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Provo Is as Provo Does: A General Introduction

LUCAS VAN DER LAND

dr. E. Boekmansriching
Bibliotheek

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'Provo' is short for *provocateur* and first appeared in print in the doctoral dissertation *Achtergronden van nozemgedrag* (Background to the Behaviour of Young Trouble-Makers) presented at Utrecht University in January 1965 by Wouter Buikhuisen. This study was the result of a five-year investigation of semi-delinquent street gangs and attempted to define specific characteristics of various groups widely if vaguely classified by the Dutch public as 'nozem.' Buikhuisen called one of his categories 'street nozems' or 'provos.' These youths, he found, were distinguished by a general lack of interest in political, social, or cultural matters; they had few aspirations; and their actions were motivated primarily by a desire to overcome boredom. Sometimes they were passive, meeting in cafeterias or ice-cream parlours, going to the cinema, dancing, listening to juke-boxes, sauntering about town, and so on. At other times they behaved rowdily, annoying passers-by, provoking fights, and destroying private and public property. They did not provoke in order to needle the police or because they were dissatisfied with the existing power structure. They provoked simply when there was nothing else to do – just to stir things up a bit.

The Provos to whom this issue of *Delta* is devoted are quite different from Buikhuisen's provos, although they borrowed their name from his book. They provoke continually and as matter of principle. Their discontent and recalcitrance reflect a deep concern with social and cultural problems and a political commitment. There is purpose to all their actions, and, for people who do not believe in the saving grace of work, they work very hard to achieve their aims.



Robert Jasper Grootveld, a political proto-Provo and happener

Yet to the outsider the Provo phenomenon must seem both confused and confusing. There are several reasons for this, of which the following are the most evident. First, the commotion and publicity surrounding Provo activities have been considerable. Provo has had greater impact on the international press than practically any other Dutch question, creating the impression abroad that it is much bigger and better organized than is actually the case. It began in Amsterdam and has been largely confined to this city. The number of 'full-time' Provos has never exceeded twenty-five or thirty. This is the group within which real social interaction takes place, which lays the plans for street demonstrations, and which fills the pages of the periodical *Provo*. Around this core is a constantly changing peripheral group – to which many 'old provos' (nozems) belong – which joins in the happenings and demonstrations. And beyond this group is an outer fringe whose interest has been temporarily aroused – people out for a walk, for instance, who stop to look, sometimes take part, and come in for their share of the blows when the police charge.

In the second place, the Provos are generally described as young, and many of those who write about them treat them simply as another youth problem. 'Young,' however, is a rather elastic adjective in the Netherlands. It refers more to a particular behaviour pattern than to an age group. In Dutch youth organizations one frequently encounters members who are between twenty-five and thirty years old. Several Provos are older than twenty-five, are married, and have children. In 1967 the ages of a number of prominent Provos were as follows: Irene Donner, 28; Roel van Duyn, 24; Koosje Koster, 25; Luud Schimmelpenninck, 31; Hans Tuynman, 25; Bernhard de Vries, 27; Duco van Weerlee, 28. The twelfth on the list of Provo candidates standing for election to the Amsterdam municipal council in 1966 was the writer Jef Last, who was then sixty-eight.

Thirdly, although Provo activities have taken place for the most part in Amsterdam, youthful Amsterdammers are not the sole moving spirits. Quite a few Provos come from other places: Roel van Duyn, Irene Donner, Hans Tuynman, and Bernhard de Vries are from The Hague; Duco van Weerlee is from Leiden. They are to a large extent people who have lost their roots, who were bored to tears in their home towns, and who expected rather more of Amsterdam than that city has been able to give them.

Fourthly, although in many descriptions of it – including some in this issue – Provo is for want of a better word called a movement, this suggests a greater degree of unity as regards principles and aims than is warranted by the facts. There was no true solidarity among them in the beginning, and they came together later only when they felt themselves driven into a corner by the actions of the police and the authorities. Each Provo speaks for himself and

about himself, never on behalf of a movement or by virtue of a shared system of ideological notions. What the Provos do have in common is their activity: bringing points of political or social conflict to public attention by spectacular means (happenings and demonstrations). In this they have shown an amazing talent for garnering free publicity and for finding the weak spots in the Establishment's shell. They vastly enjoy both the act and the result of their provocation, and for a while each of them becomes *homo ludens* – the man of play (the term was invented by the late distinguished Dutch historian Johan Huizinga) – a species into which the Provos would like to convert all their fellowmen. Their actions are accompanied far more by cheerfulness and laughter than by the grim seriousness and fanaticism that one might expect in situations where the authorities respond so vigorously.

Lastly, the reasons why the Provos have been relatively so successful and have gained such enormous publicity (which is one of their main successes) are to be found both in themselves and in the social and political climate in the Netherlands of the 1960s. The Provos belong to the first generation of this century that is not impressed by the threat of economic sanctions or cowed by uniforms. This is the difference between them and those who lived through the depression years and the German occupation.

Some of the factors, mainly social or political, that have conspired to provoke the Provos are mentioned in the following pages, but not systematically or according to any plan. The editors felt that the reader should be shown how Provo came into being as a phenomenon, particularly by way of what the Provos themselves have said. We have not attempted to give a cultural history of the Netherlands in the sixties. Had we done so, we should have had to deal with the fact that since 1950 – after the rubble of the Second World War had been cleared away – prosperity has increased by leaps and bounds, and that this has been accompanied by various economic, psychological, social, and political side-effects, such as full employment, intensification of traffic and industry (air pollution), and the powerful stimulation of material desires in spite of the continuing housing shortage in the large towns. In the political sphere there are a number of issues that are of lively interest not only to Provos: an obsolete party system that hampers political involvement and helps to preserve an excessive distance between the government and the individual. In the coming decade, the question whether the Netherlands should become a republic or remain a monarchy will certainly grow in intensity, and here too the Provos are in the vanguard as extreme republicans. The new political party D'66 (Democrats '66), which was unprecedentedly successful in the 1967 elections, when it won seven seats in parliament,

supports certain measures that in some respects are related to the issues raised by Provo. Nevertheless, Provo and D'66 have nothing to do with each other, except that in both cases the roots of their success are nourished by the same feelings of discontent.

The same is true of the groups that agitate against nuclear armament and America's policy in Vietnam. These movements had already existed for some time in the Netherlands and were organized by young socialists, students, or the Pacifist-Socialist Party. Because the Provos sometimes took part, the street demonstrations of these groups received more interest and publicity than they had had before. Ironically and erroneously, the demonstrations were often ascribed to Provos. But that is typical: through the activities of a very small number of Provos, an action or demonstration acquires a spectacular or provocative character which, as it were, compels both public and authorities to pay attention to it.

One final remark: the Provos think and write of themselves with a small initial letter and of their 'movement' simply as capitalized Provo. Since most publications about them in English do not make this distinction but capitalize both terms, the editors have, for consistency's sake, decided to follow suit.



19 March 1966: provoking an uncapped cop

An Amsterdam Chronology

- 1964
June–September Robert Jasper Grootveld, the anti-smoking magician, holds happenings round 'Het Lieverdje' (The Little Rascal), the romanticized statue of a 'typical' Amsterdam urchin donated by a cigarette manufacturer and placed on the Spui, a crossroad in the middle of town.
- 1965
May Roel van Duyn's first experience of Robert Jasper Grootveld's Magic Centre.
June Announcement of the engagement of Princess Beatrix and Claus von Amsberg.
3 July Princess Beatrix introduces Claus von Amsberg to Amsterdam; Provos throw anti-monarchist pamphlets from a bridge into the royal boat.
12 July The first issue of *Provo* magazine appears and is confiscated by the police, as are copies of all subsequent issues, sometimes because of their contents, but usually because they are distributed in the streets without licence.
31 July The police intervene in the weekly Saturday-night happening at the Lieverdje, setting a pattern for the future.
17 August *Provo 2* appears.
4 September First happening at the monument, in the well-to-do southern district of Amsterdam, to the Dutch colonial general Johannes van Heutsz, who led the Dutch forces to final military victory over the independent state of Achin in Sumatra after a war lasting from 1873 to 1905. To the Provos, Van Heutsz is the symbol of colonialism.
22 September *Provo 3* appears.
7 October Three Provos smear white paint on the official residence of the burgomaster of Amsterdam.
28 October *Provo 4* appears.
18 December *Provo 5* appears.

1966

- January The 'Provo-Orange Committee, The Pearl of the Jordaan' is founded with the purpose of adding anti-lustre to the wedding of Princess Beatrix and Claus von Amsberg by presenting an anti-wedding present.
- 24 January *Provo 6* appears.
- 25 February *Provo 7* appears.
- 10 March Wedding day of Beatrix and Claus. In the morning the Provos organize a protest happening. Smoke-bombs are thrown at the wedding procession. Later in the day, especially in the evening, fights break out with the police at various places in the city.
- 19 March Opening of an exhibition in a gallery on the Prinsengracht of photographs showing the police in action on 10 March. The police take new, hard-handed action and are filmed in the process by the cineast Louis van Gasteren; the film is run that evening on Dutch television, which also carries an interview with Burgomaster Gijsbert van Hall of Amsterdam, who pleads for a cooling-off period. (Later remounted under the title *Omdat mijn fiets daar stond* [Because My Bicycle Was Standing There], Van Gasteren's documentary is refused approval for showing in motion-picture theatres.)
- 30 March The satirical television program *Zo is het* – the Dutch counterpart of the English 'That Was the Week that Was' – is abruptly cancelled owing to a conflict arising from a projected lampoon of the burgomaster of Amsterdam.
- 1 April Provo Hans Tuynman is arrested for handing a policeman a pamphlet protesting against the police.
- 2 April Street demonstration against the conduct of the police. Many arrests.
- 14 April *Provo 8* appears.
- 23 April Koosje Koster, Provo and student, is arrested for giving raisins to passers-by in the street. At the police bureau she is searched to the skin, in spite of her strenuous objections.
- 5 May Demonstration against American militarism in Vietnam. A stone with a protest message wrapped round it is thrown through a window of the American Consulate.
- 11 May Hans Tuynman receives a three months' sentence. His detention leads to many demonstrations outside the jail on the Amstelveenseweg.
- 12 May *Provo 9* appears.
- 1 June Elections for the municipal council. The Provos win over thirteen thousand votes – two and one-half per cent of the total and therefore enough to seat their first candidate, Bernhard de Vries, on the forty-five-member council.
- 1 June Irene Donner-van de Weetering, number two on the Provo list of candidates for the municipal council, is arrested while demonstrating for Hans Tuynman at the jail. Her husband, chess grand master Jan Hein Donner, declares the next day that he will no longer represent the Netherlands in chess competitions because of the treatment his wife has received from Dutch authorities.
- 13 June Demonstration of construction workers dissatisfied with an administrative decision regarding holiday money. During the disturbance outside the pay-office with the police in watchful attendance, one of the workers, Jan Weggelaar, suddenly drops dead in the street. The construction workers assume that he has been killed by the police.
- 14 June A strike called by the construction workers in retaliation for the death of their colleague. Gathering in large numbers, and augmented by sympathizers, including Provos, they march through the city; a number of them attack the building and vehicles of the morning newspaper *De Telegraaf*, which in its 2:00 a.m. edition had attributed Weggelaar's death to the activities of the construction workers themselves and not the police. (Later editions call it a heart

attack brought on by excitement, a diagnosis subsequently confirmed by the official autopsy.)

In the centre of town, on the Dam and Damrak, serious battles break out between the crowd and the strangely delayed police. The disorders continue until late that evening and are renewed the next three evenings.

30 June *Provo 10* appears.

16 July By decision of the government in The Hague, H. J. van der Molen, chief of the Amsterdam police, is dismissed from his post as a result of 'incompatibility' with the executive head of the police, Burgomaster van Hall, a conflict brought to a head by the events of 13-14 June.

17 July The police herd approximately three hundred demonstrators against the United States' Vietnam policy into lorries and drive them to the farthest borders of Amsterdam. The public prosecutor later declares that this action exceeded police jurisdiction.

15 August *Provo 11* appears.

24 August Establishment of a government commission to study the background of the situation in Amsterdam, with Ch. J. Enschedé, professor of penal law at the University of Amsterdam, as chairman.

1 October *Provo 12* appears.

22 November The Amsterdam public prosecutor, J. F. Hartsuiker, declares to the press that in the period from 19 March to 31 October 1966 seventy-four complaints have been filed against the conduct of the police. In nine instances, the complaints have been found valid, but only two of them are eventually heard in court.

1967

10 January *Provo 13* appears.

15 February *Provo 14* appears.

17 March *Provo 15* appears.

22 March Bernhard de Vries resigns and is replaced in the Amsterdam municipal council by Luud Schimmelpenninck, originator of the white-bicycle plan.

9 May The cabinet under Prime Minister Piet de Jong dismisses Burgomaster van Hall of Amsterdam from his post, effective 1 July 1967.

13 May Provo gathering in the Vondel Park. Announced as a meeting to disband the movement, the event turns into an indecisive happening. A number of old-time Provos want to continue, others want to stop. Everything is in a state of flux. The magazine *Provo* has not been issued since this meeting.

17 May Publication of the first part of the Enschedé report about the situation in Amsterdam, with particular reference to 13 and 14 June 1966. No conclusions drawn.

This chronology, like all chronologies, is incomplete and can never be completed. The summer of 1967 in Amsterdam has been one long, warm, peaceful happening.

PROVOLUTIE



◀ Late August 1965: a happening at the Lieverdje;
Provo Peter Bronkhorst holds up a burning crown

▶ 15

Amsterdam Provoked

AAD NUIS

*In July 1966 Aad Nuis (born 1933), a staff member of the faculty of letters at the University of Leiden, published a little book entitled *Wat is er gebeurd in Amsterdam?* (*What Has Happened in Amsterdam?*). Tracing the course of events in the year that elapsed between the engagement of Princess Beatrix and the construction-workers riots, he gave an eye-witness report of the emergence of Provo and the actions of the police against it. The following historical and interpretative sketch is a distillation of this book, brought up to date.*

Picturesque Amsterdam, capital of a peaceful and prosperous country, hit the world's headlines on two occasions in 1966. Foreign newspaper readers noted with surprise that a little revolution of some sort was raging along the canals against a backdrop of seventeenth-century gables. In March, there were disorders at the wedding of Crown Princess Beatrix,* in full view of representatives of the international press. In June, the situation was more serious: a pitched battle was mounted between citizens and police, and order was not restored for several days. It was puzzling that so many Dutchmen should suddenly indulge in these extreme forms of political behaviour. More puzzling was the motive behind it all. The disturbance on the day of the royal wedding seemed to be an expression of republicanism – a political creed that had stirred little passion in the constitutional monarchies of western Europe since the nineteenth century. The riots in June were even more improbable, the immediate reason appearing to be a protest on the part of a group of construction workers against an insignificant deduction from holiday bonus money made by trade-union officials to cover administration costs. Yet the ultimate source of the trouble, according to a great many people, lay in a singular youth movement, a local variant of the international New Left: Provo.

* For an extended account of public and political reaction to this event, see Maarten Rooij, 'A Constitutional Question: The Marriage of Princess Beatrix,' in the Spring/Summer 1966 issue of *Delta*.

Before examining this phenomenon, a few remarks should be made about the background to the events in Amsterdam in order to place them in perspective and to remove some of the aura almost of folklore that from a distance they no doubt seem to possess. The relatively small band of Provos has undoubtedly played an important role in the commotion, but did not conjure it into existence alone.

In the first place, the old central district of Amsterdam has a long and continuing history of radicalism. At the most recent municipal elections, in June 1966, the five big respectable political parties that join in ever-changing coalitions to govern the country, backed by the large majority of the Dutch electorate, together polled less than half the votes cast in this part of town. In this election, too, the old centre proved to be a stronghold not only of the parties left of the Labour Party, but also of the extreme right-wing Farmers Party. The working-class streets behind the mansions and office buildings lining the main canals have more than once been the scene of bloody clashes with the forces of law and order – the last time during the depression in the thirties. In February 1941, during the first year of the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, the heart of the city was the focal point of a general strike protesting against the first anti-Jewish measures – the only such strike in the whole of Europe.

Secondly, like every international cultural centre, Amsterdam attracts artists, journalists, students – a loosely bound group of intellectuals whose importance lies less in its size than in its influence on public opinion. Hitherto this group had not been very active politically. A small country has a negligible voice in world affairs, and its international politics tend to be unexciting. To be sure, the threat of a big war and of creeping inflation is as real in the Netherlands as elsewhere, while such problems as housing, traffic congestion, and air and water pollution are perhaps nowhere so urgent as in this densely populated, highly industrialized country. Although all these things aroused uneasiness among the opinion-formers, they stirred no real political animation, for they seemed too much like inevitable impersonal events of nature. No Dutch soldiers were being sent to fight in Vietnam, and no struggle for civil rights had to be waged at home; there was, in fact, a lack of any concrete inducement to protest against the established order.

Such an inducement might have come in a variety of forms. As it happened, the spark was ignited, and a whole chain reaction set off, by

the Crown Princess's choice of husband. The future prince consort turned out to be a German who, in his youth, had been a soldier in Hitler's army. Now, the royal family's popularity with the political left in the Netherlands since the Second World War has been based mainly on the fact that during the war Queen Wilhelmina had indeed been a symbol of national unity. To many people, the introduction of a one-time German soldier broke the bond linking the throne to the remembrance of wartime solidarity. Others who had never given much thought to the monarchy felt themselves become republican as soon as public debate drew their attention to the matter.

The first few days after the engagement was announced, the papers were full of comments pro and con. But suddenly editorial criticism ceased, and letters protesting against the match were no longer published. Instead of criticizing, many of the publicity media now began to dish up an ostensibly enthusiastic, royalist festiveness. For the protesters this was the second blow. Those who had looked upon the monarchy as purely ornamental and of no special significance to the running of a democracy now began to see it as a symbol of authoritarianism. A new term suddenly gained currency: 'regents' mentality.' (The oligarchs who ruled the Netherlands in the eighteenth century were known as regents; although for the most part anti-Orange – they wanted to keep power in their own hands – they were certainly authoritarian, and, historical consistency notwithstanding, it was this latter trait that was drummed up now to typify the Establishment.)

Suspicious that neo-regents held the upper hand were reinforced when the government, under Prime Minister J. M. L. T. Cals, decided to hold the wedding in Amsterdam, the city that had suffered most from the persecution of the Jews, and in which protest at the marriage was strongest. To make matters worse, the municipal authorities committed a few blunders of their own, among them an attempt to use the Anne Frank House as a temporary police station during the ceremonies.

On the day of the wedding the prevailing atmosphere in the centre of Amsterdam seemed divided between indifference and hostility. Eighteen of the forty-five town councillors, the three chief rabbis of the Jewish community, and representatives of such organizations as the Amsterdam Students' Association had refused invitations to attend the ceremony. Since the weather was bad and the television coverage complete, many

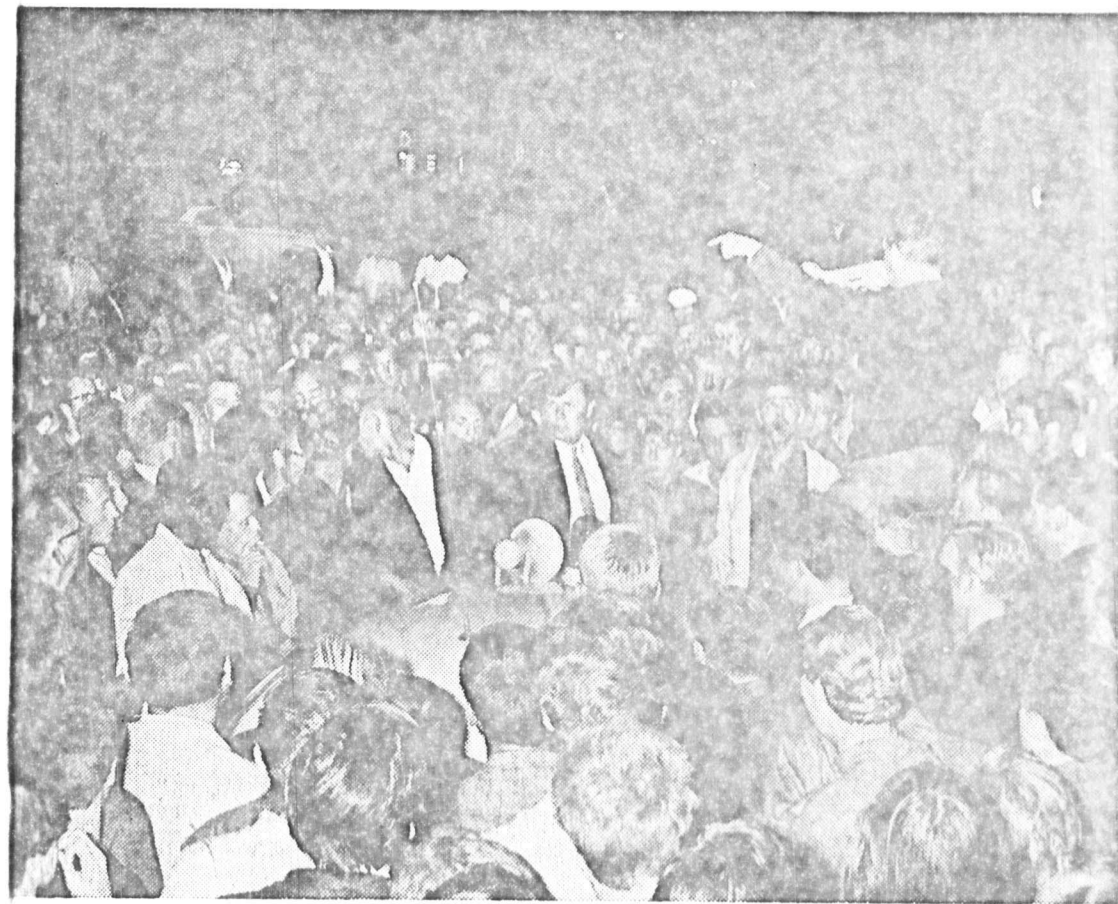
people chose to stay at home, and the streets were relatively quiet. This made all the more conspicuous the groups of young people who, half in earnest, half jokingly, demonstrated in favour of a republic. In spite of the impressive array of guards lining the route, a few smoke-bombs exploded close to the carriage of the bride and groom. These bombs were not dangerous, but they made front-page news all over the world.

After this, the trouble really began. Once the wedding procession had passed, the police, who were clearly on edge, made a charge against a group of inquisitive but innocent bystanders. Heavy-handed behaviour on the part of the police and – later – on the part of judges and magistrates became the order of the day during the next few weeks, primarily in response to humorous and non-violent demonstrations by Provos. As in the case of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, the police provided their opponents with the best propaganda. The disproportionate violence shocked the Amsterdamers, who (apart from the war years) had not seen such things for decades. Some, of course, cheered the police action, deducing the guilt of the law-breakers from the means taken to suppress them, but these people formed a minority in the old part of the city.

Tension increased. On the thirteenth of June it broke: the rumour spread that the police had killed a demonstrating construction worker (the official autopsy later revealed that the man had died of a heart attack). This proved sufficient to start a pitched battle. When the smoke cleared, a battle of words began that at the present time is still far from ended. * As far as one can make out, the authorities in the Netherlands have suffered a tangible loss of prestige, but interest in political matters of every kind has everywhere increased. The chain reaction leading up to this awakened interest was to a large extent initiated and sustained by Provo.

Provo is not a political organization with an executive committee and a party platform. It is a movement with a small, informal nucleus that imperceptibly merges into less and less distinct circles of sympathizers. Its most characteristic features are the originality of its modes of action, the partnership between young people who roam the streets and grown-ups in responsible positions, and the unusual unanimity among the young people themselves, whether 'hipsters' or 'activists' (for a classification of

* One thing has been settled: two court decisions have established that the 'insignificant' (two per cent) deduction of bonus money was illegal.



13 June 1966: protest meeting of construction workers

OPPOSITIE

the Provos by one of them, see a later article). The nature of the movement developed rapidly in response to the pressure of events, but it was determined mainly by the way in which the characters and talents of a small number of key members complemented each other.

On 12 July 1965, shortly after Princess Beatrix's engagement had been announced, the first issue of a stencilled magazine called *Provo* appeared. Since it contained 'recipes' for bombs (reprinted from a nineteenth-century anarchist pamphlet) and a 'Provo manifesto,' it was promptly confiscated, and therefore became an immediate success. The manifesto was written by an Amsterdam University philosophy student, Roel van Duyn, and revealed him to be intelligent, able to express abstract ideas in a lively and often original manner, and possessed of a fearful vision of society's future. According to him, the Bomb is sure to be used. The smoothly running clockwork of welfare and progress offers no opposition to the industrial and military interests that are pushing the world towards war. On the contrary, the welfare state, having wrapped the people in cotton-wool, is rocking them to sleep, making them unconscious accomplices in their own destruction.

Van Duyn had made a study of left-wing theories and the history of the left-wing movement in the Netherlands. The struggle of the Dutch Labour Party to improve living conditions seemed to him merely to promote the torpor that keeps people from thinking about the real dangers. He detested the communists for their rigid dogmatism and dictatorial practices. He had more sympathy for the pacifists and the small, scattered bands of anarchists, but he became impatient when made to listen to endless discussions on doctrinal purity, and he observed how little influence these groups had on public opinion.

He fastened his hopes on the unorganized young people in the streets who had not yet been absorbed into the labour market. A few months previously, the social psychologist Wouter Buikhuisen had published his dissertation (referred to in the introduction above) on the aggressive behaviour of 'nozems' and 'provos.' Van Duyn adopted the latter term, but gave it a different significance. He had noticed that many people who passively accepted authority and the existing social pattern were suddenly shocked into wakefulness by the sight of policemen wielding rubber truncheons, and that they then began to ask fundamental questions, going much deeper than merely criticizing police behaviour. The provocative

'nozems' ought to develop into 'anti-state anarchists,' Van Duyn suggested, that is, their undirected riotousness should be transformed into a conscious opposition to society. They had to realize that a job would degrade them into becoming 'a cog in this time-bomb society of ours' and that they should turn to 'full-time provoism' – a course which the welfare state made eminently feasible. Then they could deliberately goad the police to further violence, which would in turn arouse more ill-feeling, and so the opposition to despotism would grow.

'My whole idea was rather theoretical – I was most surprised by the effect it had,' Van Duyn said in an interview a year later. Anyone reading the passionate words of his first article in *Provo* can see that he really did not think his ideas were realizable. 'We cannot convince the masses,' he wrote; 'we scarcely even want to. How anyone can place any trust in that bunch of apathetic, unenterprising, witless cockroaches, beetles, and ladybirds is a mystery to me . . . If only we could be revolutionaries. But we're more likely to see the sun rise in the west than a revolution in the Netherlands.' Provoke for the sake of provoking was his motto: 'We know our actions are useless; we are quite ready to believe that neither Johnson nor Kosygin will listen to us, and for that very reason we are free to do what we like. We also know that a demonstration is of no use in the long run; that is why it is so important to get as much as possible immediately out of demonstrating.' His article was perhaps the most despairing document ever to usher in a new political movement.

But Van Duyn was wrong on two counts. In the first place, by concentrating on the tenacity of the Establishment as a whole, he failed to realize that the maintenance of order in the centre of Amsterdam was in a very shaky condition. A handful of Provos was able to put the authorities on the spot, and the situation that developed was not a bit like the political witness borne by a small band of martyrs that Van Duyn had had in mind.

Something else happened that Van Duyn could hardly have foreseen. His little group and their magazine became a meeting-place for the most diverse ideas – practical, crackpot, constructive – that had apparently been floating in the Amsterdam wind. Talented individuals who had never taken any interest in politics unexpectedly became involved. Within a few months, Van Duyn's bitter negativism had been transformed into the optimistic exhilaration of an original political movement.

An important part in this transformation was played by the one-time window-cleaner Robert Jasper Grootveld (born 1932), who combined in a remarkable manner the talents of magician, jester, and revivalist. He had first gained notoriety a couple of years earlier by painting *K* for *kanker* (cancer) on cigarette-advertisement hoardings throughout the city (although he was said to be a chain-smoker himself). Later he set up an 'anti-smoking temple' and proclaimed the Lieverdje – because the little statue was the gift of a large cigarette manufacturer – the symbol of 'tomorrow's addicted consumer.' Every Saturday midnight at the mid-town crossroads where the Lieverdje stands, he staged a 'happening,' which consisted mainly in the mumbling of incantations.

When Van Duyn's group began taking part in this weekly ritual, the happenings acquired a political flavour they had hitherto lacked and became a method of protesting, by means of absurd and weird slogans, that was both more effective and more fun than the traditional forms of demonstration. In all this, Grootveld's influence was very marked, for the Provos found his poetic inventiveness and gentle non-violence infectious. The political angle, however, was their own, and because of it the newspapers, police, and public began to throng to the happenings, which as often as not ended in a free-for-all.

Van Duyn was soon no longer the Provos' only theorist. The painter Constant Nieuwenhuys, who has devoted himself almost exclusively in recent years to developing his plans for a city of the future, set out some of his ideas in an essay written for the ninth issue of *Provo* (this essay is reprinted below, beginning on page 55). According to Constant, automation and increasing leisure will cause more and more young people to revolt, because they will be able to release their frustrated energy only in aggressiveness. A virtue can be made of this by converting the pent-up energy into an urge to play, a form of creativity that spells an end to the esotericism of art, that will make every man an artist in his own fashion. The city of the future will no longer be a place to earn money in, but to play in. Because Constant believes in this future, he could not understand why Van Duyn was so sombre. He was the first of a series of artists who allowed themselves – though occasionally with some reserve – to be influenced by the Provo movement, and who in

turn enriched it with new ideas. Among them are the composer Peter Schat, the architect Aldo van Eyck, the painter Frank Lodeizen, and such writers as Harry Mulisch, Renate Rubinstein, Simon Vinkenoog, and Jan Wolkers.

Perhaps the most direct contribution to Provo has been made by Luud Schimmelpenninck, who developed the first and best worked out of the 'white plans': the white-bicycle plan and the white-chimney plan, drastic solutions to central Amsterdam's most pressing problems, traffic congestion and air pollution. Schimmelpenninck is in his early thirties and earns his living as a free-lance technical adviser and idea-man. He came in contact with the Provos as a result of his sympathetic interest in Grootveld's campaign against addicted consumerdom.

That a radical left-wing movement should have chosen white as its rallying colour will perhaps surprise some people, especially in the United States. The reason is simple: the Netherlands is almost free from internal racial problems, and the Dutch language has two words for white – one for the colour of this paper (*wit*) and one for skin colour (*blank*). The contamination that the colour of innocence and fresh beginnings has suffered in the English-speaking world has thus not taken place in the Netherlands.

Constant's vision of the future, Van Duyn's bitter social criticism and Schimmelpenninck's practical ideas, enhanced by pointed slogans and stunts thought up under Grootveld's influence, formed an attractive mixture for many people. Moreover, the police provided martyrs, two of whom in particular stirred the public's imagination: Hans Tuynman, who was kept in jail for months because he had handed a policeman an anti-police pamphlet on April Fool's Day; and Koosje Koster, a girl student who was arrested as she was doling out raisins to the crowd surrounding the Lieverdje one Saturday night and, because she did not submit 'gracefully,' was searched at the police station with excessive thoroughness by a policewoman in the presence of three policemen.

Supporters now began appearing on every side. The weekly newspaper of the Amsterdam University students took up the Provo line; student organizations and left-wing youth groups got in touch with the movement; teen-agers were attracted by the publicity and the conspiratorial atmosphere; lads who had been on the fringes of – or even right in – the criminal world became idealists willing to spend whole

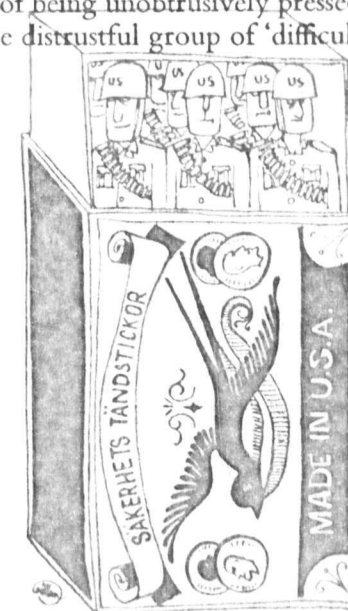
nights printing pamphlets protesting against the war in Vietnam; clergymen, municipal officials, and politicians of every persuasion came to talk and often went away partial or even whole-hearted sympathizers. New 'white plans' sprang up like toadstools. Tens of thousands of copies of *Provo* were sold on the streets. In the municipal elections of 1 June 1966, the Provos won over thirteen thousand votes, making their best showing in the old city; this was enough to gain them one of the forty-five seats on the municipal council – a remarkably good result for a movement whose adherents were mostly under voting age. Roel van Duyn would have been amazed had anyone dared to predict such a thing to him a year before. The first Provo to serve on the council was Bernhard de Vries; he was recently replaced by Luud Schimmelpenninck, following a rotation policy announced by the Provos at the outset of their active political career.

After this success, and above all after the riots of the construction workers a fortnight later, there was bound to be a certain reaction. Provo had lost its newness, so that press and television began to lose interest. Moreover, the diversity of the elements that had found temporary union in the movement became apparent. In May 1967 the Provos announced that they were formally disbanding – a somewhat equivocal statement, since they had never been formally established.

This does not mean that the movement is played out. Provo's impulse is propagating throughout society. The lack of freedom to demonstrate and the way in which public order is maintained have been subjects of intense discussion at all levels, although little has changed as yet. The consistent ingenuity with which Dutch protest campaigns against the war in Vietnam have been conducted and the fight to stop the demolition and depopulation of Amsterdam's old centre owe much to Provo. At a demonstration held several months ago to protest against a bank's being permitted to erect a huge modern building in the heart of the city, speeches were made not only by Robert Jasper Grootveld but also by a former burgomaster of Amsterdam, A. J. d'Ailly. Although the Provos' attempt, encouraged by municipal authorities, to set up a cultural centre for young people stranded on neighbourhood opposition, as did a plan to turn a street in a condemned slum area into a play zone, there are new

ideas in the air, and Provo-councilman Schimmelpenninck is actively pushing his white-bicycle plan. To replace *Provo* magazine, a new 'white paper' was launched under the evocative title *Paper Tiger*.

But while the ideas and principal exponents of Provo are spreading all over the Netherlands and even beyond, a danger threatens the long-haired boys and girls who, through their enthusiasm and humour, started the ball rolling. Friends and foes of Provo tend to be remarkably unanimous on one point: there are 'good' Provos and 'bad' Provos. The 'good' Provos are the student types who serve as spokesmen – as surprisingly rational spokesmen; the 'bad' Provos are the young hangers-on among the street kids, whom events have drawn out of their social and cultural isolation, and who have therefore for the first time attracted the attention of the public. The ordinary law-abiding citizen has been jolted and shocked out of his complacency by a behavioural pattern that had never bothered him before, simply because he did not know it existed. Dutch society exhibits a suspicious tendency to treat these young rebels like children who have found a gold watch: their ideas are too valuable and should be taken out of their hands, especially since they probably weren't come by honestly anyway. If there is no glare of publicity when these youngsters are hauled into court to answer for their reckless acts, they are treated like juvenile delinquents. At a moment when dozens of books and articles on their activities are appearing and *Delta* is devoting a special issue to them, they are in danger of being unobtrusively pressed back once more into the anonymity of the distrustful group of 'difficult brats' on the street corner.





12 July 1965: Provo Roel van Duyn is arrested for unauthorized pasting-up of poster announcing publication of Provo 1



Interview with Roel van Duyn

► 27

A. L. CONSTANDSE AND HARRY MULISCH

At the end of 1965 Roel van Duyn (born 1943), philosophy student at Amsterdam University and for some time the unchallenged 'philosopher' of the Provo movement, was interviewed for the literary monthly *De Gids* by journalist A. L. Constandse (born 1899) and novelist Harry Mulisch (born 1927). Although Van Duyn follows good Provo custom in speaking only for himself (the Provos have never acknowledged a leader, spiritual or otherwise), his answers in these excerpts from the interview as published in *De Gids* (January, 1966) may be considered representative of accepted Provo thinking.

In the last half year a great deal has been published about the Provos, and their movement is often connected with those of the nozems and the marijuana-smokers . . . and with various other movements, such as that of Robert Jasper Grootveld. Can you make clear to us what the difference is between the Provos and these three other movements?

Well, Robert Jasper started his happenings about a year and a half ago, and these happenings were mostly pop art. He'd shout, 'No happy smoker is a riot-stoker' and 'Nurse, nurse, a cigar,' and although the cops were there, they couldn't care less because it wasn't dangerous. Then we came along, and we had more political ideas. We demonstrated against Claus, against cars, against the police, and they thought that was dangerous. So the main difference between Robert Jasper and us is that he puts more stress on pop art and his personal image, and we're more interested in politics.

The second point was . . . the use of marijuana, mescaline, and LSD.

Well, yes, for those other groups that's the main thing — the use of that stuff. For us it's unimportant. We're social and political . . .

But isn't it true that you're really against the psychedelic drugs?

No, not at all. A lot of Provos take them. It just happens that Robert Jasper is campaigning against LSD. According

to him, a fascist society could be founded on LSD – big dope syndicates could get hold of it and exploit it, the way cigarettes are now.

But the Provo philosophy doesn't admit LSD?

No.

Wouldn't protests against dope and the hallucinogens fit in very well with your fight against air pollution and consumer addiction?

Yes, you could say that. But on the other hand, these drugs are illegal and therefore attractive. They're in conflict with public opinion, with prevailing norms and standards, and that's why we like them . . .

What is Provo's relation with the nozems?

Nozems live in a state of passive resistance to authority. They ride around on their buzz-bikes, but it's pretty unorganized, mainly passive, as far as I can tell. We want to make it active. We want to change this instinctive nozem resistance into a deliberate anarchistic resistance. What we've agreed is that we'll call all these people the provotariat – all these nozems, all the guys like Robert Jasper, all the protesting students and artists. They've got certain things in common: they don't feel that they are part of the production process and they often don't have a job, but they're very critical of society and the world and the epoch they live in. They are full of protest, are all about the same age, and live in the asphalt jungles of the welfare cities. That's a general description of them.

I read the following in Provo: 'The provotariat is the only rebel group left in the welfare countries. The proletariat has sold itself out to its leaders and its television. It has gone over to its old foe, the bourgeoisie, and together they form one great grey blob.' Does this mean that the provotariat doesn't belong to any special class?

It is an anti-class.

An anti-class – the opposite of a class? What do you mean by that?

It is an anonymous group of subversive elements – at least, that's the way we describe it. It's the outsiders, the kids that don't belong to the proletariat or the bourgeoisie or the squares, but do belong in a big rebel group. According

to us, this group doesn't know its own strength yet, and so there is an analogy between our position – at least, we think there is – and the position of the people who founded the First International. They were the vanguard of a newly rising class, the proletariat, which at that time formed a potentially revolutionary element, but an apathetic one still unaware of its powers.

But your new group doesn't have a socio-economic base, does it?

More a psychological one. But it is socio-economic, too, because it is not involved in the production process. Most of the group are unemployed – they are 'useless.'

Is there an age limit? Don't you have to be about twenty?

Yes, we of course appeal most to young people.

What happens if somebody of sixty-five, say, wants to join?

Well, he wouldn't belong to the provotariat as I've described it, but he could be a Provo all right. After all, Socrates was a bigger Provo when he was old than when he was young . . .

Have you Provos lost faith in the proletariat as the revolutionary class?

Yes, completely. In our opinion, the provotariat will be the only revolutionary element in the future. The provotariat is getting restless all over the world. In the United States, for example, the beatniks are terribly active, especially in the fight against racial discrimination. The students in American universities are also in revolt, as are the students in Spain. In the Soviet Union you have the *stilyagi* – the only internal resistance there at the moment, as far as I know. I think that the old political resistance in Russia is dead and gone. But the authorities can't cope with the rebellion of the new generation – they're being swamped by it. They can't stem the flood of jazz and beat styles that the young generation wants. Nothing can stop it . . .

totale revolutie

In a text-book capitalist society – such a thing probably doesn't exist any more, if it ever did – there is more freedom for the individual, even to die, as Marx said, than in a rigidly organized communist society like Albania, for example. With your views, are you more for a classical capitalist society or a classical communist one? In other words, if you had to choose, which would it be?

I'd choose capitalism, even though it would bring the wrath of all the Marxists down on me. But I'm speaking strictly for myself. Some Provos would certainly choose communism, because they believe that a society in great economic distress has to be strictly organized, even along hierarchical lines as in China . . .

Can you estimate how many people in the Netherlands, whether they've ever heard of the Provos or not, agree with you?

I believe that the entire provotariat is in principle behind us, that we give expression to certain traits of its character, and that people sympathize with us because of this.

Name a figure. We have a population of twelve million. If it ever got down to brass tacks, how many people do you think would be on your side?

Well, in that case of course, not very many. At most a few thousand. But those who sympathize with us in general – there could be hundreds of thousands of them.

Considering the enormous amount of attention the Provos get from the press, you probably share the common dissatisfaction with the state of things nationally and internationally.

What makes us 'really mad is the individual's lack of influence on events. A happening is an attempt to seize at least the little part in things that you ought to have and that the authorities try to take away from you. A happening is therefore a demonstration of the power you'd like to have. Influence on events. I wanted to say something else; I forgot it a while ago: Provos have agreed to disagree with each other. I wanted to say that the true Provo is no Provo at all. He's someone who won't let himself be trapped into any name, someone who is capricious and elusive and against everything. Add that to the description.

That rounds things off nicely: A true Provo is no Provo.

Provo and Anarchist

GER HARMSSEN

Dutch social scientists have watched the Provo movement with professional interest, joining now and then in the general discussion with articles setting a wider perspective. In the 30 October 1965 issue of the now defunct monthly Bulten de perken (Beyond the Limits), the historian Dr Ger Harmsen (born 1922), a specialist on youth movements, challenged the pretensions of some Provos to be the heirs of traditional anarchism.

Only on the basis of what are purely external characteristics can the Provos be regarded by other people and themselves as anarchists. The reason is not that it is now chiefly young people who are concerned, whereas formerly it was mainly older people, although this is not without interest in connection with the disappearance of anarchism as a political phenomenon and its reappearance as an emotional phenomenon because of changing socio-economic circumstances. Young people are indeed more sensitive to feelings of discontent and unease than are older people, and it follows that some young people will make use of a patchwork of ideas and slogans from the anarchist arsenal to give expression to these feelings without understanding the intellectual totality of which they once formed a part. If this emotional thinking in slogans out of context is taken for what it really is – a *cri de cœur* – I am in full accord, but it should not be taken seriously as far as its intellectual content is concerned.

In an article dealing with the clashes between the Amsterdam populace and the police, Roel van Duyn places the activities of the Provos in 1965 on a parallel with the 'Eel Rebellion' of 1886, the potato riots of 1917, and the revolt of the unemployed in 1934, all of which were events in the class struggle in Amsterdam during periods of economic crisis. Although Van Duyn himself admits that the Provo activities are not of the same

historical importance, he continues to draw parallels in the rest of his article. The only constant factor is, in fact, the uniformity in the action of the police, who behaved in the same way on all these occasions. Van Duyn appears to think that to come into conflict with the police is a revolutionary act in itself because, in his view, the police are the supreme embodiment of evil. I must confide to him, however, that I have several times in my life been extremely grateful to the police for having rescued me from a critical situation, and I would not care to find myself in such a situation without them.

The question is not the action of the police in itself, but the social context in which this action takes place. This means not only that the historical examples Van Duyn cites are more important, as he himself admits, but that his contemporary example is in no way comparable with them. Therein lies the crux of the matter. Workers threatened by hunger and need are not to be compared with bored and artificially agitated youths who do not know the meaning of want and deprivation. I can only find the comparison distasteful. The historical examples belong to the series of great class demonstrations, political and economic strikes. The later example, the activity of the Provos, belongs to a completely different series – that of collisions between adolescents and the police. In working-class areas before the war such clashes were regular weekly events. I say events because they often concerned organized gangs of youths who, in order to have some excitement and to let off steam, sometimes fought one another. But these lads much preferred to taunt the police into retaliation. I remember battles that were bloodier and left behind more casualties than our recent ‘riots’ have ever done, but in those days they had no news value. They received no publicity and were hardly an object of academic study. If comparisons are to be made, do not look at the interested, enterprising, creative, but very small core of Provos, but at the fringe group of scufflers whom Professor Buikhuisen had in mind when he first defined ‘nozems’ and ‘provos.’

PROVO



19 March 1966



Anarchism Post-1945

RUDOLF DE JONG

Another protest at the Provos' calling themselves anarchists was voiced by the political scientist Rudolf de Jong (born 1932), an anarchist of the old school now associated with the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. His essay, of which only brief extracts are reproduced here, was one of a series by various authors compiled in the book Provo, published in 1966.

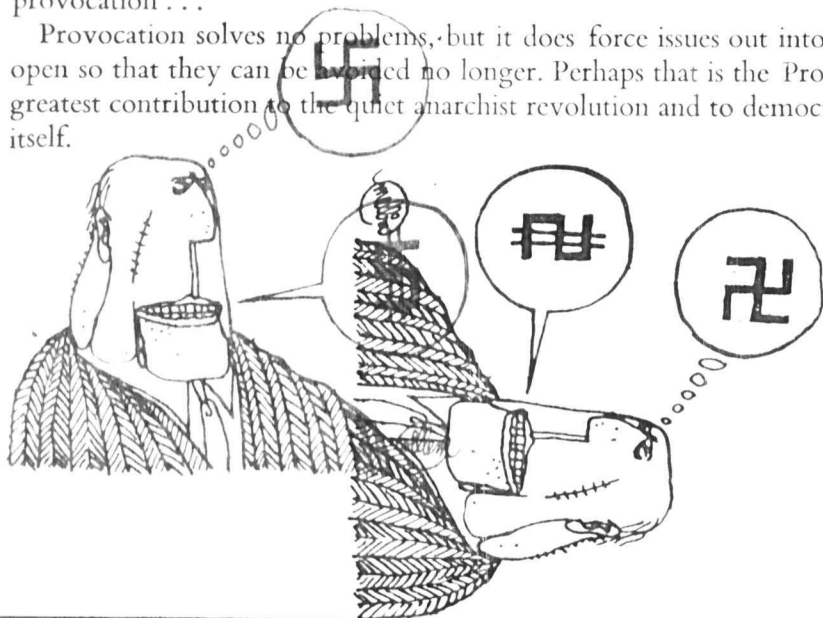
In the field of theory – how does one organize society in the anarchist spirit, with a minimum of authority and a maximum of participation? – the Provos have achieved little or nothing . . . Their best ideas – the white-bicycle plan, New Babylon – originated with a technologically minded inventor and an architect and do not have much in common with an anarchist organization of society. In the views Provos have so far expressed about organizing society in this way, their anarchism was rather old-fashioned and orthodox. Yet even though the Provos are still relatively poor in theoretical content, this does not mean that they should be dismissed out of hand. They have discovered methods of conduct and of dealing with problems that demand our attention. In these methods they are perhaps more anarchist than the old anarchist movements, and in this respect they most resemble the New Left in the United States, which also emphasizes practical action and a strict code of personal behaviour (as regards clothing and appearance, the singing of folk songs, and the like). The New Left, too, suffers a certain poverty of theory, but is now proposing to remedy this situation. Obviously, the problems with which this American group is concerned are far more important than the Amsterdam matters with which Provo has become involved . . .

The socialist and anarchist movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries rejected the bourgeois, capitalist society and broke as

many bonds with it as possible. Within the workers' movements preparations were made for the future society, and a workers' culture was in the process of development. These movements would not even admit bourgeois nonconformity, holding that it remained a manifestation of its class. They often dismissed it simply as decadent: the revolution would sweep it away. This was all logical. The world of the worker *was* quite a different one from that of the capitalist, and the revolution which would destroy the capitalist world was a reality. When the possibility of revolution faded, the differences between the world of the workers and that of the bourgeoisie was emphasized still more strongly, perhaps as a compensation. This was especially true between the two world wars. Today all this has changed. In the welfare state the old demands for a separate proletarian culture have either been achieved or sound ridiculously *passé*. One cannot escape the fact that the once divided world of proletariat and bourgeoisie has grown back together . . .

Their 'image' notwithstanding – long hair, white suits, and own private brand of the Dutch language – the Provos do not put themselves in a separate Provo world. They swim about like fish in the rich waters of the welfare state. The Provos find Amsterdam, even now, a wonderful city. They joyfully welcome the latest cultural fashions of the present world: beat, op art, the conservative writer G. K. van het Reve. They try to integrate all this into their theories. Their operating within the reality of this society quite rightly is based on their most original idea – provocation . . .

Provocation solves no problems, but it does force issues out into the open so that they can be avoided no longer. Perhaps that is the Provos' greatest contribution to the quiet anarchist revolution and to democracy itself.



The White Plans

Many Provo activities are concentrated on solving the problem of making Amsterdam more livable. The most important Provo 'plans,' usually referred to as 'white' plans, are:

– the white-bicycle plan, invented by Luud Schimmelpenninck (born 1936), first outlined in Provo 2, and at present being pushed by Schimmelpenninck as Provo member of the municipal council.

– the white-chimney plan, Schimmelpenninck's solution to air pollution, published in Provo 6.

– the white-wives plan, launched in Provo 8 by Irene van de Weetering (born 1939), the foremost woman Provo, wife of the Dutch chess champion Jan Hein Donner, mother of two children, and (in contrast with most other Provos) the possessor of a flat and a telephone, both of which she has put at the disposal of Provos and other trainees in leisure.

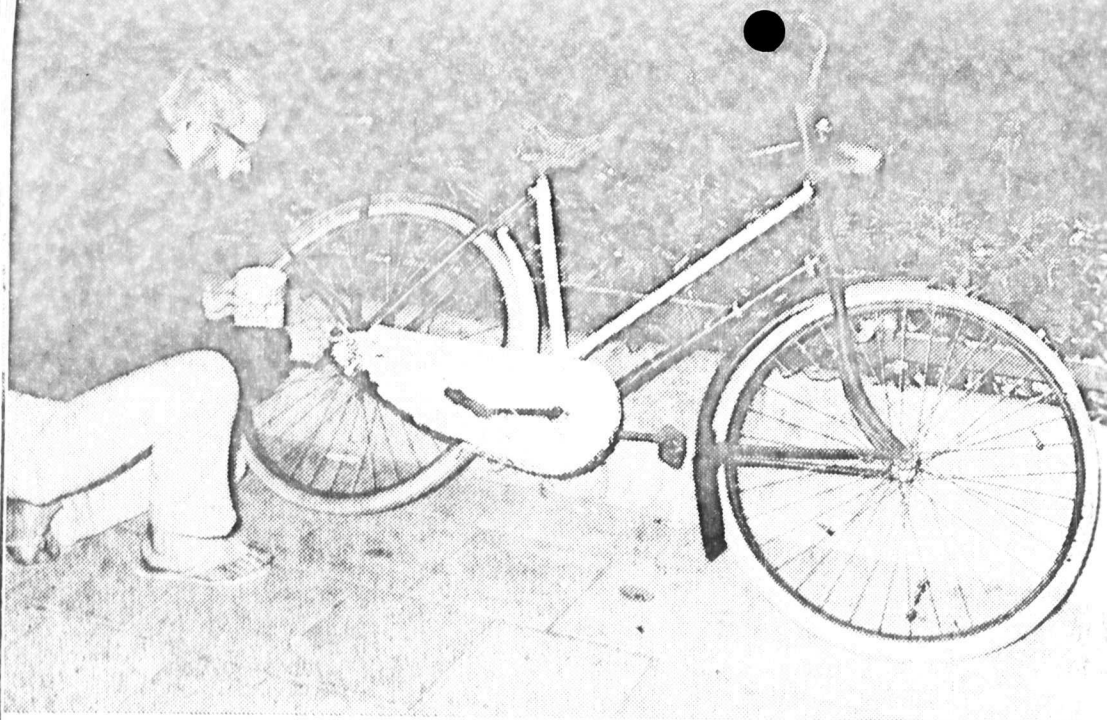
– the white-chicken plan, described in Provo 9 by Auke Boersma (born 1947); kip (chicken) is Dutch slang for a policeman.

– the white-housing plan, projected in Provo 9 by Hans Niemeyer (born 1935); it was later suggested that this plan be supplemented by a weekly list of vacant houses, flats, and rooms for the use of the thousands of people seeking living quarters in Amsterdam.

– the white-corpse plan, an anonymous contribution to Provo 13 (the 'accidents' issue), suggesting a way to make traffic accidents memorable.

These plans are here reproduced in the form in which they originally appeared in Provo. Any statements of fact that seem dubious are to be taken with a grain of salt.

PROVO'S FIETSENPLAN



Provo Roel van Duyn paints a bicycle white ▲ and high-hatted Provo Rob Stolk goes on a publicity campaign with Robert Jasper Grootveld ▼



The white-bicycle plan

It is absolutely essential that the centre of Amsterdam (at least inside the ring of old canals) be closed to all motorized traffic (cars, motor-bikes, etc.).

The elimination of traffic jams will automatically improve the frequency of public transport by more than 40%. A saving of at least 2,000,000 guilders per year can therefore be made with the same number of trams and buses and the same number of employees as at present.

We propose that the municipality buy 20,000 white bicycles each year (cost: one million) to supplement public transport.

These White Bikes would belong to everyone and no one. In this way the traffic problem in the centre of town would be solved within a few years. As the first step towards the 20,000 White Bikes per year, Provo offers volunteers the opportunity of having their bikes painted white at 12 o'clock every Saturday night near the Lieverdje on the Spui.

Taxis, as a semi-public means of transport in the city, must be electrically powered and have a maximum speed of 25 m.p.h.

Many motorists will leave their cars at home and come to town by train, or will park their cars on the outskirts of the city (where large parking lots must be built for them) and transfer to public transport.

A report on traffic in Amsterdam and a petition to the municipal council concerning Provo's Bicycle Plan is in preparation.

A MOTOR-CAR is acceptable as a means of transport only in thinly populated areas or from a thinly populated area to the city.

Cars are a dangerous and totally unsuitable means of transport in the city. There are better and technically more sophisticated ways of moving from one city to another. For these purposes the motor-car is an outdated solution.

TODAY'S SQUARES, who will undoubtedly disagree with our theories, should, however, realize that:

- the entire centre of New York, including office, shopping, and entertainment districts, and Wall Street itself, IS CLOSED TO ALL PRIVATE MOTORIZED TRAFFIC;
- public transport in London now forms 90% of all traffic because there is an almost complete ban on parking;
- the National Dock and Shipbuilding Company in Amsterdam provides red bicycles for the convenience of visitors to its yards;
- the shopkeepers in Amsterdam's Haarlemmerstraat have petitioned the municipal council to relieve them of motorized terrorism by banning all motorized traffic from the street.

This is no time for political shilly-shallying and outdated makeshifts. What is needed NOW is a radical solution:

NO MOTORIZED TRAFFIC
BUT WHITE BICYCLES!



The White-Chimney plan

- It is prohibited to discharge alien substances into the air by any means other than specially constructed and registered outlets.
- Containers, pipes, covers, and appliances must be so constructed as to prevent all possibility of leakage.
- Installations involving safety valves etc. must be designed in such a way that the contents are not normally discharged into the open air.
- The use of open containers for alien substances which are absorbed by the air is prohibited.
- It is prohibited to discharge the following substances:
 - radioactive substances
 - hydrogen sulphide
 - fluorides
- The community must be paid, at a fixed rate per pound, for the discharge of the following products into the air:
 - CO
 - SO₂
 - CS₂
 - O₃
 - soot
 - hydrocarbon
 - iron oxide
 - aluminium oxide
 - olefin
 - combustion dust
 - tar products

ADDITIONAL CHARGE PER DISTRICT:

The percentage of the additional charge per district is equal to the number of inhabitants per acre within a radius of 10 miles of the outlet. (100 inhabitants per acre equals 100%.) Mobile installations 500%.

Small heating units burning domestic fuels need not be registered. The tax due is to be levied, not on a district basis, but directly on the manufacturer or firm importing the units, and is to be calculated according to the volume

of poisonous gases discharged into the air by the average domestic heating unit. The tax will be in inverse proportion to the height of the chimney:

height above 150 ft - 10% reduction

300 ft - 20%

450 ft - 30%

600 ft - 40%

750 ft - 50%

900 ft - 65%

The colour of the fumes must be lighter than No 1 of the Ringelman scale. The temperature of the fumes should lie at least 25°C above the acid dew-point of its gases.

PROVO is a monthly sheet for anarchists, provos, beatniks, pleiners, scissors-grinders, jailbirds, simple simon stylites, magicians, pacifists, potato-chip chaps, charlatans, philosophers, germ-carriers, grand masters of the queen's horse, happeners, vegetarians, syndicalists, santy clauses, kindergarden teachers, agitators, pyromaniacs, assistant assistants, scratchers and syphilitics, secret police, and other riff-raff.

PROVO has something against capitalism, communism, fascism, bureaucracy, militarism, professionalism, dogmatism, and authoritarianism.

PROVO has to choose between desperate resistance and submissive extinction. PROVO calls for resistance wherever possible. PROVO realizes that it will lose in the end, but it cannot pass up the chance to make at least one more heartfelt attempt to provoke society. PROVO regards anarchy as the inspirational source of resistance. PROVO wants to revive anarchy and teach it to the young. PROVO IS AN IMAGE.

(from Provo 12)



The white-wives plan

In our time women are slowly struggling back to their primeval status of lovers of life.

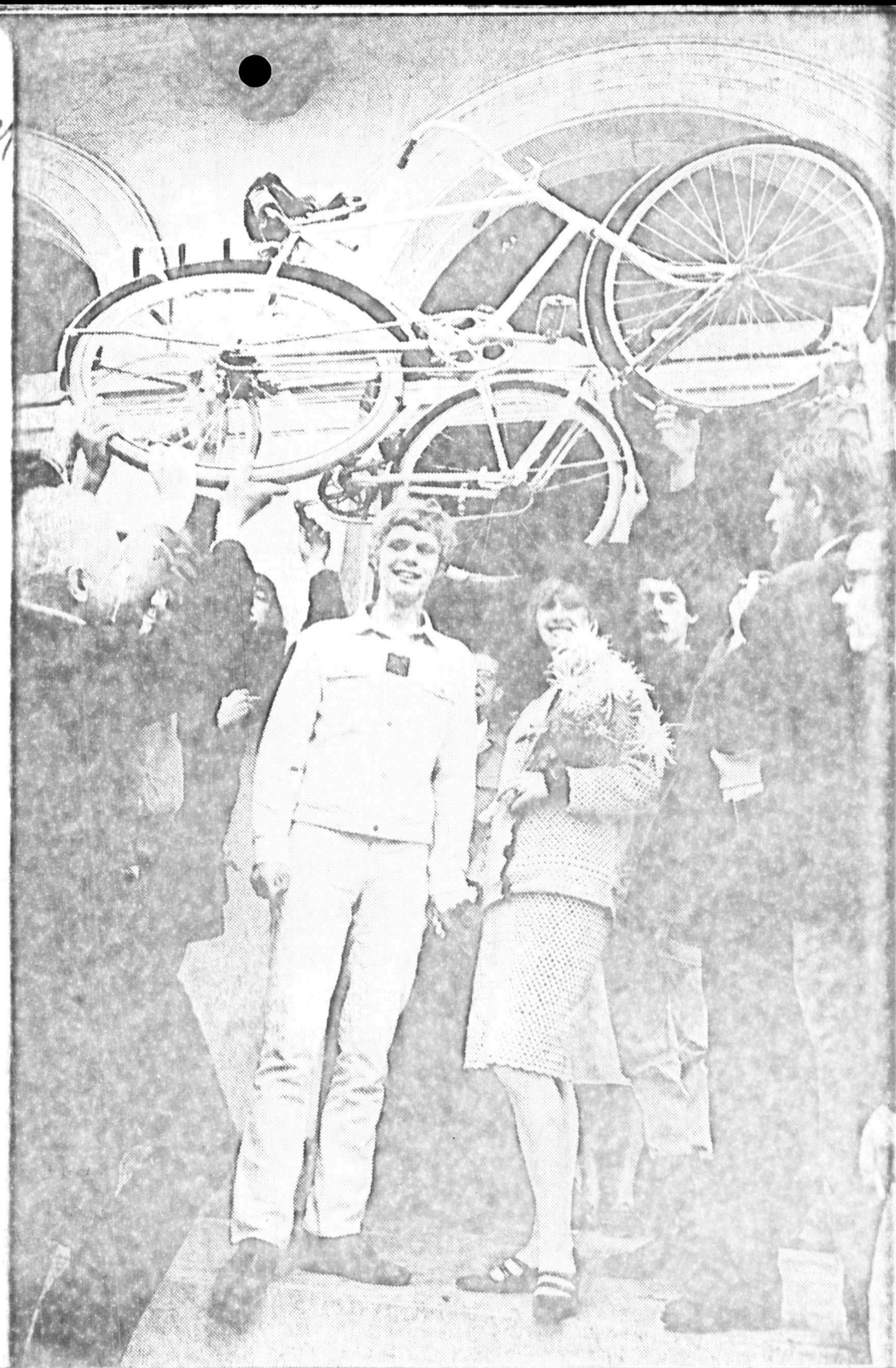
There are still a few obstacles that must be removed before this state can be finally achieved. The most important is: unwanted pregnancy. Medicine has fortunately progressed so far that it is possible to prevent pregnancy without spoiling the act of love.

Extramarital pregnancies have been the main problem up to now. Whether they ended in abortion, an illegitimate child, or a shotgun marriage, the situation was always desperate and the consequences often disastrous. I propose a few simple measures to avoid this:

1. In addition to infant-welfare centres and school medical services, district health centres should include a clinic for girls and women, where they can obtain contraceptives and medical advice.
2. Girls of sixteen (the 'marriageable age') should be invited to visit the clinic if they have not already done so on their own initiative.
3. The school medical officer should inform adolescent girls of the existence of the clinic.

Couples with two children should be warned that they will be acting irresponsibly if they have another child. The population increase is alarming. I cannot see why underdeveloped countries should be the only ones to profit widely from the newest scientific methods of birth-control. If these measures are carried out, girls will have the opportunity of acquiring experience in making love from adolescence onwards. They will grow up in a more balanced way and will eventually be able to make a really sound choice when they want children and marriage.

After all this, it is hardly necessary to point out that it is completely irresponsible, if not shocking, to enter marriage as a virgin - you can't 'tell chalk from cheese,' you are expected to take and keep the first man you meet, and there are absolutely no guarantees that you and he will be sexually suited.



Summer 1965: Provo Rob Stolk and his bride pose under a triumphal arch of white bicycles after their wedding in the Zaandam town hall ▶



The White-Chicken plan

THE RECENT POLICE ACTIONS, which are closely connected with the emergence of the provotariat, have clearly shown that under the present system the police have only two alternatives: standing at attention or beating the daylight out of everyone.

The police force, shaken to its foundations by new forms of art, has proved again and again that it is totally unfitted for its task. Provo has tried to exorcize the spectre of violence evoked by the police by entirely non-violent means. Innumerable attempts have been made to find a solution to the misunderstandings. Talks with the burgo-master of Amsterdam and the chiefs of police have fizzled out completely. The efforts of the provotariat will have to be concentrated on communication with individual policemen.

The massacre on 10 March led Provo to set up its 'Friends of the Police' committee, which, only nine days later, launched the experimental image of the 'white chicken' at the opening of the exhibition '10-3-66.' The White Chicken is the dove of peace of the Provotariat.

The program of the Friends of the Police is as follows:

1. DISARMAMENT

Before there are any casualties, the police must be disarmed; in England the police are unarmed and consequently disarming. To accomplish this, however, the police and the public must be able to communicate properly. In France, Germany, Belgium, and Italy the police may use fire-arms only in self-defence.

2. SOCIAL WORK

The White Chicken is the social worker of the future. He will be charged with the distribution of first-aid bandages and medicines in emergencies. He will carry matches and contraceptives, as well as Royal Dutch Oranges and chicken drumsticks for the starving provotariat.

3. REORGANIZATION

The Amsterdam police force will have to be reorganized so as to fall under the jurisdiction of the municipal council

and not the burgomaster. Whenever difficulties concerning any police measures occur, individual policemen will be able to justify their actions at special teach-ins.

Every municipality will democratically elect its own chief of police. There will be a documentation centre where anyone who is dissatisfied with the actions and organization of the police can look for evidence to support his claims.

4. TRAFFIC

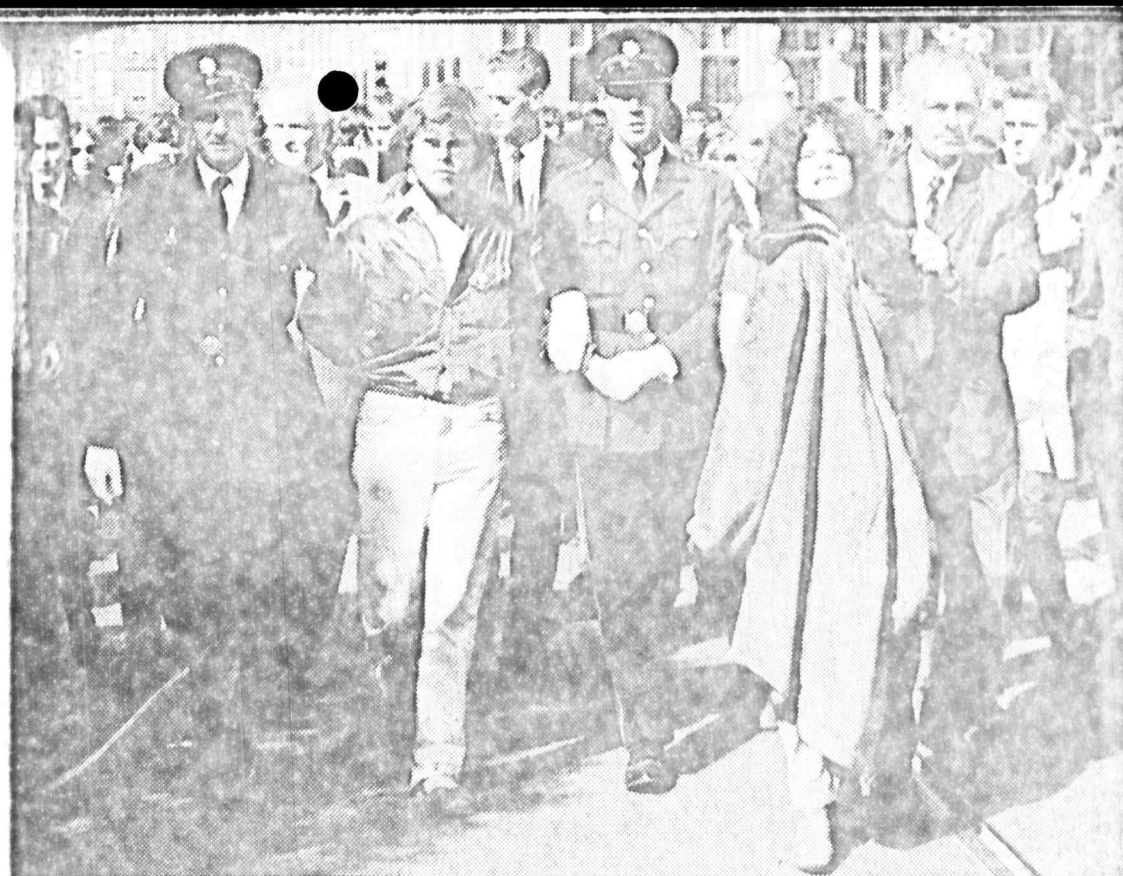
As soon as the 'magic centre' of Amsterdam is closed to all private transport, the police will be in a position to see to it that the traffic outside the centre runs smoothly. The White Chicken will ride on a white bike and will be charged with the transportation of defective white bikes to repair shops where do-it-yourselfers and amateur mechanics will be able to paint and repair the bikes as part of their program of creation and recreation.

5. UNIFORM

The White Chicken is dressed in a white uniform as a symbol of his social function.

We suggest a white cap for the transitional period.

The White Chicken heralds the sweet (r)evolution of social relationships. For Belgium and France a similar plan is being drawn up: the White Flies plan.



20 September 1966: Provos Kasper Kool and Koosje Koster under arrest ▲
 Summer 1965: Provo Willem Jan Stevens holds a cop at bay with a burning torch ▼

The White-housing plan the white-corpse plan

Only a few of the many possibilities for improving the housing situation can be listed here – those that can be acted upon without delay. To be brief, these are:

Speculation in house-building by the state, municipalities, industrialists, investors, and private persons should be stopped or, at least as far as the first two categories are concerned, avoided as much as possible.

Regarding town-planning projects: if demolition and new construction cannot be begun immediately after a neighbourhood is condemned, the houses and business premises scheduled for replacement should be made available as temporary dwellings for single persons, young families, students, etc., rent-free. These residents would be permitted to make any necessary repairs and improvements in their quarters. On the other hand, it would be better in the first place to postpone the reconstruction projects until the housing crisis slacks off. Houses in the city (especially in the old centre) now used for offices and businesses should return to their original function as residences. In this way the depopulation of the old centre can be counter-acted.

Keep the Waterlooplein as an open-air market. Improve or reconstruct the houses in the neighbourhood. Drop the plan for the new town hall in this area. Keep on using the old town hall. If it is necessary to expand, take back the expensively restored royal palace on the Dam (which by rights is our real Town Hall).

Besides all this, priority should also be given to a study of more efficient and more economical building methods – the prefabrication of lighter, more standardized materials, for example, and a coordination of the methods already used. This coordination could be the joint effort of individuals or groups and the state or municipality, the latter of which could make ground available for experimental housing and neighbourhood projects.

Provo's first contribution towards a solution of the traffic problem in Amsterdam was the White-Bicycle plan. The authorities torpedoed it by quickly confiscating all the White Bikes that Provo had presented to Amsterdam. And the traffic terrorism continues to increase. On the very first day of the new year the monster devoured a two-year-old child.

Watch out when you are on your feet,
Murderers drive freely in the street.

As a punishment for traffic criminals and as a warning – *memento mori* – to everyone who walks about in the mass cemetery of Amsterdam, Provo now proposes the White-Corpse Plan. The authorities must carry it out themselves – it is simple enough for them.

As part of the White-Corpse Plan, the police accident-squad should be equipped with a piece of chalk, a chisel, a hammer, and a bucket of white mortar. Whenever the monster strikes anywhere in Amsterdam and someone is flattened against the merciless asphalt, the police must trace the victim's outline on the ground with the piece of chalk. As soon as an ambulance has removed the sad remains, the murderer himself, using the chisel and hammer, must hack out the silhouette of his victim one inch deep in the asphalt, under supervision of the police. Next he must fill the hollow with the white mortar. Then, perhaps, all the prospective murderers approaching the scene of the disaster will let up on the gas for just a moment.

Moreover, the slaughtered victims of traffic must be given a white funeral at the expense of their murderer. Pedestrians who see a white funeral procession passing through the city will know: once again the monster has caught someone unawares and snatched away his life without warning.

Think, pedestrian, for the motorist is unthinking.



Constant, *Two Animals* (1949), gouache and chalk;
collection of the Hague Municipal Museum

NEW BABYLON the world of HOMO LUDENS

The world of plenty is New Babylon, the world in which man no longer toils, but plays; poetry as a way of life for the masses, „la poésie faite par tous et non par un". New Babylon, perhaps, is not so much a picture of the future as a Leitmotiv, the conception of an all-comprehensive culture which is hard to comprehend because until now it could not exist, a culture which, for the first time in history, as a consequence of the automation of Labour, becomes feasible although we do not yet know what shape it will take, and seems mysterious to us. Will man of the future be able to play his life? Will he be able to lead a life without the necessity to earn his daily bread in toil and sweat? The answer to these questions entails the condemnation of a moral which still regards labour which can be performed by a machine as the fulfillment of man's life and promises him a fictional paradise as a reward after his death.

When one occupies oneself with New Babylon everything else seems to have become unimportant. Yet the time has not yet come to give a conclusive answer to all the questions which present themselves. This is the dilemma of creative man to-day: yesterday's world has come to an end, the world of to-morrow is still dim in outline. By necessity he continues to be the vague designer, the semi-player. He only suggests whereas he would like to play, he plays whereas he would like to give shape, he outlines only whereas he would like to be precise. But his outlines of the new world to come are important in that at last he deliberately turns away from the utilitarian world in which creativeness was only an escape and a protest, and that he becomes the interpreter of the new man, homo ludens.

Constant

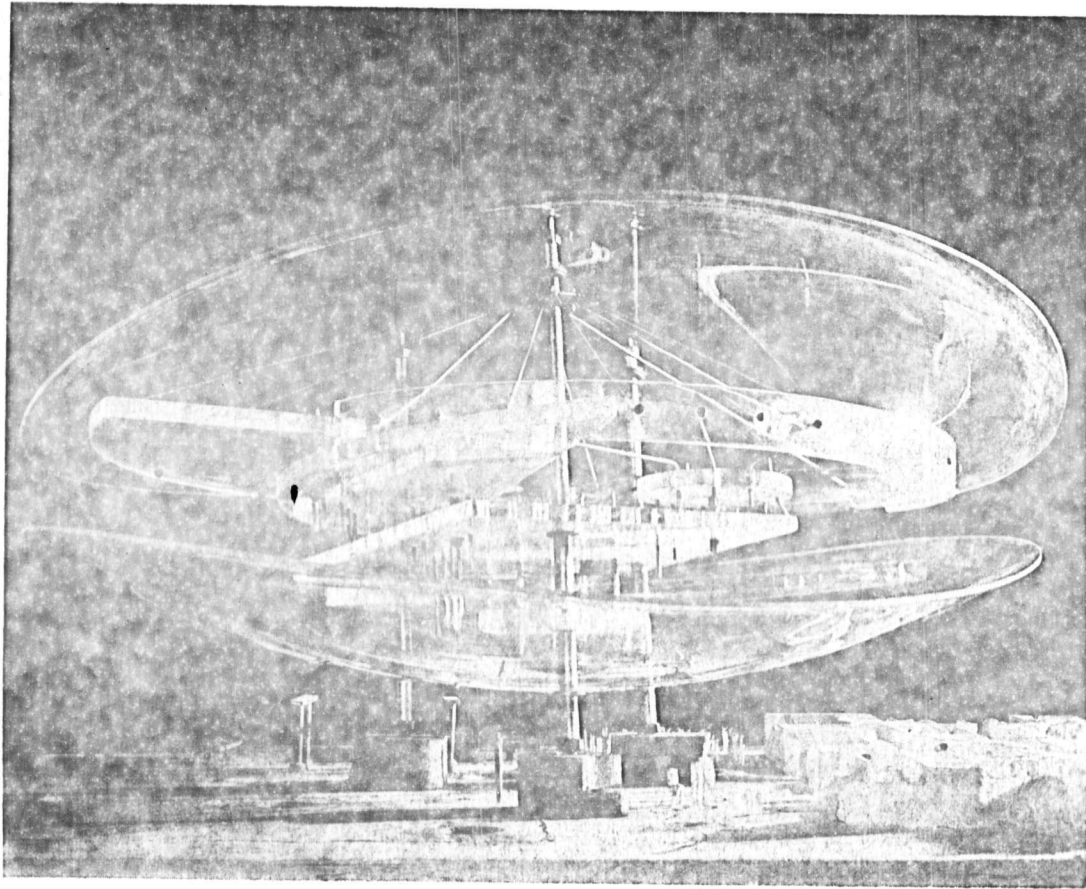
(facsimile from *New Babylon*, No 4)

NEW URBANISM

New Urbanism

CONSTANT NIEUWENHUYS

Constant, as the painter-sculptor-architect Constant Nieuwenhuys (born 1920) signs his work, was one of the founders of the international Cobra group in 1948 and since 1959 has dedicated his many talents to creating tomorrow's 'creative culture,' New Babylon. He is a forerunner of Provo in the sense that he predicted the revolt of homo ludens. In 'New Urbanism,' Constant's contribution to Provo 9, he makes clear why revolt is necessary and the kind of future it should lead to.



New Babylon's Spatiovore (concert-hall for electronic music), plexiglas and metal model (1960); artist's collection

1. A growing discrepancy can be observed between the standards applied in allocating urban space and the real needs of the community. Town-planners and architects still tend to think in terms of the four functions of the city as defined by Le Corbusier in 1933: living, working, traffic, and recreation. This over-simplification reflects opportunism rather than insight into and appreciation of what people actually want today, with the result that the city is rapidly becoming obsolete. At a time when automation and other technological advances are reducing the demand for manual labour, plans go forward to build working-class districts suitable only for passing the night. While privately owned cars are multiplying so swiftly that their very numbers render them practically useless, more and more living space is given up to provide parking facilities. The Buchanan Report, *Traffic in Towns*,* shows that 'full car-ownership' in a small city like Leeds (513,800 inhabitants in 1963) would require so much space that the problem of overcrowding would be unsolvable. Although air pollution threatens the very existence of plants, animals, and even human beings, people still talk optimistically

* London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1963. This report was commissioned by the British Ministry of Transport and was under the direction of Professor Colin Buchanan.

NEW URBANISM

about 'garden cities.' And while Jeremiahs bemoan the problem of increasing 'leisure time,' the restrictions laid upon the space available for public recreation deprive young people of all opportunity to use the leisure they have.

2. A logical consequence of the growing amount of leisure time is that the idea of recreation is becoming meaningless. Recreation is the recouping of energy lost during the working process. As soon as there is a surplus of energy available for activities other than work, recreation becomes pointless and makes way for the possibility of true creativity – the creation of a new way of life, of a new environment. That is the reason why the youth of today no longer turn to hobbies and clubs for relaxation but seek excitement in communal initiatives.

3. These collective endeavours can never take place in the country but only in the city, for it is not silence and solitude that the young are after, but encounters with others in a social environment. The phenomenon of bumper-to-bumper roadside picnics proves that the country outing is more a flight from the functional city than an excursion to enjoy the beauties of nature. Amsterdam's Forest Park becomes a social environment on hot Sundays in August. If urban space were planned to meet the needs of a leisured society, these flights from the city would become unnecessary. Paradoxically enough, when townspeople trek *en masse* to the great outdoors, the difference between town and country disappears. A camping area is a form, however primitive, of a city.

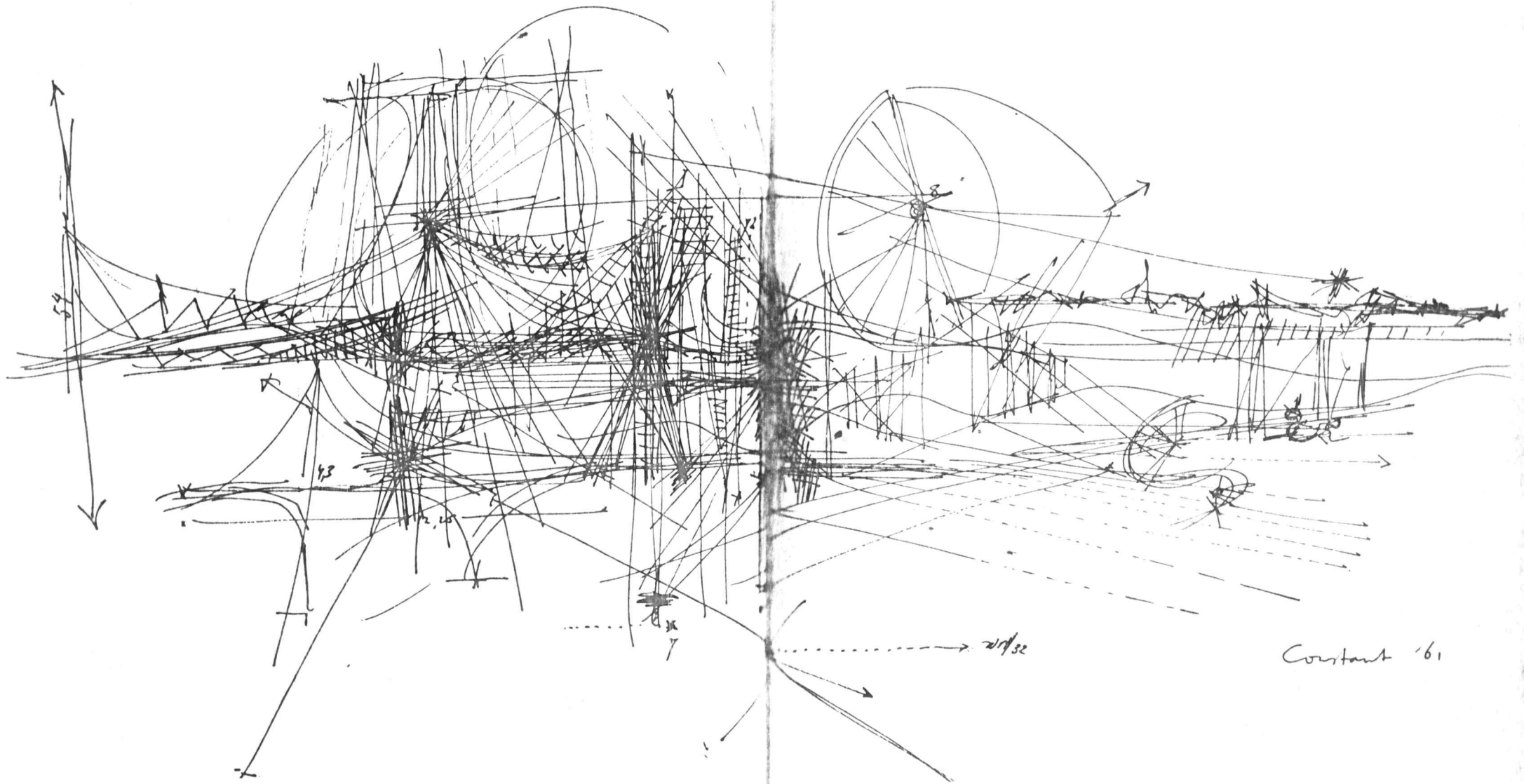
4. The social environment of the city is being threatened by a chaotic traffic explosion, which is itself the result of carrying proprietary rights to ridiculous extremes. The number of parked cars at any given moment far exceeds the number on the move. Use of a car therefore loses its

NEW URBANISM

major advantage: rapid transport from one place to another. The storage of private property on public ground – which is what parking is – gobbles up not only the space required for the flow of traffic but increasingly larger chunks of living space as well. Efficient use of the motor-car can be achieved only by collective utilization of the *total* number of cars, and this total must be limited to the number actually needed. It is a scandal that countless people have to walk, even in bad weather, when more than enough cars to transport them are standing idly parked at the side of the road, obstructing traffic and worse than useless.

5. Traffic's wholesale invasion of social space has led, almost imperceptibly, to violation of the most fundamental human rights. The traffic code has degraded the individual who proceeds by the only natural means of locomotion to the rank of 'pedestrian,' and has curtailed his freedom of movement to such an extent that it now amounts to less than that of a vehicle. So much public space is forbidden ground to the pedestrian that he is forced to seek his social contacts either in private areas (houses) or in commercially exploited ones (cafés or rented halls), where he is more or less imprisoned. In this way the city is losing its most important function: that of a meeting-place. It is highly significant that the police try to justify their measures against 'happenings' on the public thoroughfares by arguing that such manifestations impede traffic. This is an implicit acknowledgement that high-speed traffic is king of the road.

6. The acculturation process takes place within the social environment; if this environment does not exist, no culture can form. The more numerous and varied the contacts, the more intensely does acculturation flourish. Chombart de Lauwe was the first to point out this function of certain urban areas (especially old districts), which he termed



Constant, *Technical Landscape* (1961), india ink; collection of the Hague Municipal Museum

Constant '61

NEW URBANISM

'acculturation zones.'* He noted in particular that the culture-forming process is strongest in those districts where the population is looked upon as anti-social, and that the contact between different groups – a contact which gives rise to new culture-forming elements – is most intense in districts where there is evidence of social dislocation.

7. The fact that all bureaucrats are enamoured of order, of a regulated society, leads them to destroy acculturation zones. Baron Haussmann slashed his broad boulevards through such zones in Paris in order to facilitate the rapid movement of troops. In Marseilles, the Nazis tore down the old harbour quarter to break the resistance of the citizens. The present redevelopment of city centres and the deportation of inhabitants to the suburbs has a similar effect.

8. The so-called 'garden-city movement,' propagated in about 1900 by the English town-planner Ebenezer Howard, was based on the assumption that industrial production could be raised if workers were given improved housing and living conditions. The prerequisites for the movement's success – the wish to be near to nature, a love of work, the closeness of family ties – are no longer valid today. Garden cities are therefore obsolete before they are even finished. Instead of the rural idyll that Howard had in mind, suburbs built on this plan are mere dormitories – places to sleep in and to escape from at the first opportunity, that is, at the first stroke of leisure time. Isolated housing units marooned in a sea of traffic become ghettos for a population whose sole contact with the rest of the world is through the controlled 'communications' media of press, radio, and television.

9. A person's living quarters become less important to him as his radius of action expands and his amount of leisure

* See P. H. Chombart de Lauwe (and others), *Paris et l'agglomération parisienne*, 2 vols (Paris, 1952).

time increases. When productive labour was introduced in the New Stone Age, man was transformed into a sedentary creature, but now that the need for manual work is disappearing, there is little reason to be tied down to one place for long periods. At the same time, however, there is growing demand for temporary accommodation – hotels, and even caravans and tents. The proportion of dwelling space to the total social space requires immediate reassessment in favour of the latter, for the needs of an emerging race of nomads must be satisfied.

10. The nature of the social environment will depend on the way in which the newly released energy is put to use. In any event, this space will be the setting for play, invention, and the creation of a new way of life. Utilitarian norms such as those that apply in the functional city must yield to the norm of creativity. In future, man's way of life will be determined not by profit but by play.

11. The above points explain why the teen-age revolt against the fossilized standards and conditions of the past is aimed chiefly at the recovery of social space – the street – so that the contacts essential for play may be established. Idealists who think that these contacts can be arranged by organizing youth clubs, publications, or hiking groups are seeking to substitute prescribed patterns of behaviour for spontaneous initiatives. They are opposed to the most important characteristic of the new generation, creativity – the desire to create a behaviour pattern of their own, and ultimately to create a new way of life.

NEW URBANISM

Report to the King Rat

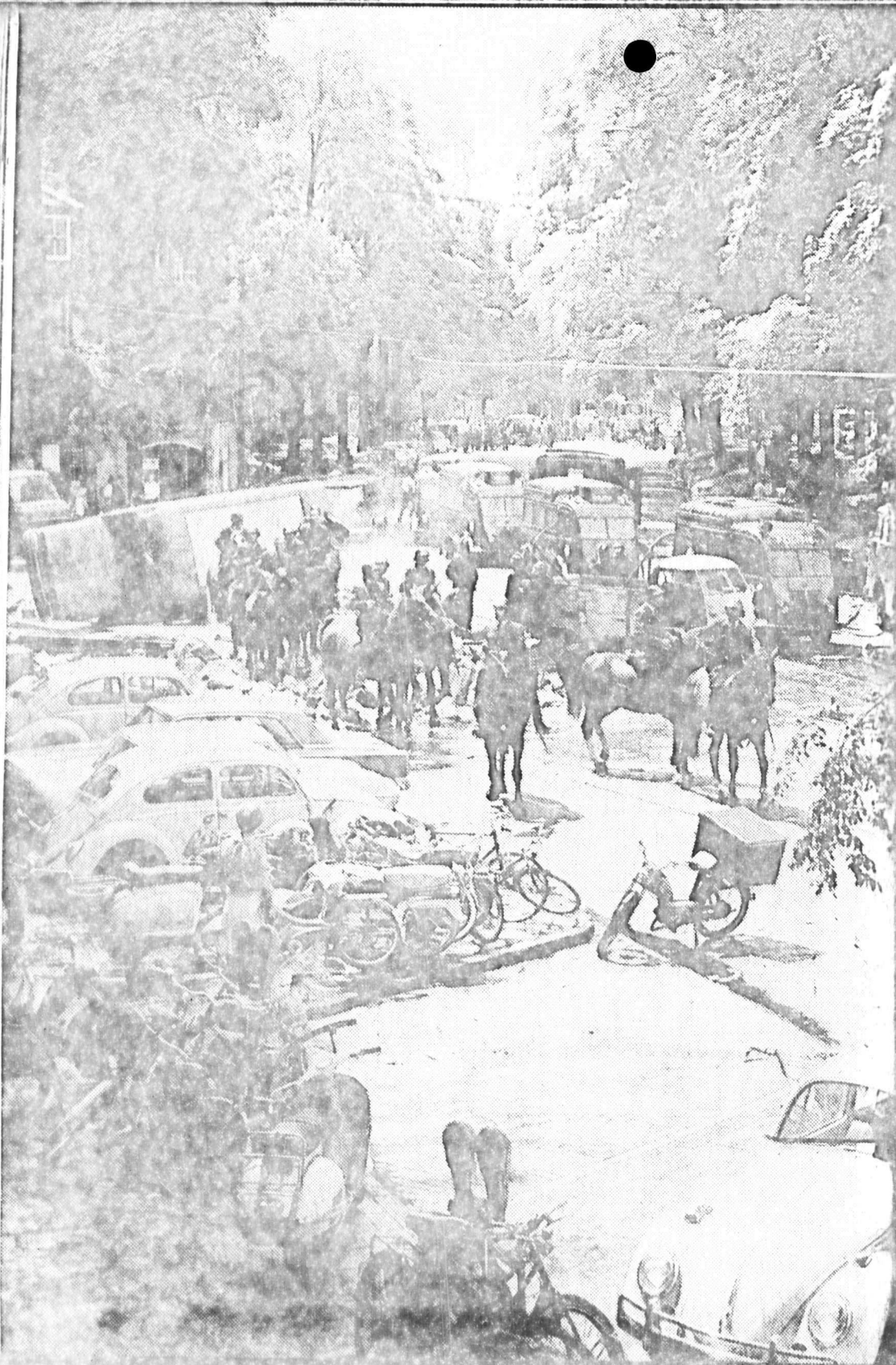
HARRY MULISCH

One avowed champion of the Provos is Harry Mulisch (born 1927), whose moving description of the death of his father appeared in the Summer 1962 issue of Delta and whose novels, plays, and study of Adolf Eichmann entitled De zaak 40/61 (The 40/61 Case) have set him in the forefront of contemporary Dutch writers. Late in 1966 he published Bericht aan de rattenkoning (Report to the King Rat), a fiery commentary on events in Amsterdam between 1964 and 1966, weighted heavily on the side of the Provos and against the Establishment – the King Rat of his title, in allusion to the like-named biological monstrosity of a cluster of rats inextricably fused at their tails. The following passages are extracts from this report, which Mulisch says he wrote 'in a fit of fury and laughter that lasted three weeks.'

Those who say that the Amsterdam riots represent 'nothing brand new but are a symptom of the normal conflict between generations may well be asked to explain why the young people of the Netherlands twenty years ago didn't turn a hair at their government's repressive action against Indonesians fighting for independence, whereas *today's* youth smear the statue of General van Heutsz – Amsterdam's monument to colonialism – with great regularity. Those who say that the Amsterdam riots are 'purely temporary' are of course right, but only because the targets aimed at are themselves temporary. Pumping police troops into Amsterdam – like pumping Americans into Vietnam – can end *this* rioting, but this rioting only. Those who say that the situation should be dealt with firmly, eradicated root and branch, may apply for information to Amsterdam's discharged chief of police and overwrought burgomaster, to the booed-at minister of the interior and the politically mauled prime minister.

If anything is to be eradicated root and branch – and this is the gist of my message – it is precisely this 'root-and-branch eradication.'

Anyone who has grown up in the 'welfare state,' the white homeland of the 'haves,' has a different attitude towards things than his parents, who belong to another era and have *accumulated* all these things. If this person also happens to live in a capital city, he's apt to *show* on occasion that he



does think otherwise. He takes welfare, or what passes for it, for granted. A car is for getting him from one place to another or for having fun with – nothing more. When he discovers that this same car represents a *triumph* to his parents, he shrugs his shoulders and looks upon them as poor duffers, which they are. The boy plays with things. They are simply *things* to him, not symbols. A car is a car, not a CAR; television is television, not THE TEEVEE. If a program bores him, he switches it off – outraging his parents. Screeching and falling all over each other, they rush to turn THE TEEVEE on again . . .

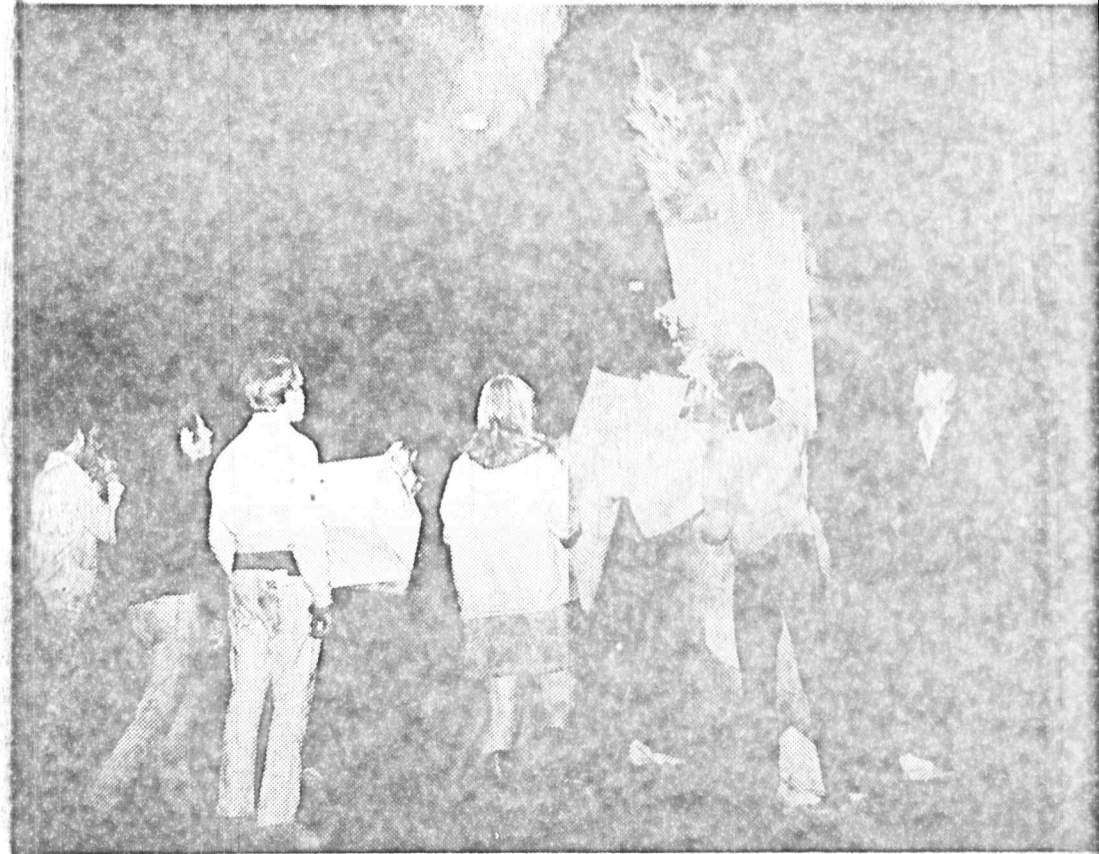
A happening is not an expression of discontent, as elderly youth-leaders seem to think, but an expression of pleasure. The Amsterdam 'nozems' (as they used to be called) initially consisted of two groups, both clad in black and distinguishable from each other only by those in the know. There was a pretty tough, motorized group known as the 'dykers' because they hung around the Nieuwendijk, and a more sophisticated, peripatetic group called the 'pleiners' because their favourite gathering-place was the Leidseplein.* This difference is reflected in the literary works of Jan Cremer and Simon Vinkenoog, respectively.

The dykers stemmed from the former proletariat, wore leatherette outfits, and stuck to rock 'n' roll; the pleiners were the offspring of the former middle classes, wore real leather, and stuck to jazz. The pleiners now and then smoked marihuana and read modern literature. The dykers smoked heavy shag and went to the movies; when the show was over, they clattered across the street to the Dam. That led to their happenings – or, as the old folks put it, to incessant, widespread disturbances of LAW AND ORDER, which the short-staffed police couldn't put an end to. And yet an end did come.

As follows:

It was evening, rainy, with the police stationed here and there. A couple of hundred dykers were hanging around the national monument on the Dam. The *status* was tensely *quo*. All of a sudden four or five open American cars roared out from side streets and alleys, each manned by four or five burly, crouching thugs armed with cudgels, whips, sticks, and bicycle chains. Driving at top speed up onto the sidewalks, the attackers began lashing out mercilessly at the bewildered boys, weaving

* For more subtle distinctions, see the article, in *Provo 4*, 'Over bietniks pleiners magiejers bullen provoos brozems nozems brovoos kikkers dijkers en dammers.' The narrow Nieuwendijk, one of the older streets in central Amsterdam, is full of shops, movie-



in and out among them, hitting right and left. Within a minute it was all over, and for good. This episode, at any rate, was torn out root and branch.

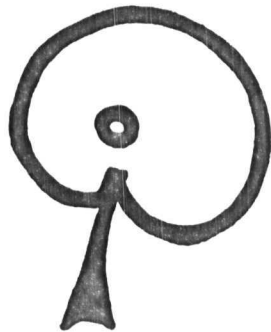
The police did nothing. While the boys, bleeding and crying, supported one another, the police got into their cars and drove away. The incident was never investigated, and no charges were made against the underworld, which had restored peace in its own territory: the red-light district behind the Dam, where business had suffered because of the little disturbances.

This was the beginning of the downfall of the police and the law in Amsterdam . . .

houses, and bars, snack and otherwise. The Leidseplein, lying about a mile to the southwest, is the square adjacent to the Municipal Theatre; it is also well equipped with other amusement places.

After many adventures,* Robert Jasper Grootveld's magical eye fell on the statue of the Lieverdje on the Spui, exactly half-way between the Leidseplein and the Dam. 'Our Lieverdje' – the little rascal dear to every Amsterdamer – had long been a standard character in the Amsterdam column of the daily *Het Parool*, and the statue named after him had been given to, and accepted by, the city of Amsterdam a few years before by a firm of cigarette manufacturers. The bronze sculpture is the work of Carel Kneulman and represents a sort of street urchin wearing a cap and sagging knee-socks, a type that no longer exists and probably never did exist outside of a certain kind of boys' books popular in the thirties, when Kneulman was a lad. In this forlorn little figure Grootveld now recognized the rightful monument for 'the addicted consumer of tomorrow.' And since his anti-smoking temple had become just as unserviceable as the temple on the Acropolis, he decided to transfer his ritual practices to this totem of the Great Taboo.

From that moment onwards this sign started appearing all over the city:



It suggests all sorts of things: an apple, a heart, perhaps even a smoke-bomb. But the official interpretation is: Amsterdam. The circle is the girdle of canals, the stem is the Amstel River, the dot is the Lieverdje.

* Readers interested in Amsterdam affairs are referred to Dick P. J. van Reeuwijk, *Damsterdamse extremisten* (Amsterdam, 1965).



While their parents – seated on refrigerators and washing-machines, with a mixer in one hand and the daily tabloid *De Telegraaf* in the other – were watching THE TEEVEE with their left eye and THE CAR out in front with their right, the children betook themselves to the Spui on Saturday evenings. The pleiners were there, too, of course, and so were a bunch of the dykers who had been beaten up by the underworld as the police looked on (not all of the dykers, but no one knew that until 14 June 1966). Everyone had long hair, although it was not half as long as that of Jacques Gans, the *Telegraaf* columnist who would soon be calling them 'an obnoxious plague of fleas.' When the electric clock by the Lutheran Church on the Spui pointed to the zero hour of midnight, the high priest appeared from an alleyway in full pontificals, sometimes daubed with paint, sometimes masked, and began walking magical circles round the Nicotine Demon while his disciples applauded and sang the Ugge-Ugge song. Sometimes there were hundreds listening to his sermons from the pedestal. They handed him paper, which he wound round the Lieverdje, and wood alcohol, and matches.

The police did not interfere in any way.

Because up until 1965 there were no politics involved. The facts that americanization had begun to wane in the Netherlands after the murder of Kennedy, that American jazz and rock were being ousted by English beat, that James Bond was superseding the FBI, that a word like 'image' was pronounced *à la française* (which only a short time before would have been unspeakably *square*) – all this was still quite politically innocent. For the time being the Saturday night happenings were just kids out for a bit of fun in a capital of the white homeland of the 'haves' – youngsters gratifying their sacral needs in their own playful way and totally ignorant of conditions elsewhere in Amsterdam.

Such as:

1. the fact that a few hundred yards away, in the Heilige Weg, a peaceful sit-down demonstration against nuclear weapons had been broken up forcefully by order of the burgomaster, Gijsbert van Hall;

2. the fact that demonstrators against Portugal's participation in the NATO Tattoo in the Olympic Stadium had, by order of the same Van Hall, been herded together by the police and beaten with clubs and whips, out of the sight of the public.

This was the beginning of the downfall of the burgomaster of Amsterdam . . .

As the date of the ROYAL WEDDING drew near, the schemes for upsetting the festivities increased in number and ingenuity. [The Provos] first dreamed up fairly simple projects, such as painting thousands of balloons with swastikas and releasing them from some suitable spot in town, to be chosen according to wind direction. If the police decided to shoot the balloons down, they would also bring down the vials of nitric acid tied to them, and the acid would then take pleasant revenge on the Sunday clothes of Orange supporters. The ceremonial-bow scheme was pretty good, too. Somebody's father had once been a cabinet minister and would surely be invited to the wedding ceremony in the church. A tube filled with some horribly stinking fluid would be slipped surreptitiously into his breast-pocket – by his son, for instance, during an embrace – and when he bowed to the bride in church, the little bottle would fall out and be smashed on the flagstones.

The plans kept getting more innocuous and soon were hardly plans at all any more but diabolic technical pranks for venting bile. Like the idea of having loudspeakers blare forth the sound of machine-gun fire from a house as the wedding procession was passing by: this rat-tat-tat would immediately draw real bullets from the police, thereby proving that Amsterdam had indeed armed itself. Another clever suggestion was to make some technical alteration to the church organ so that it would spew out laughing-gas when the psalms were played. But the idea I still like the best is the lion-manure plan. Somebody had heard that horses, no matter how full of tranquillizers you prop them, *always* bolt at the smell of lion manure. With the help of republican keepers at the zoo, the stuff could be collected and at the proper time strewn along the route to



the West Church. Amsterdamers would then be treated to the spectacle of a runaway golden coach, with Beatrix and Claus clinging in terror to each other, pelting along the Rokin, past the Mint Tower, via Rembrandtsplein to the Wibautstraat, and then helter-skelter down Highway 1 headed for Germany. In the meantime, we would be paying homage to the Netherlands Lion at the zoo . . .

While Van Hall was solemnizing the MARRIAGE in the town hall (he was named temporary Registrar of Marriages for the occasion, an appointment the municipal council, not to mention Van Hall himself, could have refused), Provos and students were laying flowers at the foot of *The Dockworker* . . . the statue by Mari Andriessen erected to commemorate the February Strike of 1941 – a brave, meaningful, desperate protest against the German manhunt, an unforgettable deed which compensates for a great deal in the atrocious war-time history of the Netherlands and gives us the right, however scanty, to look the people of Warsaw in the face.

From *The Dockworker* everybody marched cheerfully and full of *Gnot** across the Amstel and Rembrandtsplein towards the West Church. Along the way, Provos and students exploded the first smoke-bombs. The press of course, true to its nursemaid mentality, was soon to speak exclusively about 'Provos,' for never in five hundred and eighty-seven thousand years could it possibly pen a sentence like *Students demonstrated for the republic as the queen and prince passed by*. As for the smoke-bombs:

* A magic word, coined by Robert Jasper Grootveld. It is probably a combination of 'God' and 'genot' (delight), although a derivation is of course not a definition. I must confess that I have never been able to plumb all the depths of *Gnot*.

OPPENHEIMER



it later appeared that they had been manufactured and delivered by a sixteen-year-old boy from a provincial town. Overcome by remorse after witnessing their effect, he wrote an apology to Beatrix – so that now the Netherlands, too, has its Oppenheimer.

Along the Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal, near the offices of *De Telegraaf*, the marchers encountered their first solid opposition from the police. It was a provincial contingent brought in to strengthen the local forces – a male society, undoubtedly largely virginal, that reacted with particularly sordid emphasis at the sight of girls with above-the-knee skirts and long-haired, laughing, bespectacled, bearded city boys who looked not at all like police in civvies. The crowd-barriers were knocked down, and the first battle was joined on a day that was to witness many more.

How the next thing could happen is still a mystery, but within minutes smoke-bombs began exploding among the regents, regents' wives, and regentesses who were walking in their splendid robes the short distance from the palace on the Dam to the West Church. The faces of the kings, emperors, imperial marshals, generalissimi, and popes changed to reinforced concrete. Especially the Calvinist cabinet minister Biesheuvel (otherwise not a pronounced regent type), who gets flung every morning, fully dressed, into the swimming-pool by the prince in person, nearly burst into smoke himself, it is said, from sheer rage. Perhaps because he was the only one to realize that while a smoke-bomb is not a particularly dangerous weapon, it is a particularly televisogenic one.

As I sat shamefacedly watching THE TEEVEE, I was still in the dark about what was going on. That it had begun to rain was nice, of course, but of little comfort. Everything *could* have happened, but now nothing would. And then suddenly, as the procession moved along the Raadhuisstraat, there came singing:

*Orange on high, Orange on high,
Long live the republic!*

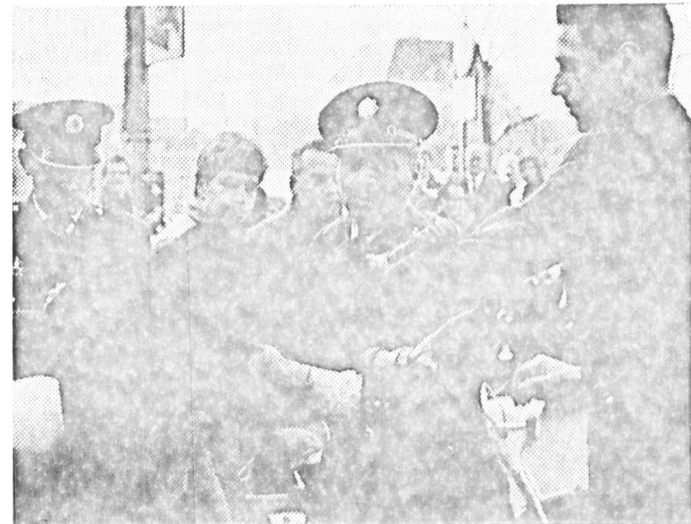
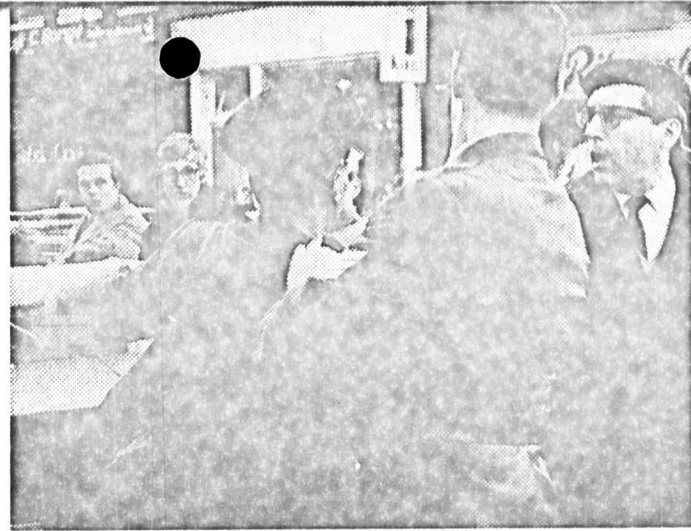
The cameras, directed by nursemaids, quickly swivelled away from the chasing and clubbing going on behind the barriers. Then all at once the picture grew hazier and hazier until the whole screen was white. A break in transmission – not a bad idea either. But suddenly the carriage with the newly-weds emerged from the mist – and when I grasped what had happened, I was overcome with emotion. Other people, with more guts than me, had brought it off, were throwing smoke-bombs into living-rooms throughout Europe, the Soviet Union, the United States, Japan, and were being pursued far along the canals and beaten up in doorways by policemen falling all over each other to get at them. Others were being shoved up against bridge railings by mounted police, held tight by reins looped round their necks, and kicked senseless by spurred riding-boots.

The shouting could be heard even in the church:

Republic! Republic! Republic!

Immediately after the heart-warming catastrophe I went to the press centre in the Krasnapolsky Hotel, where pandemonium reigned, and where I, not only because of a guilty conscience, spent hours picking a quarrel with the producers of the Royal Dutch TEEVEE, who had suppressed this republican *news*. In the meantime fights with the police were going on everywhere outside – that is to say, the police were still fighting on their own, opposed by nothing but laughter, jeers, and unintelligible shouting. The Tourist Association had evidently also advised the police to make a frontal attack on the entrance to the Krasnapolsky, so that a number of foreign journalists got a taste of *Pax Neerlandica*. A Frenchman in torn clothes kept running up and down the hall exclaiming that Amsterdam was worse than the Congo. He may have been the same person who afterwards published this headline in his Paris daily:

**THE PROVOS: POSSESSED BY SEX AND DEATH
THEY HURL THEMSELVES ON POLICE BAYONETS**



Blues for a Pregnant Girl

NICO

1
I don't think about you so often any more.
when I do
I don't see you now as a memory
but as a woman
I must admit that also in that capacity
you're not bad.

2
when I happen to run into you
I usually look
half on the sly
at your belly
and
try to remember whether you
have a big mirror at home.

3
go on dreaming, darling
your child will
cry you awake
soon.

The General

TON SCHIMMELPENNINCK

When the general
got up and said
men what can we
actually do
for peace
there was only a soldier
who listened and said
sir
I'd start out by
taking off your jacket

White Poetry

Notes on White Poetry

PIETER BEEK

What good are poems that are only read by two people out of a thousand? Absolutely nil. At best they have a kind of snob value as antiques. Reading poems like that takes a lot of background knowledge. Remember all those painful hours of poetry interpretation at school, analysing the most peculiar poetic quirks? The poem was an intellectual measuring stick or jigsaw puzzle, the poet a saint.

At last the time of setting and solving riddles is largely a thing of the past. Poetry has become pure – that is, the word has become the most important element. By putting words in the proper order, the poet achieves an effect that has every right to create a shock, pleasant or unpleasant. The White Poem can be one of several things. It can tell an imaginary story, or it can take a piece of reality and give it an effect by isolating it. In either case the result may be ironic, humorous, or shocking, absurd or unreal, but at any rate it can be understood.

Move On

ANONYMOUS

Move on, goddammit,
said the cop
I let him say it three times
so his god would be certain to hear it.

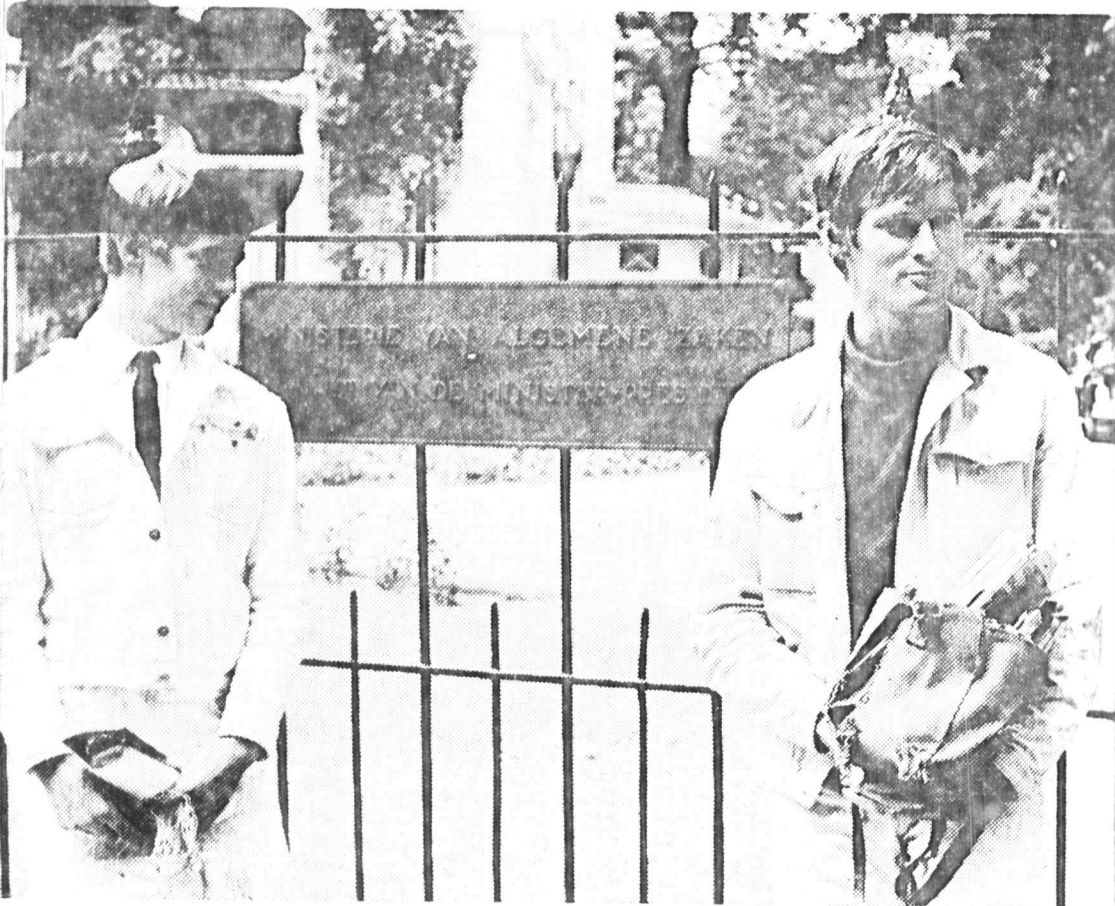
Es Labe-a dee Poe-leets-eye

PIETER BEEK

on his twenty-fifth anniversary
as a policeman
last year
in heerhugowaard
officer fritsen was given
a miniature billy club
in silver

which his grateful wife
still uses frequently

PROVO



Bernhard de Vries (right), first Provo member of the Amsterdam municipal council, and his brother, after Bernhard has called on the Prime Minister in The Hague

Provo Inside Out

BERNHARD DE VRIES

Among the variegated contributors to the book Provo was an inside expert, Bernhard de Vries (born 1940), who had recently been elected the first Provo member of the Amsterdam municipal council. His analysis of what makes Provos tick and of the different kinds of Provos may therefore be taken as straight from the horse's mouth.

The first thing Provos have in common is their basic dissatisfaction with established society – their scepticism of an authoritative system that deals with awkward problems either by ignoring them or by showing the ones it can't cope with under the table in the blissful illusion that out of sight is out of mind.

The second thing is their attitude of protest towards the *status quo* politicians who, twenty years after the Second World War, not only have failed to bring about peace but have even systematically obstructed it by clinging to obsolete issues of party or class.

Regarding the future the Provos are less unanimous. Some of them have faith in projects like Constant's New Babylon, while others feel themselves backed to the wall in a desperate last stand against the approaching nuclear holocaust. So you have on the one hand the hope of a clearly defined alternative to society in its present rejected form, and on the other a preoccupation with the vague chance of mere survival.

Characteristically, the Provos' scepticism never leads to criticism for criticism's sake – that curse of misunderstood

democracy – but always to conscious commitment. Provo is therefore a far cry from the political debating-club whose members are righteously pleased with their own magnanimous toleration of each other's prejudices. Provos protest – a form of action which people with misguided ideas of tolerance have long considered improper.

Provos protest effectively: they provoke counter-protests, thus forcing their opponents to take a stand or at least think about the matter at issue. Provos protest spontaneously, following no set plan and therefore accomplishing more. Organized demonstrations with slogans castrated beforehand by officialdom go completely against the Provo spirit, which has grown out of that most spontaneous possible form of expression, the happening. The provotariat indeed derives its flexibility and strength from the very fact that the authorities don't know what it will think up next . . .

Although outsiders may believe that Provo is a closely knit group of unruly but kindred spirits, insiders know only too well that it is a heterogeneous bunch, bound together by a common ideal of personal freedom and finding expression in radical nonconformity, militant anti-militarism,* and loving anarchism.

If Provos have to be pigeon-holed, I suppose you could divide them roughly into four groups. But don't forget that with anything as fluid as Provo every classification is arbitrary and vague, and that many Provos fit into more than one category.

1. *The happeners.* This group originated in the artistic happening – the purely aesthetic mass-manifestation – as practised in Amsterdam and Antwerp. The police and the bourgeoisie were of course scandalized and countered with right-wing provocation, the conventional reaction of the philistine middle classes and their bogy-men servants, the booted protectors of shocked mediocrity. The result: the

* This anti-militarism does not rule out sympathy for such guerilla fighters as the Vietcong, who have had to turn to armed resistance when all peaceful means of protest against American intervention proved of

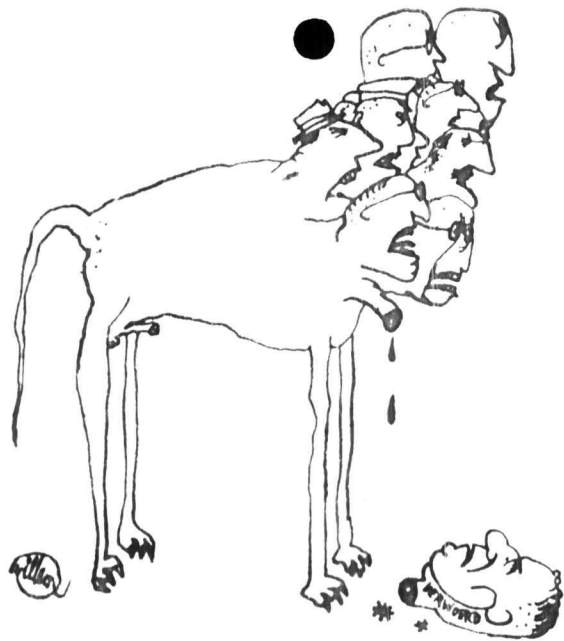
artistic happening acquired a political tinge and became the Provo happening. Provo happenings are collective manifestations of protest against an authoritarian system that has to assert itself at all costs, proving yet again by its perverse intransigence that authority and art are arch-enemies the minute art ceases to be mere embellishment and becomes the expression of independence, joy of life, criticism, and protest.

2. *The beat(nik)s and hipsters.* These two American words cover an extremely mixed group. The beats deliberately set themselves apart from socially accepted norms of appearance by being as unkempt as possible, and the hipsters go to the other extreme by dressing like dandies. Beats and hipsters are the opposite of squares, the colourless herd. To some degree, they are all practising escapists, using marihuana, LSD, and other hallucinogens to flee society into a private world that is better adapted to their own personal standards. These seekers after a heightened state of consciousness are unconditionally peace-loving and pacifist. It is difficult to find a common denominator for this group because it draws its spiritual sustenance from itself, while at the same time it assimilates the most divergent religious and artistic influences from outside, ranging from Zen to Yevtushenko.

3. *The thinkers.* These are the people who put our ideas into writing and distribute them in such publications as *Provo*, *Revo*, *Eindelijk* (At Last), the Amsterdam University student weekly *Propria Cures*, and sympathetic local and national newspapers and journals. (The opposition press, of course, also lavishes loyal and endearing attention upon us.)

4. *The activists.* These are the Provos of direct action. They believe that demonstrations, sit-ins, teach-ins, forums, and Provo attendance at opposition meetings can contribute greatly to the mobilization of public opinion in the Provo sense. The activists will use any reasonable means as long as it yields publicity. (For the information of historically deformed imbeciles on the look-out for parallels: Provo

no avail. Like all right-wing provocation, the American action can only lead to violence and abuse of power.



activism has nothing to do with the activism of Flemish nationalists, which was based on theories of *Blut und Boden*.) The activists react spontaneously and positively to events that threaten world peace and personal freedom: American bombardment of Vietnam for example, or excessively severe legal measures at home. The activists are also known as 'street Provos.'

As far as foreign policy is concerned, Provo is anti-militaristic. They resent it when the older generation trots out its moth-eaten notion that young people are not competent to judge situations in the past that are still actively influencing the present . . .

Provo is unique because it is the vanguard in a unique situation – that of a general state of welfare in which for the first time in history man has space to live his own life creatively. That the Provos temporarily are rewarded with sticks and stones for their insight only goes to prove that authorities always find the most obvious truths the hardest to grasp. The younger and youngest generations are marching right behind the vanguard, headed straight for the municipal council. TO THE HOMO LUDENS! AGAINST ABUSE OF POWER! PLAYFULLY ONWARD TOWARDS A LIVABLE AMSTERDAM!

The Provos of Holland

PIET THOENES

International interest in Provo led The Nation to ask Dr Piet Thoenes (born 1921), professor at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, to comment upon the Dutch phenomenon in its 17 April 1967 issue. In the following excerpts from this article, Dr Thoenes discusses the background and impact of the movement and its possible meaning for the future.

Their main meeting place is called the Cellar – part of an old house, on the banks of a canal, right in the heart of the old town.

The Cellar is always open, day and night; at any hour, there are people to talk to, to listen to, to be with. There are no convocations, no fixed hours, no attempts at organization. There is a certain stability of clans, but a still greater instability of ever-changing topics, actions, relationships, and leaders.

Anyone can tell you where the Cellar is, and if you are rather more than a tourist, if you are really interested, go there and meet the people. You can sit and talk, or help to print the next edition of *Provo*. Or join a group that is on its way to start a happening around the Lieverdje, a nearby statue which is a famous rallying point for Provos, police, and innocent onlookers.

The Provo movement is an open one; no one is excluded. But if you really intend to join, you will have to change a lot. To be a Provo is more than part-time entertainment, and relationship with the movement cannot be fixed simply on a weekend basis or by taking out a membership. A genuine Provo is utterly different from the bourgeois society around him. He has no ambition for a suitable career or a well-organized family life, no fixed plans for next week, no ideology.

A Provo is against the dead symbols of a dead society, against official religions, against any kind of authority and obedience, against heroism

and martyrdom. He is, above all, a nonconformist, a lover of things new, original, and authentic. He is always on the move, restless, even faithless and elusive.

His problem may be: how is a man without any ties to become or remain involved in the world around him? His beloved Cellar is not a nomad's tent. It is a womb, and the womb, alas, is not the world.

By now, society must realize that change is the phenomenon most characteristic of the kind of world in which we live. And if I were interviewed on the topic, while sitting at ease behind my desk, I would readily agree, saying – change, that is most important! But time and again, as we move about in this world, we are caught unawares. Suddenly, there is something new, something provoking, unpredictable. It is exceedingly difficult to face these new phenomena with the slightest degree of objectivity.

We react as emotionally as the 'adversary' might hope, and the amount of change which we must digest in the span of one generation seems to give us a fair amount of stomach trouble. Perhaps the blame should be placed on the generation of our fathers, who taught us about social institutions, social processes, and social behaviour as though they were eternal truths. Certainly we have doubts that never troubled them. But we did, after all, inherit a few things – ideas about duty and courage and obedience – that shouldn't be touched. There we know where we stand and what it is that we must defend.

Now, suddenly, part of the younger generation hits us precisely on the points where we thought ourselves reasonably safe. No one really understands where these young people came from. They seem to have escaped our educational devices. Who taught them? Who brought them up? There they are, suddenly, in the centre of the stage, throwing smoke-bombs at the royal galaxy.

And in the Netherlands of all places. One of those nice little countries, so clean and tidy; wealthy, self-assured, quiet, and friendly. Not one of those eternal trouble spots erupting once again, but NATO's dearest child. Is it just accident, a little shower on a pleasant April day? Or is there something rotten in the state of Holland, and is Provo just another sign of the decay of the West?

In any case, Provo has aroused the attention of the world. It has captured far more of the international press than has any hard-working Dutch politician, professor, merchant, or industrialist. Why should it attract this interest? Is it ethnological curiosity, like some newly documented oddity of behaviour among the Eskimos or the Onas? Or was there a constellation of factors in the Dutch society which unexpectedly spawned a phenomenon that foreshadows tomorrow's culture of the Western world?

It may be a key to our puzzlement that the welfare state is indeed very real, and a reality markedly different from the liberal kind of society one remembers from the pre-1940 period. It is a reality, moreover, that has not yet been brought to consciousness by a new well-developed ideology.

Holland, today, for example, differs widely from Holland before World War II. There is another level of education. Formerly, twenty-five per cent continued their education after the compulsory school-leaving age; now, eighty per cent do so. The occupation structure has changed, with far less agriculture and commerce, more industry and services. Wealth is greater and public poverty has disappeared.

And so we have arrived in a distinct consumer culture. Before the war, the main thing was to earn money. If you were able to earn much and spend little, you had 'arrived' – always assuming you were not actually a miser. It was assumed also that you knew what to buy in the way of clothes, books, and furniture; at the same time, excessive attention to good taste was looked upon by a large part of the Dutch middle class as bordering on bad taste.

Not so nowadays. In a way, what makes the welfare state such a pleasant society is the stress on a good life. To earn a lot is, of course, still tremendously important, but there is a growing amount of 'gardening' in daily life. 'Gardening' here means focusing on personal things in your immediate surroundings. There is less interest for long-term, large-scale public affairs; more time for hobbies, collections, friendship, and love.

This attitude may be in part a reaction to what is happening in the world around us. A larger role is given to secondary structures and organizations immediately outside the private circle: more bureaucracy, more impersonal contacts, more rationalization in a society of ranks, diplomas, functions, and administration.

The world uses us and we use the world, but there is little involvement. It is not only that we lack love or hate. This world seems to have so many laws and powers of its own that we, as individuals, cannot do much about it. And so it is better to leave worries to the Establishment.

A logical consequence is widespread political apathy. Even in countries with less anomalous political parties than the Netherlands, political interest is ebbing. It is felt almost universally that politics are old-fashioned, a holdover from a generation that had not yet discovered that the real powers cannot be controlled by parliament. Deep down, there is no lack of interest in religious matters; but it takes the form of personal judgement and is no longer caught by official movements or organizations.

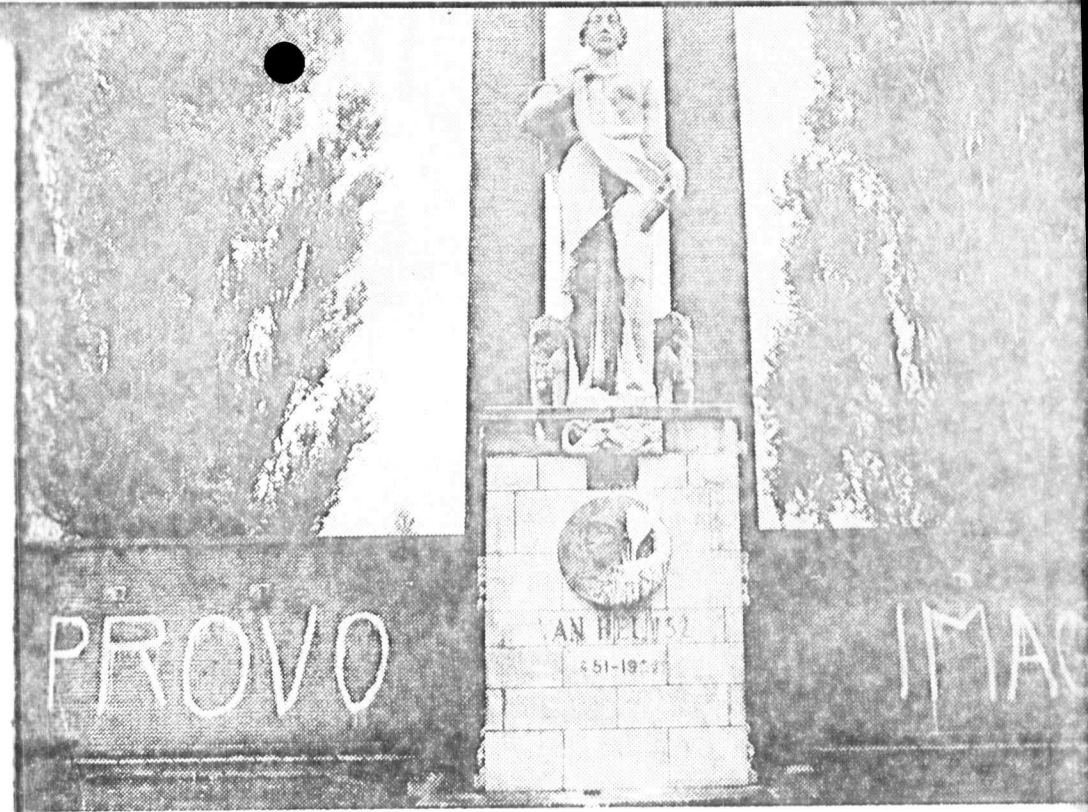
Now what do these differences signify? The welfare state is undoubtedly a society, but it is not the creation, let us say, of an élite which purposely started a revolution and now proudly looks back on what it has achieved.

We live in it, most of the time we are reasonably happy with it, but we hardly ever look at its blueprint and wonder if it is as we really intended it to be. If the welfare state had a distinct ideology, perhaps there would be a general protest, clear-cut goals for a coming generation. But there are none. The parents live on, half satisfied, half worried; and so do the larger part of the younger generation – half satisfied, half frustrated.

Or is there really a generation in the making, with ideas of its own, and certainties and ideals that they may have directly inherited from their grandfathers? In order to understand the Provos as a possible new form of young generation, we must first take a closer look at some characteristics of the Dutch society which has produced this new phenomenon . . .

Thinking about the future, I must revert to a distinction made in the first part of this article. Provo is the sum of two, let us say, cultural, factors in Dutch society.

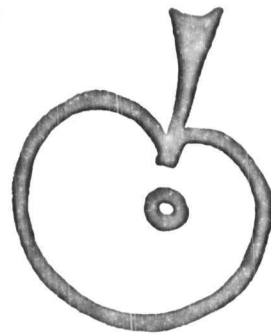
One is a general condition. Welfare states, with their kind of external educational system, are always high on the list for possible generational conflicts of the beatnik type. The combination of rapid technological change and continuous political apathy leads easily to that kind of protest. As such, it is entertainment but not much more. It does not really influence over-all society, its structures, processes, and value systems. We



all know that the dissenting members of the younger generation will one day take their examinations, marry their girls, and find their jobs.

The existence of this form of generational conflict lends some extra colour to our society, sometimes an element of surprise, even of reflection, but there is nothing in it that promises to change the course of history. The other factor is a particular combination that occurred in Holland during the mid-sixties, and that gave the generational protest a character which prevents us from dismissing it as a form of growing pains. It has reached a level at which history is made, enabling us to look around the corner and get an idea of what might lie beyond the welfare state: another kind of society, a real *homo ludens*, even a new religion.

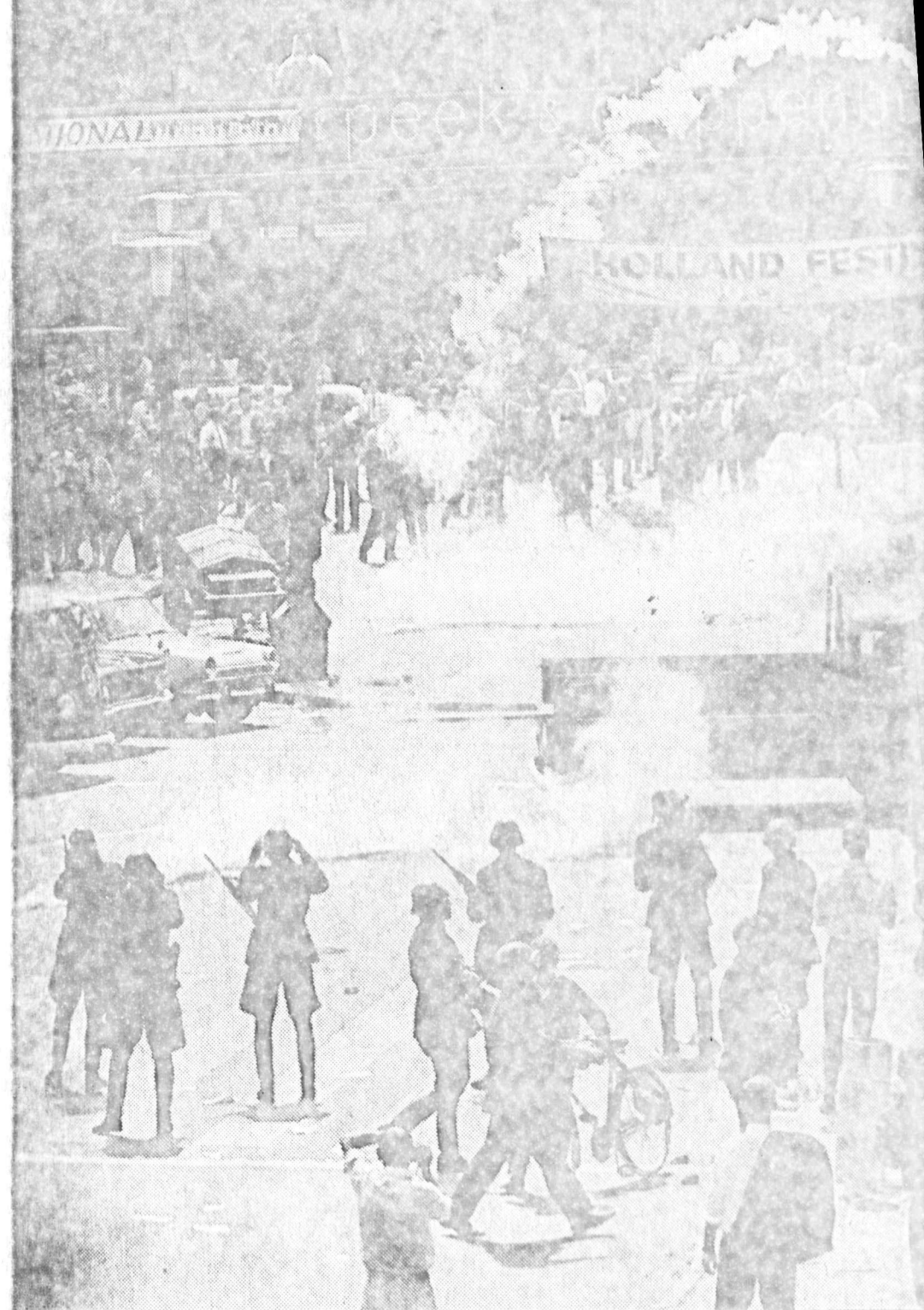
In any event, Holland will never be quite the same again. If we go to the theatre, we shall recognize the nineteenth-century flavour of the set-up; if we start a new organization, we shall know that it is already a bureaucracy; and if we found a new political movement, we shall have to confess that in some way or other it is already part of the Establishment. Although Provo has not been able, or even tried, to force us to change existing structures, it has left an indelible mark.

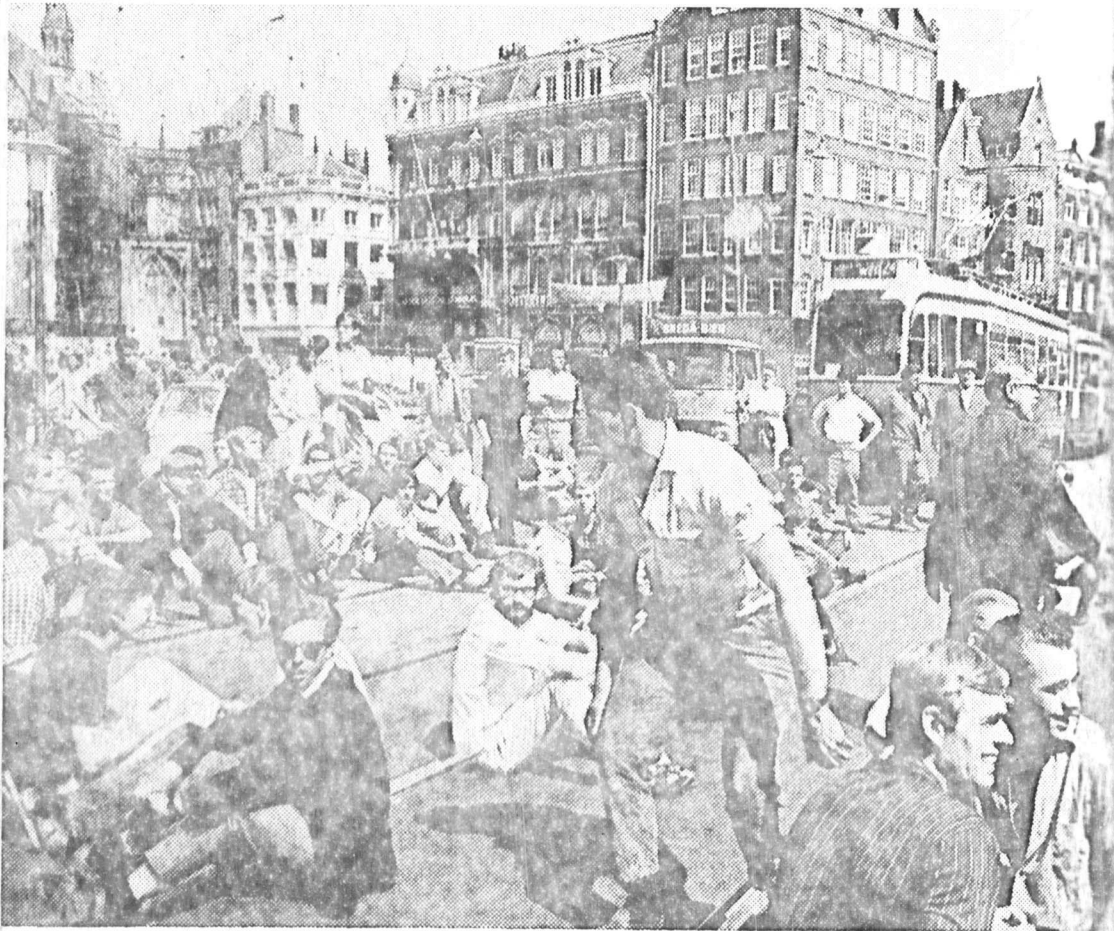


But why, I wonder do I write as though Provo were already safely locked up in the past? Is it because there have been hardly any happenings during the last few months? No provocations, no riots, no new men, really nothing at all? Or because the stream of publications on Provo (mainly very good ones) gives the feeling that we have analysed, understood, and pigeon-holed the movement? It may, of course, be wishful thinking on the part of a middle-aged, middle-class observer who wishes to relax once more in the security of *God, Nederland, en Oranje*.

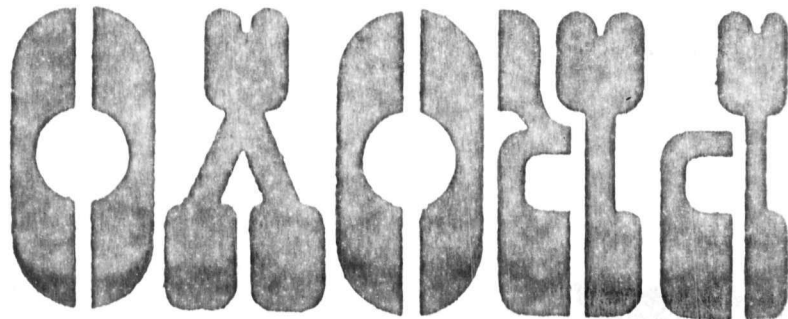
Provo has given us a new way in which to look at things. But that is also precisely where its weakness lies. A number of people might start thinking anew, but nothing obliges them, or even allows them, to start reliving. Nothing will happen if we go on as before. Provo is a challenge, but only provoking in the field of ideas, important as that may be. When you continue to publish white plans that are not enforced, and when you go on throwing smoke-bombs at the royal procession, it just doesn't work any longer – not for yourself or for your enemies.

Perhaps that is the main reason for writing about Provo as if it were already a thing of the past. But I hope that I am wrong. I hope that here, or somewhere else, a movement which starts as the protest of a generation will grow into something more – more than entertainment, than irritating hooliganism. Provo has shown that one may use his imagination to envision a different world. Why, after all, should the welfare state be the last phase of history before Judgement Day?





14 June 1966: a Provo sit-down on the Dam before things got hot



A SLIGHT ADVENTURE BY SIMON CARMIGGELT

Some lads in the provinces seem destined for provodom if they can just make the break to Amsterdam in time. In this slight adventure, Simon Carmiggelt sketches a young rebel *in spe*. You may not like him at first sight, but perhaps he will grow on you.

Since the boy was unusually tall for his seventeen years, he had to duck his head several times going up the stairs to the attic, but when he reached the top he could straighten to his full height again. As he passed the first door on one side of the narrow hallway, he gave it a couple of hard kicks. Then he went into his own cramped room and sat down under the reading lamp.

'Everything is going according to plan,' he said in an affected voice. Almost at the same moment his door opened and a little girl came in. She was about five years old and had on a long, light-blue nightgown.

'Henk . . .' she said, wiping the sleep out of her eyes.

'Yeah?'

'Somebody pounded me awake.'

'You don't say.'

She looked at him uncertainly and then asked, 'Where are my daddy and mummy?'

'Gone away.'

'When are they coming home?'

'They are never coming home again,' he replied in a sepulchral tone.

'Ohhh,' cried the child. Sobbing, she ran out of the room on her little bare feet.

'Everything is going according to plan,' the boy repeated. He sat very still and waited. A few minutes later he heard heavy footsteps on the stairs, and a flabby, somewhat slovenly woman came panting into the room.

'You lousy bum!' she screamed. 'Did you scare that little kid again? Oh, you just wait till Mr Peters gets home! I hope he really lets you have it this time.'

'Hold your tongue, menial,' said the boy. 'You have the brains of a shrimp and the vocabulary of a garbage can. Mr Peters, accompanied by his anaemic bedmate, is at present in one of the three cinema-houses that are the pride and joy of this communal cesspool; he is there engaged in recharging his frustrated emotional life with his weekly shot of culture.'

'You can just keep your pretty words to yourself,' said the woman; 'I'm talking about that poor little baby you're always tormenting . . .'

'If the right honourable Mr Peters does not desire his poor little baby to be tormented, he would be well advised not to take such maladjusted young people as I into his house,' replied the boy pedantically. 'He does so because he is money mad. Oh well – Crescentam sequitur cura pecuniam, as Horace puts it so admirably. Since you, lowly serving-woman that you are, obviously do not understand the citation, I shall translate: As riches grow, care follows.'

'Oh shut up,' snarled the woman. 'You ought to be put in a reformatory, that's what. You don't belong in no decent respectable home.'

She went out, slamming the door behind her. Henk yawned primly. For a minute or two he remained motionless. Then he took his coat from a hook, walked to the end of the hall, and opened a door. A blond lad, somewhat smaller than Henk, sat at a desk dismally staring at a schoolbook.

'Did your father send you any money?' asked Henk.

The other boy nodded.

'Enough for us to amuse ourselves on as two gentlemen should?'

'Yes, but old man Peters . . .'

'That pedagogical quack,' said Henk, 'to whom our dear yet impotent parents have entrusted our education, at this moment is scratching his pitifully afflicted libido against a Hollywood drama, whose lamentable content we had better not contemplate if we wish to keep from puking. Are you coming?'

They were soon on their way out of the house, followed by the woman's screams: 'You ain't allowed to go out! You low-down bums! Mr Peters said . . .' But they were already outside.

'What shall we do?' asked Henk. 'Break the usual window at the only school in the world where they teach you to speak Greek in the local rustic accent?'

'Not that again,' said the other boy. 'Let's go over to Kitty's and drink beer.'

'Okay,' said Henk, yawning. 'Off we go to the village courtesan, who combines the exterior of a dress-maker's dummy with the manners of a drunken plumber. It argues for the innocence of Mr Peters that he does not even suspect the existence of her establishment.'

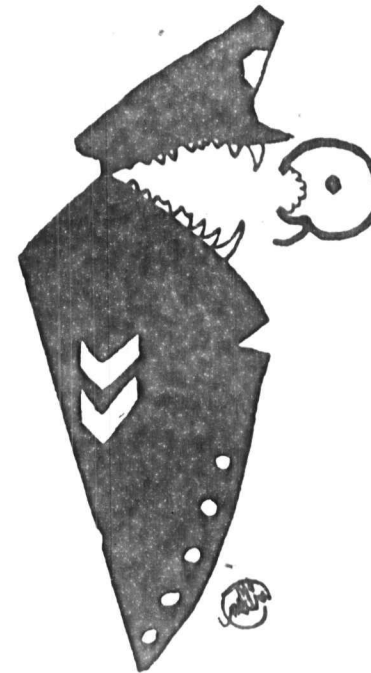
Putting on their most menacing looks, they stalked stiffly and silently through the poorly lit streets of the provincial town.

'We are execrable adolescents,' announced Henk. 'Ripe for a television program devoted to contemporary youth. We need love and warm understanding. But I ask you, sir, who will provide us with these luxuries?'

The other boy did not reply. He had heard it all so many times before.

Provo and the Maintenance of Public Order

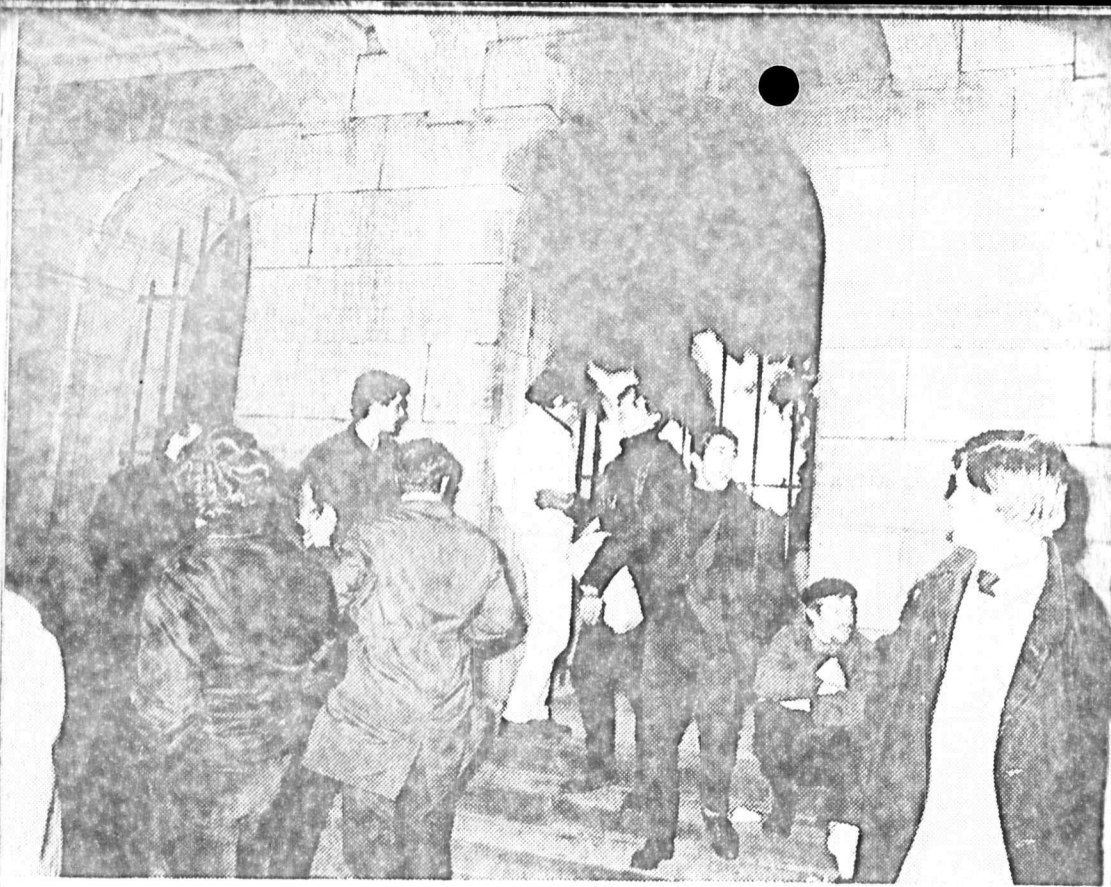
L. H. C. HULSMAN



L. H. C. Hulsman (born 1923), professor of criminal law at the Netherlands School of Economics in Rotterdam and adviser to the Ministry of Justice, contributed a caustic article to the book *Provo*, frankly denouncing the legislature, the courts, and the police for incompetent conduct. He was fiercely attacked for this, notably by the judiciary. The main points of criticism concerned his having expressed an opinion without having seen the files, and the following two passages of his article: (1) 'Everything indicates that members of the Amsterdam police force have used violence on a rather large scale in circumstances where such action had nothing to do with maintaining order. This is unequivocally recorded in copious photographic material. In other words: in dealing with Provo, members of the Amsterdam police force have frequently committed the offence of maltreatment.' (2) 'In some Provo cases the verdict pronounced by the criminal court has been obviously unjust.'

In an interview published in the weekly *Vrij Nederland* on 26 November 1966, Professor Hulsman defended himself and in addition gave his opinion about the numerous arrests of persons for shouting 'Johnson murderer' during demonstrations against the American Vietnam policy. In the excerpts below, the questions are in italic, the answers in roman type.

The pattern is quite clear: the frequency of the phenomenon, plus the direct information available; the statements made by the police themselves; the letters from the public prosecutor; the equipment used by the police. In broad outline, the total picture of what is happening is incontestably established. When I see a photograph of Provo Peter Bronkhorst being dragged along the street by his hair, I don't need any further information. Or consider the case of journalist Joop van Tijn, who lodged a complaint after he had been mishandled by the police. He received a letter from Attorney-General Gelinck saying that it was impossible to trace who beat him and how, but that Van Tijn 'was possibly mistaken for someone else.' This is tantamount to admitting that what happened to Van Tijn may well have been meant for a different person. The fact of the beating is also acknowledged.



19 March 1966: provocation by bonfire in one of the porticos of the royal palace on the Dam

A much-heard excuse for maltreatment by the police is that no one should be surprised if a harassed policeman deals out a blow too many here or there. An argument like this sounds reasonable, of course, but . . .

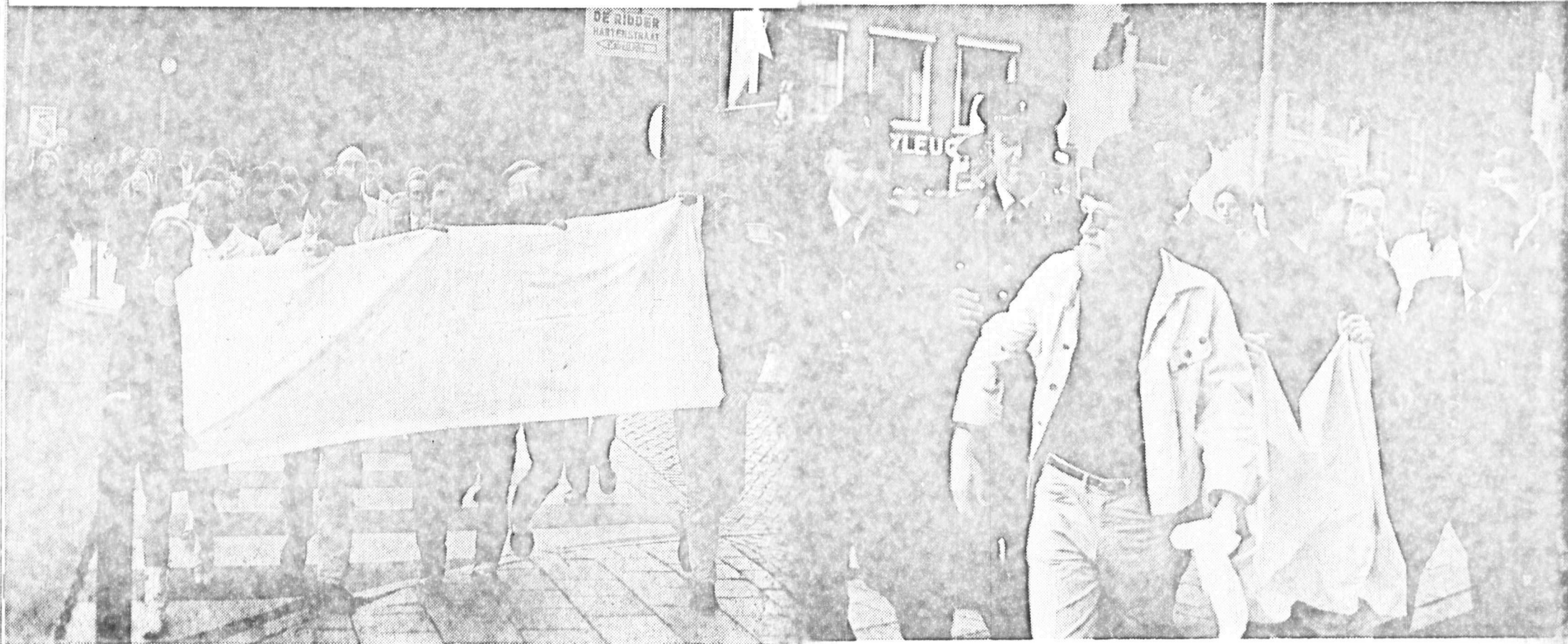
It doesn't sound reasonable at all. Such arguments spring from a completely wrong way of thinking. If you teach a man to distinguish between his own person and his function, he will understand that if anything is being harassed in circumstances like this, it is the apparatus and not the individual. If some people are incapable of making this distinction, they are not thereby disqualified as persons, but they are as policemen . . .

Abuse of power is one of the gravest errors. In the police force it should simply not be tolerated. Even more, since the Dutch penal code explicitly states that resisting a policeman is a criminal offence, the offender as a rule is subject to certain prosecution and penalties. If the law is to give this protection to the police, we must make very sure that they will never take advantage of it by behaving in such a way as to invite punishable offences against themselves.

Chief Inspector Heijink of the Amsterdam police has said that he had orders from the burgomaster and the public prosecutor 'to see to it that the slogan "Johnson murderer" is not permitted because utterances of this sort belong to the most serious category of offences, punishable by four years' imprisonment.'

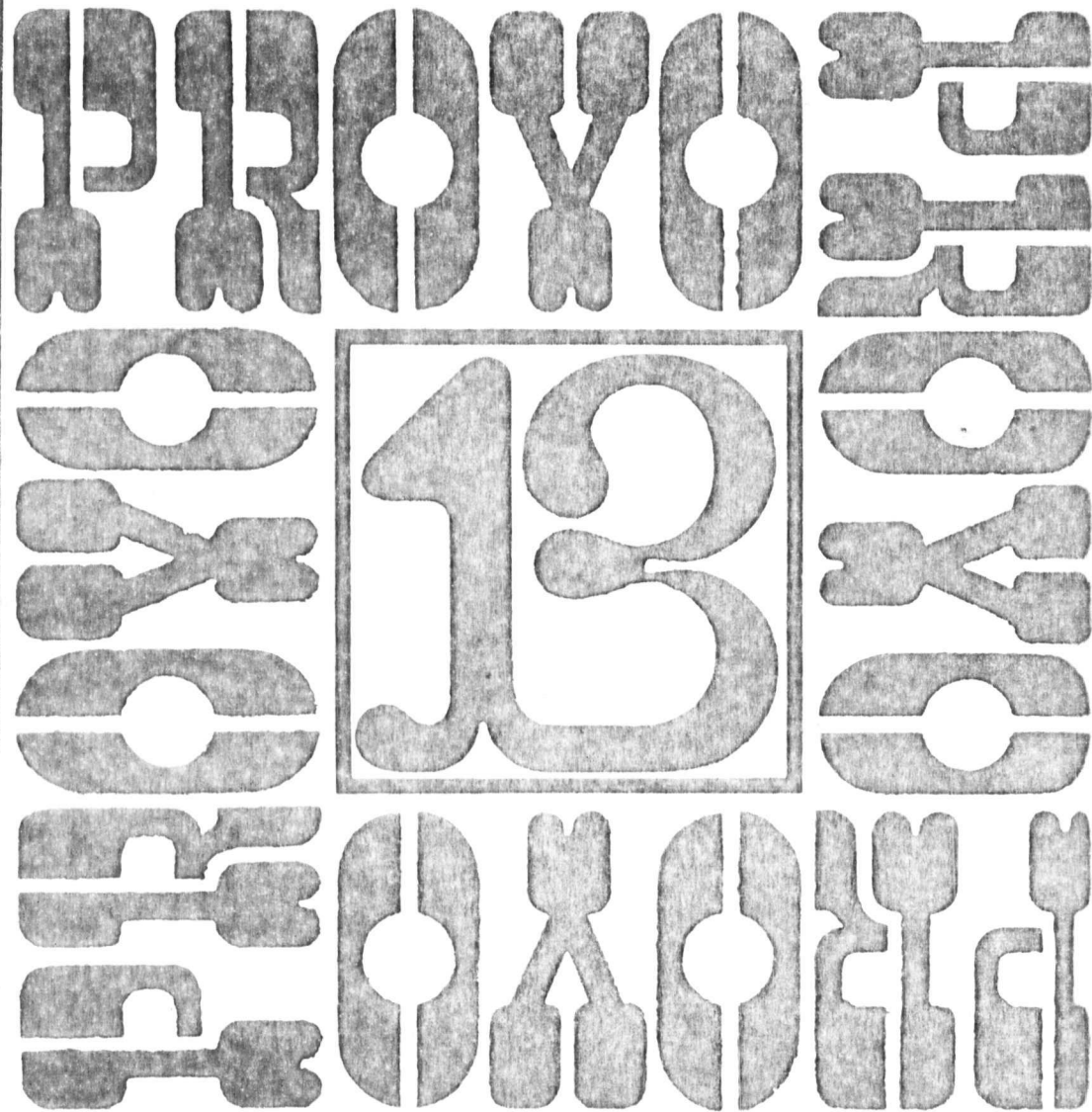
This slogan symbolizes condemnation of a particular policy. Whether it is formally punishable depends on the significance our society attaches to these words. The degree of punishment is no indication of the gravity of the offence. On this point our legislation allows a judge the latitude of a minimum fine of fifty cents and a maximum of four years' imprisonment. Moreover, this law dates from 1886, and since that time our sense of values concerning the relative seriousness of offences has changed considerably. Nor can it be argued that action must be taken purely because the law says that something is a punishable offence. We have to keep in mind the principle of expediency, according to which only those things need be dealt with that are socially harmful – a generally accepted principle of sub-social thinking.

If our society does not interpret the slogan 'Johnson murderer' as an insult to the President of the United States, but solely as a condemnation of a particular policy, the act of uttering these words does not fall under the penal provision. Objectively, I myself do not agree with a one-sided condemnation of the American Vietnam policy, but that is not the point here. In my opinion no one intends to say anything about Johnson personally, and if people want to emphasize their dislike of a certain policy by affixing an unsavoury epithet to the person who symbolizes that policy, it does not seem right to me to take serious legal action against them. Besides, as far as I can gather from American publications, you can get away with shouting 'Johnson murderer' in the United States. So on that ground alone it is wrong to take action against it here.



Provo Hans Tuynman (far right) and friends during

and at the end of a 'white' demonstration



A. D. BELINFANTE

One of the Provos' major objectives has been to enlarge the possibilities for demonstrating in public. In the Netherlands freedom of demonstration is not incorporated in any national law but is regulated in municipal by-laws and general police ordinances. In a public lecture on Amsterdam University Day, 29 October 1966, A. D. Belinfante (born 1911), professor of constitutional and administrative law at Amsterdam University and for many years adviser to the Ministry of Justice, put forward a plan to clarify the law concerning public demonstration. Earlier that month, on 7 October, Ed. van Thijn, spokesman for the Labour Party in the Amsterdam municipal council, had submitted a similar proposal to that body. Credit must certainly be granted the Provos for having helped to instigate both of these efforts. Professor Belinfante's argument may be considered to represent the standpoint of a section of the legal profession in this matter. The two cabinet ministers to whom he refers are no longer in the government: Mr Smalldenbroek is now a member of the State Council, and Professor Samkalden has been appointed the new burgomaster of Amsterdam.

In the course of the parliamentary debate occasioned by the disturbances that had occurred in Amsterdam on 13 and 14 June 1966, the Minister of the Interior, Jan Smalldenbroek, was asked to state the exact position in the Netherlands with regard to 'freedom of demonstration.' This phrase is derived from the legal parlance used to designate basic rights as guaranteed in the Constitution, such as 'freedom of the press' and 'freedom of religion,' but does not itself occur in the Constitution. The question was clearly put in order to determine whether or not a constitutional right of public demonstration exists in the Netherlands. The minister replied by referring to municipal by-laws: those were the documents to consult for regulations pertaining to freedom of demonstration. Now it is true, of course, that municipal by-laws usually do have something to say about processions, speeches made in public, and other matters that might be construed as touching upon demonstrations. On

the other hand, fundamental freedoms, set forth in terms binding even on the legislator, are rarely propounded in police ordinances.

The confusion became even greater when the Minister of Justice, Professor Ivo Samkalden, declared in a television interview on 23 June 1966, in answer to a question about freedom of demonstration, that a regulation concerning this freedom was to be found in Article 7 of the Constitution, and that municipal by-laws not in accordance with it could be overruled by the court. Article 7 does indeed state one basic right – the freedom of the press. Thus it would seem that the Minister of the Interior does not acknowledge freedom of demonstration as a constitutional right, but that the Minister of Justice does.* The latter apparently considers freedom of demonstration as synonymous with the right to air thoughts and feelings publicly through the medium of the press without having to obtain official permission beforehand. This is, however, a limited interpretation of freedom of demonstration, for by this freedom people generally mean the right to express opinions in the street by quite other means than the printed word.

The ministerial confusion becomes understandable when one realizes that Dutch legal literature makes no mention of freedom of demonstration as such, but deals only with a few aspects of it. A completely different situation obtains elsewhere, particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries. Legal handbooks in these countries precisely define the vague term 'freedom of demonstration' which has gradually become current in the Dutch press. The problem embraces the right to hold processions or parades whose purpose it is to express a specific point of view, to hold open-air gatherings with the same purpose, to make open-air speeches, to carry banners or signs in procession or individually, and to stage vocal or sit-down demonstrations. To a large extent it is concerned with the right of free expression of opinion by means other than the mass-communications media, and to a lesser extent with the rights of assembly . . . The Netherlands has neither a constitutional definition to guarantee the free expression of opinion in general, nor a constitutional basis for that particular aspect of it known as freedom of demonstration . . .

It is quite clear that the Dutch regulation of freedom of demonstration (if one may so refer to something that does not exist) deviates consider-

* The Dutch Supreme Court has recently upheld the wider interpretation.

ably from the ideal expounded in the European Convention on Human Rights, which was signed in Rome in 1950 by all the members of the Council of Europe. The convention puts freedom of expression (and, it follows, freedom of demonstration) first and foremost, subject only to exceptional circumstances requiring that interests other than freedom of expression be afforded prior protection. It is also clear that the citizen's responsibility for his own individual use of freedom, which is so rightly made an issue in the convention and which forms the basis of British and American regulations, is ignored in the Netherlands. Here, the decision whether an expression of opinion by demonstration is permissible or not rests entirely with local administrative bodies, which hold the licensing authority for processions, open-air assemblies, open-air speeches, and the carrying of signs in processions. Neither the ordinary citizen nor the court, neither the citizen who demonstrates nor the legally elected representative of the people, has any say in the matter. Whereas the Dutch citizen knows just where he stands under the regulations governing freedom of the press, he has nothing to guide by in determining his right of demonstration, and he is treated like a child by the administrative apparatus.

Is it possible to draw up equitable regulations covering the right to demonstrate? I believe that it is, and I should now like to sketch a main outline of the possibilities. If the Dutch Constitution is ever to be amended to allow a more liberal interpretation than that held by Minister Smallenbroek, Article 7 will have to be rewritten to include not only freedom of the press but also freedom of expression in general, thus in retrospect acknowledging Professor Samkalden's point of view. In addition, the provisions laid down in the Convention on Human Rights should be incorporated in the new text. Without going into details, may I say that, in respect of freedom of demonstration, the law must set the boundaries for the freedom of assembly in the open air, of public speech-making, and of processions. The law, let me stress, and not municipal by-laws.* And such a law regarding freedom of demonstration can be made at any time without amending the Constitution.

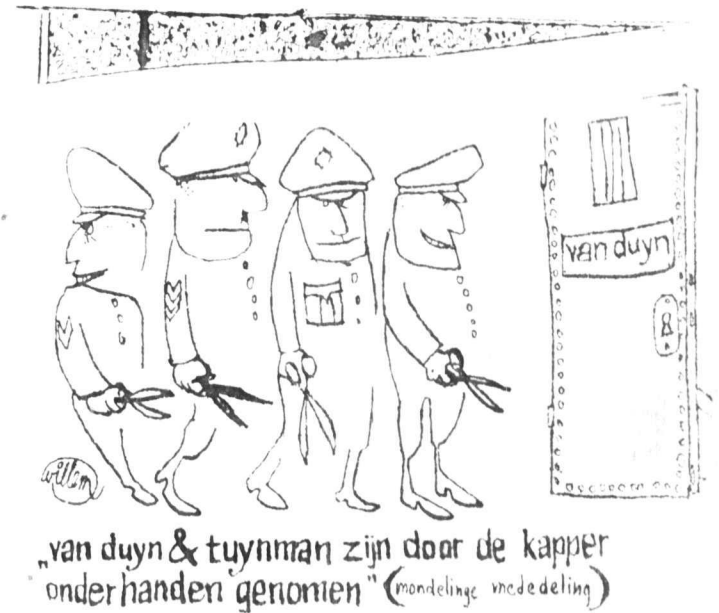
What should such a law contain? Freedom to hold open-air assemblies, parades, speeches, or other forms of demonstration as long as the three elements of public order are preserved: the unobstructed flow of traffic, the safety of person and property, and the maintenance of democratic

* It is desirable that regulations concerning freedom of demonstration should be the same throughout the Netherlands. A regulation by law is therefore essential. That the Convention on Human Rights does not demand this is to be concluded from a Dutch Supreme Court decision of 1964 (No 239).

freedom. Thus, demonstration becomes a punishable offence only if the regular flow of traffic is impeded, but not if a pedestrian is momentarily hindered. Knowing this, both the citizen and the court will have a basis for determining whether or not an element of the public order has been violated. In addition, another possibility will be open to the citizen. Because the right to demonstrate has been legally recognized, he will be able to apply beforehand to the burgomaster for a licence to exercise this right. If his application is approved (as it will have to be), he is then liable to punishment only if he demonstrates against democratic freedom. Moreover, the police will be responsible for maintaining the first two elements of public order. The licence can be granted with certain stipulations, such as the route to be followed and the manner of assembling and marching, but not with regard to the nature and content of signs or oral slogans used. What is needed is repressive check and not preventive censure. The aim is to achieve expression of opinion as unrestricted as in the press.

Article 186 of the Penal Code (regarding unlawful assembly) would of course also have to be adapted to conform to these proposed changes. A crowd refusing to disperse after having been ordered to do so by the police would be committing a punishable offence only if it obstructed traffic, brought about injury to persons or damage to property, or propagated principles in conflict with democratic freedom. If Article 186 were not to be so amended, the authorities would then be able to regard legal demonstrations (that is, open-air meetings or processions that do not violate any of the elements of public order and must therefore be permitted) as 'street crowds' and apply the 'unlawful assembly' prohibition against them.

What would be achieved by accepting this proposal? I believe that it would place on the individual citizen the duties and responsibilities incumbent upon the exercise of the freedom of demonstration. He would have to judge for himself first of all whether or not a demonstration disturbs the public order by conflicting with any of its three elements. If it does so, then anyone who holds or participates in such a demonstration renders himself liable to arrest. To be sure, a demonstration not in conflict with the elements of public order may well be illegal for reasons other



than a lack of official authorization: it can, for instance, occasion such other punishable offences as slander, sedition, and so on.

Should a difference of opinion exist between the demonstrators and the police with regard to whether or not a demonstration obstructs traffic, causes personal injury or property damage, or propagates principles deleterious to the democratic freedom of others, it is up to the court to decide the dispute. Any demonstrator who wishes to avoid such differences of opinion can easily do so by applying for a licence to hold the demonstration. This guarantees him impunity with respect to the offence of holding an unlawful demonstration. Naturally he remains completely responsible for other offences committed as a consequence of the demonstration.

In an address to the New York Law School in 1960 Justice Hugo Black of the United States Supreme Court reminded his audience of the considerations laid down as the basis for freedom of the press and freedom of speech by the framers of the American Constitution, the 'founding fathers.' 'They were not afraid for men to be free, and we should not be,' he concluded. Nor should we in the Netherlands.

In Defence of Political Protest

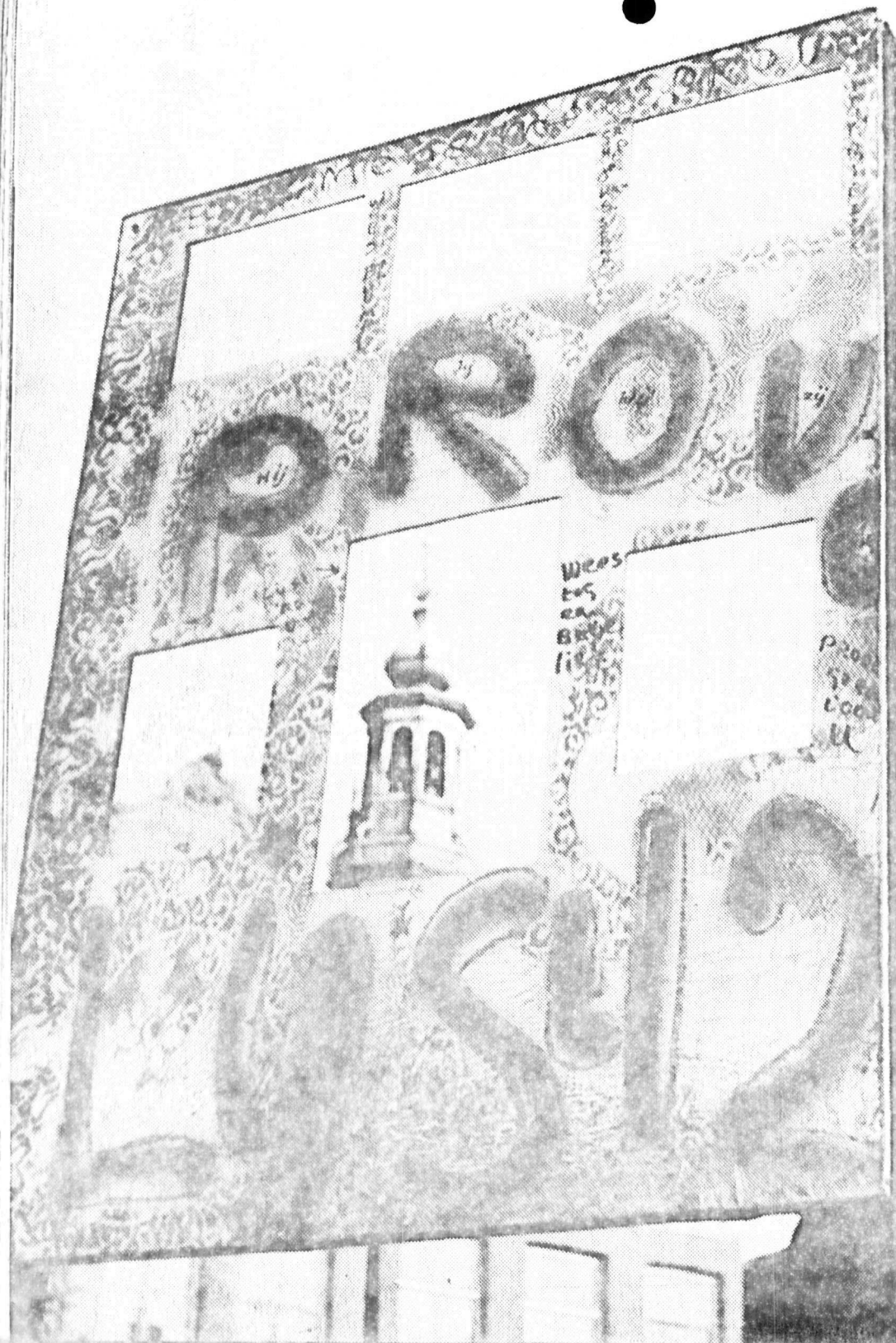
LUCAS VAN DER LAND

In another public lecture on 29 October 1966, Dr Lucas van der Land (born 1923), lecturer in political theory at Amsterdam University, made a plea for the acceptance of political protest as a constructive element in the democratic process. At the same time he criticized certain aspects of Professor Belinfante's proposal for amendment of the law to include the right to demonstrate.

In this attempt at evaluating political protest . . . I wish to restrict myself to those political systems in which pluralism and popular influence are not avoided but striven for. I shall defend on three grounds the proposition that political protest in this context must be appreciated as a constructive element, and that it is constructive not in spite but because of the fact that it does not make use of the usual institutional channels.

In the first place, political protest creates an outlet for criticism, thereby preventing an accumulation of rebellious feelings that can lead to monstrous alliances of malcontents with nothing more in common than their collective aggressiveness towards the existing system.

Secondly, an action of protest in a meaningful place provides information about current reactions among the people to particular policies of the government. Many citizens have the feeling of being overcome, as by a natural phenomenon, by the social changes that arise from technological advances, population and economic growth, and the course of international relations. The authorities have the task of evaluating and manipulating these developments – of stimulating or discouraging them, of shifting emphases, of correcting and coördinating. In this activity any information concerning the reactions of citizens, whether of large or small groups, is valuable and worthy of attention. Persons who go to the trouble of banding together, of painting signs and banners, of going out



on the street and breaking the law must be taken seriously. The authorities undermine the efficacy of their own decisions when they dismiss this behaviour as irrelevant. This argument cannot be refuted by the claim that existing institutions, the press included, are sufficiently capable of receiving and passing on this information. One must bear in mind that political institutions are created, maintained, and manned by the Establishment. They can – and in general in the Netherlands they definitely do – in all sincerity strive after lawfulness and equitable treatment, but they are not socially and politically unbiased.

When in the spring of 1966 a group of Dutch citizens used a newspaper advertisement to protest against a number of court decisions, it was this suspicious lack of impartiality that was being questioned. To reject this protest with an appeal to the indisputable integrity of the Dutch judiciary merely creates misunderstandings. It was certainly not a question here of corruption or of 'social-class justice,' although this term, difficult as it is to handle, was bandied about at the time. But it was a question of constraint on the part of the judge and the public prosecutor in interpreting the concept of maintaining authority. This constraint was sadly wanting in many of the sentences demanded by the public prosecutor and in much of the motivation given for punishment, especially in applying the doctrine of the general prevention of crime.

In the third place, because political protest is informal in nature and tends to direct attention to only one or a few points of conflict, a chance is provided for differentiated political behaviour. What must I do, for example, when the political party of which I am a member takes a stand with regard to Vietnam that is diametrically opposed to my own convictions, while at the same time I fully support its policy on a great number of other issues? I can refrain from voting for this party in the following election, or even resign my membership. But I am then forced to deny all the points on which I agree, and above all I am unable to show clearly on which point I disagree with party policy. Political protest offers an opportunity for expressing myself very clearly on one point without bringing the rest of my convictions into question. It makes possible a more differentiated political expression.

The conclusion to be drawn from the three arguments I have put forward is that in general as few obstacles as possible should be put in the path of political protest.

The advertisement, signed by approximately twelve hundred citizens, first appeared in the evening edition of the daily *Het Vrije Volk* for Saturday, 18 June 1966. The text begins with the words: 'Our sense of justice is being affronted.' The affront is then specified in a list of unacceptable actions on the part of the public prosecutor and the judiciary. The text ends: 'We desire of all police officials, burgomasters, members of municipal councils, officers of justice, magistrates, members of parliament, the government, and all other authorities that they do everything in their power to restore reason and fairness to the administration of justice. This reason and fairness are not to be found at present.'

Since to protest means to express grievances publicly, freedom of protest coincides to a large extent with freedom of demonstration. Except for one point, I can agree with Professor Belinfante's proposed amendments to the legislation concerning freedom of demonstration (which are in agreement with those proposed in the Amsterdam municipal council by the spokesman for the Labour Party). The great merit of Belinfante's argument lies in the fact that he attempts to give to the indefinite concept of 'public order' a concrete substance that can be used to try the permissibility of demonstration.

One can readily agree with three of the elements Belinfante lists as detrimental to 'public order': the obstruction of traffic, the inflicting of physical injury, and the damaging of public or private property. I do, however, object to the following point: that demonstrations should not be allowed to direct themselves against democratic freedom. Neither 'democratic freedom' nor 'democracy' is here defined. From the context it is clear that the term 'democracy' is not being used in the sense currently given it by, for example, Schumpeter and his followers,* who relate it to the method of decision-making in a political community. Belinfante's interpretation involves a much vaguer structure of ideological notions in which human rights assume a central position. This means that once again a criterion that is subject to all kinds of interpretations has been introduced to replace the old, rejected 'public order.' For instance, the question can very easily be raised whether a demonstration against important aspects of the existing legal order is or is not an implicit demonstration against democratic freedom. In short, with this nebulous

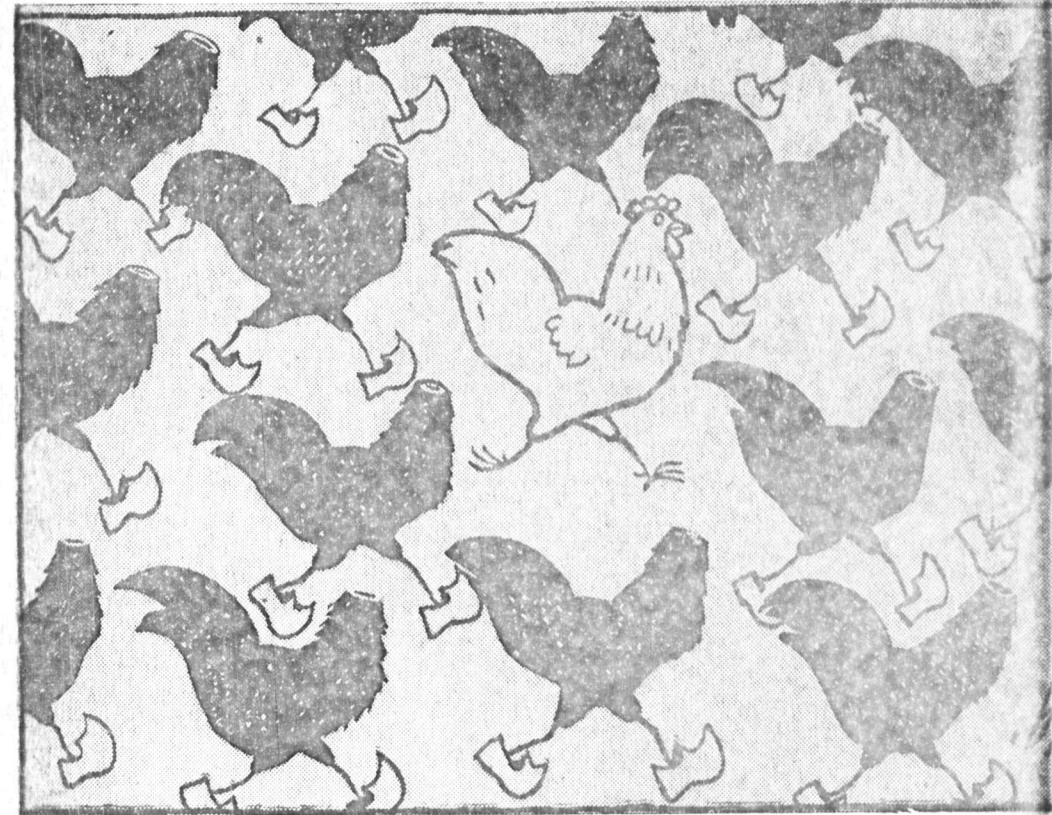
* Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942), Vol. II, Part IV; Lane Davis, 'The Cost of Realism: Contemporary Restatements of Democracy,' *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. XVIII, No 1 (March 1964).

touchstone, the powers that be can declare slogans inadmissible merely because they do not happen to like them.

Even before the Second World War, Professor van den Bergh defended the standpoint that democracy may give up some of its toleration and must become militant when it is truly threatened.* This seems to me most tenable, but it is going too far to interpret every use of anti-democratic slogans as a genuine danger to democracy. And moreover: Is this restriction of freedom of demonstration really necessary? Existing legislation surely offers sufficient guarantee against, for example, the use of anti-Semitic or other discriminatory slogans, or against slander or sedition. Belinfante's proposal abolishes preventive censure of slogans and transfers control, in a repressive sense naturally, to the court; it shifts the responsibility for demonstrations from the burgomaster onto the citizen himself. In a trend of thought like this, there is no place for clauses concerning democratic freedom.

provo in politics

Cartoon by Charles Boost in the daily *De Tijd*, 2 June 1966, the day after the municipal election



* George van den Bergh, *De democratische staat en de niet-democratische partijen* (The Democratic State and Non-democratic Parties; Amsterdam, 1936). Dr van den Bergh (1890-1966) was professor of constitutional law at Amsterdam University.



Provo campaign poster for the municipal-council elections of 1966: 'For a laugh, vote Provo'



Provo Bernhard de Vries at his seat in the Amsterdam municipal council

In the April 1967 issue of the Dutch quarterly *Acta Politica*, the political scientist Constance E. van der Maesen (born 1935) of Amsterdam University published the results of an investigation concerning the municipal-council elections in the capital of the Netherlands on 1 June 1966. The Provo movement took its first – and perhaps its last – plunge into politics in these elections, winning 2.5 per cent of the approximately 510,000 valid votes cast and thereby one seat in the forty-five-member Amsterdam municipal council. The investigation – an analysis of the election results and of a post-election inquiry by means of interviews among a representative sample of voters – revealed the following:

- There were more men (56 per cent) than women among the Provo electorate; among all voters, 48 per cent were men.
- The highest percentages of voters not affiliated with churches were found among the Provos (88 per cent) and the Pacifist-Socialist Party (79 per cent). Among the total electorate, 54 per cent were unaffiliated; the percentage for the Communist Party was not given.
- Compared with voters for other parties, Provo voters were young; nevertheless, more than half of them (52 per cent) were older than thirty-five years (against 74 per cent in the electorate as a whole).
- Among Provo voters, 32 per cent came from the two highest

socio-economic levels, out-distancing all other political parties in this respect (Liberals, 28 per cent; over-all, 9 per cent).

- The level of education among Provo voters was remarkably high; considerably more of them (24 per cent) had secondary-school or university education than had the voters for other political parties; only 7 per cent of the total electorate had this much academic training.
- Of the total Amsterdam electorate, 28 per cent was against the marriage of Princess Beatrix and Claus von Amsberg, whereas 80 per cent of the Provos opposed the marriage, that is, 20 per cent more than among the Communists and nearly 50 per cent more than among the Labour Party.
- To the question whether the burgomaster of a municipality should be elected by popular vote or continue to be appointed by the national government, the preference for an elected burgomaster was strongest among the Provos – 84 per cent. Other left-wing parties showed: Communists, 81 per cent; Pacifist-Socialists, 69 per cent; and Labour Party, 49 per cent. For the whole electorate, the figure was 53 per cent.
- Among the reasons given for voting Provo, positive considerations were foremost: the white plans and other constructive contributions to social welfare, and idealism. Also mentioned were condemnation of police behaviour, sympathy with provocation, and defiance of the Establishment.

the defence of the provos

the situation was too obscure for us not to vanish
 there were too many words for these faces wet with sweat and fear
 there were faces that served death laughing
 with quick exploding joints to the jaws
 openhearted tongues tied to beds of concrete
 faces that never are shade for overheated people
 faces full of nipples for bloodthirsty pigs to drink at
 with the omnipresent hot onion beneath the eye forever opened
 'the eye of a provo shall be a navel forever closed
 on our fat affluent belly.'

eyes closed like picturesque tiles to be walked over clattering
 a neatly scrubbed face (world press) is not the place to put a fat boot
 put a fat boot instead on a husky man
 who knows how to hit

alternative: unseat the government and torture truth
 out of all these heads hermetically sealed that have left it unsaid
 for years? for ages? where are the snows of summer?
 where is our idleship's capital and where where
 have all the strong arms of the weak-kneed gone?

truth is: too much has been done in order to do too little
 so things could come to the pass that workers burped
 machinery mooded like cows
 the vast computer cackling at last laid its wind egg
 and still there were men and women in pa's and ma's porticos lovemaking

lucbert

the truth is we weren't so much arming against russians and chinese
 but against green boys and girls who know how to play and dance
 the truth is these times' worst enemies are:
 fellows who use misplaced illustrations to suck out our eyes like eggs
 fellows who sleeping take their bored wives to yet another recital
 fellows who systematically banish picasso '39-'45 out of their sight
 fellows who persist in saying negro music when they mean armstrong parker coltrane
 fellows for whom 'white music' reaches no further than the heroic heartthrob of beethoven
 fellows who refer to oscar wilde as a naughty boy
 fellows who build houses of cards for people no longer permitted to play
 fellows who don't want to change the weather
 fellows who commend the wages only when they're low
 fellows who grant awards to poets they've never heard or read
 fellows who think that their god is everybody's friend
 fellows who think they are stronger than some ideas because they once had the privilege
 of shooting down a few orientals
 fellows who slaughter the hog of their good breeding with knife and fork
 fellows who are almighty strong with a very strong slave at their door
 fellows who never gave all the country's good architects a chance in town and industry
 planning
 fellows who constantly see their own dead eye rising like a sun
 fellows who worship the sun of a dynasty that did not rise till after night had fallen
 fellows who still don't realize that our national bells need no tongues to toll the last hour

because of this bitter truth I sing the praise of the provos, white heroes of a world to be won

altea / san roque / june-july 1966

LUCBERT (born 1924) was a member of the Cobra movement in the late 1940s. He came to the fore as the leading poet of the Generation of the Fifties, but today he is active primarily as a painter. A short film on him and his work by Joan van der Keuken has just been released in English, under the straightforward title *A Film for Lucbert*.

The other poems in this issue have been taken from Provo publications. 'Move On' and 'Blues for a Pregnant Girl' are from *Image*; 'The General' and 'Es Labe-a dee Poe-leets-eye' are from *Provo*. 'Notes on White Poetry' was abridged from a longer article, also from *Provo*. The translations are by James S Holmes.

On the Psychology of Protest

H. C. RÜMKE

Dr H. C. Rümke (1893-1967), professor emeritus of psychiatry at Utrecht University, died very suddenly in Zurich on 22 May, before he could put the finishing touches he planned to this essay, one of the last in the long series of publications that graced his career and retirement. With a Provo in his own inner council, as he cheerfully admitted, Dr Rümke found the Provo movement a starting-point for contemplating the psychology of protest.

The present wide interest in the psychology of protest has arisen from contemporary events, especially those that have taken place in Amsterdam. If the Provos have achieved anything, it is that they have compelled many people from different strata of society to think, that they have kindled a spark. In many people they have aroused a vague sense of anxiety. I shall now attempt to throw light on the act of protest, on the person who protests, and on the person who reacts to protest.

The fact that the problem is a direct result of significant present-day events has the advantage that all of us are involved in it. But it also has the disadvantage that, by focusing our attention too closely on Provo protestations, we are inclined to look upon provoism as an isolated phenomenon and thus fail to recognize its relation to other contemporary manifestations of protest. A brief survey of events in divergent fields where the protest factor is evident will enable us to indicate some general characteristics of this phenomenon.

1. In the sphere of religion. In its boldest form protest against religion as such is expressed in the verdict: God is dead. This protest against a living God is not new. It occurs repeatedly in the writings of Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche. At the time of the Enlightenment this statement was

perhaps not made in so many words, but there were certainly declarations that amount to the same thing. It is significant that everywhere in theology today there are attempts at breaking away from traditional forms, demythologizing age-old representations that are no longer tenable, reviewing the implications of formerly cherished doctrines. It could be said that we are in the centre of a new protestantism, passing over the question whether the term protestantism as originally used applies to the concept we are discussing. There is no doubt, however, that in many minds the word Protestant evokes the idea of protest.

2. In the field of sexual morality. Everywhere new forms are being sought. Prohibitions which had seemed valid for generations are now contested by word and deed. A clear expression of protest may be seen in the flourishing of what is real or near pornography in present-day writing, as well as in the attention lavished on perversity. The popularity of the Marquis de Sade is part of the picture. Many – including medical – observers regard homosexuality as a valid form of sexual life rather than as a disease or deviation. The protest against opposite points of view also accounts for the fact that when I call homosexuality a morbid deviation, I am often looked at like someone harbouring outrageous racial prejudice.

3. In the field of art. For decades there have been signs of violent protest against long-accepted forms. In the past twenty years this protest has been drastically expressed in poetry, in atonal music, in the abandonment of stereotyped forms in non-figurative visual art. All this is repetition of what was started in dadaism and futurism.

4. I am firmly convinced that protest is a factor in the origin of addictions. This is apparent in alcoholism, but much more so in the abuse of marihuana and LSD. Both use and misuse express the conscious or unconscious longing for what is different, the protest against ordinariness or codified living. There is a craving for what is new, stirring, timeless. The protest against the tyranny of chronometric time can lead to addiction.

5. Finally, I should like to mention protest against health, contempt for what is normal, although few would go as far as the nineteenth-century German neurologist Paul Julius Möbius, who calls normality *eine mildere Form von Schwachsinn* (a milder form of mental deficiency). I was sharply struck by the remark of a patient who said to me, 'If I did not have my illness, I would be nothing.'

It may be held that a discussion of protest should be preceded by careful definition of just what it conveys. I am following a different path. I have allowed myself to be guided by what is generally labelled protest. Protest has to do with revolt, with rebellion, with anarchy, with revolutionary activities. Sticking to our starting-point, the behaviour of the Provos, I conclude that provoking is a form of protest and a means of expressing protest. I am not going into a discussion of protest based on political and ideological principles. This form of protest has a different structure from the protest we are dealing with at the moment.

I have already shown how protest presents itself under a number of guises among groups of people, sometimes extremely large groups, in many different walks of life. Now I shall attempt to define the role of protest in the personal development of the individual. Although protest is found even in the very young infant, actually right from birth, we are justified in speaking of protest phases. The first occurs in the child between the ages of two and four. The second is manifested during puberty. Both phases are connected with what one may call the urge to self-determination. The first protest phase comes into play when the child is subjected to toilet-training, requiring it to submit to the wishes of its mother or nurse. If this training is imparted in an unsatisfactory manner, a permanent attitude of protest may result. During puberty, protest is obviously a matter of achieving independence, discovering one's own true nature, developing a unique identity. This protesting attitude of the child towards its parents has been dubbed a war of independence. If it does not lead to a satisfactory development of the adolescent personality, the result may be the fostering of permanent protest attitudes towards all who – like the parents – are regarded as representatives of authority.

These are the most familiar phases of protest in the individual's development. This has given rise to serious misunderstanding. If a person protests vigorously in later life, we are far too apt to assume that his development has been arrested at either the anal or the puberty stage. His behaviour is then branded as being anal or adolescent. This may be the case, but it is by no means necessarily so. The sledge-hammer verdict that he who is not red before twenty-five has no heart, while he who is still red at a more mature age has no head is responsible for a great deal of damage. In later periods of life there are clear protest phases to be

perceived. It is a striking fact that these protest phases as a rule usher in a new period of life with its own special structure. Among these I wish to mention only the phase related to what I call the other or the obverse Oedipus complex. We usually forget that it was the parents of Oedipus who wanted to kill their child, who saw in him a dangerous threat. Like the familiar Oedipus complex, this aggression of the older generation towards the younger is closely linked up with something innate in the human disposition. Just as the young person with an unconverted Oedipus complex may harbour an attitude of permanent protest towards all parent-images, so the person who does not overcome the obverse side of the Oedipus complex may remain keenly aggressive with regard to all child-images, that is, towards the younger generation. This does occur, but it would be unjust to regard it as the underlying cause of all forms of 'older' protest.

The origin of protest has been described as the need to discover oneself. This calls for the establishment of a balance, adequate to the total personality, between the various life-directing tendencies. It helps to reveal the remarkable composition of the human creature. Antagonistic urges have to reach an equilibrium that is difficult to attain and to maintain. One could say: this being pulled in diametrically opposite directions is a feature of the human being. We speak – not quite correctly – of a diametrical or polar structure. When one pole becomes predominant, the result is not seldom a protest on the part of the neglected pole. In the context of our discussion I think in the first place of the following diametrical urges: to dominate and to be subordinate. When a person – even a weak person – is forced by circumstances to live in a condition of subordination, the ever-existent urge to dominate rises in protest. One could also mention the urge to independence and to dependence. It is sometimes said, especially with reference to men: the mature individual is independent. The misconception follows that a man always has to be independent, for otherwise he is not a real man. Thus the urge to independence may take on morbid proportions in some people, while at the same time a hardly conscious or quite unconscious craving for dependence, for subjection, still persists. These are the people who may suddenly and quite incomprehensibly want to subject themselves to a dictatorial regime. Another set of opposites that plays a role in the phenomenon of protest is the desire both for an orderly life and for

chaotic disorder. An analogous polarity is wanting to be both a respectable citizen and a Bohemian. The moment arrives when one can no longer endure middle-class respectability. The revolt against bourgeois values does not occur during adolescence but in middle age. It gives rise to numerous forms of protest against moral values. In the erotic sphere alliances spring up that seem incomprehensible to others. This is one of the major themes in the novels of Thomas Mann. In Simenon, too, the topic is often treated fascinatingly.

Supposing that one has to judge a person who has displayed violent protest, for instance a Provo. One should then consider the following:

1. Whether in this case the desire to bring about a change through protest or provocation is related to a deeply rooted primordial urge. This may be difficult to assess, but it is not impossible if, in judging, one takes into account the entire personality. One is too apt to conclude that the urge is not genuine if the person in question cannot give a straightforward statement of what exactly he is aiming at. He wants to satisfy the urge to change. Sometimes one has the impression that the protest is essentially genuine but that the object or the means are inadequate. This need not indicate lack of sincerity. Although the protesting person may honestly desire the other condition, this urge has become detached from the unconscious, almost mysterious goal. Then there is danger of pathological deviation. I have noticed such patterns most clearly in the case of addictions.

2. The protest may be connected with a disturbed development, as has been described above. There is then something compulsive about the protest. One must not forget, however, that a retarded adolescent may be in the right. If one adopts an attitude of protest against every authority, this may indeed signify a deviation, just as every protest against the young, looked upon as a homogeneous unit, may be the compulsive result of the above-mentioned obverse side of the Oedipus complex.

When an unconscious unsolved conflict expresses itself in the repetitive urge, to use Freud's terminology, it is called acting out. To some extent provoism may be so regarded. In this acting out there is nothing of the creative element of primordial protest. Sometimes it is difficult to

distinguish between sterile acting out and creative protest. Therefore we had better be extremely cautious in our judgement.

3. It may be that the person being investigated is himself not convinced of the genuineness of his protest. Then it may be a case of a new form of hypocrisy: in order to be in, to gain or retain the esteem of a certain group, he makes a show of protestation. I have the impression that this happens very often.

4. In such a case, protest may no longer be related to any appreciable aim, but may be an easy way of giving vent to the tendency to evil-doing which exists in everybody. (A great deal could be said about the neglected psychology of evil-doing.) As an example of evil, I should like to mention above all the tendency to humiliate, to mortify a fellow-being – to exert power over him for the sake of power itself.

5. It may be a rigid form of protest with a possibly justifiable aim. In such cases there are transitions towards pathological querulousness, a difficult diagnosis which may cause the psychiatrist much perplexity. When the grievance-monger is backed by a group that for some reason or other protects him, the psychiatrist may be in for much unpleasantness. This he will have to endure.

The psychology of protest is important; the psychology of the reaction to protest is no less important. Here, too, there are clearly distinguishable manifestations running more or less parallel to those of the protest itself.

1. A group is sincerely convinced that certain values entrusted to it are being imperilled by the protest in question. Its members may be mistaken – just as those engaged in honest protest may be mistaken – but they have a claim to our respect. It is their duty to react to the protest. I am always struck by how indignant those who protest and especially those who provoke become when their provocations are repulsed. Unless their actions go beyond all reason, those who do the repulsing are entitled to the support of the authorities.*

2. The reaction to the protest may be determined by certain inner complexities of which the person himself is not aware: fear of forfeiting his security, or – this also occurs – a repression of guilt feelings because one has turned a blind eye to manifest injustice. There may be a compulsive rejection of everything young people do, the other side of the

* The editors venture to suggest that, unless their actions go beyond all reason, the provokers are equally entitled to the support of the authorities.

Oedipus complex not having been assimilated. Or yet again it may be a case of sterile acting out.

Guilt feelings can have a double effect: violent reactions as well as unmotivated tolerance, even admiration, for the protest. Thus we have an example of what I call the complex of the brother of the Prodigal Son. I am reminded of the lines I once penned: *Mijn hart volgde Uw begeren / Op alle duistere paden / Van zonden die U deerden / Wilde ik mijn hart verzaden.* (My heart followed your hungering / Along all the murky paths / With sins that injured you / I wished to sate my heart.)

3. Here, too, the new hypocrisy may be at work. Even though one cannot approve of the protest, one does not resist it, but plays a tolerant role so as to appear young, receptive to modern trends. This reaction is perhaps even more dangerous than the hypocritical protest.

4. The resistance to protest may also take on a querulous character. Then we are in the pathological domain. The diagnosis is just as difficult as that of the querulous protestation.

5. Finally, the inclination to evil-doing may come into play here. The repulsion of protest satisfies the lust for power, the desire to vex or humiliate others.

Just as protest has a function in the total process of development, resistance to it also has a function. Especially while that which is being attacked by protest is still of value and is developing creatively, the resistance must be judged positively.

What emerges clearly against this background of the Provo phenomenon and the resistance to it? It is obvious that we have to do with something that has always existed, that there is a Provo hidden in every person, and that what the Provo does may actually have positive significance for the development of a group. The Provo, too, can contribute to productive disintegration. This positive side can operate only if there are creative forces dormant in the group provoked, ready to achieve a new level of maturity. It seems as though in the course of a process of personal growth this productive disintegration comes at a definite time when there is already some change to be perceived. It is never fortuitous. The question is whether provocation aimed at achieving productive disintegration in a group also occurs at a definite time. This would seem to be the case.

Something must be ready for it. I have a shrewd idea that this applies to the forms of protest mentioned at the outset. If the group is not ready, if the provocation or the protest is not well-timed, it leads to nothing. The protest then usually peters out by itself.

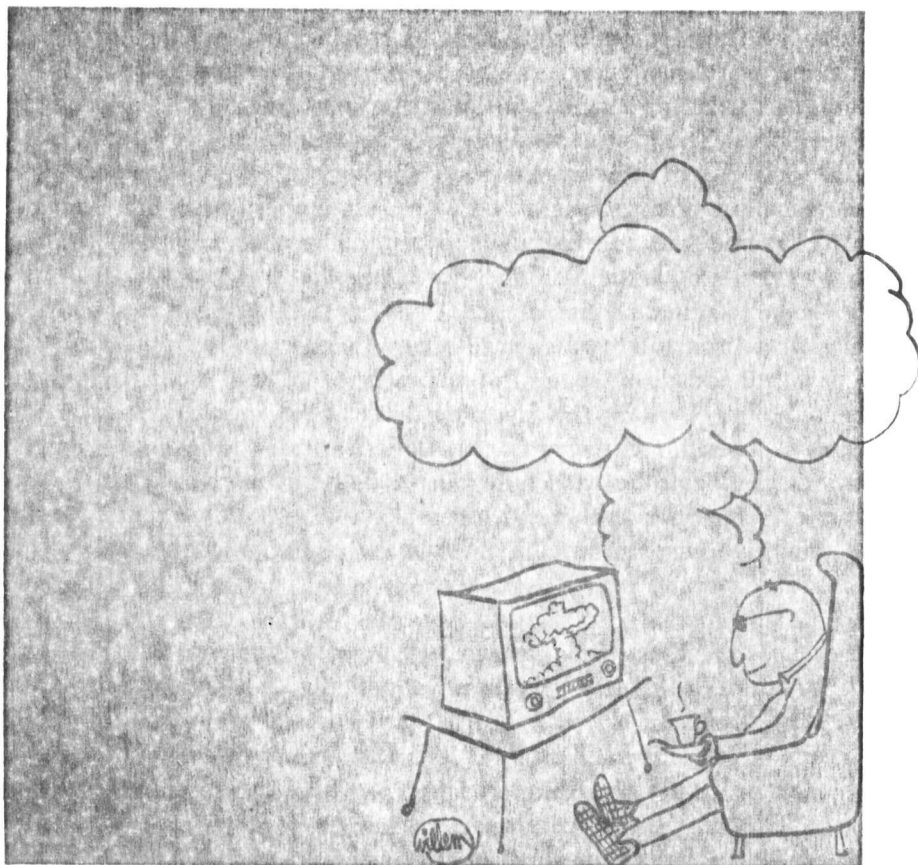
Judging the Provo is particularly difficult since provoism is a manifestation which seems still to be undergoing constant change. All the forms of protest I have described are to be met with among the Provos.

At his best the Provo displays the characteristics of disinterestedness and playfulness. Whether he will retain these qualities is very much a moot point. A typical feature is that he has no clear objective. This comes out in Hans Tuynman's book *Full-Time Provo*, published in 1966. The book makes an impression of genuineness and leads one to think that aims may perhaps be discovered in the course of provocation. In later books that particularity fades away. A more purposeful design emerges. One suspects that in a short while the Provos themselves will become the ruling class. The disinterestedness and playfulness, it seems to me, can exist only when provocation is not tied up with a political ideology. Now that provoism has gained a seat in the municipal council, it is indeed a question whether much of the uncommittedness of the Provos will not be lost. As I remarked long ago: for more than half a century a Provo has had a seat in my inner council – but he will have to make room for another as soon as it appears that he has a fixed program.

It is remarkable how the Provo protests against the counter-protest he provokes. Perhaps this is connected with the adolescent origin of protest. Sometimes it seems as though the Provo wants to keep the affection of those he attacks. If the others fight back, he is deeply indignant. He seems to find that a lack of love. I presume that the fully convinced, honest Provo has a different attitude. But I cannot prove it.

Protest is of all times. As long as there are creative forces in the world and in the individual human being, protest will also continue. So I conclude with a fantasy of the future. In the new Utopia all the wishes of all the Provos have been fulfilled. After this state has lasted a while, curious things start happening. A novel appears in which a young man refuses to have sexual intercourse with a girl because he does not love her. In the Readers' Column a mother writes to complain: 'What must our

daughters come to if such ideas catch on?' The book is confiscated because of its threat to public morality. In a student paper, hitherto known for its progressive views, a large caption is printed across the page: GOD IS ALIVE. The responsible editor is banned from the university for a year. Happenings take place. Under a tree in a park a group of rowdy young people, men and women, stand eating apples. They also offer the fruit to passers-by and to police agents. Nobody can understand it. Everybody discusses it. A few days later there is a protest march with a great many followers. Large banners proclaim: 'We want to be driven from this paradise.' Then everything starts all over again.



How Long Do Ten Months Last?

ROGER VAN DE VELDE

The crime is not specified in this story by the Flemish writer Roger van de Velde (born 1925), but the sentence is. The time for protest has passed into the time for waiting. Those on the outside must wait, too, and it is perhaps as hard for them as it is for the prisoner. Mr van de Velde is a contributor to Flemish and Dutch literary journals and in 1965 won the Hilvarenbeek Prize for short stories. The illustration is by Dick Elffers.

At the entrance she had to hand in her identity card, and the porter, looking in his faded uniform like the man from the gas company, gave her an aluminium number-tag in return. She glanced at it mechanically. The tag was stamped number sixteen, although that was probably of no importance. Or was it? Which things were important and which were not in this strange world cut off from the world? Behind her back the massive double door was locked and at the same moment she felt a short, sharp stab of pain in her head as though the grating sound of the key bored red-hot through her left temple.

I must be brave, Sylvia thought. I will do my very best to be brave. I don't want him to notice how shaky and helpless I'm feeling, how worried and scared I am. She clenched the number-tag between her finger-tips and the ball of her thumb, and the headache gradually subsided. But her heart kept stirring about like a burrowing rodent under the molehill of her left breast.

Sylvia followed the other visitors through the narrow courtyard. Cotton-woolly moss grew in the cracks between the flagstones, and a diagonal shaft of sunlight fell across the white façade of the inner building. There were not many visitors. Next to her walked a thin little old woman who was probably in mourning since she was dressed all in black except for a bunch of purple artificial flowers on her hat. Then there were two

men who seemed to belong together, for they were chatting away, their free and easy manner showing that they were familiar with the place. Right in front, just behind the warder, there was a youngish woman more or less Sylvia's age. The way she moved in her celery-green frock, rolling her hips in a deliberate rhythm, was enough to make one guess that she was flashily made up and probably used a heavy perfume.

Sometimes, as she was walking along the street, Sylvia would play a little game by trying to imagine what the faces of strange women in front of her looked like. She was amazed to find herself involuntarily carrying on this innocent game while trying so hard to concentrate her thoughts and feelings on Herman. No doubt it was an instinctive way of relaxing her tension. As long as she did not see Herman, her attention was diverted by people, objects, and sounds that somehow lent shape and form to an unfamiliar atmosphere; but as soon as Herman was also part of this atmosphere, her yearning twined like a frail forest plant towards the shelter of his tangible presence.

It had always been like this. No, not always; not at the beginning when they were continually intoxicated by their immoderate thirst for one another. But it had been like this during the past years, when the afterglow of their debauch was no longer strong enough to rekindle the cinders of disillusionment. After every heated argument, after every scene followed by hours or even days of sullen silence, she grew back towards him like ivy, almost unconsciously, restlessly, along the many small and seemingly insignificant things that formed part of their common habits and whose frustration irritated her physically, like a small wound refusing to heal. And every time they had found each other again, compelled by the feeling of thwarted necessity which was stronger than all contradictions and disagreements.

Perhaps *that* is the vulnerable and yet durable human love, tarnished and stripped of delusions of false perfection, but continually and spasmodically renewing itself in an interplay of yearning and repletion? As long as they could determine this interplay themselves, as long as they had only to reach out a hand to make amends, this love was proof against threats from the outside world. But now that Herman had suddenly tumbled into the pitfall of that outside world and was imprisoned in a steel trap, nothing remained except unsatisfied longing, a wild unrest growing into desperation.

I must be brave, Sylvia repeated to herself as she sat down in the waiting-room next to the woman in the green dress. But she could not control her agitated heartbeats.

It was her first visit to the prison. She had wanted to come before, immediately after his arrest, but Herman had objected. As long as the case was being tried and sentence had not been pronounced, he was only permitted to receive visitors in an enclosed cubicle, behind a glass wall.

Did he want to spare her the humiliation? Or was it his pride, in revolt against this humiliation? She thought his letters revealed nothing but longing, mixed with a reluctant admission of remorse. But he had written repeatedly and expressly that he did not wish to see her for the time being, that he had no desire to be exhibited like a monkey in a cage. His pride had turned out to be stronger than his need for her.

Now that the verdict had been delivered he was allowed, as a prison inmate, to receive visitors in the communal hall. His resistance seemed to have broken down all of a sudden, for in his last letter he had begged her to come as soon as possible.

'It is a mild sentence,' the lawyer had said, adding casually: 'Two and a half years, with the customary reduction for good behaviour, means an actual sentence of ten months.'

Is ten months a mild sentence? How long do ten months last, when every day, every hour grinds the separation deeper into the flesh? Can ten months not last as long as ten years?

Ten months is one month longer than the normal period of pregnancy, Sylvia had thought involuntarily. It was a foolish association of ideas since they had no children; and, even if they had, that was no standard of measurement, for the woman carries even the developing foetus of an unwanted child as an inseparable possession. And these ten months meant nine plus one of unconditional separation.

Later on, with peevish reluctance, she had measured the separation with the hour-glass of calendar time. Summer was at its height. So Herman would not be free until the end of next spring. What was she to do with autumn and with winter and with all the days that lie in between the seasons? Is it true that everything passes, as Herman had written with

banal but forced resignation? Of course everything passes, but how much does one have to pay for this passing?

In the tiny waiting-room the two men kept on talking loudly and freely about the sale and price of slaughter cattle, and a couple of chairs away the old woman in black sat staring vacantly as though she was still facing an open grave. Sylvia glanced at the woman in the green dress next to her. Her face was indeed dolled up, but underneath the make-up a pale scar ran across her right cheek, and she looked much older and less attractive from the front than from the back. The woman felt Sylvia's eyes on her and returned her gaze with a tired smile, perhaps acknowledging an unspoken alliance, for she, too, was visiting someone who had been torn temporarily out of her life. Perhaps she knew already how long ten months last?

When the attendant opened the door of the visiting-room, Sylvia purposely let the others go first. Her fear was stronger than her longing, just as his pride had been stronger. And this fear was no less senseless than his pride, for despite number-tags and warders, railings and glass walls, nothing counted except that urgent need to be close to one another again.

Sylvia entered the visiting-room behind the old woman. The resolve flashed through her brain: I must concentrate on the first minute. If I can manage to control myself during the first minute, to behave in a natural, easy way, he won't notice the turmoil I'm in; and perhaps I'll calm down if we can chat together cosily for half an hour.

Suddenly she stood in front of Herman. He was sitting right next to the entrance at a little yellow beech-wood table. He had on a white cardigan with a faded black number on the collar and, underneath it, a khaki shirt buttoned up to the throat. Afterwards it seemed strange to think how during those very first moments, before they had exchanged a word or touched one another, her eye had somehow been caught by insignificant details. The yellow table, the white cardigan with the illegible black number, and the buttoned-up shirt-collar which must have felt uncomfortable, for she knew that he hated shirt-collars and as a rule went about the house and even into the street with his tie dangling loose.

How long do ten months last? How long does a kiss last? They probably hadn't embraced for more than a couple of seconds, but in the brief space of time, while he was sucking the breath from her mouth, with one hand cupping the back of her head and the other pressing gently under

her left breast, Sylvia had an overwhelming feeling that time and place had ceased to exist. It was the same kiss that had always made up for everything after the arguments, the scenes, the churlish bouts of silence. Autumn, winter, and the countless indefinite days melted away like wax in the glow of one brief embrace.

When they sat down opposite each other the first minute had passed, but the disquiet which had left her heart under the pressure of his hand crept over her again as she groped for a word to reaffirm her surrender. Every time they had found one another again, words had been superfluous, for the body speaks its own language. But now that they were sitting like puppets across from each other, separated by a table-top and surrounded by strangers, their longing had to be poured into the rough mould of inadequate speech. And never before had her mouth felt so stiff.

None the less Sylvia had quietly schooled herself to find the proper words. She had thought: I'll tell him I'm lonely but keeping my chin up. I'll convince him that this separation won't affect our love but will strengthen it into a steady glow that can't be dimmed by time and distance. I'll confess that I get into bed at night wearing his grey sweater, which smells so deliciously of tobacco and petrol. I'll tell him I wore his dilapidated old felt hat when I painted the bookcase, and that yesterday I fixed a fuse with trembling fingers and tight-shut eyes. He'll smile, and his smile will help the talk along.

But now that she was sitting rigidly opposite him, Sylvia hunted in vain for the thread of the prefabricated words. She suddenly felt the stabbing headache come on again and did not know whether to start with the fuse or with the sweater. Her thoughts seemed to be spiralling through her head. Perhaps it was no different with Herman, for he just sat there staring at her, speechless, a dazed look in his eyes, as though he hadn't seen her for years.

She tried to smile under his fixed gaze and heard herself saying, 'I miss you terribly, Herman . . .' but got no further because all further words were useless fringes to that one truth.

He smiled in return, as though she had told him about the old felt hat. It was a forced smile, however, and for the first time she suddenly noticed

how ill-shaven he was. At home he sometimes went about with a three-days' beard, and this nonchalance had never bothered her. On the contrary, such virile carelessness had often excited her sensually. But now, sitting at a small table across from him, she felt an almost physical unease at the sight of the sparse black stubble. Perhaps the white cardigan was to blame.

'Of course we miss one another,' Herman said, and he, too, got no further. They talked like a couple of strangers addressing each other for the first time in a railway waiting-room. But his hands gripped hers and that gesture made up for much. Except for their eyes, which were desperately fighting back tears, except for the words that stuck in their throats, there was only their hands that could meet in a mute yet ardent embrace on the smooth yellow table-top.

Sylvia tried once more to concentrate her thoughts. I must make it quite clear to him that nothing or nobody can undermine our love. I must convince him that ten months pass much quicker than one thinks at the beginning when you lose heart. And again, to her surprise, she seemed to be hearing someone else asking, 'Can I do anything for you, Herman? Is there anything you need? Is the food all right?' He shrugged his shoulders and replied with almost resentful indifference, 'I don't even know what I eat. It doesn't matter in the least.' But now that she had found a chance of padding her longing desire with sorrowful anxiety, Sylvia kept insisting.

'You mustn't neglect yourself. I want you to be your old self again when you come home.' She paused for a moment because she had caught herself automatically saying 'your old self,' as though the time they had been together had faded into the distant past. Therefore she quickly tried to correct herself without realizing that this, too, sounded a bit lame.

'I want things to stay the way they are now, in spite of everything, so you must start by looking after yourself. Is there really nothing you need? Have you enough cigarettes? If it's allowed, I can send you money.'

He shook his head firmly. 'You needn't send money. I work in my cell. I fold income-tax forms. Fourteen francs for a thousand forms. I earn enough to buy cigarettes and other stuff.'

His pride, his stubborn, incorrigible pride, Sylvia thought. She was sure he did not earn enough to pay for his cigarettes, and, even if he did, she was staggered at the idea of him sitting in a godforsaken cell folding

stacks of paper. His slender white hands were made for drawing and painting, for stroking and rousing her to ecstasy. It was madness to soil those hands with dead printed forms.

'Aren't you allowed to draw in your cell?' she asked softly and almost warily, for that deprivation probably made him suffer too. Herman shook his head again.

'You know I never paint or draw unless I feel I've got to. I have no urge at the moment. For practical reasons it wouldn't be possible anyway. This place is crawling with practical difficulties that squash the slightest attempt at self-expression. In jail all vicious germs of individualism are scrubbed away with regulation lysol.'

His pride, Sylvia repeated to herself. His incurable pride always getting hurt, making him rebel at every established order, at all the conventions and taboos set up by the stupid, tub-thumping drips.

Two tables further the old woman sat mumbling away to a bald, sombre-looking man who might be her son. Her thin lips moved incessantly, as though she was muttering her prayers, and the bald head nodded from time to time. Hanging against a white-washed wall above the black hat with the purple artificial flowers was a picture of a snow-covered mountain, no doubt Fujiyama. Next to it was a framed sign reading: Notice to Visitors. It is strictly prohibited to smoke or to present money or other articles to the Inmates.

The school print of Fujiyama and the stilted wording of the notice irritated Sylvia just as Herman's stubbly beard did, and at the moment she did not know why. Only later did she realize that those insignificant details were ingredients of an oppressive atmosphere in which she found it hard to breathe and in which words lost their usual resonance.

Did the atmosphere depress Herman too? His hands kept moving around her hands and his eyes were lit with feverish longing, but his words also seemed to lie heavy and sour in his mouth like green fruit.

He swallowed and said slowly, with the deliberate emphasis of someone who has prepared a speech, 'I haven't the right to rob you of a year of your life, Sylvia. It wouldn't be fair to expect you to help pay off this debt. I can believe that you'll wait for me, as the popular songs say, but

I don't want to bind you to anything. I shall never ask you for an account of how you spend this year. I have thought about it seriously, and we'd better understand each other clearly on this point.'

He swallowed once more and flaked the orange varnish from the nail of her little finger with his thumb-nail.

Why is he hurting me? Sylvia thought with surprise. Does he want to put me to the test? Is he trying to extort a promise of unconditional faithfulness with this reckless challenge, like the true-love romances he detests?

She parried, 'Would you like me to wait?'

He gave a tired smile. 'Of course I'd like you to wait for me, but . . .'

She interrupted him with a firmness that clearly astonished him. 'Then I'll wait. Ten months or longer, if necessary. Like the popular songs. I believe in popular songs, no matter how silly they sound.'

In a sudden impulse of defence and protection she had spoken a bit too loud, and she looked over her shoulder involuntarily as though fearing a scornful remark, but nobody in the room seemed to notice them. Even the warder, sitting on a high chair near the door, did not pay the slightest attention to the visitors. He looked at his wrist-watch, suppressed a yawn with his hand, and gazed with boredom out of the window, which faced a bare wall.

'We must be prepared to look at the matter realistically,' Herman started off again, but she shook her head firmly with compressed lips, and he knew her well enough to realize that she did not wish to discuss things any further. He was deeply grateful and realized that he had never felt so fond of her before, but how was he to put it into words, sitting at a hard table in a white-washed room among strangers?

'What's the family got to say?' he asked apropos of nothing. Of all questions, this was the one Sylvia least expected. Since their marriage, and perhaps even before, Herman had always displayed a splendid unconcern towards his relatives and particularly to their drawing-room tittle-tattle about his reprehensible conduct. The only one for whom he at times showed an awkward, wistful affection was his younger half-brother, who was on military duty in the Rhineland and probably even more boldly indifferent to family gossip.

Sylvia shrugged her shoulders, just as he had done at the mention of prison fare, and purposely mimicked his haughty nonchalance.

'The family can go jump in the lake. The two of us, you and I, *we* are the family. We have nothing to do with their tea-parties.'

This was a weak bit of bravado, for he knew that she was extremely attached to her own family, especially her mother. But he appreciated the fact that she was playing his favourite game.

Again they sat opposite each other for a while without speaking, searching in vain for words to express the indefinable aching of their limbs and the constriction of their hearts. Behind Sylvia's back the woman in the green dress gave a husky laugh, and that sound hurt her too. When would she regain her inward peace so as to be able to laugh light-heartedly again?

Not to let on, she related a breezy account of her work at the shipping-office, where there was so much to do that she had no time for fretting, and talked about Anna, her best friend, who came now and again at night to watch the television. But Herman seemed to be listening only to her voice and not to her words, the shallow words that kept on tripping her up because she was consciously lying.

Of course she worried. At home, at work, in the street, everywhere. The office boss was always making nasty remarks because her mind was not on her job, and a few days ago she had burst into tears for absolutely no reason as she was putting a bill of lading into her typewriter. Everybody in the office had stared at her, and she had flung herself out of the room to go to the toilet. And even though Anna was her best friend, it was by no means true that she came regularly at night to watch the television. She had come twice, and then Sylvia had given her to understand plainly and almost harshly that she preferred to be left in peace. Afterwards she had begged her friend's pardon, but the fact remained that she wanted to be alone with her misery, and Anna had accepted this.

Then why was she trying to mislead Herman by shamming a false calmness as transparent and fragile as glass? Was his obstinate silence not more honest than her tissue of evasions? Only their hands spoke a mute, simple language. How long do ten months last? How long does half an hour last?

Sylvia was just going to tell him about the fuse she had mended when the warder climbed down from his high chair and clapped his hands to signal that the visiting-hour was over.

It is finished and it hasn't started yet, Sylvia thought with dismay. For what really important things had they told each other during the bare thirty minutes when their cautious voices had hardly broken the surface of a shy reserve? What did he know about her longing and her tears? What did she know about his need and his despair?

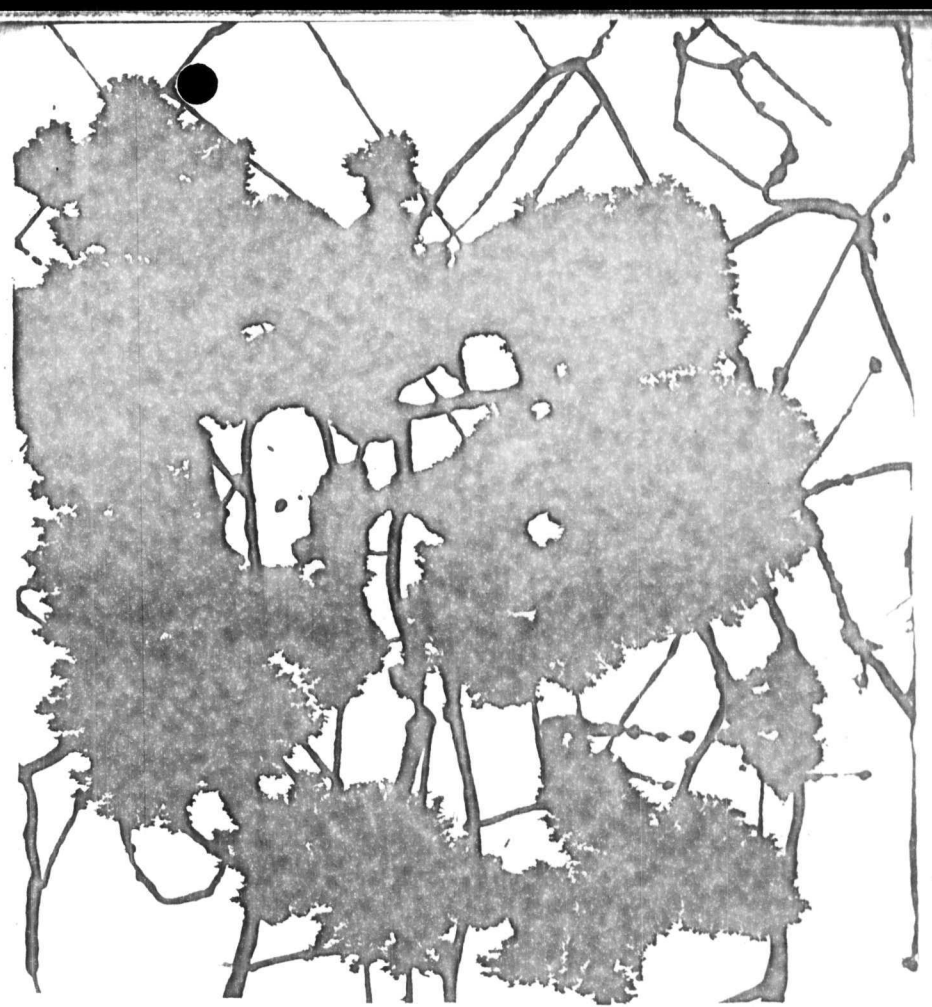
For a few moments she sat motionless as though refusing to resign herself to this sudden parting, but the warder clapped his hands again and distorted his face into an almost painful grimace. He could do nothing about it either. Sylvia got up with a choking sensation in her lungs as though her breath had been cut off and was seeking an outlet. For a moment she was afraid that she would not be able to keep back her tears, but she managed to control herself. Perhaps because she relaxed completely in their brief parting embrace. Or perhaps because the warder, with his head slightly averted, stood waiting next to them in an attitude wavering between leniency and impatience.

She could still taste his mouth on her tongue as she passed through the door leading from the visiting-room to the corridor. At the turning she glanced back, but the warder was locking the frosted-glass door and blocked the view.

In the sunny little courtyard one of the cattle-dealers was evidently joking with the woman in the green dress, for she laughed as she pushed up the hair at the nape of her neck with a fluttery hand. Sylvia was suddenly overcome with an almost panicky feeling that she had forgotten to say something of the greatest importance, something absolutely essential. This feeling was so urgent that she stopped for a moment and was about to turn back. But no matter how hard she tried to concentrate, standing on the same spot where she had resolved to be firm and plucky, she simply could not recall what the important, essential message was.

At the gate she was given back her identity card in exchange for the number-tag, and the porter touched his finger to the peak of his cap as he let her out.

In the blazing, triumphant sun Sylvia walked home slowly, indifferent to the bustling crowd around her, indifferent to everyone and everything, for once she was outside the prison everything that really mattered had ceased to exist. She felt heavy and tired and seemed immune to every



emotion. While waiting for the traffic light to change she automatically put on her sun-glasses. She stood patiently at the edge of the pedestrian crossing and thought of nothing at all.

She followed the stream of pedestrians meekly and, obeying the impulse of a distant childhood recollection, fitted the rhythm of her footsteps to the variations that came to her mind on one word: niets, nichts, nothing, nada, rien; rien, nada, nothing, nichts, niets.

But in the cool, lonely living-room numbness deserted her and pain broke loose again in the dreary knowledge that nothing was essential as long as her yearning remained unquenched. Under the black Madonna, the sepia wash that was her favourite among all his drawings, Sylvia poured herself a full glass of cognac and emptied it at one draught. She slipped his grey woollen jersey, reeking so delightfully of tobacco and petrol, over her blouse, put his dilapidated felt hat with the white paint stains on her head, and sank gently into the leather armchair, weeping and moaning.

Politics and Other Art Forms: A Letter from Amsterdam

GERARD K. SCHIPPERS

with vignettes by Lex Metz



Everybody knows about doors: they're always opening and shutting to let someone in or out, and no one gives them another thought. Except, perhaps, when one door after another gets shut firmly in the public's face, as happened almost daily last March and April on Dutch television newscasts. It was a time of cabinet formation, and the doors belonged to the four men successively charged by the queen to try putting a government together. Arriving at their doors for secret consultations were the leaders of the various political parties, and crowding round the stoop but never getting any farther were the television and newspaper reporters hoping to catch a whiff of hot news.

The hottest news had actually come with the February general elections, when the Dutch electorate had given plain evidence of its dissatisfaction with the present political system and constellation of parties. The two largest parties – Catholic and Labour – lost eight and six parliamentary seats, respectively, and one of the two main Protestant parties (the Christian-Historical Union) went from thirteen to twelve. The other biggish Protestant party (Anti-Revolutionary) redeemed this loss by winning two seats, and the Liberals gained by one. But a real firecracker was tossed into the works by a fledgling party, Democrats '66 (called D'66 for short), which bagged seven of the one hundred and fifty seats in the Second Chamber.

New political parties are no rarity in the Netherlands, but successful ones are. Therefore, although the election news has cooled off considerably by now, it is worth while taking a look at some of the factors behind the

extraordinary turn of events. First of all, the Dutch electorate, faced with rising unemployment and large doses of television news and commentary, has become more and more politically minded of late. Yet the large, 'conventional' parties have displayed a singular lack of understanding of the public mind. Parliamentary debates – the most important of which are televised – are conducted in a jargon that at times seems to perplex even the insiders not to mention the poor average voter, who begins to suspect that matters of direct concern to him are being settled – or not – over his head. His vision of himself as a participant in the democratic process is reduced to that of a mute, powerless bystander.

As early as the parliamentary elections of 1963 and the provincial elections of 1965, the extreme right-wing Farmers Party under its leader Hendrik Koekoek ('Farmer Cuckoo' as his nickname literally translates) had profited from this lack of understanding and widespread feeling of disquiet. Whatever his other qualities, and they are not always admirable, Koekoek has the born politician's gift of gab, a thick country accent, and a prickly sense of self-righteousness. He talks to the 'little people' in their own language, and they respond by voting for his party despite the fact that its leadership is incompetent and its program anything but constructive. Koekoek's success should have taught the other party leaders a lesson, but it didn't, or only slightly: they realized they weren't getting their ideas across and that it was vital to do so, but they didn't seem to know how to go profitably about it. During the election campaign, the Labour Party sent its spokesman and his pleasantly efficient wife on a caravan tour of the provinces, but even this was not enough. And the Catholics were torn by the conflicts arising from their dismissal of their own party member J. M. L. T. Cals as prime minister – a matter of principle (the budget) and not of personality, as they kept pointing out, but as no one seemed quite to believe.

Obviously, a new way of communicating with the electorate had to be found, and D'66 hit upon it. Taking a cue from a procedure that has had considerable success in the United States, the leaders of the young party decided to call upon a reputable advertising agency for help in presenting their campaign. They selected the energetic Amsterdam firm of Franzen, Hey, and Veltman, whose experts produced an exemplary plan, with sure-fire advertisements in the right newspapers at the right moment, lucid television broadcasts, and attractive, well-formulated pamphlets setting forth D'66's program. One of the agency's greatest services was in persuading the

party to whittle down its original 'basic' program from fifteen points to two: direct election of the prime minister, and election of members of parliament by district. Paradoxically but emphatically, D'66 also stressed the need for fewer, stronger parties to replace the fossilized multiple-party system and shilly-shallying coalition governments. And it had a trump up its sleeve: a dynamic candidate, Hans van Mierlo (born 1931), whom the New York Times likened to John Kennedy. Before turning to politics, Van Mierlo had done some wandering abroad, supporting himself with such odd jobs as cutting wood and unloading oranges, and then had returned to the Netherlands to finish his law study and to work as a journalist. Observing the troubles in Amsterdam during the past two years and the seeming incompetence of local or national authorities to cope with the situation, he became convinced that many voters, and especially young ones, were not being represented as they desired and had a right to be. When he took to the hustings, he proved able to project both himself and his party's ideas. Once the election results were in, one of the vice-presidents of the advertising agency (who had been won over to the party) said that he had handled the campaign just like that for a new washing-powder, with D'66 as the product and Hans van Mierlo as the packaging. I think this approach is realistic and no disgrace to 'honest' politics.

Neither D'66 nor, luckily, the Farmers Party (which also wound up with seven seats, a gain of four) is yet strong enough to be included in the government. As all the coming and going at doors demonstrated, the five large parties found the formation difficult enough. It took six weeks before a coalition of Catholics, Protestants, and Liberals was put together under Prime Minister Piet de Jong, with the socialists bowing out. Even then it was hard to fill the cabinet posts, for personal and party interests appeared to take precedence over the national welfare. More than half of the new ministers are political novices. Whether they can talk Dutch to the Dutch remains to be seen – and D'66 and the rest of the country will be watching them.

When you get right down to it, television can be fun, especially when the comedy is unintentional. All those political parties parodying themselves, for instance. Or some of the horrendous song festivals. But what do people really enjoy seeing? To judge from a lot of the programs, the television

companies haven't the slightest idea. They do hit the bull's eye once in a while, however, and when they do you might just as well stay home, for taxis disappear into the ground and the trams that are running are manned by sourpuss drivers and conductors. No Dutchman, high- or low-brow, wants to miss the football flirtations of Amsterdam's Ajax team with the Europe Cup. If for some reason or other a big match isn't telecast, the howls of protest are nation-wide. Cees Buddingh' has even written a poem about it, aiming straight at some up-and-coming political program with his title: 'New Party Song.'

what misery! (4 times)
 what bottomless misery (4 times)
 again last sunday
 holland-belgium (2 times)
 not on tv (4 times)
 television-owners of the world
 unite (2 times)
 please (8 times)
 hurry! (3 times) -



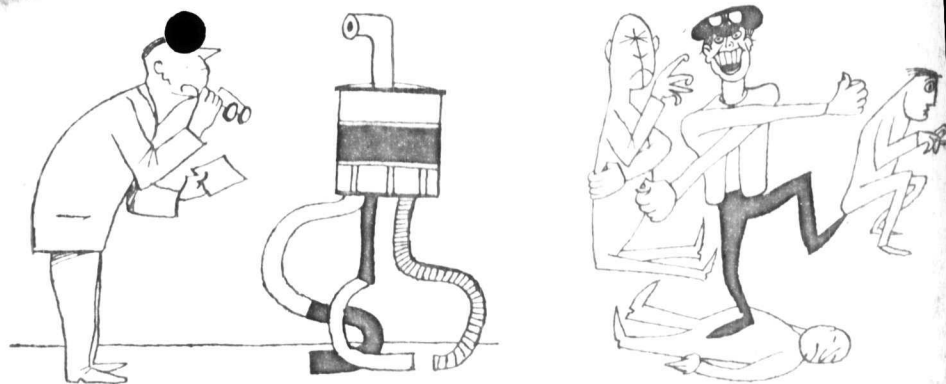
The Concertgebouw Orchestra is back from another highly successful tour – this time to the United States and Canada – but its friends abroad may be unaware that it is having rough sailing at home. Some months ago five young Dutch composers – Louis Andriessen, Reinbert de Leeuw, Misja Mengelberg, Peter Schat, and Jan van Vlijmen – sent an Open Letter to the orchestra management declaring that new music doesn't stand a chance as the programs are now planned. They pleaded for the appointment of a 'creative' conductor, especially since Bernard Haitink, who bears the entire artistic responsibility for the orchestra in addition to his duties as conductor, has said that he has insufficient affinity with contemporary music.

The letter had no effect. A panel was thereupon formed to discuss the matter at a television teach-in. Again, no concrete results. A further public exchange of opinions took place, during which the manager of the orchestra read a statement saying that 'the present program policy should be continued, with

one permanent conductor and a number of carefully selected guest conductors.' This, of course, got things exactly nowhere.

The artistic policies of the Concertgebouw Orchestra and the Amsterdam Municipal Museum differ profoundly. The museum dares to take risks, exhibiting the most advanced national and international art. The orchestra tenaciously holds on to a conservative repertoire and is, with all due respect, beginning to look more like that venerable storehouse of art history, the Rijksmuseum, than like a living twentieth-century musical organization. It seems insensitive to the kind of music that Louis Andriessen described in an interview: 'You make your own rules. Beyond that, everything goes. John Cage . . . has written a piece for the piano in which the pianist is supposed to sit three minutes and twenty-eight seconds at the keyboard without doing a thing. Everyone knows this anecdote. But it does have meaning. It is complete emptiness with respect to music. It means that everything is possible. We've actually known this for fifty years.' If it is true that things always happen fifty years later in the Netherlands than anywhere else, it is high time for the Concertgebouw Orchestra to start playing new music.

To go back to the Municipal Museum and its creative artistic policy. The director, E. L. L. de Wilde, has succeeded in finding an intelligent equilibrium between recent art history and the avant-garde. In March and April a record number of people visited the enormous Picasso retrospective, which included most of the paintings and drawings but not the ceramics shown in Paris, plus other items from Dutch collections that didn't go to France. Amsterdam was the only other city in the world to get this exhibition, with Picasso's blessing and the gift of a sculpture to the municipality. Such successful shows are naturally few and far between (and smack to some people of commercialism), but the museum is just as interested in displaying the work of lesser-known contemporary artists, even though there are no queues of spectators. During the first half of 1967 De Wilde and his associates W. A. L. Beeren and Ad Petersen organized exhibitions of the work of Victor de Vasarely, the forerunner and most important representative of Op Art, and of the French New Realists – I particularly liked Yves Klein's monochromes (mostly an even blue), Arman's accumulations (including a whole series of electric razors in polyester), and Martial Raysse's neon lighting. There were also several shows devoted to the



international Zero artists, who do not want to interpret reality but to intensify it; they use unadorned materials: bolts, furs, barbed wire, artificial grass, and so on. We got a look, too, at the work of the Argentinian-Italian precursor of the Zeroists, Lucio Fontana (born 1899), who slashes his canvases with a knife. For the latter half of the year the museum is planning exhibitions of Roy Lichtenstein's comic-strip Pop Art and Niki de St Phalle's witty female figures made of colourful thread and scraps of cloth. Scheduled for February 1968 is a big show of the work of Robert Rauschenberg, the American Pop Art pioneer. And so the Municipal Museum keeps up its reputation, established after the war by W. J. H. B. Sandberg and now being carried on by De Wilde, of being one of the most inventive institutions of modern art in the world.

News from the literary front: the freebooters Willem Frederik Hermans and Jan Cremer have lately been shooting off their poisoned darts and irreverent B.B. guns with renewed gusto. Hermans, novelist and lecturer in physical geography at Groningen University, keeps aloof from the Dutch literary clique but can't resist taking pot-shots at it. In the first chapter of his *Mandarijnen op zwavelzuur* (*Mandarins in Vitriol*), which he published himself in 1963, he wrote that he was providing 'three-dimensional examples' of 'how the sugar-candy exhibition of Dutch literature is organized by impotent bellyachers, bunglers, slackers, toadies, and sing-song intriguers, who take turns at giving and receiving prizes, conspiring with the government and betraying one another, prostituting themselves to the newspapers or selling themselves to publishers.' After a statement like this, it is no wonder that Hermans refused to accept the Vijverberg Prize for his latest novel, *Nooit meer slapen* (*Sleep No More*, 1966). In a letter to the Jan Campert Foundation, which awards this prize every year, he requested that the money (twenty-five hundred guilders) be given to the Food for India organization, and stated the grounds for his refusal: 'This relieves me of a lot of bother and

possibly saves one or two of your jury members from a guilty conscience. Thank you for taking the trouble. I shall write a novel about you entitled *Wel te rusten* [*Sleep Well*].’ Which members of the jury did Hermans have in mind? ‘I’m naming no names. If I had wanted to, I’d have done so much sooner,’ he told a reporter of the Catholic daily *De Volkskrant*. But in *Mandarijnen op zwavelzuur* he had written of one of the five members of the jury, ‘Adriaan van der Veen’s prose can be taken apart and put together again like a construction set. He is no writer of epics, or novels, or short stories, or prose. He is a writer of sentences. He makes a few every day, from eight until nine in the morning. He makes them as dull and round as dried peas; you can do all sorts of things with them – put them to soak, make soup of them, bake them, lay them side by side in a row or a square or a circle; you can toss them all together and put them into little bags.’ And in a passage on ‘committed literature,’ he called another jury member, Pierre H. Dubois, ‘the rag-picker of Paris.’ Dutch literary juries are really very sweet: they’re quite willing to give a prize to a writer who hasn’t been at all nice to them.

Jan Cremer, whose first book *Ik Jan Cremer* (1964) has gone into twenty-seven reprints and an English translation, dropped into town for a visit last spring. Fresh from having knocked out *Ik Jan Cremer II* in – was it three weeks? – in a New York hotel-room, assisted by poet Hans Sleutelaar, he deigned to grant Amsterdam reporters a press conference. Then he disappeared again – but not before he had sent a brick or so crashing into the Dutch china cabinet. This time it was the first issue of his very own ‘news’ sheet, the *Jan Cremer Krant*, that caused the most fuss. Handed out free of charge at the annual Book Ball, the paper was full of deliberate exaggerations, crazy insinuations (some not very amusing for the people concerned, a couple of whom sued for libel), and ruthless attacks on ‘good taste.’ Also included was a ‘white list’ of ‘figures who for what reason soever have earned the friendship of the editor-in-chief.’ A second issue, taking back a good deal said in the first and offering further revelations, was promised but has yet to appear. Jan Cremer himself returned, but stayed only long enough to parade his bride. A lot of people hope he won’t entirely desert his beloved ‘little bare cold cockadoodle land,’ as he apostrophizes the Netherlands in a recorded song. His uninhibited rudeness, jaunty bravado, and smooth practical jokes add salt and mustard to the Dutch literary scene – and we can do with plenty of seasoning.

Reviews

A SELECTION FROM RECENT NOTICES

our daily gall and wormwood

Jan Wolkers, *A Rose of Flesh*. Translated from the Dutch by John Scott. London: Secker & Warburg / New York: Braziller. 21 s / \$ 4.50.

Like other Dutch writers of his generation, Jan Wolkers portrays a world that is at once senseless and significant. For him, as for others, the absurdity of life does not reduce it to mere triviality: the very pain it exacts invests it with sufficient meaning to justify the writer’s efforts. Wolkers does not approach the subject with the bold playfulness of Gerard Kornelis van het Reve, or with the philosophic interest of Willem Frederik Hermans. He is distinguished rather by his objectivity, his disinterested purpose, his honesty. The novels of these writers, now all in their forties, chronicle the failure of their protagonists, sensitive sons of insensitive doctrinaire fathers (Christian or Communist, it does not matter), who struggle to claim a freedom which will finally be useless to them, and who at last become as arid in

spirit as the fathers before them.

In Wolkers’ *A Rose of Flesh*, translated from the Dutch by John Scott, the hero, Daniel, and his father differ less in their hostility towards life than in what they hate about it. Both men live in wary expectation of evil; his father fears sin, whereas Daniel is sickened by the daily horror of existing in a world where ‘everyone who dies is murdered,’ wantonly killed by the hostility of nature to life. The fear of death lies at the centre of Daniel’s anxiety, his self-absorption, his very being. It is so ordinary a woe that Wolkers clearly establishes Daniel as a sufferer from an endemic modern disease.

All the symptoms are disquietingly familiar: the broken marriage, the attempts at suicide, the desolate urban loneliness. With no recourse but the private life, and no belief in the reality of anything beyond his own states of consciousness, Daniel must live out his agony according to self-imposed rules which permit him neither escape nor alternative. And his experience