

Rode Jeugd in the Netherlands

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RODE JEUGD IN THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands of the 20th century is hardly known for its rich tradition of political violence. However, first steps towards starting up an armed struggle were made also there at the same time as for example *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF) started to operate in West Germany and the Weathermen conducted bomb attacks around the United States. These efforts were taken by radicals involved in a loose organisation called *Rode Jeugd* (Red Youth). Like other New Left organisations involved in armed struggle, also the adherents of Rode Jeugd were radicalised by the Vietnam war and believed that the world was in the brink of revolution. They thought their struggle was part of a worldwide struggle against imperialism and capitalism and looked at China as the leader of the struggle. However, the activities of Rode Jeugd or its successors never developed into the same scale those of RAF or *Brigate Rosse* in Italy.

The protest phase

In a historical account of Rode Jeugd published in its internal paper in 1973, group's history is divided into two periods: the protest phase of the years 1966–1970 and the period of resistance with initiatives for the urban guerrilla in 1970–1973.¹ After the organization was disbanded in 1974, many of its former members continued their involvement in armed struggle in the context of *Rode Hulp* (Red Help), *Rood Verzetsfront* (Red Resistance Front) and other networks.

Rode Jeugd has roots in two directions - the protest movement of the mid-60's and a small Maoist organization called *Rode Vlag* (Red Flag) which was established by former members of the Communist Party of the Netherlands who were expelled from the party following the dispute between those supporting the line of China and the Soviet Union.²

In the mid-60's, the protest movement and mood was quickly building up in Amsterdam. The main phenomenon of these years was Provo which was established in 1965. This loosely organised movement was influenced by anarchist ideas and was best known for its style of protest. It aimed at provoking people by parodying the bourgeois values and way of living. Provo had a huge appeal on the protesting youths, and its gatherings draw together hundreds of people.³

¹ "Bijdrage LLL: Rode Jeugd 1966/1970 – 1970/1973," *Voorwaarts*, 15 November 1973.

² See e.g. *Rode Jeugd Stadsgeurilla cahier no. 1*, 15. On *Rode Vlag* and Maoism in the Netherlands in general, see Beekers 2005.

³ On protesting in Amsterdam around the mid-1960s, see e.g. Bosscher 1992; Kennedy 1995/1999. On the political background of Rode Jeugd see also van Staalduinen 1996, 15–52. On Provo's history see e.g. Mamadouh 1992, 54–

The development of youth protests were closely watched by members Rode Vlag. In their eyes, the spring 1966 marked an important turn. In March, thousands of youths gathered to Amsterdam to demonstrate during the wedding of Princess Beatrix who, despite the fact that the Nazi Germany had occupied the country a couple of decades ago, married a German prince. While the protests so far had been mostly cultural in character, this time there seemed to be clear political overtones. They were excited to see the youths coming to the streets to protest against the prevailing system, but they felt the youths lacked understanding on what they should do and who they should target. To help the protestors with this, the young members of Rode Vlag established a youth paper, which became called *Rode Jeugd* (Red Youth) and started to spread it among the protestors and thereby educate those on Marxism-Leninism.⁴ Two central figures behind the paper were Willem Oskam and Joost van Steenis, both 20-odd year prominent activists of the left-wing scene.

Besides the youth, also workers seemed to be becoming more active. In June 1966, construction workers marched to the streets of Amsterdam to protest against uneven holiday bonuses. The demonstrations turned into riots when a man was found dead among the crowd. The demonstrators widely believed that he was killed by the police. When the morning edition of the populist-conservative newspaper *De Telegraaf* (correctly) reported that he died because of heart failure, the demonstrators, reinforced by many more people, stormed into its building.⁵

In the aftermath of these riots, Rode Jeugd got its first moment of fame. A couple of days before they began, Rode Jeugd had been handing out its third pamphlet in the city centre of Amsterdam. The pamphlet listed a number of American banks and other locations with their addresses and a following text:

Above is a short and very incomplete list of American companies and institutions where following things could be done: breaking windows, chalking anti-American slogans to the walls, setting on fire and so forth. But as several of our “left-wing” newspapers and weeklies [...] have already stated with fervour, and we fervently agree, something like that would be scandalous! That is certainly hooliganism. Creatures who do such things are dubious people, beggars of the worst kind.⁶

The pamphlet landed into the hands of the widely respected novelist Godfried Bomans who accused Rode Jeugd in his op-ed of being the culprits behind the recent riots.⁷ The op-ed drew a lot of attention and led to the arrest of four Rode Jeugd members who were sentenced to four weeks in prison and a 1000 guilder fine. Bomans, however, got so much criticism for his writing and the

85; Pas 2003.

⁴ ”Communique,” *Rode Vlag* 3, no. 6 (June 1966); *Rode Jeugd – Marxistisch-Leninistisch Jongerenblad* 1, no. 1 (June 1966); ”Rode Jeugd bulletin nr. 1” (Rode Jeugd’s pamphlet, 26 May 1966).

⁵ See e.g. Bosscher 1992; Kennedy 1995/1999, 155–158.

⁶ ”Rode Jeugd bulletin nr. III”, dated 10 June 1966.

⁷ Bomans, Godfried; ”De raddraaiers,” *de Volkskrant*, 18 June 1966.

consequences it caused that he was forced to apologize. As a token of his regret, he donated 100 guilders to the Rode Jeugd's fundraising campaign to cover the fines and legal costs.⁸

While Rode Vlag leaders were pleased with the initial success of the youths, their relations soon broke up. In the leaders' view, instead of introducing the protesting youths to Marxism-Leninism, their own youths had become badly infected by the playful anarchist style of Provo movement, which was the main phenomenon of the protests. When Willem Oskam praised Provo and slandered the working class on the pages of Rode Jeugd people, Rode Vlag had had it.⁹ The youths went on and establish Rode Jeugd as an independent organization in October 1967. Its first meeting, which was advertised during Provo activities, was attended by about 60 youths, many of whom joined the organization.¹⁰

The first years of Rode Jeugd were characterized by spontaneity and loose organization. Around the core of leaders and key members, there were perhaps a couple of hundred youths, mostly workers. Activists aligned with Rode Jeugd took part in demonstrations, published their own paper, chalked slogans to walls and distributed pamphlets. It did not have any concise and strictly defined political programme. Rather, its agenda and ideology was a mixture of Marxism-Leninism and the concerns of the protest movement. It was involved in protests against the US and for the liberation movements and took part in almost any leftist demonstration that was organized in Amsterdam. On the other hand, it raised up more traditional working class issues like poor position of young workers in the labour markets, working conditions and wages in particular companies and the development of communist movements elsewhere in the world.¹¹

Rode Jeugd became soon known for its hard approach. They did not believe that peaceful protesting would lead to anywhere and advocated more confrontational methods. When the Rode Jeugd adherents were confronted with the police, they did not withdraw but stroke back. In the demonstrations, Rode Jeugd people carried flags and placards bound on a stout pole that were used as cudgel and many youths brought chains with them. It was exactly this militant attitude that

⁸ Rode Jeugd managed to collect at least 1300 guilders by the campaign. The sum donated by Bomans was given to the National Liberation Front of Vietnam in Prague in the form of medicines and plastic. Eggen, Fr.: "Zilverlingen van Bomans", *Rode Jeugd – Marxistisch-leninistisch jongerenblad* no. 3 (1966); "De in ons land bekend staande humorist "Godvruchtige Godfried"...", *Rode Jeugd - Marxistisch-leninistisch jongerenblad* no. 4 (1966); "Voorlopige verantwoording steunlijsten Rode Jeugd," *Rode Jeugd - Marxistisch-leninistisch jongerenblad* no. 5 (1966).

⁹ For the dispute see Oskam, Willem: "Rode Jeugd interviewt Provo Rob Stolk," *Rode Jeugd – Marxistisch-Leninistisch Jongerenblad* 1, no. 5/6 (December 1966); Oskam, Willem: "De beweging en de stilstand," *Rode Jeugd – Marxistisch-Leninistisch Jongerenblad* 1, no. 6 (January 1967); Oskam, Willem: "Leve de lange haren en de witte spijkersbroeken!!!!!!!" *Rode Jeugd – Marxistisch-Leninistisch Jongerenblad* 1, no. 7 (April 1967); Bischof, C: "Proletariaat of Provotariaat?" and "Inhoud van Rode Jeugd valt niet onder verantwoording van redactie Rode Vlag," *De Rode Vlag* 4, no. 5 (May/June 1967).

¹⁰ "Organisatie!!!!" *Rode Jeugd – Marxistisch-Leninistisch Jongerenblad*, no. 10 (October 1967).

¹¹ See *Rode Jeugd – Marxistisch-Leninistisch Jongerenblad*, no. 1-13 (1966-1968).

made Rode Jeugd attractive for those who got involved.¹² This hard approach became an important part of its self-image and its trademark that distinguished it from other Marxist-Leninist organisations:

De “Rode Jeugd”, the only consistent revolutionary organization in the Netherlands, WILL realize its action programme, step by step and despite intimidation or reactions that it gets. As Marxist-Leninists, we consider it our responsibility to respond with ALL means to the insults en challenges posed by imperialist capitalism.¹³

The same hard approach, however, strained its relations with other Marxist-Leninist movements and to a degree with the protest movement of the day.¹⁴ By 1968, it had come so far that Rode Jeugd was often not invited to demonstrations anymore. For Rode Jeugd, though, being not invited seemed like the strongest invitation of all. An obviously frustrated Rode Vlag leader wrote about a Vietnam demonstration organized in October 1968:

Because the [...] organizations had not dared to ask Rode Jeugd to participate (apparently because of the prior experiences!), they [Rode Jeugd] found it necessary to suddenly show up with slogans that had nothing to do with defending the Vietnamese people. The police got a reason to intervene when other demonstrators who wanted to remove these slogans got into fight with Rode Jeugd.¹⁵

While the activities of Rode Jeugd had started in Amsterdam, new branches were established in various towns in the late 1960s. These were established by people who had come to Amsterdam for demonstrations, met Rode Jeugd people and put together their own organisation back in their home town. New Rode Jeugd branches were established in Eindhoven, IJmuiden, Kampen, The Hague and several other cities (of which little was heard afterwards).¹⁶ Activities of different branches took varying forms as result of differences in local protest scene, reactions from the authorities and aspirations of local Rode Jeugd leaders. In most places, the actions did not really go much further than chalking, distributing pamphlets in the streets and companies, and participating in the demonstrations.

The most important of the new branches was that of Eindhoven. Towards the end of 1960s, it became a major locus of Rode Jeugd’s radical actions. Like in Amsterdam, Rode Jeugd in

¹² E.g. interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 14 March 2003; Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003; Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005.

¹³ *Publikatie Aktiegroep Rode Jeugd Eindhoven* no. 1 (1968).

¹⁴ See e.g. “De Vietnam-demonstratie van Piet Nak”, *Rode Jeugd. Marxistisch-Leninistisch Jongerenblad* no. 8 (1967); “Rode Jeugd. Ontstaan en ontwikkeling”, *Rode Jeugd. Stadsgeurilla Cahier*, no. 1 [1972]; “Bijdrage LLL: Rode Jeugd 1966/1970 – 1970/1973”, *Voorwaarts*, 15 November 1973; Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 17 April 2007.

¹⁵ Bischof, C: “Provtariaat of Proletariaat,” *Rode Vlag* 5, no. 1 (November 1968).

¹⁶ See e.g. *Publikatie Aktiegroep Rode Jeugd Eindhoven*, no. 1 (1968); “Rode Jeugd actief in het land,” *Rode Jeugd – Marxistisch-Leninistisch Jongerenblad*, no. 13 (November 1968). About the activities of different branches, see *Rode Jeugd – in dienst van het volk*, no. 3 (1970), no. 1–4 (1971).

Eindhoven emerged as a very open club of mostly working youths who were eager for action. The character of Rode Jeugd in Eindhoven, however, was strongly shaped by the local conditions together with the determination of its local leader, Henk Wubben. After returning from a thought-provoking eight years of sailing with the mercantile marine, Wubben joined Rode Jeugd and established its branch in Eindhoven.¹⁷

What comes to the local conditions, Eindhoven was a much more conservative city than Amsterdam. The city was largely run by one party (*Katholieke Volkspartij*, Catholic People's Party), one company (Philips) and one publication (*Eindhovens Dagblad*, Eindhoven Daily). While in Amsterdam Rode Jeugd was one among many protesting groups, in Eindhoven it was practically the first youth group which outspokenly challenged the policies and values of the major power holders. Reaction of the authorities was harsh, reflecting determination to prevent youth movements gaining ground in the city. The first arrests were made during the first public action of Rode Jeugd, which involved pasting wall posters on the situation in Indonesia. Besides taking photographs and finger prints and keeping the youths overnight in the cell, the police had, according to Wubben, informed their employers, "as if we had committed a murder."¹⁸

Provocative confrontations with the authorities and especially with the police became a prevalent aspect of Rode Jeugd's actions in Eindhoven. It took the form of more or less spontaneous teasing of the policemen by shouting things, damaging the police cars or doing something to which the police would react but making sure there were just out of reach. That seems to have been mostly an enterprise of certain younger members of Rode Jeugd while Henk Wubben was rarely seen taking part in these actions.

Besides the authorities, Rode Jeugd's adherents frequently ended up in confrontation with American soldiers who were based in West Germany and who regularly visited Eindhoven in their furlough. These "beer patrols", as Rode Jeugd called them, came several times to the Rode Jeugd stand at the market place to pick a quarrel and destroy the propaganda material. According to eye witnesses' and Rode Jeugd's own account, the police were not eager to interfere with the fighting, which was interpreted as a sign of discrimination against left-wing and progressive youths.¹⁹ The third front of confrontations was at the factory gates. Rode Jeugd youths came often

¹⁷ Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003; Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 26–27.

¹⁸ "Hoofdinspecteur de Jager contra Rode Jeugd" (Rode Jeugd Eindhoven pamphlet [July 1968]); Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003. Reactions of the local police of Eindhoven to the first actions of Rode Jeugd are characterized as strong also by BVD (*Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, National Security Service) in its reports ("Rode Jeugd," BVD report, 2 February 1973).

¹⁹ "rj 7: Amerikanen in Eindhoven" (Rode Jeugd Eindhoven pamphlet [October 1968]); "Politie solidair met Amerikanen," *Publikatie Aktiegroep Rode Jeugd Eindhoven*, no. 1 (1968); Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 29; "Politie zou niet hebben ingegrepen", *Eindhovens Dagblad* 7 October 1968.

in conflict with security guards when they were delivering pamphlets to the workers who were entering the factory terrain.²⁰

From the Rode Jeugd youths' perspective, it looked like whatever they did, they were confronted with countermeasures. To defend its right of existence, Rode Jeugd decided to respond to every action taken against them even harder. This soon led to a process of escalation:

In the morning, confrontation group of Rode Jeugd goes to the [factory] gate to deliver pamphlets to the arriving workers with calls such as do not take this, protest, go to resistance etc. Then the factory guards come and say, you must go away, you are at the territory of the factory [....]. A couple of days later you go back [...]. Away from the sight is what was called a strike force. Again the security guards came out to beat us. The strike force stormed immediately to the fore and beat the security guards with cudgels.

The next step was that you came back again with the confrontation group and strike force to the gates and invite the security guards to come out. [...] If that did not help, then we came to the next phase [...]. You located the house of the company's director, chalked it, broke the windows and turned his car around.

These are naturally hard and extreme methods, but other methods did not work in Eindhoven. We had to act this way, not only to continue existing as political movement but also to enforce our authority. That was thus a culture of violence, an institutionalized culture of violence that was used against us in the first instance and which we resisted. That way you came to a process where one step provoked another.²¹

The most famous confrontation of Rode Jeugd with the authorities took place in February 1969. Rode Jeugd organized a demonstration against Philips together with *Studenten Vakbeweging* (SVB, Students' Trade Union Movement)²² under the name *Aktiegroep Eindhoven Griekenland* (Action group Eindhoven Greece). A couple of months earlier, Philips had opened a new factory in Greece and which in demonstrators' opinion indicated that Philips was supporting the US-backed military junta that had come to power two years earlier.²³ Overall, Philips was a manifestation of those powers that Rode Jeugd was opposing: imperialism and local establishment of Eindhoven.

The demonstration reached its climax when the demonstrators, led by Henk Wubben and Evert van den Berg (another prominent Rode Jeugd member of Eindhoven in the years to come) approached the statue of Anton Philips to lay a wreath made of barbed wired and decorated with a swastika.²⁴ The police had called the demonstrators to stay away from the statue, and when the order was not obeyed, the police dogs were released and allegedly several plainclothes Philips

²⁰ E.g. interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003.

²¹ Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003.

²² SVB was a student union established in 1963 to advocate interests of students with the French *Union nationale des étudiants* as its model. For more about SVB, see e.g. Regtien 1969; Kijne 1978, 37–68.

²³ "Demonstratie zaterdagmiddag 22 februari [...]" (Aktiegroep Eindhoven Griekenland pamphlet [February 1969]).

²⁴ *Eindhovens Dagblad* 24 February 1969; Linden, Frénk van der: "Ik zit gevangen in mijn eigen onbuigzaamheid," *NRC Handelsblad* 19 April 1997; "Rode Jeugd," BVD report, 2 February 1973; Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 29–30.

security guards attacked the demonstrators. A couple of days later, the police commissioner Odekerken defended his decision in the local newspaper:

The boundaries must be set somewhere and for me personally it was in front of the statue of Dr. A.F. Philips. Dr. Anton Philips has meant a lot to Eindhoven; to prevent this statue, his memory being damaged, I consider that I acted sensibly when I gave leave to release the dogs.²⁵

The demonstration was followed by a wave of reactions that brought Rode Jeugd into national awareness.²⁶ For Henk Wubben, it cost his job as it turned out that the company he was working for was linked to Philips.²⁷

The escalation process between Rode Jeugd and the authorities in Eindhoven undoubtedly played a central role in Rode Jeugd's radicalization. Faced with the ever-escalating conflict, its members expected that a similar kind of polarized situation would eventually develop in the Netherlands as already had in West Germany and France. That suggested that a change of tactics was in place:

The tactics of extraparliamentary actions that Rode Jeugd uses in Eindhoven will change significantly and fundamentally. The traditional forms of passive resistance such as demonstrations [...] have proven to be insensible and can be considered over. It has naive and unrealistic to think in the first place that monopoly capitalism of the establishment would be moved by a pamphlet where the disastrous consequences of the capitalist system are underlined. [...] We must move from peaceful, sterile protests to progressive resistance. [...] It is clear that our tactic [...] has to be waging aggressive urban guerrilla war. Possibilities of such guerrilla struggle in the living population centers of the west must be studied. [...] The use of progressive violence against the reactionary violence will thus lead to the total reorientation of Rode Jeugd's purpose, methods and ideology.²⁸

It was announced that Rode Jeugd in Eindhoven had adopted a new approach called *Revolutionaire Buitenparlementaire Oppositie* (REBO, Revolutionary Extraparliamentary Opposition), modelled after the German and French extraparliamentary oppositions. The use of violent tactics was justified by drawing a parallel between Rode Jeugd and the guerrilla movements in the Third World. They all found themselves in similar kind of situations and were acting as vanguards for the suppressed masses.²⁹

After the Philips demonstration, the conflict kept escalating in Eindhoven. This time, the mayor of Eindhoven, Herman Witte became their target. Rode Jeugd accused him from unsavory

²⁵ "Politie gebruikte honden tegen demonstranten," *Eindhovens Dagblad* 24 February 1969.

²⁶ E.g. *Trouw* 26 February 1969.

²⁷ Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003.

²⁸ "REBO", *Publikatie aktiegroep Rode Jeugd*, no. 3 (1969).

²⁹ "REBO," *Publikatie aktiegroep Rode Jeugd*, no. 3 (1969).

behavior during the Second World War. In September 1969, his car was hit by an incendiary device when he was returning from the opening ceremony of the new city hall. As response, the police arrested thirteen youths and made seven of them were made to sign a written commitment that they would not take part in political activities for the next six months.³⁰ In June 1970, the home of police sergeant Piet Snijders, stationed together with two other sergeants to the inner city of Eindhoven, seemed to have been the target of a fire bomb attack, although the bomb actually hit the neighbouring house. A couple of months afterwards, three local Rode Jeugd members, including Henk Wubben, were arrested and held in custody until being acquitted from the original charges, most of them related to the aforementioned firebomb attack. Wubben himself was arrested for six months.³¹

Split of the moderate wing

While Rode Jeugd kept radicalizing, the protest movement around it was also changing. This had a profound impact on Rode Jeugd:

The year 1970 was important for RJ, and it found its expression in 1971. After 4 years of disturbances, during which Rode Jeugd got and kept going well, the movement began to ebb away. This happened in 1969 and 1970. With this, also the potential of RJ became slowly washed away. What was left were the motivated adherents, a few key members and the leaders. Whereas in 1966–1970 violence was used only in the form of stones, smoke bombs, cudgels and a few Molotovcocktails, in 1970 began the discussion of more serious violence, the development of the “urban guerrilla,” about which little was known at that time.³²

The protest movement, which was largely based on spontaneity, was losing momentum. Instead, many of those who had been active in that context started to orient towards established politics. Most typically, they joined small parties that had close bonds with the movement or the increasing

³⁰ Van de Pol, Dick: ”Iemand om zeep helpen is in onze ideologie volkomen vanzelfsprekend,” *Vrij Nederland* 7 August 1971; Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 30–33; “Oproep--oproep--oproep...” (Rode Jeugd pamphlet); In April 1969, a firebomb was thrown to Witte’s house, but Rode Jeugd has always claimed that it was not responsible for the act (Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 30).

³¹ Wubben was arrested as a suspect in a firebomb attack against a house close to where Piet Snijders lived. The police assumed that the perpetrators had mistakenly hit the wrong house. Wubben was found not guilty in the end (as was Luciën van Hoesel, who was also charged with the same deed), but he received a sentence of two months for another charge pressed against him in the same trial (destroying the carpet at the town hall), which was quite likely included to guarantee a conviction. The arrests trials are described from Rode Jeugd’s point of view in Rode Jeugd, *Rode Jeugd vogelvrij? 1. Het Proces 2. Dubbelspion. Uitgave Rode Jeugd* [1971]. The third member arrested as a suspect in the firebomb attack was Geert Paulussen, who was released without being tried after three months and soon afterwards was recruited as a police informant and later doubled by Rode Jeugd. Snijders’ close colleague Flip Raap confirmed in an interview that Rode Jeugd’s description of the events is largely accurate (Interview with Flip Raap by Leena Malkki on 11 June 2003).

³² ”Bijdrage LLL: Rode Jeugd 1966/1970 – 1970/1973,” *Voorwaarts*, 15 November 1973.

number of single-issue (peace, environmental etc.) organizations established within it.³³ This choice was made possible by the attitude of the Dutch elite. Towards the mid-1960s, a rather common perception among the elite was that the world was changing quickly and it made no sense to fight against it.³⁴

For a small minority, which included the core of Rode Jeugd, this cooptation and institutionalization was no way to go.³⁵ With the ebb of the protest movement, however, Rode Jeugd lost a big part of its adherents. What was left were the leaders and the most committed members.³⁶

The new situation intensified the discussion among the core members about the group's future. While spontaneity had had its advantages in the earlier years when a large amount of youths were easily mobilized into action, the new circumstances, in the activists' view, called for stricter organization and more serious approach. This was demanded especially by Henk Wubben who had never been a big fan of spontaneity. Rode Jeugd put a lot of faith on the working class youth to show themselves to be more revolutionary and committed than students.³⁷

Besides good organization and discipline, a good revolutionary movement needed also a clear political program. This turned out to be a particularly tricky question. In the previous years, ideas and activities of Rode Jeugd in different cities had developed to different directions and several political lines had emerged. While the development of the Eindhoven branch was generally met with interest and excitement by Rode Jeugd youths in other cities, but there were also critics.

Efforts for coherent programme and more structured organization were made already in 1969 when the first congress of Rode Jeugd was held. On that occasion, Willem Oskam was appointed as Rode Jeugd's chairman and Henk Wubben and Joost van Steenis as other members of the leading troika. Also, a document outlining its principles was put together, but not everyone was happy with it.³⁸

During 1970 and 1971, a fierce dispute developed among Rode Jeugd. The battle about the appropriate course of action was waged with the writings of Marxist-Leninist classics as a weapon in Rode Jeugd's internal discussion paper *Voorwaarts* (Forwards). Opposed to each other were the moderates in Amsterdam and Kampen, led by Ton Meurs on one side and the radicals, including the whole branch of Eindhoven and most of Rode Jeugd's leaders, on the other side. The

³³ Koopmans 1992, 64–66.

³⁴ Kennedy 1995/1999, 146–173.

³⁵ Koopmans 1992, 66–67.

³⁶ "Bijdrage LLL: Rode Jeugd 1966/1970 – 1970/1973," *Voorwaarts* 15 November 1973.

³⁷ "RJ van protest naar verzet," *Rode Jeugd – Marxistisch-Leninistisch Jongerenblad*, no. 1 (1970); Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 30 June 2003; Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003.

³⁸ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 33; Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003; "Rode Jeugd wil aktie: beginselverklaring," *Rode Jeugd – Marxistisch-Leninistisch Jongerenblad*, no. 1 (1970).

key issue was very typical for the radical left-wing movements of its time: violence³⁹ now or only later. That violence was necessary to bring up revolution was self-evident to all of them.

For the moderates, the best actions of Rode Jeugd were committed around 1969–1970 in Amsterdam where Rode Jeugd had become active in organizing youths working for the supermarket chain Albert Heijn. In those efforts, Rode Jeugd was working along real communist lines and not caught in sidetracks like insensible fighting with the authorities.⁴⁰

In Eindhoven, community work never really found ground. The activities were more characterized by direct action and ever-escalating confrontation with authorities. The local Rode Jeugd members and most of the organization's national leaders supported the so-called radical or Leninist line. While influenced by the classics of Marxism-Leninism, their ideas came just as much from Carlos Marighella, whose manual for urban guerrilla struggle had just been released and being published in Rode Jeugd paper in several parts, starting in August 1970. This line was consolidated into a single document for the first time by Henk Wubben, but also several other people had a role in its development.

Unlike the moderates, the radicals thought it was not possible to bring the masses into power in fully industrialized societies by means of traditional workers organizations. The workers had so hopelessly lost their class consciousness that they no longer realized they were being exploited. The best way for Rode Jeugd to bring the revolution closer was to act as a vanguard organization. By its actions, this vanguard should support the struggle in the Third World by attacking capitalist institutions in the Netherlands and that way to escalate the destruction of capitalism along the lines of the encirclement theory of Lin Piao⁴¹. Based on that theory, they predicted that revolution would first succeed in Third World countries and then spread to the heartlands of capitalism. By driving capitalism into chaos at home they could best help the progression of the revolutionary struggle and at the same time demonstrate to the Dutch workers how the capitalist system could be effectively attacked. Also, the vanguard would benefit the mobilization of the masses in the Netherlands by developing tactics and spreading information so that when the time comes to challenge the system, the masses would know what to do.⁴²

The text also established legitimation for violence:

³⁹ The concept of violence includes in this debate also acts against property, such as sabotage and firebomb attacks.

⁴⁰ "Diskussiegrondslag voor het congres van Rode Jeugd (ml) Amsterdam 27 November 1971".

⁴¹ The encirclement theory of Lin Piao had a strong impact on Rode Jeugd's worldview. The first reference to it is in Rode Jeugd paper published in October 1967 (Oskam, Willem: "De volksoorlog of de parlementaire weg," *Rode Jeugd – Marxistisch-Leninistisch Jongerenblad*; no. 10 [October 1967]).

⁴² *Voorwaarts* 1, no. 4 (1971). The same text is published again in *Voorwaarts* 1, no.5 (September 1971) partly rewritten by other members of Rode Jeugd.

With this economic oppression, the owner practices violence against the labour class in all forms from physical to mental violence. Breaking free from these circumstances requires the take-over of productive means by the proletariat which returns them to the society. To achieve this, it is necessary to respond the violence of the ruling class with violence. [...] Because violence stems from economical relations and it does not depend on any kind of ethical conceptions about freedom or humanity, we must consider violence a technical question, a political tool to destroy the adversary. From this perspective, the relationship between the objectives and means becomes also a technical question. The use of intimidation and terror is necessary in the fight against the private interests of the oppressors. [...] Here [in the Netherlands], we are facing the destructive phase [of the struggle] and the situation requires from us that we use all possible means without reservations to achieve our objective, which at this phase is to drive capitalism into chaos. Fraud, intimidation, sabotage, destruction of lives, stratagems and so forth are necessary for this purpose. At this phase of the revolution, we must free ourselves from all values and norms of the ruling class because these rules are restrict us and they are directed at preserving the status quo.⁴³

Soon after Wubben's paper was published, several key leaders of Rode Jeugd were leaving for China. It would be a three months' visit by the invitation of the embassy of China. Ton Meurs, demanded that they should not leave. When they decided to leave anyway, the parties agreed on a ceasefire: the radicals would refrain from any further action and the moderates would not attack the radicals publicly.⁴⁴

In the meanwhile, the moderates drafted their response to Wubben's paper. They claimed that the interpretation of the revolutionary struggle downright dangerous for the struggle of the labour class in the Netherlands. There was no problem with class-consciousness among the labour class. Monotonous work in the assembly lines increased it and not destroyed it as Wubben has claimed. The first priority at that moment was to organize the workers by working in companies and labour unions. Starting the use of violence without the masses would only lead to the destruction of the vanguard. They also accused Wubben from misreading Lin Piao's encirclement theory.⁴⁵

Little came out of the agreed cease-fire. Before the leaders left, it was also agreed among the Eindhoven branch that, should there be one more attack against them by the police, they would attack the police commissioner himself. Shortly after the leaders had left, a firebomb exploded under the car of the police commissioner of Eindhoven. Rode Jeugd claimed the attack.⁴⁶

⁴³ *Voorwaarts* 1, no. 4 (1971).

⁴⁴ Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003; Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005.

⁴⁵ "Enige voorstellen omtrent en politieke lijn en de taak van de Rode Jeugd. Antwoord van afdeling Amsterdam aan Kameraad Wubben" (July 1971).

⁴⁶ "Rode Jeugd bulletin nr. 1," (Rode Jeugd Eindhoven pamphlet [August 1971]); Interview with Henk Wubben 3 April 2003; Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005; "Brandbom in dienstauto van

During the next couple of weeks, the secret headquarters of Rode Jeugd in Eindhoven were visited by an army of reporters. In several interviews, anonymous Rode Jeugd members told that things had gone so far that there could be deaths and announced group's responsibility on several other deeds.⁴⁷ A weekly paper *Vrij Nederland* published a full-page interview with a young man who was "22 years old and has a long hair" where he told that no legal or moral norms restricted them when their struggle to bring down the system.⁴⁸ In another weekly, a member of Rode Jeugd told that professional revolutionaries need money and therefore there was a expropriation program of a Dutch bank waiting for execution.⁴⁹

The attack and the press campaign effectively sealed the split among the organization. The moderates responded by publishing a pamphlet where they proclaimed the words and deeds of the Eindhoven section as misinterpretations of Marxist-Leninist theory.⁵⁰ The news about the bomb attack reached the Rode Jeugd delegation which, on their way back to the Netherlands in early October 1971, stepped out of the plane in Brussels and travelled the rest of the way by train, fearing that the police would be waiting for them at the airport. While the leaders had argued for the use of violence now, they were not totally pleased with what had happened. They did not have any complaints about the burning of the police commissioner's car, but the younger members were severely criticized for the press campaign which the leaders found unnecessary and counterproductive.⁵¹

The split of Rode Jeugd was sealed in November 1971. The moderates had called up a Rode Jeugd congress to sort out the differences. Only two activists supporting the radical line showed up, only to announce that all the others had been expelled from the organization. The moderates consequently established a short-lived organization called *Rode Jeugd (ML)*.⁵²

Eindhovense hoofcommissaris", *Eindhovens Dagblad* 24 July 1971; "Rode Terreur in Eindhoven", *De Telegraaf* 24 July 1971.

⁴⁷ E.g. "Rode Jeugd stak politiebureau aan", *De Telegraaf* 31 July 1971; "Rode Jeugd in Eindhoven kondigt sabotage aan", *De Tijd* 5 August 1971; Ummelen, Bert: "Rode Jeugd wacht niet tot platte land de steden omsingelt," *Eindhovens Dagblad* 14 August 1971.

⁴⁸ Van de Pol, Dick: "Iemand om zeep helpen is in onze ideologie volkomen vanzelfsprekend," *Vrij Nederland* 7 August 1971.

⁴⁹ Paumen, M. "Guerilla met geweld en terreur," *NRC Handelsblad* 5 August 1971.

⁵⁰ "Verklaring van Rode Jeugd Amsterdam M.L." (Rode Jeugd Amsterdam pamphlet [August 1971]).

⁵¹ Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003; Dekkers, Frans & Daan Dijkman: "Revolutie in de polder", *Haagse Post* 9 January 1988.

⁵² In English Red Youth (ML = Marxist-Leninist). "Revolutionaire strijd in Nederland," *Rode Jeugd ml*, no. 2 (December 1971). Rode Jeugd (ML) soon joined forces with *Bond van Nederlandse Marxisten-Leninisten* (BvNML or BNML, Bond of Dutch Marxist-Leninists), which was an organization established by *Rode Vlag* group in 1969 (see e.g. *De Rode Vlag* 9, no. 4 / *Rode Jeugd ml* 2, no. 7 (June/July 1972); "Van de Rode Jeugd tot de nieuwe kommunistische jeugdorganisatie," *De Rode Vlag* 11, no. 5 (June 1974).

The resistance phase

After a period of meetings and discussions, the first modest steps towards illegal work were taken in 1971. In 1972, these were extended, diverse contacts established and experiences were gathered in this terrain that was new for all groups. It brought certain danger with it, because there was not much to try out yet.⁵³

In the next couple of years, the remaining members of Rode Jeugd were taking steps towards more serious and radical ways of action. The term urban guerrilla appeared first in Rode Jeugd paper already in 1967. Then it was concluded that it was naturally not possible to start a guerrilla in the Netherlands, but that the working class had to show its class solidarity with those people who were standing face to face with imperialism or are directly opposing it.⁵⁴ Now, they were of different opinion. At the same time, the more radical the group became, the more people left its ranks.

Besides the withering of the protest movement at home, the strategy and worldview of Rode Jeugd were challenged by some developments abroad. Rode Jeugd had perceived itself as part of a worldwide revolutionary movement that was led by China. However, China's commitment to the world revolution came seriously under question in the latter part of 1971 when China started to normalize its relations with the United States and announced that President Richard Nixon would come to a state visit. Around the same time, Lin Biao, the figurehead of the encirclement theory, died in a dubious plane crash. The revolutionary community was there no more (if it ever existed in such form as they had envisioned), so Rode Jeugd could not count on any such alliances.⁵⁵

In the coming months, new lines for the struggle were drafted.⁵⁶ The plan was basically to start building up an urban guerrilla organization in the Netherlands with the resources they had in hand.

They did not expect it to be easy:

We are still a small group and we have to map out our tactic cautiously to avoid that we become destroyed before we have achieved our objectives. The first steps will be difficult. There will be strong attacks from the right but also from many who call themselves leftists. We have to convince these leftists by conducting the correct and clear politics. From the struggle conducted by Tupamaros, RAF in Germany or NRP in France, it has come out that many leftists are against the line of violence. But our politics are correct and by following our line consistently and when so-called "leftists" actions fail again and again, the majority of the leftists will start to support the line of violence and

⁵³ "Bijdrage LLL: Rode Jeugd 1966/1970 – 1970/1973," *Voorwaarts*, 15 November 1973.

⁵⁴ Rode Jeugd. Marxistisch-leninistisch jongerenblad no. 10 (1967): 14.

⁵⁵ Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003; Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005; Ottens, Luuk, Piet Hein Scheltens & Rob Siebelink: "Muziek maken is een uitlaatklep, dat weet ik wel. Maar het is nog altijd beter dan surfen'," *De Groene Amsterdammer* 13 February 1985.

⁵⁶ See especially *Voorwaarts* 2, no. 2 (May 1972). The following description is mainly based on this document. The matter is discussed also in *Voorwaarts* 1, no. 5 (September 1971).

that we have to start the violent revolutionary struggle now. [...] At first, it will appear that we become isolated, but in a longer term our force and support will start to grow quickly.⁵⁷

In the internal discussion paper, three things were identified for the urban guerrilla organization to do. Firstly, it would prepare for revolutionary struggle in the Netherlands. This struggle was not expected to actualize in the near future. In the meanwhile, it would support the struggle of people in the Third World by attacking the economic power of the imperialists in the Netherlands. Thirdly, contacts would be established with other guerrilla organizations in other West European countries. The purpose of the contacts was to provide help and learn from those who had more experience with the urban guerrilla.

The plan included creating an organization with legal and illegal branches. The illegal branch should consist of largely autonomous cells that would train themselves through learning-by-doing and would school themselves further in Marxist-Leninist theories. Besides training and recruiting, the cells and the national command should also be involved in putting together the necessary material resources for the actions, such as cars and other transportation vehicles and weapons. At first, the cells should commit small acts such as chalking, setting cars into fire or breaking windows. Later, they could use all kinds of explosives to attack economic and political power holders. It was emphasised that at all times, it should be made sure that the public was not put into danger.

While this structure was to be created for committing illegal acts, it was considered very important that, to avoid isolation and recruit new members, these professional revolutionaries would maintain their normal contacts with the society and be involved in legal activities. To support this illegal organisation, a legal mass movement should be put up. This network of sympathisers could provide intelligence information, hiding places and other things that the cells need.

Some experiments with illegal actions were conducted already in 1971. Besides the attack against the car of the police commissioner in Eindhoven, Aat van Wijk recalls that there were a few unsuccessful bomb attacks, including an attempt for a bomb attack during the state visit of Japanese emperor Hirohito. A bomb was placed to the hotel he was staying at, but it failed to explode properly.⁵⁸

In early 1972, the urban guerrilla campaign started for real. The first bomb attack took place in February 1972 when a small explosion hit Evoluon, the exhibition center established by Philips in Eindhoven. Next morning, a letter signed by *Philips Griekenland Aktiegroep* (Philips

⁵⁷ *Voorwaarts* 2, no. 2 (May 1972).

⁵⁸ Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 24 March 2003 & 30 June 2003.

Greece Actiongroup) arrived to the press office of Philips. In the letter, it was told that Philips had one month to deliver one million guilders to the Greek resistance movement, otherwise the group would start its sabotage program and, if necessary, put the directors of Philips personally responsible for their deeds.⁵⁹

In the media, there was immediately speculation about a link between this action group and Rode Jeugd. Rode Jeugd had after all picked Philips as a symbol of imperialism and oppression of labor class, held demonstrations against it and delivered pamphlets among its workers. Its members had played a significant role in an action group that had earlier voiced a similar request on Philips.⁶⁰ The spokesperson of Rode Jeugd denied that the group was responsible for the action, but also emphasized that Rode Jeugd did not distance itself from such deeds either.⁶¹

During the spring, there were many more small-scale bomb attacks (both successful and failed) in Philips facilities, which went unclaimed. On 24 April, bombs exploded in Philips facilities in Rotterdam, Baarn and Hilversum.⁶² A month later, there was a bomb attack in the Philips facilities in Arnhem and an attempted attack in Amsterdam. In early June, an attempt for bomb attacks was made in Philips facility in Eindhoven, but the bomb failed to explode.⁶³ These attacks were not reported in the media at that time.

On 8 May, a previously unknown group called *Revolutionair Volksverzet Nederland* (RVN, Revolutionary People's Resistance Netherlands) claimed an arson attempt on the office of Turkish Airlines in Amsterdam. It was told that the attack was a protest against the execution of three left-wing extremists in Turkey.⁶⁴ On 18 June, another arson attack was made in the name of RVN. The target was this time the American Library in Amsterdam and it caused significant damage.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 55; "Rode Jeugd," BVD report, 2 February 1973.

⁶⁰ "Sabotage?" (pamphlet of Actiegroep Eindhoven Griekenland [May 1970]).

⁶¹ See e.g. "Rode Jeugd: Wij pleegden aanslag op Evoluon", *NRC Handelsblad* 25 February 1972; "Philips zwijgt nog over brief Evoluon", *NRC Handelsblad* 26 February 1972; "'Philips moet politieke steun aan Griekeland staken'", *Algemeen Dagblad* 26 February 1972; "Vage brief actiegroep na bomaanslag op Evoluon", *Eindhovens Dagblad* 26 February 1972; Geffen, Wim van: "Politie ontdekt hermost bomontstekingen", *De Telegraaf* 26 February 1972; "Actiegroep zou dader van bomaanslag zijn", *Trouw* 26 February 1972.

⁶² "Bomaanslagen bij Philips", *Het Parool* 24 April 1972; "Bommen bij Philips nog raadselachtig", *De Volkskrant* 25 April 1972; "Bomaanslagen op Philipsgebouwen", *NRC Handelsblad* 24 April 1972; "Aanslagen op Philips werk van amateurs", *De Telegraaf* 25 April 1972; "Actiegroep houdt woord", *Algemeen Dagblad* 25 April 1972; "Bomaanslagen bij Philips", *Trouw* 25 April 1972; "Rode Jeugd," BVD report, 2 February 1973.

⁶³ "Loos bomalarm op Eurostrand", *Eindhovens Dagblad* 9 June 1972; Geffen, Wim van: "Politieberaad over nationale terreuraanpak", *De Telegraaf* 18 October 1972, "Philips-topmensen bedreigd", *Eindhovens Dagblad* 21 October 1972; "Rode Jeugd," BVD report, 2 February 1973. According to the article published in *Eindhovens Dagblad*, the bomb attacks in Arnhem and Amsterdam would have been found in late April.

⁶⁴ "Misdad werpt schaduw over weekeinde", *De Telegraaf* 8 May 1972.

⁶⁵ E.g. "Brand in bibliotheek gesticht uit protest", *Het Parool* 19 June 1972; "'Verzetsgroep' claimt brand bibliotheek", *De Volkskrant* 19 June 1972.

Both Philips Griekenland Aktiegroep and Revolutionair Volksverzet Nederland were action names of Rode Jeugd that were used for illegal actions. In this way, Rode Jeugd could remain a legal organization, only covertly supporting illegal actions taken by ad-hoc commandos that operated under different names.⁶⁶ Both Aktiegroep Philips Griekenland and Revolutionair Volksverzet Nederland were featured in a Rode Jeugd booklet that was published in August 1972. Philips Griekenland Actiegroep is portrayed as group acting independently of but according to ideological lines set by Rode Jeugd. What comes to Revolutionair Volksverzet Nederland, it is told that it had recently been established by a group of people from Marxist-Leninist movements with the intention of building up an organization capable of committing illegal acts and to prepare for the armed struggle.⁶⁷

In October, the name of Revolutionair Volksverzet Nederland appeared in the headlines again in the context of a series of attacks that caused a lot of alarm. The first attack took place at Holiday Inn in Utrecht on 4 October. A couple of weeks later, there were several attempted or successful bomb attacks within days from each other. The targets of these attacks were Bank of America in Rotterdam, Zwolsche Algemeene (which was owned by the gigantic American company ITT) and one of the former top executives of Philips in Eindhoven.⁶⁸ The bombs were largely similar to each other and much more professional than the ones that were used in bomb attacks against Philips in the spring. They bore resemblance with some bombs used by RAF in West Germany.⁶⁹ These successive attempts for bomb attacks caused a lot of hysteria. In latter part of

⁶⁶ Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 24 March 2003. Some other former members of Rode Jeugd have made reservations for this interpretation, however. Henk Wubben maintained in the interview that Rode Jeugd was not directly responsible, even though it did take political responsibility for the acts. He also said that it is not like Rode Jeugd had nothing to do with the acts (Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003). Therefore, it seems that his stand derives back to the view that Rode Jeugd was the legal part of the campaign and the acts were not committed in its name and thus not acts of Rode Jeugd. Evert van den Berg, on his part, recalls only that there were articles about these organizations in Rode Jeugd publications. However, he was aware that there were some illegal operations taking place at that time, but he was not part of the cell structure involved in them (Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005 & 15 April 2007). See also *Rode Jeugd Stadsgeurilla Cahier*, no. 1; John Ubbink & Hans Polak, "Rode-Jeugd-secretaris Willem Oskam: 'Niet alleen zaak van bommen'," *Het Parool* 14 December 1972; "Voorwoord," *Over gewapende strijd. Aanzetten tot de stadsguerilla in Nederland. 1966–1974 Rode Jeugd* (Marxisties Scholings Kollektief 1975).

⁶⁷ *Rode Jeugd Stadsgeurilla Cahier*, no. 1 (1972).

⁶⁸ The fact that all the bombs were visibly placed made the police believe that the bombs were meant to be found on time and that the ones who had placed them were trying to create panic among the companies, the public and the police ("Nieuwe aanslag in Utrecht", *Algemeen Dagblad* 19 October 1972; "Politie verdenkt de Rode Jeugd", *Eindhovens Dagblad* 20 October 1972). In an interview with the author, Aat van Wijk denied this and told that the bombs did not explode simply due to technical faults (Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 24 March 2003). There was still another bomb found in Leiden, which according to some reports, turned out to be a fake bomb ("Ook bom in Leiden", *Het Parool* 19 October 1972; "Ook bom in Leiden", *Eindhovens Dagblad* 20 October 1972; "Leidse bom was nepbom", *NRC Handelsblad* 20 October 1972).

⁶⁹ "Terreur houdt aan: in Utrecht bom gevonden", *NRC Handelsblad* 18 October 1972; "Bom houdt Rotterdam urenlang in spanning", *Algemeen Dagblad* 18 October 1972. In a BVD report from February 1973, it is told that the new more professional bombs were largely similar to those that RAF had used, among other places, in Frankfurt. It is told that interestingly enough, Luciën van Hoesel made a travel to Frankfurt in September 1972 to meet RAF

October, there was a flood of false bomb alarms around the country.⁷⁰

The police concluded almost immediately that the attacks must be the work of a domestic organization.⁷¹ Again, there was a lot of speculation about Rode Jeugd's responsibility.⁷² More light to the attacks came on 21 October when several newspapers reported that a letter was received by the media from Revolutionair Volksverzet Nederland:

Revolutionair Volksverzet Nederland is responsible for the attacks on Holiday-Inn Utrecht, Bank of Amerika R'dam and Z.A. [Zwolsche Algemeen] Utrecht. The attacks are directed against the U.S. imperialism in Vietnam and Chile in particular. One should not expect us to distribute pamphlets any more. The struggle will be fought with weapons. Down with all American companies in the Netherlands. Long live the armed uprising. Venceremos.⁷³

Another letter signed by RVN was received by the top executives of Philips:

Despite several exhortations, the executive board has not found it necessary to accept our request. Therefore, the tribunal has decided to go into the next phase of the action program. The last warning has been given. From now on, there will be proceeded to direct personal action. The tribunal has valued you personally at 48 000 guilders. Should you not pay, then the action group will apply the last phase to you or your surroundings. If you accept our suggestions, we expect you to place the attached advertisement on 26/10 or 27/10 or 28/10. Then, the action group knows that you want to accept the suggestions and will contact you in due time to arrange the transaction with you. In return, the tribunal will call off personal acts against you and your surroundings.⁷⁴

One day later, yet another letter signed by RVN reached the newspapers. In that letter, RVN denied its responsibility and announced that it had not sent the earlier letter. Instead, it was claimed that the whole campaign was a stunt of right-wing elements in the Netherlands aimed at turning people against the left-wing groups in the eve of the elections.⁷⁵ Later, it has come out that this letter was written by those involved in RVN to confuse the police and judiciary.⁷⁶

Until now, other left-wing organisations had felt little need discussing the doings of Rode Jeugd in their publications. After the bomb attacks in October, however, the competing

and/or Rote Hilfe members ("Rode Jeugd," BVD report, 2 February 1973).

⁷⁰ E.g. "Philips-topmensen bedreigd", *Eindhovens Dagblad* 21 October 1972; "Politie op spoor bomterroristen", *De Telegraaf* 23 October 1972.

⁷¹ "Terreur houdt aan: in Utrecht bom gevonden", *NRC Handelsblad* 18 October 1972; "Veel raadsels na bomaanslag in Eindhoven", *De Volkskrant* 18 October 1972.

⁷² E.g. "Nieuwe aanslag in Utrecht", *Algemeen Dagblad* 19 October 1972; "'Geheim' officier leidt onderzoek naar bomboeven", *De Telegraaf* 19 October 1972.

⁷³ "Politiek groep legde bommen", *De Volkskrant* 21 October 1972. See also "Twee brieven van linkse extremisten", *Algemeen Dagblad* 21 October 1972; "Philips-topmensen bedreigd", *Eindhovens Dagblad* 21 October 1972.

⁷⁴ Quoted in "Chantage op topmensen van Philips", *NRC Handelsblad* 21 October 1972.

⁷⁵ "Werkgroep op spoor daders bomaanslagen", *NRC Handelsblad* 23 October 1972; "Volksverzet wijst bomaanslagen af", *De Volkskrant* 23 October 1972.

⁷⁶ Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 24 March 2003. Evert van den Berg, however, did not recall the second letter (Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005).

Marxist-Leninist organization KEN (ml) published an article on the bomb attacks in its newspaper *Rode Tribune*. Rode Jeugd was accused of false revolutionary politics and called anarchist-terrorists who endanger the real revolutionary struggle by their childish actions. The authorities are blamed for using Rode Jeugd to discredit the whole revolutionary movement and legitimize the development of stricter counterterrorist measures.⁷⁷ In *Vrije Socialist*, a publication of an anarchist group *Federatie van Vrije Socialisten*, it is suspected that the attacks were work of right-wing forces. How else could one explain why all bombs were so visibly placed, almost none of them went off and no organisation has claimed and explained the attacks?⁷⁸

The authorities seemed to be sure that the attacks were committed by Rode Jeugd members but there was no definite evidence against any particular person.⁷⁹ Because the question of responsibility for the attacks remained without any definite answers, there was room for speculations in the lines of the last letter signed by RVN.⁸⁰ Rode Jeugd, on its part, announced that it was not responsible for any of the bombs and did not know whether RVN was responsible, but that this kind of acts got their sympathies.⁸¹ Later in December 1972, Willem Oskam admitted in an interview that there were people from Rode Jeugd in the ranks of Revolutionair Volksverzet Nederland.⁸²

While Rode Jeugd was behind RVN and PGAG (and most probably also most of the unclaimed bomb attacks against Philips), not everyone active in Rode Jeugd were up to date with at least the practical side of illegal activities. The organization was divided into legal and illegal parts, even though some people involved with illegal acts also took part in schoolings and other legal actions. Those involved in the illegal activities included at least Joost van Steenis, Henk Wubben, Aat van Wijk and Willem Oskam (who was sometimes left in the dark for the fear of him not being able to keep things secret). Also Luciën van Hoesel and Theo Engelen, both central figures of the

⁷⁷ "Voor de revolutionaire massastrijd – tegen de individuele terreur", *Rode Tribune* no. 13 (December 1972). Before this, Rode Jeugd's deeds had been commented only on the publication of its mother organisation Rode Vlag at any length. In the dispute between the moderates and radicals in Rode Jeugd, Rode Vlag supported the moderates (see e.g. *De Rode Vlag* 8, no. 7 [1971]).

⁷⁸ "Terreur geweld", *De Vrije Socialist* November 1972.

⁷⁹ See e.g. "Rode Jeugd," BVD report, 2 February 1973; "Politie op spoor bomterroristen", *De Telegraaf* 23 October 1972.

⁸⁰ See e.g. Galen, John Jansen van: "Ook Arend Lijphart is het partij-politieke spoor bijster," *Haagse Post* 18 October 1972; "Chantage op topmensen van Philips", *NRC Handelsblad* 21 October 1972; "Voor de revolutionaire massastrijd – tegen de individuele terreur," *Rode Tribune*, no. 13 (December 1972); *Rode Tribune Bulletin: Extra uitgave* [October 1973]; Heyden, Jan van der: "Eindhovens Rode Jeugd-lid woensdag voor gerechtshof. Vader van Hoesel: "Er zit iets fout in de vervolging van mijn zoon Lucien", *Eindhovens Dagblad* 8 September 1973; Chorus, Boudewijn: "Gesprek met Luciën van Hoesel: Bomaanslagen, de BVD, de Hoge Raad, en de Scheveningse gijzeling," *Haagse Post* 30 November 1974.

⁸¹ "Rode Jeugd doet in Albanië theorie op", *De Telegraaf* 24 October 1972.

⁸² Ubbink, John & Hans Polak: "Rode-Jeugd-secretaris Willem Oskam: 'Niet alleen zaak van bommen'," *Het Parool* 14 December 1972.

Eindhoven branch, were often involved.⁸³ Besides them, there was at least Jan Mölling, a Rode Jeugd member from Amsterdam who was a smith by profession, helped them with making the jackets for the bombs.⁸⁴

During 1972, preparations were going on for the executions and support of the urban guerrilla struggle. Weapons were bought and plans were made for obtaining money through bank robberies and renting safe houses. There were also renewed efforts for political schooling.⁸⁵ However, just as the urban guerrilla started to get off the ground a bit, some worrying developments took place. In West Germany, most of what later became known as the first generation of RAF had become arrested and some of its members got killed by the police. If an organization like RAF, which was much larger and more sophisticated, could not survive, what would be Rode Jeugd's chances? If we know that we would not be able to hold up for more than a very short time, does it make any sense to start with it at all? These were questions that many Rode Jeugd key members pondered.

Decline of Rode Jeugd

After the bomb attacks, the authorities feared for more attacks and felt a need to take action against Rode Jeugd.⁸⁶ In December 1972, the police raided the houses of three Rode Jeugd activists. Two of them were released quickly, but with the third one, Luciën van Hoesel, things were more complicated. Under his bed, boxes with bomb supplies similar to those used in recent bomb attacks were found. Everything suggested that the authorities must have had an information source inside the group.

The members fervently tried to hunt down the traitors among their ranks and organized support for Luciën van Hoesel's upcoming trial. For this latter purpose, they took part in establishing an organization called *Rode Hulp* (in English Red Help). The task of this organization was to support so-called political prisoners, especially Luciën van Hoesel, but also imprisoned RAF

⁸³ Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 24 March 2003; "Rode Jeugd," BVD report, 2 February 1973.

⁸⁴ Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 30 June 2003; BVD: "Rode Jeugd," BVD report, 2 February 1973; Hoekstra 2004, 70.

⁸⁵ Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 17 April 2007; Interview with Annie Westebring by Leena Malkki on 18 April 2007.

⁸⁶ "Rode Jeugd," BVD report, 2 February 1973. According to a BVD report ("Informatie politiek terrorisme," BVD report 29 March 1973), the arrests in December 1972 mentioned below in the text were taken because the authorities learned about the existence of two bombs. Due to circumstances, the operation had to be accelerated and therefore only Luciën van Hoesel was caught with bomb material. Rode Jeugd has always claimed that the boxes in the possession of Van Hoesel were destined to for a Greek resistance movement LEA (Dekkers & Dijkman 1988, 58–59; Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003; Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 24 March 2003).

members and Palestinians. At the same time, they continued their activities as before and planned new bomb attacks. In March 1973, when Van Hoesel's trial started, Rode Jeugd threatened public prosecutor J. Peijnenburg with revenge if Van Hoesel was sentenced. Also Philips was warned.⁸⁷

Then in June 1973, Ger Flokstra, a less prominent Rode Jeugd member, was arrested with a suitcase full of bomb supplies. The bomb was meant to be used in an attack against an American target similar to those that had been committed in October. Also this time, it was obvious that there was an informant involved. According to a police document, Rode Jeugd would have come up with a plan to commit several bomb attacks to strengthen the position of van Hoesel. The police had followed Flokstra when he brought the bomb materials in a suitcase from Amsterdam to Eindhoven and stored them to a locker at the train station. When he came back to collect the suitcase, he was arrested.⁸⁸

While Rode Jeugd people recovered rather quickly from the initial shock caused by the arrest of Luciën van Hoesel, the arrest of Ger Flokstra paralyzed the group. It was a well-known fact that there were informants inside the group. These arrests, however, managed to plant a considerable degree of suspicion and almost paranoia among them. Questions about trust and what to do with people they suspected of being informants sucked up all energy.⁸⁹

Rode Jeugd activists of course knew that they were under close scrutiny by the security service and they had spotted informants among their ranks already in the late 1960s. It was also clear that if they wanted to commit to urban guerrilla struggle, they should be to work disciplined enough to keep their plans secret. The organization, however, remained still very open, and outer rings of the group were easily infiltrated by the security agencies. Each cell operated rather autonomously, and it was difficult to keep everything under control. This was not too threatening as long as all confidential information stayed within the core group. The real problem was that while most core members developed high security awareness, there were some who had trouble resisting the temptation to share confidential information over a glass of beer.⁹⁰

Rode Jeugd, and especially Henk Wubben, put much effort into developing counterintelligence measures. Some of the informers for example, were exposed or outed

⁸⁷ *Rode Hulp Informatie-bulletin*, no. 2 (1973); "Rode Jeugd bedreigt officier van justitie," *NRC Handelsblad*, 27 March 1973.

⁸⁸ "Rode Jeugd", found from the collections of Streekarchief Eindhoven.

⁸⁹ "Arrestatie week geheim gehouden. Politie Eindhoven pakt man met bomonderdelen," *Eindhovens Dagblad*, 24 June 1973; "Politie pakt man met materiaal voor bomproductie," *Trouw*, 22 June 1973; interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 24 March 2003; interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003; interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005.

⁹⁰ Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003, Hoekstra 2004, 75, *Rode Jeugd – Marxistisch-leninistisch jongerenblad*, no. 1 [1970].

themselves, and were instructed to feed the BVD false information in return.⁹¹ BVD "runners" were deceived by providing them with the same false piece of information through several informants, thereby increasing its credibility. In other cases, Rode Jeugd publicly exposed the informers, thereby embarrassing the BVD.⁹²

The issues of infiltration gained a prominent role also in the trial of Luciën van Hoesel. He initially got a sentence of three years for the possession of explosives which was an exceptionally long term for such crime. Van Hoesel did not accept this verdict and appealed to a higher court. At this stage, his attorney, Pieter Herman Bakker Schut and Rode Jeugd members made an attempt to cast doubt over the evidence that formed basis for Van Hoesel's sentence. They did this by exposing the details about one case where the BVD had used an informant in an attempt to incriminate another Rode Jeugd member. Danny Mulders, one of the less prominent young members of Rode Jeugd had come clean about his contacts with BVD after his runner had allegedly provided him with money to buy a pistol and return it with Evert van den Berg's finger prints on it. An official BVD history claims that Van den Berg himself instigated it and that Mulders surprised his runner with the gun.⁹³ Be as it may, the issue was deeply embarrassing for the BVD. It did not turn the sentence of Van Hoesel, however. He received a sentence of two years in November 1973.

During the fall 1973, it was becoming increasingly evident to people in Rode Jeugd that it was time for some drastic changes. It was at this point that the history of Rode Jeugd, quoted several times above, was written. The history ended followingly:

It is clear that we all have still a lot to learn. There is no room for carelessness that can lead to blunders and bring the comrades and organization in danger.⁹⁴

The members kept on analysing the international situation and the learnings from other revolutionary movements to decide what they should do. There was no question that the revolution would come but they clearly felt that the strategy of urban guerrilla needed to be defined better. The symbolic bombings against imperialist targets were still found productive and all in all, they remained steadfast in their belief that revolution was not possible without violence. Any revolutionary organization that wanted to be successful, should have not only a strong legal arm but also an illegal arm to be able to defend itself. In fact, the recent example of Chile had proven that

⁹¹ Cf. Rode Jeugd leaflets: *Rode Jeugd vogelvrij? 1. Het Proces 2. Dubbelspion. Uitgave Rode Jeugd* [1971]; *Rode Jeugd vogelvrij. Het BVD spel* [1973]; Rode Hulp Special, devoted to the Van Hoesel case [May 1974]; *Rode Hulp*, no. 7 (July 1974).

⁹² The double agent affairs are presented in the "Rode Jeugd vogelvrij" brochures mentioned in the previous footnote. About infiltrators and informants, interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003; interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005.

⁹³ Engelen 2007, 192-193.

⁹⁴ "Bijdrage LLL: Rode Jeugd 1966/1970 – 1970/1973," *Voorwaarts*, 15 November 1973.

very point once again. There were no grounds to think that it would be otherwise in Europe. In Germany, the whole left was under pressure and a couple of hundred people had been arrested, in Belgium, newspapers and books were banned, workers on strike were intimidated and fired. In France, a number of left-wing organisations had been banned and in Italy the police and fascist gangs were cooperating. The same trend has taken place in the Netherlands too, the establishment of “terrorist brigades” being one example of them. Therefore, it was necessary to start with building the illegal side of the revolutionary struggle also in the Netherlands.⁹⁵

What came to the legal arm of the struggle, it was concluded that they could not develop such political organization from Rode Jeugd that could take up this task:

Rode Jeugd is organizationally not up to a long-lasting struggle in the metropolises, not well adjusted to the reality of waging armed anti-imperialist struggle and class struggle. It is therefore unavoidable that we have to remodel our organization. The image of Rode Jeugd that is formed through several years’ practice does not go together with the level in which we need to start working. It can even be that this image hinders the building of a resistance organization in the Netherlands.⁹⁶

The organization was formerly disbanded on 14 March 1974, the anniversary of the death of Karl Marx:

The national command of Rode Jeugd has decided to disband Rode Jeugd as a legal political organization. The formation of sharpshooter brigades whose task is to kill, the establishment of the National Criminal Investigation Service for so-called ideological criminality and increasingly stronger calls of the police corps from big cities to widen the repression apparatus are seriously threatening Rode Jeugd’s normal way of functioning. [...] As Rode Jeugd refuses to be voluntarily experimented on or to serve as a target for the rising fascism any longer, the national command has decided to disband its legal status.⁹⁷

In this press release, the need to disband Rode Jeugd is largely explained by the hardened counter-measures. In the texts written by Rode Jeugd members⁹⁸ for more restricted consumption, the stagnation of theory forming was blamed for the miserable state of urban guerrilla in the Netherlands. Because of that, same old mistakes had been made over and over again. The problem with most Marxist-Leninists was, in Rode Jeugd activists’ view that they stubbornly and uncritically held to the mass line and strived for building up a mass organization. They did not have an understanding of the structure and development of imperialism in the global level and requirements that it set for the struggle. While focusing on the legal organization, they ignored the

⁹⁵ *Voorwaarts*, 15 November 1973, especially “Bijdrage IV: De illegale organisatie”.

⁹⁶ “Bijdrage V: Enige opmerkingen over de legale organisatie,” *Voorwaarts*, 15 November 1973.

⁹⁷ Cited in “Actiegroep Rode Jeugd opgeheven,” *Eindhovens Dagblad*, 15 March 1974.

⁹⁸ “Bijdrage IV: De illegale organisatie,” *Voorwaarts* 15 November 1973; “Bijdrage V: Enige opmerkingen over de legale organisatie,” *Voorwaarts* 15 November 1973; “Voorwoord” and “Inleiding,” *Over gewapende strijd. Aanzetten tot de stadsguerilla in Nederland. 1966–1974 Rode Jeugd* (Marxisties Scholings Kollektief 1975).

importance of building an illegal organization on its side to help it prevail the countermeasures by the capitalist and imperialist forces. In this situation, Rode Jeugd more than any other organization had wiped out the dust from the old classics and dared to bring up the question of violence.

To put it simply, Rode Jeugd lacked supporters. Its relations with other Marxist-Leninist organisations had always been troublesome. Movements such as Bond van Nederlandse Marxisten-Leninisten⁹⁹ and KEN ml did show support when someone from Rode Jeugd was arrested and criticized the authorities for the way they attacked the left¹⁰⁰, but that was how far their solidarity went.

The second problem, specific to Rode Jeugd, concerned organization. The problem was that when it was decided to move from protest to resistance, the organization had not changed accordingly. The purpose had been to build up a resistance organization with well-schooled revolutionaries capable of consistent and disciplined action. However, many of its adherents were young workers who acted spontaneously out of their dissatisfaction with the societal situation and did not care for ideological schooling. Also for the more experienced and motivated members had problems adapting to the new situation. The result was an organization with initiatives for resistance, but still characterized by spontaneity and openness.¹⁰¹

The lack of schooling was seen also as an obstacle in the further development of their own organization because they made it difficult to recruit new supporters or allies, especially among the intellectuals. It was mentioned that the low theoretical level was one reason why some people, especially intellectuals, did not want to work with Rode Jeugd.¹⁰² This showed a shift in Rode Jeugd members' thinking. Rode Jeugd had been distinctively a working class movement. Its members had been suspicious at best about the leftist students who went to the factories to learn about the life of workers while young workers like they themselves tried their everything to get out of there.

While things had gone awry with the revolutionary struggle, it was no reason to quit. It was however, only a handful of core members who continued the efforts while the rest quietly left the scene.

⁹⁹ The bond of Dutch Marxist-Leninists, the follower of the Rode Vlag group.

¹⁰⁰ E.g. "Onmiddellijke vrijlating van Lucien v. Hoesel", *Rode Tribune* no. 14 (January 1973); "Klassejustitie!" *Rode Tribune* no. 17 (April 1973); "Onmiddellijke vrijlating van Lucien van Hoesel", *Rode Tribune* no. 23 (October 1973); *Rode Tribune bulletin: Extra uitgave* (1973); "Het volgende artikel is...", *De Rode Vlag* 7 no. 1 (January 1971); "Politie en justitie terreur", *De Rode Vlag* 11 no. 8 (November 1974).

¹⁰¹ "Bijdrage V: Enige opmerkingen over de legale organisatie," *Voorwaarts*, 15 November 1973; Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 3 April 2003.

¹⁰² "Bijdrage V: Enige opmerkingen over de legale organisatie," *Voorwaarts*, 15 November 1973.

New attempts for revolutionary armed struggle

In reality, the disbandment of Rode Jeugd did not bring any big change to many of its key members' activities. In the resistance phase of Rode Jeugd, key members had already functioned in many ways rather autonomously and hardly anyone had a concise overview of everything that was going on. After the disbandment, many of them simply went on like before with their own network of people and activities. The relations between the key members had become strained to the degree that it was felt best everybody went their own way. Some stayed in contact, but others took distance.

The next couple of years were characterized by search for ways to matter for revolutionary struggle. Starting up an urban guerrilla in the Netherlands was still in the agenda, but due to increasingly unpromising perspectives, many former Rode Jeugd activists leaned more and more towards supporting other armed struggles. Generally, there was the feeling that while motivation was still there, there were little possibilities for action. They were all so well known to the BVD by then that it was hard to do anything without the agency being aware of it in no time.

Support to other movements had been an important part of their activities almost from the beginning. From the late 1960s on, together with other people in the Netherlands, they had provided logistic support for Greek and Portuguese resistance movements and helped, with German activists, American soldiers who did not want to go to Vietnam, to escape from the army bases in West Germany to Scandinavia. When the preparations for urban guerrilla started in early 1970s, the contacts with German activists intensified. Later in the 1970s, Rode Jeugd key members have claimed to have provided support for German activists, but the extent of their activities is not clear.¹⁰³ Rode Hulp members sent all kinds of supplies to imprisoned activists and helped them with legal issues by contacting lawyers. Some of the former Rode Jeugd activists have claimed that they have assisted German activists in obtaining explosives and guns, and provided safe houses in the Netherlands. There is evidence that at least a dozen fugitive members of the RAF stayed in the Netherlands. Rode Jeugd/Rode Hulp members might have been involved in providing support.¹⁰⁴

Besides that, there is some evidence of attempts in the mid-1970s to help IRA with getting weapons.¹⁰⁵ Some people, like Luciën van Hoesel, as well as Mirjam Lucassen and Annie Westebring, who became active in the "Rode Jeugd" corner of the radical left around this time,

¹⁰³ Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 30 June 2003; Interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 15 July 2003; Interview with Annie Westebring 18 April 2007; Hoekstra 2004, 172–173; Verbij 2005, 152–156.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 30 June 2003; interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 15 July 2003; interview with Annie Westebring by Leena Malkki on 18 April 2007; Hoekstra 2004, 73; Engelen 2007, 194–202; Pekelder 2007, 126.

¹⁰⁵ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 86–87.

played with the idea of taking it one step further and leave for Nicaragua or some other place where there were better perspectives for revolutionary struggle.¹⁰⁶

Rode Hulp

Several people from the old cadre of Rode Jeugd joined an organization called *Rode Hulp* (Red Help). As it was already mentioned, this organization was established in January 1973 to organize solidarity with progressive activists who because of their activities against the capitalist society had already come or threatened to come in conflict with the society.¹⁰⁷ Instead of merely joining, the former Rode Jeugd members rather kidnapped Rode Hulp to use it as a legal cover to continue the efforts towards starting an urban guerrilla. This displeased many original members of Rode Hulp who soon established their own short-lived organization *Rood Solidariteitsfront* (Red Solidarity Front).¹⁰⁸

The former Rode Jeugd members who joined Rode Hulp included Aat van Wijk and Willem Oskam but especially Evert van den Berg and Luciën van Hoesel (after he was released from prison in late 1974 and moved to Amsterdam) became radical Rode Hulp's central figures. They were joined by new people, most importantly Annie Westebring¹⁰⁹, who became the secretary of Rode Hulp. Also Joost van Steenis was active in these circles, but was later expelled. Willem Oskam, although hanging around, remained more on the sidelines. For a long time, he worked in a progressive bookstore. In the years to come, the disappointment with the ever-gloomier perspectives for revolution seemed to hit this die-hard leftist very hard.¹¹⁰

Under the banner of Rode Hulp, a lot of discussions were held about the future of revolutionary struggle and the role of the Dutch activists in it. What came to concrete radical actions in the form of bomb attacks and the like, not much happened. In May 1976, after the death of the RAF leader Ulrike Meinhof, there was a strong urge to do something. A bomb was placed in the office of Autopon, which was the main dealer of Volkswagen in the Netherlands. A bomb threat call was made to the police in Amsterdam. The bomb was found before it exploded. There appears to have been also another attempted bomb attack that targeted a German company called

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Mirjam Lucassen by Leena Malkki on 6 February 2006.

¹⁰⁷ *Rode Hulp. Publikatie met medewerking van de Bond voor Vrijheidsrechten* [1973].

¹⁰⁸ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 78-79.

¹⁰⁹ Annie Westebring was actually a member of Rode Jeugd in its very last months, but became really active only after its disbandment (Interview with Annie Westebring by Leena Malkki on 18 April 2007).

¹¹⁰ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 21; Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 15 April 2007.

Hoechst.¹¹¹ Several people from the Netherlands travelled to Meinhof's funeral and some of them gave a speech over his grave.¹¹²

In the summer 1976, a new opportunity presented itself for the radicals around Rode Hulp. There was a chance to participate in a month-long training at the training camp of the Palestinian resistance organization PFLP¹¹³ in South Yemen. The opportunity was arranged by Ciska and Adrie Eeken. The couple felt sympathy for the Palestinian cause and was involved in various kinds of support activities.¹¹⁴

The group that eventually left for South Yemen was gathered by Evert van den Berg, Luciën van Hoesel and Annie Westebring. The offer to accept fifteen people for the training was incredibly royal considering the small number of people in the Netherlands that were interested in such possibility. Most of those few who were interested were monitored so closely by the security service that it was difficult for them to do anything without it being noticed. After a great deal of hesitation, it was decided to accept the offer and try to fill all places, because such an opportunity did not present itself too often.¹¹⁵

The list of people who left included Evert van den Berg, Luciën van Hoesel and his girlfriend Mirjam Lucassen. Adrie and Ciska Eeken enrolled to the training too, as did Annie Westebring and her boyfriend Roel Koopmans. Besides them, there were Lidwien Janssen and Rinus Nieuwburg from the network of Evert van den Berg in Breda, two other couples active in the radical leftist milieu, a Moluccan called Sam Pormes, recruited through Annie Westebring and an Irishman Flinton Vallery from People's Democracy invited by Evert van den Berg.¹¹⁶

The fifteen people who left for South Yemen did not form any homogeneous group. Each of them had their own agendas and came from different backgrounds. In an attempt to bring

¹¹¹ Interview with Mirjam Lucassen by Leena Malkki on 6 February 2006; Gemeentepolitie Amsterdam, Recherchedienst, Centrale Recherche, Bijzondere zaken, records on the case (no. 3449/1976); The information about the bomb attack at Hoechst is based on interview with Annie Westebring 18 April 2007. Also Lidwien Janssen has told about the attempt when she was questioned by Mossad and later Dutch authorities (the minutes are available in the private archive of Frans Dekkers).

¹¹² Dekkers & Dijkstra 1988, 96; Interview with Annie Westebring by Leena Malkki on 18 April 2007.

¹¹³ The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Mirjam Lucassen by Leena Malkki on 6 February 2006; Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005; Interview with Annie Westebring by Leena Malkki on 18 April 2007.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Annie Westebring by Leena Malkki on 18 April 2007; Interview with Mirjam Lucassen by Leena Malkki on 6 February 2006.

¹¹⁶ Dekkers & Dijkstra 1988, 99–100. Sam Pormes has always claimed that he has not been in the training and instead, someone else must have used his name. His participation in the training was brought up again by Antoine Verbij in his book that was published in March 2005 (Verbij 2005) and a couple of months later in an article in the Dutch weekly *HP/De Tijd*. At that time, he was a member of the upper house of the Dutch parliament. Pormes initially denied again his participation, but his party (*GroenLinks*, in English Green Left) forced him to leave his position after it was concluded in an investigation instigated by the party that it was very likely that he indeed attended the training (e.g. Hippe et al 2007).

more cohesion into the group, a lengthy document¹¹⁷ was produced, with Evert van den Berg and Luciën van Hoesel probably as its primary authors, and signed by all travelers. The document was largely a summary of the Rode Jeugd ideology. The basic idea was to start building up logistics and organization in order to conduct revolutionary struggle in the Netherlands and support struggles elsewhere in the world. This was, however, only one of the agendas that the participants had in mind.¹¹⁸

The training turned out to be a typical guerrilla training, including long days of gymnastic exercises, combat training, shooting and explosives training.¹¹⁹ In the camp, there was also a group of Germans who seemed to have been there already for longer time who at times acted as co-instructors. The group was led by Siegfried Haag. Besides him, also Günther Sonnenberg, Verena Becker, Rolf Clemens Wagner, Rolf Heissler, Willy Peter Stoll and Elisabeth van Dyck were reportedly there. While the Dutch did not know all of their identity during the training, Luciën van Hoesel recognized Elisabeth van Dyck whom he had met in Amsterdam when she was hiding there. When Van Hoesel brought that up, he was confronted by the whole German delegation for this security blunder, which in their eyes seemed like another addition to the list of amateurish deeds of the Dutch comrades.¹²⁰

While the Dutch activists felt a lot of sympathy for their German comrades and had provided help for them, there had always been some ambivalence about the methods used by the German urban guerrillas. The experiences with the Germans in the camp fed into that. The RAF people irritated the Dutch because they seemed to think they knew it all better and showed how the revolution should be done. The relations were further colored by the historical hatred that the Dutch felt against the Germans. The RAF people, on their part, paid back by acting very haughtily towards the Dutch.¹²¹

Instead of a new beginning, the South Yemen episode marked the beginning of the end. In retrospect, Evert van den Berg has concluded that all ingredients for disbandment were there before the travel, but it took a while to realize it.¹²²

The whole trip to South Yemen was full of security blunders. Making such a journey clandestinely while being so closely watched by the security service was quite a challenge to begin

¹¹⁷ *Filosofisch en methodisch uitgangspunt* (Philosophical and methodological premises), available in the private archive of Evert van den Berg.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Annie Westebring by Leena Malkki on 18 April 2007; Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005.

¹¹⁹ Remmers, Henri & Sauer, Derk: "Marius Nieuwburg: Een mislukte terrorist," *Nieuwe Revu* 12 November 1976; Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 112, 118–120.

¹²⁰ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 121–123.

¹²¹ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 122–123.

¹²² Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005.

with. The participants were aware of that, but the eagerness to leave overcame the concerns for security.¹²³ The participants made the situation even worse with their own actions. For the travel arrangements, they used regular travel agencies, which noticed a sudden increase of queries for alternative travel routes to South Yemen. Evert van den Berg's retrospective statement in 2005 that "we could have just as well rented a tourist bus"¹²⁴ is hardly an exaggeration. Also, it did not help that Ciska Eeken travelled with a collection of passport photos of all the participants to the Middle East before their travel and that these photos were found and copied by security guards at the Schiphol airport in Amsterdam.¹²⁵

The second compromise was made with the recruitment of participants. It was largely based on "who wants, can come" principle. The biggest mistake was, according to the participants, that people were allowed to take their boyfriends and girlfriends with them. Besides bringing a sufficient degree of social drama with it, the selection process produced a very heterogeneous group of people.¹²⁶

When accepting such an offer as the training was, it was evident that the time might come to return the favor. This came shortly afterwards. Ciska Eeken got a request from Wadi Haddad of PFLP to inspect the arrangements on board in an Air France flight to Tel Aviv. Originally, Luciën van Hoesel and Mirjam Lucassen were supposed to go, but cancelled, because they were afraid they were too well-known to go through passport controls without being recognized. In the end, it came down to Rinus Nieuwburg and Lidwien Janssen to carry out the assignment. They boarded the flight in Paris on 24 September 1976. Lidwien Janssen left the plane in Tel Aviv where the plane made an intermediate landing and Rinus Nieuwburg traveled to the end destination, New Delhi.¹²⁷

When Janssen arrived to Tel Aviv, she was told that the authorities had been informed that there was a bomb in her suitcase. After the inspection, she was directed to the airport police where a representative of Mossad came to question her.¹²⁸ It soon became clear that Mossad was well informed about her past activities. According to Lidwien Janssen, it seemed that it was mostly PFLP and not really Rode Hulp that interested the authorities, even though they seemed to be very well informed about the latter too.¹²⁹ Her case was handled in the court in early 1977. In March, she

¹²³ Interview with Mirjam Lucassen by Leena Malkki on 6 February 2006; Interview with Annie Westebring by Leena Malkki on 18 April 2007; Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 113–116.

¹²⁴ Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005.

¹²⁵ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 115–116; also interview with Annie Westebring by Leena Malkki on 18 April 2007.

¹²⁶ Interview with Annie Westebring by Leena Malkki on 18 April 2007; Interview with Mirjam Lucassen by Leena Malkki on 6 February 2006.

¹²⁷ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 133–137.

¹²⁸ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 137–138.

¹²⁹ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 138–143; Sauer, Derk & Remmers, Henri: "Rode Hulp: 'Dood en verderf is niet onze

was sentenced to six years for indictment, espionage and help to a hostile organization. She was released three years after the arrest.¹³⁰

After Janssen had left the plane, Rinus Nieuwburg flew the whole way to New Delhi as planned and continued his travel unhindered to Bombay. Later, he went to the airport to meet Janssen as was agreed in advance and got arrested. The arrest put him in a difficult situation. There was no extradition treaty between India and Israel and hardly any evidence to press charges against him. Returning to the Netherlands was difficult, because he did not have enough money and airline companies were not particularly keen to have someone suspected of planning a plane hijack as their passenger. With the help of other Rode Hulp activists, a deal was negotiated with a Dutch journalist that in return for arranging Nieuwburg's travel to the Netherlands, Nieuwburg would give an interview.¹³¹

Before the interview was published in November 1976, the arrest of Lidwien Janssen as well as the training in South Yemen had already received extensive coverage in the Dutch media. Right after the arrest of Nieuwburg, there was a small story in a newspaper about a Dutchman arrested in Bombay. For Rode Hulp activists, that was the first sign that the operation did not go as planned. Confirmation for this came when early in the following morning, the police showed up on the door of the Rode Hulp activists and made house searches.¹³²

In this situation, there seemed to be only one thing to do. On 31 December 1976, the disbandment of Rode Hulp was announced. Just like when Rode Jeugd was disbanded, the actions of the authorities were mentioned as a cause for the decision. It was claimed that the criminalization politics of the Dutch government and the "bourgeois" media had greatly impeded Rode Hulp's work as a relief agency. It was also pointed that these instances were influenced by the Israeli secret service and propaganda machination, which wished to label Rode Hulp a terrorist organization.¹³³

Another wave of operations against the Dutch activists took place in January 1977, most evidently prompted by confessions of Lidwien Janssen in Israel.¹³⁴ The operation was so extravagant that it must have been organized to work also as a deterrent. It does not seem out of the question that pressure from Israel to act firmly against people suspected of cooperating with its adversaries played a role as well.¹³⁵

stijl', " *Nieuwe Revu* 19 November 1976.

¹³⁰ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 147–151.

¹³¹ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988. The result of this deal is Remmers, Henri & Sauer, Derk: "Marius Nieuwburg: Een mislukte terrorist," *Nieuwe Revu* 12 November 1976.

¹³² Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 143–144.

¹³³ "Rode Hulp. Amsterdam, 31-12-1976".

¹³⁴ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 152–153, also interview with Annie Westebring by Leena Malkki on 18 April 2007.

¹³⁵ The impact of Israel on the measures taken by the Dutch authorities in the case of Rode Hulp was speculated e.g. in Sauer, Derk & Remmers, Henri: "Rode Hulp: 'Dood en verderf is niet onze stijl'," *Nieuwe Revu* 19 November 1976.

The tour-de-force was largely unnecessary, because most of the trainees and their accomplices had already drawn their conclusions. With the ever-increasing attention by the security services and experiences with the training, the contemplations about the possibilities and expediency of urban guerrilla had reached a culmination point. Luciën van Hoesel told the reporters, already before Rode Hulp was disbanded, that it was high time for him to take distance from armed struggle.¹³⁶

For some, one reason for this was the experiences in South Yemen. The training put them face-to-face with the reality of armed struggle much more concretely than they had been before which made some of them feel uncomfortable. Lidwien Janssen has told that only there she realized how much the weapons were the last option and how weapons give a false feeling of power. She spoke about this with the Germans in the camp who told that once you use weapons, you realize that you won't become thirty.¹³⁷ According to Mirjam Lucassen, when she and Luciën were training with the weapons in the camp, they did not really think that they would use the skills against other people. Only after the training, the consequences of full-fledged involvement in the armed struggle started to sink in. To continue with the armed struggle would mean they should put their acquired skills in practice. This was too much for them.¹³⁸

The explanations that those who were active in the radical Rode Hulp have given to their detachment from armed struggle have most often included two elements: continuing of the armed struggle became impossible because the security service was too well up-to-date with their activities and the liberal climate crumbled away motivation. With the withdrawal, also the contacts between the former comrades quietly faded away.

In the case of Luciën van Hoesel and Mirjam Lucassen, the long process of disengagement crystallized in a particular moment. In a nightly bus ride to home during the fall of 1976, Luciën and she sat in the last bench and agreed that they should stop altogether with what they had been doing in the past years. They decided try out something completely different for a while, and maybe try again the armed struggle after a couple of years.¹³⁹

Shortly after the bus ride, Van Hoesel and Lucassen got married, moved to Groningen in the north of the Netherlands and started a family. What comes to the political activities, that

¹³⁶ E.g. Sauer, Derk & Remmers, Henri: "Rode Hulp: 'Dood en verderf is niet onze stijl'," *Nieuwe Revu* 19 November 1976.

¹³⁷ Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 120–121.

¹³⁸ Interview with Mirjam Lucassen by Leena Malkki on 6 February 2006. On the other hand, Rinus Nieuwburg told in an interview in late 1976 that the experience with the training in South Yemen strengthened his motivation to fight against capitalism. However, in the same interview he told that he would not participate in the armed struggle in the future (Remmers, Henri & Sauer, Derk: "Marius Nieuwburg: Een mislukte terrorist," *Nieuwe Revu* 12 November 1976).

¹³⁹ Interview with Mirjam Lucassen by Leena Malkki on 6 February 2006.

“completely different” became joining a political party, *Pacifistisch Socialistische Partij* (PSP, Pacifist Socialist Party). The decision has been later explained by Mirjam Lucassen followingly:

We had always been in the same lines with PSP with regard to how economy should be organized, how the society should be organized, you name it. Only the armed struggle was somewhat contradictory, because PSP was pacifist and we were just the opposite. But if you come to the point that you decide to stop with the armed struggle, then is that last difference [...] gone. That was then the only party that came into question. [...] I think what has also played a role is that we thought that if we joined a political party, then we would be safer, then you were part of something. You can of course start up something yourself, but nobody will believe you and you continue to be placed in that same corner.¹⁴⁰

For the PSP, letting former urban guerrilla fighters to join was apparently no problem. In the local elections of 1978, Luciën van Hoesel was the leading candidate of PSP and got elected.¹⁴¹ In his own opinion, his past has only helped him in his career as social worker. As Lucassen has later told, it made it easier for Van Hoesel to win the trust of those youths he worked with. Ironically enough, his job brought him again face to face with the same prosecutor that was involved in the lawsuit that brought Van Hoesel his prison sentence.¹⁴²

Also Evert van den Berg joined PSP around the same time and has been active in the parliamentary context ever since. “A political animal does not stop”, as he put it. It has cost him time and energy to make his way and win the respect of everyone, but the fact that it has succeeded, has been a proof in his eyes that the return to the society was still possible.¹⁴³ Together with another former Rode Jeugd activist Theo Engelen, he was a representative in the agglomeration council in Eindhoven in the early 1980s. While both of them had at that point left their revolutionary past behind, the security service was not convinced about this and recruited people to monitor them. This became public when the recruited informants told about the operation to Evert van den Berg.¹⁴⁴ In 1986, Van den Berg was elected to the city council of Eindhoven and in 1994–1998, he worked as a policy maker of the parliamentary faction of parties propagating the interest of elderly people. Nowadays, he assists representatives of local council in Eindhoven in policy-making. From time to time, his past has been brought up. “If you are 35 years active in the politics, you naturally make some enemies”.¹⁴⁵

Like Luciën van Hoesel and Mirjam Lucassen, also Annie Westebring left Amsterdam and moved to Groningen. She found a new political home, much more rewarding and comfortable

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Mirjam Lucassen by Leena Malkki on 6 February 2006.

¹⁴¹ E.g. “Ex-leider Rode Jeugd kandidaat gemeenteraad”, *NRC Handelsblad* 17 November 1978.

¹⁴² Interview with Mirjam Lucassen by Leena Malkki 6 February 2006; Dekkers & Dijksman 1988, 58.

¹⁴³ Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki 29 June 2005.

¹⁴⁴ E.g. de Valk 1996, 80–81.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005.

than the militant radical left had ever been, in the anarchist movement. Unlike the Marxist-Leninist movements, the anarchist movement, in her opinion, acknowledged the diversity of human beings and the richness that it brings to the life. She became active in many kind of grassroots activities and runned an anarchist bookstore for some time. Over the years, she has worked as a teacher and a chef and nowadays she is involved in the education of challenging children through giving them lessons in cooking.¹⁴⁶

While leaving the armed struggle behind appears to have been rather easy and smooth in practice, it did not happen in the blink of an eye, however. None of those involved were sought by the police or had any other such practical issues complicating the detachment. For Evert van den Berg, “stopping was one thing, dissolving another issue”. He told it took a long time from him to look after people in his network and make sure they would not do the same mistakes again.¹⁴⁷ It also seems that for many it took a long time to process the meaning of their experiences and the choice to abandon the idea of armed struggle.

Not everyone, however, stopped involvement in the armed struggle in 1976. One of those who continued was Aat van Wijk. After Rode Jeugd, he was active in the context of Rode Hulp, mostly in the form of helping imprisoned German activists by sending goods and speaking with lawyers. He did not leave for South Yemen, but was asked by Evert van den Berg and Luciën van Hoesel to provide logistical support for their group after they had returned to home.¹⁴⁸

When Rode Hulp was disbanded, he continued for a while in *Rood Verzetsfront* (RVF, Red Resistance Front), an organization that was established shortly afterwards (more about the organization in the below). Later, Aat van Wijk left the organization, because it became clear that the activities of RVF were developing along the same lines as those of Rode Jeugd and Rode Hulp earlier. Van Wijk was not interested in making the same mistake for the third time. After criticizing the developments, he and his associates from The Hague were kicked out the organization.¹⁴⁹

While leaving RVF behind was an easy choice to make, leaving the whole concept of armed struggle was a much more emotional and difficult issue:

You have ideals, you have ideas, regardless of whether those are good ideals or good ideas. We thought for a long time that we, together with other groups in Europe, could bring on the revolution. You had lost your sense of reality a bit, okay, but that was your vision, that was your point of view. If you discover that it is not true, it is like cutting your umbilical cord or so, a painful feeling.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Annie Westebring by Leena Malkki on 18 April 2007.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Evert van den Berg by Leena Malkki on 29 June 2005.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 24 March 2003 & 14 April 2003.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 24 March 2003 & 14 April 2003.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 14 April 2003.

After leaving RVF, Aat van Wijk has had contacts with people in the extraparliamentary left-wing scene, but has not been politically active himself. For the next fifteen years, he was so sick of everything to do with the politics that he did not even vote in elections. Later, he has regained his interest in the politics, but he had made a conscious decision not to take part in any party or movement in order to avoid the situation that it would be brought into discredit by revelations that there is an “ex-terrorist” among their ranks.¹⁵¹ For a long time, he worked as graphic artist and nowadays he runs a cultural centre and a restaurant.

Rood Verzetsfront

When Rode Hulp was pronounced dead, a new organization called Rood Verzetsfront (RVF) was established. The driving forces behind its establishment were Ciska and Adrie Eeken and a few of their acquaintances from the Palestine committee. Those who got involved were mostly people who had had ties with Rode Hulp but not active in it. From former core Rode Jeugd/Rode Hulp members, only Aat van Wijk - and more discreetly Henk Wubben (more about him in the following section) - continued their activities in its context. They were joined by a new generation of activists, at least some of them radicalized by the kidnapping of Hanns-Martin Schleyer by RAF in September-October 1977.¹⁵²

The purpose of Rood Verzetsfront was to support those who opposed the fascist system. This was to be done mostly in two ways: to give publicity to resistance against the system and to help activists in trouble. For the first purpose, a paper named after the organization was established and printed in the Eekens' own press. Rood Verzetsfront was also actively involved in organizing information evenings and demonstrations in support of anti-fascist and anti-imperialist movements.¹⁵³ In practice, its activities concentrated heavily on the conflict between the state and urban guerrilla groupings in West Germany. Attention for the German situation was sought also by methods of direct action. To give an example, in March 1979 RVF occupied the office of Swiss Air in Amsterdam as a protest against the treatment of two *Bewegung 2. Juni* (2nd of June Movement) members, who were imprisoned in Switzerland.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Interview with Aat van Wijk by Leena Malkki on 24 March 2003, 14 April 2003 & 17 April 2007.

¹⁵² Moussault 2009, 37-38; Ottens, Luuk; Scheltens, Piet Hein & Siebelink, Rob: ”” Muziek maken is een uitlaatklep, dat weet ik wel. Maar het is nog altijd beter dan surfen”, *De Groene Amsterdammer* 13 February 1985; ”De toepassing van ”klein geweld” in Nederland,” BVD Report 21 March 1977.

¹⁵³ ”Het ROOD VERZETSFRONT gaat ervan uit...,” *Rood Verzetsfront* 1, no. 3 (May 1977).

¹⁵⁴ ”Verklaring bij appel gevangenhouding” (statement by two RVF members [2 May 1979]).

In analogy with Rode Jeugd and Rode Hulp earlier, there seems to have been initiatives for armed struggle also behind the façade of Rood Verzetsfront. About these initiatives, little concrete is known. Paul Moussault, a former core member of RVF tells in his book about the group that in the spring of 1979, a grouping called B-group was established within the RVF. The purpose of this group would have been to start preparing for an armed struggle in the Netherlands by obtaining the necessary resources (such as money, cars, weapons and explosives). According to Moussault's account, which is evidently mostly based on his own recollections, at times supported by interviews with other former members, the group drafted several plans for stealing money and cars, some of which were aborted only in the last minute. The group also hit twice to the city house of Groningen with the intention of obtaining legitimization papers.¹⁵⁵ After the first such action in June 1979, two RVF members became arrested. This action led to a controversy among the RVF members about whether the RVF should be involved in such activities in the first place. As consequence, several people broke away from the group.¹⁵⁶

In these attempts, RVF seems to have confronted the same challenges that Rode Jeugd, Rode Hulp and many other groupings with aspiration to armed struggle had confronted earlier: how to combine legal and illegal actions.¹⁵⁷ Many thought that, in order to be successful, the branch committing illegal actions should be clearly separated from the legal branch. In the case of all of these organizations, there was no patience and resources to create such an illegal branch. Besides, many people involved were already well-known so the possibilities for clandestine action were not very good. At the same time, the craving for action was so big that it was very difficult not to act against one's best judgment. This dilemma was not properly solved inside the organization.¹⁵⁸

For the remaining members, the treatment of the imprisoned RVF member Joop Bolt became a focus of their attention. Activities around his case culminated in a bomb attack against the house of J. M. Schampers in late February 1980. The attack was claimed under the name of Rood Volksverzet and it was the first bomb attack that the B-group had committed.¹⁵⁹

The existence of B-group remained shortlived. By late 1980, its members had developed such internal disagreements that made it impossible to continue cooperation. The same can be said about the Rood Verzetsfront in general. Cooperation between its branches in various cities declined and its members put their efforts mostly in working in the context of militant squatter

¹⁵⁵ Moussault 2009, 207-216.

¹⁵⁶ Moussault 2009, 134-135.

¹⁵⁷ The similarity of the challenges is reflected by the fact that the former RVF member Paul Moussault uses almost direct quotations from Rode Jeugd/Rode Hulp texts in describing these aspects of the history of the RVF (e.g. Moussault 2009, 140, 207-208).

¹⁵⁸ Onderzoeksburo Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten 1998, 59, 67, 71-82; Verbij 2005, 143; Pekelder 2007, 153-154.

¹⁵⁹ Moussault 2009, 141-144, 217.

movement, anti-militarism and actions against the nuclear power.¹⁶⁰ After that, the Rood Verzetsfront continued its existence in the form of a publishing enterprise until the late 1980s.

As mentioned earlier, RVF was looking at helping people involved in armed struggle also more concretely than merely by seeking publicity for their cause and conditions. In this context, the name of another Rode Jeugd veteran, Henk Wubben, has come out.

*Henk Wubben, RVF and RAF*¹⁶¹

One of the questions that keep intriguing the students of the left-wing movements in the 1970s is what Henk Wubben did after 1974. Soon after the disbandment of Rode Jeugd, he moved to Amsterdam and started to study cultural anthropology at the university. He was still seen in the radical left-wing circles, but did not seem to play a particularly prominent role in Rode Hulp or any other grouping. As zealous as he felt about the idea of revolution, he seemed to be very doubtful about the prospects for revolutionary struggle in the Netherlands and, perhaps even more, about capabilities of his potential partners in it.

In the last years of Rode Jeugd, Henk Wubben had been calling for more professional attitude and methods. Also after the disbandment of Rode Jeugd, he remained highly critical about the activities of other former Rode Jeugd people. This came especially clear in the letters he wrote to some of them in June 1975 where he expressed his disappointment that people seemed not to be have taken warning of the past mistakes and that they were not doing enough to get to the bottom of the case of Luciën van Hoesel. In the letter, he broke off all contacts with them.¹⁶²

Henk Wubben had his eyes more on what was going on in West Germany and oriented his activities towards supporting the groupings waging the revolutionary struggle there. He was active in several organizations supporting RAF. He had established many contacts with German comrades already during Rode Jeugd time, for example with people involved in so-called *Knastgruppen* (prison groups) that supported the imprisoned German activists. Through this, he met a lot of people who later joined RAF and went underground. Wubben himself never became part of an illegal structure, but instead had a role in *das Umfeld*, thus the support networks of RAF. He emphasizes that this help did not include renting cars or houses, because a professional organization like RAF does not make itself vulnerable by giving such tasks and thereby the knowledge about

¹⁶⁰ Moussault 2009, 141, 165-166, 222; Onderzoeksburo Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdiensten 1998, 59.

¹⁶¹ Information about Henk Wubben's activities in this sub-chapter is based on interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 15 July 2003 unless mentioned otherwise.

¹⁶² "Aan: Willem Oskam, Joost van Steenis, Evert v.d. Berg, Aat van Wyk en Lucien van Hoesel" (letter written by Henk Wubben, 26 June 1975).

their bases to outsiders. He gives the impression that he has been one of those who RAF had more trust in, but avoids being specific about his activities.

Some cues about the degree of his involvement can be found from what is known about his activities. From them, it can be derived that he has considered himself capable of hiding explosives and taking care of a German comrade escaping from prison.¹⁶³ Considering the length and palpable strength of his commitment to the struggle of RAF, it would be surprising if he had kept himself for the whole time in the margins. Fully in the line with his thinking and way of action is also not to betray his comrades by a too detailed babble over his past activities.

It has been claimed that Wubben has acted as an important contact person between RVF and RAF¹⁶⁴, and there is no reason to doubt that. His contacts with RVF originate from the beginnings of the organization. According to him, the Eekens were in the process of directing their activities from supporting the Palestinian cause more into supporting RAF and they were looking for people already involved in such activities. In the context of Rood Verzetsfront, Wubben was involved in developing the political line of the grouping and helped with the printing press. He was also involved in some actions that were organized in support of RAF.

His role in the initiatives for armed struggle is not clear. In any case, he did not then and does not nowadays reject the idea of committing e.g. small-scale bomb attacks or occupations. Through such kind of militant actions, people could train and explore “whether they were fit for the hard work”. According to Moussault, he would have been part of the B-group and involved in various plans for robberies and bombings.¹⁶⁵

In the 1980s, Wubben withdrew slowly from the involvement in the armed struggle. A crucial turning point in this regard was in June 1980 when his home where he lived with Ciska Eeken was almost totally destroyed by an explosion. A couple of days afterwards, Wubben was arrested for hiding explosives. While Wubben maintains that the explosion was work of the German intelligence agencies in consequence of the unsuccessful attempts to infiltration through him, many

¹⁶³ In 1980, Wubben was arrested when he visited a garage where there were ingredients for explosives. According to his account, the materials were destined to IRA and he had helped to hide them after the first attempt for delivery to the receiver had failed. The supplies were, according to Wubben, obtained by a BVD infiltrator (interview with Henk Wubben by Leena Malkki on 15 July 2003). Paul Moussault, however, has claimed that this was a story that was fabricated for defense purposes and that the chemicals were obtained to be used in their own bomb attacks (Moussault 2009, 216-218). With hiding comrades on the run I refer to the so-called Celler Loch Affaire. As part of efforts to infiltrate RAF, Henk Wubben was asked whether he could take care of his friend Sigurd Debus, who was allegedly at that time in bad health, after he was helped to escape from prison. Initially, Wubben agreed to help in this, but later became suspicious and withdrew from the plan.

¹⁶⁴ E.g. Verbij 2005, 144.

¹⁶⁵ E.g. Moussault 2009, 210-211, 214-215, 220-221.

people are convinced that explosion was most probably caused by his own accident with the handling of explosives.¹⁶⁶

After the campaign of Rood Verzetsfront sputtered out, there has never come another similar kind of opportunity for a revolutionary struggle in the Netherlands that Wubben would have found worthwhile. He still holds the struggles that Rote Armee Fraktion and other groups were engaged in as honorable and just ones.

Nowadays Henk Wubben lives together with Ciska Brakenhoff (formerly Eeken) in a street named after one of the heroes of the Dutch resistance movement during the Second World War. In 1997, his book on North Korea was published and he occasionally lectures and interviews on the theme. Ciska Brakenhoff, on her part, remains steadfast in her refusal to give interviews.

Joost van Steenis and the concept of small violence

Of the former Rode Jeugd people, Joost van Steenis is one of those who have stayed involved in the radical politics the longest. After Rode Jeugd, he too took part in Rode Hulp for a time. Others, however, had serious reservations about his concept for anti-imperialist struggle. According to Van Steenis, the concept of urban guerrilla did not suit well to the prevailing circumstances in the developed countries. Instead, the best way for action was the use of “small violence”, that is all kinds of acts that required little from the logistics. Most typically these acts would be directed against the power holders of imperialist and capitalist system in person, such as harassment, intimidation and other deeds that disturb their lives.¹⁶⁷ Most others did not support this idea and Joost van Steenis and his participation in Rode Hulp was effectively over.¹⁶⁸

From the late 1970s on, Van Steenis has been active in various movements. In 1977, he was a parliamentary candidate for a small party called *Verbond tegen Ambtelijke Willekeur* (Alliance against Arbitrary Official Rule). One year later, he established, together with his friend Tom de Booi (who had also been active in Rode Hulp), an organization called *Schoon van Lichaam, Helder van Geest* (Clean Body, Lucid Mind) which purported the doctrine of small

¹⁶⁶ Dekkers & Dijkman 1988, 46–47; “Nederland wist van bomaanslag”, *Het Parool* 14 June 1986. Van Staalduinen claims that it has later come out that the German authorities knew about the explosion (Van Staalduinen 1996, 200). However, this information seems to be based on misreading the above mentioned article in *Het Parool* (which deals with the role of German authorities in the explosion at the wall of the prison Debus was in).

¹⁶⁷ Discussion paper for the meeting in Amersfoort 13 December 1975 (“Vergadering zaterdag 13 december 12.00 precies Restaurant Amershof...”); a letter from Joost van Steenis to Aat van Wijk, 10 August 1979; “De toepassing van “klein geweld” in Nederland,” BVD report 21 March 1977.

¹⁶⁸ Dekkers & Dijkman 1988, 79.

violence, as well as *Stichting Macht & Elite* (Foundation Power and Elite), which had the research on the balance of power in the western countries as its task. In the early 1980s, he was actively involved in squatter movement as well as the movement against nuclear power.¹⁶⁹ Nowadays he maintains a Foundation Power and Elite website where he publishes his letters, articles and books.

Part of Van Steenis' ideology is the propagation of autonomy of individuals and autonomous action. His opposition of all elites includes also reservations against strict organization of resistance against the ruling elite, because "centralization will always lead to the rise of a new elite".¹⁷⁰ As this shows, Van Steenis has largely left behind the Marxist-Leninist ideology in its most typical form and has done so already in the late 1970s.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ "Who is Joost van Steenis?" <http://members.chello.nl/jsteenis/whoisjoostvansteenist.htm>, 12 February 2008; Quarterly survey of BVD 4, 1981, reprinted in English in de Valk 2005). About his role in the movement against nuclear power, see especially de Valk 1996, 191–204.

¹⁷⁰ "Who is Joost van Steenis?" <http://members.chello.nl/jsteenis/whoisjoostvansteenist.htm>, 12 February 2008.

¹⁷¹ Letter from Joost van Steenis to Aat van Wijk, 16 January 1980. See also the webpages of his foundation at <http://members.chello.nl/jsteenis/index.htm>, 12 February 2008.