


“The Best Place to Help the Panthers Is at Home”: Dutch Black Panther Solidarity in Pursuit of a Revolution

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In 1969, a group of activists in the Netherlands formed the Solidariteitscomité met de Black Panthers, or Black Panther Solidarity Committee, intended to support the Black Panther Party through a platform of public education, fund-raising, and political protest. Their efforts were part of a broader campaign for European solidarity launched by the African Americans themselves earlier that year. This article is the first to explore how Dutch activists understood their transatlantic partnership with the Black Panthers, arguing that their solidarity served not only to support the party but also to challenge American imperialism and Dutch colonialism in new ways.

Early in the evening of 16 January 1970, hundreds of people made their ways through the streets of Amsterdam to attend a special event at the monumental Moses and Aaron Church. When the final guests arrived at the venue, it was overcrowded. The wooden benches of the church were packed, forcing numerous visitors to take their places on the stairs to the pulpit. Dozens of others stood in the entranceway or leaned against the back walls. The baroque altar of the church, normally displaying an array of biblical statues, marble pillars, and oil paintings, was hidden behind a large white screen and a banner with the words “BLACK PANTHER PARTY – ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE – DE MACHT AAN HET VOLK,” accompanied by an illustration of a clenched black fist.¹ That evening, the church hosted the

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¹ Rob Mierenet, “Albert Howard Hield Lezing over ‘Black Panther’ Beweging in USA in Mozes en Aaronkerk A’dam,” 16 Jan. 1970, photo collection, col. nr. 2.24.01.05, inv. nrs. 923-1651 to 923-1660, Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Netherlands. “De macht aan het volk” is a direct translation of “All power to the people.” All translations in this article are the author’s own.

very first event of the Solidariteitscomité met de Black Panthers, or Black Panther Solidarity Committee (BPSC), which had been established several weeks earlier to raise support for the Black Panther Party (BPP) in the Netherlands.

To kick-start their campaign, the committee had invited a speaker who knew the organization inside out: Elbert “Big Man” Howard. Big Man was a veteran member of the Black Panther Party, having joined founders Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton as one of their first recruits in Oakland, California in 1966. Since then, he had filled a number of key roles in the organization, serving as both deputy minister of information in Eldridge Cleaver’s absence and as editor of its immensely popular newspaper the *Black Panther*.² Big Man turned out to be an ideal representative for the party that night. He appeared onstage in iconic Black Panther fashion, wearing a leather jacket with sunglasses and a round afro haircut, living up to the crowd’s idea of what a Black radical was supposed to look like. He also proved to be an excellent orator. In a passionate yet carefully constructed speech, Big Man laid out the revolutionary nationalist ideology of his party, explaining how the Black Panthers fought racism, capitalism, and imperialism all at the same time. Aware that many of these themes were popular among European activists too, he invited the audience to join him and his comrades in fighting these systems globally. “We are prepared to collaborate with oppressed people wherever they are in the world,” he firmly stated. “Because in the end we are all doing the same thing.”³

By the time Big Man had reached the Netherlands, he had already traveled to Japan and Scandinavia to spread a similar message.⁴ His tour was part of a broader effort by the Panthers to expand their network of revolutionary activists, liberation movements, and even politicians who could help them challenge the growing power of the United States in the midst of the Cold War. As one of the most oppressed groups in American society, the Black radicals believed they had a critical role to play in global resistance against their

² Curtis J. Austin, *Up against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 40–43; Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr., *Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 264; Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 139.

³ Martin Ruyter, “Ze Kunnen de Revolutie Niet Doden,” *De Volkskrant*, 16 Jan. 1970, 11; and Jelte Rep, “Big Man: ‘Zwarte Panters Laten Zich Niet Vernietigen,’” *Trouw*, 17 Jan. 1970, 7.

⁴ Elbert “Big Man” Howard, *Panther on the Prowl* (self-published, 2002), 34–52; Elbert Howard, interview by David P. Cline in Santa Rosa, California, 30 June 2016, filmed by John Melville Bishop, US Civil Rights History Project, Library of Congress, at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016655436/>, 01:18:30–01:19:38.

government, arguing that they were in a unique position to fight its imperialist project from within.⁵ To strengthen their position, fugitive party members Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver had started building an International Section for the Black Panther Party in Algiers, the capital city of Algeria, in the summer of 1969. From there, the Cleavers managed to form coalitions with some of America’s fiercest ideological opponents, including communist leaders Fidel Castro, Pham Van Dong, and Kim Il-sung.⁶ At the same time, they helped the Panthers build an extensive solidarity network in Europe, which has received much less attention in the historiography than their other transnational relations. In fact, connections to smaller countries like the Netherlands have not yet been discussed at all.

Representatives of the BPP had first made an appearance in Europe in the spring of 1969. Even before the Cleavers had settled on the Mediterranean coast, chairman Bobby Seale and minister of education Raymond “Masai” Hewitt had gone on a tour through Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark to raise support for their campaign to free cofounder Huey Newton from prison and to see if there was any interest in their work across the Atlantic.⁷ Their tour had been organized by Jamaican activist Connie Matthews, who worked for UNESCO in Copenhagen, and Leonard W. “Skip” Malone, an American journalist living in the same city. Both had previously been involved in the Scandinavian Solidarity Committee for Third World Peoples’ Liberation Struggle (SSCTWP) and had later established the Danish Solidarity Committee Black Liberation (SCBL).⁸ As they traveled across Northern Europe, Seale and Hewitt left behind a number of committees which promised to keep raising support for them after they were gone. Upon returning to the United States, Seale and Hewitt rewarded Matthews for her help in organizing the tour by appointing her the official international coordinator of the BPP, authorizing her to develop this newly formed support network into a strong system of fund-

⁵ Bloom and Martin, 66–73; Sean L. Malloy, *Out of Oakland: Black Panther Party Internationalism during the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), 117; Michael L. Clemons and Charles E. Jones, “Global Solidarity: The Black Panther Party in the International Arena,” *New Political Science*, 21, 1 (1999), 177–203, 190; Yohuru R. Williams, “American Exported Black Nationalism: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Black Panther Party, and the Worldwide Freedom Struggle, 1967–1972,” *Negro History Bulletin*, 60, 3 (1997), 13–20, 16; Stephen Shames and Bobby Seale, *Power to the People: The World of the Black Panthers* (New York: Abrams, 2016), 43, 182. ⁶ Malloy, 127, 165–66, 191.

⁷ Bloom and Martin, 107–11; Malloy, 120–22; Clemons and Jones, 187.

⁸ David Hilliard and Bobby Seale, “The Black Panther Party Authorizes Leadership in Scandinavia,” *Black Panther*, 4 May 1969, 10; Robyn C. Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 118.

raising, education, and political pressure.⁹ Under Matthews, with support of the Cleavers in Algiers, the Scandinavian committees gained several hundred followers and the network quickly expanded southwards, taking root in West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Italy as well.¹⁰

While it was quite unique for an organization to establish its own solidarity network like this, this type of activism was not altogether uncommon in Europe. Characterized by the countercultural spirit of the 1960s, hundreds of student movements and action groups had begun to mobilize in support of the so-called “Third World” through solidarity committees and campaigns of other kinds. According to historian Kim Christiaens, this type of activism was popular because it “contrasted the status quo and *ennui* in Europe with the whirlwind of changes and challenges in countries emerging out of the ruins of colonial empires and defying the stalemate of the Cold War.”¹¹ While on the surface this type of activism was characterized by a kind of romanticization of liberation movements in the non-Western world, it was also fundamentally critical of political developments at home. After all, for European activists to side with the “Third World” from the heart of the “First World” was to challenge not just their own governments’ foreign policies, but also the growing influence of the United States and international organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) around the world. In fact, as some have previously argued, anti-Americanism even became a defining characteristic of European solidarity activism in this period.¹² Such sentiments had a significant impact on regional Black Panther solidarity as well.

⁹ Bloom and Martin, 313; Hilliard and Seale, 10; House Committee on Internal Security, *The Black Panther Party: Its Origin and Development as Reflected in Its Official Weekly Newspaper, the Black Panther* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Service, 1970), 67–68.

¹⁰ Clemons and Jones, 197; Spencer, 103. The British Black Panther Movement is not included in this list because it was established independently of the Black Panther Party. For research on the British Black Panther Movement see Anne-Marie Angelo, “The Black Panthers in London, 1967–1972: A Diasporic Struggle Navigates the Black Atlantic,” *Radical History Review*, 103 (2009), 17–35.

¹¹ Kim Christiaens, “Europe at the Crossroads of Three Worlds: Alternative Histories and Connections of European Solidarity with the Third World, 1950s–80s,” *European Review of History/Revue européenne d’histoire*, 24, 6 (2017), 932–54, 933.

¹² *Ibid.*, 945; Kim Christiaens, John Nieuwenhuis, and Charel Roemer, *International Solidarity in the Low Countries during the Twentieth Century: New Perspectives and Themes* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020), 7–8; Konrad J. Kuhn, “Liberation Struggle and Humanitarian Aid: International Solidarity Movements and the ‘Third World’ in the 1960s,” in Samantha Christiansen and Zachary A. Scarlett, eds., *The Third World in the Global 1960s* (New York, Berghahn Books, 2013), 69–85; Robert Gildea, James Mark, and Niek Pas, “European Radicals and the ‘Third World’: Imagined Solidarities and Radical Networks, 1958–73,” *Cultural and Social History*, 8, 4 (2011), 449–71.

Though scholars have acknowledged the European efforts of the party before, relevant research remains limited. Some of the first to pay attention the topic were Michael L. Clemons and Charles E. Jones, who in 1999 published an exploratory study of Black Panther internationalism in *New Political Science*. In collaboration with Kathleen Cleaver, now an academic herself, the two offer a brief overview of the party’s transnational contacts, acknowledging its European connections along the way. By far most of their attention goes to Scandinavia and West Germany, where the committees were, in Cleaver’s words, “the most dynamic and the best organized.”¹³ Since then, other scholars have followed suit. In their acclaimed *Black against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (2013), historians Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr. briefly discuss the Seale and Hewitt’s tour and subsequent emergence of the solidarity committees.¹⁴ In slightly more detail, the Scandinavian and West German committees are covered in Sean L. Malloy’s *Out of Oakland: Black Panther Party Internationalism during the Cold War* (2017), which provides the most detailed analysis of the party’s internationalism to date.¹⁵ Unfortunately, however, neither have developed extensive accounts of the solidarity committees’ histories, nor do they seem to be aware that a wider European network existed. Besides, neither has gone beyond the Panthers’ own writings on these alliances, creating a rather one-sided vision of what European solidarity truly meant.

The one place where historians have gone beyond this perspective is West Germany, which lay at the heart of the European network. In contrast to those mentioned above, German historians Maria Höhn and Martin A. Klimke have tried to determine why activists there developed such an interest in aligning with the African American revolutionaries.¹⁶ In *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (2010), Klimke argues that Black Panther solidarity became popular because it allowed West German activists to tackle two critical issues in their Cold War society. First was the rise of American imperialism in the country after the end of World War II. Labeling the West German state an “external colony” of the United States, German activists believed that they shared many of the burdens of the African American freedom fighters, who considered themselves an “internal colony” in the same space.¹⁷ Perhaps more

¹³ Clemons and Jones, 198. ¹⁴ Bloom and Martin, 312–14. ¹⁵ Malloy, 119–27.

¹⁶ Maria Höhn, “The Black Panther Solidarity Committees and the Voice of the Lumpen,” *German Studies Review*, 31, 1 (Feb. 2008), 133–54, 136–37; Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 120. ¹⁷ Klimke, 109, 131, 141.

crucially, however, Klimke argues that solidarity with the Black Panthers offered West German activists a “vehicle for coming to terms with the past,” as the party’s criticism of American racism and imperialism also allowed them to take a more critical perspective on their own history of racial violence and expansionism, particularly during World War II.¹⁸ As such, Klimke argues, Black Panther solidarity was motivated not only by compassion but also by a personal interest in the systems the African Americans were trying to dismantle.

Considering the absence of research on similar projects elsewhere in Europe, the purpose of this article is to provide a first overview of Black Panther solidarity in the Netherlands and to examine how Dutch activists saw their position within the party’s transnational network. It predominantly focusses on the history of the Black Panther Solidarity Committee, founded in December 1969 by a group of young white progressives in the city of Hilversum, popularly known as the media capital of the Netherlands. Under the leadership of journalist Peter Schumacher, these Black Panther sympathizers were able to convince hundreds of activists throughout the New Left and the anticolonial movement to join their efforts in support of the BPP. Following an internal conflict between the BPSC and its partner organization *Vrijheidsschool*, or Freedom School, only several months after its founding, the committee was instructed by the European network to lay down its activities and hand over its responsibilities to the latter. Under the leadership of former BPSC members At van Praag and Lily van den Bergh, the Freedom School continued to raise support for the party until December 1970, after which it disappeared from the public eye. Van den Bergh stayed involved with the BPP until the Cleavers were forced to close the International Section in 1972.

Although support for the Black Panthers was central to the Dutch solidarity movement, the history of these organizations shows that their underlying motives also corresponded to those of their West German counterparts. Organizing in the midst of the Cold War, both the BPSC and the Freedom School actively endorsed the BPP for its leading role in the global fight against American imperialism. They accepted the Panthers’ self-proclaimed vanguard status in the revolutionary movement and therefore believed it was their task defend them in any way they could. For the most part, this meant collecting money for their work and putting pressure on American diplomatic institutions in the Netherlands. Their most common site of protest became the US consulate at the Museumplein in Amsterdam, where the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.

committee frequently gathered to call for the release of imprisoned Black Panther leaders, the withdrawal of the United States from Europe, and an end to American aggression in the Third World, focussing in particular on the war in Vietnam. On several occasions, the activists also called on domestic politicians to cut their ties with the US government by leaving NATO, though none ever took this seriously.

The Dutch movement was also similar to the German in that it encouraged local activists to face their own imperial legacies more critically. In the context of the Netherlands, these legacies were not related to World War II but to the long history of Dutch colonialism in the Caribbean, where the country still had significant influence. Since 1954, the Kingdom of the Netherlands had consisted of three core territories: the Netherlands, Suriname, and the Netherlands Antilles. Though the Caribbean territories of the kingdom had received some domestic autonomy after World War II, the Dutch had failed to grant them full independence. This situation had led to an upsurge of anticolonialism in both territories, as demonstrated most clearly by the 1969 Trinta di Mei uprising on the island of Curaçao in the Netherlands Antilles. Conscious of these developments, Dutch Black Panther sympathizers realized that they could not support the fight for Black freedom in the US without supporting that same fight in their own realm, motivating them to collaborate with various Surinamese and Antillean action groups. As such, Black Panther solidarity offered Dutch activists a framework through which they could simultaneously challenge American imperialism in Europe and their own colonial legacies in the Caribbean and beyond.

Though Dutch solidarity would remain marginal in the broader history of the Black Panther Party, its history does provide some important insights into the party's transnational efforts. In line with previous studies of Scandinavian and West German solidarity, it shows that the Black Panthers actively encouraged Europeans to use their privileged position in the West in support of Black freedom. While never allowing white activists into the BPP directly, the party did repeatedly emphasize the need for mutual support and collaboration in the global fight against racism, capitalism, and imperialism, regardless of ethnic or racial identity. To some, this position might be surprising, as Europe had historically been responsible for the development of every system the Panthers opposed and remained one of America's most powerful allies in the postwar order. Yet the Panthers believed there was real power in the protest movements that had emerged on the continent and were convinced that a strong transatlantic partnership could help both parties succeed in their opposition against those in power. As this article shows, European allies themselves embraced this idea with open arms, not despite but because of their own countries' complicity in creating and upholding these systems.

THE BLACK PANTHER SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

The first official Black Panther committee in the Netherlands, the Black Panther Solidarity Committee, was established on 15 December 1969 in Hilversum. The founder of the committee was Peter Schumacher, a young journalist who had come into contact with the party when he had traveled to the United States earlier that year. Based on what he had seen and heard, Schumacher was highly impressed with the Panthers, believing them to be “the first revolutionary party in America to fight for a radical social revolution.”¹⁹ Eager to support the party upon his return to the Netherlands, Schumacher began to explore the possibility of gathering support for the Panthers at home.²⁰ He reached out to the European solidarity network, which sent two fellow Black Panther enthusiasts to the country: Leif Aingsmose, chairman of the Danish solidarity committee, and Bill Caldwell, chairman of the Swedish solidarity committee and coordinator of the European distribution of the *Black Panther*. Both stayed in the Netherlands for several weeks to assist Schumacher in setting up a local committee, sharing their experiences, providing him with the necessary knowledge and tools, and connecting him to their extensive transnational network of Black Panther supporters. It was also Aingsmose and Caldwell who arranged for Big Man to visit Amsterdam that January.²¹

In the meantime, Schumacher selected the first members of the founding committee. Initially, the BPSC consisted of journalist Jelte Rep, who worked for daily newspaper *Trouw* as “America expert”; film director At van Praag, who specialized in countercultural documentaries; and publisher Rob van Gennep, whose publishing house was known around the Netherlands for its leftist literature. Much like Schumacher himself, all were young white men who had learned about the Panthers through their work in the media. Even before the BPSC could get its work started, however, the composition of the committee had already changed. Despite their initial enthusiasm, both Rep and Van Praag left the committee within weeks of its

¹⁹ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, *Black Panther Nieuwsbulletin*, Jan. 1970, 3, ZK 72913, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; “Ik Dacht: Dit Wordt te Gek,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 24 Jan. 1970, 41.

²⁰ Peter Schumacher, “Zwarte Panters Vogelvrij,” *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 20 Dec. 1969, 1; Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, Jan. 1970, 3; “Ik Dacht: Dit Wordt te Gek,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 24 Jan. 1970, 41.

²¹ “Black Panther in het Universiteitstheater,” *Het Parool*, 5 Jan. 1970, 4; “Panters,” *De Volkskrant*, 13 Jan. 1970, 9; Haaster, “Harde Politieke Aanpak Nodig,” *Het Vrije Volk*, 14 Jan. 1970, 4; Hanneke Meerum Terwogt, “‘Big Man’ Howard Sprekt, Vanavond,” *Het Parool*, 16 Jan. 1970, 9; “Albert Howard komt Spreken in Amsterdam,” *Het Vrije Volk*, 14 Jan. 1970, 4; “‘Black Panther’ Bill Caldwell en Provo-Raadslid Roel van Duyn naar Groningen,” *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden*, 4 Feb. 1970, 11.

founding, listing rather ambiguous reasons for their resignation.²² They were replaced by two young women: Lily van den Bergh and Anja Meulenbelt. Van den Bergh was a former actress and television host who had recently started working as a freelance journalist, writing for prominent magazines and newspapers like *De Groene Amsterdammer* and *Vrij Nederland*. As recently as 1969, she had traveled to California to interview Masai Hewitt and Elaine Brown on the ideas and programs of the Panthers.²³ For Meulenbelt, who would play a prominent role in the Dutch feminist movement and become a Socialist Party member later in life, the committee was one of her first activist experiences.²⁴

Under the guidance of Caldwell and Aingsmose, the newly established BPSC began formulating its plans. This was no easy task. On the surface, the members of the committee understood that, as a solidarity group, their main purpose was to gather support for the Black Panthers in the Netherlands by raising awareness, collecting donations, and organizing solidarity protests. “From the very start, the Panthers have stated that white support is welcome, but that the Panthers themselves will decide how the black revolution will be realized,” Schumacher clarified in a piece for *Groene Amsterdammer*.²⁵ On a deeper level, however, the committee also believed that solidarity went beyond mere moral support. True solidarity also meant “fighting against racism and imperialism on all fronts here.”²⁶ While the members of the committee acknowledged that there was no place for them in the United States, they did believe that the BPSC could help them by challenging their shared enemies in their own society. “Why would we let black people in America, who have the courage to sacrifice themselves ... do all the hard work?” the committee asked in its opening statement, while “we, here in Europe, can help the Black Panthers ... by starting a fight against economic pressure at home and by opposing the exploitation of our colonies.”²⁷ Ultimately, the Dutch activists hoped that they could help pave the way for an “International Panther Party” that could fight imperialism all around the world.

Although the committee thus had significant ambitions, its program initially focussed only on its first goals: to educate the public about the Black

²² Schumacher, “Zwarte Panters Vogelvrij”; “Ik Dacht: Dit Wordt te Gek,” 41.

²³ Lily van den Bergh, “Bloemen, Drugs, Naaktheid en Anarchie zijn Geen Adequaat Antwoord op Onderdrukking,” *Vrij Nederland*, Jan. 1970, 5.

²⁴ These are the names of committee members listed in the BPSC newsletters. However, Meulenbelt later also mentions a Marcel, likely referring to Surinamese student Marcel Kross, and someone named Hannah, who according to Meulenbelt was Bill Caldwell’s girlfriend and “did most of the work behind the scenes, virtually unnoticed.” See Anja Meulenbelt, *De Schaamte Voorbij: Een Persoonlijke Geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1976), 109–10.

²⁵ Peter Schumacher, “Zwarte Panters Vogelvrij.”

²⁶ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, Feb. 1970, 1; “‘Big Man’ Howard Spreekt, Vanavond,” 9.

²⁷ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, Jan. 1970, 2.

Panther Party, to collect financial support for its programs, and to advance its causes through political protest. After all, as the committee argued, “real solidarity can only be given once one knows what it’s all about.”²⁸ The educational element of their program was the most extensive and consisted of two main components: writing and lecturing. The first mostly took place in the BPSC’s monthly newsletter, which became a medium for committee updates and Black Panther news. Using the Panthers’ own writings as their source, the committee wanted to provide an alternative view of recent events involving the party, such as the FBI’s assassination of Fred Hampton in Chicago and the murder of suspected FBI informant Alex Rackley in New Haven. Although Dutch media had covered these events widely, the BPSC believed that the American sources used by Dutch journalists – which they referred to as “Hoover’s reports” – were untrustworthy.²⁹ In addition to news items, the publication also contained translations of some of the party’s core texts, such as the Ten Point Program (“What We Want, What We Believe”) and its membership rules, as well as updates on the work of the solidarity committee in the Netherlands. The newsletter was distributed to subscribers, but could also be bought at a selected number of bookstores around the country and at lectures and events organized by the committee.

Each of these newsletters also contained a reading list with books on the Black Panther Party, the Black Power movement, and African American history in general. Some of these books were written or published by members of the committee, such as Peter Schumacher’s *Eldridge Cleaver: Een Zwarte Panter in Amerika* (1969), Ton Regtien’s *Black Power en de Derde Wereld: Een Interview met Stokely Carmichael* (1968), and the Dutch translation of Stokely Carmichael’s *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (1969). Other books on the list were written by members of the party itself, such as Eldridge Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice* (1968) and his *Post-prison Writings and Speeches* (1969), or by other Black radicals, such as Malcolm X and Alex Haley’s *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965) and Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). The lists were constructed by Van Gennep, who sold all of these books and the BPSC newsletter at his shop in Amsterdam, though the committee mentioned they were also available at other “progressive bookstores” in the Netherlands.³⁰

Besides their own newsletter, members of the BPSC also wrote about the Panthers in a number of newspapers and magazines. The most elaborate of

²⁸ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, Feb. 1970, 1.

²⁹ Rob van Gennep, “Rob van Gennep Over,” *Het Vrije Volk*, 10 Jan. 1970, 19.

³⁰ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, Jan. 1970, 7, 9; Feb. 1970, 8; March 1970, 2; April 1970, 2.

these was founding member Jelte Rep’s six-part series on the Black Panthers in the newspaper *Trouw*. In this series, he discussed the living conditions in African American neighborhoods, the police violence they encountered, how the Black Panthers were trying to combat this, and what the BPSC did to support this.³¹ In less detail, fellow committee member Van Gennep wrote about the BPP and BPSC in his personal column for socialist newspaper *Het Vrije Volk*.³² Other members wrote about their activities on a freelance basis. Both Schumacher and Van den Bergh, for example, submitted pieces on the party to *De Groene Amsterdammer* and *Vrij Nederland*, both of which were major left-leaning journals. Through these articles, Schumacher and Van den Bergh hoped to convince “those whites freed of racial delusions” to join their committee or make donations.³³

The second part of their educational program consisted of a series of lectures organized in collaboration with various student organizations, cultural institutions, and political pressure groups around the Netherlands. These lectures took place in large cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, but also in student cities like Leiden, Tilburg, and Nijmegen, and in towns with large leftist communities like Groningen, Assen, and Deventer. At its height, the committee organized two or three of these lectures a week. Each was slightly different, though most of them followed a similar format. First, one of the committee members would start off with a short introduction to the ideology and programs of the Black Panther Party. Sometimes this lecture was not given by a committee member but by a special guest, such as Caldwell. After this lecture followed a short documentary film on the BPP or on racial inequality in the US in general. Afterwards, there would be room for an interactive activity, which could be a discussion, a brainstorming session, or even the drafting of a policy proposal. Once the audience had gained a basic understanding of the work and relevance of the Black Panthers for Europe, the committee invited its audience to sign up for one of their solidarity protests, to subscribe to their newsletter, or to make a donation to the party.³⁴

³¹ Jelte Rep, “Toenemende Solidariteit in de Ghetto’s,” *Trouw*, Feb. 21, 1970, 9; “Gewapende Negers Verbijsteren Blanke Politie mannen,” *Trouw*, Feb. 24, 1970, 7; “Ik Zal Vermoord Worden,” Zegt Huey P. Newton,” *Trouw*, Feb. 25, 1970, 7; “Eldridge Cleaver Komt Diep Onder de Indruk van Nieuwe Negerpartij,” *Trouw*, Feb. 26, 1970, 7; “Politie Zet op Keiharde Wijze de Aanval in,” *Trouw*, Feb. 27, 1970, 7; “FBI Werkt met Zwarte Spionnen,” *Trouw*, Feb. 28, 1970, 13.

³² Van Gennep, 19.

³³ Schumacher, “Zwarte Panters Vogelvrij”; Van den Bergh, 5.

³⁴ Meulenbelt, *De Schaamte Voorbij*, 109; Vrijheidsschool, *Vrijheidspers Informatiekrant*, Amsterdam, 1970, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, ZK 37945; Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, April 1970, 3; Terwogt, “‘Big Man’ Howard Spreekt, Vanavond,” 9.

After all, the information provided by the BPSC was not only intended to be educational, but also to stimulate the collection of financial aid for the Panthers. As the previous paragraphs suggest, the committee's most steady sources of income were the profits from their newsletter, payments for articles in major papers, money raised at events, and gifts by individual donors. On top of that, the BPSC gathered money by selling the *Black Panther*, which they received from Caldwell in Stockholm and distributed to booksellers nationwide. When the distribution of the *Black Panther* faltered because shipments from the United States were disrupted, it was replaced by a new information bulletin written by the Cleavers for their European allies.³⁵ Although none of the BPSC's financial records were archived, one of its newsletters states that it had raised approximately two thousand Dutch guilders in the first month, of which eight hundred had been collected at the event with Big Man and 1,200 had been gifted by individual donors. Half of this money was used to cover the committee's own expenses, including the materials for the newsletter and the costs of communication, while the other half was transferred to the national headquarters of the Black Panther Party in Oakland. The money was meant to fund legal assistance for prosecuted members, social projects, and training programs, such as the Free Breakfast Program and the Liberation Schools.³⁶ Big Man later wrote that most European aid was spent on legal support for prosecuted Panther leaders.³⁷

Besides teaching and fund-raising, the BPSC also showed its support for the Panthers through demonstrations. The purpose of these demonstrations was to pressure American diplomats, Dutch government officials, and even large businesses like American Express into denouncing the persecution of the Black Panthers in the United States. Two protests in the spring of 1970 are especially noteworthy. The first took place on 2 March, after the committee had gotten word from the European network about plans for a continent-wide uprising against the prosecution of Bobby Seale in the trial of the Chicago 8 and in New Haven. Even though they had only learned about these plans several days before the chosen date, the committee was determined to join the operation and side with their comrades in Paris, Frankfurt, Copenhagen, Oslo, and Stockholm. Despite the last-minute organization, some 150 people joined their march, starting at Beursplein in the city center of Amsterdam and ending at the highly secured US consulate at

³⁵ Vrijheidsschool, "Aan de Abonnes van de Black Panther Krant," private archive of Lily van den Bergh.

³⁶ Schumacher, "Zwarte Panters Vogelvrij"; Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, Feb. 1970, 2.

³⁷ Howard, *Panther on the Prowl*, 52.

Museumplein.³⁸ Along the way, the Black Panther supporters paused for short sit-ins, obstructing trams and causing delays throughout the city. Once the group arrived at the consulate, they presented a letter in which they requested the Consul General to inform the American government of their discontent with "the way in which ever more people in the[ir] country are tried and judged based on made-up facts."³⁹ They furthermore used the letter to accuse the US of becoming a police state where "fascist tendencies" were steadily increasing. According to an eyewitness, the entrance to the consulate was protected by fourteen police officers, some of whom tried to obstruct the delivery of the letter.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the young crowd held up countless banners and signs, holding up images of Bobby Seale and making statements like "Bobby Seale moet vrij" ("Free Bobby Seale"), "Alle macht aan het volk" ("All power to the people"), and "Nixon in de Cel" ("Imprison Nixon").⁴¹

The BPSC organized an even larger protest on 24 April, which the committee had declared a national day for Black Panther support. Similar to their previous protest, this demonstration was set up to call for Seale's release, as they believed him to be "yet another victim of the American capitalist government's systematic campaign to extinguish all active members of the Black Panther Party."⁴² Because it would be too much work for the five-person committee to prepare a nationwide event of this size by themselves, they decided to delegate the arrangements of protests outside Amsterdam to a number of local task forces.⁴³ Located in at least twelve cities, and led by separate groups of Black Panther supporters, these subcommittees were authorized to set up their own protests using the promotional and educational materials of the national Black Panther committee. In the weeks leading up to the national event, the committee supplied them with posters, pamphlets, ideas for slogans, buttons, and newsletters from their central office, which was now

³⁸ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, March 1970, 1; "Demonstraties tegen Chicago-Proces," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 3 March 1970, 2; "Politie Belet Afgifte Brief aan Consul Ver. Staten," *Het Parool*, 3 March 1970, 5.

³⁹ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, March 1970, 1.

⁴⁰ "Politie Belet Afgifte Brief aan Consul Ver. Staten," 5; Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, March 1970, 1. The committee later suggested that they had managed to slip it into his mailbox, but it is unclear whether the Consul General ever received it or forwarded their message.

⁴¹ "Demonstraties tegen Chicago-Proces," 2; "Politie Belet Afgifte Brief aan Consul Ver. Staten," 5.

⁴² "Stop Moord op de Black Panthers," 1970, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, poster, 48 × 35 cm, BG D11/49 (1970).

⁴³ These cities included The Hague, Eindhoven, Haarlem, Hengelo, IJmuiden, Groningen, Baarn, Arnhem, Nijmegen, Rotterdam, Utrecht, and Zeist. The committee also encouraged readers in other places to sign up for the National Black Panther Day, but it is unclear whether they did.

based in Amsterdam.⁴⁴ In the capital, the BPSC itself set up an information fair at Leidseplein, followed by a night of performances and short films at the Moses and Aaron Church. At the end of the day, the protesters gathered for another demonstration at the consulate. An estimated six hundred people attended the performances at the church, of whom four hundred later made their way to Museumplein.⁴⁵ They carried signs and banners that depicted the iconic image of a black panther and, once again, the slogan “All power to the people! Alle macht aan het volk!”⁴⁶ The immense support for the Panthers that day showed just how far the BPSC had come in under four months’ time, making the Dutch movement for Black Panther support one of the largest and fastest-growing in Western Europe.

FROM A SINGLE COMMITTEE TO A MOVEMENT

From the moment the BPSC first announced its plans, activists around the Netherlands were drawn to its ideas, and requests for collaborations simply started pouring in. As the mass attendance of Big Man’s lecture and later BPSC protests indicates, there was a tremendous interest in the party, especially among Caribbean students and other revolutionaries in the Dutch New Left. When the committee informed international coordinator Matthews about the widespread support for the Panthers during her visit to Amsterdam in early 1970, she advised Schumacher to establish a Grand Committee of Black Panther Solidarity that could operate as an umbrella network for all Dutch organizations and individuals who wished to support the party. As the country’s official Black Panther committee, the BPSC would serve as the head of this network and coordinate its activities with Matthews to ensure that they matched the party’s expectations.⁴⁷ Within a matter of weeks, the group grew from a mere five-person committee to a fully fledged movement that included over ten organizations and hundreds of followers.

⁴⁴ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, April 1970, 5; “Vier Arrestaties bij Betoging,” *De Telegraaf*, 23 March 1970, 5.

⁴⁵ “Black Panther Demonstratie in Amsterdam,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 25 April 1970, 2; “Bobby Seale Moet Vrij,” *De Tijd*, 24 April 1970, 9; “Black Panther Films,” *Trouw*, 24 April 1970, 9; “Film-Actie,” *De Volkskrant*, 24 April 1970, 17; “Ongeveer 400 Sympathisanten Black Panther demonstreerden,” *Het Parool*, 25 April 1970, 5; “Black Panther-Dag in Amsterdam,” *De Groene Amsterdammer*, 25 April 1970, 4; “Vrijdag: Dag van de ‘Zwarte Panters’,” *Trouw*, 21 April 1970, 4; “Stop Moord op de Black Panthers”; Vrijheidsschool, “Black Panthers Vrijheidsschool,” April 1970, poster, 50 × 35 cm, BG D49/814 (1970), International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

⁴⁶ Koen Wessing, photograph, 24 April 1970, BG B23/492 (1970), International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

⁴⁷ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, invitation to grand committee meeting, 18 March 1970, private archive of Lily van den Bergh.

One section of the Grand Committee consisted of Caribbean student organizations and interest groups: the Surinamese Student Union (Surinaamse Studentenuic, SSU), the Antillean Action Group (Antilliaanse Aktiegroep, AAG), and the Surinam Revolutionary People’s Front (Revolutionair Volksfront Suriname, RVS).⁴⁸ Most of these had become involved with the BPSC in January 1970, when the committee had invited them to discuss the relevance of Black Panther ideology for Black communities in the Netherlands and to explore how it could extend its solidarity to Antillean and Surinamese groups with similar goals as the BPP.⁴⁹ In discussing this process with *Het Parool*, the committee explained that Dutch people often read about African American resistance without realizing that Black people in the Netherlands “for a large part encounter the same problems in their interactions with whites as negroes in America.”⁵⁰ Whether through the “internal colonialism” of African Americans in the United States or through Dutch colonialism in the Caribbean, both of their problems were caused by the same root problem: imperialism.

According to Swedish committee leader Caldwell, who had taken part in this session, the BPSC’s initial meeting with the Caribbean groups had been so successful that the latter decided to partner up with the committee. Over the following months, members of the SSU, AAG, and RVS attended many of the committee’s events, participated in their demonstrations, and helped them organize events in their own communities and neighborhoods. From Meulenbelt’s reflections on these collaborations in her autobiographical *De Schaamte Voorbij* (1976), it seems that the BPSC did not take their involvement in the solidarity movement lightly. In demonstrations, Antillean and Surinamese groups were encouraged to march up front, moving ahead of the white crowds.⁵¹ Their voices were amplified in other activities too, such as the lectures given by the BPSC all over the country. “I [gave] lectures, sometimes together with Marcel from Suriname,” Meulenbelt wrote, likely referring to Marcel Kross, a Surinamese student who was highly involved in the committee. “After my lecture on America, he would share how we are complicit in what is happening in Suriname.”⁵² This suggests that, while the issue of racism in the Netherlands was not central to the BPSC, the committee believed that the African American and Afro-Caribbean freedom struggles were deeply interconnected, if not the same.

Collaborations between the BPSC and its Caribbean partners were not limited to the work of the solidarity movement alone. In its writings, the

⁴⁸ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, invitation to grand committee meeting.

⁴⁹ Terwogt, “‘Big Man’ Howard Spreekt, Vanavond,” 9; “Panthers,” 13 Jan. 1970, 9.

⁵⁰ “Panthers,” 13 Jan. 1970, 9. ⁵¹ Meulenbelt, *De Schaamte Voorbij*, 110. ⁵² *Ibid.*, 109.

BPSC also promoted and supported the anticolonial protests of Antillean and Surinamese groups outside its own platform. One example was a protest in De Pijp, a neighborhood in Amsterdam which was home to a large community of Caribbean migrants. On 28 March 1970 some thirty Surinamers, Antilleans, and other “representatives of the Third World” came together near the famous Albert Cuyt Market to stand up against “the colonialism, the oppression and the exploitation of non-white Americans by white settlers.”⁵³ Waving around Black Panther flags and signs, the protesters called for an immediate end to the persecution of the Black Panthers and the withdrawal of police forces from African American neighborhoods. Though the BPSC had not played any role in the organization of the event, their public support for it shows how much they valued these kinds of efforts, even if they took place outside their own program. “The participating organizations hope to organize more of these manifestations in the future,” the BPSC wrote, before adding, “We hope more Surinamers will join the next one.”⁵⁴

On one occasion, the committee even decided to support its Caribbean partners financially with money that was intended for the BPP. On 1 June 1969, one day after the anticolonial Trinta di Mei uprising in Curaçao, some seven hundred protesters from around the Kingdom of the Netherlands gathered at the Antillenhuis in The Hague (home of the cabinet of the minister plenipotentiary of the Netherlands Antilles in the Netherlands) to protest against the way the Dutch government had intervened in the uprising and to denounce Dutch colonialism in general. While mostly peaceful, the protest escalated when a small number of protesters smashed some of the windows of the Antillenhuis, which started a wave of violent altercations between the police and the demonstrators. By the end of the night, seventeen activists had been arrested for use of violence, even though many witnesses would later testify that it was the police who had started the violence and not the other way around.⁵⁵ After a long wait, eight of the arrestees were prosecuted in February and March 1970. Leading up to the trial, several large Antillean and Surinamese organizations expressed concerns that the case served as “an attempt at intimidating the Antillean and Surinamese community in the Netherlands” to stop them from criticizing the kingdom.⁵⁶ During the trial, defendants made similar arguments, contending

⁵³ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, April 1970, 3; “In Amsterdam: Betoging Tegen Kolonialisme,” *Het Vrije Volk*, 27 March 1970, 27.

⁵⁴ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, April 1970, 3.

⁵⁵ Rudi F. Kross, “Het Proces,” *De Vrije Stem*, 26 March 1970, 1; “Politie Provoceerde het Geweld,” *De Waarheid*, 13 Feb. 1970, 2.

⁵⁶ Quote from “Surinaamse Organisaties Protesteren Tegen Proces,” *De Waarheid*, 11 Feb. 1970, 2.

that the police had prevented them from “practicing their fundamental civil rights to freedom of expression” because they were “scared that our protest against the problems in the Antilles will be heard by the Dutch.”⁵⁷ They did not manage to convince the judge, who found four of the defendants guilty and imposed on them hundred-guilder fines.⁵⁸

One of the defendants in the Antillenhuis trial was Lucien L. Lafour, who was suspected of having hit an officer on the head with a stick. Lafour, who also went by his “Muslim name” Brada X, was half Surinamese and had been a public supporter of the Black Power movement for several years.⁵⁹ Knowing that his speech would be heard by a full court house and a wide range of journalists, he used the opportunity not only to speak to the allegations made against him, but also to make a political statement on colonialism and racial inequality. In the first half of his address, Lafour drew the attention of his listeners to the racial biases of the judicial system, the police officers at the Antillenhuis, and the Dutch marines whose actions on 30 May had sparked their protest. “Charged with collective assault. You wonder if this isn’t a mistake, a typing error, because isn’t this what the 600 marines should be charged with, who are busy keeping the people of Curaçaoa enslaved?” he asked the court, referring to the Dutch marines who were sent to shut down the protests.⁶⁰ In the second half of his speech, he shifted his focus to the need for Black resilience in resisting colonial oppression. Drawing stark comparisons between the Antillenhuis protesters, the leaders of Trinta di Mei, and prominent Black Power activists in the United States, Lafour warned the court that “it would be madness to think blacks can be stopped ... Blacks will persist.”⁶¹

The BPSC, which had followed the trial closely, was highly impressed with the rhetoric of the defendants and decided to start an additional fund-raising campaign to help the Antillenhuis protesters pay their fines. While these protesters had not been directly involved in their efforts to support the Black Panthers, the committee believed that both parties fought the same

⁵⁷ “Kritiek op Proces na Demonstratie voor Antillenhuis,” *De Volkskrant*, Feb. 12, 1970; “Rechtbank: Begrip voor Rellen Antillenhuis,” *Trouw*, 13 Feb. 1970, 3; “Berechting Rellen bij Antillenhuis,” *Het Vrije Volk*, 12 Feb. 1970, 9; “Antillianen Protesteren Fel,” *Het Parool*, 13 Feb. 1970, 5.

⁵⁸ Letter to Stanley Brown, The Hague, 19 March 1970, Vito-artikelen, Archief, 1969–1971, N.B. Correspondentie e.a., Archivo Nashonal, Willemstad, Curaçao; “Officier Eist Geldboetes in Antillenhuis-Proces,” *De Volkskrant*, 13 Feb. 1970, 6; “Verdachten Ontkennen in Antillenhuis-Proces,” *Limburgsch Dagblad*, 13 Feb. 1970, 4.

⁵⁹ Hans Stevens, “Vroeger Konden We Woningen Bouwen: Waarom Nú Niet?” *De Tijd*, 27 March 1970, 9; Lucien Lafour, “Deep South,” *Trouw*, 22 May 1970, 11; Lafour, speech, private archive of Lily van den Bergh. ⁶⁰ Ibid. ⁶¹ Ibid.

anticolonial battle and were therefore equally deserving of its solidarity.⁶² On top of that, Lafour himself joined the BPSC, where he became responsible for communication between the committee and its Antillean and Surinamese partners.⁶³ Already in its earliest days, the BPSC had announced that they were “working on the addition of a Surinamer,” which they considered to be “no unimportant participant in this kind of committee.”⁶⁴ In his speech to the court, Lafour had proven to be the perfect candidate for this position. Over the following months, he would help the committee improve its interracial collaborations, helping the BPSC progress towards its goal to “fight against ... the exploitation of our colonies.”⁶⁵

While the BPSC strongly valued these interracial collaborations, they were by no means perfect. Although the white Black Panther supporters could be considered ahead of their time in that they understood their role within the movement as somewhat passive, it was clear that they struggled to fully translate the Panthers’ antiracist rhetoric into the Dutch context. On paper, the committee repeatedly spoke out against structural and institutional racism, but in practice the topic was often overpowered by their interest in imperialism and capitalism. This was certainly the case when members discussed racism in the Dutch empire. In fact, early interviews show that most of the committee’s initial efforts to tackle Dutch racism came from Caldwell rather than Schumacher or the other Dutch members of the BPSC.⁶⁶ It was also clear, at least in the beginning, that the solidarity committee upheld an exoticized, even glamorized, image of the Black Panthers, which sometimes projected the BPP as little more than a media hype.⁶⁷ One clear example of this was a deeply problematic statement by BPSC member Van den Bergh, who argued that Big Man’s lecture had been well attended because seeing an African American in real life was “like seeing a wild animal at Artis,” referring to the local zoo.⁶⁸ Such statements created a distance between the BPP and the Dutch public and contradicted the BPSC’s commitment to inclusivity, as it gave the impression that Black activism was foreign to the Netherlands.

⁶² Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, March 1970, 4; letter to Stanley Brown, The Hague, 19 March 1970, Archivo Nashonal, Willemstad, Curaçao, Vito-artikelen, Archief, 1969–1971, N.B. Correspondentie e.a.

⁶³ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, March 1970, 1; April 1970, 15.

⁶⁴ “Panters,” 13 Jan. 1970, 9.

⁶⁵ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, Jan. 1970, 1.

⁶⁶ See, for example, the BPSC’s interview with Terwogt, where Caldwell intervened when Schumacher kept talking exclusively about the Black freedom struggle in the United States. Himself an African American, Caldwell interrupted Schumacher to ensure that he would also mention racial inequality in the Netherlands and stated that “things will happen here, too.”

⁶⁷ Malloy, *Out of Oakland*, 125–26, has argued that this was also the case elsewhere in Europe.

⁶⁸ “Panters,” 13 Jan. 1970, 9.

Besides, Van den Bergh’s statement showed how deeply unaware the BPSC was of the painful history of racism in the Netherlands, which included a long tradition of eugenics, human zoos, and dehumanization.⁶⁹

Besides alliances with these Caribbean organizations, the BPSC also collaborated with a variety of groups in the Dutch New Left, including Cineclub Amsterdam, the Freedom School, the Netherlands Students’ Bureau for International Cooperation (NESBIC), the Red Youth (Rode Jeugd), and the United Support Groups of the NFL (Verenigde Steungroepen aan het FNL).⁷⁰ While all of these organizations had different agendas and platforms, with some being communist and others more interested in Third World solidarity, they were united in one critical aspect: their opposition to American imperialism. Although the Dutch government maintained close diplomatic ties with the US and was, according to historian Rob Kroes, even considered “NATO’s most faithful ally” in the region, years of American interference in Europe and violence in Vietnam had made Dutch youths critical of the superpower.⁷¹ Or, as student activist Pieter Hildering phrased it in a letter to the Panthers at the time, “this country, as well as ... the rest of the pig-tortured world, has just had enough of the dirty deals [Americans] think they’re making.”⁷² In this context, the BPSC was seen as a welcome addition to the countercultural scene, as it provided Dutch radicals with a direct link to what they believed to be “the only group in the United States that is able to transform their country.”⁷³

Of all the groups that collaborated with the BPSC under the umbrella of the Grand Committee, two stood out in particular: Cineclub Amsterdam and the Freedom School. Cineclub, which was established by filmmaker At van Praag in 1966, was an Amsterdam-based film production and distribution company that specialized in the acquisition, creation, and screening of documentary films on global liberation movements. The organization’s main purpose was to use film “as a means to create consciousness, as a ‘weapon in the fight’

⁶⁹ For the history and legacies of Dutch racism see Philomena Essed and Isabel Hoving, *Dutch Racism* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

⁷⁰ Solidariteitscomité Black Panther Party, invitation to grand committee meeting; Solidariteitscomité, April 1970, 1; “Black Panther Demonstratie in Amsterdam,” 2; “Ongeveer 400 Sympathisanten Black Panther demonstreerden,” 5; “Black Panther-Dag in Amsterdam,” 4.

⁷¹ Rob Kroes, “The Great Satan versus the Evil Empire: Anti-Americanism in the Netherlands,” in Rob Kroes and Maarten van Rossum, eds., *Anti-Americanism in Europe* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1986), 37–50, 42–43.

⁷² Pieter Hildering, “Letter from Holland,” *Black Panther*, 7 Feb. 1970, 12.

⁷³ “Vrijheidsschool,” *De Telegraaf*, 10 March 1970, 9; “Cineclub organiseert Vrijheidsschool,” *De Volkskrant*, 7 Feb. 1970, 11; “Vrijheidsschool Gaat Acties Voeren,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 7 Feb. 1970, 2.

that did not prioritize anyone's individual career or personal success."⁷⁴ By the turn of the decade, Cineclub had drawn approximately 2,500 members and screened its films multiple times a week.⁷⁵ The company first became involved with the BPSC in the fall of 1969, when Van Praag was invited to join the founding committee. Although the Cineclub director did not stay in the committee for long (for reasons unknown), his company remained highly involved in its work. Starting with the opening event with *Big Man*, Cineclub supplied the BPSC with an array of relevant slide shows and documentary films, which included a recorded interview with Bobby Seale, Agnès Varda's *Black Panthers* (1968), and Santiago Álvarez's *Now* (1965).⁷⁶ As mentioned previously, these films played an important role in the educational program of the BPSC, as they were shown at nearly every lecture they gave.

In February 1970, Cineclub and several other action groups founded a new organization which they the Freedom School. At first, the Freedom School was established as an educational initiative to teach Dutch students and educators about the oppression and liberation of the Third World. During its first event, which was described as a "discussion week," some 150 participants got together to debate issues related to non-Western school curriculums, discriminatory admissions policies at Dutch universities, and what students and educational staff could do to challenge these practices. Every session was concluded with a Cineclub film about a foreign liberation movement, including those in China, Argentina, Vietnam, France, and the United States.⁷⁷ While this discussion week was a great success, however, the educational side of the Freedom School would not last long. Within a matter of weeks, the Freedom School transformed from an educational platform to a loose-knit network of radical student protest.

Despite the broad range of topics discussed at the initial Freedom School discussions, the new organization was particularly interested in one revolution: that of the Black Panthers. During their first get-together in February, many of the participants had come to the conclusion that American imperialism posed the number one threat to global freedom, as it was responsible for "the oppression of all black people, the exploitation of the third world, the war in Vietnam, [and] the political and economic domination of Europe."⁷⁸

⁷⁴ "Geschiedenis," *Cineclub Vrijheidsfilms*, at <https://cineclubvrijheidsfilms.nl/geschiedenis>; J. P. G. van Laarhoven, "'PAN': Nederlandse Film Als Socialistisch Wapen," MA dissertation, Utrecht University, 2013, 88–89. ⁷⁵ Van Laarhoven, 88.

⁷⁶ An overview of the films in Cineclub's collection can be found in the inventory of Cineclub Vrijheidsfilms (Amsterdam), "Collectie Beeld- en Geluidmateriaal Cineclub Vrijheidsfilms," International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

⁷⁷ "Vrijheidsschool Gaat Acties Voeren," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 7 Feb. 1970, 2; "Cineclub Organiseert Vrijheidsschool," *De Volkskrant*, 7 Feb. 1970, 11; "'Vrijheidsschool' Bereidt Acties Voor," *Trouw*, 10 Feb. 1970, 5.

⁷⁸ "Vrijheidsschool," *De Telegraaf*, 10 March 1970, 9.

Together with its parent organization, Cineclub, the student organization began organizing regular demonstrations for the party. The largest of these took place on 14 March, following a Black Panther-themed week at the Freedom School. Hundreds of students gathered at the US consulate to call for the release of Bobby Seale and to denounce the reluctance of the Dutch government to guarantee protection to Eldridge Cleaver, who had been invited to attend the event but had to cancel when the Dutch government – “which clearly dances to the tune of the USA” – threatened to extradite him.⁷⁹ Other Freedom School protests took place at the Krasnapolsky Hotel in Amsterdam, where the group disturbed a televised election night to condemn the Dutch government’s membership of NATO, and at Leidseplein, after one of their Black Panther information fairs had been disturbed by the police. The latter ended with several Freedom School members setting their banners on fire and getting arrested on charges of arson.⁸⁰

Cineclub and the Freedom School became, with the exception of the Black Panther Solidarity Committee, the best-known organizations in the Dutch Black Panther solidarity movement. While their priorities and approaches were different, most of the groups’ activities were organized in collaboration with the other members of the Grand Committee. After all, each of them had something distinct and valuable to offer. The BPSC, which consisted primarily of journalists, was most knowledgeable on the history, philosophy, and political programs of the party. Their newsletters and lectures provided Dutch Black Panther enthusiasts with essential information and updates on the party. Cineclub was able to make the BPSC’s message come alive by providing inspiring and insightful visual representation to this information. Once the crowd had been fired up, the Freedom School played into their energy and led them onto the streets, sometimes mobilizing as many as four hundred students and young professionals at once. By March 1970, collaboration within the Grand Committee had become so close that “one could hardly speak of separate organizations anymore,” as a report from the Dutch security agency

⁷⁹ Vrijheidsschool, “Eldridge Cleaver Mocht Niet naar Nederland Komen,” *Vrijheidspers Informatiekrant*, n.p., Amsterdam, 1970 (2), ZK 37945 (1971?), 3, International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; “Betoging voor Vrijlating,” 3; “Politie Jaagt Demonstranten Weg bij VS-Consulaat,” *Het Parool*, 16 March 1970, 5; “Kans dat Cleaver Komt Erg Gering,” *Trouw*, 10 March 1970, 1.

⁸⁰ “Een Maf Avondje Verkiezingen,” *De Telegraaf*, 19 March 1970, 13; “Geen Aardverschuiving: Winst D’66 Valt Tegen,” *Trouw*, 19 March 1970, 3; “Samkalden had Zeer Rumoeurige Verkiezingsavond,” *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 19 March 1970, 9; “Vier Arrestaties bij Betoging,” 5; “Onrust in A’dam bij Betoging Zwarte Panters,” *Turbantia*, 23 March 1970, 7; “Demonstratie voor Zwarte Panters Liep Uit op Verkeerschaos,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 23 March 1970, 10.

stated.⁸¹ Together, these groups transformed Black Panther solidarity in the Netherlands from a single committee into a movement spanning hundreds of activists and multiple organizations.

INTERNAL CONFLICTS AND THE DEMISE OF BLACK PANTHER INTERNATIONALISM

Unfortunately, the vast growth of the solidarity movement did not occur without complications, many of them emerging from these very same collaborations. Though the Grand Committee may have seemed like a well-oiled machine to outsiders, the diversity of parties involved also made things quite difficult. At its best, the Dutch solidarity movement was a loose-knit network of individuals and semi-organized pressure groups that came together to defend the party's campaigns and ideology. At its worst, however, the movement was a chaotic and disorganized web of young activists who were never quite sure what the Black Panthers expected of them and who had many different views on what their allyship was supposed to look like. This led to a number of internal disagreements, especially between the BPSC and the Freedom School, the most prominent of which concerned their preferred methods of resistance.⁸² In a number of their protests, members of the Freedom School had resorted to minor forms of violence, such as smashing windows, throwing stones at police officers, and throwing firecrackers at politicians.⁸³ At their own events, they had also set banners and portraits of President Nixon on fire and had painted Black Panther slogans on the walls of public buildings.⁸⁴

The BPSC, by this point regarded as the "old guard" of the solidarity movement, strongly disapproved. The actions of the Freedom School were, in the committee's view, too reckless, and created confusion within the movement, distracting outsiders from the important message they tried to convey. While the BPSC emphasized that it was not against political protest per se, it believed that any resistance coming from the movement "would have to

⁸¹ "Notitie Betreffende Solidariteitsdemonstratie met Zuid-Molukkers, Amsterdam, 28 Nov. 1970," *Inzagedossier Molukse Zaken*, 03 Activiteiten van Zuid-Molukkers na het Bezoek van President Soeharto Sept. 1970, at <https://inlichtingendiensten.nl/groepen/molukken>.

⁸² "Panthers," *De Volkskrant*, 25 April 1970, 19.

⁸³ "Gevechten bij Amerikaans Consulaat," *Algemeen Dagblad*, 16 March 1970, 3; "Politie Jaagt Demonstranten Weg bij VS-Consulaat," 55; "Ongeveer 400 Sympathisanten Black Panther demonstreerden," 5; "Een Maf Avondje Verkiezingen," *De Telegraaf*, 19 March 1970, 13.

⁸⁴ Vrijheidsschool, "Straatakties, Plakken, Kalken, Krantverkoop, We Gaan Door, Doe Mee!"; *Vrijheidspers Informatiekrant*, n.p.; Vrijheidsschool, "Stop Murdering Black Panthers!!!!!!," private archive of Lily van den Bergh.

proceed in a completely disciplined manner, in accordance with the traditions of the American Black Panthers themselves.”⁸⁵ The “new guard” of the movement, under the leadership of Cineclub director At van Praag, labeled the stance of the BPSC elitist and pushed for a more militant form of protest.⁸⁶ They believed that disturbances of these kinds were useful tools in getting their message across and that they gave those they targeted, like the US consulate, a deeper sense of urgency to act. Even more aggressive resistance was not out of the question, as they were convinced that “protest without violence is simply no longer possible in today’s society.”⁸⁷ Plus, they added, “the Panthers say that the best place to help them is at home,” meaning they also had to use BPP tactics to fight oppression in their local environment.⁸⁸

Although the groups were able to work around their differences for a while, tensions became increasingly unmanageable and needed to be resolved. Eventually this happened not at one of their regular meetings in Amsterdam, but at the official BPP Solidarity Committees’ Conference in Frankfurt on 18 and 19 April 1970. This conference was organized by Matthews, who had invited some four hundred delegates from different parts of Europe “to coordinate and learn from our common struggle.”⁸⁹ Besides the formal solidarity committees, the international coordinator invited anyone who wished to organize in support of the Black Panther Party to attend. Writing about the conference in the International News section of the *Black Panther*, Matthews explained that she aimed to draw the committees’ focus towards “the brutal attempt of the racist fascist power structure of the United States to annihilate the Black Panther Party.”⁹⁰ She wanted to construct a plan of action to address this issue from across the Atlantic. By the end of the conference, the European solidarity network had agreed on the following points of action: (1) to “intensify our support [through] our coordinated attack on U.S. Imperialism in our own countries,” (2) to “organize mass actions in solidarity with the Black Panther Party and against the fascist repression in the U.S. ... directed to the working masses and oppressed peoples of our countries,” (3) to “condemn the repression and harassment of the Party’s representatives in various European countries,” and (4) to “demand that all European countries give free travel papers” to Eldridge Cleaver.⁹¹

⁸⁵ “Panthers,” 25 April 1970, 19.

⁸⁶ Meulenbelt, *De Schaamte Voorbij*, 110.

⁸⁷ “Ongeveer 400 Sympathisanten Black Panther demonstreerden,” 5.

⁸⁸ Letter to the editor of *Het Parool*.

⁸⁹ Connie Matthews, “B.P.P. Solidarity Committee’s Conference,” *Black Panther*, 9 May 1970, 15; House Committee on Internal Security, *The Black Panther Party*, 68–69; “Europese Steun voor Zwarte Panters,” *Amigoe di Curaçao*, 21 April 1970, 4.

⁹⁰ Matthews, 15.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

These new resolutions indicated a rather profound transformation in the European solidarity network. Exactly one year after Seale and Hewitt had authorized Matthews to set up a network for education and fund-raising, the international coordinator announced a new approach to solidarity that was much more proactive and politically engaged than originally intended. This worked to the advantage of the Freedom School and Cineclub, whose hands-on approach to solidarity was closer to Matthews's view than to Seale and Hewitt's original one. Hearing these resolutions at the conference, Van Praag's delegation decided that this was the perfect time to settle their disagreements with the BPSC once and for all. They requested to present their case to the European convention, after which they proposed to take a collective vote on the issue. This vote would decide whether the Dutch solidarity movement would continue with Schumacher's "protest through education" or whether they would follow the more proactive path of the "new guard." Schumacher and Kross, who represented the BPSC at the convention, strongly opposed Van Praag's proposition, as they had come to Frankfurt in much smaller numbers than the Freedom School and therefore had fewer votes of their own.⁹² Despite the objections of the BPSC, the other European delegates agreed to accept the motion and take a vote on the issue. In the end, extra votes for the BPSC would not have made a difference: the European committees largely voted in favor of Van Praag and decided that the BPSC had to be dissolved. Effective immediately, the committee had to hand over its activities to the Freedom School, which now became the official Dutch Black Panther solidarity committee – albeit under its own name.⁹³

The fate of the Black Panther movement in the Netherlands was thus not determined by internal differences within the Dutch New Left alone, but also by the changing attitudes of the European solidarity network writ large. While this same network had mentored the founders of the BPSC and helped them establish an educational program only four months earlier, recent developments within the Black Panther Party itself had convinced Matthews and her followers that education and fund-raising were no longer enough: it was time to take more radical action. To the original Black Panther committee, this new form of solidarity was unacceptable. Although Matthews encouraged them to join the Freedom School in their ongoing efforts, all – with the exception of Lily van den Bergh, who had already sided with the Freedom School in the preceding months – left the movement upon their return to the Netherlands. "All we have to do now is to wait for the windows of consulates

⁹² "Panthers," 25 April 1970, 19; Meulenbelt, 110.

⁹³ Vrijheidsschool, letter to the editor; "Black Panthers-Comité Uit Elkaar," *Het Vrije Volk*, 24 April 1970, 5; "Panthers," 25 April 1970, 19; "Nederlandse comité Panthers ontbonden," *Trouw*, 27 April 1970, 3; Frits N. Eisenloeffel, "Wereld Drie," *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 23 May 1970, 28; "Black Panther-Dag in Amsterdam," 4; Meulenbelt, 110.

and embassies to be smashed,” a bitter Schumacher shared in *De Volkskrant*, before sarcastically adding, “an unusually powerful argument.”⁹⁴

With the “moderate figures” of the BPSC (as the Dutch security agency described them) gone, the local solidarity movement grew increasingly more fanatic.⁹⁵ Now that they no longer had to take the wishes of the BPSC into account, members of the Freedom School were free to express their solidarity as they pleased. Now under the leadership of Van den Bergh, the group continued to organize lectures with film screenings, fund-raisers, and small-scale protests over the summer of 1970.⁹⁶ They also started publishing their own newspaper, the *Freedom Press Information Paper*.⁹⁷ This paper was slightly more elaborate than that of the BPSC, though its content was almost identical. The main difference from the former was its visual appeal. Whereas the BPSC’s newsletter had been written on a typewriter and was completely free of images, the *Freedom Press* paper was filled with Emory Douglas’s iconic Black Panther art, portraits of Black Panther activists, pictures of previous solidarity protests, and countless political slogans. Copies of the paper were handed out at lectures and protests, of which there were only a couple after the Frankfurt conference.⁹⁸

Several months after taking control of the Black Panther solidarity movement, the Freedom School also became involved in the highly controversial case of the Wassenaar 33. This case revolved around a group of South Moluccan activists who had forced their way into the residence of the Indonesian ambassador on 31 August 1970, one day before President Suharto’s state visit to the Netherlands. The purpose of their protest was to demand a meeting between Suharto and Johan Manusama, President of the unrecognized Republic of South Maluku (RMS). While the ambassador escaped the scene, a security officer was killed by protesters.⁹⁹ The actions of the Wassenaar 33 immediately caught the interest of the Freedom School. The Black Panther supporters saw many similarities between these anticolonial “Heroes of Wassenaar” and the Black Panther Party, both of whom they considered to be key players in the liberation of the Third World.¹⁰⁰ On 28

⁹⁴ “Panthers,” 25 April 1970, 19.

⁹⁵ “Notitie Betreffende Solidariteitsdemonstratie met Zuid-Molukkers, Amsterdam, 28 Nov. 1970.”

⁹⁶ Vrijheidsschool, “Vrijheidsschoolactie,” *Vrijheidspers Informatiekrant*; Vrijheidsschool, “Steenfonds voor Vrijlating Black Panthers,” *Vrijheidspers Informatiekrant*.

⁹⁷ Originally called the *Vrijheidspers Informatiekrant*.⁹⁸ Meulenbelt, 110.

⁹⁹ Peter Bootsma, *De Molukse Acties: Treinkapingen en Gijzelingen 1970–1978* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2015), 33–50; Fridus Steijlen, “Actie Wassenaar 1970: Een Wake Up Call,” *Moluks Historisch Museum*, at www.museum-maluku.nl/actie-wassenaar-1970-een-wake-up-call.

¹⁰⁰ “Groep Linkse Jongeren op de Bres voor Zuidmolukkers,” *Trouw*, 20 Oct., 1970, 1; “Bondgenootschap,” *De Volkskrant*, 22 Oct. 1970, 13; “At van Praag: Actie in Wassenaar

November 1970, the Freedom School and the Moluccan activists got together for a massive demonstration in Amsterdam where hundreds of activists rose up in support of the Moluccan and African American liberation movements. Protesters carried banners with slogans such as “Viva R.M.S. en Black Panthers” (“Viva R.M.S. and Black Panthers”) and “Politieke gevangenen vrij!” (“Free political prisoners!”), referring to the Wassenaar 33 as well as the countless incarcerated Black Panthers in the US.¹⁰¹ Although the crowd left several trams, cars, and buildings damaged, the protest proceeded without any police interference.¹⁰² The day was concluded with a meeting at Paradiso, where Cineclub screened a Black Panther movie and two British Black Panther advocates, who had been invited through the European network, addressed the crowd.¹⁰³

Despite the large numbers of activists attending this protest, however, it seems that the Freedom School soon lost interest in the party. After their collaboration with the Moluccans in November 1970, which had already been their first Black Panther activity in months, they did not organize any further protests for the BPP. Instead, they decided to focus on more local community activism in Amsterdam, especially in working-class neighborhoods such as the Jordaan and De Pijp. Soon, they disappeared from the public eye completely. Its parent organization Cineclub did continue to screen Black Panther movies, but ceased to make an effort outside its regular screenings.

The decline of Black Panther solidarity in the Netherlands did not stand in isolation but reflected much deeper disparities within the BPP itself. As Cleaver was growing his network in Europe, his colleagues at home were starting to worry that the global ambitions of the International Section were alienating the party from its African American base. While Cleaver was convinced that Black America could only be liberated once the US government lost its superpower status, the Oakland-based Panthers increasingly felt that his diplomatic efforts distracted the party from its commitments at home. Of all Cleaver’s comrades, founder and chairman Huey Newton proved to be his

gaf ons Geweldige Shock.” *Trouw*, 30 Oct. 1970, 9; “Vrijheidsschool: Op de Bres voor Scholieren en Zuidmolukkers,” *Tubantia*, 30 Oct. 1970, 27.

¹⁰¹ “Z.-Molukkers Hielden Huis in de Hoofdstad,” *De Telegraaf*, 30 Nov. 1970, 3.

¹⁰² “Zuidmolukkers op Oorlogspad,” *De Tijd*, 30 Nov. 1970, 1; “Net Geen Geweld bij Demonstratie voor Z.-Molukken,” *NRC Handelsblad*, 2 Nov. 1970, 2; “Trams en Auto’s Beschadigd bij Demonstratie van Zuidmolukkers,” *Leeuwarder Courant*, 30 Nov. 1970, 4; “Zuidmolukkers in Actie voor ‘Helden van Wassenaar,’” *Tubantia*, 30 Nov. 1970, 7; “Onrustige Betoging van Jonge Zuidmolukkers,” *NRC Handelsblad*, 30 Nov. 1970, 3.

¹⁰³ It is unclear which British Black Panther advocates spoke at the event. According to Dutch intelligence officers, both Michael X and Kathleen Cleaver were supposed to be there, but neither seems to have been present.

fiercest opponent. Several months after his release from prison in 1970, the party’s founder decided to stir the BPP back in the direction of community service. From his perspective, tackling child hunger, building medical facilities, and ending police brutality in poor Black communities were much more beneficial to the survival of his people than “waiting for a revolution that might never come or depending on international allies thousands of miles away.”¹⁰⁴ This sentiment was shared by chief of staff David Hilliard, who believed that the revolutionary ideals of the International Section were unrealistic. “When we begin our attack who’s going to join us?” Hilliard wrote in his autobiography. “Party comrades will jump off the moon if Huey tells them to. Our allies won’t.”¹⁰⁵

The FBI cleverly played into the question of transnational alliances in its efforts to sabotage the Panthers. In its forged correspondence between the party’s headquarters in Oakland and the International Section in Algiers, the bureau repeatedly suggested to Newton that Cleaver was undermining his authority, while implying to Cleaver that Newton did not respect his work abroad. As historian Robyn C. Spencer has shown, Matthews inadvertently played an important role in these strategies. Following her successful work for the party in Europe, the International Coordinator had spent some time in the United States, where she had become more involved in the Oakland chapter of the party, working closely with Newton. “Now a close associate of both Cleaver and Newton,” Spencer writes, “she was used by the FBI in their plan to ‘create doubts’ about people close to Cleaver.”¹⁰⁶ By the time the Panthers realized how the bureau had used Matthews to foster internal hostilities, the damage had already been done, as Newton expelled both Matthews and Cleaver from the party in 1971.

When all of this took place, it was already clear that the European solidarity network had chosen his side in the dispute. Over the spring of 1971, many former Black Panther supporters laid down their Black Panther work and instead joined Eldridge and Kathleen’s new organization, the Revolutionary People’s Communications Network (RPCN). Though short-lived, the RPCN came to rely heavily on the Cleavers’ contacts in France and West Germany, but also involved Van den Bergh, who had built close friendships with both Matthews and Kathleen Cleaver over the preceding years. Between 1970 and 1972, the former BPSC and Freedom School leader regularly traveled back and forth between the Netherlands and Algeria to supply

¹⁰⁴ Malloy, *Out of Oakland*, 174.

¹⁰⁵ David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 2001), 284, cited in Bloom and Martin, 358.

¹⁰⁶ Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come*, 104.

the International Section with money, technical equipment, and other materials.¹⁰⁷ She was even staying with the Cleavers during Eldridge's formal expulsion on live television and later traveled to the US to distribute a videotaped interview with him in an effort to persuade members of the BPP to join the RPCN.¹⁰⁸ Van den Bergh, as well as several other European activists, continued to stay in touch with the Cleavers until Eldridge went underground in Paris in 1972 and abandoned his pursuit of a revolution for good.

Though the Black Panther Party itself continued to exist for another decade, the Cleavers' departure marked an end to three years of European solidarity with the organization. The solidarity network had formally taken took off in 1969, the year in which Seale and Hewitt toured Scandinavia, Matthews was appointed international coordinator of the party, the Cleavers established their International Section, and Big Man embarked on his European journey. While European support was always marginal in the greater scheme of Black Panther activism, as the relative absence of the continent in the historiography alludes, these efforts do show how Black radicals strategically pursued new and perhaps unexpected alliances to support themselves financially and politically. This was quite unique both in the context of the Black Power movement, where white involvement was typically rejected, and in the context of European solidarity, where activists rarely had any direct contact with those they organized for, much less operated under their supervision.

Although the Dutch branch of the European solidarity network never became as successful as its Scandinavian and West German counterparts, its history still provides some critical insights into the dynamics of the Panthers' transatlantic project. Within a matter of months after its founding, the BPSC and its partners managed to bring together hundreds of activists from around the Netherlands to support the Black radicals, using their professional expertise in the media to their advantage. In embracing the Panthers' ideology of revolutionary nationalism, they were able to create a meaningful

¹⁰⁷ Kathleen Cleaver, daily reports, 22 Feb. 1971–4 April 1971, daily reports, by Kathleen Cleaver, communications secretary 1970, 1971, Carton 5, Folder 46, International Section Subseries, Black Panther Party Series, Eldridge Cleaver Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Paul J. Magnarella, *Black Panther in Exile: The Pete O'Neal Story* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2021), 111.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Sachs Collopy, "The Revolution Will Be Videotaped: Making a Technology of Consciousness in the Long 1960s," PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2015, 280–89; Lily van den Bergh, "Ondergang of Vernieuwing van een Revolutionaire Partij?," *De Groene*, 22 May 1971, 3; correspondence between Lily van den Bergh and Kathleen Cleaver, 8 Nov. 1971, 18 July 1972, Van den Bergh, Lily, Carton 5, Folder 33, International Section Subseries, Black Panther Party Series, Cleaver Papers; Videofreex, "CBS–Lily and Cleaver Tapes," video, 00:23:36, 5 March 1971, Video Data Ban, at www.vdb.org/collection/browser-artist-list/cbs-lily-and-cleaver-tapes.

partnership between the Black Power movement, the Dutch New Left, and the local anticolonial movement. This triangular alliance allowed activists in the Netherlands to directly support the African American freedom struggle from afar, while also challenging the increasing influence of the US in Cold War Europe and confronting their own colonial legacies in the Caribbean and Southeast Asia. At the same time, it shows how internal disputes over solidarity practices led to the local movement’s demise just as rapidly. Though some former members found new causes to support, with both Meulenbelt and Van den Bergh becoming leading figures in the Palestinian solidarity movement, others were never involved in such projects again.

It is difficult to determine what the Dutch solidarity movement truly managed to do for the Panthers. Politically, it is safe to say that neither the BPSC nor the Freedom School was able to achieve much. Despite well-attended protests at the US consulate, it does not seem like the solidarity activists were able to change the relationship between the Netherlands and the United States in any way. In fact, there is no proof that American or Dutch officials even informed the US government of the Black Panther protests in Amsterdam. At the level of Dutch colonialism, the BPSC had slightly more impact, albeit minimal. With money gathered for the BPP, the committee was able to offer anticolonial activists in the Netherlands some relief, but only after they had already been arrested. Moreover, by drawing clear comparisons between the African American, Caribbean, and Moluccan struggles, the committee brought conversations about racism to the forefront of the Dutch New Left, though not always without biases on their own side. Perhaps the main contribution Dutch activists made to the Panthers themselves was financial. Based on Big Man’s reflections in his autobiography, the Oakland-based Panthers actively used the allies’ donations to fund legal assistance for imprisoned members.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, the Cleavers received considerable material aid from their European allies and used this to strengthen and expand their Algerian base. One could even argue that the allies did their job too well, as the growing influence of the International Section would eventually pave the way for Cleaver’s expulsion from the party.

Realistically, however, too little is known about the European solidarity network to truly determine its significance in the broader history of the BPP. Future research would have to examine how exactly the European network was organized, how the different solidarity committees were connected to each other, and how they were able to support the International Section on the other side of the Mediterranean Sea. After all, this article has been the first to show that an overarching network even existed, leaving

¹⁰⁹ Howard, *Panther on the Prowl*, 52.

plenty of room for further inquiry. Particularly interesting would be a study of Afro-European involvement in this network, which was unlikely to be limited to the Dutch context. It would be worth exploring how these activists viewed their own connections to the African American party and how they related to those who identified with the BPP in a different capacity, such as the Black Panther Movement in the United Kingdom, which was not established by but after the example of the American organization. This would create a deeper understanding of the European solidarity network, which, despite its brief existence, was never homogeneous and was always in motion.

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