

EUROPE speaks**[Nachkriegsausgabe]***Edited by Mary Saran**No. 7**December 1st, 1946**[Seite: - 37 -]***The New Holland*****By a Dutch Correspondent***

IN pre-war Holland, as in most continental countries, the Socialist Party was under strong German influence. It was a centrally organised, well-disciplined party. From its inception it was Marxist in character. Marxism is a typically German system of thinking and, as modern Germany can only be understood as a country which arrived too late on the world stage, so must Marxism be understood as the doctrine of a class which arrived too late on the political stage.

In Britain, Socialism grew out of the trade union movement as the political concentration of existing forces. On the continent the trade unions had to be encouraged by the socialist movement. In Britain, a progressive bourgeoisie had split away from the Conservative Party, developing its own great liberal tradition. Socialism was able to make use of this tradition and, by a gradual process, insert itself into the position of the Liberal Party. On the continent the workers found no such vehicle for their political urges. There was no tradition upon which to build. Therefore, the continental socialists, much more than the British, tended to regard the State with all its traditions and institutions as their enemy. The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, for lack of a strong liberal tradition, fell back on the Church, and thus on the continent political parties and trade unions with a denominational basis were created.

The Marxist Tradition

Marxism fitted remarkably well into this situation, for it corresponded to the workers' way of looking at the world. There was for them an unbridgeable gulf between the bourgeoisie and its instrument the State, which were evil, and the workers who represented the forces of good, the trend towards social progress. Marxism succeeded in giving the workers a strategy. It taught them to look behind the high-sounding phrases of the clerical parties; it made them understand the conditions of their own position and of their struggle as a class. For a long period, Marxism was essentially in accordance with realities, the more so as the continental bourgeoisie fitted perfectly into the rôle assigned to it by dialectics. Therefore, Marxist teaching had a strong hold on the continental Labour Movement. It became, however, a dogma, and in the course of time even the elements of truth in this doctrine were perverted.

The philosophical shortcomings of the Marxist theory revealed their fatal effects only when the parties themselves were involved in a crisis. Marxist predictions of the advancing proletarianisation of society did not materialise: the middle classes in town and country even extended during the period of rationalisation. With the improvement in their material position, large sections of the workers began to believe in the inevitability of gradual progress and their movement declined in fighting power. Because in Marxist

theory Socialism was the affair of the workers, they did not attempt to win over the middle classes by widening their appeal.

Stagnation in the Labour Movement

In Holland, the stagnation of the socialist movement was notorious. In local self-government, it is true, there were considerable achievements. Many social improvements were due to socialist influence. But in parliament the socialists remained an opposition party. The coalition of right-wing parties, liberals with both Protestants and Catholics, kept the social democrats out of government. The Catholic Party, which occupied a centre position, was the only party on the Right which had considerable working class support. (The catholic provinces of Holland are also the industrially strong parts of the country.) Thus it feared the competition of the socialists. Its small left wing never dared to put the question of a coalition between social democrats and Catholics on the agenda.

When the economic world crisis came, Dutch Socialism was unable to defend the workers in parliament. It was equally unprepared for any extra-parliamentary struggle. The discontent and distrust of the social democratic leaders which developed among the workers were, however, denied proper expression in the trade unions and the Socialist Party because of the domination of the party machine.

Ties with the Past cut by War

By the Second World War, Holland, which had always stood on the fringe of world politics, was thrown into the whirlpool of international conflict. Without military tradition, incapable of defending herself, she was forced to capitulate after four days. Under occupation the ties with the political past were cut and the whole nation, robbed of its traditional leadership, was compelled to look for a new orientation. The established political forces failed almost completely. Deserted by the old, a new leadership grew up in all parties, consisting of young people who, despite many differences of opinion, found a new unity in the fight against the occupying forces. In this practical co-operation the old political barriers were largely broken down, with the result that sections of the middle classes, already shaken by the world crisis, began to move in the direction of Socialism. Many socialists were excellent illegal fighters. But the Socialist Party as such played no part. The record of the trade union movement which drifted along with its legality unimpaired by the Germans was even worse.

[Seite im Original:] - 38-

Out of all this grew the desire for a regeneration of the old cadres in the socialist movement and for the inclusion of the groups won over to the socialist idea. Since German Socialism was greatly discredited, the socialists began to look towards Britain. The Labour Party was the only socialist force which still represented a real and growing power, and its success at the General Elections made a big impression in all continental countries.

The Resistance Movement

The first reaction to German occupation in Holland was the formation of the so-called Dutch Union, a kind of political Oxford movement, which steered a rather dangerous course between opposition and collaboration, until it was dissolved by the Reichswehr. Its programme embodied the idea of Socialism, if vaguely and in nationalist colours. The

second attempt to organise the oppositional forces arose out of the illegal struggle. In a concentration camp, St. Mivchielsgestel, left Protestants, left Catholics and right-wing socialists agreed on a broad socialist programme, again very vague, and the „Dutch People's Movement" was born. A non-party cartel, it set itself the aim of creating a mass party on a non-denominational, non-Marxist basis capable of attracting the majority of the people and of forming a government on socially progressive lines.

Out of this cartel a government was formed after Liberation, which remained in office for almost a year, until the election in April, 1946. During this year the battle between the forces striving for a political regeneration and the traditional parties was fought out. During occupation the illegal press, which was in the hands of young and progressive people, had a monopoly of "public opinion". But it could be foreseen that, because of the intellectual lethargy of the masses, the traditional powers would emerge far stronger than this underground press would lead one to believe, especially as the old parties had at their disposal the most experienced people. In a country as traditional as Holland, with no recent experience of progressive governments, it is not surprising that the Government, formed as it was on a non-parliamentary basis, by a new political movement inspired by mere glimmerings of a vague socialist ideal, should encounter great difficulties. Nobody knew how big was its support in the country. But as it had to undertake a thankless task, the reconstruction of a pillaged country, it was to be expected that the reactionaries would not be keen to take on this responsibility. In this situation it was important not only to carry out the reconstruction, but to exact payment for this service by bringing in those progressive reforms for which the shock of liberation had provided the social and psychological conditions.

Liberation Government's Thankless Task

The thankless task was carried out. Life in Holland was gradually brought back to normal. But no radical measures of social reform were introduced. Reaction recovered and began to attack. An emergency parliament was established in which the traditional parties had far too big a percentage of the seats. The Government did not risk any conflict with them, although this parliament feared nothing more than dissolution, for it was clear that many of its old war horses would not be returned. Because the Government had not the courage to create accomplished facts by sharp legal action, the revolutionary potentialities of the situation after Liberation were lost. The wavering treatment of the quislings and the colonial problem, to mention only two examples, led to growing discontent. This was the situation in which the new Dutch Labour Party was founded.

Foundation of Labour Party

Immediately after Liberation the old Social Democratic Party had come back. But it lacked part of its former working-class support. Many workers, dissatisfied even before the war with the right-wing course of the Party, but too lazy to revolt, had been separated from their Party by the five years of occupation. Now they struck against the old leaders by refusing to return to the Party and the former trade unions. A new radical trade union movement was founded which promised at first to develop into something like the American C.I.O., but which gradually disintegrated. The leaders of the Dutch People's Movement, true to their programme, began to form a new party on the British model. Many Left Protestants joined, a smaller number of Catholics, and later the social democrats. But from the start this new Labour Party suffered from the fact that the nature of its main nucleus, the old Social Democracy, had remained unchanged. Large

sections of the keenest and intellectually most alert workers therefore stayed outside. Critical as they were of the old social democrats, they became even more suspicious when that party united with elements traditionally regarded as still more right wing. This was in fact a wrong view, for many of the new converts to Socialism stood to the left of the Social Democratic Party. But adherence to the Marxist doctrine with its glorification of the workers obstructed an objective conception of the new sociological phenomena.

Election Results Disappointing

The results of the election were disappointing. Although inroads were made upon the protestant fortress and limited, if important, successes gained amongst the catholic workers, even more was lost to the communists, who obtained ten per cent. of the seats in parliament, and as much as thirty per cent. in Amsterdam. The communists profited by the decline in the material situation of the workers (caused mainly by shortages of goods) and the resulting discontent which always makes men turn towards the more unscrupulous and aggressive elements. The communists - though in name a People's Party - still appeal in the main to proletarian grievances. They speak in strong, uncompromising terms. Despite all their changes of front they still appear as the standard bearer of Marxism, as a militant force pursuing the workers' interests.

The formation of the Labour Party was, however, the right move. Without it Socialism would have suffered an even greater defeat. To win back the workers it must prove by action that the new development does not mean a decline in militancy. The fight for the interests of workers, farmers and the lower middle classes must be the first concern of the Party.

With the creation of the Labour Party it has at last become possible to undermine the conception of clerical politics. In the new Party questions of "Weltanschauung" have been dropped. A new conception of Socialism, a kind of militant social humanism is being shaped. The class ideology is regarded with critical eyes, but the conception of the struggle has by no means been abandoned. What has been abandoned is the illusion that only workers can think and act in a socialistic way.

The Catholics weathered the storm best. They became the largest party and took over the leadership in the new Government.

Holland at End of Colonial Phase

The most difficult political issue facing the Government was the colonial question. Here a conflict of world-wide importance had to be resolved. In many respects conditions in Indonesia can be compared to those in India. But whilst in India a bourgeoisie of

[Seite im Original:] - 39-

some importance had developed and, with it, a class of intellectuals, the economic pressure of the Dutch upon Indonesia had been so great that, except for a very few owners of small businesses and industrial enterprises, no capitalist class existed. Moreover, the colonial régime had done nothing to encourage the growth of an Indonesian intelligentsia; the only two universities, at Batavia and Bandoeng, are both of fairly recent origin. Admittedly the Dutch administration introduced certain measures in the spheres of welfare and hygiene which, by colonial standards, can be called progressive. During the last few decades a struggle has been going on in the colonial

administration between the reactionary trend which gained in influence after the world economic crisis, and the so-called ethical trend which had adherents amongst the middle ranks of officials. The Indonesian nationalist movement suffered greatly at the hands of the political police. After the suppression of its radical wing, which had withdrawn into complete non-co-operation, a new phase began with the foundation of another nationalist movement which favoured some contact with the Government, partly because of the Japanese threat.

Indonesia under Occupation

Then came the Second World War. Holland was invaded by the Germans and two years later Indonesia by the Japanese. The army, which was used only to deal with the "enemy from within", was shamefully beaten. The white régime suffered a terrible moral defeat. Although the methods used by the Japanese occupation troops soon destroyed any pro-Japanese sentiments, they did not thereby create any pro-Dutch leanings. The Indonesians blamed the Dutch for being unable, after three hundred years of rule, to defend the country. The Japanese made every effort to teach the Indonesians "Asiatic pride", and tried in particular to imbue the youth with their own brand of Fascism. This was not easy in view of the pacific attitude of the Indonesians. But some sections of the youth were won over to the fascist youth organisation Hei Ho (the S.S. of the Japanese). Some of the well-known leaders of the nationalists, Soekarno[1] and Hatta [2], liberated by the Japanese from Dutch internment camps, collaborated with the occupation authorities, but, as was established later, not without the agreement of other leaders who did not co-operate. A small group around Sjahrir[3] refused all co-operation with the Japanese on humanitarian, democratic and socialist grounds.

The capitulation of the Japanese created a vacuum. It is true that in many cases they armed groups of Indonesians, but this was not the official policy of the Japanese Army Command. The Republic was proclaimed by the nationalist movement against the will of the Japanese, under the pressure of the Indonesian Youth Movement, the Pemoedas, which had nothing to do with the Hei Ho. Even Soekarno, an agitator without much moral or intellectual courage, was compelled to associate himself with this step.

Anti-Dutch Revolt

This movement was not yet anti-Dutch, for there was a widespread belief that the Dutch would immediately recognise the Republic and that an entirely new relationship between the two nations would develop. Unfortunately, most Dutchmen, especially those outside Indonesia, failed to understand the situation. Since Indonesia had been under a police régime the Dutch were ignorant of the real political forces in the country. Thus it could happen that Van der Plas[4], a high official, declared to the Allied authorities: "My return will be a flower corso." This might well have been the case if his officials had been there to organise it! There were progressively minded officials who had close relations with the Indonesian population, and they knew better. But they were not heard. The majority had the usual colonial outlook and, together with the plantation owners, had always played the rôle of the master race. Their human and political bankruptcy was absolute. First cowardly, then arrogant, they spoilt every chance of a peaceful solution. Returning as "experts" to Holland, they infected the Government with their prejudices. It is not surprising that the Indonesians, seeing that the former colonial conditions were to be restored as a matter of course, interned the Dutch in the internment camps from which they had just been freed. The Republican Movement turned into an anti-Dutch revolt. The gulf widened rapidly. Very slowly the Dutch

Government, which found it extremely difficult to get accustomed to the idea of an independent Indonesia, began to realise what was happening and became more conciliatory - but always too late to catch up with developments.

Gradually the Republican Movement took shape. It gained control of the whole of Java and Sumatra except for the towns occupied by the Dutch and British Armies, though it must be pointed out that the authority it wields cannot be compared with European models. It has authority because there is no other force which could challenge it. The present organisation is nothing more than a loose association of village economic units.

The Economic Position

Indonesia comprises an enormous agrarian area with large agricultural estates - the so-called "cultures" - which have been worked almost industrially. The majority of the people are small farmers who live on starvation level. The working class is insignificant in numbers and influence, and greatly weakened by the strain of revolution and disorder. A thinly spread but well-organised system of modern industrial technique and transport had been developed. This system, as well as the "cultures", [was] destroyed by the revolution. What remained was a primitive feudal village system in a vast country. There is almost no culture or cohesion. This explains why the armed extremist groups are able to gain a hold so quickly in the localities and why Sjahrir's Socialist Party has such a weak grip on the masses. It explains the influence of the corrupt feudal Muslim Party.

Political Forces in Indonesia

Politically everything is still in flux. Of the many parties the two most outstanding are the Masjumi Party [5] and the People's Front. Thanks to its religious background, the Masjumi Party has become a mass party which embodies, however, all kinds of different trends: democratic and even socialistic as well as very reactionary ones. It includes adherents of capitalism, or at any rate of unlimited private profits (and political corruption), and also some influential feudal chiefs. This party might turn either semi-fascist or bonapartist on the model of the Roxas [6] Party (Philippines) or a right-wing Kuo Min Tang. The People's Front is led by Tan Malakkas [7], an ex-communist, martyr, agitator and irresponsible ultra-left politician, who has been stirring up extreme anti-Dutch sentiments. At times he has been used by the Masjumi leaders. Recently he was arrested by the Government.

Between these two stands the Socialist Party of Sjahrir. Sjahrir is a convinced socialist, educated in Holland, the most outstanding personality of the nationalist movement, both as a character and a politician. He and his party have refrained from co-operation with any collaborationist elements, although a certain contact with Soekarno, as the most popular figure among the Indonesian masses, was maintained. Sjahrir's party is only small, but has steadily gained ground because he is the only political leader with a perspective and a clear political line.

[Seite: - 40 -]

Sjahrir's Aim and Strategy

What does Sjahrir want? His aim is the Republic, but a Republic which makes possible the growth of a democratic form of Socialism. For this reason, if for no other, he seeks

an understanding with Holland. For a military struggle would encourage extremism and chaos. A Republic which was dominated by a Roxas Party, on the other hand, would be independent only in name; it would leave in power the old feudal and other corrupt Indonesian classes, whilst, as in the Philippines, American capital would be the real ruler. Indonesia lacks an intelligentsia. She cannot build up a modern State out of her own resources. An understanding with Holland on a progressive basis would mean that great support could be obtained from that country for the work of organisation and education. In the course of such co-operation Indonesia could become a genuinely independent democratic State. This is Sjahrir's aim.

It is, however, impossible for Sjahrir to ignore the immediate demands of nationalism, because that would lose him the confidence of the movement. His party is still weak, and he must conquer and consolidate his position from day to day. Thus he has backed the minimum programme of the nationalists and would have resigned if it had not been accepted. In that case war would have been the only alternative. Militarily, the Dutch could probably defeat the Republic. But they would have to face guerrilla warfare for a long time, and the nationalist movement could create such chaos that Holland would be unable to control the country effectively. Fortunately, the Dutch Commission under Schermerhorn [8] has succeeded in reaching an agreement with the Indonesian Republic which is now awaiting ratification.

Dutch-Indonesian Agreement

The importance of this draft agreement cannot be over-estimated. It has been brought about in the face of the opposition of an extremely active reactionary minority composed of roughly the same elements which in Britain are against the Labour Government's India policy. In Holland these forces comprise the old Liberal Party (the party of the employers), the right wing of the Catholics and almost all the protestant political groups. The whole Left has favoured an understanding with Indonesia, supported by a large section of the middle classes who still incline towards their former pacifist tradition which has always been linked with the Dutch policy of neutrality.

Moreover, the experience of German occupation, of the misery and suppression that went with it, has made such a deep impression on the Dutch people that most of them shrink from the idea of suppressing another nation. People from all social classes have attended recent public meetings to protest against the sending of Dutch reinforcements to Indonesia. The Protestant Church Congress (the Synod), upon the initiative of its spiritual leader, Professor Kraemer [9] (who recently joined the Labour party) issued a strong proclamation against the colonial system and for an understanding with the Republic.

The Labour Party has been foremost in opposing any revival of the old colonial policy, which would have involved the threat of a colonial war. There are many in the Civil Service and especially in the higher ranks of the army who would have loved to see their shameful defeat at the hands of the Japanese redeemed by an easy victory over the Indonesian Army. (The army has not yet been purged. The Socialist Ministers have not even purged their own departments.) The Labour Party's decision to join the Government at a time when it would have been more advantageous to go into opposition, was mainly due to its desire to see that an understanding with Indonesia was reached. Therefore, it was one of the conditions laid down by the Labour Party before entering the Government that a commission under Schermerhorn should go to Indonesia to seek an agreement.

Liberty of Action Regained by Labour Party

The success of the commission has taken a heavy load off Dutch politics and given the Labour Party more liberty of action. Whilst the agreement with Indonesia was in the balance, it could not press its demands to the extent of endangering its participation in the Government. Unfortunately, the workers have shown little appreciation of this necessity; for every concession to the Catholics they have attacked the Party. It is true, however, that an even more difficult task lies ahead: that of carrying out the agreement in practice. For this it will be necessary to fight a continual day-to-day struggle against the reactionaries in Holland and in Indonesia. To make the agreement really work, as many progressive people as possible should be sent from Holland to Indonesia.

The Labour Party has solved its first big political task. If it uses its increased opportunities well, it will enter the next election with very much better prospects. A word in conclusion on the ideological problem: Many socialists of the old school fear that with the influx of new elements the conception of Socialism will be watered down. This would make it very difficult to win back the lost working-class support. It is also feared that the right wing of the old Social Democratic Party, which is inclined towards a certain bourgeois "respectability", might profit by the new trends and that under its influence the differences between socialist and bourgeois mentality might be completely lost. It must, however, be remembered that many of the new-comers of middle-class origin have come to Socialism because of their opposition to the bourgeois milieu. They certainly do not favour a right-wing policy. They hope to find in Socialism the principles on which a new society can be built. They are ready for radical changes.

Dutch Socialism's Great Task

The problem facing the socialist movement is one that concerns workers and middle-class intellectuals alike. The old Marxist ideology, the fallacies of which have been revealed, must be revised. The socialist idea must be restated in terms of a humanism which does full justice to the psychological, emotional and ideal factors. But at the same time it must be realistic, in accordance with the results of modern social science, capable of giving its followers a political strategy which enables them to organise not only the workers - though this remains of paramount importance - but all progressive sections. To develop a movement which is idealistic, yet militant, which strives for power, but is anti-machiavellian, is the great task of Dutch Socialism.

EUROPE SPEAKS aims, through the publication of reports, documents and articles, to help towards a better understanding of the Europe of to-day. It will be concerned to underline those developments which contribute to the achievement of social justice in the individual countries and the unification of Europe as a whole.

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Editorische Anmerkungen

- 1 - Soekarno = Sukarno (1901-1970), indonesischer Politiker, Gründer (1927) und Führer der „Indonesischen Nationalpartei“ (PNI), von der niederländischen Kolonialregierung verbannt (1934), zusammen mit Hatta Ausrufung der Unabhängigkeit der Republik Indonesien (1945), erster Präsident von Indonesien (1945), nach Anerkennung der Unabhängigkeit Indonesiens durch die Niederlande (1949) als Präsident bestätigt (1949-1967), nach Putschversuchung der KP praktisch entmachtet (1965), offizieller Rücktritt (1967).
- 2 - Mohammed Hatta (1902-1980), indonesischer Politiker, Mitglied der 1927 gegründeten „Indonesischen Nationalpartei“ (PNI), Inhaftierung in den Niederlanden (1927, 1935), zusammen mit Sukarno Ausrufung der Unabhängigkeit der Republik Indonesien (1945), Vizepräsident und Ministerpräsident von Indonesien (1948-1950), nach dem Sturz Sukarnos (1967) Berater von dessen Nachfolger Suharto.
- 3 - Sutan Sjahrir (1909-1966), erster Ministerpräsident Indonesiens (1945-1947), Gründer der Indonesischen Sozialistischen Partei (1948), gestorben im Exil in Zürich (1966).
- 4 - Van der Plas, nach "Europe Speaks" hoher niederländischer Beamter. Weitere biographische Daten konnten nicht ermittelt werden.
- 5 - Masjumi-Party, Abkürzung für „Majelis Sjura Muslimin Indonesia“, Partei in Indonesien, die 1960 unter Sukarno aufgelöst wurde.
- 6 - Manuel Acuña Roxas (1892-1948), philippinischer Politiker, Abgeordneter des Repräsentantenhauses (1921), Finanzminister im Kabinett Manuel Quezon (1938-1941), Inhaftierung durch die japanische Besatzungsmacht (1942), nach seiner Wahl und Anerkennung durch die Vereinigten Staaten erster Präsident der Philippinen (1946), plötzlicher Tod durch Herzinfarkt (1948).
- 7 - Tan Malakkas = Tan Malaka (1893-1949), indonesischer kommunistischer Politiker, Vorsitzender der kommunistischen Partei PKI (1921), Ausweisung aus politischen Gründen nach Timor (1923), 20 Jahre lang Aufenthalte in verschiedenen Ländern Europas und Asiens, davon 15 Jahre in China (1927-1942), Rückkehr nach Indonesien, nationaler Führer der „Demokratischen Volksfront“, Gegner Sukarnos und kompromisslos gegenüber der niederländischen Kolonialmacht, Festnahme und Inhaftierung durch Sjahrir-Administration (1946-1948), nach der Freilassung Gründung einer Volkspartei, erneute Festnahme und Hinrichtung (1949).
- 8 - Willem Schermerhorn (1894-1977), niederländischer Politiker (Arbeitspartei), Professor der Technischen Universität Delft (1926), erster Premierminister nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg (1945-1946), Parlamentsabgeordneter (1946-1951).
- 9 - Hendrik Kraemer (1888-1965), niederländischer evangelischer Theologe, Aufenthalt

in Indonesien (1921-1936), Professor in Leiden (1937-1948), Widerstand gegen die nationalsozialistische Besatzungsmacht, Geiselhaft (1942-1943), Direktor des ökumenischen Instituts in Bossey (Schweiz), das für die Koordinierung der evangelischen Weltmissionsarbeit wirkt, Mitglied der niederländischen Arbeitspartei.