

= Centre Democrats ( Netherlands ) =

The Centre Democrats ( Dutch : Centrum Democraten , CD ) was a political party in the Netherlands . Founded in 1984 by members who split out from the Centre Party ( CP ) , the Centre Democrats was joined one month later by the only CP Member of Parliament ? Hans Janmaat . Janmaat went on to become the leader of the party , which subsequently became strongly centered on his person . The newly formed Centre Democrats represented the more moderate faction of the Centre Party , but espoused an anti @-@ immigration and nationalist ideology . Their claims of standing in the centre of the political landscape have thus been disputed by political scientists .

The Centre Democrats did not gain enough votes for parliamentary representation in the 1986 general election , but Janmaat won back his seat after the following election in 1989 . In 1994 he was joined by two additional representatives won by the party . The CD was subject to a cordon sanitaire by the other parties in Parliament , although some parties rather sought to confront it following its 1994 success . The CD failed to win any seats in the 1998 election , and it fell into disarray until it was finally dissolved in 2002 .

= = History = =

= = = Early years ( 1984 ? 1989 ) = = =

The Centre Democrats was founded on 7 November 1984 by a few low @-@ key members who broke away from the Centre Party ( CP ) . On 5 December the same year the only Member of Parliament for the Centre Party , Hans Janmaat , changed party to the Centre Democrats and became its seventh member . Janmaat believed that by steering a more moderate course , the Centre Party would attract more voters at the polls , but was expelled by the party 's hardliners . In an attempt to appear more mainstream than the Centre Party , the new Centre Democrats ' slogans were more moderate and less explicit . As opposed to the Centre Party 's Eigen volk eerst ( " Our People First " ) , the Centre Democrats ' manifesto used the Dutch proverb Oost West Thuis Best ( " East , West , Home Best " ) . After Janmaat joined the Centre Democrats , the party became known as " his " party . Despite widespread media coverage generated by Janmaat 's reputation , party membership remained small in the first few years .

During its early years , the Centre Democrats received extensive media attention on two occasions . The first occurred when the Centre Democrats and Centre Party met on 29 March 1986 in Kedichem . A group of anti @-@ fascist activists believed that the two parties were planning to merge , and firebombed the hotel where the meeting was held . The venue was severely damaged , Janmaat narrowly escaped death and the party secretary Wil Schuurman had one leg amputated after jumping from a window to escape the conflagration .

Janmaat 's attempt to be reinstated as a teacher at his old school following his failed re @-@ election to parliament led to the second media frenzy . Although he was legally permitted to go back to his job , the protests of some students and parents due to his reputation as a " racist " , led him to be bought off by the court from pursuing a return to his old job . Unable to go back to his former job , Janmaat returned to politics . Taking advantage of Janmaat 's profile , the Centre Democrats contested the 1986 general election under the name Lijst Janmaat / Centrumdemocraten , but gained just 0 @.@ 1 % of the vote and no parliamentary seat . The Centre Democrats failed in its attempt to win votes from the Centre Party , which gained 0 @.@ 4 % of the vote but also did not win a seat .

= = = In parliament ( 1989 ? 1998 ) = = =

Following the 1986 election , the Centre Democrats worked on improving both its image and its grassroots support . The strategy paid off with Janmaat winning a seat in the House of Representatives in the 1989 general election . By contesting the election in all nineteen

constituencies , the party won the right to state @-@ sponsored television and radio time but still had no more than 300 registered members . In the 1990 local elections the Centre Democrats won eleven seats , then , in the 1991 provincial elections , three seats in the provincial parliament .

Electoral success overtook the party and Janmaat began to make controversial statements in the media . Based on his conviction that high office should be restricted to third @-@ generation Dutch nationals , he suggested that several cabinet ministers , including Justice Minister Ernst Hirsch @-@ Ballin who was of Jewish descent , and Agriculture State Secretary Dzsingisz Gabor who was of Hungarian descent , should be removed from the Dutch leadership . This marked the start of prosecutions of Centre Democrats party members on charges of racism , as well as the decision by the other parties in Parliament and government to place a cordon sanitaire around the party .

The cordon sanitaire turned out to be counterproductive with the Centre Democrats winning 77 seats in the 1994 local elections and gaining representation in almost every city where it fielded a candidate . Large cities were strongholds of the party , winning more than 10 % of the vote in Rotterdam . It became the fifth largest Dutch political party . After the elections , however , scandal loomed over the Centre Democrats , largely because of its weak organization and lack of active party members . Many of its previously won local seats became vacant after a while , as elected representatives failed to take them up , joined or founded other parties , left the party or left politics altogether . Before the 1994 general election opinion polls predicted that the party could win more than five seats in the House of Representatives . However , media reports claiming that some newly elected local members had extremist pasts damaged the Centre Democrats ' prospects . A secret recording broadcast on national television one week before the election showed an Amsterdam council member bragging about having set immigrant centers on fire in the early 1980s . In the election that followed , the Centre Democrats won 2 @. @ 5 % of the vote and three seats in the House of Representatives ( Janmaat was joined by Wil Schuurman and Cor Zonneveld ) , well below earlier expectations . Janmaat claimed that the relatively poor result was a result of an anti @-@ CD campaign in the media . Due to its growth , and questions arising amongst the other parties over the development of a multicultural society , political opponents began to confront the Centre Democrats directly rather than maintain a strict cordon sanitaire around it .

Despite attempts to broaden their appeal , the issue of foreigners remained central to the party 's rhetoric . Janmaat was convicted of " inciting racial hatred " by the Dutch courts for speaking out against multiculturalism . His conviction later came to be seen as unwarranted by mainstream observers . Janmaat and Schuurman , who were to marry in 1996 , dominated the party . With Schuurman 's son head of the party office , the Centre Democrats became almost a family affair . Janmaat remained skeptical of initiatives outside his own control , and expelled multiple local council members from the party . While much of this was due to local cooperation ? unauthorized by the Centre Democrats leadership ? with the more radical Centre Party ' 86 ( CP ' 86 ) , Janmaat later agreed to coordinate joint demonstrations with it . The cooperation soon fell apart and Janmaat distanced himself from CP ' 86 as the 1998 election approached .

In the 1995 provincial elections , in the face of competition from four new ethnocentric competitors , none of which won a seat , the Centre Democrats did not increase its three @-@ seat presence in the provincial parliament . In the 1998 local elections the Centre Democrats lost all but one of its seats , having contested the election in just around half of the municipalities it contested in 1994 . In the 1998 general election two months later , the party lost all its seats in Parliament . This was as a result of the Centre Democrats 's failure to benefit from increased attention on immigration issues , its years of internal infighting , and new legislation directed mainly against the far @-@ right , which had raised the number of signatures per district required in order to contest elections .

= = = Demise ( 1998 ? 2002 ) = = =

After the 1998 election , Janmaat became increasingly worried by legal pressure , believing that the Centre Democrats could become the government 's next target after CP ' 86 was officially banned in 1998 . He founded the " Conservative Democrats " as a potential successor party in the event that the Centre Democrats was proscribed . The new party contested the 1999 European elections as

the Lijstverbinding Centrumdemocraten / Conservatieve Democraten , a supposed two @-@ party cooperation , where the two names in reality represented the same party . It won only 0 @.@ 5 % of the vote in the election , a showing widely seen as the last spasm of a dying party . Janmaat 's increasing physical exhaustion only served to exacerbate the situation . Nonetheless , with a new political climate following the September 11 attacks and the rise of Pim Fortuyn , Janmaat sought political rehabilitation in his final years . The reason was that his earlier criminal convictions arose from stating things that had now become accepted .

On 18 April 2002 , only a few months before Janmaat died , the party was formally dissolved . As a result it did not participate in the 2002 general election , where the recently emerged Pim Fortuyn List attracted votes based on an appeal similar to that of the Centre Democrats .

= = Ideology = =

After the split from the Centre Party , the ideology of the Centre Democrats was broadly similar to that of its originator , although the Centre Party became increasingly radical in the following years . The Centre Democrats did not publish a party or electoral manifesto before 1989 , and until then its policies were known primarily through the small @-@ scale distribution of pamphlets , which were almost exact copies of old Centre Party pamphlets . Like the Centre Party , the Centre Democrats claimed to be at the centre of the political spectrum , representing a " centre @-@ democratic ideology " . Nevertheless , the party focused mainly on the issue of immigration , and mainstream observers considered the party 's ideology to be a populist form of nationalism .

= = = Immigration and multiculturalism = = =

The Centre Democrats was strongly opposed to multiculturalism and immigration . It did not , however , exclude people based on ethnicity . It spoke , initially at least , of a Dutch population rather than a Dutch ethnic community . The party remained distinct from ethnic nationalists , as it gave immigrants the choice between repatriation or assimilation . Its 1989 party program stated that " foreigners and minorities either adjust to the Dutch ways and customs or leave the country . " The Centre Democrats considered Dutch culture to be under threat from foreigners , and that Muslims in particular had come to the Netherlands with the intention of taking over or dominating the country . Also opposed to " multicultural marriages , " and wanting to limit the possibility of adoptions from the Third World , the CP generally sought a return to the old Dutch society with its singular Dutch culture . According to political scientist Cas Mudde , the party 's ideology is best described as civic nationalism . Nevertheless , by 1994 the party had moved more towards ethnic nationalism by asserting that its program began " from the indissoluble unity and solidarity of the Dutch ethnic community [ ... ] based on the common history and the culture that originated from that history . "

= = = Foreign policy = = =

The Centre Democrats opposed any limitation of the sovereignty of the Dutch state and was thus skeptical of the European Union and European integration , seeing the Maastricht Treaty as one of many international defeats inflicted on the Dutch government . While it generally described international organizations such as the United Nations as superfluous and inefficient bureaucracies , it supported NATO as a means of keeping the West safe from Communism . In its 1998 program , the Centre Democrats included a call for the " reunification with Flanders and other Dutch @-@ speaking territories " , thereby promoting the idea of a Greater Netherlands .

= = = Society = = =

While the party did not originally place heavy emphasis on ethical issues , it did see the family as the cornerstone of society . By 1994 , it had become more conservative , stressing law and order as well as traditional morals and values . Over the years , it also sought to make divorce more difficult ,

particularly for families with children . The party also lent much space to discussing the AIDS virus , which it put in the context of a moral crisis and moral relativism that it considered to only be solvable by returning to traditional morality .

= = = Economic = = =

The party 's economic policies did not deviate substantially from the generally supported mixed economy of the Netherlands . Its other demands did not have a strong ideological coherency . Supporting a generous welfare state for the Dutch people , it was otherwise sceptical of state interventionism in the economy ; notably by high taxes which would hinder private initiative , or overspending on subsidies .

= = Organisation = =

The original scientific bureau , or think tank , of the Centre Democrats was the Stichting Wetenschappelijke Onderbouwing Centrumdemocratische Ideologie ( Foundation for the Scientific Elaboration of the Centre Democratic Ideology , SWOCI ) . In 1992 its name was changed to the Thomas Hobbes Stichting ( Thomas Hobbes Foundation ) , after Janmaat 's favorite political philosopher .

The Young Centre Democrats ( Jonge Centrumdemocraten ) , became the youth organization of the Centre Democrats , having originally been founded as the youth wing of the Centre Party in the early 1980s . It was later succeeded by the CD Youth ( CD @-@ Jongeren ) , which was based almost exclusively in the Haarlem area . The Centre Democrats did not attract many youngsters , nor did it establish a particularly active youth organization . Most of the far @-@ right youth tended to join CP ' 86 .

Over time the Centre Democrats published a variety of party papers of varying quality . The Centrumtaal and the Middenkoers were the original newspapers first published in 1986 . Although the former was intended for general party news , and the latter aimed at a more intellectual readership , they did not differ much in content . By 1987 ? 1988 , Centrumtaal was more or less succeeded by CD @-@ info , and Middenkoers by CD @-@ actueel . CD @-@ actueel was distributed for the last time in 1993 , with CD @-@ info succeeded by the CD @-@ Nieuwsbrief in 1997 , although in later years it had been published less and less frequently .

= = International relations = =

The CD regarded itself as related to other European " patriotic parties " , but its official contact was limited to the German People 's Union , the French National Front and the Belgian Vlaams Blok . The party regularly attended annual meetings of the German People 's Union and the National Front , and Janmaat spoke of his good contacts with the latter party 's leader Jean @-@ Marie Le Pen . Relations with the Vlaams Blok created a conflict of interest given VB 's arguably better contacts with CP ' 86 , the Centre Democrats ' main rival in the Netherlands . Even so , the Centre Democrats maintained official contacts domestically with both the Centre Party and its successor , the CP ' 86 .

= = Election results = =

= = House of Representatives = = =

= = European Parliament = = =