

**Desperate Times, Desperate Measures:**

*German Oppression, Dutch Resistance, and the Tragedy at De Woeste Hoeve*

by

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### **Abstract**

A case study of the attack on Hanns Albin Rauter and the subsequent reprisals at De Woeste Hoeve allows us to investigate the role of the German occupiers and the Dutch resistance, and especially the relation between them after Operation Market Garden. The Dutch-German relations slowly deteriorated over the course of the occupation, reaching a critical low in early March 1945. By that time the Germans were determined to forestall defeat and clamped down on the increasingly hostile Dutch population. Meanwhile, the Dutch resistance suffered from various factors that inhibited its development, but was simultaneously encouraged by Allied victories and motivated by extreme cold, lack of fuel, scarcity of food, and ever-increasing levels of German repression to undertake increasingly bold and daring missions. When these two forces met, the results were deadly and revealing, giving a more nuanced perspective of the state of affairs in the Netherlands after September 1944.

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- Preface -

## After Market Garden

*“They were lined up in order of execution. I was forced to walk by them three times and was not allowed to look away. There must have been 117 or 118.”*

- Mrs. Ledder-Brouwer, *eyewitness*<sup>1</sup>

The story of Nazi occupied Holland has not received full attention, even though, compared to other West European democracies, the Netherlands suffered tremendously.<sup>2</sup> While France, Belgium, and the Netherlands south of the Rhine were liberated beginning in the fall of 1944, the Dutch north of the great rivers remained under German occupation until the spring of 1945, suffering starvation, extensive depredations, and heightened German violence. By war’s end the Netherlands had suffered some 204,000 civilian deaths, nearly ten times as many as Belgium, Luxembourg, Denmark, and Norway combined.<sup>3</sup> Although the diary of Anne Frank is well known, and many may have heard of Arnhem because of the ill-fated Operation Market Garden, few realize what happened to the Dutch after the battle for Arnhem was lost.

In many respects the final months of the war were the most fascinating, yet the most tragic episode of the German occupation of the Netherlands. This paper investigates how the relationship between the Dutch and the Germans, or more precisely between the German

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<sup>1</sup> After the war Mrs. Ledder-Brouwer recounted that she was biking on the road between Arnhem and Apeldoorn when she came across the site of the reprisals. German officers forced her to get off her bike and walk by the row of executed prisoners, not allowing her to look away. Henk Berends, *Woeste Hoeve: 8 maart 1945* (Kampen: Uitgeverij Kok Voorhoeve, 1995), 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Van Der Zee, *The Hunger Winter: Occupied Holland 1944-5* (London: Jull Norman & Hobhouse, 1982), 15; David Stafford, *Endgame, 1945: The Missing Final Chapter of World War II* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2007), 258.

Throughout this paper the names “Holland” and “the Netherlands” will be used interchangeably. Although technically incorrect, given the fact that “Holland” only covers two out of the twelve provinces, “Holland” is what English-speakers traditionally call the country the Dutch themselves call “Nederland.”

<sup>3</sup> These numbers exclude Jewish deaths. Belgium suffered roughly 10,000 civilian deaths; Luxembourg, 5259, Denmark, 1000; and Norway, approximately 5000. Chris Bishop, *S.S. Hell on the Western Front: The Waffen S.S. In Europe 1940-1945* (St. Paul: Amber Books, 2003), 104-105.

occupiers and the Dutch resistance changed after Operation Market Garden, and it especially examines how changes in this relationship affected the lives of the general populace. In considering these issues, one specific event in March 1945, what the Dutch called “De Woeste Hoeve,” stands out. An analysis of this episode, and especially the factors that led to it, allows for a better examination of the state of the German occupational forces and the Dutch resistance in the last six months of World War II.

In early 1945 the Netherlands suffered from a massive famine, the only one in history to occur in a modern, developed, and literate country.<sup>4</sup> The resistance, which had not only grown desperate, but also more determined than ever to defeat the Nazis, undertook dangerous missions to alleviate the famine and provide for the nearly 300,000 people hiding throughout the country.<sup>5</sup> One such mission took place on the night of March 6, 1945, when a small resistance unit from the region of Apeldoorn attempted to capture a meat truck near De Woeste Hoeve, a small hamlet between the cities of Arnhem and Apeldoorn.<sup>6</sup> Instead of finding food, however, the group accidentally attacked a vehicle carrying the Nazi Chief of Police in the Netherlands, Hanns Albin Rauter, the second-highest ranking National Socialist in the country. The assault left him badly injured, but alive.<sup>7</sup> The underground fighters had no idea that the car they shot up contained a high-profile S.S. Officer. It was a painful testament to the fact that even this late in the war, the Dutch resistance was still suffering from inherent disadvantages, such as a lack of internal unification, the audacity of some members, and the absence of reliable military intelligence.

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<sup>4</sup> Zena Stein, et al, *Famine and Human Development: The Dutch Hungerwinter of 1944-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 40.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Arblaster, *A History of the Low Countries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 228.

<sup>6</sup> Berends, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Louis De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, vol. 10B, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1981), 418.

The Germans, of course, ordered severe reprisals for the attack. De Woeste Hoeve provided them with a welcome pretext to show the population that the Germans were still in control and that any act resistant to German hegemony would be punished mercilessly. Consequently, Rauter's replacement, Karl G. Ebenhardt Schöngarth, ordered the immediate execution of *Todeskandidaten*, the hostages held by the Nazis for just such an occasion.<sup>8</sup> Across the Netherlands these hostages died: 59 were shot in Amsterdam, 49 in Amesfoort, 38 in Den Haag, and another 8 in Utrecht.<sup>9</sup> The worst reprisal took place on March 8 at the site of the attack itself. From nearby prisons the Nazis gathered 117 hostages, drove them to the roadside, formed them into groups of 20, and directed the green uniformed German Order Police to shoot them down. All 117 hostages were left on the side of the road, laid out in the order of their execution. Every passer-by had to stop, walk up and down that road three times, and look only at the corpses.<sup>10</sup> In all, the number of executions came to an astounding 263, the highest number of hostages murdered in any single episode in Nazi occupied Holland.<sup>11</sup>

This tragedy at De Woeste Hoeve between March 6 and 8, 1945, provides an appropriate case study to understand better the state of the Dutch resistance and the German occupiers, and especially the relation between them after Market Garden. It demonstrates two things about the conditions in the Netherlands in 1945. First, De Woeste Hoeve reinforces the notion that German maliciousness and terror reached its peak in the final year of the war. Hostage executions occurred on an almost daily basis, generally in public and on street corners to

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<sup>8</sup> Berends, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 17-26.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>11</sup> Werner Warmbrunn, *The Dutch under German Occupation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 251.

The final number of executions (263) is supported by Warmbrunn, 60; Berends, 25; Jørgen Hæstrup, *European Resistance Movement, 1939-1945: A Complete History* (Westport, CT: Meckler Publishing, 1981), 450; Werner Rings, *Life with the Enemy: Collaboration and Resistance in Hitler's Europe 1939-1945* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1982), 40.

Walter B. Maass stated bigger figures for the killing of hostages after the attempt on Rauter, about 400, of whom 117 were executed at the site of the attempt. (Walter B. Maass, *The Netherlands at War: 1940-1945* (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1970), 146.)



heighten the impact.<sup>12</sup> Second, the event tragically exemplifies that the Dutch resistance was still a relatively small, ideologically diverse organization, which had not truly unified into a single organization.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, the resistance sometimes undertook missions that undermined their own objectives by provoking the Germans to retaliate with harsh reprisals. Although individual resistance pockets did much to undermine the German war effort, the lack of a unified system of command, the absence of reliable military intelligence, and the audacity of some members had disastrous consequences in that final year of the war. For Holland, the combination of these two factors turned the year 1945 into the bloodiest period of World War II.<sup>14</sup>

Although the German malice and violence is uniformly acknowledged by historians, the treatment of the Dutch resistance is much more controversial. The historiography of Holland under German occupation, and especially the role of the resistance within that framework, has developed around a myth of a unified and single-minded organization.<sup>15</sup> Part of the reason for this misconception involves semantics. The Dutch term *verzet*, which translates as “resistance,” gives the impression that the resistance to the Nazis was unified; after all, people spoke of Dutch resistance. Throughout this project the term “resistance” will be used in much the same way, but this did not mean the resistance spoken of was a united movement. As this paper will argue, the only thing most resistance groups had in common was their opposition to the Nazi regime, and they generally had widely divergent religious, political, or social ideas and motivations.

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<sup>12</sup> Van Der Zee, 180.

<sup>13</sup> Dick van Galen Last, “The Netherlands,” in *Resistance in Western Europe*, ed. Bob Moore (New York: Berg Publishers, 2000), 207.

<sup>14</sup> Stafford, 258.

<sup>15</sup> See for example: Warmbrunn, 185, 215, 254; Van Galen Last, 189-221; Diane L. Wolf, *Beyond Anne Frank: Hidden Children and Post-war Families in Holland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Ido de Haan, *Na de Ondergang: De Herinnering aan de Jodenvervolgving in Nederland, 1945-1995* (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 1997); Antonius A. Klumper, *Sociale Verdediging en Nederlands Verzet '40-'45: Ideëel Concept Getoest aan Historische Werkelijkheid* (Tilburg: Drukkerij Gianotten, 1983)

The myth surrounding the resistance also grew out of the fact that in the post-1945 process of rebuilding, the movement was credited with reawakening Dutch nationalism and creating a stronger sense of national unity.<sup>16</sup> It was comforting to think of solid, unified resistance against the Nazi occupation. As historian Louis de Jong points out, it was only “natural that the resistance attracted attention. It furnished examples of self-sacrifice and courage under extremely dangerous circumstances and it was heartwarming... to dwell on this material.”<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, the myth of a brave and unified resistance dovetailed well with the strong national consciousness of the postwar period.<sup>18</sup> As will be demonstrated, however, such a myth was incorrect.

The focus of this paper is thus twofold. First, De Woeste Hoeve, and by extension the conditions in the Netherlands at large, can tell us about the state of the occupation and the German attitude towards the Dutch near the end of the war. In early 1945, the Nazis began to realize the inevitability of their demise and sought to clamp down on whatever they could control. Retaliation for anything perceived as contrary to the German war effort was immediately and severely punished. In this light, De Woeste Hoeve was very much a part of the overall German strategy. Second, investigation of the tragedy confirms the state of the Dutch resistance. Encouraged by the diminishing German position, actions grew bolder and increasingly daring. The desperation brought on by the Hungry Winter (*Hongerwinter*) of 1944 and 1945, moreover, made valiant missions a necessity. Despite their increased activity, however, the Dutch resistance was unable to unify effectively, set up a reliable system of command, or obtain accurate military intelligence to aid in its operations, and thus remained a particularly dilettante affair. Although the attempt to capture the meat truck was very

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<sup>16</sup> Van Galen Last, 207.

<sup>17</sup> Louis De Jong, “Preface:” in Werner Warmbrunn, *The Dutch under German Occupation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), v.

<sup>18</sup> Van Galen Last, 207.

commendable in its intent, the fact that it ended in the attack on Rauter, and caused the death of 263 people at the hands of the Germans, remains a tragic reminder that the Dutch resistance suffered from inherent disadvantages.

- Chapter One -

# The Donauklub:

## *German Oppression*

*“We hope not to win the war. We hope to postpone defeat long enough to provoke a fatal split between the Allies.”*

- Ernst Kaltenbrunner <sup>19</sup>

The tragedy at De Woeste Hoeve was an obvious result of the deteriorating relations between the Dutch and the Germans. To understand what happened that early morning of March 8, 1945, we need to examine the nature and objectives of the Nazi occupation, and especially understand that the German approach had not remained static throughout the five-year subjugation. Initially, the occupation was marked by relative stability, and for large sections of the population daily life continued much the same as before. When the war began to turn against Germany, however, things changed drastically. The Nazis grew increasingly desperate to hang on to whatever they could, and with that growing despair came an increased use of violence. Then, when the German Reich began to crumble in earnest, the Nazi distress set off a cascade of events that turned the year 1945 into the most lethal year the Netherlands experienced during the war. In these days of heightened violence, De Woeste Hoeve stands out as one of its worst episodes.

When the Germans invaded Holland on May 10, 1940, the Dutch were completely unprepared for war. For them the invasion represented the first violation of sovereignty since

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<sup>19</sup> David Stafford, *Endgame, 1945: The Missing Final Chapter of World War II* (New York: Little Brown and Company, 2007), 258.

Ernst Kaltenbrunner was a high-ranking Austrian S.S. Officer who replaced Reinhard Heydrich as the Chief of the Security Police and the Security Service (*Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD*) after his assassination in 1942. Kaltenbrunner was the president of Interpol between 1943 and 1945, and was the highest-ranking S.S. Officer to be tried at Nuremberg in 1946. (Louis De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, vol. 5, *Maart '41 – Juli '42: Tweede Helft* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1974), 1034.)

the Napoleonic Wars. After the Congress of Vienna the country had managed to stay out of every European conflict for almost a century and a half.<sup>20</sup> Events such as the Franco-Prussian War and World War I went by nearly unnoticed, and the Dutch, perhaps naively, thought that the current war would pass them by as well. After all, Hitler, in numerous public declarations, had promised to respect Holland's independence and policy of neutrality.<sup>21</sup> The Dutch Prime Minister, Hendrik Colijn, in fact, believed that even in the case of a European war, which he regarded as very unlikely, the German Reich would respect Holland's sovereignty.<sup>22</sup>

In reality, the German High Command had decided it must occupy the Netherlands in the event of war on the western front.<sup>23</sup> Hitler agreed violating both Dutch and Belgian neutrality would protect the industrial Ruhr Valley, and gain bases for the probable air-attack on England.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, it was the *Führer's* opinion that such a breach of neutrality was irrelevant, and that no one would question it after the Third Reich had won the war.<sup>25</sup> The Germans also considered the Low Countries to be a natural extension of their country. Occupation, moreover, would give Germany control of the Maas, Waal, and Rhine Rivers, all of which carried much of the overseas trade of the Reich.<sup>26</sup> A final consideration to invade was the Dutch colonial empire, in particular the East Indies (present-day Indonesia). Capture of the empire would bring Nazi Germany advantages in foreign trade and commerce.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that the Netherlands did experience the Belgian Revolution in 1830 and 1831, when the southern provinces seceded from the United Kingdom of the Netherlands to form the independent Kingdom of Belgium. (J.H.C. Blom and Emiel Lamberts, *History of the Low Countries*, trans. James C. Kennedy (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 301.)

<sup>21</sup> Max Domarus, *Hitler, Reden und Proklamationen, 1932-1945* (Wauconda: Blochazy-Carducci Publishing, 1990), I: 699, 1149; Whitney R. Harris, *Tyranny on Trial: The Evidence at Nuremberg* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1954), 139-140.

<sup>22</sup> Louis De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, vol. 1, *Voorspel* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1969), 599, 649.

<sup>23</sup> Werner Warmbrunn, *The Dutch Under German Occupation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 6.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, *Nazism, 1919-1945: Foreign Policy, War, and Racial Extermination* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 765.

<sup>26</sup> Warmbrunn, 25.

<sup>27</sup> Gerhard Hirschfeld, *Nazi Rule and Dutch Collaboration: The Netherlands under German Occupation, 1940-1945* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1988), 33.

Aside from the military and economic considerations to invade, there was also the vague, but crucial, ideological and racial incentive.<sup>28</sup> Much like he felt about the Norwegians and the Danes, Hitler believed the Dutch were members of the Aryan master race (*Herrenvolk*), the race destined to rule lesser peoples. According to historian Werner Warmbrunn, the *Führer* was driven by a romantic-historical vision of a Holy Germanic Empire of the German Nation, which was essentially a reconstitution of the old Holy Roman Empire with the addition of some Scandinavian territories.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, Hitler sought to unite the Aryan Norwegians, Danes, Dutch, and Flemings in a “Germanic Empire” under Nazi leadership.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, he wanted to integrate these peoples to improve the racial composition of the German nation.<sup>31</sup> Thus, after the invasion, the Netherlands had a Special Status (*Sonderstellung*) within the Nazi sphere, based on this racial ideology.<sup>32</sup> Importantly, that focus meant a relatively mild and friendly occupation, at least initially, and certainly far different from the war of destruction launched in Poland and throughout Eastern Europe.<sup>33</sup>

As a result of this *Sonderstellung*, it initially appeared the occupation was to be an unexpectedly civilized affair.<sup>34</sup> Since many Dutchmen expected something far more onerous, they were surprised to find the enemy soldiers polite and courteous, leading one historian to call this time the “honeymoon period.”<sup>35</sup> Even the Belgians, who had experienced a German occupation less than a generation before, were taken aback by the “correctness” of the

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<sup>28</sup> Hirschfeld, 19.

<sup>29</sup> Warmbrunn, 25.

<sup>30</sup> Werner Rings, *Life with the Enemy: Collaboration and Resistance in Hitler's Europe 1939-1945* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1982), 22; Ivo Schöffer, *Het Nationaal-socialistische Beeld van de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden: Een Historiografische en Bibliografische Studie* (Utrecht: Hes Publishers, 1978), 90.

<sup>31</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier, 1941-1942*, ed. Gerhard Ritter, trans. Henry Picker (Bonn: Athenäum-Verlag, 1951), 122, quoted in Werner Warmbrunn, *The Dutch Under German Occupation, 1940-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 24.

<sup>32</sup> Hirschfeld, 4.

<sup>33</sup> The term used is “war of destruction” (*Vernichtungskrieg*.) Pieter Lagrou, “Belgium,” in *Resistance in Western Europe*, ed. Bob Moore (New York: Berg Publishers, 2000), 30.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Arblaster, *A History of the Low Countries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 222.

<sup>35</sup> Warmbrunn, 12.

occupiers' behaviour.<sup>36</sup> For their part, the Germans arrived in the Netherlands hoping to find friends, even allies, and expected to occupy the country with as few troops as they could.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, the appropriate authorities saw to it that troops and police personnel remained as inconspicuous as possible.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, during this phase the Germans basked in successive victories in Western Europe, and Nazi leaders were confident that they would be able to control the Dutch population without much additional effort. They had good reason to feel assured. By the time the Germans installed a civilian government in the Netherlands, the Belgian army was about to collapse and the French were close to defeat.<sup>39</sup> The general feeling, moreover, was that the British would have difficulty extricating even a part of their expeditionary force from the continent, much less muster enough strength to repel a German invasion.<sup>40</sup> Everything suggested that once the Germans gained continental supremacy, it would be impossible to dislodge them.

In the Netherlands, the German hegemony quickly took hold. Although the Nazis worked hard to create and preserve a policy of friendship, there was no mistaking that they were the masters. The Dutch government had gone into exile in London, and on May 18, a mere three days after Holland surrendered, a civilian administration headed by an Austrian, Arthur Seyss-Inquart, was installed. Appointed personally by Hitler as the High Commissioner of the Occupied Netherlands (*Reichskommissar für die besetzten niederländischen Gebiete*), he acted as the supreme civilian authority.<sup>41</sup> In his propagandistic inaugural speech, Seyss-Inquart claimed that he had no intention of imposing National Socialist ideology on Dutch society, and

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<sup>36</sup> Bob Moore, "Comparing Resistance and Resistance Movements," in *Resistance in Western Europe*, 250.

<sup>37</sup> Moore, 30; Rings, 69.

<sup>38</sup> Rings, 69.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

<sup>40</sup> Rings, 48.

<sup>41</sup> Warmburnn, 27.

indeed, he hoped to win the Dutch to the benefits of Nazism in a friendly manner.<sup>42</sup> He furthermore claimed that the Germans did not have imperialistic designs on the country, guaranteeing the monarchy and the independence of the Netherlands after the Nazis had won the war.<sup>43</sup>

On June 6, Seyss-Inquart was joined by Hanns Albin Rauter who, apart from the *Reichskommissar*, became the most powerful official in Holland. Rauter, who was also an Austrian, had been recommended by Heinrich Himmler and personally appointed by Hitler as Higher S.S. and Police Leader in the Netherlands (*Höhere S.S. und Polizeiführer und General-Kommissar für das Sicherheitswesen*).<sup>44</sup> He was a tall, tough-looking man of little charm, which did little to endear him to the Dutch.<sup>45</sup> A fanatic and radical National Socialist with an overriding sense of duty, Rauter was quite formal in his contacts with Seyss-Inquart and other colleagues.<sup>46</sup> Unlike the *Reichskommissar*, Rauter rarely left his post, which meant he was on hand during the crises of the occupation. For many Dutchmen Rauter became the symbol of the Nazi terror, associated with all reprisal killings that took place in the country.<sup>47</sup> The announcements of those reprisals, plastered all over Dutch cities, bore his name and his signature.<sup>48</sup> While people readily joked about Seyss-Inquart, calling him “Six and a Quarter” (*Zes en een Kwart*), no jokes circulated about Rauter.<sup>49</sup>

To round out the occupation apparatus, three other officials, each in charge of different government departments, joined Rauter and Seyss-Inquart. The first, Hans Fischboeck, a

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<sup>42</sup> Arthur Seyss-Inquart, *Vier Jahre in den Niederlanden: Gesammelte Reden* (Amsterdam: Volk und Reich Verlag, 1944), 9-10; Richard S. Fugner, *Dawn of Courage: Dutch Resistance to the German Occupation of Holland, 1940-1945* (Minneapolis, MN: Mori Studio, 2008), 64.

<sup>43</sup> Warmbrunn, 27; J.J. Boolen and J.C. Van Der Does, *Five Years of Occupation: The Resistance of the Dutch Against Hitler-terrorism and Nazi-robbery* (N.P.: Printed on the Secret Press of D.A.V.I.D., 1945), 14.

<sup>44</sup> Hendricus J. Neumann, *Arthur Seyss-Inquart* (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1970), 139.

<sup>45</sup> Warmbrunn, 31.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>47</sup> Louis De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, vol. 4, *Mei '40 – Maart '41: Eerste Helft* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1972), 74.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*



former bank president from Vienna, assumed responsibility for Finance and Economy.<sup>50</sup> Friedrich Wimmer, another Austrian, dealt with Internal Affairs and Justice.<sup>51</sup> The third man, Fritz Schmidt, from Westphalia, was the only non-Austrian among the top civilian officials. He was Commissioner-General-without-portfolio, but was responsible for Public Opinion and Dutch politics.<sup>52</sup> With so many Austrians, the Dutch referred to them as the *Donauklub*, after the river Danube.<sup>53</sup> The German High Command also played up this Austrian-connection, hoping to awaken pleasant memories of Tyrolese yodeling and Viennese joviality.<sup>54</sup> The nickname stuck.

There was nothing pleasant about the occupation, however, and the “honeymoon” was over within a few months. Very few Dutchmen sympathized with the National Socialist cause, and Seyss-Inquart had no success attracting others through friendly persuasion. Himmler, who had counted on 600,000 young Dutchmen for his S.S., was furious and claimed that “Jewish capitalist influences” had corrupted the Dutch.<sup>55</sup> The reality was, of course, that the Dutch had become accustomed to the realities of occupation and had grown more vocal in opposing it. This led to increased friction between the two sides. In 1941 the tension came to a head with the outbreak of the February Strike in Amsterdam. This disruption was a general demonstration against the anti-Jewish measures launched by the Nazis.<sup>56</sup> Although put down after only one day, the strike marked the breakdown of the German conciliation attempt, and the acknowledgement that the Dutch would not convert to National Socialism voluntarily.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Warmbrunn, 33; Neumann, 138.

<sup>51</sup> Neumann, 138.

<sup>52</sup> De Jong, *Mei '40 – Maart '41: Eerste Helft*, 86-89.

<sup>53</sup> F. Parkinson, *Conquering the Past: Austrian Nazism Today & Yesterday* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 334.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Henri A. Van Der Zee, *The Hunger Winter: Occupied Holland 1944-5* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 100.

<sup>56</sup> Louis De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, vol. 4, *Mei '40 – Maart '41: Tweede Helft* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1972), 800.

<sup>57</sup> Warmbrunn, 12.

After the February Strike the strife between the German administration and the general populace clearly intensified.<sup>58</sup> The Dutch had to adapt to the new physical realities of occupation: food shortages, strict rationing, and compulsory labour registration.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the German police began to take *Todeskandidaten*, hostages awaiting execution in the event of sabotage.<sup>60</sup> The plight grew worse because of the entry of the Soviet Union and the United States into the war in June and December 1941 respectively.<sup>61</sup> Their entry, coupled with a worsening military situation in North Africa prompted further harsh measures with increasingly oppressive legislation, random arrests, arbitrary imprisonments, and attacks on personal liberty.<sup>62</sup> Further, Hitler's economic mobilization for total war in all Nazi-occupied territories in the spring of 1943, led to the introduction of forced labour and internment of former Dutch servicemen.<sup>63</sup> During this period rationed goods began to disappear as well.<sup>64</sup> The combination of these factors did much to upset the Dutch, and it became clear that the Germans had failed to win them over. Because the Nazis realized they could no longer win the Dutch to their cause, it became less important to indoctrinate them, or to treat them gently.<sup>65</sup>

Conditions, however, did not radically worsen until after the Normandy landings of June 6, 1944. The Allied Expeditionary Force advanced across northern France and Belgium with lightning speed and as the anticipation of a possible Dutch liberation ran high, German apprehension ran even higher.<sup>66</sup> The Nazis now began to prepare for the Allied incursion that they knew was coming. Geographically, the Netherlands, with its river system essentially

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Dick van Galen Last, "The Netherlands," in *Resistance in Western Europe*, 196.

<sup>60</sup> Warmbrunn, 11.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>62</sup> Van Galen Last, 199.

<sup>63</sup> Rings, 69-70.

<sup>64</sup> Warmbrunn, 13.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Louis De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, vol. 10A, *Het Laatste Jaar: Eerste Helft* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1980), 172.

separating north and south, was perfectly positioned as a defensive German line.<sup>67</sup> Seyss-Inquart was convinced that the Allied advance could be stalled, perhaps even turned around, in the Netherlands.<sup>68</sup> Rauter too, was certain that Holland was well situated for a prolonged defense.<sup>69</sup> Their dreams of an imminent Allied defeat were stimulated by the efforts of Joseph Goebbels, who set up a special unit spreading misinformation and tantalizing half-truths to hungry Allied and neutral journalists.<sup>70</sup> Using this network, the Nazis spread deceptive intelligence with the hopes of inducing the Allies to believe that Nazi Germany could hold out for some time. The themes were always the same: “impregnable positions, massive supplies carefully hidden in bomb proof caves, underground factories, and, of course, elite units of troops to man the whole bastion.”<sup>71</sup> If the Allies believed this, so the Nazis fantasized, the Americans and the British might seek a negotiated peace, which would in turn provoke a split with the Soviets.<sup>72</sup> In the final days of the war, the Germans no longer fought for victory, but merely to postpone defeat long enough to provoke a separation amongst the Allies.

The hopes of a split between the Anglo-American forces and the Soviets meant heightened German determination to hold on to what was still under their control. The Dutch, meanwhile, were encouraged by the rapid advance of the Allies and expected liberation very soon. As if to support the notion, on September 5, 1944, came big news: the first troops had supposedly crossed the Belgian-Dutch border.<sup>73</sup> The mood in the Netherlands was one of euphoria. Prime Minister of the Dutch government-in-exile, Pieter S. Gerbrandy announced in a broadcast from London: “Now that the Allied armies have crossed the Dutch border in their

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>68</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar: Eerste Helft*, 175.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>70</sup> Stafford, 258.

<sup>71</sup> Rodney Kennedy-Milnot, *The Fortress that Never Was: The Myth of Hitler's Bavarian Stronghold* (New York: Holt, Rinehard, and Winston, 1964), 25.

<sup>72</sup> Stafford, 255.

<sup>73</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar: Eerste Helft*, 175.

irresistible advance, I wish to give a warm welcome to our Allies on our native soil.... The hour of liberation has come.”<sup>74</sup> The reality was slightly different, however. London, always about twenty-four hours behind the facts, had brazenly broadcast that troops had crossed into Dutch territory and liberated the city of Breda.<sup>75</sup> It was wishful thinking. In reality the Allied troops were still 60 kilometers away from Dutch soil, and the liberation of the first Dutch city, Maastricht, had to wait until September 14.<sup>76</sup>

Nevertheless, people in the Netherlands were ecstatic after the radio announcement.<sup>77</sup> Soon stories began to circulate: Dordrecht had supposedly fallen and the troops were en route to Rotterdam.<sup>78</sup> Believing this, a resistance group took possession of a school in Rotterdam, only to face arrest and execution by the Germans, who were still firmly in control.<sup>79</sup> When no Allied troops arrived by nightfall, a sense of reality returned. Radio *Oranje*, realizing the immense mistake it had made, announced that it had “no further official reports about the advance in the Netherlands.”<sup>80</sup> Most of the Dutch population also knew better by then; phone calls to Breda had been sufficient to show that the town was still in German hands, as were Dordrecht and Rotterdam.<sup>81</sup> That Tuesday, September 6, subsequently became known as Mad Tuesday (*Dolle Dinsdag*).<sup>82</sup>

To the Germans, *Dolle Dinsdag* was a clear demonstration of the Dutch hostility towards them. They now began to act on the assumption that they occupied enemy territory and that

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<sup>74</sup> From May 1940 onwards, the Dutch had a daily fifteen-minute broadcast on the facilities of the B.B.C., known as Radio *Oranje*. It provided the population with news untainted by the Nazi propaganda machine. Van Der Zee, 18.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 19; De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar: Eerste Helft*, 172.

<sup>76</sup> Van Galen Last, 203; Warmbrunn, 14.

<sup>77</sup> Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 59-60.

<sup>78</sup> Van Der Zee, 21.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*; De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar: Eerste Helft*, 227-228.

<sup>80</sup> Van Der Zee, 21.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>82</sup> The term *Dolle Dinsdag* was first used on September 15, 1944, in the anti-German magazine *De Gil*. It was nevertheless possible, however, that the name had emerged among the general population before that; “it is almost too perfect a term to denote the general feeling of that day.” De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar: Eerste Helft*, 175.

they faced a hostile population willing to give aid to the enemy wherever possible.<sup>83</sup> Rather than drafting Dutch men of military age for the labour battalions, the Nazis began drafting them out of fear they might assist the Allied forces.<sup>84</sup> The hysteria of that day also convinced many Germans and Dutch collaborators to transport their women and children to Germany.<sup>85</sup> Seyss-Inquart had already set the example. On September 3, he had sent his wife to Salzburg.<sup>86</sup> *Dolle Dinsdag* clearly served as a wake-up call for the Nazis, and they realized that the situation for many of them had become unsafe.<sup>87</sup> For members of the Dutch collaborationist party, the National Socialist Movement (*Nationaal Socialistische Beweging*, or N.S.B.), the situation was much worse. From the beginning of the occupation the general populace had been more resentful and violent towards the N.S.B.ers than towards the Germans themselves.<sup>88</sup> Consequently, many collaborators were eager to get out of the country and a mass exodus followed. Over 60,000 people fled the country in a movement the clandestine press mockingly dubbed the new Drive to the East (*Drang Nach Osten*).<sup>89</sup>

It was not until now, when German defeat seemed almost inevitable, that Western Europe, and the Netherlands in particular, began to suffer the worst excesses of the Nazi regime. After D-Day, Hitler decreed that all trials of resistance fighters in Europe should stop, as these turned them into heroes and martyrs.<sup>90</sup> Instead, they should be summarily executed. To implement this new rule in the Netherlands, Karl G. Ebenhardt Schöngarth was chosen and made head of the Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst*, or S.D.).<sup>91</sup> Schöngarth, a stern character, who insisted on

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<sup>83</sup> Warmbrunn, 14.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Van Der Zee, 22.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>87</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar: Eerste Helft* 1, 185-186.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 180-181.

<sup>89</sup> Arblaster, 230.

<sup>90</sup> Van der Zee, 181.

<sup>91</sup> The *Sicherheitsdienst* was the secret police and intelligence arm of the S.S. It was often seen as a sister organization of the Gestapo. *Ibid.*

punctuality, allowed no one to speak against his decisions.<sup>92</sup> He was, however, less involved in the decisions of his subordinates than some of his predecessors and allowed a greater degree of individual discretion among his underlings. This meant that in some regions of the country he tolerated a reign of terror.<sup>93</sup> One colleague called Schöngarth “a raging drunk” and an “impossible human being” who “cursed constantly.”<sup>94</sup> This was the Schöngarth who took over Rauter’s job after the attack at De Woeste Hoeve.

Hitler’s directive about resistance fighters began a new era of brutality. For example, in June 1944, a local resistance group briefly managed to take over the village of Tulle, France, killing and badly mutilating the German garrison housed there.<sup>95</sup> When the Germans regained the town later the same day, they found 64 dead.<sup>96</sup> The next morning, the reprisals begun as all males in town were gathered together. Ninety-nine Frenchmen were publicly hanged from balconies, window grilles, and lampposts along the main streets of the town in the hope that the hangings would deter further attacks.<sup>97</sup> More would have died had the S.S. not run out of rope. Instead, they rounded up 149 civilians and deported them to Germany for slave labour. One-hundred-and-one did not return.<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, in Italy, Field Marshal Albert Kesselring gave orders that villages from which shots were fired at German servicemen should be burned down and the “culprits and ringleaders” publicly hanged.<sup>99</sup>

The terror reached the Netherlands on October 24, when 29 civilians were publicly executed in Amsterdam in retaliation for the murder of an S.D. Officer.<sup>100</sup> Pedestrians and

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<sup>92</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar: Eerste Helft*, 68.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*; Van Der Zee, 181.

<sup>94</sup> Adolf Emile Cohen, *Een Onbekende tijdgenoot: de laatste Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei and des SD in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, 1955), 171.

<sup>95</sup> H.R. Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis: Rural Resistance in Southern France, 1942-1944* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 173.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Rings, 41.

<sup>98</sup> Kedward, 174.

<sup>99</sup> Rings, 41.

<sup>100</sup> Louis De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, vol. 10B, *Het Laatste Jaar: Eerste Helft* (‘s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1981), 370.

others who passed by were held at gunpoint and forced to witness the brutalities.<sup>101</sup> At his trial Rauter claimed that he had known nothing about this reprisal, and that he had protested to Hitler about the execution of hostages in such a fashion.<sup>102</sup> This was a crucial point, given that Rauter had apparently not wanted any retaliation for the 1941 February Strikes either, and had supposedly asked for no reprisals to be carried for the attack on his life at De Woeste Hoeve.<sup>103</sup> For the latter incident Rauter claimed that Schöngarth had acted on instructions from Himmler.<sup>104</sup> Since Rauter made these statements at his trial, their truth is debatable. Moreover, at the time of the October 24 reprisals in Amsterdam all of Schöngarth's actions still required authorization by Rauter, which made his claim of innocence highly unlikely.<sup>105</sup>

Whether or not Rauter ever filed a complaint with Hitler remains questionable, but even if he had, it was unlikely that the *Führer* would have done anything about it. The shooting of hostages, which was justified as an extreme form of self-defense, was long standing, having been authorized as early as September 16, 1941.<sup>106</sup> The decree stated that “in general, the execution of fifty to a hundred Communists” was to be regarded as “proper reparation for the death of one German serviceman.” Furthermore, the manner of their execution should “enhance the deterrent effect.”<sup>107</sup> Although the decree had originally been designed for the Eastern Front, which according to the Nazi worldview was populated with biologically inferior peoples, after July 1944 it was applied to all occupied territories on Hitler's personal orders.

Accordingly, German reprisals grew more atrocious and more frequent after July 1944. In August, in the town of Wormerveer, five citizens were chosen at random and executed after a

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 371.

<sup>103</sup> Van Der Zee, 183.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar: Eerste Helft*, 371-372.

<sup>106</sup> Rings, 40.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 40.

policeman was killed.<sup>108</sup> In Rotterdam, several days later, four men were executed after a local resistance unit freed 48 prisoners from a police station.<sup>109</sup> On the night of September 30, 1944, a German military vehicle was attacked near Putten, wounding all passengers and killing one.<sup>110</sup> General Christiansen, the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht in the Netherlands, was furious and demanded that the entire village pay for the crime.<sup>111</sup> Although no one was killed directly, 87 homes were burned, women and children were taken prisoner, and the entire male population was transported to the concentration camp of Neuengamme.<sup>112</sup> Of the 600 men deported, 552 perished.<sup>113</sup>

The tragedy at De Woeste Hoeve took place several months later, when the Nazis were on the brink of defeat and Allied victory was almost certain. As the public executions of the civilians in Amsterdam and the incident in Putten have shown, De Woeste Hoeve was not an aberration and was very much in line with German actions elsewhere. It moreover reinforced the notion that German aggression and terror reached its peak just before the end of the war. With the establishment of heightened German aggression, one of the two elements essential for De Woeste Hoeve was in place. The second factor, the Dutch resistance, grew and evolved alongside the German aggression. Dangerously, the resisters often acted on insufficient or inaccurate information, did not professionalize as their membership increased, and undertook increasingly hazardous missions. This combination had dire consequences in March 1945.

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<sup>108</sup> Fuegner, 182.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>111</sup> General Friedrich Christiaan Christiansen was the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht in the Netherlands (*Wehrmachtbefehlshaber in den Niederlanden*), which made him the military counterpart to Seyss-Inquart. He held the post from 1940 until the final German surrender in 1945. Although Christiansen was not as fanatic as Rauter, nor as intellectual as Seyss-Inquart, he was nevertheless an ardent Nazi. When he heard about Putten he allegedly said: “*Das ganze Nest muss angesteckt werden und die ganze Bande an die Wand gestellt!*” (“That whole nest [Putten] must be burned out and the whole gang put against the wall”.) Louis De Jong, *Mei '40 – Maart '41: Eerste Helft*, 100-101; quote in De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar: Eerste Helft*, 51.

<sup>112</sup> Olivier Wieviorka and Jacek Tebinka, *Resisters: From Everyday Life to Counter-State in Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe*, ed. Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka, and Anette Warring, (New York: Berg Publishers, 2006), 195.

<sup>113</sup> Walter B. Maass, *The Netherlands at War: 1940-1945* (London, New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1970), 177.



- Chapter Two -

## **Sonderstellung:** *Dutch Resistance*

*“As everybody knows, the Dutch are the most insolent  
and obstreperous people in the entire West...”*

- Joseph Goebbels<sup>114</sup>

Isaac Newton’s third law of motion, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, had special application to the relationship between the Dutch and the Germans during the occupation of the Netherlands. While it was obvious that the Dutch resistance emerged as a reaction to the German occupation, it also changed as the German occupational policies evolved. In other words, the Dutch resistance passed through a series of stages. Initially, it was very mild and passive, often taking the form of symbolic resistance. As time passed, however, it became increasingly violent and audacious. Yet at the same time, the resistance never unified, and despite its best efforts, its leaders often acted on insufficient or inaccurate information, which had disastrous consequences in March 1945. Of equal danger, in the face of desperation brought on by the *Hongerwinter* of 1944 and 1945, the resistance grew more willing to undertake hazardous missions. When this increased desperation and growing audacity combined with heightened German aggression, it had lethal consequences for the Dutch.

The initial Dutch reaction to the occupation was passive, due in large part to the surprise of the invasion for which the Netherlands was both materially and psychologically

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<sup>114</sup> Joseph Goebbels, *The Goebbels Diaries: 1942 – 1943* trans. Louis P. Lochner (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1948), 121.

unprepared.<sup>115</sup> On May 10, 1940, the Germans simultaneously invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg without a declaration of war. The *Wehrmacht* forced the Dutch to a humiliating ceasefire in less than five days.<sup>116</sup> Just two days before that end, Queen Wilhemina of Orange fled to London after her army chief told her he could not guarantee her safety.<sup>117</sup> While the Queen's sudden departure at first surprised, shocked, and demoralized the Dutch, fortunately she soon became a symbol of freedom and the representation of national sovereignty and unity.<sup>118</sup> Accordingly the Queen became the focal point for Dutch people from all walks of life. As historian Dr. Louis de Jong observed, she became "the living symbol of the nation's will to survive."<sup>119</sup>

The initial period of the occupation was consequently marked by acts of resistance that focused on the Queen and a reawakened nationalism.<sup>120</sup> Popular forms of symbolic opposition were the wearing of pins made of coins bearing the picture of the Queen, growing flowers in the national colours, and naming newborn babies after living members of the royal family.<sup>121</sup> Many people also tuned into Radio *Oranje*, a daily 15 minute broadcast from the Dutch government-in-exile on the facilities of the B.B.C.<sup>122</sup> Queen Wilhelmina's "spirited" speeches on this service were usually a highlight for many Dutch. She regularly launched verbal attacks on German and Dutch Nazis. A joke circulated that the young princesses Beatrix and Irene were not allowed to listen to their grandmother's speeches because of the foul language she occasionally used.<sup>123</sup> Telling anti-Nazi stories and carrying and distributing pictures of the royal family were moreover

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<sup>115</sup> Dick van Galen Last, "The Netherlands," in *Resistance in Western Europe*, ed. Bob Moore (New York: Berg Publishers, 2000), 191.

<sup>116</sup> Paul Arblaster, *A History of the Low Countries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 221.

<sup>117</sup> Henri Van Der Zee, *The Hunger Winter: Occupied Holland 1944-5* (London: Jull Norman & Hobhouse, 1982), 90; Arblaster, 221.

<sup>118</sup> Gerhard Hirschfeld, *Nazi Rule and Dutch Collaboration: The Netherlands under German Occupation, 1940-1945* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1988), 16.

<sup>119</sup> Louis de Jong, "The Dutch Resistance Movements and the Allies," 1940-1945 in *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the History of Resistance Movements – Milan, 26-29 March 1961* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1964), 10.

<sup>120</sup> Russell Miller, *The Resistance* (Morristown, NJ: Time-Life Books Inc., 1979), 25.

<sup>121</sup> Louis de Jong and Joseph W.F. Stoppelman, *The Lion Rampant: The Story of Holland's Resistance to the Nazis* (New York: Querido, 1943), 336.

<sup>122</sup> Van Der Zee, 21.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

everyday expressions of popular dissent. Patriotic citizens greeted members of the Dutch collaborationist party, the *Nationaal Socialisistische Beweging* (N.S.B.) by singing “On the corner of the street” (*Op den hoek van de Straat*), which describes how the N.S.B. had betrayed their country.<sup>124</sup> The Dutch greeting “hallo” was transformed into an acronym to mean “Hang all traitors” (*Hang Alle Landverraders Op*).<sup>125</sup>

Acts of symbolic and passive resistance remained a significant part of Holland’s struggle against the Nazis for the duration of the war. The more overt acts of resistance were more difficult to organize, as they required larger groups and more planning. When resistance units did emerge, they usually grew from personal friendships.<sup>126</sup> Often locality, religious beliefs, political persuasion, or social class united these groups. Some were highly conservative and reactionary, fighting for the ideals of Crown and Country, while others, like the communists, saw their chance to impose a new, different, and improved post-war society.<sup>127</sup> These groups, in turn, did not usually combine into larger units, which made the Dutch resistance command and control hierarchy complicated, decentralized, and compartmented.<sup>128</sup> An exception to this was the partnership between the Calvinist Resistance Council (*Raad van Verzet*, or R.v.Z.), and several much smaller Communist resistance units.<sup>129</sup> Their union was very successful, given their vastly different ideologies. This was, however, an exception, as the only thing most organizations shared was the common goal of defeating the Nazis.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> J.J. Bollen and J.C. Van Der Does, *Five Years of Occupation: The Resistance of the Dutch Against Hitler-terrorism and Nazi-robbery* (N.P.: Printed on the Secret Press of D.A.V.I.D., 1945), 17.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Arblaster, 228.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Stewart W. Bentley, *Orange Blood, Silver Wings: The Untold Story of the Dutch Resistance During Market-Garden* (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2007), 6.

<sup>129</sup> Rings, 214.

<sup>130</sup> Jeroen Dewulf, *Spirit of Resistance: Dutch clandestine literature during the Nazi occupation* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 75.

The creation of larger groups and the possibility for active resistance was also constrained by Holland's geography and demography.<sup>131</sup> In 1940, the Netherlands encompassed only 32,529 square kilometers in area, making it smaller than Vancouver Island.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, thanks to an excellent transport system, the German garrison of three infantry divisions and several regiments of the Order Police (*Ordnungs Polizei*) could move anywhere in the country within a few hours.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, the country had no mountains and very little forest to provide shelter for partisan movements.<sup>134</sup> Only in a few wooded riverside areas were resistance groups able to hide German prisoners of war.<sup>135</sup> Then, because of Holland's population density, only very small underground groups could assemble in any one place.<sup>136</sup> In 1940, the population of the Netherlands was roughly 9.25 million and, at nearly 710 persons per square kilometer, the country boasted the highest recorded population density in the world.<sup>137</sup> In the west, it was twice as high as elsewhere. Although the west constituted only about a fifth of the total land surface of the Netherlands, it accounted for almost half the total population of the country.<sup>138</sup> For these reasons Holland was ill-suited for full-scale attacks or partisan warfare.<sup>139</sup>

It should be noted that the same geographical and demographical constraints plagued Belgium and Denmark. The Netherlands, however, also had the disadvantage of topography. During the war, the country was in many respects cut off from the rest of the world.<sup>140</sup> Unlike Norway, Denmark, or France, it did not share a land border with a neutral country, and the

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<sup>131</sup> Jørgen Hæstrup, *Europe Ablaze: an Analysis of the History of European Resistance Movements 1939-45* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1978), 101.

<sup>132</sup> The province of Flevoland was created in 1986 by reclaiming the Flevopolder, part of the IJsselmeer, and has since added almost 1,500 square kilometers. (Mark T. Hooker, *The History of Holland* [London: Greenwood Press, 1999], 6.)

<sup>133</sup> Van Galen Last, 190.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.; Richard S. Fuegner, *Dawn of Courage: Dutch Resistance to the German Occupation of Holland, 1940-1945* (Minneapolis, MN: Mori Studio, 2008), 3-4.

<sup>135</sup> Werner Rings, *Life with the Enemy: Collaboration and Resistance in Hitler's Europe 1939-1945* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1982), 179.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Zena Stein, et al., *Famine and Human Development: The Dutch Hungerwinter of 1944-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 39.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Rings, 179.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 213; Fuegner, 4.

Germans closely guarded its North Sea avenue to England.<sup>141</sup> While over 50,000 Norwegians made their escape to Sweden or Britain and over 30,000 Frenchmen fled to Spain, less than a thousand Dutchmen succeeded in making the dangerous sea crossing to England or crossed occupied territory to Switzerland.<sup>142</sup> The country's location, moreover, was on the direct route between Allied airfields in Britain and the industrial heartland of Germany. This meant that the dense concentrations of anti-aircraft artillery there hindered the dropping of secret agents or supplies to resistance groups.<sup>143</sup> For some then, resistance remained an isolated affair.<sup>144</sup>

In light of these geographic, topographic, and demographic constraints, the Dutch fell back on other means of resistance, such as acts of espionage, sabotage, clandestine printing, and strikes. Historian Jørgen Hæstrup called the strike the “most characteristic feature” of the Dutch resistance.<sup>145</sup> Indeed, strikes were used very effectively to convey the hostility of the populace, the first one coming in late June, a mere seven weeks after the Dutch surrender. Not surprisingly, the first strike rallied around a member of the Royal House. On June 29, the birthday of Prince Bernhard, who was in exile in London, people all across the country flew the national flag, in violation of a German ban.<sup>146</sup> Moreover, people stopped work and took to the streets to sing the national anthem, likewise prohibited, and many marked the day by carrying carnations in one of their buttonholes.<sup>147</sup> The carnation was the Prince's favorite flower, and subsequently the day was remembered as Carnation Day (*Anjerdag*).

After *Anjerdag* the situation in the Netherlands remained relatively quiet. It was the calm before the storm, however, as a much bigger strike broke out in February of 1941. In opposition

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<sup>141</sup> Van Galen Last, 190.

<sup>142</sup> Rings, 213.

<sup>143</sup> Van Galen Last, 190.

Only late in the war were supplies more easily flown in. Importantly, the Sten guns used in the attempt on Rauter were of British origins and had been parachuted in by Allied Forces. (Geraldien von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, *Resistance, Reprisals, Reactions in Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe*, ed. Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka, and Anette Warring [New York: Berg Publishers, 2006], 190.)

<sup>144</sup> Van Galen Last, 190.

<sup>145</sup> Jørgen Hæstrup, *European Resistance Movements, 1939-1945: A Complete History* (Westport, CT: Meckler Publishing, 1981), 101

<sup>146</sup> Rings, 157.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*; Miller, 25.

to the passage of anti-Semitic laws, people initially took to the streets in Amsterdam, which had become the epicenter of political turbulence and nervous tension.<sup>148</sup> The unrest quickly spread to other cities, and the February Strike (*Februari Staking*), as it was subsequently called, became one of the few popular uprisings undertaken by non-Jewish citizens against anti-Jewish policies.<sup>149</sup> In the Netherlands, where about half the population was Calvinist, brought up on a strict knowledge of the Bible, anti-Semitism was regarded not merely as inhuman, but sacrilegious.<sup>150</sup> Nevertheless, the walkout was put down after only a day and many strikers arrested, but not executed. After February 1941, the Dutch did not again resist the anti-Semitic policies of the Third Reich en masse, and of the 140,000 Jews who lived in the Netherlands in 1940, only some 35,000 survived the Nazi racial policies.<sup>151</sup>

While the February Strike neither slowed nor stopped Nazi policies, it was a clear indication that the Dutch had grown hostile to the German presence, and that the “honeymoon” was over.<sup>152</sup> Two factors help explain this. First, by this time the Dutch had begun to recover from the initial shock of invasion and had realized the realities of occupation. Second, the Dutch had grown hostile to the German authorities, especially the person of Arthur Seyss-Inquart. The *Reichskommissar* hated the royal family and never had much appreciation for the Dutch either.<sup>153</sup> Despite his initial conciliatory speech, he made no secret of the fact that he had come to the Netherlands to exploit it for the Third Reich.<sup>154</sup> Consequently, the Dutch took an intense dislike to this Austrian and, by extension, to the German occupational forces.

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<sup>148</sup> Hæstrup, 102; Arblaster, 227.

<sup>149</sup> Louis De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, vol. 4, *Mei '40 – Maart '41: Tweede Helft* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1972), 800.

<sup>150</sup> Michael R.D. Foot, *Resistance: an Analysis of European Resistance to Nazism 1940-1945* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1976), 260.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Werner Warmbrunn, *The Dutch under German Occupation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 12.

<sup>153</sup> Van Der Zee, 98.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

After February 1941 the Dutch resistance grew increasingly more violent, focusing its aggression on the collaborators first, and on the Germans themselves second. Although the strikes of June 1940 and February 1941 might have given the impression of a great Dutch solidarity, this was not the case. The reality was that numerous, often tiny, underground organizations had sprung up to work against the Nazis.<sup>155</sup> The Dutch Resistance was, as one historian called it, a “very small and ideologically diverse” movement.<sup>156</sup> Although many Dutch agreed on their opposition to the Nazis, they disagreed on most other points. A good indication of this diversity came in the clandestine press. The Dutch had one of the liveliest underground publications in all of occupied Europe.<sup>157</sup> As historian Michael Foot explained, “Printing was one of Holland’s largest light industries; there were thousands of small presses and skilled compositors, plenty of paper, and plenty of subjects to write about.”<sup>158</sup> Eventually over a thousand clandestine newspapers appeared, supplemented by numerous broadsheets and pamphlets.<sup>159</sup> The most well known were the Calvinist *Trouw*, the communist *De Waarheid*, the royalist *Je Maintiendrai*, and the two progressive papers, *Het Parool*, and *Vrij Nederland*.<sup>160</sup> Like the resistance itself, these newspapers were ideologically varied and often only had the defeat of the Nazis in common, which ensured that attempts at unification amongst newspapers in 1940 and in 1943 largely failed.<sup>161</sup> Although the number of publications was thus commendable, the variety was an indicator that the resistance lacked unity, acted separately, and remained ideologically diverse.

Since there were so many different subgroups, the possibility of a unified resistance proved difficult. This was not the only shortcoming, however. Holland’s flat terrain did not lend itself to

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<sup>155</sup> Arblaster, 227.

<sup>156</sup> Van Galen Last, 207.

<sup>157</sup> Harry Stone, *Writing in the Shadow: Resistance Publications in Occupied Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 45.

<sup>158</sup> Foot, 261.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*; Rings, 169.

<sup>160</sup> Foot, 261; Rings, 169.

<sup>161</sup> Stone, 84-85.

partisan warfare so essential to the successes in France, Yugoslavia, Norway and Greece.<sup>162</sup> Nevertheless, earlier in June 1940, the *Orde Dienst* (O.D.) had been created, largely by members of the Dutch Army, still frustrated with Holland's embarrassingly quick defeat in 1940.<sup>163</sup> It, and the few other military partisan movements like it, however, failed because the population density and open plains of Holland did not lend themselves to militant guerilla warfare.<sup>164</sup> The O.D.'s movement was furthermore restricted by the many rivers and canals that traversed the country, meaning its fighters had to use the roads, railroads, and bridges, which were easily patrolled by the Germans.<sup>165</sup> Moreover, roadblocks and checkpoints, plus shortage of gasoline and tires hindered the O.D. and made it easy for the Germans to limit their movement.<sup>166</sup>

The German ability to subdue the O.D. was further helped by the so-called England Game (*Englandspiel*). This had arisen in November 1941 when the German Military Intelligence (*Abwehr*), arrested a number of Dutch agents working for the government-in-exile in London. During the subsequent interrogations the *Abwehr* gained access to radio links with London, and as a result, communications between London, the O.D., and other resistance groups were compromised and manipulated by the Germans for an extended period of time. Using *Englandspiel*, the Nazis diverted equipment, weapons and money which would have equipped 10,000 resisters. Further, it brought death to more than 450 resistance fighters (*verzetsstrijders*). Although *Englandspiel* finally ended in late 1943 when a Dutch agent managed to escape the *Abwehr*, the Dutch resistance had suffered a devastating blow from which it never fully recovered.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Will Irwin, *Abundance of Valor: Resistance, Survival and Liberation, 1944-1945* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2010), 69.

<sup>163</sup> Van Galen Last, 194; Bentley, 4..

<sup>164</sup> Rings, 214.

<sup>165</sup> Irwin, 69.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> Carlos C. Jurado and Paul Hannon, *Resistance Warfare: Resistance and Collaboration in Western Europe, 1940-1945* (London: Osprey Publishing, 1985), 14.



Although the end of *Englandspiel* allowed the resistance to rebuild and attempt to unite, it was not successful. Among its larger branches, such as the Resistance Council (*Raad van Verzet*, R.v.Z.), the National Action Groups (L.K.P., *Landelijke Knokploegen*), and the Relief Organization for Those in Hiding (L.O., *Landelijke Ondergrondse*) widely diverging objectives, priorities, and political and religious alliances still existed. Aside from these larger groups, there were many smaller units, equally divided ideologically, which operated independently at a local level. The discovery of *Englandspiel* in 1943 not only further divided these units, one group blaming the other for *Englandspiel*, but also caused individual pockets to mobilize and step up attacks on German installations and personnel in revenge.<sup>168</sup>

The L.K.P., which had roughly 550 members in 1943, was primarily responsible for this increased aggression, killing over forty Dutch collaborators in an eight-month period immediately following the termination of *Englandspiel*.<sup>169</sup> These assassinations, or “liquidations” as the underground called them, focused on members of the N.S.B. rather than the Germans themselves.<sup>170</sup> N.S.B. officials, and even their wives were shot in their homes. These were not, however, arbitrary acts of political murder. Since they raised strong moral qualms for many participants, each attack was carefully discussed with a minister of religion or authorized resistance leaders.<sup>171</sup> No attacks were approved without a thorough examination of every conceivable ethical, moral, political, and psychological objection.<sup>172</sup> Still, many prominent collaborators, including senior police officers and Gestapo informers met their death in 1943. General Hendrik Seyffardt, a sponsor of the Netherlands Volunteer Legion, but not a member of

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<sup>168</sup> Rings, 70.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 197; Irwin, 68.

<sup>170</sup> Warmbrunn, 206.

<sup>171</sup> Rings, 197.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

the N.S.B., was the first to die when he was shot at his home on February 5, 1943.<sup>173</sup> Shortly thereafter Richard Reydon, the recently appointed Secretary-General of the Department of Propaganda and Arts in the Netherlands, was shot in the spine and died of his injuries soon after.<sup>174</sup> In quick succession, the police chiefs in Nijmegen and Utrecht were executed in broad daylight.<sup>175</sup>

In addition to the assassinations, the Dutch-German relations were further damaged by another strike, which occurred in April 1943. Late in that month Hitler declared economic mobilization for total war in all Nazi occupied territories.<sup>176</sup> When the Supreme Commander of the *Wehrmacht* in the Netherlands issued his proclamation ordering Dutch army veterans to report for transfer to the Reich, strikes began.<sup>177</sup> The disruptions, which extended into May, became one of the strongest demonstrations of popular resistance. Significantly, Rauter was on duty as in February 1941.<sup>178</sup> Immediately people were arrested, although no one was summarily executed in retaliation.<sup>179</sup> Rauter supposedly wanted no “unnecessary” blood.<sup>180</sup> Although the Germans were still somewhat civil towards the Dutch, the strikes illustrated the growing breakdown of relations between the occupier and the occupied.<sup>181</sup>

In the aftermath of these strikes, the number of assassinations increased. Encouraged by the increased effort, sympathetic police units now took their weapons underground and joined

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<sup>173</sup> Warmbrunn, 206; Walter B. Maass, *The Netherlands at War: 1940-1945* (London, New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1970), 140.

The Netherlands Volunteer Legion (*Vrijwilligerslegion Nederland*) was set up by Seyffardt, a former Chief of the General Staff of the Dutch Army, in July 1941 to let Dutch Nazi sympathizers fight under Dutch officers and their own flag. The assurances of autonomy were empty promises, and the Legion was quickly dissolved and its units integrated in the Waffen S.S. (Warmbrunn, 91; *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, 1940-45, Rotterdam. July 10, 1941, 1.)

<sup>174</sup> Maass, 140; Warmbrunn, 207; F.A. De Graaff, *Op Leven en Dood: Kroniek van Oorlog en Bezetting, 1940-1945* (Rotterdam: W.L.&J. Brusse, 1946), 178.

<sup>175</sup> Rings, 197.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 69-70

<sup>177</sup> Warmbrunn, 113; Richard S. Fuegner, *Dawn of Courage: Dutch Resistance to the German Occupation of Holland, 1940-1945* (Minneapolis, MN: Mori Studio, 2008), 118.

<sup>178</sup> Rauter was always on hand during the great crises of the occupation, unlike Seyss-Inquart who was always absent. Louis De Jong, *Hanns A. Rauter – Persoon en Daden, in Nederland in Oorlogstijd, 1946-1950*, vol. IV (Amsterdam: Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, 1949), 3.

<sup>179</sup> Louis De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, vol. 6, *Juli '42 – Mei '43: Tweede Helft* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1975), 777-778.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 778.

<sup>181</sup> Warmbrunn, 113.

resistance movements.<sup>182</sup> Members of the N.S.B remained the primary targets, as their betrayal of Queen and country was seen as morally worse than the German invasion or occupation. In the eastern provinces farmers with known N.S.B sympathies were targeted and their farms burned.<sup>183</sup> In June 1943, Folkert E. Posthuma, a former Minister of War and member of the Political Secretariat of State of the N.S.B., was assassinated.<sup>184</sup> Altogether over forty N.S.B.ers were shot between February 1 and September 15, 1943.<sup>185</sup> Still, assassination attempts on German military personnel, especially high-ranking officers, remained relatively few until the Allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944, after which they began to increase.<sup>186</sup>

The D-Day landings gave a tremendous morale boost to resistance efforts throughout Europe, and the Netherlands was no exception. People across the continent were overjoyed, as it finally seemed Axis defeat was a true possibility. The landings moreover led to another attempt to unite the resistance effort in the Netherlands.<sup>187</sup> With the approach of Allied armies, Dutch forces became more active, and the will to unite more universal. With directions from London, the O.D., L.K.P., and R.v.Z. came together in the Netherlands Forces of the Interior (*Nederlandse Binnenlandse Stijdkrachten*, B.S.).<sup>188</sup> With Prince Bernhard as its Commander, the B.S. was established to improve coordination within the resistance.<sup>189</sup> Members of the various organizations were declared soldiers of the Forces of the Interior, and became subject to Prince Bernhard's orders and those of his subordinates.<sup>190</sup> The resistance organizations that were combined into the B.S., however, were accustomed to operating in a decentralized manner and were unable to coordinate their activities effectively, which was essential if the B.S. was to

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<sup>182</sup> Rings, 178.

<sup>183</sup> Warmbrunn, 207.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> Jurado, 14.

<sup>188</sup> Irwin, 68.

<sup>189</sup> Van Galen Last, 203; Warmbrunn, 215.

<sup>190</sup> Warmbrunn, 14.

work.<sup>191</sup> But it did not really matter. The formation came too late to be truly effective.<sup>192</sup> Paramilitary activities increased somewhat, but there was still no genuine unified military resistance in the Netherlands.<sup>193</sup>

The lack of internal integration was troubling because the Normandy landings coincided with two developments that led many *verzetsstrijders* to abandon moral concerns about the use of violence and step up aggressive resistance.<sup>194</sup> First, the Allied invasion coincided with increased German aggression and violence, which the resistance deliberately countered with numerous acts of political assassination and sabotage.<sup>195</sup> Most resistance groups and clandestine papers sanctioned the execution of Dutch collaborators and German officials alike as necessary acts of war.<sup>196</sup> While some expressed regret that the situation had come to this, most openly approved the liquidation of traitors and the enemy.<sup>197</sup> The second development was the onset of the *Hongerwinter* after September 1944. The famine conditions in the country led many *verzetsstrijders* to undertake dangerous and sometimes foolish missions to acquire the barest necessities for survival.

The *Hongerwinter* occurred after the failure of the Allied enterprise at Arnhem, which doomed hopes for a speedy liberation of the entire Dutch territory.<sup>198</sup> Consequently, the southern provinces of Zeeland, Noord Brabant and Limburg were liberated by the Allies, while the northern provinces remained under German control, essentially dividing the Netherlands into a liberated south and an occupied north. In support of Operation Market Garden, the Dutch government-in-exile had ordered Dutch railroad workers to go on strike, and thirty thousand

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<sup>191</sup> Stewart, 6.

<sup>192</sup> Rings, 219.

<sup>193</sup> Van Galen Last, 190; Irwin, 68.

<sup>194</sup> Warmbrunn, 207.

<sup>195</sup> Rings, 197.

<sup>196</sup> Warmbrunn, 207.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>198</sup> Fuegner, 178.

people had subsequently obliged. The Germans, fuming about the work stoppage, used it as a pretext to obstruct the delivery of food and fuel to Holland's western provinces.<sup>199</sup> Due to its high population density, the Netherlands depended heavily on imports, especially in the west. The blockade was disastrous since it was in addition to earlier German measures, which had cut food rations, introduced earlier curfew hours, and limited utilities based on coal, electricity, and gas.<sup>200</sup> The embargo both expanded these restrictions and included a wholesale ban on goods traffic, which ultimately caused the *Hongerwinter*, claiming the lives of 15,000.<sup>201</sup> In the big cities, the struggle for food and fuel became the dominant preoccupation of everyone.<sup>202</sup> In February 1945, for example, the situation was so desperate that people in Amsterdam received only 340 calories per day.<sup>203</sup> Although the Swedes offered to send humanitarian aid to alleviate the famine, the Germans had no intention of allowing anyone to help the Dutch.<sup>204</sup>

The quest for food now became paramount for everyone so that much of the resistance effort subsequently became humanitarian-oriented. Determined to aid their fellow countrymen, many *verzetsstrijders* turned from sabotage to acquiring food. Forgery of food coupons and ration cards became a necessary part of this effort. Theft was another option. Although this was by far the most dangerous approach, it was often quite successful. Resistance fighters, often dressed in German military uniforms, raided food offices or attacked vehicles carrying ration cards or food coupons. In one case, a resistance unit managed to burn a hole in an iron safe large enough for one adult to enter and steal the 40,000 ration cards locked inside.<sup>205</sup> Desperation led to increasingly hazardous and brazenly dangerous actions as the Dutch resistance took greater risks to acquire ration cards.

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<sup>199</sup> Van Galen Last, 203.

<sup>200</sup> Warmbrunn, 16.

<sup>201</sup> Rings, 70.

<sup>202</sup> Warmbrunn, 16.

<sup>203</sup> G.J. Kruijer, *Sociale Desorganisatie: Amsterdam tijdens de Hongerwinter* (Meppel: J.A. Bloom, 1951), 179.

<sup>204</sup> Van Der Zee, 43.

<sup>205</sup> Boolen and Van Der Does, 36.

It was against this backdrop of despair that the attack on Rauter took place. Between 1940 and 1945, the resistance thus grew progressively more violent. Additionally, by March 1945 the resistance was suffering from intense despair caused by the *Hongerwinter*, while it was still plagued by geographical, topographical, and demographical constraints. These obstructions inhibited increased professionalization. Even though the *verzetstrijders* themselves were not to blame for these disadvantages, it made them more prone to make mistakes. Accordingly, it was a combination of increased Dutch resistance without an accompanying professionalization, and heightened German aggression that resulted in the bloodshed in 1945. Consequently, the attack on Rauter was not an attack on the man himself, or the office he represented, but simply an attempt to steal a meat truck to alleviate hunger.

- Chapter Three -

## Convergence:

### *De Woeste Hoeve*

*“It doesn’t matter where you get the people. This is an order  
of the highest authority – it cannot be altered.”*

- Hans Kolitz<sup>206</sup>

In March 1945 the conditions in Holland were horrifying. The German *Wehrmacht* was determined to stop or turn around the Allied advance in the Netherlands, and met any form of hostility, resistance, or non-collaboration with quick, harsh, and violent reprisals. Between September 1944 and May 1945, roughly 1,000 Dutchmen fell victim to German executions.<sup>207</sup> Extreme cold, lack of fuel, scarcity of food, forced population movements, Allied bombing, and ever-increasing levels of German repression furthermore encouraged the resistance to undertake missions that had earlier been considered too bold or too daring. These were the preconditions for one of the worst episodes of Nazi cruelty in the Netherlands: the tragedy at De Woeste Hoeve on March 8. However, given that the attack and subsequent reprisals were the result of both heightened German aggression and increased Dutch resistance, it is difficult to see De Woeste Hoeve merely as a symbol of German terror.

By March 1945 the effects of Seyss-Inquart’s embargo had developed into a full-fledged famine. The problems were compounded in Apeldoorn where, in the wake of the battle for Arnhem, many citizens from that region had fled.<sup>208</sup> To help these refugees and others, a local resistance unit received a tip in the late afternoon of March 6. It revealed a planned transfer of

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<sup>206</sup> Henk Berends, *Woeste Hoeve: 8 maart 1945* (Kampen: Kok Voorhoeve, 1995), 17.

<sup>207</sup> Dick van Galen Last, “The Netherlands,” in *Resistance in Western Europe*, ed. Bob Moore (New York; Berg Publishers, 2000), 206.

<sup>208</sup> Berends, 11.

3,000 kilograms of meat from a slaughterhouse in Epe, a small city north of Apeldoorn.<sup>209</sup> Here was a golden opportunity to help alleviate the famine conditions. Even if people had something to eat, their diet consisted mainly of potatoes and vegetables, and lacked protein and fat.<sup>210</sup> Hence, the local sabotage director ordered a resistance unit led by Geert Gosens to steal the meat.<sup>211</sup>

The mission did not seem particularly perilous since similar ones had succeeded in the past.<sup>212</sup> According to the tip the meat was to be picked up by a German truck and transported to the Reich early in the morning of March 7. The first plan was to use a German truck the resistance had stolen earlier and pick up the meat before the real vehicle arrived.<sup>213</sup> It could take place under the cover of darkness, made easier since strict police control was not what it had been earlier since the Nazis needed all resources in their attempt to postpone defeat.<sup>214</sup> Acquiring the necessary papers was not a problem since the resistance had become especially adept at forging German documents.<sup>215</sup> The plan then called for a distribution of most of the meat among various section chiefs who would allocate it at their discretion. Another part of the meat would be randomly dropped on street corners in Apeldoorn, which was in great need because of the numerous refugees.<sup>216</sup>

Before the mission, Geert Gosens' group secured and planned the essentials. *Wehrmacht* uniforms were acquired and the people to carry out the mission selected. Gosens personally chose Henk de Weerd, Karel Pruis, Wim Kok, and two Austrians, Sepp Köttinger and Hermann Kämpfer, both well-trained and reliable deserters from the Waffen-SS who had joined the

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<sup>209</sup> Louis De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, vol. 10B, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft* ('s-Gravenhage: Staatsuitgeverij, 1981), 418.

<sup>210</sup> Henri Van Der Zee, *The Hunger Winter: Occupied Holland 1944-5* (London: Jull Norman & Hobhouse, 1982), 18.

<sup>211</sup> Berends, 11.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 419; Berends, 11.

<sup>214</sup> Werner Warmbrunn, *The Dutch under German Occupation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 234.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>216</sup> Berends, 11.



*Landelijke Ondergrondse*.<sup>217</sup> Köttinger and Kämpfer's ability to speak fluent German had been of tremendous value in earlier missions, since their Austrian accent had aroused no suspicion among fellow countrymen in occupied Holland. Transportation, however, turned out to be a major problem. The truck they intended to use was not drivable, and the other available vehicles were too small. Therefore the group decided to hijack a German vehicle, kill and bury the crew, and use that truck to pick up the meat.<sup>218</sup> Although this was significantly more dangerous than the original plan, Geert Gosens had successfully completed such operations in the past.<sup>219</sup> The proposed location for capture was quickly chosen. A deserted stretch of road running between Apeldoorn and Arnhem, just past an inn named after the nearby hamlet of De Woeste Hoeve, was ideal for this operation. Although the street was the most direct route between the two cities, it was not paved and was primarily used for supplying the *Wehrmacht*. Many trucks used the road daily, and capturing one in the cover of darkness should not be a problem.<sup>220</sup>

At approximately 9:30 in the evening the men left Apeldoorn by bicycle, and traveled south towards Arnhem. Most were armed with Sten guns, while Gosens carried his own Walther PPK. After about 5 minutes a German officer stopped them at a roadblock. Köttinger spoke with the officer and, because of his fluent German, the group passed without problem. To see if they could pass for a German patrol, they stopped a truck in Beekbergen. Using their pocket lights, they flagged down a truck and asked the driver for his license and registration. The Dutch driver noticed nothing unusual, showed his papers and soon continued on his way. Confident, the group carried on south towards De Woeste Hoeve.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Berends, 11-12.

<sup>218</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 419.

<sup>219</sup> Berends, 12.

<sup>220</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 419.

<sup>221</sup> Berends, 12.

They arrived at their destination around 10:30. Since the moon was in its last quarter and would not rise until after midnight, the night sky was pitch black. Two hundred meters past De Woeste Hoeve Inn the group dropped their bikes in the ditch and prepared their weapons.<sup>222</sup> After 10 minutes they heard a heavy vehicle approaching, which they presumed was a truck.<sup>223</sup> They got into position, two in the ditch on each side of the road and two on the street. Geert Gosens and Sepp Köttinger were the two men who were to stop the truck so the others could ambush them from the side.<sup>224</sup> Köttinger turned on his flashlight and the approaching car slowed down. At the same time, in the vehicle, Rauter ordered his driver not to stop but drive straight through the blockade.<sup>225</sup> The driver, who was not one of Rauter's regular drivers, instead hit the brakes hard and the BMW came to a rough stop in front of Köttinger and Gosens.<sup>226</sup> According to Rauter's post-war account, one of the men jumped on the car's hood and pointed the gun straight at the driver.<sup>227</sup> Then someone from the car yelled: "What is going on, man, don't you know who we are?" (*Was ist den los, Mensch, wissen Sie denn nicht wer wir sind?*). Gosens and Köttinger were caught by surprise; they had expected a heavy truck with a crew who would obey their every command.<sup>228</sup> Instead what had come to a halt in front of them was a luxury car – a BMW convertible carrying German officers.

There was not much time to think, and in a split-second Gosens opened fire.<sup>229</sup> His shot went through the windshield of the car and hit the person in the passenger seat. Later it was discovered that this man was Rauter, who said that he felt "the shot as if struck by a sharp

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<sup>222</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 420.

<sup>223</sup> Geraldien von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, "Resistance, Reprisals, Reactions" in *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe*, ed. Robert Gildea, Olivier Wieviorka, and Anette Warring (New York: Berg Publishers, 2006), 191.

<sup>224</sup> Berends, 12.

<sup>225</sup> Nederlandse Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten, *Ik Draag U Op: Systeem en Werk der Nederlandsche Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten, getoest aan de lotgevallen van locale eenheden (Apeldoorn en omgeving.)* (Apeldoorn: Uitgave ten Bate van het fonds nabestaanden ondergronsche strijders, 1946), 8. (Hereafter cited as *Ik Draag U Op*.)

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>228</sup> Berends, 12-13.

<sup>229</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 420.

Others claim that it was Rauter who opened fire first. (Von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, 191.)

knife.”<sup>230</sup> The other men jumped out of the ditch and opened fire, piercing the car with 234 bullets.<sup>231</sup> Rauter’s orderly, *Oberleutnant* Exner, who was sitting in the backseat, was riddled with bullets and died instantly.<sup>232</sup> The driver also died within minutes. Rauter, however, who was struck first but subsequently only by eight more bullets, survived the ordeal. He remained conscious and according to his later account considered continuing the fight after the resisters had stopped shooting.<sup>233</sup> His gun jammed, however.<sup>234</sup>

When silence returned, Rauter heard somebody say, “He is dead” (*Hij is dood*).<sup>235</sup> Seconds later, with the group still inspecting the damage, a truck approached and passed the BMW before resuming its route to Apeldoorn.<sup>236</sup> When the truck had passed, the group, which had quickly hidden, came out for a closer inspection of the damage they had done. Since their flashlights had stopped working, they were unable to see whom they had shot, and because there was absolute silence they assumed the three men were dead. When the group heard another car approach, they decided to leave while they could. They did not return to Apeldoorn; that was too risky. Instead they went to a campground named Coldenhove, to the southeast of the city, where they spent the night in a log cabin.<sup>237</sup> Gosens and his group still had no idea whom they had shot.

It was not until 3:30 the next morning that the BMW was discovered by a passing German military convoy.<sup>238</sup> Upon stopping, the soldiers heard Rauter make a faint noise. They rushed to the nearby De Woeste Hoeve Inn, woke its owners, and demanded to use their

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<sup>230</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 420.

<sup>231</sup> Van der Zee, 183.

<sup>232</sup> Exner’s full name is a mystery. In all sources he is referred to simply by his title: *Oberleutnant* Exner.

<sup>233</sup> *Ik Draag Up Op*, 9.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>235</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 420.

<sup>236</sup> Berends, 13.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> Berends, 13.

Some sources claim that it was actually a truck from the International Red Cross who discovered the body. However, this source also claims that there were four German officers in the BMW and that there were only 4 perpetrators. (Van Der Zee, 183.)

telephone.<sup>239</sup> Still nobody knew who the critically injured man was. Within minutes an ambulance left the military hospital in Apeldoorn. When it arrived, it found two corpses, the driver and Exner, and Rauter, who was severely weakened due to massive blood loss and nearly frozen due to the night cold. He had two bullets through his left lung, another through his jaw, three more through his right hand, one through his chest, which missed vital organs, and one in his upper right thigh.<sup>240</sup>

Later that morning, the *Sicherheitsdienst* began its investigation. Two men from Velp were first on the scene, soon joined by Oscar Gerbig, commandant of the Apeldoorn detachment.<sup>241</sup> The officials found many empty shells of British-make, and concluded that the attack must have been planned and executed by the resistance. The hypothesis was not farfetched since Gosens and his group had used Sten guns, which were of British make and, as the Germans knew, frequently dropped into occupied Holland by the Allies.<sup>242</sup> At noon Gerbig returned to his office in Apeldoorn, where he learned that Rauter's injuries were serious and he would be incapacitated for at least 6 months. Consequently, Gerbig contacted Heinrich Himmler, who appointed Zwolle S.S. Brigadier General Eberhard Schöngarth to fill Rauter's position.<sup>243</sup> Schöngarth, a sinister person with a violent past, held the post until the end of the war.<sup>244</sup> He had arrived in the Netherlands in June 1944, when he replaced Erich Naumann as the Commander of the S.I.P.O. and the S.D. (*Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und der*

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<sup>239</sup> Berends, 13.

<sup>240</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 420-421.

<sup>241</sup> Berends, 15.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.; Werner Rings, *Life with the Enemy: Collaboration and Resistance in Hitler's Europe 1939-1945* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1982), 197.

<sup>243</sup> Berends, 16.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

Schöngarth, who attended the 1941 Wannsee Conference to discuss the final solution to the Jewish problem, was a fierce anti-Semite and staunch National Socialist. He had also worked in Poland where he had been responsible for the deaths of many Jews and Communists. (Gerard Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984], 93.)

*Sicherheitsdienst*).<sup>245</sup> As close colleagues, Rauter and Schöngarth had gotten along well; in fact, Rauter once remarked that he admired Schöngarth's "dedication" to the job.<sup>246</sup>

The first task Schöngarth undertook was to visit his colleague in the hospital. When he arrived Rauter told him he was absolutely certain somebody had planned and executed this attack with the intention of killing him.<sup>247</sup> He further claimed that the resistance had known about his trip because it had allegedly tapped his phone.<sup>248</sup> Rauter's belief was reinforced by the fact that he had heard the resisters say, "He is dead."<sup>249</sup> Rauter, moreover, believed the number of assailants to be around six, and recognized Geert Gosens when Schöngarth showed him pictures of several suspects.<sup>250</sup>

After an attack on a high-profile German officer, it was only a matter of time before reprisals would begin. During his visit, however, Rauter claimed he asked Schöngarth not to carry out any reprisals. If so, it was likely that Rauter's recognition of defeat had something to do with his request. Nevertheless, immediately after his visit, Schöngarth reported to Himmler that Rauter's life had been saved, despite being hit by several bullets. Himmler, in turn, wired Seyss-Inquart that he would be grateful "if you would do anything that can contribute to [Rauter's] recovery" and causally ordered the execution of at least 500 people. Seyss-Inquart thought it excessive, but did nothing to stop it.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> De Jong, De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 66.

Erich Naumann had replaced Wilhelm Harster in 1943. Naumann had served as commander of *Einsatzgruppen B* in Poland, where he engaged in the wholesale shooting of Jews and Communists. At Nuremberg, Naumann was found guilty for over 17,256 deaths. In his position as Commander of the SIPO and SD in the Netherlands he introduced an intensified police terror and stepped up the number of reprisal murders. (Adolf Emile Cohen, *Een Onbekende tijdgenoot: de laatste Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei and des SD in Nederland* [Amsterdam: Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, 1955], 9-11.)

<sup>246</sup> Warmbrunn, 41.

<sup>247</sup> Berends, 15.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> This statement, according to Rauter, implied that they knew whom they had killed. Since we now know the attack on Rauter was unintentional and accidental, it is more likely that what was said was, "*Die is dood*," which loosely translates to "this one is dead." (De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 421.)

<sup>250</sup> Berends, 15.

<sup>251</sup> Van Der Zee, 183.

Despite Rauter's alleged wishes, but in line with Himmler's request, Schöngarth ordered Oscar Gerbig to make a list of prisoners in Apeldoorn and surrounding municipalities who were suitable candidates for execution.<sup>252</sup> Gerbig, in turn, gave his immediate subordinate, Hans Kolitz, the same instructions.<sup>253</sup> Kolitz then contacted Willy Lages, the S.D. Commandant in Amsterdam and ordered him to deliver 75 prisoners.<sup>254</sup> Since Lages was only able to deliver 53 *Todeskandidaten* from Amsterdam he found another 6 in Utrecht, bringing the total to 59.<sup>255</sup> On the morning of March 8 all 59 prisoners were executed at Fort de Bilt. Johannes Munt, the S.D. Commandant in The Hague received an order for 80 prisoners. There were only 27 prisoners in Den Haag proper, but Munt, ever resourceful, ordered 49 prisoners to be identified in the prison in Amesfoort.<sup>256</sup> Munt personally selected another 11 prisoners and added them to his 27 prisoners. This brought his total to 38. Adding the 49 in Amesfoort, Munt ordered the executions of 87 men that evening.<sup>257</sup>

The greatest reprisals, however, took place at the scene of the ambush. Schöngarth personally ordered prisoners from Assen, Zwolle, Almelo, Colmschate, Doetinchem, and Apeldoorn to be brought to De Woeste Hoeve. At around 6:30am on March 8, 1945, 117 prisoners were cuffed using parachute rope and loaded into trucks. A convoy of seven trucks left, led by Gerbig on his motorcycle. The first truck carried security guards whose job it was to secure the road and stop all traffic one kilometer in each direction of the reprisal site. The trucks arrived at De Woeste Hoeve and parked about 200 meters away from the Inn, the exact site where the attack occurred. A fire-squad of about 50 German soldiers from the Weapon

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<sup>252</sup> Berends, 17.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 422.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Berends, 17.

<sup>257</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 422.

School of the Order Police (*Waffenschule der Ordnungspolizei*) in Amesfoort awaited them.<sup>258</sup> The officers had been told what they were to do and were asked if they were ready and willing to take responsibility for it. When one officer refused to take part in what he called “man slaughter,” he was immediately arrested. Several days later Schöngarth personally shot him.<sup>259</sup>

*Oberstleutnant* Karl Wilhelm Fricke was in charge of the actual executions. Every five minutes a group of twenty prisoners was brought to the site. Oscar Gerbig then read the reason for the execution to each group of prisoners. “At this exact location, an attack on a Wehrmacht official was carried out yesterday. As a reprisal measure, several hundred people will be shot. You are part of this group.” Martin Slagter, a Dutch collaborator, translated what Gerbig said. Slagter later admitted that after he had translated the announcements, he had to stand behind a nearby shed because he did not want to see the drama unfold. Gerbig too, later admitted, that he had a hard time participating in the reprisals. After, the victims were laid out in a long line between the road and the bicycle path. At around 10am the road was opened to the public. Every cyclist that passed the site was forced to stop and walk past the line three times. Mrs. Ledder-Brouwer remembers that she was biking along the road that morning when German officers forced her to get off her bike and walk by the row of executed prisoners. “They were lined up in order of execution,” she recounted after the war, “I was forced to walk by them three times and was not allowed to look away. There must have been 117 or 118.”<sup>260</sup>

The total number of retaliations was striking. The reprisals Hans Koltitz had ordered throughout the country, 59 in Amsterdam, 38 in Den Haag, and 49 in Amesfoort, with the 117 killed at the scene of the ambush, brought the total number to an astounding 263, the highest number of any single episode in occupied Holland. The corpses were loaded into three trucks

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<sup>258</sup> Berends, 18, 27-28.

<sup>259</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 424.

<sup>260</sup> Berends, 28-30.

and driven to a nearby cemetery. Normally, identification of the victims took place before they were loaded into the trucks, but time constraints did not allow it. Instead, the victims were buried in the same sequence as they had lain along the road at De Woeste Hoeve; fortunately, this made it possible to identify the victims later. Although rumours about what had happened began to circulate soon after the incident, nobody knew exactly what had occurred. The only source of information was a poster put up around the city by German authorities. It stated that in reprisal for attack on a 'German car,' several hundred terrorists and saboteurs had been summarily executed.<sup>261</sup> Since the victims were not identified, many of the families did not find out what had happened until after the liberation in May 1945.

Given the tragic outcome of the attack on Rauter, the Dutch surprisingly paid minimal attention to it. The first mention of De Woeste Hoeve appeared in *Het Parool* on March 17, but the article focused on the reprisals rather than the attack that provoked them. The paper began by recognizing the German efforts during the first few years of occupation to appease the Dutch populace, but then wrote that these efforts were rendered futile by the recent "string of unspeakable violence." Germans were now killing men by the dozen, grabbing them out of prisons, and summarily executing them without any form of trial. As the piece asserted, whoever had the misfortune of being arrested by the Germans would be either dead or dying within a couple of days. The article went on to note that Rauter's fate, as far as the resistance was concerned, had already been established. He was a war criminal who would be hanged after the war. For this reason, it said, none of the large resistance units had any intention of carrying out Rauter's sentence any earlier.

*Het Parool* concluded that the attack on Rauter must have been thoroughly planned and the perpetrators must have known of Rauter's travels. It further claimed that none of the small

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<sup>261</sup> Berends, 30-32.



rogue resistance units were responsible since they had neither the means nor the will to carry out such an attack.<sup>262</sup> Ten days later, on March 27, *Het Parool* went even further, writing that it was likely Rauter's attackers were themselves German and that even the Nazis thought so too. Seemingly, the paper denied Dutch involvement to highlight the illegitimacy of the subsequent reprisals. It noted that Rauter's car had not swerved or hit something, but had come to a stop voluntarily. This indicated that the car was stopped by a German patrol, for the car would not have stopped for any other reason. Then, had the perpetrators not been German, the ensuing conversation would have revealed this to Rauter and the other passengers. The paper moreover asserted that the lack of an investigation following the attack was an indication that the Nazis themselves believed the perpetrators were German.<sup>263</sup>

Whereas the Dutch reaction to the attack was to focus on the reprisals rather than the ambush on Rauter, the Germans, uncharacteristically, chose to give the tragedy as little publicity as possible.<sup>264</sup> Rauter was never publically identified as one of the victims of the attack, likely because the German authorities did not want to advertise the vulnerability of their highest officials. It was furthermore embarrassing that the entire German police force in the Netherlands could not guarantee the safety of its leader.

The lack of German attention paid to the attack was a reflection of both the desperation and lack of resources at war's end. There was also a general unwillingness to demonstrate the vulnerability of the Nazi's highest officials. The Dutch, on the other hand, only ever addressed the unjust nature of the reprisals and went as far as denying any involvement in the attack at all. They asserted alternatively that the perpetrators must have been German. The initial Dutch

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<sup>262</sup> "Ons Antwoord op het Bloedbad: Felle Actie, Meer Verzet," *Het Parool*, March 17, 1945, <http://www.hetillegaleparool.nl/archief/1945/450317-1.php> (accessed January 7, 2011.)

<sup>263</sup> "Wie Pleegde de Aanslag op Rauter – de SD schijnt geen belang te hebben bij opheldering van deze vraag," *Het Parool*, March 27, 1945, <http://www.hetillegaleparool.nl/archief/1945/450327-1.php> (accessed January 7, 2011.)

<sup>264</sup> Von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, 192

reaction perfectly demonstrated that the resistance was aware of the blunder it had made and the unnecessary deaths it had unwillingly provoked. In this light, the historian Louis de Jong condemned the actions of the resistance at De Woeste Hoeve, calling it an irresponsible act of resistance undertaken with the intention of getting a German truck, but leading instead to the shooting of 263 people.<sup>265</sup> Indeed, the resulting murder of Dutch citizens was tragic and appalling, yet should the resistance have stopped its raids out of fear for reprisals? Given the circumstances, the actions of the resistance were both justified and commendable. That being said, whatever its motivations, the Dutch resistance had a role in provoking the reprisals, which makes it difficult to see De Woeste Hoeve as strictly an example of German terror.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> De Jong, *Het Laatste Jaar II: Eerste Helft*, 426.

<sup>266</sup> Von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, 192.

- Conclusion -

## **Passing Judgment:** *De Woeste Hoeve in Retrospect*

*“Let’s talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs;  
Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes  
write sorrow on the bosom of the earth.”*

- William Shakespeare<sup>267</sup>  
*Richard II, Act III, Scene II*

The tragedy at De Woeste Hoeve serves as a microcosm of the state of affairs in Nazi occupied Holland after Operation Market Garden. It demonstrates that two distinct factors were at play. First, De Woeste Hoeve reinforces the notion that German viciousness and violence reached its peak just before the final defeat. Second, the attack on Rauter demonstrates the desperation of the Dutch resistance in the face of starvation. For the Netherlands the combination of these factors meant the year 1945 became the bloodiest period of the war, tragically exemplified by De Woeste Hoeve. The vast majority of the 204,000 Dutch civilian casualties died between September 1944 and May 1945. Of course, the Germans must accept the responsibility for this. The dubious grounds of the attack on Rauter, however, and the subsequent reprisals challenge the notion that they bear full responsibility. Instead, what this paper has argued is that the tragedy at De Woeste Hoeve, and by extension some of the suffering between September 1944 and May 1945, was also unwittingly a result of actions on the part of the Dutch resistance.

The larger historiographical problem, of course, is that of responsibility. Who was responsible for the bloodshed in Holland in 1945? More specifically, who should be held

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<sup>267</sup> Isaac Reid, ed. *The Works of William Shakespeare in Nine Volumes*, vol. 4 (Boston: Monroe and Francis, 1810), 46.

accountable for the tragedy at De Woeste Hoeve? Traditionally, the Germans have had to shoulder the major responsibility. Indeed, without the German invasion, the Netherlands would never have suffered the horrific conditions in which the country found itself after September 1944. Moreover, the German unwillingness to accept imminent defeat in early 1945, but instead proclaim a fight to the last man, caused immense suffering and death. Historians uniformly recognize that the Germans perpetuated violence to the very end. The reprisals at De Woeste Hoeve reinforce this notion, and demonstrate that Nazi retaliations were often out of proportion to the deed.

However, what role did the Dutch resistance play? Was it not complicit in the tragedy? The illegitimacy of the reprisals is beyond doubt, but maybe the men who carried out the assault reached for their guns too soon. The attack on Rauter may have been avoided if the resistance had better intelligence and more accurate knowledge of the movement of senior Nazi officials. The resistance, or at least the clandestine press, clearly recognized the dubious nature of the attack on Rauter, as it went to great lengths to argue that the attack came from the Germans rather than the Dutch. It moreover denied that the resistance had ordered any such attack.<sup>268</sup> That mistakes were made at De Woeste Hoeve is clear. It is unfair, however, to claim that the resistance should have given up all attempts at raids for fear of reprisals. As Geert Gosens said in 1946 when he came forward and claimed responsibility for the action, the act had been meaningful given the conditions.<sup>269</sup> Nevertheless, De Woeste Hoeve remains a tragic reminder that the Dutch resistance shared responsibility for the tragedies that befell the Netherlands after September 1944. The lack of a unified system of command, the absence of reliable military intelligence, and the questionable action of some *verzetssrijders* did much to

<sup>268</sup> “Wie Pleegde de Aanslag op Rauter – de SD schijnt geen belang te hebben bij opheldering van deze vraag,” *Het Parool*, March 27, 1945, <http://www.hetillegaleparool.nl/archief/1945/450327-1.php> (accessed January 7, 2011.)

<sup>269</sup> Geraldien von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, “Resistance, Reprisals, Reactions” in *Surviving Hitler and Mussolini: Daily Life in Occupied Europe*, ed. Robert Gildea, Olivier Wievorka, and Anette Warring (New York: Berg Publishers, 2006), 192.

aggravate the Germans, causing them to make conditions in 1945 worse than they may have been without misguided Dutch provocation.

De Woeste Hoeve thus fundamentally challenged the popular perception of the Dutch resistance as an effective and unified group. During the post-war reconstruction a myth surrounding the resistance developed. The small, ideologically diverse organization was proclaimed as one movement that embodied national resurrection.<sup>270</sup> This allowed the Dutch to hide behind the legend that “we were all in the resistance.”<sup>271</sup> Indeed, the historian Louis de Jong observed: “Resistance appears to be a subject full of romance.”<sup>272</sup> It was only “natural that the resistance attracted attention. It furnished examples of self-sacrifice and courage under extremely dangerous circumstances and it was heartwarming... to dwell on this material.”<sup>273</sup>

This view, however, is not entirely correct. While in countries such as France and Belgium veteran resisters were the main protagonists of commemoration, *verzetstrijders* were not particularly visible in the post-war remembrances.<sup>274</sup> This again goes back to the lack of unity within the resistance. Those who fought the Germans in Holland did not feel the urge to associate together and claim their legacy as peers. Moreover, those local groups that attempted to preserve their legacy after the war were boycotted for political reasons. In the era of post-war reconstruction, the country needed an ideal of a united resistance, which would be undermined by individual veterans’ leagues claiming their own particular merits.<sup>275</sup>

This limited attention paid to the efforts of the resistance has profoundly influenced how the Dutch remember the war, the occupation, and their opposition to the Nazis. German terror

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<sup>270</sup> Peter Romijn, *The Synthesis of the Political Order and the Resistance Movement in the Netherlands in 1945*, in *The End of the War in Europe 1945*, ed. Gill Bennett (London: HMSO, 1996), 146.

<sup>271</sup> Diane L. Wolf, *Beyond Anne Frank: Hidden Children and Post-War Families in Holland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 105.

<sup>272</sup> Louis De Jong, *The Netherlands and Nazi Germany* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1990), 29.

<sup>273</sup> Louis De Jong, “Preface,” in Werner Warmbrunn, *The Dutch under German Occupation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), v.

<sup>274</sup> Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 68.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*

was, and still is, usually acknowledged by pointing to incidents such as Putten, while De Woeste Hoeve is generally overlooked. The role of the resistance, furthermore, is not as strongly celebrated in the Netherlands as elsewhere, such as Poland and France. In the Netherlands, rather than stressing the role of the resistance, non-collaboration with the enemy is often remembered with pleasure. The Dutch are proud to claim that at its height the membership for the N.S.B. was less than 4% of the total population.<sup>276</sup> In this light, the Dutch remember their everyday opposition to the Nazis with pride and satisfaction, but tend to disregard the actions of some more aggressive resistance. It is an interesting contrast with France, which in post-1945 discourse has frequently overemphasized its resistance to the Nazis to compensate for its collaborationist regime in Vichy.

Tragically, de-emphasizing the efforts of the resistance resulted in the fact that De Woeste Hoeve has never received the attention it deserves. A cross was erected on the site of the reprisals less than two months after liberation, the inscription, reading, “Here on 8-3-45 the German invaders brutally murdered 117 sons of the Fatherland.” It clearly pointed to the victims, yet their relatives played no part in the commemoration.<sup>277</sup> Part of the explanation for the initial lack of involvement in commemoration lies in the different backgrounds among those executed. The majority of the people shot that day were resistance fighters, but they came from all walks of life, had widely divergent political and religious persuasions, and hailed from towns and villages throughout the country.<sup>278</sup> Only a few lived in the neighbourhood of the site of the assault and the reprisal. The people shot were a group of men randomly gathered, sharing only the fact that they were German prisoners at the time of the assault. Consequently, neither

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<sup>276</sup> Jacob Zwaan, and Aukje Zondergeld-Hamer, *De Zwarte Kameraden: een Geïllustreerde Geschiedenis van de NSB* (Amsterdam: Van Holkema & Warendorf, 1984), 56.

That average was slightly higher in the major cities, where it was around 7.2%. (Detlef Mühlberger, *The Social basis of European fascist movements*, [New York: Croom Helm, 1987], 228.)

<sup>277</sup> Von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, 192.

It should be noted that a ceremony is now held every year on March 8 to remember those who died at De Woeste Hoeve.

<sup>278</sup> Henk Berends, *Woeste Hoeve: 8 maart 1945* (Kampen: Kok Voorhoeve, 1995), 17-26.

family nor the local municipality cultivated the memory of De Woeste Hoeve.<sup>279</sup> The other part of the explanation focuses on the realization that the attack and subsequent reprisals were not black versus white; Dutch and Germans alike had been involved. Accordingly, both sides have since largely forgotten the calamity of De Woeste Hoeve. The final tragedy then, is this very lack of remembrance, regret, or shame on either the part of the Germans or the Dutch.

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<sup>279</sup> Von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, 192.

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