

Anarchism in the Netherlands

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2009

In 1885 anarchism gained a foothold in the Netherlands and by the late 1880s groups were active in Amsterdam, the Hague, and Rotterdam. From January 1888 they published *Anarchist*, which survived eight years without charging subscription fees.

In the Netherlands, all shades of anarchism developed. Whereas *Anarchist* was social-anarchist, other journals spread individualist, Christian, or Tolstoyan anarchism. When Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis joined the anarchists in 1898, his *De Vrije Socialist* (*The Free [i.e., libertarian] Socialist*) became the leading anarchist journal in the Netherlands. Because of Domela Nieuwenhuis, Dutch anarchism as such was not very well organized. Dutch anarchists founded single-issue organizations that promoted teetotalism, anti-militarism, vegetarianism, free thought, or neo-Malthusianism. This gave the movement a moralistic overtone. However, in 1901 the socialist trade union federation Nationaal Arbeidssecretariaat (National Labor Secretariat) (NAS) adopted a revolutionary syndicalist program.

Dutch anarchism was particularly strong between 1898 and 1919, although the precise number of activists and sympathizers is unknown. The movement published at least five weeklies (*De Vrije Socialist* was twice a week) plus several other periodicals. It spread over the whole country, although it was weak in the two Catholic southern provinces of Brabant and Limburg.

During World War I the anti-militarist movement became very active. The number of war resisters grew considerably. In the first decade after the war it kept its strength with Bart de Ligt, Albert de Jong, and Arthur Lehning as important representatives. After 1936 discussions about aid to the Spanish Republic fatally divided the movement; only in the northern province of Friesland did it manage to retain its strength. This typifies the development of Dutch anarchism during the interwar years. At the end of the 1920s the anarchosyndicalist movement, also led by De Jong and Lehning, dwindled. Younger comrades either joined the communist movement or took a more individualistic stance with a preference for direct action. They also had broader cultural interests, such as sexual politics: during the 1930s Anton Constandse and Gé Nabrink introduced the ideas of Wilhelm Reich.

Anarchists took part in the resistance during World War II. Afterwards, the movement was rather weak, but a new generation continued the publication of *De Vrije Socialist* while Albert and Rudolf de Jong published the syndicalist *Buiten de Perken* (*Outside the Markers*). Most anarchists adhered to a traditional anarchism and found it difficult to accept newer forms like Provo.

During the 1970s the movement regained momentum thanks to young adherents. Next to *De Vrije Socialist* the more theoretical *de AS (The Anarcho-Syndicalist)* was founded. Anarchism inspired many squatters. Through the Onkruid movement, radical anti-militarism was renewed. New journals came into being during the 1980s. *Ravage* and *Bluf!* catered for a young public and *Buiten de Orde (Out of Order)* is the journal of a new anarcho-syndicalist trade union, De Vrije Bond.

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Published in *The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest*.

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