

# Rondos A black & white statement

## Biography

### How it all started...



We had a gig but no band. It was March 1978 and we were in the canteen at the *Academie van Beeldende Kunsten* art school on the G. J. de Jongheweg in Rotterdam. Maarten had just agreed to do a gig for teacher Sjoerd Buisman who was throwing a party in a small venue in Dussen, Noord-Brabant and was looking for a band to liven things up a little. Didn't we play music? Did we want to perform? "Yes," Maarten said. Buisman didn't know we weren't a band, didn't have any equipment and especially no music. But we left him under the illusion and took the gig.

We had exactly one week to sort everything out. Friends of ours from outside the academy, Kees and Aad, played in a rock band and lent us their gear and a rehearsal space in South Rotterdam. A poky little room on a kind of wharf on the Brielselaan. But, we had no songs. We did have a lot of LPs though. We were keeping a close track of the punk wave that had erupted in England. We took our favourite songs from different albums. From Wire, Eater, The Damned and The Clash. Ten in total. Wim figured out the chords, but the lyrics were more of a problem. Most of them were unintelligible. We took a stab at them. Much later, when we got our hands on the lyrics from the bands that had made it by that time, it turned out we had concocted our own versions of them. Not that we cared, back then. We practised every day for a week. We played the ten chosen songs on a cassette recorder and tried to copy them as best we could. And we could all play. Kees and Aad had been playing a long time together. Wim and Allie even met playing in a high school band in Delft. I sang for the first time and tried my very best.

After a week the songs started to come together. As good as could be expected, anyway. But we played the set super fast and it only lasted for about twenty minutes all together. No problem: we would simply play all ten songs twice. Nobody would notice. And what if they did? Now all we needed was a name for the band. Not a minor detail. We came up with *Pull...Use...Destroy*, from the detergent package. Excellent! We bought leather jackets, really cheap on a flea market, and Wim cropped his beard as short as possible. After all, you can't have punks with beards. We were ready and we were many. There were nine of us in the rented van on our way to our first punk gig in Dussen. Allie van Altena and Maarten van Gent played the guitar, George le Roy, Wim ter Weele and Kees Isings the bass (yes, we had three bass guitars!), Aad Faasse played the drums and I did the vocals. Saskia de Vries was our sound technician and Piet Dieleman our photographer.

The performance was short and heavy. The artistically-minded audience was slightly shocked and perplexed. No reaction at the end except a painful silence followed. Hardly a party atmosphere. Without a second thought, we immediately started to dismantle our gear and lugged it to the exit through the bewildered audience as aggressively as possible. This led to angry reactions and almost caused a scuffle. We left the party and, in the van on the way back to Rotterdam, decided we would continue with the band. We had no idea what we were getting ourselves into.

### How the story continued...

A second performance followed a short while later. George had packed it in and we changed our name to *The Rondos*, after the almond tartlets we ate by the dozen in the art school canteen. It was the worst name we could think of. We'd added ten new songs to our repertoire by, among others, The Suicide Commandos, The Ramones and The Who (a Speedtwins version of *My generation*).

Our second performance was a complete fiasco. An obscure community centre, worn-out and bleak, amidst blocks of flats on the outskirts of Delft. The audience consisted of five or six bored teenagers who stayed as far away from us as they could, hiding somewhere in the dark in the back of

the room. What's more, Aad, who was preparing for the Academy of Music, thought punk rock was a joke, which didn't do much to improve our performance.

Shortly after that we played outdoors, outside the AMRO Bank on the Lijnbaan in Rotterdam, on *Binnenstadsdag* ('Inner City Day'). Things went much better this time. There was a big audience and there were punks present for the first time. We gave it everything we had, which led to enthusiastic reactions. Even from a wandering police officer. All of a sudden The Rondos existed.

More gigs followed, mostly in community centres in and around Rotterdam, but also in jazz club B-14. We played alternately for and against the audience. By this time we were also working on our own songs. Aad left the band and Wim started playing the drums. And how! We also found a better rehearsal space, on the Oranjeboomstraat in South Rotterdam. It was a room in a former school building owned by the municipality and used by a folk dance group called Radostan. They were not pleased with us. The acoustics of the room were deafening and playing there made you lose your sense of orientation completely. Mirrors for the folk dancers were fixed badly on to the walls and resulted in distorted reflections.

A friend of ours, Lydia van der Spek, had been so kind as to lend us 10,000 guilders interest-free and for an indefinite period of time. It was a huge amount of money at the time, especially for poor art school students like us. We spent it all in one afternoon on a PA system with microphones, monitors and a mixer, guitar amplifiers and a drum kit.

Film maker Bob Visser had heard about us and came by. Later, he made the excellent VPRO television program *Neon* and realized we were doing something new and unique even before we did. He recorded a kind of video clip with us that went wrong due to a technical failure. Visser had ambitious plans. He promised a lot. He was going to record an album with us. He would arrange a studio. In the end, he failed to deliver. The broken promises turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Partly because we were far from ready for a studio album, but mostly because it made us decide that we'd be doing everything ourselves from then on.

We played with The Railbirds at the Quibus in Schiedam. We'd met The Railbirds on *Binnenstadsdag*. They were much younger, about 16 years old, and played good music. We designed all our own concert posters, drawing them by hand on blank newspaper. I'd swiped a police hat from a police car that was parked in front of the art school and had police officers both in and around it. It was an heroic feat. Maarten, who according to the others was best suited for the job, dressed up as police officer and pushed forward to the stage through the audience at the beginning of the gig. This caused quite a stir in the overcrowded room. Frank, who would later become our bass player, emptied his beer in Maarten's neck because like everybody else he assumed the policeman wanted to prevent the concert. Once he'd clambered on to the stage Maarten played his own version of the Dutch anthem, the *Wilhelmus*, and at times even made it sound like the children's song *Zie ginds komt de stoomboot* ('I can see the steamboat coming'). A legendary start, even for that time, to a legendary performance. We played 30 of our own songs at a breakneck pace and then, out of sheer enthusiasm, we added the 20 cover-songs from our early days. A gig with 50(!) songs. The audience must have been exhausted.

At this stage we came up with the idea to find a place to live and work together, with the band, our sound engineer Saskia and our good friend Piet from the academy, but without Kees who wanted to live on his own. We just thought it would be fun. We had already founded *Kunstkollektief Dubio* ('Art Collective Dubio') and published the manifesto *Juliana ja! Beatrix nee!* ('Juliana Yes! Beatrix No!'). They were provocations that, to our pleasure, led to quite some confusion among the management and teachers of the oh-so establishment art academy.

Up till then, we got together at one of our homes, usually with Saskia and Wim, or in one of the art school studios in the Henkes-building in Delfshaven in West Rotterdam. Most of us were fourth-year students and had no classes to go to. We were supposed to work independently in the studios. Which we did, to our heart's content. Most of our projects were meant to provoke, like the Art Collective Dubio and, at first, even The Rondos. One day we made a life-sized model of a tank and dragged it through Rotterdam. We took photographs of it in front of the town hall, the bridges over the River *Maas* ('Meuse') and the Euromast and left the thing on the station square, where it was attacked by a group of incensed members of the pacifist socialist party PSP. We loved the whole ruckus and exhibited the project in the academy under the name *Coming soon, German Panzerkampfwagen*. All of this to the great annoyance of many of our teachers and, to our pleasant surprise, many of our fellow students who wanted to be making serious art. Our goal was to get out of the stuffy atmosphere at

the academy that we found blasé and lethargic. The only person we got on with was Mrs. de Vries, the canteen lady. We were large consumers.

At this time, we had our eye on a monumental white property, *Huize Schoonderloo* on the *Tweede IJzerstraat* in Delfshaven. Even the name of the street, 'Second Iron Street', was terrific. The building was empty and, as it turned out, had been so for five years. We rang the doorbell of the adjoining caretaker's house. The man rather unwillingly told us the property was due to be demolished and was in very bad condition. We glanced through the windows. It was just what we were looking for. We asked for more information with the *Gemeentelijk Grondbedrijf*, the municipal development department that turned out to be in charge of the building. 'In charge' being a bit of an overstatement. 'Neglect' sounded more like it. We got in touch with a man called Piet Slijkerman, a civil servant from the socialist party PvdA who worked at the Rotterdam Town Hall. We presented him with our plans. Saskia especially managed to keep Slijkerman's attention with her relentless perseverance. Rotterdam didn't have one of these yet: a living-and-working collective of young artists. And just when Rotterdam wanted to present an image of itself as an 'art city'.

After some tussling involving hints to the possibility of breaking in and squatting, Slijkerman eventually summoned the Grondbedrijf to transfer the building to Art Collective Dubio. That is to say: its destination remained demolition, but we could use it in the meantime. We weren't given a lease and therefore had no rent protection. We could be thrown out without warning at any moment. We paid 250 guilders rent a month but had to restore the derelict building ourselves and keep it in good repair. The municipality had deliberately destroyed the central heating system. They'd let the pipes freeze, had disassembled the boiler and removed it, destination unknown. The roof was leaking and many of the windows were broken.

After some severe opposition from different civil servants at the Grondbedrijf we finally moved into *Huize Schoonderloo*, the old Napoleonic country house dating from 1803, in January 1979. 'We' comprised Wim, Allie, Maarten, Saskia, Piet and me, i.e. the complete Kunstkollektief Dubio. The neighbourhood council lead by Peter Bulthuis, member of the Dutch communist party CPN, wanted to demolish the building at all costs, and was hostile towards us, as our angry neighbour. The local community held its breath, not expecting much good from a group of obscure punks running loose in a property that was way too big for them.

The winter of 1979 was harsh. It was 17 degrees centigrade below freezing, the windows were broken and couldn't be repaired due to the heavy frost. The central heating didn't work. It was a tough time. We became winter-hardy, but the building was exactly what we needed. We paid for all the repairs, cleaned the whole place up and conducted a makeshift restoration of the roof. That summer we painted the building white again on the outside and Allie even made two wonderful coats of arms with the Delfshaven blazon to go on the outer wall. *Huize Schoonderloo* was restored to its former dignity and the neighbourhood was reassured. Our sprucing up job was much appreciated in the underprivileged area of Delfshaven.

The house had some twenty rooms and each of us had his own private quarters of one or two rooms. Piet moved into a spacious studio where he could bathe himself in floodlights while engaging in his beloved art of painting. In addition, there were common rooms like a workshop, a darkroom, a printing room, an office with a portrait of crown princess Beatrix, a large common studio, a large common living room with a sofa and three televisions, a kitchen, a beautiful wooden attic extending over the full length of the building and a subterranean bunker that was gas- and bomb proof, built at some point by the management of Stokvis who had converted the house into an office. The bunker now served as our rehearsal space. We had our own stronghold, surrounded by splendid maple and horse chestnut trees.

It was not long before our house became a meeting point for the Rotterdam punk scene, political activists and other non-conformist artists. We put our rehearsal space and PA at the disposal of other bands, who took turns rehearsing there. With *Huize Schoonderloo* as our home base we could fully develop all our activities, one of which was *The Rondos*. Things began to snowball. We could hardly keep up ourselves. All eyes were turned to us, not only in the Rotterdam punk scene, but also in the established art scene of the city on the Maas river, that didn't feel taken seriously anymore and mightily resented us. But other artists felt all the more attracted to us, and likewise the police and the Dutch Secret Service BVD.

Fer Abrahams from *Stichting Popmuziek Nederland* ('Dutch Foundation for Pop Music') organized D-Day, with Dutch punk and new wave performances, on Thursday nights in the pop temple Paradiso in Amsterdam. He got

his hands on a badly recorded tape of The Rondos and was nuts about us. He asked if we wanted to play. We didn't think 'Paradiso' sounded too bad. We played there on 14 December 1978. We were asked to return the following month. On 18 January 1979 we were setting up in Paradiso's small room again, but during our sound check the bar manager started to put down folding chairs. We objected. Punk with chairs in the room was out of the question. The manager insisted they stay, because that was the deal with the Paradiso management. We packed up. In that case we'd rather not play at all. Fer Abrahams, impressed with how we stuck to our punk principles, apologized afterwards. On 9 June 1979 we performed again on a D-Day weekend with The Filth and Ivy Green in the large room at Paradiso, without chairs. A rental coach full of Rotterdam Rondos fans left for Amsterdam that night. Paradiso was flooded with Rotterdam punks in Feyenoord-shirts.

In March 1979 Kees Isings left the band. Frank (Famous) Seltenrijch took his place. Frank had played in the band The Butchers, that had been founded even before The Rondos. This earned him respect. We hit it off well together and Frank played his first gig with The Rondos at Nullis Pretti in Rotterdam on 31 March 1979.

In April the first edition of our magazine Raket ('Rocket') appeared. It was published as a wall poster. Raket invited everyone to provide drawings, texts or anything of that kind. We pasted the posters on walls all over Rotterdam. In May and June issues 2 and 3 followed, still as wall posters, now printed double sided and overfull. We were flooded with reactions and decided to turn Raket into a poster with fanzine. Raket no. 4 appeared in September 1979 as a stencilled A4 booklet of 22 pages on recycled paper, in an edition of 350 copies. We printed and distributed the whole thing ourselves. Underground, as it should be done.

Raket fast became one of the most influential punk fanzines in the Netherlands. Partly because the magazine offered everyone space for drawings, letters, texts and announcements. Even neo-Nazis. There was no selection or censorship whatsoever. We stencilled everything. The last edition of Raket, no. 14 of November 1980, had no less than 4 supplements and altogether 232 pages. In an edition of 1000 copies, no less. At the same time The Rondos made lyrics books, comics, posters, postcards and buttons. All Do-It-Yourself.

From the start, we didn't know the first thing about punk ideology. That's to say, in the early days of the punk movement it wasn't at all clear what it actually meant to be a punk. The music that trickled into the Netherlands from England sounded overwhelming. You might as well throw your old record collection in the bin. But what was it all about? And what was the intention? First and foremost, punk was against absolutely everything. That appealed to us no end. For the rest, we just went about our own business. Doing everything ourselves just seemed like the best approach.

Of course we were leftist. That was completely normal in those days. The establishment, the state, the army, capital and the church were far removed from us and formed a threat to our own creativity and lust for life. That much was obvious and needed no discussion. So let's get going.

Punk sailed under the flag of anarchism, but in anarchism there slumbered a hint of destruction and fatalism. We wanted to differentiate ourselves from that, so we turned to a more communist point of view. Some of us came from a Marxist-Leninist background. We believed in doing things ourselves and doing them together. Co-operation. It obviously had nothing to do with any form of state communism, if it can be called that. We kept far away from the bourgeois CPN and leaned more towards the viewpoints of the German RAF (*Rote Armee Fraktion*), which had taken up arms against imperialism in the spirit of the Vietcong. We sympathized with that. Not that we wanted to take up arms, but we came a long way by taking up our guitars.

At the same time, communism as a symbol turned out to be a good provocation too, both towards the bourgeoisie and the self-proclaimed anarchist punk scene. We sewed a yellow hammer and sickle on to the top left corner of a large Dutch flag and used it as a backdrop to our gigs. It went really well with Maarten's police uniform. But it was not always understood. Were we really communists? We assented to it half mockingly and half seriously. In the beginning, our lyrics were non-political or generally 'anti'. Wayward, anyhow. Over time we became more serious about our communist image. More fanatical too, due to pressure from the outside. But more about that later.

It remains to be seen whether that whole business with the hammer and sickle was an act of wisdom. But as they say, hindsight is 20/20. We were more like precursors of the do-it-yourself undercurrent than followers of communist doctrine. We practised what we preached and preached what

we practised. It wasn't theory. We were not armchair socialists. We shared our space, our equipment, our printing press and our money. We worked on an equal basis with everyone. And we worked hard. Day and night. Without making any money for ourselves. Not a cent. We were in service. So were a lot of others. They were the ones we collaborated with, whether they were punks or not.

We gained followers. Many young punks who liked our music and also kind of liked our ideas. Hammers and sickles appeared all over the place, but that had never been our aim. On the contrary: we were hoping people would shape their own ideas, start their own bands and stencil their own fanzines. Some did, others preferred to be followers.

Eksit was the Paradiso of Rotterdam, only smaller. They had hosted several notorious English punk bands as early as 1977, including The Sex Pistols. Full marks. But after that they were through with punk. Bands from abroad still played there regularly, but no Dutch punk groups and even fewer Rotterdam punks. We were boycotted. And Rotterdam punks still gathered in Eksit every weekend, for the simple reason that they had nowhere else to go in Rotterdam. Many of them worked in Eksit too, as volunteers. Dissatisfaction began to build up about the rigid policy, particularly that of programmer Leo Loos. He stuck to his guns. No Rotterdam punk. Even though ever more bands appeared, with no opportunities to perform. The atmosphere grew tense. Glasses were not the only things that got broken. A strapping young punk from Puttershoek walked around the venue with the toilet seat around his neck. The walls were covered in graffiti, to the annoyance of staff and regulars. There were fierce discussions and a female staff member eventually sighed: "But Leo himself is quite punk too." You don't say.

Eventually Leo Loos elegantly dropped to his knees and had an audience at Huize Schoonderloo. Apparently we were the representatives of the Rotterdam punk scene. We negotiated. And got a result. More punk bands would be scheduled, on weekends too, possibly or if necessary as a support act, and the stage would be open to Dutch punk bands every Tuesday night, including Rotterdam bands. We made an appeal to everyone in Raket to report at Eksit. Bands poured in. Tuesday nights became crowded. This is when we met The Workmates and The Ex from Amsterdam. Kindred spirits. We became friends and regularly performed together. The Rondos did a gig with Slaughterhouse Five in Eksit on 12 May 1979. On a weekend. Indeed.

Then a miracle happened. The unsurpassed Ted, a friend from a distant Marxist-Leninist past, worked as a social worker in creative centre Kaasee. A large wooden barracks on the outskirts of Rotterdam, on the Gordelweg to be precise. Hardly anyone ever went there. Ted opened Kaasee's doors to the Rotterdam punk scene. Everybody was welcome. A large number of punks offered their help as worker and programmer. Kaasee became the punk headquarters of Rotterdam and surroundings. Dutch bands and foreign bands performed there every weekend. Entrance fees were low and the interior minimalist. In short: a paradise.

The highlight was probably Rock Against Religion on the second day of Christmas, 26 December 1979. On the programme were Neh, Revo, The Ash-Trays, Jesus & The Gospelfuckers, Ketchup, Tändstickorshocks, Rode Wig, Ayatolla's, Squats and the unfortunate Jules Deelder, who would be opening the night reading poetry. In his *Neon* program Bob Visser spent some airtime on a television announcement of the RAR night and Raket no. 7 included a special RAR supplement and a RAR poster. The audience flooded in. A punk concert was more appealing than Christmas at the parents' any time. Kaasee was packed. Punks piled up outside. They couldn't get in. Not because of safety regulations, but simply because the place was crammed full. The night was a great success. Nine bands and a poet for a mere 2.5 guilders. They don't come like that any more.

Saskia had by that time become a true master in putting pressure on civil servants and had made out a case for rehearsal spaces for the fast growing number of bands. There was a constant lack of rehearsal spaces in the city. She arranged something with the support of the director of the Rotterdam School of Music. Two locations would be converted into rehearsal spaces. One in North Rotterdam and one in South Rotterdam, in the former camp Waalhaven. Both of them gave room to around 20 bands and were equipped with a basic backline. They would be managed by the foundation *Stichting Rotterdamse Oefenruimtes* STROEF, founded for this purpose, and manned by the musicians themselves. Saskia was offered a council job. As a youth worker. She declined.

Peter Graute of record-shop Backstreet Records on the Boomgaardstraat considered his stock as his own collection that he sold from. He played a major role in the Rotterdam punk scene from the word go. His shop was

a place where punks got together and bought records that were not for sale anywhere else. In 1980 Peter released the LP *Rotterdam Collection* with Martin of Backlash Studio. It included a number of punk bands. He suggested we invited bands from England and the United States. He had the necessary contacts and would organize the gigs, for instance in Eksit, Kaasee or other places in the Netherlands. We would house the bands in Huize Schoonderloo. It was an excellent plan. Lydia Lunch came with Adèle Bertei of The Contortions and Scritti Politti. The Red Crayola and The Raincoats came over too, as well as a number of reggae bands, consisting of non-communicative Rastas, whose names have long been forgotten. The result was a series of legendary concerts.

In April 1979 we released our first single, together with The Railbirds. *Polio from Holland* it said on the colour postcard in the plastic cover, referring to the refusal of families of strictly reformed upbringing to vaccinate their children against polio. The edition was 500 copies. We released this edition once again DIY, proving it was perfectly possible to release your own records. To beg for a record contract with record companies was unnecessary and demeaning. For this occasion we started our own independent label King Kong Records.

A double single was released in July, again with The Railbirds and now also with Bunker and Terminal City, the stage name of the Rotterdam poet Fready. Once again in an edition of 500 copies. We sold the records ourselves: at home, at concerts, in Peter's shop Backstreet, where we also sold Raket, and in a few other record-shops.

At some point in spring Dick Rijnke of Rotterdam Films called us. VPRO television had asked him and his wife Mildred van Leeuwaarden to do a triptych about the Rotterdam art scene. He was already working with Cor Kraat and his mates, but would also like to record something with us. He was wondering if he could come by. He could. It involved ten or twenty minutes of film at the most. We agreed. Dick and Mildred soon became enthusiastic about the goings on in and around Huize Schoonderloo and Kaasee. Beautiful material of course, and thus far undiscovered. They filmed our adventures regularly over the course of several months. Meanwhile Dick cut his hair, bought a leather jacket with the right buttons and spray-painted graffiti on the walls of the railway station tunnel with Mildred. In the end, the last one and a half episodes of the documentary were devoted to Huize Schoonderloo and its inhabitants and sympathizers. The triptych was named *Groeten uit Rotterdam* ('Greetings from Rotterdam') and was shown on Dutch television in April 1980.

In the meantime we were still art academy students. We'd almost forget at times. Final exams were nevertheless on their way. We insisted on graduating together, with our collective projects. As Kunstkollektief Dubio, so to say. The plan was reluctantly agreed to. The procedure was set in motion. Just before the crucial moment it was decided it wasn't possible after all. The diplomas were registered to our names, so they wanted to know exactly who had done what. We ignored them and wrote a manifesto against the art academy as an institution and confederate of the art- and gallery-mafia. Up yours!

We did have our own ideas about art. First and foremost, it had to be worthless. That is to say art should not represent any financial value. Rather a thousand bad stencils than one framed, unique but prohibitive pencil drawing with eternal value. To us, art was not a commodity, investment or status symbol. Art had to be reproducible, temporary, accessible to everyone and preferably exhibited in the streets. Our anti-art shaped our ideas, our discontent and our anti-authoritarian sentiments. Our work was anonymous and straightforward. And we couldn't appreciate the spiritual dimension of art, for the time-being.

Eventually we did exhibit our work, consisting of comics, copies of Raket, posters, graffiti and big Rondos flags in the academy hall and refused to accept our diplomas. Or were they denied us? It all caused a great stir. Our work couldn't be assessed. It fell outside all disciplines. They had indeed no clue. Vice-principal Piet Geurts didn't show up. A few of the teachers supported us. Most stayed out of the fray, choosing neutrality as the safer option. We did, however, sell 1500 guilders worth of issues, records and buttons in one week to fellow students and other interested parties. Dick and Mildred captured it all on film for generations to come.

Around that time Peter from Backstreet showed us a bizarre LP from London: *The feeding of the 5000* by Crass. We were overwhelmed. An enormous noise, driven by the beat of a drum and accompanied by serious ranting and raving, lasting the entire two sides of the album. We'd never heard the word 'fuck' that often on one record before. In Huize Schoonderloo we held our breaths as we listened to Crass' anti-musical music many times over. Something that resembled tracks started to take shape. We

read the lyrics and looked closely at the sheet covered in fascist-like symbolism. They were great! Better than us!

We sent them an enthusiastic letter, some of our issues and a single. We immediately got a very nice letter in return, with Crass buttons we should by no means feel obliged to wear and a Crass lyrics book, handmade and stencilled. They wondered if we wanted to come to England to perform together. We sure did. We decided to take a trip to England. Dick and Mildred filmed our departure from Hook of Holland. We saw a Crass concert in London. What an experience. The whole thing soon degenerated into a fight, initiated by a gang of skinheads who were violently terrorizing the venue. To our utter amazement Crass initially played on as if nothing was happening.

The following day we visited Dial House in the countryside on the outskirts of London. Penny Rimbaud, Crass' drummer and clearly its source of inspiration too, gave us a warm welcome. He'd been in the kitchen all day and had baked all kinds of vegan vegetable pies, especially for us. Were we hungry? We told him it was kind of him but we'd just scoffed some hamburgers in London somewhere. Vegetarianism was still one step beyond us. Crass were surprised we weren't fifteen-year-olds. That is how our music had sounded on the single we sent them. What do you say to that? To make things better G. said it was meant as a compliment. Rather sweet.

We were invited to perform with Crass and Poison Girls in London the following September. We were already looking forward to it. They asked if we could leave the hammer and sickle at home, because they were likely to have the wrong effect on the skinheads who faithfully frequented Crass' gigs. We agreed to everything.

We returned to London in September. We were wearing nice black suits with red *Politischer Schutzhaftling* ('political activists in protective custody') triangles. Admittedly inspired by Crass' militant uniforms. Up to then we'd usually worn cheerful, colourful football shirts bought on flea markets. But by then everybody was doing that, you see.

The Crass members lived and worked together for the good cause like we did. They were incredibly friendly, a little older and a little more intellectual. And the ladies were rather feminist. "We pay with our bodies." We were still boyish and open-minded, but certainly not stupid. We got on straight away, especially with Penny who just seemed incredibly old to us. He had to be almost forty! He was very friendly, however, and had clearly been influenced by oriental philosophy. Zen, if you like. We spotted modest Buddha statuettes here and there in the beautifully decorated country home and in the middle of a conversation he suddenly pointed at the wooden coffee table and said: "This teapot is borrowed from the universe." Everyone fell silent. You could have heard a pin drop and we all stared at the teapot on the table that looked very normal to us. We'd not seen that one coming.

We stayed the night. They willingly put their rooms and beds at our disposal. The day of the concert arrived, a benefit concert for anarchist prisoners in England. Crass practised the transitions between the songs, which they played without pausing, like they did on their records. We hung around in their delightful garden. Steve Ignorant, Crass' brilliant singer, polished everyone's Dr. Martens boots. He asked how we could remain so calm just before a performance. We smiled, because we didn't understand the question. He told us he kept running to the toilet with nerves all day. We raised our eyebrows. That afternoon we arrived at the Conway Hall in Crass' van. The place was swarming with skinheads. The fascist National Front had just held a big meeting. In the Conway Hall, of all places.

The atmosphere in the venue just before that night's performance was vicious. Fights broke out near the toilets in the corridor between different groups of skinheads supporting different football clubs. They marched ostentatiously into the room, with bloody hands and faces. They raised their arms in the Nazi salute. The Rondos played. Apart from the odd broken string the gig went perfect. We got good reactions. Poison Girls played. There was a lot of *Hex*-like behaviour from female fans. Their vocals were rather theatrical, but still it was a great show, supported noisily by a gang of Westham skins thrashing the balcony.

Then all hell broke loose. It all happened very fast. People were getting punched and kicked. Panic broke out. The audience scattered. We lifted small skinheads on to the stage so they wouldn't get trampled. They cried with shock and fear and were barely eleven or twelve years old. People were lying on the floor. The police arrived and cleared the room. The skins were told to hand in their shoelaces. Peace returned and staff scrubbed the floor and mopped up the blood. Apparently, members of the Anti Nazi League and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) had clashed with skinheads of the British Movement and the National Front, who had stayed behind in pubs around the Conway Hall after the NF meeting to come to Crass' gig that evening. A Jewish activist from the SWP walked up to the stage and

pointed his finger at Crass. Your fault!

We grabbed our things and got in the van. We were packed together and very quiet. We went by a Chinese take-away for some vegan spring rolls. At Crass' place a discussion ensued. The tone was friendly, but still. Shouldn't you protect yourself from this kind of violence? They frequently wrestled with these problems. Crass had become a target for skinheads who were attracted to their furious music, militant appearance and swastika-like symbols, but who rejected anarchist and pacifist ideas. Crass refused to employ bouncers or let the venue hire them, even though that was a common thing in London in those days. It was a question of principles but should the audience be put through all this? You do invite them to come to your gigs, after all. Is it fair to deliver them unprotected to hordes of skinheads, fascist or not, while you are safely on the stage? It was fair, said Crass, for that was simply the situation in London at that time and they didn't want to be 'anti'. Crass said we didn't understand, coming from the peaceful Netherlands. Crass' pacifist anarchism, although admirable, opposed The Rondos' more militant attitude.

We said goodbye the next day. We agreed to do more concerts in England together, organize a common tour of the Netherlands and there were plans to record an LP with Crass' help. We'd talk about it all later. In the meantime the newspapers in England were full of the Conway Hall battle. The only venue, by the way, that had offered the National Front a space to meet, from the fundamental conviction that everyone has the right of assembly. When we got back home to peaceful Huize Schoonderloo Andy, Crass' guitar player, telephoned us. They had decided not to collaborate with us after all. Yes, we did do the same thing and yes, personally they thought we were very nice and sympathetic, but still. Later we received a letter from Penny. They didn't want to confuse the audience by playing with a band that had different views. Besides, we had some sympathy for the People's Republic of China. Also a difficulty.

We were rather baffled. Obviously we understood that they were under direct physical threat from National Front skinheads. If they'd taken that as an argument, we would've immediately endorsed and appreciated it. But they were turning it into an ideological issue. They just didn't want to be seen with us. Letters were sent both ways. No results. Still we didn't give in. Raket published vicious articles we wrote about the Crass vs. Rondos controversy. We thought it relevant because in the Netherlands too, the Crass ideology was spreading and racism, propagated by different neo-Nazi groups, was emerging and poisoning the punk scene. The issue simply had to be addressed. In hindsight we may have been too bitter and disappointed, and thus let things get too tense. We did, however, get votes of sympathy from London punks who were tired of the skinhead terror and wanted to strike back, but felt hindered by Crass. The discussion spread across the Dutch punk scene. You can look it all up in Raket.

On 15 September, just after our return from London, The Rondos organized a concert in Kaasee for the benefit of striking Rotterdam dock workers. My father was one of them, you see. It was an unofficial strike, not backed by the trade unions for political reasons. They were in league with the reigning PvdA bosses, one of whom was the corpulent mayor of Rotterdam André van der Louw, once some kind of leftist but now utterly devoted to regency. The strikers were famished because the trade unions, including the socialist FNV, kept a lid on the strike fund cash box. Riot police were used to help those who wanted to work, popularly called blacklegs, inside the gates. Those picketing the docks were provoked and beaten up. The socialist city council even made a violent attempt to arrest all the strike leaders.

We decided to organize the benefit in Kaasee mainly due to our personal engagement. And why not? We were widely supported and received touching words of thanks from dock workers. Gretchen Gestapo responded with outrage. She thought it was ridiculous that punks, artistic ones even, had become involved with workers. Bunker, Jozef Kip Quartet, The Rondos, Tändstickorshocks, Sovjets, Infexion and The Bugs played for free. All the evening's proceeds, to the tune of 895 guilders, went to the strike fund.

Huize Schoonderloo sometimes seemed like a place of pilgrimage. It would be no exaggeration to say that hundreds of people visited our home over the years. The *Raketbasis* ('Rocket base') was even announced as a stop on the local tramline. There were many punks from abroad too. Take those two French punkettes who rang the doorbell, came in and pitched their camp in our workshop. They lay there in their sleeping bags for days, looking through our fanzines and issues. Every now and then they went to get some food and then all of a sudden they were gone. They never said a word.

The tireless Rob Berends from the Doornroosje venue in Nijmegen was one of our many regular visitors. He was dedicated to gathering, stapling and distributing Raket. He always brought a large rucksack for that purpose. The people from The Workmates and The Ex from Amsterdam also lent a helping hand. Not to mention Zult and Bill Rezillo of the *Pedaallemmer* fanzine from Zeeland. And of course we cooked meals for everyone. Punks from the Hague came by. They'd been chased from the royal seat because of the misbehaviour of The Mollesters and would therefore rather stay in Rotterdam. They were loyal visitors of Kaasee and made good music, with Ketchup, Kreche, BVD and others. BVD's bass player was a virtuoso on his fretless bass. He made a huge impression.

Haile Selassie-followers Gretchen Gestapo and Amarillo also did us the honour of a visit. They conducted their punk business from gallery Anus on Sarphatistraat 62 in Amsterdam. Following their visit to us they published a vindictive article in their fanzine *Koecrandt*. Which wasn't even true. They spread the rumour that The Rondos were sponsored by the communist party CPN and that we received a subsidy from the city of Rotterdam through the intervention of Van der Louw's son, who hung out with the punk scene. It was all jealousy-inspired slander. They later even admitted it themselves. But to this day, Gretchen Gestapo, who now calls herself Diana Ozon, stubbornly persists in this rubbish. Yes, I suppose there is still an old sore there, and an old annoyance. She really wanted to belong, you see. Not so much to the punk movement as to the art establishment. She was willing to do anything. She even sold out graffiti.

We also harboured refugees. Take Noël, that was his alias, who had narrowly escaped the claws of the Philippine junta. He had worked as a lawyer for the Philippine resistance and had thus become involved in armed actions. The police had traced him after the guerrilla movement had 'borrowed' his car for a bombing. He had fled, leaving his wife and child behind, and had come to the Netherlands working on a ship. He was here illegally and he was ill. He cooked for us. Chicken with incredible amounts of garlic. He later left to stay with his brother in Canada, where he would be safe.

From our home, militant anti-militarists carried out actions targeting American army materiel in the Rotterdam harbour. Our location near the River Maas was very strategic and they were oh-so nervous.

Social workers dropped by with large groups of youngsters. They wanted to show them that things could be done differently. We drank litres of tea with biscuits together. Surinamese kids from the Kruiskade used our stencil machine to multiply their pamphlets. We helped them with their photographs in the darkroom. People from the *Groep Marxisten-Leninisten* ('Marxist-Leninist Group') appeared and published articles on us in their magazine *Rode Morgen* ('Red Dawn'). They brought along old campaigners like Kees Rijken, who had been a member of the *Communistische Partij Holland* ('Communist Party Holland') before the war and had served as a political officer in the secret and illegal organization led by Daan Goulooze. Kees would later play an important role in the book *Rood Rotterdam in the jaren '30* ('Red Rotterdam in the Thirties'), published by Raket in 1984.

Film maker Pieter Jan Smit screened the premiere of his movie *Botlek Blues* in Huize Schoonderloo. The Rondos did the score. A delegation of Amsterdam squatters came on a working visit. We showed them around our premises. They thought it looked like a monastery. Wim offered one of the female squatters a 'humandarin'. We certainly did not want to seem sexist.

We became good friends with Herman from the squatters publisher Lont in Amsterdam and worked closely with him. Local residents came over for tea. Like the couple who ran the snack bar down the road. We had a meal there every Monday, after mopping our whole building. The husband was a 6th dan karate and said we could always call him if something was up. A reassuring thought. The greengrocer around the corner, the hyper-nervous Aad Stok, who did not like to eat fruit himself, gave us boxes full of 'left-over' fruit and vegetables at the end of every day. Almost for free. Cape Verdean girls practised their gymnastics in Allie's room. They had lost the key to their own space in the neighbourhood and knocked on our door. And many more people visited us. There was a writer of radio plays from the BBC with a heavy stammer. There were punks from Antwerp, Paris, Delft, Utrecht, New York and Puttershoek. An old lady from the neighbourhood gave us her old iron bed for free, in case we didn't have enough beds for all our visitors. There was Sonia Herman Dolz, still very young then, who makes such beautiful documentaries now. There was a truck driver who gave us boxes full of paper he'd skimmed off a load. On one occasion thirty Amsterdam punks, all more or less drunk, came ringing our doorbell in the middle of the night looking for a place to sleep. We didn't open the door. There was Colombian Luz, who we helped writing her thesis and who dedicated herself entirely to the Cape Verdean community in Rotterdam. There

was Martin Mooij, the very helpful director of the *Rotterdamse Kunststichting* ('Rotterdam Art Foundation'). There was the peerless Herman Pin who wrested a similarly peerless interview from us. There were the squatters from the Rotterdam *Poortgebouw*. There were the people from the graphic workshop *Grafische Werkplaats Rotterdam*, who gave us an entire printing press.

This list is just a fraction of all the nice — and not so nice — people who dropped in on a visit or stayed a while at Huize Schoonderloo. All these people walked around in our home and nothing ever got stolen. Apart from a pile of LPs swiped from Piet's studio by the haughty Lydia Lunch alias Teenage Jesus, and a hundred guilders from our housekeeping money taken by a junkie dressed up as a punk.

Naturally, our telephone lines were monitored and the police and the Dutch Secret Service BVD kept an eye on us. There were strangers who came to the door dressed in army boots, asking us how they could get in touch with people from the *Rood Verzetsfront* ('Red Resistance Front'), Dutch sympathizers of the German *Rote Armee Fraktion* RAF. We told them we didn't have a clue. They just looked a little too much like policemen to us.

Then there was a guy dressed in a Palestinian scarf. He wanted to hold his meetings with other city guerrillas in our bunker, so they could not be listened in on. We were suspicious and told him to find a location for his conspiracy elsewhere. There were enough police provocateurs about and we didn't want to take a chance.

One of our acquaintances brought in a white South-African man once. Unexpectedly, on an evening, while we were watching TVs. He had fled from a police cell in South Africa, where he had been held captive for armed actions like ANC bombings. He claimed to be an ANC member. He said he had been tortured by the police. He was nervous and asked us for underground work so he could make money for an escape to Sweden. He wanted to seek political asylum there. He also needed medication for the epileptic fits he was having after having undergone heavy torture, and an address he could stay at in the north of the country. We urged him to tell us as little about himself as possible. The less we knew, the better. We gave him money and arranged for medication through a doctor friend from the socialist party who had also treated Noël. We gave him an address somewhere near Groningen, with non-political family members. This way he had everything he needed and we didn't put anyone in danger. He left and we never saw him again.

Much later, during a meeting of leftist book-shops in Huize Schoonderloo, it appeared that the man had visited leftist strongholds in several cities, telling more or less the same story. He was simply a police spy. Voluntarily or under pressure. This was how secret services mapped escape routes in case they ever really needed to catch someone.

Does all of this still have anything to do with The Rondos' music? It sure does!

Something a little more light-hearted about the repression system, then. Our shop was visited by the local policeman. He had a very young trainee with him. The trainee stared at all the posters on the walls around him with his mouth open and asked: "Are all of those really against us?" We sympathized with him.

We also heard from neo-Nazis. The notorious and feared Marinus from Amsterdam called several times. He only wanted to talk to the men, not to Saskia who happened to pick up the phone. I spoke to him. They were long conversations on a friendly but distant tone. Did we not want the same thing? He respected us. We were militant and well-organized. He appreciated that. It was just that he believed more in the "blood and soil" idea of national socialism because he hated foreigners. Later he showed up at a Rondos gig with a bunch of thugs. He was out of luck: the venue in South Rotterdam was the territory of a heavy motor gang. They were no weak little boys and they didn't tolerate any kind of hassle on their home turf. The whole thing blew over.

Neo-Nazis sent letters with Adolf Hitler stamps to Raket. We published them without any kind of comment. They spoke for themselves.

Incidentally we also founded *Red Rock* in October 1979. Red Rock was a collaboration, at first of three and then of four Rotterdam bands with anarchist or communist sympathies: Sovjets, The Rondos, Rode Wig and Tändstickorshocks. We shared a rehearsal space and PA and performed together as often as possible. Maarten designed the Red Rock logo, a kind of stretched red V on a green-white-green Rotterdam flag.

Sovjets were Rik, Mees, Erik and drummer Kees who could keep up a good pace provided he didn't drink too much. They played catchy music. Solid. Punk at its best, and funny too. Later they started playing rather more experimental 'no wave' with Gabriëlle on drums, Bernie singing and Anne on

the saxophone.

By that time, The Rondos wore a uniform of grey working clothes with the red KZ triangle worn by political prisoners in the Nazi-camps. Our lyrics had become more political and our music more intense. Displayed in the background were our large square banners. One of those featured a stylized version of El Lissitzky's *Beat the White Armies with the Red Wedge* from 1920.

Rode Wig ('Red Wedge') was founded shortly after that by Saskia, Rien who played the bass and his brother Pieter on the guitar. Carla joined the band later. She played the guitar and sang. Saskia played the drums. Or rather: beat the drum, in the most positive sense possible. Because the music Rode Wig played probably sounded most like the agitprop groups of the Communist Party of Germany in the thirties. They wore the same kind of uniform clothing and the lyrics were political manifestos without any exceptions. One could call it musical pamphletism, referring to punk's roots in revolutionary Russian and German avant-garde. Or would that be saying too much?

And then there were the inimitable Tändstickorshocks. They were probably one of the most legendary Dutch punk bands of all times. Did they realize that themselves? Probably not. Could they play? Yes and no. They made not being able to play into an art form. Ron Roteb, ex-Railbirds singer, most certainly knew how to play the guitar on his maltreated instrument sawed down to the size of a cigar box. His singing was phenomenal. Exasperating. The inseparable Geert and Pinkel played bass and guitar respectively and sometimes sang a song. Ton, in his total "despair", was an excellent drummer. He was the only drummer who occasionally managed to strike up a split second too early or too late then keep it up during the whole song. Breathtaking. And contrary to most other bands they looked really punk. Their EP, released by King Kong Records in April 1980 in an edition of 1000 copies is a monument for Dutch punk in general and Red Rock in particular. It is enough to make you go all lyrical.

The band Revo had the run of our place too. Besides, they were always very helpful in gathering Raket. Revo played extremely fast, rudimentary punk and consisted of four fourteen-year-old, beardless lads who were all school drop-outs. It was an express condition to be allowed to join the band. Aram, with the first A circled, always looked like he was being electrocuted and shouted his unintelligible lyrics out in a choked falsetto. Ed Equalizer played the drums, like his big brother did in Bunker, and Ernst played the guitar. The lanky and extremely shy Marcel Megawatt played the bass guitar. He was excellent at drawing and published his own magazine *Marcel Megawattblad*. Raket no. 8 appeared in January 1980 with a special Marcel Megawatt supplement.

There was no end to the publications. Raket published long articles on anarchism, Rastafarianism and anti-fascism. Everyone could send in their contribution. Apart from that we published lyrics books, posters, post-cards, pamphlets, a children's book and huge amounts of buttons of The Rondos, Tändstickorshocks, Red Rock, Rode Wig and buttons with the texts 'Destroy fascism', *ME weg ermee* ('Down with the Riot Police') and *VerZ* ('Res=tance'). Altogether over 30,000 pieces.

We had a love-hate relationship with Paradiso. We performed there on 1 November 1979 with all the members of Red Rock and on 17 December with Red Rock, The Ex and Ketchup as part of the *Laatste Punkweekend* ('Last Punk Weekend'). We were still thick as thieves back then but, to run ahead of our story, on 3 May 1980 we would be refusing to play there again. We had been asked to perform on an anti-fascism night and to make the programme booklet for the event as well. Nothing was too much trouble for us but with metropolitan arrogance, Paradiso raised the entrance fee from four to ten guilders, contrary to agreement. It was partly due to The Slits and The Pop Group from England. They asked 5000 guilders for their anti-fascist performances and received it too. That night we handed out our free booklets outside Paradiso and gave our incensed comments.

All of the above has helped shape our music. It was not only influenced by the music of our favourite bands Wire and Gang of Four, or Crass' determination, another favourite, but especially by our daily life. And that daily life was called punk. Punk was an undercurrent, or anticurrent: a subculture that gave everyone the chance to develop their own creativity, discover their own qualities and live amongst equals. That was how we lived in Huize Schoonderloo. That is how we liked it. We wanted to take part in society, most certainly, but not in the institutions that tried to dominate and control life and degraded people to mere workers, subjects, patients, believers or consumers. We detested that. This view of life permeates The Rondos' music.

In the meantime our LP *Red Attack* appeared in February 1980. It was the

first time a band had released a punk LP on their own in the Netherlands, as far as we know. Something to be proud of. We recorded the album in Martin van der Leer's Backlash Studio on the Haringvliet in Rotterdam. Most tracks were recorded only once. It took only a couple of days to record them all. Now Martin said the whole thing needed to be mixed. We didn't understand. We had recorded our previous singles ourselves, on a two-track recorder in our shell-proof rehearsal space. There had been no mixing whatsoever. It was fine as long as it all sounded equally loud. He suggested adding an echo and... We protested even louder. No echo. Are you nuts? We release it just the way it has been recorded. The next day Wim and Frank went over to the studio to make sure there was no mixing going on. We considered the whole thing settled. *Red Attack's* famous sound, the cardboard box sound, is simply the result of our ignorance. But it sounds great all the same. We had 2500 copies pressed and sold them for *Don't pay more than f12.50*. In *Raket* we wrote a guide to recording, releasing and distributing your own records. Music belongs to everyone and should not be monopolized by record companies.

Around this time Maarten decided to leave The Rondos and move out of Huize Schoonderloo. He was dearly missed. Rien Faber of Rode Wig moved in. He was a true asset.

### How it all ended...

We have now come to 1980, The Rondos' last year. We'd been playing the better music venues for a while now, like Paradiso, Doornroosje, De Eland and O16. We'd left the community centres and more obscure places behind us. We attracted a large audience, however reluctantly, and our magazine *Raket* kept growing. Red Rock flourished and here and there a good review on our LP appeared in the newspapers. Nevertheless the punk movement started showing hairline cracks. Commerce and heroin were not the only newcomers on the scene: the extreme right also got a foot in the door, like the *Nationale Partij Nederland* ('Dutch National Party') and the *Nationaal Jeugd Front* ('National Youth Front'). That was a nasty business. Some punks and newly-bred skinheads, adorned with misunderstood Celtic crosses, could not resist the temptation. Racist pamphlets were handed out, still secretly then, and foreign labourers got beaten up. Popular feelings were roused, against us too.

We could see the storm coming and devoted lengthy articles and unequivocal drawings in *Raket* to the subject. We warned people. Not just against the rapidly emerging right-wing extremism — their leader Janmaat would take place in the Dutch Parliament shortly after that — but also against the ever growing state terror.

We anticipated the coming of some kind of police state. It was not such a strange idea in times of economic crisis and growing resistance. In England Thatcher continued anything but gently, radically destroying the entire social system. In West Germany the power of the repressive system was grotesquely extended, under the pretext of the war against the so-called terrorism of the RAF. *Berufsverbot*, censorship on books and press and precautionary arrests were the order of the day. They positively fell back into national socialism. The United States of America pulled all the strings in the background.

The Netherlands contributed to these developments too. The police took violent action against left-wing activists. Tanks were deployed against squatters and vomiting gas against peace activists. Firearms were pointed at people. On 30 April 1981, during Queen Beatrix' visit to Breda, they casually tried out precautionary arrests. There was no legal basis whatsoever, but you can never start those things early enough.

What could we do? We did all we could to try and place the punk movement in a historical context. In beautiful articles in *Raket* we referred to Dada and the revolutionary workers culture of the KPD that arose from it in Germany in the interbellum period. We praised John Heartfield, George Grosz and Gerd Arntz. We published several of Gerd Arntz' beautiful black-and-white lino- and woodcuts. A punkette from The Hague visited us and saw the images. She said: "My grandfather made those." We told her they were by Gerd Arntz and she said: "He's my grandfather." She took a copy of *Raket* home to show him. Less than a week later we received a handsome letter in an almost runic handwriting that we only managed to decipher after puzzling over it for quite a while. Gerd Arntz was pleased to see that his work was used again in the fight for the good cause.

To underpin our statements in *Raket*, we used to fall back on Marxist theories. We did the same in analyzing emerging fascism. This led to a num-

ber of indigestible essays on communism of rather questionable merit. We also brought up the People's Republic of China as a socialist experiment. We gave the Chinese comrades the benefit of the doubt, unjustly so, as it turned out.

It might have been better if we'd stuck to our own practices and the ideas stemming from them. But 'do-it-yourself' was no standard expression yet and did not come up to the mark against the fascist and racist reflexes that were spreading like wildfire and the growing state terror. As a consequence there was some confusion of concepts and we alienated part of the punk scene. But never mind that. The demise of the punk scene was already inevitable.

Punk had become outdated and threatened to fall into harmless folklore. Our house was used more and more like some kind of community centre. People rang the doorbell, made themselves comfortable on our sofa, watched our televisions and emptied our fridge. We were forced to retire to our private quarters. In the end we made it clear that Huize Schoonderloo was our home, our hermitage. This was where we lived. And maybe people could find something else to entertain themselves on Saturday evenings. That did not go down well.

The divisions in the once so harmonious punk movement grew ever larger. There were the folklore punks on one hand and people looking for new ways to do things on the other. We belonged to the latter and were annoyed by the first group.

We had provided entrance to Eksit and Kaasee, provided rehearsal spaces, a periodical that was available for everyone and much more. We had hoped other punks would follow our example. We wanted to collaborate, not lead. But a lot of punks found it nice and convenient. Why bother doing anything themselves? It had made them lazy and greedy and all they did was complain. Of course there were many good people too. But unfortunately the simple-minded ones are always a majority.

Yes, we were on the warpath. We were unscrupulous and loving at the same time, as well as incredibly dedicated, and we were not tied to our punk image.

Then came 30 April 1980. We went to the capital to witness the coronation débâcle. Police provocation made the whole thing escalate, and we fought at the forefront in the battle for the Blauwbrug bridge. We threw stones at the anti-riot squad. They got what they bargained for. We were not in the least averse to it.

The following day, on 1 May, we performed in Kaasee with Art in Revolution and BVD. The audience was all set for an hour of jumping and bouncing. After Maarten had left, however, we'd composed a whole new set. Our music was even more jagged, hacking and bleak and had a very personal style. But most of all it was impossible to dance to. Some people appreciated the turn we had taken, but a large part of the audience pulled out on the spot and resorted to Kotx from South Rotterdam. They advocated a rather more hedonistic kind of punk. The Rotterdam punk scene had finally been split. A good thing too.

On 18 May we performed with Red Rock in Doornroosje in Nijmegen, together with The Ex and Suspect. We didn't know then that it would be our last performance.

The Fall from Manchester let us know that they wanted to organize a tour of the Netherlands with The Rondos. They'd listened to our LP and were impressed. We declined because we had just planned our holidays and really needed the break.

We took the train to the Basque Country. We were very partial to the more stubborn regions. We also visited Lourdes and eventually the Pyrenees. The breathtaking beauty of the mountains overwhelmed us. We'd gotten used to spending our time in stuffy, dark and smoky rooms. Here, there were trees, clouds, mountain lakes, chamois, fire salamanders and whip snakes. We bought mountaineering boots and went on long hikes. We stayed away as long as possible, until we had no money left. When we got back to Rotterdam, we could think clearly again. The retreat had done us good. We realized we didn't want to be the frontmen of the punk scene or the scapegoats of neo-Nazis and other riffraff. We decided to pack in The Rondos and Raket. We'd overshot the mark. That much was clear to us. But we stayed true to ourselves and decided to tie things up nicely. We would publish two more editions of Raket and one last Rondos single. And that is what we did.

Somewhere around this time it all became too much for Piet. He made beautiful paintings in his studio and took part in everything. He photographed almost all our gigs. Nevertheless, he'd been feeling uncomfortable for a while because of the friction between his love for painting and our reputed anti-art attitude. Sadly, he decided to leave Huize Schoonderloo.

Raket no. 13 appeared in September 1980 in an edition of 1000 copies. It contained 114 pages. The last edition of Raket, no. 14, was published in November of that year, with no less than 4 supplements: *Over platen maken en hun verspreiding* ('On making records and their distribution'), *The selling of Limburg*, about punk in the mining district, *Punk & Verzet* ('Punk and Resistance') and the first part of *De avonturen van Red Rat* ('The Adventures of Red Rat'). 232 pages all together, times 1000 for the complete edition. Our arms ached with stencilling and gathering all the pages and we called on everyone to start making their own fanzines again.

With these last two editions we dropped a bombshell. Punk was as good as dead, we argued. What should we do? Anybody had any ideas? A heated discussion followed. The supplement *Punk & Verzet* that came with Raket no. 14 is bursting at the seams with the reactions. We may have overplayed our hand in the all too personal polemics with some former Red Rock colleagues. Feelings were running high and stones literally came flying through our windows. But the loss, particularly of Kaasee, once a refuge for all denominations, but degenerated to the drinking and fighting house of a small, intolerant clique, truly grieved us. We were sad to see it all being thrown away. The disintegration only gained momentum and on 8 April, 1981 Kaasee burnt to the ground. The Rotterdam punk scene collapsed like a house of cards and never recovered from the blow. That's that, done and dusted, good riddance.

In September 1980 The Rondos' last single appeared, titled *Fight Back!*. On the sleeve it said: "the rondos quit. this is our last record. we brought the rondos to a conclusion, because in our opinion we became too successful. and being successful means being accepted. besides; a great part of the punk-movement is developing in a direction, which is not ours; violence, alcohol, confirmation and commerce/business. but the struggle continues! we keep on fighting with other means." It was written without capital letters, in both Dutch and English.

The public at large took offence at the word 'success'. They thought, like true bourgeois, that by success we meant being in the hit parade and making lots of money. But we didn't. On the contrary, to us being successful meant to be placed on a pedestal, serving as a punchbag for neo-Nazi and being asked to play on a Labour Day celebration for the PvdA, for Chrissake. We declined. We would rather do without The Rondos.

Our urge to provoke took new shape in the sleeve of *Fight Back!* We were often called Maoists. That's all very well, but then we would put a portrait of the Great Helmsman on the sleeve of our last single. Almost everyone took the provocation seriously, even though the man in question wore the red Rondos triangle on his luxury workwear. And the song *Which side will you be on?* most certainly was a call to our colleagues from Crass.

We made plans to start a new band later, under a new name, once everything had quietened down. We never did. We sold our PA and paid back the 10,000 guilders we borrowed for it. The Rondos were history. Forever more. Amen.

### How after the end life went on just like before...

We had ended Raket with the slogan *Punk is dead. Long live the resistance.* Nothing much changed for us, to be honest. But it was a weight off our shoulders. We were public figures no longer and considerably fewer people visited Huize Schoonderloo. Our home became a haven of peace. Relative peace, because things kept rumbling. We continued building our network of like-minded people and got back to work. Raket became the name of our publisher's.

*De avonturen van Red Rat* ('The Adventures of Red Rat') part one, about the crowning of Beapix, that had first appeared as a supplement with Raket no. 14, was received with open arms. In April 1981 part one and the new part two about squatting appeared together as a comic, with a poster, in an edition of 4000 copies that sold out rapidly. In the comic, rats came up against pigs. Red Rat flitted to and fro in all the stories, more like a spectator than a hero and always profoundly confused. More double editions followed. I drew ten parts all together, in five comic books. They were about the actions against a nuclear power station in Dodewaard, Breda 30 April 1981, the ammunition trains, Berlin, men and women, the left-wing movement, the office and the Basque Country. A Red Rat button appeared and some posters. Red Rat became popular and his likeness popped up everywhere. On walls, T-shirts, in school papers and fanzines. He started to lead his own life and no one knew who drew him. He was even translated. There were three translations into German and there are rumours about English,

Italian and Danish versions. The comic publisher's Oberon called and offered us a contract for Red Rat. We weren't interested.

In the meantime we'd been working very hard on *Ze zijn er weer...* ('They are back...'). A substantial book on the organization and strategy of state repression. We drew lines from national socialism to the American counter-insurgency and showed how control of the press and the media was at the centre of state psychological warfare. *Ze zijn er weer...* was in fact an elaboration of the political views we had aired in Raket and in the lyrics of the Rondos songs. We did all the writing, lay-out and printing of the 305 pages of the book ourselves. *Ze zijn er weer...* appeared in July 1982. The cover showed the face of a member of the anti-riot squad that looked suspiciously like the former Fuehrer of the Third Reich. The police noticed too and resolutely seized a number of copies at the shop of the Rotterdamse Kunststichting. But by that time we'd already sold most of our edition of 2000 copies.

Wim, who was especially devoted to music, had by that time started playing drums with The Ex. And how!

When our angry neighbour left in 1981 because he law-abidingly assumed Huize Schoonderloo would be demolished, we confiscated the three-storied caretaker's house. We opened the leftist book-shop *Raketbasis* on the ground floor. Paulette van Raket, who had by that time moved into Huize Schoonderloo, sold all kinds of subversive reading material, records, posters, buttons and similar articles there.

Then we read in the paper that the community council of Delfshaven had decided to demolish Huize Schoonderloo in the near future. They hadn't even bothered to notify us personally. It turned into a battle for preservation of the beautiful premises. Not for ourselves, but because we were outraged that a beautiful, historical home dating from 1803 that was in perfect technical state would be torn down. In Rotterdam of all places. In that case the German *Luftwaffe* had had nothing to be ashamed of either. We won. CPN party member Bulthuis tasted defeat after the 9000 folders we spread door-to-door, the incredible support of local people and other sympathizers. Rightly so.

The school our home was supposed to make way for, ended up being built next-door. All that needed to be demolished were two empty warehouses. Huize Schoonderloo remained. It was fully restored later and is still there today. In all its glory.

Wim moved out and after a while we came to the conclusion it would be better if we all went our separate ways. We transferred Huize Schoonderloo to a friend of ours. She would manage the building and find a good purpose for it.

We had started a new project in the meantime. Rien, Saskia and I worked on *Rood Rotterdam in de jaren '30* ('Red Rotterdam in the Thirties') for two years. It was a hell of a job, but well worth the effort. We interviewed fifteen men and women who had been active in the leftist movement before the war. They were communists, anarchists, free-thinkers, social revolutionaries, syndicalist communists and one Interbrigadist who fought in Spain. We became good friends with most of them. They entrusted us with their personal stories and their precious photographs. The book grew into a 384-page monument filled with stories, photographs, drawings, letters and poems. *Rood Rotterdam* was to become the first book about 'ordinary' revolutionaries in the Maas city during the depression. It appeared in January 1984 in an edition of 4000 copies.

We made the booklet *Pen en Schaar* ('Pen and Scissors') with two of the old campaigners, Kees Rijken and Bram van de Haterd. It contained collages by Kees and poems by Bram. We also released the comic *Uitverkoop!* ('For sale!') about the rise of the Dutch national socialist movement NSB in the thirties.

Rien went his own way and Saskia, little Jan en Arie, and myself moved to Amsterdam. There, Raket merged with Lont and took the surprising name Raket & Lont publisher's. Several other publications followed, including the comic book *No Pasaran!* about the adventures of a Dutch Interbrigadist in the Spanish civil war. In 1987 it all came to an end. Herman and I decided to hand over the task to Ravijn publisher's. After ten years, Raket ceased to exist. We called it a day.