Left-wing radicalism and the mass army

the USA and the Netherlands in comparative perspective

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1 Introduction

This essay focuses on the interrelationship between radicalism and the military establishment. For long, anti-militarism and anti-war feelings have been main components, if not constant features, of the leftist ideological perspective. For the military, on the other hand, in democratic societies at least, legitimization of the military establishment in the eyes of the general public has been a crucial problem. The relationship between the military outlook and left-wing radicalism may display various configurations. It is less of a problem in periods when within the population at large a consensus prevails as to the existence of an acute military threat from abroad. These 'levée en masse' periods tend, on the one hand, to lead to mass armies on a conscription basis, whereas, on the other hand, left-wing dissent in general and anti-militarist positions in particular tend to recede to the margin of the public conscience. However, under the impact of some law of institutional inertia, military institutional arrangements are apt to outlast the periods which have provoked them into being. Then, the relationship of dissent to the military establishment may change radically.

Once the general political climate has changed, the boundary setting off the military as just one institutional framework from other such frameworks has become a conflict-ridden borderline, separating increasingly divergent outlooks on the world. The persistence of the institutional arrangement of conscription, for one thing, directly inducts the bearers of dissent into the military, while, on the other hand, military spending, planning and action, inspired by what the leftists may deem an outdated world perspective, serve further to delegitimize the military in their eyes. Abolition of the draft and the institution of a volunteer army, as undertaken in the US, may reduce these tensions. Such tactical withdrawal from the reservoir of left-wing dissent may allow the military preemptively to disarm the opposition, or at the least to keep it at arms length. Unremitting continuation of military planning and action may, however, lead the opposition to redirect its radical focus and to produce broader, more elaborate analyses of the military industrial complex and of the role of the military in Western, capitalist

society.

The various configurations which can emerge in this context, I have tried to order by means of a simple set of variables: *political environment, structural isolation,* and *sense of alienation* of the radical left. Slightly misquoting C. W. Mills, we might call the approach a study in 'situated options'. The 'situatedness' refers to the fact that the political environment directly specifies a range of options open to the contending parties of left radicals and the military. The political environment also has an indirect impact through its influence on the relative isolation of the radical left. To the extent, moreover, that the degree of structural isolation of the radical left bears on its sense of alienation, the latter can be considered an intervening variable, potentially leading to further reduction of the range of options set by structural isolation.

A central assumption of the paper is that variations in the degree of isolation and alienation of the left tend to go along with variations in the image of society it comes forth with. Thus the perceived adversary can range from highly specific institutions or segments of society, such as the arms industry — the 'merchants of death' — to an opponent of such elusive and mythical proportions as 'the system' or 'society'. Collusion theories are apt to arise in the process, as well as the imputation of self-conscious motivation to social processes, viewing these as inspired by the self-interest of social elites or a dominant class. Once this inflationary process has been unleashed, it may, in its own right, serve to stunt the left in its attempts at coming up with rational strategies for remedial action.

2 Political environment, structural isolation, and sense of alienation - parameters of radicalism

Radicalism as an oppositional outlook on a prevailing social order is mostly conceived of as variable in content and scope. Variations in these respects are bound up with the way a radical movement is embedded in a socio-political context. The main variables here might be referred to as degree of structural isolation in addition to a self-conscious awareness of distance or, more fashionably, alienation. The ensuing covariation can be summarily characterized in the following way. A high degree of structural isolation in addition to a definite perception of distance affect both content and scope of the radical perspective. The analysis of society becomes increasingly personified, linking apparent ailments of society to highly self-conscious actions on the part of social classes or elites. In addition to this perspective on society as inspired by class or group interests, the theme of elite collusion may arise, causing the image of the opponent to expand into a definite monolyth in disregard of all aspects of diversity or conflict within this do-

minant layer. In the process, the diagnosis may spread across spheres of social action which, from different viewpoints, might well be considered to show a rationale of their own. The resulting perspective we may regard as an instance of a conspiracy view of society. For all its suggestion of personification and seeming consistency of diagnosis, however, the very inflation of the adversary into mythic proportions such as 'the system' is rather a reflection of the radicals' isolation than a ready recipe for remedial action. A low degree of isolation, on the other hand, accompanied by a sense of involvement in and accessibility of relevant avenues of social and political action result in a markedly different radical perspective. Its scope indeed remains far more limited and distinct; the radicals' oppositional stance aims at more specific objectives and opponents and shows a greater willingness to seek allies rather than making converts.

Prime examples of these divergent configurations of radicalism may be the radical sixties as compared with the radical thirties. The differences in isolation and perception of distance between these two periods can be specified as follows.
In the thirties, the anti-fascist, 'popular front' position, as authorized by Moscow, explicitly endorsed and encouraged attempts by the Communist left at the formation of alliances with democratic forces, through participation in the liberal-democratic processses of parliamentary politics and penetration into the structures of social democracy, such as the unions. On the whole, this strategic line has successfully submerged the main organizational structures of the left into the prevailing style of politics in both America and the Netherlands, rather than providing for a clear-cut counterpoint. In the Netherlands, the shock waves of the emancipist period of the later decades of the nineteenth century still made themselves felt; the strategic response on the part of political elites had been the encapsulation of the disturbing potential of emancipation through political segmentation — known as *verzuiling* — and a reduction of political intercourse and exchange to the elite levels of the body politic. This process of encapsulation initially had involved only the bourgeois and petty bourgeois political parties, denominational and non-denominational; in the thirties it gradually cast its net as wide as to include the social-democratic party. This party responded in kind; its policy line throughout the thirties can be understood as aiming in part at the systematic projection of the image of a responsible parliamentary-democratic party with all the self-restraint in the use of extra-parliamentary means this entailed.
In the United States, in a sense, the situation was the reverse. Rather than the gradual institutionalization through encapsulation of emancipist energy as previously burst forth, the thirties in America show a resumption of emancipist themes, a return to the widening of effective participation to those societal segments which had been left out in the institutionalization of the previous wave of emancipation[1] around the turn of the century. Here too, the effective integration of the radical left in the process of political experimentation and renovation kept it from formulating its radical perspective at its most extreme.
Yet, in contained and moderate form, the left maintained some aspects of the radical outlook as it had developed over a length of time. The traditional anti-militarism and anti-imperialism of the left can be pointed out in both America

and the Netherlands. For the better part of the thirties the main body of the organized left in the Netherlands upheld its pacifist stance, just as in America opinion polls testified to the strength of anti-militarist and anti-war feelings among radical students. Rather than the emergence of collusion theories concerning an alleged military-industrial complex, we come across the more limited version of the 'merchants of death', both among the left wing and the mainstream of American politics,[2] a version which more closely resembled traditional European conceptions as held on the left than do recent trends in American left-wing thinking on the subject.

Yet another factor may have been instrumental in keeping the military somewhat out of focus. In America, isolationism was still rampant, just as in the Netherlands neutralism was a basic tenet in foreign policy. For both countries the post-World War II period shows a definite break with these cherished and long-held goals. We shall have more to say on the impact of this development in a moment.

In addition to the 'popular front' approach, there may be another empirical indicator of differences in the degree of structural isolation of the left wing in the thirties as compared with the sixties. During the thirties, in both America and the Netherlands, left-wing youth, by nature the most uncompromising and absolutist component of any ideological movement,[3] by and large operated under the organizational aegis of adult organizations, either through explicit youth sections of established parties and unions or closely affiliated with such structures. The sixties, it would appear, are unique in the sense that here radical movements had gone as far as to emancipate themselves from these quasi-paternal structures of supervision and guidance and ventured out on their own. In the process, therefore, the radical movement of the sixties came to reflect one more dimension of emancipation, compared with previous periods, namely that of generational emancipation. This outcome may provide us with a basic insight to account for the specific options and limitations of radicalism in the sixties.

Before going into the analysis of this period, however, it may be useful to dwell somewhat more at length on some of the conceptual implications of isolation and sense of distance as parameters of radicalism. Structural isolation would seem to find its reflection in awareness of distance only through some process of reference. We should like to focus on the historical dimension involved here. A sense of distance and exclusion may arise in the wake of the frustration of hopes as arisen in periods of emancipation. We might alternatively describe these periods as an opening-up of political and social systems, as an extension of effective participation to groups, previously excluded — in other words, as periods of democratization, extending participation at the same time as they expand the political agenda. For indeed, political demands, muted up till then, come to be openly submitted for political discourse and decision-making. Time and time again, however, history illustrates the reversal of these trends, through the gradual reduction of the political agenda as well as the selective cooptation of radical leadership in processes of political compromise and accommodation. Thus, isolation and the awareness of it should be interpreted against this backdrop

of some sort of tidal movement of democratization and oligarchization. We propose to define these crucial terms somewhat beyond the immediate associations both term are apt to evoke.

Naturally, these associations — let us call them Michellian — fully apply in the analysis at hand. They refer to such developments as the increasing institutionalization, expansion of scope, and centralization of the political sphere which, many observers hold, is one of the crucial aspects of modernization. In the process, political decision-making and implementation tend to be removed from the level of ad hoc, local, and little-institutionalized political processes, thus creating the familiar problems of the sense of decreased political efficacy on the part of the rank-and-life citizen. The main dimension of oligarchization, involved here, pairs the opposite concepts of mass participation versus elitist decision-making.

Somewhat different angles may serve to highlight related, though different aspects of oligarchization. In so far as the Michellian concept implies the increase in institutionalization of the process of political participation, it may suggest another pair of opposite concepts: spontaneous, direct action outside established channels versus the institutional frame for political action. Or, in a somewhat different vocabulary, Leninist rather than Michellian, it opposes action from below to action from above.

Yet another established perspective in the analysis of the political realm suggests a third dimension of oligarchization. The stress on system maintenance and political stability, implicit in the work of many American pluralists,[4] has borne out that where the societal balance of power is thus that no single interest group can prevail upon the others, inevitable tendencies toward accommodation and compromise occur. The formation of interest-promotion groups, ranging from pressure groups to political parties, tends to unite people on one, or a limited number of interests, whereas these groups may be internally divided over other interests. Therefore, patterns of shifting alliances and majorities occur which lead the participants to value more highly the potential for accommodation than for conflict in the over-all arrangement. Once this tendency to leave out divisive issues leads to the continued exclusion of social groups from the pale of accommodating politics, this may well be viewed as another instance of oligarchization of the political arena. It is reflected in the fact that the political agenda is reduced to include only such issues as would not align large blocks in society *vis-à-vis* one another. The latter event would seriously threaten to upset political stability. In other words, the tendency has grown to seek the solution of social conflict in the kind of politics that Lowi[5] has called regulatory or distributive; pluralist political systems tend to shrink from solutions that would imply social redistribution, including redistribution of power as well as of societal resources. Inevitably then, in the process, these systems tend

to alienate those social groups, the implementation of whose demands would negatively affect the established social distribution, the prevailing *status quo*. With an ironic reference to Boorstin, we might call it the evil genius of pluralist politics rather than its genius. The dimension of oligarchization, implied here, we might alternatively describe as one of enlarging versus restricting the political agenda, or as one of politics stressing social conflict versus politics seeking consensus.

Depending on both structural isolation as well as an opposition's definition of the situation (its sense of distance and exclusion), radical movements may, on the basis of the above analysis, gravitate, in greater or lesser degree, to wards a position where it advocates mass participation in politics, direct spontaneous action rather than 'working through the system', the insertion of redistributive issues in the political agenda as well as the introduction of open conflict. Both the radical thirties and the radical sixties show traces of this development. Yet, we would hold, the radicals in the thirties have been operating under an impression of lesser distance and exclusion, have been more in tune with broad New Deal enthusiasms in the US, or susceptible to *verzuiling* politics in the Netherlands, whereas the radicals of the sixties took a more extreme stance. In the following we propose to go into the effects of this more extreme radical position on the relationship of the radical movement toward things military as well as into the options of parties in power to react to this more virulent attack on the military's entrenched position and sphere of influence.

3 The military and the New Left - a comparison of recent Dutch and American trends

(a) A concise history of the Dutch and American New Left
Without going too deeply into aspects of oligarchization which the political systems of America and the Netherlands showed during the fifties – we have done so more extensively elsewhere[6] – we might briefly say that in the post-World War II era both America and the Netherlands show the culmination of political institutions which had grown in response to previous periods of social strife and conflict and which, toward the end of the fifties, tended to have lost a proper articulation with newly-risen social cleavages and configurations. In Holland, the structural framework of *verzuiling* (columnization), reflecting the cleavage structure prevalent around the turn of the century, increasingly rigidified and rather worked to falsify the matrix of social division as it had been recently gestating. Yet, as an entrenched system, geared to an accommodation among political elites, while structurally separating their respective constituencies, it could afford to neglect the slow build-up of tension for some time. A potent factor, here as in America,

was the dominant Cold War perspective which served both as legitimation of the internal political order as well as an outlook rallying the populace *vis-à-vis* an external threat. In America too, it would seem, the institutional order as well as its vocabulary of self-legitimation gradually grew out of touch with realignments as these occurred in society. In a sense, the situation was the reverse of what we saw in Holland — rather than falsely dividing the populace through a structure of columns which no longer relevantly reflected reality, the American system falsely united the populace around the column of Americanism, with it varying faces of 'the American dream', 'the American way of life', and 'the Free World' (a strongly America-centered concept). Here, perhaps even more strongly than in the Netherlands, the concepts gained through their negation — Americanism as a rallying standard gained effect through the gradual definition of Un-Americanism as undertaken in the McCarthy Senate hearings.[7] Both the McCarthy period, defining Communism as Un-American, as well as the stance of many left-wing intellectuals who had felt deceived by the excesses of Stalinist Communism and had adopted staunchly anti-Communist positions, succeeded in virtually muting left-wing dissent throughout the fifties. This, by the way, offers one more explanation of the generational character of the New Left in the US; the younger generation had to start from zero following the abdication of older leftist generations.

Yet, whatever the virtual odds against radicalism — whatever the actual degree of isolation from the established political process — the early SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), the most articulate and reflexive component of the early New Left, did not display any marked sense of alienation. The distance to mainstream American politics, in its view, could be bridged by realigning the Democratic Party in order to make it more readily accessible and responsive to the political outlook arising through the grass-roots activism of the early civil rights movement and the community organization of SDS. The political outlook still was highly reformist and populist; while stressing themes of participatory democracy and aiming at the introduction of redistributive issues into the political agenda, it still was willing to 'work through the system' and to keep such conflicts as it engaged in within bounds of non-violence and civil disobedience.

Such was the early American New Left's 'cultural focus'. Notwithstanding its familiarity with the British New Left, and the fact that A. J. Muste's brand of pacifism is considered one of the ideological sources feeding into the American New Left, it did not share the emphasis which either the British New Left or Dutch New Left precursors put on themes of disarmament, opposition to nuclear armament, and pacifism. The greater generational continuity in both England and the Netherlands should certainly be considered here, as well as the geo-political fact of America's location com-

pared with that of Britain or Western Europe in the pre-ICBM era. Furthermore, nowhere had anti-Communism, or the rejection of views, supposedly 'soft' on communism, such as pacifism, come to be linked as tightly with a nation's self-identity as in America.

By the mid-sixties, however, the structural isolation of the American New Left had found its reflection in a sense of alienation. No more reference was made to attempts at 'working through the system'. In the eyes of New Left leaders, the formidable unresponsiveness of the American system precluded the design of any further rational analysis of society or strategy for change, be it institutional or extra-institutional. C. W. Mills as a source of inspiration was eclipsed by H. Marcuse's imagery of internalized repression and the one-dimensional society. Prior to the escalation of the Vietnam war even, the attribution of self-conscious imperialist motivation to the American system had occurred, as wel as several variations on the theme of collusion, carried to the extreme of 'the system' constituting the opponent. Thus, the theme of corporate liberalism (or liberal corporatism) was elaborated by Flacks, that of imperialism by Oglesby and, finally, the theme of the military-industrial complex by Hayden and Pilisuc. Illustrative of the New Left's inclination to inflate the adversary, Hayden and Pilisuc argued that American society, rather than containing a military-industrial complex, *was* itself a military-industrial complex. Somewhat later, under Marcuse's influence, Hayden explicitly referred to the one-dimensional man and liberal society's capacity to contain change.[8]

The Vietnam war has dominated the history of the American New Left during the second half of the sixties. The democratizing impetus of the early New Left was still carried on by the student movement under the banner of anti-authoritarianism at campuses across the nation. Yet, the overriding mobilizing issues were protest against the war, draft resistance, and opposition to the universities' subservience to the military-industrial complex. The isolation and alienation — the sense of unbridgeable distance — may go far to explain the changed character of actions which protesters engaged in. The draft resistance movement has been the only one to consistently stick to non-violent means of civil disobedience. The other strands of the protest movement all vacillated between peaceful demonstrations and rabid violence. SDS became torn with factional strife and gradually drifted to definite Old Left perspectives of various brands of Marxism.

During the latter half of the sixties the social process was increasingly perceived as explicitly willed and manipulated by powerful interests who acted in perfect concert. Thus, distinct fields of social action were being increasingly subsumed under this single-minded, interpretive premise. For instance, the Selective Service System could, in this perspective, be conceived as a design for channeling young men into socially important occupations by using the

club of induction.[9]

In the Netherlands, developments were different on various accounts. Of course, there has been the Dutch equivalent of the American student movement; its anti-authoritarianism, as directed against academic structures, may even have been more successful in instituting student participation in a variety of academic matters than any place else in the Western world. Yet, in Holland too, the student movement shows the same over-all decline in oppositional fervor, the same drift towards factionalism as elsewhere. Once more, the decline of this generational branch of the wider New Left may be accounted for in terms of the self-imposed break with adult left-wing organizations and the inevitable high rate of turn-over characterizing generation brackets. Yet, at the height of anti-authoritarian protest, this branch of the Dutch New Left made itself felt in the military. We shall return to these developments shortly.

A unique feature of the Dutch New Left, in comparison with other countries, may be the use that some of its constituent elements have made of institutional opportunities for change. The very choice of these options characterizes this segment of the New Left as markedly different in outlook from the consistently extra-institutional or extra-parliamentary New Left. On the basis of an essentially different assessment of strategic options, of isolation and distance, this, what we might call 'partisan' New Left, ever since the fall of 1966, has undertaken the attempt to bring the New Left's democratizing potential to bear on the organizational structure of a large socialist party. Following successive electoral defeats, the party apparatus was in disarray. Throughout the late forties and fifties the party had participated in the elite intercourse of *verzuiling* politics and had definitely grown out of touch with the changed political climate of the sixties. The most appropriate description of the partisan New Left's endeavor, therefore, is its effort to awaken the party to its initial calling of emancipation and democratization, and to open up the party to the novel issues and priorities of the sixties. Through grass roots action within the party and mobilization of the party's rank-and-file, the partisan New Left has found rapid access to the leadership echelons of the party hierarchy as well as to its parliamentary party. Notwithstanding the lurking danger of renewed oligarchization and 'betrayal of the basis' through cooptation, on the whole the partisan New Left has been succesful in making the party more responsive to and helpful for the range of direct actions and the variety of direct action groups which in Holland appear to be the lasting heritage of the radical sixties. Thus, a long chain of alignment has been created, reaching all the way from grass roots direct action to sympathetic echelons in a political party structure as well as in parliament. Moreover, it would seem that the partisan New Left has carried along some of the issues of the early Euro-

pean New Left — the anti-Cold War perspective, the anti-NATO stance, as well as a willingness to reach out toward the Communist world — in its conquest of positions of power. As a matter of fact, it has taken a two-pronged approach; its attempts at changing the political outlook of the Dutch Labor Party were supplemented by a wider strategy of changing the established patterns of coalition formation in Dutch politics.

Thus, 'New Left' aspects of fundamental democratization were reinforced by strategies seeking conflict and the clear opposition of policy alternatives rather than their muting through compromise and consensus. In a sense, the partisan New Left has introduced a radically different perspective on the political game into one of the larger party structures whereas previously such inpact used to be sought predominantly through the strategy of secession from the established parties. Secession and the formation of splinter parties theretofore had been the preferred option under the Dutch system of proportional representation. The main example in the present context of our argument is the Pacifist Socialist Party which had expressly sought the relative isolation of the political margin in order to testify consistently to a set of perspectives which, in the fifties, had been suppressed in the Cold War consensus of center-left coalitions.

To summarize this brief survey of the American and Dutch New Left, we can say that in Holland the existence of political parties which essentially reflected the cleavage lines of a previous period of emancipation offered the strategic option of infusing these potentially emancipist parties with new fervor. In America, on the other hand, the absence of this type of party may have been highly instrumental in isolating and frustrating a New Left impetus which, on other accounts, displays marked similarities with developments in Holland. Let us now go more specifically into the interplay between this New Left impetus and parties in power as it centered on matters concerning the military and military-strategic thinking.

(b) The New Left and the military: impact and repercussions
Various, systematically different, relationships and margins of action can be discerned in the relationship of a New Left-type movement, as outlined in section 2 above, and institutionalized military-strategic perspectives. The basic institutional reflection of such perspectives in the post-World War II era has, throughout the Western world, been the mass army as well as the network of inttrlinking military alliances setting off the so-called Free World from the so-called Communist block. Both reflections are meaningfully interrelated — both were supported by the Cold War perspective as prevalent in the fifties.

To the extent that the New Left represented an antithetical outlook on the world, it came to be the main threat to the establishhed Cold War perspec-

tive. Its actual impact, though, varied according to the political environment. The American New Left, as we said above, was alerted rather late in its career to issues of military import. Other than European New Left varieties it has never developed a consistent radical perspective nor the logistical support of organization, in opposition to Cold War thinking, the policy of military alliances, or the role of the mass army. Its analysis rather focused on the naked fact of formidable American power as induced by imperialist motives and instituted as a military-industrial complex, and on the appalling use repeatedly made of it through military intervention abroad. Its actions were rather an *ad hoc,* moral response to separate instances of the use of this power than a consistent strategy, inspired by its ideological perspective on the world political situation. The American New Left, therefore, has been much more parochial than its European counterparts. That aspect became highly visible in the opposition to the Vietnam war − the opposition was moral rather than rational, limited in focus rather than inspired by a broad frame of interpretation. The response was immediate and *ad hoc* rather than being subsumed under a wider strategic approach of political opposition. Undoubtedly, the prevailling structural isolation and the sense of alienation have been instrumental in precluding such developments. Thus, the diffuse sense of illegitimacy of the Vietnam war as well as the outspoken moral outrage have sought outlets in opposition to the immediate, highly concrete issue of the draft. Moreover, it would seem that the anti-war impetus was compounded by intrinsic elements of inequality in the American Selective Service System[10] − inequalities which became all the more repulsive in times of war than of peace.

Even among draftees, it would seem, this pattern of *ad hoc* opposition to concrete events, e.g. in the form of disobeying orders, prevailed over attempts at long-range, ideologically imbued opposition.

Yet, the over-all pattern showed all the signs of a threat to social order, both domestically and in the army. This potential for disorder, we may assume, has effectively rallied a right-wing backlash around the issues of law and order. Politically expert leadership, willing to capitalize on this emergent mood, faced the dilemma of dampening anti-war resistance while avoiding a policy of downright surrender. Given the *ad hoc,* short-range character of opposition, however, the leadership could avail itself of the following strategies. Common to all is the purpose to compound the structural isolation of the left-wing leadership while at the same time reducing its potential following by holding out various baits. Thus, the Nixon policy of phased withdrawal from Vietnam tended to detach the issue of the draft from the Vietnam war; the concrete, domestic impact of the war on peoples' every-day lives was thus drastically reduced. Moreover, through the institution of a lottery system the more patent injustices of Selective Service were

removed. The culmination of this policy line, finally, should be considered the institution of the all-volunteer army, significantly enough proposed several years before by another right-wing Republican: Goldwater. Furthermore, it would seem that the relaxation of rules on conscientious objection by the Supreme Court in 1970 fit in nicely with this strategy of shielding off the military from left-wing opposition, while at the same time depriving the latter of potentially mobilizing issues. Apparently, this two-pronged approach has allowed the Administration successfully to disarm the anti-war opposition while maintaining its freedom of action to end the Vietnam war as it saw fit. The increased isolation and alienation of the left are not likely to add to its capacity for designing a consistent, oppositional view of America's role in the world.

In the Netherlands, the balance of options was markedly different. There, a consistent, oppositional perspective on foreign relations had been developed and, following a period of relative isolation in parliament, had finally entrenched itself in the main socialist party. Through a realignment of political forces in the Netherlands, actively promoted by the partisan New Left, broader support for these views may be mobilized in the end. Moreover, the anti-authoritarian, extra-parliamentary New Left has gradually entrenched itself in the very structure of the Dutch army through organized conscript unionism.[11] From an initial emphasis on bread-and-butter issues, promoting highly specific interests of the conscripts in an interplay with the politically responsible, civilian layers of authority in the Ministry of Defense, it has undergone definite radicalization. This has brought out more clearly its disturbing impact on the established military outlook concerning such matters as discipline and subordination. In a sense it has created a peace-time equivalent of a front situation where the lower echelons of the non-commissioned officers, the very stalwarts of military virtues, and entrusted with initiating new recruits into the military outlook and way of life, are in direct confrontation with a threatening enemy. This situation, be it on the lower echelons and therefore more contained, may offer a reflection of the wider conflict of perspectives and realignment of political forces, which we encountered in America. Yet, the dissipation of radical fervor of the extra-parliamentary New Left in the Netherlands, may serve to prevent this confrontation from building up steam.

What options were open to counter this impact of left radicalism on the mass army in the Netherlands? Although it is true that general conscription goes back to Napoleonic times and did originally reflect the *levée en masse,* or nation-in-arms conceptions, *vis-à-vis* an external threat, the geopolitical fact of permanent threat in Europe may have served to carry the institution of general conscription through prolonged periods of peace. Therefore, other than in America, the return to volunteer armies in continental Europe

apparently has not been an available alternative. An additional factor here may be that, different from America, conscription indeed is general and does not entail the inequitable characteristics of the Selective Service System. Up till now, at least, it has not been widely disputed. The only option, available for strategic response here, would be varying the length of induction. As to conscientious objection, we may point out that as early as 1962 humanistic motives for objection were legally admissable. This may, to a certain extent, have served to deflect the impact of radical dissent on the army.

More generally, we should say that ever since the period of decolonization, the Dutch army has been a peace-time army. It could not serve as the immediate object of moral outrage over unjust wars. This may have helped to lend the international character to the oppositional stance of the radicals. To the extent that anti-war protest took the shape of demonstrations against the American role in Vietnam, the opposition may have felt as helpless and powerless as the American anti-war protesters. To the extent, however, that the reassessment of strategic-military thinking in a global context has focused on Dutch participation in structures such as NATO, the actual entrenchment and awareness of access to decision-making may prevent this line of oppositional thinking from being effectively neutralized through isolation. Therefore, it would seem, the main dimension of confrontation in the Netherlands is between the New Left perspective and the military-strategic perspective, underlying alliances such as NATO and reflected in the high priority accorded defense spending, rather than between the New Left and the mass army.

References

1 On this subject, cf. Ch. Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left.* New York: A. A. Knopf, 1969. Also: R. Kroes: *Decade of Dissent. A Comparative Perspective on the International New Left.* (forthcoming).

2 Cf. H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen, *Merchants of Death.* New York: Dodd, Mead, 1934. Also: J. E. Wiltz, *In Search of Peace. The Senate Munitions Inquiry, 1934-1936.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1963.

3 S. M. Lipset, *Rebellion in the University.* Boston: Little, Brown, 1972.

4 Cf. P. Bachrach, *The theory of Democratic Elitism.* Boston: Little, Brown, 1967.

5 Th. J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism. Ideology, Policy and the Crisis of Public Authority.* New York: W. W. Norton, 1969.

6 R. Kroes, *op. cit.*

7 On the dialectics involved here, cf. K. T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans. A Study in the Sociology of Deviance.* New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1966.

8 For these statements, cf. Kroes, *op. cit.*

9 Indeed, there has been an official Selective Service System Memorandum, advocating this use of the SSS. After being discovered and publicized by the

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the New Left, it was withdrawn. See 'Channeling' in *Ramparts,* Dec. 1967.
10 J. A. Barber, Jr., 'The Draft and Alternatives to the Draft', in: S. E. Ambrose and J. A. Barber, Jr. (eds.), *The Military and American Society.* New York: Free Press, 1972.
11 Cf. Teitler's article in this issue on the history of the VVDM.