

3 Right-wing extremist groups

Willem Wagenaar and Jaap van Donselaar

Right-wing extremist groups have been an uninterrupted presence in the Netherlands since the 1930s. For the first five decades after the Second World War, this presence faced constant opposition from the government and society at large. After the "revolt" initiated by the right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn, a change occurred. There was greater tolerance for expressing controversial opinions – "saying what you think" – and the multicultural society became the focus of political and social debate. This seemed to create the kind of space from which right-wing extremist groups could profit, an option that was strengthened when the Fortuyn movement split up and was finally decimated. As was often said, for the extreme right the sky was the limit.

Whether the right-wing extremist groups could have profited from this space is debatable. The "classic" right-wing extremist political parties have more or less disappeared. At the same time, a new party with right-wing extremist features has been formed: the Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid; PVV), led by Geert Wilders. The PVV is not being discussed in this chapter, however, but elsewhere in this Monitor report.¹ In addition to the emergence of the PVV we are also seeing the continued growth of right-wing extremist street activism.

In this chapter we turn our attention to recent developments within the right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands. We will begin by taking a bird's-eye view of the developments that have occurred since the publication of the last Monitor.² Then three themes that we believe have played a particularly prominent role during this Monitor period will be explored: the growth of right-wing extremist street activism, the current situation regarding the so-called "Lonsdale problem" and the demise of the classical right-wing extremist parties.

3.1 Overview of 2007-2008

In addition to the three themes mentioned above, other events have also taken place during this reporting period that should be noted. These will be discussed here.

Death of widow Rost van Tonningen

The "black widow" Florentine Rost van Tonningen-Heubel (1914-2007) had been the figurehead of the extreme right since the 1980s and was greatly respected within that network. She was the widow of Meinoud Rost van Tonningen, a prominent National Socialist who collaborated during the Second World War. He died in prison a few weeks after Liberation.

¹ See chapter 8, "The extreme right and the discriminatory identity of the PVV."

² See J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; zevende rapportage* (Racism & Extremism Monitor: seventh report). Amsterdam: Anne Frank House / Leiden University 2006.

After devoting herself to raising her three children, Florentine Rost van Tonningen resumed overt political activism in the 1970s.³ Her efforts were not all that successful among the right-wing extremist parties, but she did develop a broad network of like-minded people who got together regularly at gatherings in her home and garden. This network was given the name "Consortium de Levensboom" (The Tree of Life Consortium). She also lent a helping hand in the form of modest financial support and by giving lectures, writing articles and putting different people from her network in touch with each other. During her latter years, the aged Rost van Tonningen understandably curtailed the number and scale of these activities. She died on 24 March 2007 at age 92. The widow had already worked out the plans for her funeral long before her death. In 1997 she purchased a grave in Rheden and designed a gravestone engraved with the words "Waarheid maakt Vrij" (Truth sets us free). She also said that she wanted a funeral attended by sympathisers from the National Socialist movement. In the end few of these plans were realised. There were financial problems, and supporters were not prepared or able to muster up the necessary costs. In the end, Rost van Tonningen was buried privately with only family members present. But that was not the end of the story. The Netherlands People's Union (Nederlandse Volks-Unie; NVU) organised a funeral march as a way of commemorating the deceased within their own circle. On 2 June 2007, a procession of old and new Nazis made their way through Rheden. This march led to internal quarrels because the NVU claimed the commemoration for itself. Several others, including former NVU chairman Glimmerveen, distanced themselves from the initiative. This rekindled an old disagreement between Glimmerveen and the present NVU chairman, Kusters, and the conflict was fought out in public on the internet.⁴ The death of Florentine Rost van Tonningen should not be seen as the loss of someone who was of great organisational importance to the extreme right, since that was never the case. She was the central figure of a vast network, however, and a "cultural emblem" of the extreme right in the Netherlands during the post-war years.

Developments on the internet

Most right-wing extremist groups have their own websites that are often linked to web forums. Besides such organisational initiatives there are also independent web forums with right-wing extremist features: Stormfront, Holland Hardcore and Polinco. Two internet shops were also formed during this Monitor period as well as a right-wing extremist digital radio station.

The Stormfront forum is an international web forum with a Dutch language subsection for the Netherlands and Flanders. In recent years this subsection has been a gathering place for right-wing extremists of every variety, from dyed-in-the-wool neo-Nazis to

³ Jaap van Donselaar, *Fout na de oorlog; fascistische en racistische organisaties in Nederland 1950-1990* (On the wrong side after the war: Fascist and racist organisations in the Netherlands, 1950-1990). Amsterdam: Bert Bakker 1991, pp. 201-208, p. 245. For a portrait of Rost van Tonningen also see *Kroniek extreemrechts 1945-2003* (Chronicle of the extreme right, 1945-2003), <<http://www.monitorracisme.nl/content.asp?pid=202&lid=1>>.

⁴ See <<http://www.stormfront.org/forum/showthread.php/kusters-als-oliedomme-en-schaamteloze-392274.html>> (20 September 2008) and <<http://www.nvu.info/schart/22.html>> (20 September 2008).

interested Lonsdale youth.⁵ The broad range of messages they post on Stormfront – without letup – are extreme and often racist and anti-Semitic, and they almost always use pseudonyms. The participants usually imagine that they are "all by themselves," anonymous and therefore safe from judicial intervention. The forum servers were in the United States, and in past years the Dutch courts showed little interest in taking action against hate speech made on the internet.⁶ If the participants thought that the use of pseudonyms and the physical location of the server in the United States put them outside the jurisdiction of the Netherlands, they were mistaken.

After questions were asked about Stormfront in the Dutch House of Representatives, a police inquiry was launched.⁷ In March 2007 searches were carried out in the homes of two moderators who were responsible for day-to-day operations on the Dutch subsection of the forum. The police confiscated the computers. Later two related arrests were made on the grounds of posting criminal material.⁸ Even though the first raids were made in March 2007, no summons has yet been issued.⁹

Holland Hardcore was also faced with legal action. Holland Hardcore is a forum that emerged from the Lonsdale culture.¹⁰ Since then, the forum has developed into a place that is still primarily aimed at Lonsdale youth but tries to interest them in right-wing extremist themes. Participants are actively recruited for right-wing extremist organisations and activities. On this forum, too, participants imagined they were safe from judicial interference. At the end of 2007, however, word got around that a criminal investigation of Holland Hardcore's goings on was underway.¹¹ After this became known, moderation of the forum did become stricter, but racist statements continued to be posted. In early 2008 the police raided the home of Holland Hardcore's manager and confiscated his computer. Whether this will result in prosecution is so far unclear.

A third major forum was Polinco.¹² This forum was set up in 2000 as a digital refuge for a group of internet posters with right-wing extremist views. Many people were antagonised by the owner of the forum, however, which left a small crowd of right-wing extremists who had a hatred of Jews and a preference for conspiracy theories. As a result of the small number of participants and incessant internal conflicts, the manager shut down the public forum in April 2007. In the meantime, the courts had also become interested in this forum. One regular forum participant, who was known for his anti-

⁵ "Stormfront Nederland en Vlaanderen" (Stormfront Netherlands and Flanders), *Kafka* 2005. See: <<http://www.kafka.antifa.net/stormfrontforum.htm>> (26 August 2008).

⁶ J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; zevende rapportage* (Racism & Extremism Monitor: seventh report), pp. 129-131.

⁷ *Aanhangsel Handelingen II* (Appendix to the Official Acts of the Lower House of the States General) 2004/05, 2128.

⁸ "Woningen doorzocht wegens racisme op website" (Homes searched on account of racism on website), *De Telegraaf* 19 September 2007.

⁹ Our investigation was concluded in September 2008.

¹⁰ "Holland Hardcore. Hoe een website voor gabbers toegang biedt tot extreemrechtse politiek" (Holland Hardcore: How a website for gabbers offers access to extreme right-wing politics), *Kafka* 2006. See: <<http://www.kafka.antifa.net/holhard.htm>> (26 August 2008).

¹¹ "Justitie maakt ernst met aanpak 'haatsites'" (Judicial authorities get serious about dealing with "hate sites"), *NRC Handelsblad* 25 August 2007.

¹² The name Polinco is a contraction of "politically incorrect."

Semitism (as unrelenting as it was coarse), became the target of a police raid during which his computer was confiscated. In April 2008 he was ordered to appear in court. In the ruling, the court typified his contribution to the forum as "unmistakably homophobic, racist, Islamophobic and anti-Semitic," but acquitted him nevertheless. The motivation behind this decision was that the Polinco forum did not actively seek publicity and that only like-minded individuals were involved in it. According to the court, the remarks made by the participants were not public enough to make them punishable. In addition, the court described the forum as semi-public because outsiders were not able to find it without going to great lengths to do so.¹³ The grounds named in the ruling surprised us: the contested postings took place *before* the public part of the forum was closed, *not after*. At the time of those particular postings, anyone who wanted to could visit the forum without having to register.

A relatively new phenomenon in the Netherlands are right-wing extremist web shops. In 2008 Landstorm Records was set up, a web shop that offered a wide variety of neo-Nazi products (music, clothing and Nazi paraphernalia).¹⁴ After the media began to show interest¹⁵ as well as the courts, things began to get difficult for the web shop. And when the manager was found guilty of fraud within his own circle, the web shop disappeared.

A second initiative was the Fenris mail order house. Fenris sells a broad assortment of products mainly of a right-wing extremist nature (books, CDs, DVDs, clothing, flags, jewellery, et cetera) and focuses on the youth cultures within which the extreme right is active: "gabbers," skinheads and fans of Black Metal and Neofolk.¹⁶ The assortment is monitored so that no potentially incriminating material is included. Fenris uses the money it earns to finance political activities, such as a radio station that broadcasts every week on the internet, Radio Rapaille.¹⁷ Radio Rapaille broadcasts a mix of ordinary and right-wing extremist music as well as information, appeals, interviews and reports of right-wing extremist activities.

Nationalistic People's Movement

The Nationalistic People's Movement (Nationalistische Volks Beweging; NVB) was established in 2006 by a number of former activists of the National Alliance. The movement is racist, is devoted to reunification with Flanders and parades around with symbols from the NSB (a prominent Dutch branch of the National Socialist movement from the Second World War).¹⁸ Although it has roots in a political party, the NVB does not present itself as a group with an interest in electoral participation. It is not a straightforward political party.

¹³ Amsterdam District Court 2 June 2008, LJN BD2977.

¹⁴ <<http://landstorm-records.org/shop/index.html>> (22 June 2008).

¹⁵ "Vrij spel voor neonazi's op internet" (Open field for neo-Nazis on the internet), *de Volkskrant* 24 June 2008.

¹⁶ <<http://www.fenris-postorder.com>> (28 August 2008).

¹⁷ <<http://www.radorapaille.com>> (26 August 2008).

¹⁸ "Nationalistische Volks Beweging," *Kafka* 2006. See: <<http://www.kafka.antifa.net/nvbe.htm>> (20 August 2008).

In early 2007 the NVB organised a gathering in Uitgeest. A group of political opponents also arrived to demonstrate against the gathering. The NVB had anticipated this and had asked Blood & Honour to serve as marshals. Blood & Honour were stationed outside the hall where the meeting was being held and were itching for a fight. This resulted in a violent confrontation. Some people were wounded, all the members of Blood & Honour present were arrested and a number of them were ordered to appear in court. Those responsible for the violence were sentenced to imprisonment and community service.¹⁹ A number of these criminal cases had not yet been settled in September 2008.

In the autumn of 2007 the NVB had plans to demonstrate in Amsterdam against the decision to move a war monument in order to accommodate the building of a mosque. Disturbing a war monument had not been the most obvious solution to the problem and was sharply criticised by other right-wing extremists as well. Nevertheless, the organisers went ahead with their plans. After the demonstrators had gathered they were attacked by football hooligans and political opponents, and the demonstration was terminated by order of the mayor.²⁰ Two months later, the NVB requested permission to demonstrate in Amsterdam again. For security reasons the movement was only given permission to demonstrate on a remote square. The organisers rejected this proposal and called off the demonstration. Shortly thereafter the party secretary, who was the driving force behind the movement, died suddenly. Since then nothing has been heard from the NVB.

3.2 Emergence of right-wing extremist street activism

There are several networks of right-wing extremist activists in the Netherlands. In most cases these are out-and-out neo-Nazis. We discussed the emergence of such activist groups in an earlier report.²¹ They had grown in size and there were signs of increased involvement in violent incidents and violent propaganda and rhetoric. These developments continued throughout the past Monitor period.

Netherlands People's Union

Right-wing extremist activism is not a new phenomenon. But a great deal has changed in recent years, especially when it comes to demonstrations.²² This is mainly due to the work of the Netherlands People's Union (NVU). In 2001 this party managed to obtain permission from the administrative courts to organise a legal demonstration. From that moment on, organising demonstrations has been core business for the party. Since 2001 the NVU has further expanded the latitude given to demonstrate by means of new

¹⁹ Haarlem District Court 16 January 2008, case nos. 23/000385/08, 23/000397/08, 23/000396/08, 23/000384/08. We do not know the exact details of this case since the Haarlem District Court would not provide us with a copy of the rulings.

²⁰ See <http://amsterdam.nl/algemene_onderdelen/indexen/nieuws/nieuwsarchief_2007_0?ActItnIdt=81183> (20 August 2008).

²¹ J. van Donselaar & W. Wagenaar, *Monitor racisme & extremisme. Racistisch en extreemrechts geweld in 2006* (Racism & Extremism Monitor: Racial and right-wing extremist violence in 2006). Amsterdam: Anne Frank House / Leiden University 2007. See: <<http://www.monitorracisme.nl/content.asp?pid=206&lid=1>> (21 August 2008).

²² See chapter 5, "Demonstrations by right-wing extremist groups in the Netherlands and Germany."

procedures in the administrative courts. Local authorities may not place any limitations on the scheduled time or the route, which defeat the purpose of a public demonstration.²³ This means that today the NVU can demonstrate in the centre of a city during the busy hours of the day. Naturally that applies not only to the NVU but also to other right-wing extremist organisations, which also make grateful use of this liberalisation of the free speech principle brought about by the NVU.

National-Socialist Action, Racial Volunteer Force

In 2005 some of the Lonsdale (white power) youth in Zoetermeer formed a right-wing extremist group that quickly became radicalised. This group originally took the name Soetermeer Skinhead Front but later christened itself Youth Storm Netherlands (Jeugdstorm Nederland). Today it is known as National-Socialist Action (Nationaal-Socialistische Aktie; NSA).²⁴

During its first two years this group's adherents were involved in serious acts of violence, with several members often operating together. That led to arrests and criminal convictions. In 2007 the Haaglanden police announced that they had started a so-called stalking project against these young people in Zoetermeer.²⁵ As a result of this project, the problems caused by the group were greatly reduced and part of the hard core left Zoetermeer. At first some of the problems shifted to The Hague. The group still exists but the public nuisance has subsided.

Initially the ideology of the organisation did not seem much different from that of the "Lonsdale youth:" xenophobic ideas that leaned towards neo-Nazism. All that changed as soon as the leaders of the group came in contact with a small radical action group, the Racial Volunteer Force (RVF). The group began to develop a radical neo-Nazism with a heavy emphasis on extreme anti-Semitism. This hatred of the Jews is so extreme that the group identifies with radical Muslims in the belief that they are bound together by their common anti-Semitism.

Recently the group found a new source of inspiration in the Autonomous National Socialists (Autonome Nationale Sozialisten) of Germany. These mostly young neo-Nazis were in turn inspired by militant left-wing action groups ("autonomists") from the 1980s. They use not only the slogans and symbolism but also the ideas about socio-cultural construction that were generated by a political movement of their left-wing opponents. Successfully mobilising young people for the political struggle would go hand in hand with creating an independent youth culture. This youth culture is reflected in a separate dress code, music, concerts and meeting places. The new group also thinks differently about the use of violence. Up until recently, German neo-Nazis hardly ever used violence at their public demonstrations, if at all, to keep from alienating "the common man" from their ideas. Recently a change has taken place. "Autonomous Nationalists"

²³ Zutphen District Court 26 January 2007, LJN AZ7212 and Arnhem District Court 13 May 2005, LJN AT5504 (LJN = National Case Law Number; the number under which judgments of Dutch courts are published on the website www.rechtspraak.nl).

²⁴ "Jeugd Storm Nederland," *Kafka* 2008. See: <<http://kafka.antifa.net/nsa.js.htm>> (24 August 2008).

²⁵ "Politie 'stalkt' extreem-rechts Zoetermeer uit" (Police "stalk" right-wing extremists out of Zoetermeer), *Brabants Dagblad* 15 August 2007.

are more and more apt to use violence against the police and political opponents at their demonstrations. By drawing on these sources of inspiration, the NSA has developed into a strongly ideological and radicalised group of neo-Nazis.

At the same time there has been much less spontaneous violence by NSA activists. It has been replaced by rhetoric consisting of violent propaganda that is mainly aimed at the government, the police, international "Jewry" and political opponents. In practice this mainly means seeking confrontations with political opponents (chiefly anti-fascist organisations). In one case an attempt was made to attack a demonstration of squatters, but the police managed to prevent it.²⁶ In other cases violent action was taken against individuals or buildings.

Besides these actions, the NSA was mainly getting involved in right-wing extremist demonstrations. Activists from the NSA are almost always present at demonstrations organised by the NVU. At first they deferred to the NVU's leadership role: that is, to the themes and slogans that the NVU had devised. But recently they have been projecting their "own" image. NSA members invariably stick together, with banners separating them from the rest of the demonstration. They also shout their own slogans, especially against the Jews, the state and the police, despite the official NVU theme and instructions. By taking this approach, the NSA has driven off a large number of the original NVU adherents and has become a fairly dominant feature at NVU demonstrations. The NSA has also organised a few demonstrations on its own.

At the moment – autumn 2008 – the group is still strongly oriented towards the Zoetermeer-Haaglanden region, although there are adherents throughout the entire country. Some of these are veteran neo-Nazis who see this group as an opportunity to recruit new blood for their ideas. The NSA also manages to pilfer young people from other organisations, especially the NVU and Blood & Honour. Finally, the NSA is apparently capable of recruiting new young people from the Lonsdale circuit, albeit on a limited scale.

Blood & Honour

Blood & Honour is an organisation of skinheads with neo-Nazi views. The organisation was established at the end of the 1980s in England and now has divisions in many Western countries. The organisation is banned in Germany and Spain. In the Netherlands the degree of organisation for Blood & Honour is low. There are a few different networks that toss the name of Blood & Honour about. In terms of political ambitions, Blood & Honour aims much lower than the NSA. Blood & Honour members are more accurately characterised as political hooligans. They appeal mainly to their skinhead identity. As a result, a great deal of emphasis is placed on group identity, group events, pub gatherings and concerts, alcohol consumption and spontaneous street violence.

²⁶ "Zeventien rechts-extremisten opgepakt" (Seventeen right-wing extremists arrested), *Algemeen Dagblad/Den Haag* 12 January 2008 and "De tegenslag van de nsa/ans in Den Haag" (A setback for the NSA/ANS in The Hague) (NSA's own report), on: <<http://erwache.freeforums.org/de-tegenslag-van-de-nsa-ans-in-den-haag-t129.html>> (28 February 2008).

In early 2007 Blood & Honour still had some kind of national organisation. Then in the spring of 2007 a group of Blood & Honour activists were arrested. They were present at a gathering of the National People's Movement (as cited earlier in this chapter). When a group of anti-fascist counter-demonstrators arrived, the Blood & Honour group attacked them. Arrests were made, and among those arrested were members of the national executive. This did the organisation little good.

A short time later, Blood & Honour Netherlands organised a commemoration of the Dutch and Flemish SS volunteers. This commemoration, an openly Nazi tribute at a cemetery in Lommel, Flanders, caused a great deal of commotion in both Belgium and the Netherlands.

Reports of the events in Uitgeest and Lommel reached the Dutch House of Representatives and led to questions about the possibility of putting Blood & Honour under a ban.²⁷ In response to these questions the Minister of Justice said that there was still insufficient information available about the organisation to outlaw it, but he did not rule out the possibility of discussing things at a later date.

Because of the prosecution of the Blood & Honour executive staff in the Uitgeest case, as well as all the negative publicity, the national structure of the organisation came under pressure and seems to have disappeared for now.

A few regional groups have attempted to start up again. In Aalten, for instance, the local group tried to organise a Hitler commemoration. That attempt ran aground, however, after the mayor issued a preventive ban.

Besides this national structure, a Dutch branch of a radical Blood & Honour splinter group was also active: Combat 18. This group was concentrated mainly in a small group of violent skinheads in the Rijnmond region. In 2007 the group was given negative press when police raided the home of a prominent member and found a weapons arsenal that included an automatic weapon. During the court session, indications of an even more serious offence were found: an attempt to acquire a rocket launcher. The accused was finally sentenced to two years' imprisonment, six months of which were suspended.²⁸ This case, too, seems to have had some impact on internal relations: the group appears to have more or less vanished.

Voorpost

The "Whole-Netherlandish" organisation Voorpost (Outpost) is of Flemish origin and has had a Dutch section since the 1970s.²⁹ Voorpost tries to influence public opinion on right-wing extremist themes by training its own grassroots supporters and by means of high-profile actions.

Since acquiring a new, motivated campaign leader in 2004, Voorpost Netherlands has been enjoying a period of success. The organisation recently made the news when members of the newly established Flevoland division were arrested after having tried several times to set fire to two squats, an Islamic shop and a synagogue.³⁰ The

²⁷ *Aanhangsel Handelingen II* 2007/08, 148.

²⁸ Rotterdam District Court 27 August 2007, case no. 10/711039-07.

²⁹ "Voorpost Nederland," *Kafka* 2007. See: <<http://www.kafka.antifa.net/Voorpost-flevoland.html>> (22 August 2008).

³⁰ The Flevoland division of Voorpost had its first meeting on 27 January 2007, see: <http://www.holland-hardcore.com/component/option,com_fireboard/Itemid,70/func,view/catid,41/id,18770/> (20 August 2008).

perpetrators were given nonsuspended prison sentences.³¹ Voorpost did whatever was necessary to distance itself from these actions and made it known that only two of those arrested were Voorpost members. It also expelled those members as a result of the actions.³² However, during the trial one of the founders of Voorpost-Flevoland said that contrary to any prior statements, most of the group consisted of Voorpost members.

Despite this incident, the Voorpost executive staff managed to expand the organisation in a number of areas and to attract attention – mostly regionally – by means of actions conducted at regular intervals. Voorpost generated national attention with an action against Wijnand Duyvendak, prominent member of the Green Left (GroenLinks), whose position had been compromised because of his activist past. During the presentation of Duyvendak's latest book, Voorpost activists threw a pie in his face.

Right-wing extremist street activism: a review

Right-wing extremist *action groups* have become more prominent. This can be seen first of all in the increasing number of demonstrations they hold. Since the NVU managed to actually win the right to demonstrate through the administrative courts, the number of demonstrations has steadily risen. The year 2004 was a peak year due to a number of demonstrations held after the murder of Theo van Gogh. The year 2008 (until September), however, showed an increase in the number of right-wing extremist demonstrations.

Table 3.1 Number of extreme right-wing demonstrations in the Netherlands 2001 to September 2008

Year	Number of right-wing extremist demonstrations
2001	2
2002	3
2003	8
2004	12
2005	7
2006	8
2007	12
2008 (until September)	18

Secondly, the actions are more provocative and mediagenic, which contributes to their public recognition. When Geert Wilders finally launched his film *Fitna* after months of

The arson committed by the group took place between October 2006 and February 2007. After the last case of arson on 20 February 2007 the entire group was arrested.

³¹ Zwolle District Court 4 September 2007, LJN BB2830, BB2832, BB2833, BB2836, BB2838, case nos.: 07/607095-07, 07/607104-07, -7/607107-07, 07/607094-07, 07/607093-07, 07/607089-07.

³² "Kennisgeving omtrent vermeende betrokkenheid bij gewelddadigheden Almeerse jongeren" (Announcement concerning alleged involvement in violent actions by Almere youth), see: <<http://www.voorpost.org/nieuw%20nl/20070821.htm>> (20 August 2008).

building tension, the country remained calm. The media and police who had gathered around the Binnenhof (the parliament building) in The Hague saw only one action: a demonstration by the NSA against the "Zionist" Wilders. The Duyvendak "pie incident" managed to generate an unprecedented level of attention for Voorpost.

Thirdly, the number of followers attracted to these action groups has skyrocketed in recent years. In 2004 we estimated the neo-Nazi following at about forty persons and the same number for the Voorpost following.³³ In 2006 we reported a growth in neo-Nazi connections, with a hard core of 55 persons and a following of 290 persons. For Voorpost we estimated a hard core of ten persons and a following of thirty.³⁴ In the 2007 annual report, the General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen en Veiligheidsdienst; AIVD) wrote that about 400 persons were active in the Dutch neo-Nazi spectrum,³⁵ an estimate that we second. A calculated estimate of the Voorpost membership suggests that the group is increasing. The active core increased to around forty persons, with an estimated present membership of around 200.

3.3 The "Lonsdale problem"

Lonsdale youth have gained notoriety in recent years as a problematic youth group that is often associated with violent acts and racist ideas. As we reported in earlier publications, we are not entirely happy with the name "Lonsdale youth." We decided to use the name, however, because it is a concept with strong social resonance. When we talk about "Lonsdale youth," we mean (white power oriented) right-wing extremist young people from the "gabber culture."

In 2005 we published a special study on this phenomenon as part of our Monitor project.³⁶ We concluded that racism and right-wing extremism do play a role for some "gabbers." How much of a role could not be established, however, because there are significant differences between and even within the groups of "gabbers" themselves. A calculated estimate of the number of "gabbers" who espouse any form of right-wing extremist or racist ideology comes to about 125 groups, with between 5 and 50 individuals each. No well-informed statement can be made concerning the present size of the phenomenon without new research. We see no reason, however, to suppose that the number will have risen or dropped dramatically.

Three years after the publication of this report neither the phenomenon nor the problem has gone away, although the public's reading of the situation has changed for the most part. In 2005 the word "Lonsdaler" was still among the top 10 new words in the Van Dale

³³ J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; zesde rapportage* (Racism & Extremism Monitor: sixth report). Amsterdam: Anne Frank House / Leiden University 2004.

³⁴ J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; zevende rapportage* (Racism & Extremism Monitor: seventh report).

³⁵ *Jaarverslag AIVD 2007* (AIVD Annual Report for 2007). The Hague: Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, 2008.

³⁶ Jaap van Donselaar (final editing), *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme. Het Lonsdalevraagstuk* (Racism & Extremism Monitor: The Lonsdale Problem), Amsterdam: Anne Frank House / Leiden University 2005.

dictionary of the Dutch language.³⁷ Earlier we observed that the "Lonsdale" label was showing signs of wear.³⁸ In 2005 when Lonsdale youth were featured in the media and in other reports, they were almost always tagged with the "Lonsdale" label. But recently we have noticed that such reports frequently leave the label unmentioned or use the descriptive term "skinheads" when referring to these young people. There has also been evidence that Lonsdale youth are being radicalised and are moving on to neo-Nazi groups (see previous section). This alters our image of the Lonsdale problem. Whether the changed image squares with actual developments, however, is another question. According to the intelligence service AIVD there is little to worry about. "Some youth cultures base their identity on right-wing symbolism," the service explains. "The verbal style and the appearance that these young people adopt are usually seen as right-wing extremists, but in fact that is not the case. Only a small core become radicalised and go on to join existing right-wing extremist groups or to form a group of their own."³⁹ We believe that this view is predicated on the restrictive definitions of racism and right-wing extremism used by the AIVD. Racism is defined as actions that are based on rational ideas about biological inferiority.⁴⁰ And to be a right-wing extremist, one must (in line with the above statement) be a member of a group. In the attempt to define racism and right-wing extremism, debates have been going on for decades concerning the extent to which the term "racism" should be reserved exclusively for biological arguments, in which one "race" – usually one's own – is rated more highly than the others. Some support this view, others do not. In our opinion, the definition chosen by the AIVD does little to acknowledge (a) the possibility that relatively moderate views can be based on thoroughly radical ideas and (b) the many other perceptions that are relevant to interethnic tensions. When a euphemism is used ("Full=Full") to tell someone that he must leave the country because of his ethnicity, many – including the victim at the very least – will understand it as a racist remark. Not only among ethnic minorities but within a much broader circle as well, notions of what should and should not be regarded as racist are different than those of the AIVD. A broader approach would also take into account the reaction patterns that can be triggered by such actions and remarks. Finally, there is also a legal reason: the criminal discrimination prohibitions and case law. In order to speak of "race" in the *legal* sense we are not compelled to use the *linguistic* word "race," since the legal notion of "race" is broader than the notion used in common parlance.⁴¹

For these reasons we feel more affinity for a less restrictive definition of racism that does greater justice to the different assessments sketched above – in sociological jargon:

³⁷ T. den Boon, *Taal van het jaar vijf. Kroniek van het Nederlands in 2005* (Language of the year five: Chronicle of the Dutch language in 2005). Utrecht: Van Dale Lexicografie 2005.

³⁸ J. van Donselaar & W. Wagenaar, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme. Racistisch en extreemrechts geweld in 2006* (Racism & Extremism Monitor: Racial and extreme right-wing violence in 2006).

³⁹ *Jaarverslag* (Annual Report) AIVD 2007.

⁴⁰ "Lonsdale-jongeren" in *Nederland: feiten en fictie van een vermeende rechts-extremistische subcultuur* ("Lonsdale youth" in the Netherlands: Facts and fiction concerning an alleged right-wing extremist subculture). The Hague: Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst 2005. See <<https://www.aivd.nl/contents/pages/43317/lonsdalenotavorburgemeestersgeregistreerd.pdf>> (24 August 2008).

⁴¹ For a more detailed explanation see chapter 8, "The extreme right and the discriminatory content of the PVV," section 8.3.2.

different definitions of the situation – which simply express a social reality. Such a definition would also avert the danger of "defining away" part of the problem. Worse still, there is the fear that if broad segments of society – those of the victim at least – sense the presence of racism in the way things are being done, a restrictive definition would contribute little to solving the problem and could even complicate it. People might reason that the government, on which they depend for protection, is denying the problem.

A number of incidents in 2007 and 2008 show that the Lonsdale problem is still with us. The most notorious incident took place in the village of Waspik in West-Brabant. There a Liberian refugee family was harassed for a year by a group of Lonsdale youth. The family reported the incidents to the local authorities. Despite these reports, the town and the police took no action against the group of Lonsdalers. Finally the family felt forced to leave the village and look for a home elsewhere. After an interview with the family, the forced departure became national news.⁴² The town council responded by commissioning an independent investigation of the events in order to avoid a repetition of the affair. This investigation concluded that the local government was guilty of gross failure,⁴³ which ultimately resulted in the collapse of the executive council. In the meantime, the law also stepped in. The police arrested several members from the Lonsdale group. In the end, eleven youths were put on trial and sentenced to training orders and community punishment orders.⁴⁴

Problems with right-wing extremist Lonsdale youth were observed in other places as well.

A few examples:

- In a report from the Kennemerland Bureau for Discrimination it was concluded that the situation is very serious in one village in the area (Zwanenburg) and alarming in three other villages. In Zwanenburg, according to the report, there are two racist groups of juveniles who have created a public nuisance and have been involved in violence.⁴⁵ The Zwanenburg village council said the conclusions were exaggerated.
- In Dokkum in early 2007 there were several violent incidents involving a Lonsdale group.⁴⁶ The incidents included confrontations, cases of assault and serious vandalism.
- In Edam, Lonsdale youths set fire to a mosque. One of them had committed vandalism in a Jewish cemetery earlier on. These youths were arrested and

⁴² "Oorlog duurt voort voor Liberianen" (War continues for Liberians), *Brabants Dagblad* 29 September 2007.

⁴³ *Racistische overlast in Waspik* (Racist behaviour in Waspik), Utrecht: FORUM 2008.

⁴⁴ Breda District Court 24 April 2008, LJN BD2544, case nos. 02/629464-07, 02/629220-07, 02/801222-07, 02/801221-07, 02/629217-07, 02/629219-07, 02/629218-07, 02/629221-07, 02/801243-07, 02/801239-07.

⁴⁵ Bureau Discriminatiezaken Kennemerland, *Rechts, rechtser, extreemrechts?* (Right-wing, more right-wing, extreme right-wing?), Bureau Discriminatiezaken Kennemerland 2007 (confidential report).

⁴⁶ "Dokkumer hangjeugd: Geef ons een caravan" (Dokkum street youths: Give us a caravan), *Leeuwarder Courant* 16 January 2007.

sentenced to a few months' imprisonment and additional community punishment orders.⁴⁷

This picture of a continuing problem with Lonsdale youth is also confirmed by the annual report of the Education Inspectorate: "Schools seldom have to deal with religious extremism, but they do have a problem with 'white' extremism [...] and with conflicts between native Dutch pupils and ethnic minority pupils." The Education Inspectorate defines white extremism as "Lonsdale and White Power." The figures from the annual report show that "white extremism" at schools is a problem of considerable proportions.

Table 3.2 Percentage of schools per sector that had problems with white extremism in 2006-2007

Primary education		Secondary education			Special education	
Primary schools	Special primary schools	Vocational schools for special needs pupils	VMBO (secondary vocational schools)	HAVO-VWO (general secondary and pre-university)	Special schools	Special secondary schools
2%	1%	27%	20%	9%	3%	13%

Source: Education Inspectorate⁴⁸

These percentages may indicate a rather large numbers of incidents – larger at least than what can be deduced from studies based on inventories of incidents, such as "Racial and right-wing extremist violence," "Response to extremism in Rotterdam" and "Investigation and prosecution" in this volume.⁴⁹ Does this mean that "white extremism" is therefore not reflected in incidents at schools? We cannot rule that out entirely, but we do think it more likely that schools are reluctant to report incidents openly out of fear of adverse consequences, such as acquiring a bad name. If anonymity is assured, as it is here with the study of the Education Inspectorate, schools will be more inclined to report the kinds of problems they are being confronted with. Our suspicions are borne out, at least for now, by the contacts we have had in this field or with the municipalities. Initiating specific research on this problem could provide greater clarity (and is therefore desirable).

There have also been developments in the responses to the Lonsdale problem during the past Monitor period. In Hendrik-Ido-Ambacht a project was carried out with a group of troublesome Lonsdale youth that has proven to be both innovative and effective.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Haarlem District Court 25 May 2007, LJV BA6136 & BA6137. Haarlem District Court 17 August 2007, case no. 15/740110-07.

⁴⁸ Inspectie van het Onderwijs, *De staat van het onderwijs. Onderwijsverslag 2006 / 2007* (The state of our schools: Education report, 2006/2007). Den Haag: Inspectie van het Onderwijs 2008, p. 211.

⁴⁹ See chapters 2, 7 and 9 respectively.

⁵⁰ C. Behoekoe & F. Fernández, *Aan de slag met Lonsdalejongeren. Een curatieve groepsaanpak in Hendrik-Ido-Ambacht* (Getting to work with Lonsdale youth: A curative group approach in Hendrik-Ido-Ambacht). Utrecht: FORUM, 2008.

This involved a group of about 150 juveniles, 30 to 40 of whom had racist and neo-Nazi views. They were also a public nuisance. A number of the juveniles were active in right-wing extremist groups and were involved in interethnic confrontations. In response to these problems, youth workers decided to provide a place for the youngsters in the youth centre. By building trust, giving them responsibilities and starting discussions among them, the group slowly lost its closed, radical character and fell apart as a right-wing extremist entity.

Another initiative consists of two pilot projects aimed at deradicalisation. In Winschoten and Eindhoven, attempts are underway to see whether young people who are being radicalised can be extricated from the right-wing extremist circuit by means of an individual approach. The pilots are supervised by FORUM and are being investigated as part of the *Racism & Extremism Monitor*. The projects will be completed in 2009.

3.4 Decline of right-wing extremist parties

In the previous Monitor we discussed the development of right-wing extremism in the period 2005-2006, including four parties: the New National Party (Nieuwe Nationale Partij, or NNP; dissolved in 2005), New Right (Nieuw Rechts), the National Alliance (Nationale Alliantie) and the National People's Union (NVU).⁵¹ Things have not gone well for these parties in recent years. As already noted, the Party for Freedom is being discussed separately in another part of this Monitor.⁵²

New Right

New Right originally began as a breakaway faction of Liveable Rotterdam (Leefbaar Rotterdam). Michael Smit (1976) was elected to the Rotterdam city council in 2002. After a series of conflicts having to do with Smit's right-wing extremist orientation, Smit broke with Liveable Rotterdam and formed New Right. Expectations for the party were high, both within the party itself and among outsiders. It seemed stable, had a relatively large membership by right-wing extremist standards and, in this post-Fortuyn period, had everything going for it. Yet there were problems. By switching its orientation back and forth from the radical to the moderate wing of the extreme right, New Right made few friends in either group. This alternating orientation also gave rise to internal tension. Nevertheless, New Right seemed reasonably stable – until the municipal elections of 2006. In the run-up to the elections the party regarded its prospects as highly promising. It expected to win seats in many regions. But in the end the party participated in only four municipal elections and won only one seat. Even Smit's Rotterdam seat was lost. After this the party soon crumbled away. There appeared to be major financial problems. Members left, and the party structure also broke down.⁵³ In January 2007 the only

⁵¹ J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; zevende rapportage* (Racism & Extremism Monitor: seventh report).

⁵² See chapter 8: "The extreme right and the discriminatory identity of the PVV."

⁵³ J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; zevende rapportage* (Racism & Extremism Monitor: seventh report), pp. 119-121.

remaining city council member left the party after a quarrel about anti-Semitic remarks made by another party member.⁵⁴

New Right participated in two more elections during this Monitor period. In March 2007 it took part in the elections for the Provincial States of Zuid-Holland and Overijssel. New Right failed to win a single seat. When redivision elections were held in the town of Lansingerland at the end of 2006, New Right managed to win one seat. But problems arose there, too. In order to occupy the seat, Smit himself had to move to Lansingerland. This turned out to be no easy task. Finally Smit found an address and was installed in March 2007.⁵⁵ In August, however, the town reported that Smit did not live at that address and that he had stopped showing up at the town hall as well.⁵⁶ Shortly thereafter Smit withdrew as a councilman.⁵⁷

At the end of 2007, New Right announced on its website that the party itself was being dissolved, supposedly because it had received so many death threats and so much intimidation.⁵⁸ When interviewed about his withdrawal as a politician, however, Smit admitted that mounting debts had also played a role and that he had become convinced that his ambition to become a member of parliament was not realistic.⁵⁹

National Alliance

The National Alliance grew out of a breakaway faction of the New National Party in 2003. As the name suggests, the intention was to create a party that would unite all the right-wing movements. In the previous Monitor we reported that the initial growth of the party had flagged after a burst of rapid radicalisation, especially in the areas of anti-Semitism and violent engagement. Other factors also had a negative impact on the party. In 2006 the party participated in the Rotterdam city council elections, but it received very few votes and did not gain any seats. Finally it was internal conflicts that caused members to leave.⁶⁰

The party was already being ravaged by a sharply declining membership when chairman Teijn organised two demonstrations in early 2007. Both of them ended in failure, however, due to a lack of participants.⁶¹ Six persons walked in the last demonstration. A

⁵⁴ "Als dit niet anti-Joods is, wat dan wel?" (If this isn't anti-Jewish, then what is?, *Reformatorisch Dagblad* 26 January 2007.

⁵⁵ Report of the public meeting of the Lansingerland town council, held on 29 March 2007 in the Bleiswijk administrative centre. See: <<http://www.lansingerland.nl/document.php?fileid=3068&m=1&f=81ccbab3ed65929553b69a138183ceff&attachment=0&c=2926>> (14 August 2008).

⁵⁶ "Smit moet zetel teruggeven" (Smith has to return his seat), *Algemeen Dagblad* 12 September 2007.

⁵⁷ "Terugtreeden raadslid Lansingerland" (Lansingerland councilman withdraws), <<http://www.nieuwrechts.eu/cms/>> (13 September 2007).

⁵⁸ <<http://www.nieuwrechts.eu/cms/index.html>> (17 December 2007).

⁵⁹ "Ik had genuanceerder moeten zijn" ("I should have been more nuanced"), *Algemeen Dagblad* 19 September 2007.

⁶⁰ J. van Donselaar & P. R. Rodrigues, *Monitor Racisme & Extremisme; zevende rapportage* (Racism & Extremism Monitor: seventh report), pp. 116-119.

⁶¹ "Nationale Alliantie demonstreert: Niets is wat het lijkt" (National Alliance demonstrates: Nothing is what it seems), *Alert!* 1-2007.

few weeks later the party's problems increased even further. The Public Prosecution Service in Rotterdam carried out searches in the homes of the three board members that were provoked by criminal statements made on the party's web forum. During the searches, child pornography was found in the home of party chairman Teijn.⁶² In July the executive board decided to dissolve the party. There were twenty members left at the time.⁶³

Netherlands People's Union

The Netherlands People's Union (Nederlandse Volks-Unie; NVU), founded in 1971, developed into an openly National Socialist party during the 1970s. As noted earlier, the NVU has been fighting for the right to demonstrate legally since 2001. Since then, demonstrating has become the party's most important activity. For a long time these demonstrations were more or less identical. The NVU managed to mobilise between fifty and eighty of its own supporters to serve as demonstrators. In addition there was always a small group from the more radical circuits, such as RVF activists.

The NSA/RVF group of activists has been growing recently, and as a result the NVU demonstrations are gradually being taken over. At a demonstration of about eighty demonstrators, around seventy will be from these groups and the remaining small minority from the classical NVU following. This affects the way the NVU functions. Because of the outspoken anti-Semitism of the NSA, even the NVU leadership is abandoning the cautious direction it has taken on this theme and is being more openly negative in its remarks about Jews. So external radicals seem to be undermining the NVU at this point. During the past Monitor period, the NVU participated in the Provincial States elections in Gelderland and did not gain a single seat. The significance of the NVU as a political party is slight, but in terms of right-wing extremist street activism the NVU is an actor of quite some significance.

3.5 Conclusion

The extreme right in the Netherlands has been going through a transitionial period recently. The most important observation is that the extreme right has become much more eager to engage in direct action. This is evident in the increasing number of demonstrations, the number of high-profile actions and the expanding membership in action-oriented organisations. The number of neo-Nazi activists has also shot up within a relatively brief span of time: from 40 activists in 2004 to 400 in 2008.

We see this most clearly reflected in nonviolent actions. In contrast to the last Monitor period, the spontaneous violence of these groups seems to have disappeared for the most part. There has been an increase in rhetoric that glorifies violence, however. In neo-Nazi circles in particular, violence is proclaimed as a political tool to be used against the international Jewish conspiracy, against the government, against the police and intelligence services and against political opponents. Occasionally this leads to more or less organised actions, mainly against political opponents (anti-fascists).

⁶² "Teijn durft de deur niet meer uit" (Teijn doesn't dare show his face), *Algemeen Dagblad* 15 August 2007.

⁶³ <<http://www.nationalealliantie.com>> (21 July 2007).

For the time being there has been little government response to the public preaching of violence combined with expressions of radical anti-Semitism and a call to return to a National Socialist form of government.

All that remains of the "classical" political parties of the extreme right in 2008 is the NVU. This party seems to be in a transitional stage at the moment. Under pressure from allied radical neo-Nazis, the old NVU core seems to be disappearing. At the same time, the NVU leadership is being forced to adopt the radical themes of these neo-Nazis. The rest of the right-wing extremist parties have disappeared in recent years. When the parties dissolve, the finger is usually pointed at the lack of political elbow room provided by public administration, political opponents and the judicial system. There is certainly something to this. Both the New Right and the National Alliance were had to contend with criminal proceedings for crimes of expression and with actions taken by political opponents. The political elbow room was also increasingly limited due to the radical views taken by Geert Wilders. At the same time, however, the parties seem incapable of avoiding internal problems, quarrels and splits. The combination of external pressure and the lack of internal stability proved fatal.

The transformation of organised political movements to right-wing extremist action groups, some with an agenda aimed at verbal violence, is a development that demands attention. In addition, there are still a large number – possibly thousands – of more or less racist Lonsdale youth in several regions who are involved in violent incidents and interethnic confrontations. The signals that are presently being detected with regard to the Lonsdale youth are diverse. Serious situations are being reported in some regions. Schools are having to deal with the expected problems, but unfortunately specific information about the nature and scale of those problems is lacking. At the same time, the intelligence service AIVD declares that the situation is not very serious because there is hardly any evidence of further radicalisation. This does not seem to be a matter of perceiving the facts of the events differently. Rather, the difference in assessing those events probably has more to do with just how serious they are, what is being seen, and – to be more exact – whether extremism is involved at all. The AIVD uses restrictive definitions that are not reflected in the other reports cited. The fact that there still is a Lonsdale problem seems to be beyond doubt, but assessments differ as to the nature, seriousness and scale of the problem.

At the same time there have been new, interesting developments in terms of government response. Criminal remarks made on four right-wing extremist web forums have been challenged by the courts. In addition, experimental approaches have been attempted in a number of regions to address the problems related to juvenile right-wing extremists and signs of radicalisation. Whether these new forms of response will succeed in solving the problems of extremism is a question that will require quite some attention in the coming period.