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## THE ORGANISATIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF GREEN LEFT

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In 1991 the Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN) dissolved itself into the new organisation GreenLeft, founded in 1990. Thus, GreenLeft may be considered the major 'post-communist party' in the Netherlands. Yet it is not the only one. A minority of former CPN-members established in 1992 the New Communist Party (NCPN). And there is also the Socialist Party (SP), founded in 1971 under another name (Communist Unity Movement in the Netherlands – Marxist Leninist) by former members of the CPN (and some young people without a party history).

However, in this chapter we will focus on the organisation and ideology of GreenLeft. Before doing that, we will present a brief survey of the genesis of this party, followed by a description of its party organisation and ideology as it has developed through time.

### The Genesis of Groen Links

*Groen Links* (Green Left) was first set up as an electoral alliance for the parliamentary elections of 1989. Under this banner the Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN), the Pacifist-Socialist Party (PSP), the Political Radical Party (PPR), the Evangelical People's Party (EVP) and a group of independents had joined hands. Though the alliance proved only moderately successful at the polls with 4.1% of the popular vote - in 1986 the composing parties attracted 3.3% - the parties decided to continue their co-operation and proceeded to the official foundation of *GroenLinks* as a political party on 24 November 1990. Thus more than twenty years of debates between the leftist parties about co-operation and some kind of unity came to an end (Lucardie, Van Schuur and Voerman, 1999: 31-65).

### *New Left*

The first attempts were made in the late sixties, when the traditional Dutch 'pillars' in which the major religious and ideological sections of the population had been organised, started to crumble. Patience made way for activism and the attention for material concerns shifted to 'post-material' issues like peace in Vietnam, pollution of the environment, participatory democracy, self-realisation and Women's Lib. Around these themes new movements emerged. These 'new social movements' prospered even more in the seventies and early eighties. From the start, these movements were supported, and sometimes led, by members of the small leftwing parties. In fact, the PSP could almost be defined as the political arm of the peace movement during the Cold War. Its members tried to co-operate with Communists and radical Christians in the peace movement and the movement against the Vietnam war, but at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies the co-operation was rather conflictual. The Communists were still practising front organisation tactics and were manipulating movements for their own purpose. They distrusted the 'petty bourgeois' Pacifist Socialists, who advocated non-violent defence and neutralism in the Cold War, and socialisation of private corporations under workers' control as well as emancipation of the individual from (traditional) bourgeois norms and roles. Like other New Left parties, the PSP distrusted the state (whether capitalist or Soviet); socialism had to be built in direct action at the grass-roots. Hence the party lent support to any social movement that opposed capitalism and the state. Since the late 1960s, Pacifist Socialists took part in actions against pollution and - somewhat later - against nuclear power. Feminism was adopted as a source of ideological inspiration (in 1980); ecologism did not quite receive the same favour. The final solution of the environmental problem had to wait for the arrival of a socialist society.

Christian Radicals had broken away from the Catholic Party - to a lesser extent also from two Protestant parties - and founded the PPR in 1968. Gradually, the party became more secular and leftwing, in a New Left direction; yet the term 'socialism' remained taboo. The PPR emphasized issues like peace, environment, democratisation and solidarity with the poor. The Radicals were more governmentally inclined than the Pacifist Socialists and considered actions at the grass-roots supplementary to legislative action. During the seventies they made eyes at the Labour Party (*Partij van de Arbeid*, PvdA), which resulted in their participation in a govern-

ment, dominated by social-democrats, from 1973 to 1977. After the fall of this coalition, the gap between PPR and Labour widened. The left wing which wanted to make an alliance with PSP and CPN and also wanted to renew the PPR in a more ecologist direction got the upperhand. The Radicals shifted to the left. The PPR defined its identity in the following terms: 'radical, solidary, non-conformist, libertarian and ecologist'.

Not all Christian Radicals had joined the PPR in 1968; some had stayed with the Catholic and Protestant parties. When the latter merged into the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) in 1980, some Christian Radicals did not feel at home there and decided to found a new organisation, the Evangelical People's Party (EVP). Their policies did not differ much from those of the PPR, but they were more attached to Christian principles and co-operation with Christian organisations. Whereas the left wing of the EVP wanted to co-operate with PPR, PSP and (eventually) even the CPN, the right wing preferred to stay closer to CDA and Labour Party.

### ***End of Dutch communism***

The differences between PSP and PPR were not very substantial since New Left ideas had inspired both parties (Lucardie, 1980). Both Radicals and Pacifists strove for radical democracy in every area of society by actions 'from below' as well as by legislation (though they differed in their emphasis). The differences between PSP and PPR certainly paled into insignificance, beside their differences with the CPN. The Communists were in the 1970s still part of the Old Left tradition and gave priority to 'materialist', socio-economic demands of the workers; 'post-materialist' issues were rarely discussed. The party was orthodox, centralist and hardly democratic. Although its relations with Moscow had been problematic for some time, it still upheld the dogmatic Soviet variety of Marxism-Leninism in all respects.

During the period of détente in the 1960s, the CPN had experienced a period of modest electoral growth. Under the surface, however, socio-economic changes would effect the composition of the party's membership and electorate profoundly (Fennema, 1988; Voerman, 1991). As a result of the process of 'de-industrialisation', the CPN's traditional recruiting reservoir of manual workers was drying up. During the early 1970s this tendency was camouflaged by the inflow of students, who joined the CPN especially because of its activist image. These new student members conformed (at least initially) to the authoritarian rules and culture of the party. The disastrous parliamentary elections of 1977 (decline from 7 to 2 seats) triggered a process of transformation, however. Intellectuals started to rebel against the Stalinist way the party was run and demanded ideological and organizational renewal (Voerman, 1993). The CPN should embrace post-materialist values like environmental protection, feminism, democratisation and so on. After a year-long period of party-strife, an extraordinary party congress adopted a completely modernized declaration of principles in 1984, in which Leninism was exchanged for feminism as one of the party's ideological key-stones. The idea of class-struggle as the sole pace-maker of history was also abandoned. Instead of the predominating antithesis or 'contradiction' between capital and labour, the declaration recognized the existence of various other oppositions, such as the one between the genders, between man and nature, North and South, and hetero- and homosexuality. The CPN expressed its support for movements of renewal within really existing socialism, like Charta in Czechoslovakia and Solidarnosc in Poland. A positive reference to the Soviet Union was lacking completely in the new declaration of principles.

After its defeat, the orthodox wing left the CPN and founded the undiluted Marxist-Leninist, Moscow orientated League of Communists in the Netherlands (*Verbond van Communisten in Nederland*; VCN) in 1985, which later called itself the New Communist Party of the Netherlands (NCPN).

### ***Co-operation and competition***

The issue of co-operation had come down for consideration because of the heavy electoral setbacks of the three parties at the elections of 1977, when they lost 10 of their 16 seats. Many members thought that a joint list might stop the electoral decline and perhaps even attract more voters. Co-operation between the parties was also stimulated by the new social movements which came to the fore at that time: the environmental, peace, anti-nuclear power and womens' movements. Party members met each other in blockades of nuclear plants and actions for legal abortion in the late seventies, and at the large peace demonstrations against cruise missiles in the early eighties (Schennink, B., T. Bertrand and H. Fun, 1982). Consequently, old dividing-lines between the activists

tended to fade and consultations between the executives of PSP and PPR and the new social movements were institutionalised. Initially, the CPN acted independently and organised several actions on its own hook, but after 1980, the party proved a more willing partner in common actions because of its ideological transformation.

In the early 1980s, therefore electoral co-operation got under way between Radicals, Pacifist Socialists, Communists and (reluctantly) the Evangelical People's Party. In 1984, the parties presented a common list at the European elections, which won 2 seats. At the national elections in 1986 a similar electoral alliance failed to materialize. Thus the three leftist parties presented separate lists at the elections - with disastrous results: the CPN lost all seats, the PSP retained only one and the PPR two. Besides, the exodus of members which had been going on for several years, was accelerated. Therefore in 1989, after having worked together again at the European elections, all parties crossed the Rubicon and formed an electoral alliance with one list of candidates and one electoral platform. In 1990, the co-operation resulted in the foundation of *Groen Links* as a new political formation and by the middle of 1991, all the constituent parties had dissolved themselves (Voerman, 1995).

Opponents of the merger tried to resurrect the Communist Party and the Pacifist Socialist Party in 1992, but met with little electoral success. The already mentioned New Communist Party (NCPN) gained a few seats in municipal councils yet failed to win more than 0.1 % of the popular vote at national elections; the PSP'92 did even worse. A few leftwingers switched to the Socialist Party (SP). In 1996 Erik Meijer, vice-president of *Groen Links* from 1992 to 1995 and a leading member of the PSP in the 1980s, joined the SP in 1996. He preferred a 'red activist party' to a green parliamentarist one. As a SP-member, Meijer was elected Member of the European Parliament in 1999 and joined the parliamentary group of the United European Left.

The SP had been founded by Maoists in 1972. The party based itself on Mao's concept of the 'mass-line', which in practice meant that it tried to stay in touch with the 'man in the street', and especially with people in older working-class districts. Gradually the SP shed references to China and Mao, although it kept its populist orientation (Voerman, 1998). After the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the party deleted the term Marxism-Leninism, because this notion would cause too much confusion. Instead the SP labelled itself 'Socialist' only. Key element in its ideology were the socialisation of the means of production, and economic planning. These radical goals disappeared, however, in 1999, when the party congress adopted a new set of principles. Socialism was now defined as human dignity, equality and solidarity. Notwithstanding this ideological moderation, the SP retained more or less its militant anticapitalist position. Traditionally, extra-parliamentary action was considered to be more important than elections and parliamentary representation. Nowadays, both strategies are regarded as complementary to one another. The strategy of 'vox populi', long-sustained activism and an ideological blend of materialist demands and environmentalism enabled the SP to establish solid linkages with parts of the electorate. Owing to its local activism the party had won quite a few seats in municipal elections during the 1970s and 1980s. Its opportunity for a national break-through came in the early 1990s, when the reconstruction of the welfare state was taken up by a cabinet in which Labour participated. In 1994 the SP entered parliament with 2 seats (1,3%), and in 1998 it received 5 seats (3.5%). In May 2002 the SP got 9 seats (5.9 %).

### **The Communist Contingent Within Green Left**

As Green Lefts name indicates, the ideological content of the new party is rather dualistic (see paragraph 5 below). In the beginning, it tried to compromise between a red Scylla and a green Charybdis. Of course the mixture of environmental and social demands was rather different from Communist ideology, even from its renovated variant. Therefore the question arises: how comfortable did the traditionally red Communists feel in their new green-left accommodation? What exactly were their motives and what were their expectations? On the basis of a survey, which was conducted at the last CPN congress in 1991, some answers can be given. The same survey was also conducted at the last conventions of PSP and PPR earlier in 1991, and at the founding congress of Green Left in November 1990 (Voerman, 1991).

Most Communist respondents (81%) mentioned as a motive for merger the fear that the three parties involved would not survive electorally if they continued operating separately. In fact they were quite right for their own party, for after the CPN had disappeared from the Second Chamber in 1986, as already mentioned In

line with this, some 90% expected that a merger would result in an increase of political influence. So in general the Communist representatives surveyed were rather favourable to the fusion of their party in GreenLeft – only 3% of the respondents were opposed to it. This overwhelming majority was not so surprising, of course, since most of the orthodox members had already left the CPN after 1984. Moreover, there was no real alternative for the CPN in the times of the dissolution of Communism in and after 1989. A continuance of the CPN was not very charming, when the notion of Communism in general had become discredited. Consequently, the ideological motive was also important for the Communist delegates surveyed: three-quarters of them expected the foundation of GreenLeft to be accompanied with ideological renewal.

The CPN's inclination to merger, however, was not based on the perception that the ideological differences between the parties involved had disappeared altogether. On the contrary, more than two-thirds of the respondents at the CPN congress still perceived these distinctions – and not without reason, as the results of the surveys of the parties involved demonstrate. Although CPN, PSP, and PPR were rather homogeneous in social respect – the respondents are generally high educated and more often employed in public service or education than in the productive sector – ideologically their diversity was still relatively large. To a certain extent, this divergence had a red-green dimension in which Communists and Radicals formed both extremes. For instance, 51% of the CPN respondents (PSP: 71%) were in favour of nationalization of major corporations, against 19% of the surveyed Radicals. Some 88% of the CPN respondents did not accept that the protection of the environment required not even the lowest incomes to be raised (one of the classical dilemmas between reds and greens); 55% of the PPR respondents agreed with this statement (PSP: 43%). Of the Communist respondents, 27% would strive for less economic growth to solve environmental problems; whereas 74% of the Radicals would do so (PSP: 63%). In accordance with these ideological preferences, Communists were most active in trade unions and work councils or committees (CPN: 32%; PSP: 22%; PPR: 16%), and Radicals in the environmental movement (PPR: 27%; PSP: 20%; CPN: 8%).

These differences of opinion between Communists and Radicals were also expressed in their self-placement on a left-right scale. CPN and PSP delegates considered themselves more left-wing than PPR representatives (average scores on a scale from 1 to 10: CPN: 2.2; PSP: 2.3; PPR: 2.9). Yet despite this diversity, Communist respondents were not pessimistic about the merger. More than three quarters of them did not expect that GreenLeft would become too right-wing, nor did they foresee a disintegration of GreenLeft sooner or later. Should GreenLeft hopes fail, the Communists surveyed were not prepared to give up. More than three quarters of them would try to carry on with GreenLeft.

It was not very likely that GreenLeft would fall apart, however. Behind the visible - and real - area of divergence an 'overlapping consensus' could be observed, or set of cross-cutting cleavages which prevented polarization: on some issues the Communists took a minority position, on others the Radicals or the Pacifist Socialists (Lucardie et al., 1995). The latter two groups were generally closer to each other than either is to the first; up to a point, they constitute the core of GreenLeft and demonstrate continuity between New Left and GreenLeft. The Communists on the other hand still had some of the traits of their previous Old Left tendency.

The option of merger certainly did not mean the salvation of renovated Dutch Communism, for within GreenLeft the process of its marginalization continued. Both quantitatively as well as qualitatively, the Communist contingent was on the defensive, as another survey among delegates of the GreenLeft congress in 1995 has demonstrated (Lucardie and Van Schuur, 1996). According to this survey, the Communist share within GreenLeft was diminishing: from 23% in 1990 to 14% in 1995. Of course this had to do with the growing number of 'new' GreenLeft members who had no 'old' party background. Compared to the other participating parties, however, the Communist pace of reduction was the highest, which might indicate that former CPN-members were less active within the party then before, or that they had simply left.

In ideological respect, the remaining former CPN-members within GreenLeft were losing some of their Communist characteristics. In general, one can say that to a certain extent they were accommodating themselves to the ideological shift in emphasis of GreenLeft: compared with the early 1990s, they were taking somewhat less 'red' and more 'green' positions in 1995. Still they were the least 'green' compared with the other components. The former Communists also scaled themselves the most to the left on a left-right scale, although a bit less then before: 2.4 in 1995 against 2.2 in 1991.

## Electoral and Membership Development of Green Left

After its start in 1989, GreenLeft proved more successful at the polls, even if its expectations were not quite fulfilled, especially at the national level (see Table 1). Party leader was Ria Beckers, the former leader of the PPR, the largest party participating within the electoral alliance. Though GreenLeft won six parliamentary seats out of 150, double the number held by the constituent parties before the election, the increase in its share of the vote was not impressive: 4.1% in 1989 compared with 3.3% in 1986. Opinion polls had suggested that the newcomer could count on 10 parliamentary seats. Nevertheless, GreenLeft was more successful than its ecological rival, The Greens, which obtained only 0.4% and no seats.

The parliamentary elections of 1994 were even more disappointing. Although again the opinion polls had been very promising, GreenLeft scored 3.5% and lost one seat. This defeat was attributed to a weak campaign and to the way candidates had been competing for the party leadership in a membership vote. In the final round of the selection process, two couples competed, each one intending to share the leadership among the two of them. One consisted of Ina Brouwer, the former Communist party leader, and Mohammed Rabbæ, an 'independent' who had immigrated from Morocco; the other consisted of Leoni Sipkes, a Pacifist Socialist, and Paul Rosenmøller, once a Maoist but later an 'independent' trade union leader and in 1989 number 4 on the list of candidates for the parliamentary elections. The winning couple, Brouwer and Rabbæ, did probably mobilize majoritarian support from the Communist contingent among the party members, but also substantial support from the other 'blood groups'.<sup>1</sup> It seems difficult, however, to interpret this rivalry as a struggle between factions. Nevertheless, the relatively fierce competition between the candidates - which was covered extensively by the press - was later perceived as a major cause for the electoral loss in 1994.

As a consequence, Brouwer resigned and Rosenmøller was elected leader of the parliamentary group. Quickly he became also political leader of the party. In 1998, no one opposed his leading position on the list of candidates at the parliamentary elections. Moreover, the party had decided in 1997 to abolish the membership vote and leave the nomination of parliamentary candidates entirely in the hands of the party congress. Under the leadership of Rosenmøller, GreenLeft was very successful in 1998: the party won 7.3%, 11 members of parliament. To a large extent, the electoral increase was made at the expense of Labour and the left-liberal party Democrats 66.

Because of the growing popularity and prestige of party leader Rosenmøller, GreenLeft decided in 2000 to adjust the rule by which members of parliament could only serve three terms as a maximum. This cleared the road for Rosenmøller to lead the party again at the elections of May 2002. Again opinion-polls promised an electoral increase for GreenLeft: 15 members (some 10%) seemed to be possible. The party leadership started to dream of participation in government, like other Green parties in Western Europe. However, due to internal conflict regarding the support of the parliamentary group for the air raids on Afghanistan, the expected increase started to melt away. After the bombings had ended, GreenLeft started to recover somewhat in the polls. In April 2002 the party was expected to win 4 or 5 seats, partly because of the sharp attacks by party leader Rosenmøller on Pim Fortuyn, a right-populist politician who was doing very well in the opinion polls. A few days before the elections on May 15, Fortuyn was murdered, which caused great uncertainty and an anti-leftwing-mood. In this sphere of crisis, GreenLeft lost all its expected gains and ended up with only 10 seats (6.9%). Some observers attributed the loss partly also to the Green Left campaign, which might have been aimed too much at the well-educated middle class, with the 'intellectual' slogan 'For a New Balance' (*Voor een nieuw evenwicht*) (Broere, 2002).

At the municipal level, GreenLeft was relatively successful in the 1990s (see Table 1). At the municipal elections in 1990 the party got 300 councillors, in 1994 380, in 1998 430, and in 2002 432. During the 1990s, the party participated in the local government of several municipalities, including some of the largest cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Utrecht. At the provincial (regional) level, GreenLeft also increased its electoral share, from 5.2% in 1991 to 9.9% in 1999 (see Table 1). The provincial councils elect the First Chamber of Dutch Parliament (which counts 75 members). In 1991 and 1995 GreenLeft held 4 seats, in 1999 8 seats.

The penetration of Green Left within the electorate is relatively weak. The ratio of party members to party voters at the national elections was 5.1% in 1989 and 2.6% in 2002. The ratio to the electorate as a whole

was 0,02% and 0.01%. Like most other Dutch parties, Green Left had lost members, from 16,000 in 1990 to 12,000 in 1998 (see table 1). Since then, the party has recovered to a large extent: early 2002, it had some 15,000 members. A few weeks before and after the elections, Green Left has won 1.000 members. In June 2002, the party had more than 17.000 members.

**Table 1**  
**Green Left. Membership and electoral results: 1989-2002**

	National elections		European elections		Membership
	Seats	%	Seats	%	
<b>1989</b>	6	4.1	2	7.0	18.400 *
<b>1990</b>					15.900
<b>1991</b>					14.971
<b>1992</b>					13.548
<b>1993</b>					12.500
<b>1994</b>	5	3.5	1	3.7	12.978
<b>1995</b>					11.705
<b>1996</b>					11.617
<b>1997</b>					11.873
<b>1998</b>	11	7.3			13.821
<b>1999</b>			4	11.8	13.855
<b>2000</b>					14.314
<b>2001</b>					15.037

\*) Total membership of CPN, EVP, PPR, PSP and direct members of GreenLeft.

### **Relations With Social Movements and Other Parties**

Green Left maintained informal but friendly relations with the new social movements, especially the environmental movement - which survived the 1980s better than the peace movement and the women's movement (Van der Heijden, 1992). For example, the first party president (later member of parliament), Marijke Vos, had been a staff member of 'Environmental Defence', (*Milieudefensie*, the Dutch equivalent of 'Friends of the Earth'); while this same organisation elected in 1995 as president a former Green Left member of parliament, Bram van Ojik. The director of the organisation, Wynand Duyvendak, was nominated candidate for parliament in 2002 and received a high fourth position on the list – just below Marijke Vos. Not surprising, when this organisation assessed party platforms with respect to environmental policy, it gave Green Left the best marks Brunt e.a., 1989; Van der Meer, 1994). Beckers, leader of the parliamentary party from 1989 to 1993, was elected president of another environmental organisation, *Natuur en Milieu* (Nature and Environment) in 1994. In a survey held in 1992, 30% of the members declared they had been involved in an environmental movement. Involvement in the peace movement had been even higher (42%), whereas only 20% had been active in a trade union and 14% in the women's movement. Activism may have declined somewhat since 1990, however. In 1992, 13% was still active in an environmental organisation, 10% in the peace movement and 6% in the women's movement (Lucardie, Van Schuur and Voerman, 1999, 143-144). Most members (58%) considered co-operation with social movements 'very important'. A large minority (35%) had actually joined the party because they had been active members of a social movement.

Though most Green Leftists seem to think positively of the trade unions, relations are not very close. While the largest trade union federations in the Netherlands, the Federation of Dutch Trade Unions (*Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging*, FNV) and the National Christian Federation of Trade Unions (*Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond*, CNV) try to stay aloof from party politics, their leaders and activists tend to show more sympathy for the Labour Party and the Christian Democratic Appeal (respectively) than for the smaller parties on the left.

Green Left did not entertain friendly relations with either party during the nineties. In 2001 contacts with Christian Democrats at the local level resulted in a common document. Co-operation with the Labour Party proved often difficult, both at the national and at the local level. Both parties competed for (more or less) the same part of the electorate. The potential Green Left electorate consisted mainly of Labour Party voters, as well as supporters of D66 (Kunst et al., 1997: 19). After the 2002 elections, when Labour, D66 and Green Left suffered electoral losses, the common experience of opposition to a rightwing government might improve relations between them.

### **The Organisation of GreenLeft**

As GreenLeft was the result of a merger, it may have inherited some organisational characteristics from its predecessors, which were rather different in this respect.<sup>2</sup> The first party congress of *Groen Links* adopted a constitution and bye-laws which seemed inspired mostly by those of the PSP or (to a lesser extent) the PPR. Membership was open to anyone. The first congress was open to all members (who also had the right to vote); but it approved a constitution which limited the right to vote in the future to delegates from local branches (*Statuten en huishoudelijk reglement Groen Links*, 1990, statuten art. 13, 9). In the middle of the 1990s this was changed again: local branches were allowed complete freedom to decide the number of delegates (with voting rights), instead of allotting them a maximum number of delegates corresponding with their membership. The interpretation of this change remained contested, for a while; but by 2002, congresses were open to all members who had registered in time.<sup>3</sup>

The party congress occupies a pivotal position within the GreenLeft party organisation. It takes all important decisions: adopt party programmes and bye-laws, elect the party executive and nominate candidates for parliament. However, the rank-and-file could correct decisions of congress by a membership vote or referendum (by mail), under certain conditions. Until 1997, they would elect the political leader of the party - number one on the list of candidates, who becomes usually the leader of the parliamentary group in the Dutch system - also by a membership vote.

Thus one might conclude that Green Left has never practiced direct democracy the way many other green parties did. Congress delegates, surveyed in 1995, felt the congress enjoyed sufficient influence in the party (75% agreed) but that rank-and-file members did not have enough influence (60% agreed) (Lucardie and Van Schuur, 1996: 260). This perception may still be accurate today: the minor modifications of the party organisation during the nineties do not seem to have changed the distribution of power to a significant extent.

### ***Factions and wings: the Communist presence***

Apart from this vertical structure, the party constitution also recognized 'categorical groups' (*categoriele groepen*), which would be allowed to propose motions and nominate candidates - functions similar to those of local branches. In the course of the nineties, seven such 'categories' organised themselves: women (later also men) in the Feminist Network, gays and lesbians ('Pink Left'), immigrants (the Progressive Migrant Bloc), youth, handicapped and chronically ill and people over 50 years old, and Christians. More characteristics of a faction had the Left Forum (named after a similar grouping in the German Greens), though it did not focus only on the party GreenLeft but was open to other leftists as well. Yet even the Left Forum seemed more interested in organizing debates than in lobbying within Green Left. In 1994 Left Forum decided to disband, due to lack of active members. Factions were in fact neither forbidden nor allowed in Green Left, but simply ignored in constitution and bye-laws.

A remarkable fact seems the absence of quota for women – hotly debated but rejected by the first party congress - and for members from constituent parties.<sup>4</sup> The first parliamentary caucus had represented the three main constituents more or less in proportion of membership: two members, including the political leader, from the PPR, the largest component; two members from the PSP, which was in 1989 a bit smaller than the PPR; one from the even smaller CPN; one from the 'independent members'. This balance was absent in the second caucus, elected in 1994: one member had a Communist background, one had been a Pacifist Socialist, but the other three were 'independents'. Thus the largest component, the PPR, was not represented at all any more after 1994.



Communists were a little over-represented, as a survey held in 1992 indicated that 15% of the *GroenLinks* members had been member of the CPN. Yet party members did not seem to mind very much. Most respondents in a survey we held at a party congress in 1995 felt all former parties - called 'blood groups' (*bloedgroepen*) in Dutch - enjoyed sufficient influence.<sup>5</sup> When the parliamentary party expanded in 1998 to 11 members, two former Communists were included: the Protestant minister Ab Harrewijn and Tara Oedayraj Singh Varma, who had been active in organisations of immigrants from the former Dutch colony Surinam. In 2002 only Harrewijn was nominated again, Varma had been accused of financial mismanagement and resigned in 2001, officially because of health problems. In fact in 2002 most of the parliamentary candidates had never belonged to any of the constituent parties.

### ***Financial resources***

The total income of GreenLeft in 2001 was 25 million euro. Nearly 48% of this came from membership fees. Some 26% was contributed by party representatives in municipal and provincial councils, the First and Second Chamber of Dutch Parliament and the European Parliament. About 23% of the revenues of Green Left were provided by the state. These subsidies were meant for party activities in general (although these funds could not be used for election campaigns, according to the law), and the research office, the youth organisation and television and radio broadcasts of Green Left in particular. The remaining 3% were donations, sales of party publications, interest, et cetera.

Like most Dutch parties, Green Left depends financially to a large extent on membership fees. One might expect, however, that this share will decrease – not so much because Green Left is facing membership decline (on the contrary, as is shown above), but because of the increase of state subsidies. In 2002 the party will receive nearly 200.000 additional euro's from the state – a third more than in 2001. As a result, the share of state subsidies in 2002 is expected to rise to 28% of the party's annual income.

### **The Ideology of Green Left**

The ideology of Green Left is a mixture of different elements, as might be expected from a party that brought together communists, christian and democratic radicals, pacifists and libertarian as well as ecological socialists, and a few others. Some ideological convergence had taken place between the merging parties, but significant differences had survived (Voerman, 1995; Lucardie et.al., 1995). The party manifesto, which was approved in December 1991 after protracted discussions, displays the difficult reconciliation of the diverging elements quite clearly. The main ideals of the party were defined as democracy, respect for nature and the environment, social justice and international solidarity (Groen Links, 1992, 5).

Democratic principles should prevail not only in the political realm, but also in business corporations and other organisations. Green Left did not call for workers' self-management (quite popular with PSP and PPR in the 1970s, but losing popularity in the 1980s), only for more power for works councils and trade unions. Parliamentary democracy was taken for granted, the government should guarantee political freedom as well as other social rights and freedoms. The government should be active, but not dominant in society. These ideas seem typical of democratic radicalism: a not fully developed ideology shared by the PPR, to some extent by the PSP and even by the CPN in its last years.

An active government was needed especially to turn the growth-oriented economy into a sustainable economy. This may require global planning of production and consumption. Yet internalisation of ecological costs through ecotaxes might often be as efficient as a legal ban on a product. The manifesto clearly reflects a compromise between the socialist and liberal tendencies within Green Left – on the one hand members from CPN and PSP, on the other hand those from the PPR. On the one hand, it is stated: 'the capitalist mode of production is reaching its limits' (meant are ecological limits) and 'the present capitalist market economy is at odds with the economic order which Green Left aspires to'; on the other hand 'a centralised planning economy is unthinkable' and 'the market is indispensable for fine-tuning production and consumption' (Groen Links, 1992, 4, 9, 10). However, this was a compromise between eco-socialists and eco-liberals: both wings of Green Left agreed on the need for ecological limits to growth.

Social justice means social equality: a more equal distribution of power, income, work, knowledge and property. Naturally, the government has a role to play here, too. The Green Left had obviously embraced the social welfare state, without too much debate. International solidarity was also an ideal accepted by all tendencies. It was no longer framed in a marxist context of 'workers of the world, unite!'. The link between solidarity and pacifism had been weakened as well. Yet in October 1992 Green Left added a chapter to the manifesto on peace and security, calling for 'non-violent solutions to conflicts' and 'total disarmament' as well as dissolution of NATO and WEU (Groen Links, 1992, 16-19).

Finally, the manifesto indicated a strategy for the new party: radical reformism, combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary action, in coalitions with 'other progressive forces in society' (Groen Links, 1992, 15). This wording reminds one of the CPN, more than any other party. Thus the manifesto contained a few elements which came down from the communist tradition, but on the whole it reflected more the ideological influence of the PPR and to a lesser extent of the PSP, one could argue.

The same can be said of the election programmes of the Green Left. Though one can observe a remarkable continuity in the platforms adopted in 1989, 1994, 1998 and 2002, significant socialist or communist elements declined in importance. In 1989, the party called for 'socialisation of the economy', socio-economic planning and parliamentary control of banks and other financial institutions (Groen Links, 1989, 18-20). All land should be owned by the state, while citizens or companies could rent it for an indefinite period (*erfpacht*). In 1994, the demand for planning is more abstract and less specific, while land ownership does not seem an issue at all (Groen Links, 1994, 25, 31, 45, 54). In 1998 and 2002, planning is not really mentioned any more (Groen links, 1998; Groen Links, 2002). Yet more modest demands for egalitarian social policies, increasing welfare and minimum wages for example, have been voiced in all platforms.

At the same time, ecological policies seem to gain weight and specificity in the election platforms. Especially the more recent programmes call for (more) ecotaxes on energy, especially fuel and petrol (gas), pesticides, water, waste, air travel and even the consumption of (non-organic) meat. Moreover, the party called for closing down nuclear power stations (almost done in the Netherlands); improving public transport; restricting hunting and fishing; and reducing factory farming and encouraging organic agriculture. In 1994 and 1998, the party advocated that all agriculture would have to do away with pesticides and fertilizers within 15 years. In 2002 its goal seemed more realistic: increasing the share of organic agriculture from 1% to 20% over the next 8 years. However, genetic modification of food should be banned altogether.

Democratic radicalism has been present in all election platforms, as indicated by demands for a referendum and people's initiative, and election of burgomasters (mayors), provincial governors and the head of state. Society should become more democratic as well. Hence: more power to patients and workers in health care, teachers and students in schools and universities, tenants in housing projects, and workers in industry (Groen Links, 2002, 46, 50-51, 58, 73-74). The demand for a basic income, often associated with democratic radicalism and advocated ardently by the PPR, did not figure prominently in any election platform but was somewhat hidden. In 1989 the Green Left called for a 'partial disconnexion' (*gedeeltelijke ontkoppeling*) between work and income. In 1994, 1998 and 2002 it proposed a plan for a negative income tax which might possibly result in a basic income. Of course, communists and most other marxists had always opposed a basic income disconnected from work.

International solidarity has remained an important theme in all platforms. Foreign aid should be increased and immigration policy liberalized. In 2002 *Groen Links* is the only party that calls explicitly for admission of labour immigrants (at least under certain conditions), and legalization of illegal immigrants. Moreover, it wanted to facilitate dual citizenship and to grant even immigrants without Dutch citizenship the right to vote at all levels (municipal, provincial and national). While concerned about the 'democratic deficit' of the European Union, Green Left has argued for a federal Europe, with a proper constitution approved by all citizens in a referendum (Groen Links, 2002, 94-97).

Pacifism continued to inspire the platforms in a moderate way: Dutch armed forces should become a peace force, preferably with a UN mandate and no longer tied to NATO but to the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) which included the former Soviet Union. However, this has become a controversial question in recent years. The party was badly divided about intervention in Kosovo and

Afghanistan. In the platform for the 2002 elections, Green Left is more cautious and ambiguous about NATO: on the one hand it should be replaced (in the long run) by a regional peace force of the UN, on the other hand it might help develop a European reaction force; after all, it did contribute to peace in the Balkan area.. Nuclear weapons should still be removed from the Netherlands, however.

Thus one might conclude that the influence of communist and marxist ideology was never very strong within GreenLeft; and that it declined with time after 1989 – for obvious reasons, which can be summarized with the German word *Zeitgeist* ; or in other words: the increasing dominance of liberal ideology and the collapse of the Soviet system. Like the Labour Party and even the Socialist Party, Green Left may have shifted somewhat to the centre of the political spectrum. However, it has not moderated but rather elaborated its ecological policies since 1990. In order to satisfy both real and potential voters, the party has to maintain a delicate balance between green (and democratic) radicalism and moderate realism (Kunst et al., 1997; 21-22).

## Conclusions

Communism does not exist any longer in the Netherlands. One of the most prominent factors which contributed to the downfall of the CPN in the 1980s and early 1990s was the increased prosperity and the rise of post-materialism which was attended by it. The material emancipation of the working class was more or less accomplished by the introduction of the welfare state. At the same time, the era of post-industrialism appeared to begin. The new middle class came to the fore, with other values and demands than the blue collars used to have. Communism was severely hit by these developments. Not only its materialist base started to erode, but it was also pushed aside in the ideological superstructure.

The same factors which caused the collapse of communism, contributed to the emergence of Green Left. Communists, Radicals and Pacifist Socialists began to resemble each other both ideologically and sociologically. During the 1990s, the former Communists gradually changed from red to green within their new eco-socialist organizational environment. At the beginning of the 21st century, nothing recalls to mind the CPN within GreenLeft. There is hardly any trace of a Communist legacy in party platforms, in the organisational structure and in the leadership of the party, nor in the composition of party membership. The Dutch GreenLeft is only a - partially - post-communist party in terms of its genesis. The overall picture is that of a green party.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This conclusion is based on our surveys among congress delegates in 1990 and 1991; if we assume party members shared the preferences of the delegates and did not change their preferences drastically between 1990 and 1993, we can infer that Brouwer attracted the votes from about 90 per cent of the former Communists and about 10 per cent of all other groups, whereas the candidate from the PSP received the support of less than half of the former Pacifist Socialists and also about 10 per cent from other groups. See Van Schuur, Lucardie and Voerman, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> The Communist Party was organized as a centralized mass party with quasi-professional cadre. Party constitutions and by-laws emphasized party discipline, unity and supervision by special committees - 'democratic centralism' as Lenin called it. Membership had to be deserved and could be terminated by the party executive if a member neglected his duties or obstructed party decisions. Major decisions were taken by the party congress, which was elected in a two-tiered structure: local branches (formerly: cells) elected delegates to district conferences, the district conference elected delegates to the party congress. The congress elected a party executive, which in turn elected an executive committee and national secretariat - the most powerful body in a traditional communist party. From 1938 to 1977, the party was dominated in fact by one man, Paul de Groot (first general secretary, then party president). After 1977, a collective leadership took over and began to reform the party - first the party programme, then also the organisation. In 1989 the party discussed a new constitution, which would do away with democratic centralism and promote pluralism and local autonomy. However, the new constitutional revision process was frozen when the party joined the Green Left alliance.

<sup>3</sup> At the end of 1997, the party executive encouraged individual members to register for the party congresses in January and February 1998 without consulting the local branches; some branches protested, but accepted the procedure in the end. Of course, each side in the dispute claimed to be more democratic than the other.

<sup>4</sup> A striking difference with *Izquierda Unida* in Spain, as Luis Fernandez Ramiro also points out in his chapter in this book.

<sup>5</sup> Between 76% and 83% agreed with this; even members of the EVP, who were hardly represented anywhere, agreed (78%). For more details see: Lucardie and Van Schuur, 1996.