



Stories from the shade

Dutch women in the Nazi East

Jocelyn K. Krusemeijer (8533296), 28 June 2013

jocelynkruiseijer@yahoo.com

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Supervisors: Geraldien von Frijdag Drabbe Künzel, Willemijn Ruberg

Index

Introduction	3
Chapter 1 The image of women within the NSB and NSVO	14
Chapter 2 The Nazi East	23
Chapter 3 Nederlandsche Oost Compagnie (NOC)	28
Chapter 4 About women, husbands, fathers, brothers and lovers	40
Chapter 5 Who is following whom and other stories	50
Chapter 6 Conclusion	63
Appendix	67
Overview literature, archives and websites	69

Introduction

*Denn die einen sind im Dunkeln
Und die andern sind im Licht
Und man sieht die im Lichte
Die im Dunkeln sieht man nicht
Bertolt Brecht ¹*

The invisibility mentioned by Bertolt Brecht - the German author and playwright - is applicable to various and diverse groups in Dutch society and doubtlessly in other societies as well. As pointed out by the American historian Joan W. Scott, class, race and also gender play a role in determining whether people are hidden in the shadows - not necessarily being shady themselves - or performing in the limelight - not necessarily being bright and shiny.²

This paper is devoted to one of the groups in the shade, constituted by Dutch women who went voluntarily to the Nazi East during the Second World War in the framework of the Dutch contribution to Hitler's quest for *Lebensraum*. Starting in 1942 the *Nederlandsche Oost Compagnie (NOC)* (Dutch East Company) sent farmers, fishers, dairy experts, agronomists, craftsmen and construction workers to Ukraine, the Baltic States and Belarus, in order to help with the colonisation of these territories which had been occupied by Nazi Germany. The vast majority leaving for these countries consisted of men, but also some women - married and single - took part in this operation. Although the *NOC* is mentioned briefly in several surveys regarding the Second World War in the Netherlands, barely any publications are dealing specifically with this organisation. To my knowledge the women involved are either not mentioned at all or as appendices to men. The Dutch historian David Barnouw presented the women as occasional wives following their husbands.³ This lack of attention seems to indicate that the current view in historiography

¹ Citation from the verse "Die Morität von Mackie Messer" from the film version of the "Dreigroschenoper". The music is by Kurt Weill and the lyrics are by Bertolt Brecht.

² Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 91, no. 5 (Dec. 1986), pp 1067-1075.

³ Some examples of surveys in which the *NOC* is mentioned: Loe de Jong, *Het koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*. Part 4, 5 and 7 ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972); Ben A. Sijes, *De Arbeidsinzet. De gedwongen arbeid van Nederlanders in Duitsland, 1940-1945*. ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966). The only publication specifically dealing with the *NOC* as an organisation is: David Barnouw, *Oostboeren, zee-Germanen en turfstekers. Kolonisatie tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog*. (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2004), unfortunately without footnotes, see especially p 26, p 108, p 180. Another study - dealing with the *NOC* in relation to the Holocaust - is Geraldien von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, 'The Dutch in the Occupied East and the Holocaust', *Yad Vashem Studies*, 39(2), (2011), pp 55-80.

about Dutch National Socialism entails that it is - generally speaking - not worthwhile investigating the role of ordinary women.

In this paper I intend to question this rather unilateral and stereotypical view by looking into the stories of the women involved with the *NOC*. My main query concerns the motives of these women to trade their homeland for the Nazi East. When doing so it seems important to figure out whether indeed only a few women were going eastwards - following their husbands wherever they would go - or if the phenomenon was broader and more structured, including women with an own agenda and own jobs. If the women were only following their husbands, did that entail that they did not have a real choice, that they did not bear any responsibility? Were the women acting in accordance with the view in Dutch National Socialism regarding women? How did the women cope in these countries that were mostly unfamiliar to them and that had suffered and still were suffering dearly under a foreign occupation in a way incomparable to the situation in the Netherlands? I chose women as my starting point because of their underrepresentation in historiography so far. However, in my opinion history should consist ideally of studying both men and women and the interactions between them. When possible I will therefore broaden my focus and include also men who were more or less in the same situation as the women and who were part of their lives.

In my endeavours to answer the questions and to deconstruct the stereotypical view of Dutch women in the Nazi East - just a few women following their husbands - I will use the concept of gender provided by Scott. This concept was developed once it became clear that capturing stories of women in history needed a theoretical framework. It shows the structures of power - not only between the concepts of male and female on an individual level - but also confirming the existing social hierarchy. The expectation that members of both sexes will live up to the stereotypes embedded in the discourse can be successfully contested by the realisation that the concepts of male and female are not given by nature - or if you wish by God - but are subject to geographical and temporal changes. By acknowledging the flexibility of these concepts and by exposing them as stereotypes, different ideas about the existing hierarchy can be developed, discovering a social construction, instead of a given and fixed phenomenon. Deconstructing the images of male and female could therefore lead to a better perception of the mechanisms of power in individual relationships, but also in society as a whole.⁴

⁴ See for a journalistic approach, leading to interesting narratives regarding German women in National Socialist Germany: Alison Owings, *Frauen: German women recall the Third Reich* (New Brunswick N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993); see for gender as an analytical tool: Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', pp 1053-1075.

A very successful way of deconstruction is achieved by focusing on biographical aspects, which can be done by writing biographies - mostly a literary genre - and by micro-history. By making individual lives the focal point of studies and by using ego-documents and other sources revealing information about individuals, generalised and abstract ideas like gender concepts or stereotypes can be put to the test.⁵ Critics within women's history have pointed out the hazards of using the concept of gender in history. 'Real' women could be reduced to abstract and individual representations, shaped by textual analyses. Women could be ignored altogether, while the focus was shifted again to men only.⁶ Without denying the possibility of these scenarios, it seems a pity to discard the concept of gender on the basis that it can be misused. Precisely when researching both women and men and also the connections between them, the concept seems useful in deconstructing the associated binary stereotypes and showing the flexibility of these categories instead. Admittedly this is not an easy task, because not only are the relationships drenched in stereotypes - who should deal with spiders, mice and other intruders, who should await the children after school with a nice hot cup of tea - but the whole society is permeated by them. They are found in politics, education, the labour market and doubtlessly in historiography.⁷

The omnipresence and the potential dangers of these stereotypes gradually dawned on me, making the urgency of this research even more apparent. The dangers lie not only in the risk of having a flawed view of a historical phenomenon - one could argue that such a view is by definition part of the game - but also in developing a tunnel vision in current and future situations. If members of a community are not represented in a way which underlines their individual responsibility, chances are that they indeed will not be inclined to feel answerable. Such a representation resembles an invitation to hide behind the backs of others who are actually seen as accountable. At the same time no guarantees are given that no unexpected behaviour is developed by those in hiding, behaviour which remains unnoticed, because of the shadows, because of the stereotypes, because of the tunnel vision. Behaviour which might turn out to be harmful to society.⁸ In other words, it is not

⁵ See for an overview of the history of the biography and the relation between biography and history: Barbara Caine, *Biography and History*. (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Pallgrave Macmillan, 2010); Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', p 168; Laura Lee Downs, *Writing Gender History*. (2nd ed. London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), pp 54-72; Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line. From cultural History to the History of Society*. (Michigan, UP Michigan, 2005), pp 168-169.

⁶ Joan Hoff, 'Gender as a postmodern category of paralysis', in *Women's History Review*, 3:2 (1994), pp 149-168, p 159.

⁷ Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', pp 1067-1074.

⁸ See for instance: Beatrice de Graaf, *Gevaarlijke vrouwen. tien militante vrouwen in het vizier*. (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2012), especially pp 319-328; a journalistic rendition of what might be hidden behind a stereotype: boys accused of manslaughter could (unjustly) be seen as initiators of prolonged unrest at their school: Bas Blokker, 'Het grootste probleem: meidenvenijn' in *NRC Handelsblad*, (The biggest problem: girl venom) 1 June 2013.

just the stereotypical view regarding women held in National Socialism that I would like to test by looking into some individual cases, but also whether the women were trying to hide behind these stereotypes.

When turning to the group of Dutch female sympathisers with National Socialism before and during the Second World War - which is much broader than the group of women involved with the *NOC* - it appears that also this group is only scarcely represented in the relevant historiography. Although it is not clear for which reason precisely, it is evident that it is not easy to find traces of these women. Even so some interesting books and articles have been published by Dutch historians, which seems to indicate that it is indeed possible to discern the sheer invisible, provided one is looking closely enough. Zonneke Matthée has dedicated a study to female members of the Dutch National Socialist organisations *Nationaal Socialistische Beweging (NSB)* and the *Nationaal Socialistische Vrouwen Organisatie (NSVO)*, the latter being a women's organisation. She focused on women in leading positions, unfortunately leaving the majority - the 'ordinary' women - mostly in the shadows.⁹ More information about the structure and the propaganda of the *NSVO* is given by Ellen Marrenga.¹⁰ However, in a recent survey by their colleagues Robin te Slaa and Edwin Klijn regarding the *NSB* in the period 1931-1935 women are figuring only in a handful of the almost 800 pages. In the - as recent - cultural historical study about housewives from 1250 onwards by Els Kloek - another Dutch historian - the shoe is on the other foot. The Second World War is barely mentioned, leave alone National Socialism.¹¹

This is different in the historiography on the role and position of German women in National Socialism. Here the resonance of the so-called 'cultural turn' in the historical discipline at the end of the twentieth century is heard loud and clear. During this paradigm shift the emphasis on determinative structural socio-economic theories was replaced by the poststructuralist emphasis on cultural aspects - the aspects of symbols and meanings - and on human consciousness and agency, the extent to which human beings could make their own choices and how these choices were made. Previous invisible groups of 'minorities' became visible. Strictly speaking these 'minorities' encompassed more than

⁹ Zonneke Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland. Vrouwen in de NSB 1931-1948*. (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 2007) pp 253-254; Wieger Gaasterland, 'Uit vrije wil? Onderzoek naar de motieven waarom vrouwen lid werden van de NSB', (unpublished Bachelor thesis, Utrecht University, 2010).

¹⁰ Ellen Marrenga, 'De Nationaal-Socialistische Vrouwenorganisatie' in: Zwaan, J. *De zwarte kameraden. Een geïllustreerde geschiedenis van de N.S.B.*, (Weesp: Van Holkema en Warendorf, 1984). Other studies are: Monika Diederichs, *Wie geschoren wordt moet stilzitten* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2006), regarding the image of Dutch women involved with German soldiers and Marieke Meeuwenoord, *Mensen, macht en mentaliteiten achter prikkeldraad, een historisch-sociologische studie van concentratiekamp Vught (1943-1944)*, (Amsterdam: UvA, 2011 www.dare.uva.nl), including the issue of female wardens.

¹¹ Robin te Slaa en Edwin Klijn, *De NSB. Ontstaan en opkomst van de Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging, 1931 - 1935*. (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Boom, 2009); Els Kloek, *Vrouw des huizes. Een cultuurgeschiedenis van de Hollandse huisvrouw*. (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 2009), pp 196-198.

half of the world population, including women, blacks, yellow and red people, persons from non-western and suppressed cultures - the so-called subaltern - non-heterosexuals as well as the poor, the needy, the disabled and the uneducated. Women and their histories became viable subjects of research under the influence of feminism, which embraced the work of Foucault, showing the influence of discourse, the connection between power, knowledge and language, even if it seems unlikely that Foucault developed this theories with feminism in mind.¹²

Not only new subjects and methods were introduced, but also new sources. Various kinds of ego-documents and biographies provided a new kind of information which was not to be detected in official documents kept in the archives or in contemporary studies.¹³ Personal information from judicial files was incorporated. Critics stated that individual experience had no explanatory value, but should be explained itself and that agency was created by situations conferred on the individual. Identities therefore were not fixed, but fluid depending on the circumstances.¹⁴ A way out was offered by Michel de Certeau who regarded experiences as reflections of 'tactics' - opportunistic ways in which individuals have agency to make their own choices - within 'strategies', which are imposed by powerful institutions.¹⁵

These new insights have been used by historians investigating 'ordinary' German women and National Socialism. After the Second World War these women were ignored initially, because they were not involved in formulating the National Socialist policy.¹⁶ This changed in the 1970s when the role of women was studied, initially leading to the point of view that women were either innocent by nature, or monsters, excesses, abnormalities. As a group, women were perceived as victims of the National Socialist patriarchal society. The American historian Claudia Koonz undermined the whole picture of women as victims, by stating that women in their 'female' sphere, consisting of housekeeping, education and care, had contributed to the functioning of the Nazi regime.¹⁷

¹² Ann Stoler, *Race and the education of desire: Foucault's History of sexuality and the colonial order of things* (1995), p 35; Hoff, 'Gender as a postmodern category of paralysis', p 149.

¹³ Eley, *A crooked line*, pp 117, 126-132, 130-132; 155-170; Scott, 'Gender a useful category of historical analysis', pp 1053-1075.

¹⁴ Joan W. Scott, 'The evidence of experience', *Critical Inquiry*, 17:4 (1991: Summer), pp 773-797, pp 792-797.

¹⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, 1st printing 1984) pp ix-xxiv, pp xix - xx.

¹⁶ Actually there was a similar situation regarding 'ordinary' men, a silence which was broken by publications by Daniel Goldhagen and Cristopher Browning, see Kathrin Kompisch, *Täterinnen, Frauen im Nationalsozialismus* (Köln: Böhlau, 2008), p 10.

¹⁷ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the family, and Nazi politics* (London: Cape, 1987).

In the wake of the study by Koonz, many publications saw the light, even leading to a 'Historikerinnenstreit' regarding the question whether - and if so to which extent - women could be seen as victims and if there was such a thing as a separate feminine sphere. The German historian Gisela Bock claimed that Koonz was projecting her own feminist ideas of equality of men and women on the past. To Bock men and women were fundamentally different and although she acknowledged that women as a group indeed did help Hitler gaining power, she also considered them victims of a patriarchal society.¹⁸

In several other publications women were no longer seen as a homogeneous group and the image of women either being innocent or monstrous was deconstructed.¹⁹ It was also shown that even when women were depicted as caring and sacrificing creatures, there was a shift in emphasis during the war from the family to the *Volk* as the focal point of their activities. This pragmatic National Socialist approach allowed transgressing the boundaries of the so-called 'separate spheres' and although women were not found in the highest regions of Nazi organisation, they were present at all other levels. As the war advanced more women were needed in factories - including the war industry - and as assistants in the defence artillery. They were taking part in the execution of the Nazi policy involving racial hygiene, euthanasia and genocide.²⁰ Involvement of the women as wives of SS-officers was illuminated, providing a different starting point for researching the SS-community than the well-known studies of Browning and Goldhagen in which the question was posed how the SS-men could be criminal and normal at the same time.²¹ By focusing on the women and by using amongst others postwar judicial files as a source, it became clear that these women were providing their husbands with a 'normal' home situation, even if they had children and even if home was in or adjacent to a concentration camp. The importance of this 'normal' life which enabled the men to carry on with their sometimes gruesome tasks was acknowledged by the Nazi leadership which in several cases actually

¹⁸ Gisela Bock, 'Gleichheit und Differenz in der nationalsozialistischen Rassenpolitik', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 19. Jahrg., H. 3, (Jul. - Sep., 1993), pp 277-310.

¹⁹ Christina Herkommer, 'Women under National Socialism: women's scope for action and the issue of gender' in Jensen, Olaf and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann (eds) *Ordinary people as mass murderers: perpetrators in comparative perspective*. (New York: Pallgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp 99 - 119, pp 105-109. See for a study about female wardens of concentration camps: Irmtraud Heike, 'Female concentration camp guards as perpetrators: three case studies' in Jensen, Olaf and Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann (eds) *Ordinary people as mass murderers: perpetrators in comparative perspective*. (New York: Pallgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp 120 - 144 and for various articles on the (self-)representation of women: Ulrike Weckel, (ed.), *Bestien und Befehlsempfänger: Frauen und Männer in NS-Prozessen nach 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

²⁰ Kompisch, *Täterinnen*, pp 7-18.

²¹ See for studies regarding the role of ordinary men in German National Socialism: Christopher R. Browning, *Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. (2nd ed. New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1998) and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's willing executioners*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

sent for the women to join their husbands.²² Women were not only accomplices to their husbands, they were also perpetrators, involved with terrorising prisoners, enriching themselves with confiscated goods - which was strictly prohibited - and shooting Jews. One of the women - a mother herself who shot Jewish children - stated after the war that her husband - who would normally perform this task - was absent at the time and that she wanted to show that she 'could conduct myself like a man'.²³

Especially in the Nazi East the gender hierarchy was different, German women were part of the *Herrenrasse* and therefore higher ranking in the hierarchy than males of the indigenous population, the *Untermenschen*, not to mention the Jews.²⁴ Elizabeth Harvey described in her meticulous study *Women and the Nazi East. Agents and witnesses of germanization* (2003) German women who were sent to Poland as supervisors of the colonisers.²⁵ The latter - mainly ethnic Germans - were supposed to set an example of real Germanic behaviour for the indigenous population. It is evident how closely Harvey has been looking to get these women out of the shade and into the light. She has been scrutinising documents, letters and diaries, looking for what should have been told, but what was omitted in the stories, for instance the treatment of Jews. Ghettos were sometimes mentioned as places where one could get necessary goods, an euphemism for confiscation.²⁶ When reading between the lines it is evident that the women involved have visited ghettos and therefore must have been aware of the circumstances, but it is not clear why they did not mention anything about the treatment of Jews. Harvey emphasised the difficulties in knowing what the women knew and thought exactly. Yet she showed that it is plausible that some supervising women were real believers in the National Socialist doctrine and willingly contributed to it by performing 'womanly' tasks in a 'non-political' way, profiting at the same time from the chances offered to them in these regions. Others seemed not as idealistic, but just ambitious, wanting a career and some adventure. All had to balance between two images. On the one hand they should behave in a female way and perform female tasks, on the other hand the situation in Poland demanded that they were representatives of the National Socialist regime. When acting with the authority deemed suitable for a representative they were using the opportunities offered by National

²² Gudrun Schwarz, *Eine Frau an seiner Seite: Ehefrauen in der "SS-Sippengemeinschaft"*. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1997), pp 78-81.

²³ Ibidem, pp 99-103, pp 200-202; Wendy Lower, 'Male and Female Holocaust Perpetrators and the East German Approach to Justice, 1949-1963', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol 24. (2010), pp 56 - 84, citation on p 70.

²⁴ Schwarz, *Eine Frau an seiner Seite*, pp 279.

²⁵ Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East. Agents and witnesses of germanization*. (New Haven / London: Yale University Press, 2003).

²⁶ Ibidem, p 134, p 255.

Socialism to transgress gender boundaries. By holding on at the same time to the idea of 'separate spheres', they managed to understate their contribution to the Nazi policies, hiding behind the backs of others and covering up their real actions. These actions involved for instance living in confiscated houses, using appropriated goods and improving the fates of the ethnic Germans at the cost of the Polish population.²⁷

Although this paper obviously cannot be compared to the study of Elizabeth Harvey, it is also focusing on women in the Nazi East, albeit on women of a different nationality and in a different region.²⁸ The intention of looking at these women at an individual level in order to find out what their motivations were to go to the Nazi East and to see whether their actions and their self-representations were in line with the way the women were labelled in National Socialism is similar. However, there is a difference with regard to the sources. Harvey has been using - besides secondary sources - ego-documents and transcripts from interviews she has held with some of the women. Oral history is not included in this paper and for portraying the women I will rely on general archival material regarding the *NOC* -which is fragmented and partly unordered - kept at the Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies *NIOD* in Amsterdam. In addition I will use postwar judicial files which are administered in the *Centraal Archief Bijzondere Rechtspleging (CABR)* (Archives for Special Criminal Jurisdiction) in the *Nationaal Archief* in The Hague. These files were composed during the postwar prosecution of persons considered to be 'bad' Dutch citizens and contain letters and other ego-documents, papers regarding arrest and detention, statements of defendants and witnesses and also verdicts.²⁹

The interpretation of these postwar judicial files is not unproblematic, but also offers opportunities. They consist in many cases of one - or more - *proces-verbaal* (police-report) which conveys the story of a suspect, chronicled normally by the interrogating police-officer.³⁰ This means that two different voices have to be discerned, while the text seems to reproduce the voice of one person only, because generally speaking the questions are

²⁷ Ibidem, pp 11-22, pp 294-301.

²⁸ In my bachelor thesis written in the framework of the research seminar 'Biographical Project' initiated and lectured by Geraldien von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel I have tested the conclusions of Harvey and Lower for 3 Dutch women involved in the East colonisation by the *NOC*. Further to my bachelor paper I have written some small essays with different angles to women and the *NOC*. My current paper provides adjustment of the theoretical framework and methodology, as well as an overview of the historiography regarding German women and National Socialism, more in-depth background information regarding the Nazi-East and more archival research, which will lead to an adjustment of my earlier conclusion.

²⁹ See for a complete description of the *Centraal Archief Bijzondere Rechtspleging (CABR)* the website of the *Nationaal Archief*: www.gahetna.nl; and for more information: Sjoerd Faber en Gretha Donker, *Bijzonder gewoon. Het Centraal Archief Bijzondere Rechtspleging (1944-2000) en de 'lichte gevallen'*, (Zwolle: Uitgeverij Waanders, Nationaal Archief 's-Gravenhage, 2010, *Nationaal Archief Reeks 3*).

³⁰ In the Netherlands just after the war the interrogation could also be conducted by a member of a Tribunal who was not necessarily a professional. See for more information: Peter Romijn, *Snel, streng en rechtvaardig. De afrekening met de 'foute' Nederlanders*. (2nd ed. Amsterdam: Olympus / Uitgeverij Contact, 2002), pp 41-45.

not visible in the text. Obviously these invisible questions structure and steer the answers given by the suspect. In addition the oral statements are 'translated' into written - more official - language by the composer of the report, who will be editing the text at the same time, omitting parts that seem irrelevant and emphasising others considered significant. By reading the texts closely it can be discerned sometimes that a question has been posed, for instance when a subject is introduced suddenly. Also the witness statements which are often part of the judicial files have to be read with these considerations in mind. In addition it needs to be recognised that suspects and witnesses will not be inclined to incriminate themselves. When bearing this in mind, testimonials of both suspects and witnesses can provide information as to which points of view were thought to be acceptable or could be used successfully as a strategy evading conviction. Statements of professionals like medical doctors, midwives and attorneys, but also of acquaintances might be included in the files, as confirmation of a condition mentioned by the suspect, as an attempt to focus on mitigating circumstances or just the opposite. Admittedly also these documents should be read against the grain, but they can still provide useful information not known from other sources. It should be realised that these statements were all made after the war when it was known that Nazi Germany was defeated.³¹

This is not the case however with diaries and letters present in some files. Presumably these documents give a better and closer view of the actions of the author, who was not aware at the time that he or she would later become a suspect. Still the reading of these documents is not straightforward either, because it can be assumed that the writers wanted to create a certain image of themselves, depending on the intended use of the diary or on the addressee of the letter. However, also the construction of an image can provide information about how the author wanted him or herself represented and letters can shed light on the relation between sender and receiver. However, it was common knowledge that letters were subject to German censorship, which could lead to self-censorship. Another complicating factor when trying to catch a glimpse of the actors is that current audiences will never be able to read the story in the same way as a contemporary of the storytellers, not sharing their era. Between now and then is a veil created by *hindsight*, of knowing which course history has taken and thus limiting the range of possibilities that still could seem real for historical actors.³² Having said this, it seems clear that the use of postwar judicial files and ego-documents - as long as the necessary

³¹ Aline Sax, *Voor Vlaanderen, volk en Führer. De motivatie en het wereldbeeld van Vlaamse collaborateurs tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog 1940-1945*. (Antwerpen: Manteau, 2012), pp 37-45.

³² Ibidem, pp 45-49; David Carr, 'Place and time: on the interplay of historical points of view', in *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 40 (December 2001), pp 153-167, pp 155-160.

reservations are taken into account - do provide possibilities to collect information for the portraits of the women, even though these portraits will remain vague.

Multiple studies concerning German women have demonstrated that it is possible to use even such vague portraits to change the way in which the Second World War is perceived. By departing from a gender point of view and including ego-documents and postwar judicial files as sources it has been concluded that the Second World War is not only a war of male, but also of female perpetrators. In this paper I will investigate whether the current image depicting the Dutch women in the Nazi East as just a few occasional wives following their husbands, is in line with the actual behaviour of the women, or at least what can be assumed was their actual behaviour. To this end I will provide - on basis of own archival research - some statistics about the age, marital status - if you are not married, you cannot follow your husband - and roles of the women in the East. 'Following their husband' could be one of these roles, as well as the way in which the women were performing their jobs. It is important to look at these different roles, because they might elucidate the motivations of the women. If the women were not married, they could have been following other male relations, so it seems worthwhile also illuminating this possibility using case studies. When ignoring the stereotypical image of women, the question seems valid whether male relations could have been following the women, instead of the other way round. The circle can be closed by posing the question whether husbands might have been following wives. Also in order to answer the last two questions case studies will be used. In all scenarios I will be scouting for possible motivations outside the purely relational sphere and paying attention to the women's awareness of the local circumstances.

Before doing so however, the stage for the actors has to be set. This involves describing the National Socialist view of women, before and during the war, because this image might have had an impact on the inclination of the women to behave and represent themselves in certain ways. It is also essential to sketch the circumstances in the Nazi East, because these were considerably different from those in the Netherlands. Even if the women were not familiar with the local conditions before they went eastwards, these might have influenced their choice whether to stay in the East. Finally it is equally important to know what the *NOC* had to offer to the women, besides an opportunity to follow their husbands.

For privacy reasons the names of the persons encountered in the archival material are fictitious, also in annotations and citations. Real names will only be used when these are already mentioned in secondary literature and no fundamentally new information is added.

For names of places, cities and regions the version used most frequently in the files has been adopted. Whenever numbers are mentioned, these are either numbers that are accounted for in the notes, or numbers found by researching the archival material. Unfortunately it was not possible to study all available files.³³ Therefore the numbers are not to be read as being final and I want to avoid fatiguing the reader by putting this disclaimer just once, instead of throughout the story. A last remark concerns the use of the terms women and men. The starting point of this paper are women, but I believe that men are equally important. However when reading about the actors in general it seems tedious when this is spelled out in every instance. I would therefore invite the reader to expand the word 'women' - when it is used in a general way - to 'women and the men in their lives'.

³³ More information about the (selection of the) files is given in the appendix.

Chapter 1 The image of women within the *NSB* and *NSVO*

As mentioned in the introduction the stage has to be set for the actors, the Dutch women who went to the Nazi East through the National Socialist *NOC*. Although these actors were not necessarily member of the National Socialist organisations *Nationaal Socialistische Beweging (NSB)* or the *Nationaal Socialistische Vrouwen Organisatie (NSVO)* many of them were at least moving in circles where National Socialism was an accepted ideology. It can be assumed that the motivations of the women were influenced by their environment and information about some of the relevant National Socialist ideas in general and more specific about the role of women and men is therefore helpful. As we have seen the concepts of male and female are fluid and the same holds true for the stereotypes within National Socialism, changing during the period from the rise of Dutch National Socialism in the early 1930s till the end of the Second World War in 1945.

The *NSB* arising

Women are not only remarkably scarcely represented as subjects in the historiography regarding Dutch National Socialism, they are also conspicuous by their absence in the early days of the *NSB*.³⁴ In several countries in Europe, also outside Germany and Italy, democracy had turned out to be disappointing and a call emerged for a strong leader. In the wake of these developments Anton Mussert founded the *NSB* in December 1931. The hydraulic engineer declared himself to be such a strong leader or - in his own terms - '*algemeen leider*' ('general leader'). His aim was to constitute a labour party, but he failed to attract labourers. Generally speaking the *NSB* was mainly drawing support from the bourgeois population. This resulted in a growth in membership in 1933 from around 1.000 to 21.000. In the same year the official weekly '*Volk en Vaderland*' (*VoVa*) was erected.³⁵

Due to its internal structure the organisation could offer a position to most of its active members, together with the subordinates who came with the territory. The carefully built system led to a high self-esteem of those involved and to an ambition to climb the hierarchical ladder. Districts were divided in circles, and circles in groups which in turn had also segments called *blokken* (blocs). The leaders of the various segments were appointed by the *algemeen leider*, and could nominate their own fellow board members. Deputies were needed for all district, circle, group and bloc leaders, for the multiple board members and for various other positions. This plethora of functions strongly contributed to

³⁴ Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, p 91.

³⁵ A.A. de Jonge, *Het Nationaal-Socialisme in Nederland*. (Den Haag: Kruseman, 1968), p 73-75; Te Slaa en Klijn, *De NSB*, pp 134-135, 143.

the idea that the members were very special, which furthered the inner coherence of the organisation and played a role in isolating the members from the non *NSB* members.³⁶

Although Mussert himself advocated strong authority, he seemed at first no anti-Semite or supporter of the racial doctrine, this only grew gradually on him. His major aim was to achieve a leading role - as in the glorious past - for the Netherlands in the context of the German empire, an independent role as a Germanic sister nation under a strong leader, the strong leader being himself. Apart from this specific view regarding the future of the Netherlands Mussert's programme was very vague and similar to the one formulated by the German National Socialists. This vagueness entailed that people from all sorts of backgrounds and with all kind of ideas - also those with very drastic notions - could identify themselves with the *NSB*.³⁷ The year 1933 foreshadowed the progressive radicalisation of the organisation which led at the end of the year to the prohibition of its membership for civil servants.³⁸

Women within the *NSB*

In 1934 the first official point of view of the *NSB* regarding women was formulated. The brochure *Actuele vragen* no 4 (Topical questions no 4), which has been credited to Gerharda Gunning, described that the ultimate purpose in life for a woman consisted of taking care of her husband and children. Women were supposed to operate in the private sphere, if they had the bad fortune to remain single for one reason or another, they could alternatively find fulfilment in the so-called feminine occupations like welfare work.³⁹ Under no circumstances women - married or single - were to operate outside this private and caring sphere, not to mention playing leading roles with - even worse - men as subordinates.⁴⁰

This subservient role of women was reflected in the diverse women's clubs emerging within the *NSB*, clubs with a similar structure as their mother organisation. Leaders were appointed by male *NSB* functionaries, who also had the final say regarding nominations of board and staff members including subsidiaries. The first official task of the women was to collect money for the discharged *NSB* civil servants. Other tasks performed were sewing,

³⁶ De Jonge, *Het Nationaal-Socialisme in Nederland*, pp 79-81.

³⁷ De Jonge, *Het Nationaal-Socialisme in Nederland*, pp 71-81, p 100; see for a view of Mussert in which his national socialist and violent side is emphasised and his bourgeois image is undermined: Tessel Pollmann, *Mussert & Co. De NSB-Leider en zijn vertrouwelingen*. (2nd ed. Amsterdam: Boom, 2012).

³⁸ Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, pp 33 - 34.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, pp 82 - 83.

⁴⁰ Te Slaa en Klijn, *De NSB*, p 515.

mending and knitting for the benefit of needy fellow *NSB* members and administrative help. Despite his earlier indifference Mussert was pleased with these clubs and with the commitment to the National Socialist cause of the female members fulfilling their specific roles.⁴¹

Radicalisation of the *NSB*

One of the persons playing a role in the radicalisation process of the *NSB* was Meinout M. Rost van Tonningen. Having become a member in 1936, he was a warm supporter of anti-Semitism, anti-clericalism, racial doctrines and close collaboration within the German empire, in which empire the Netherlands would dissolve, the so-called Great German ideal. In the struggle for power with Mussert - whom he found very bourgeois - Rost van Tonningen focused not only on farmers and youth, but also on labourers - the group his opponent had been unable to reach - and on women, who were initially of no interest to Mussert.⁴² In doing so Rost van Tonningen resembled Hitler who also paid attention to women in his National Socialist propaganda in his struggle for power.⁴³

The view of Rost van Tonningen was shared within the *NSB* by a vicar named Hylkema. Talented women should be able to develop themselves and to perform - even when married - tasks outside the confines of their homes. This approach seems in line with the practice in Germany where many women were increasingly holding jobs in the 1930s on the eve of the war.⁴⁴ The attention for women resulted in the foundation of the *NSVO* in September 1938, just one month before the *NSB* was declared closed for Jews.⁴⁵

Preparing for the *NSVO*

It was through Mussert that the radical *Jonkvrouwe* (Lady) Julia op ten Noort effectuated her idea of a women's organisation modelled after the German *Nationalsozialistische Frauenschaft (NSF)*. Op ten Noort had earlier been introduced to *Reichsführer-SS* and chief of the German police Heinrich Himmler and she was an enthusiastic supporter of the Great German ideal he voiced, an ideal that - as we have seen - was also embraced by Rost van Tonningen. Actually the *Jonkvrouwe* had functioned as *trait d'union* when Rost van Tonningen expressed his wish to get into contact with Himmler. She took part in their

⁴¹ Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, pp 120 - 123; Te Slaa en Klijn, *De NSB*, pp 514-516.

⁴² Ellen Marrenga, 'De Nationaal-Socialistische Vrouwenorganisatie', p 197; De Jonge *Het Nationaal-Socialisme in Nederland*, p 123.

⁴³ Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, p 82, *Het Nationaal-Socialisme in Nederland*, p 156.

⁴⁴ Kompisch, *Täterinnen*, p 21; Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, p 82.

⁴⁵ De Jonge, *Het Nationaal-Socialisme in Nederland*. pp 140, 158.

first meeting, which would result in a cordial relationship between the two men.⁴⁶ Op ten Noort had been working for two months as a guest within the *NSF* familiarising herself with initiating and organising courses for women. Despite her experience and acquaintances she realised that her idea to start up a women's organisation similar to the *NSF* was viable only when the initiative seemed to be coming from a man - preferably an influential one. She arranged an assignment by Mussert for Adriana M. van Hoey Smith and herself to explore the possibilities and to prepare an outline.

The *NSVO* arising

When the *NSVO* saw the light in 1938, the structure was similar to the one of the *NSB* with districts, circles, groups and blocs, offering interesting - in some cases even paid - positions for women. In order to attract as many women as possible it was decided that membership of the *NSB* was not a condition for becoming a member of the *NSVO*, this was only mandatory for the leadership. The organisation was more independent than the women's clubs within the *NSB* had been. The so-called '*landelijk leidster*' ('national female leader') was directly responsible to Mussert and no other official strings to male *NSB* functionaries existed. The first '*landelijk leidster*' was Van Hoey Smith - van Stolk. Op ten Noort preferred operating in the background and became deputy, thus freeing her hands for strategic issues and avoiding too much direct interaction with Mussert.⁴⁷

Op ten Noort wanted the organisation to offer camaraderie - the word used within the *NSB* for male and female members being *kameraad* and *kameraadske* respectively - although she feared that women in the Netherlands were painfully lacking this quality.⁴⁸ The work of other women's clubs should be absorbed by the *NSVO* once the *NSB* was in power and women had to be prepared for this responsibility. Op ten Noort stated that propaganda by the *NSVO* for National Socialism should be made in a feminine, not political way. Despite this there was no need for women to be trapped in '*de keuken, de kinderen en de kerk*' ('the kitchen, the children and the church'). They should flourish in new jobs especially created to satisfy their needs, along the lines of the German example. This would enable women to avoid not only being confined to their homes, but also - as much as possible - the obligatory jobs in factories and offices. Of course someone had to work in these places, in which case the women themselves should arrange good working

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p 157; Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, p 98, p 131; David Barnouw, *Rost van Tonningen. Fout tot het bittere eind*. (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1994), pp 14-15.

⁴⁷ Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, pp 101-104, pp 124-127, p 135.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p 102.

conditions. In addition the necessary attention should be given to physical health and sports.⁴⁹

Radicalisation of the NSVO

Compared with both Rost van Tonningen and Op ten Noort, Mussert was moderate. Even so Van Hoey Smith - van Stolk resigned from her position early 1940, because the *NSB* became too radical to her liking. Her successor Elisabeth Keers - Laseur seamlessly joined Op ten Noort in her appreciation of the Great German ideal and the corresponding esteem for the *SS*, a point of view they both aired openly once the Netherlands were occupied by Germany. Also a different view regarding women was voiced by the *NSVO*. Although their role remained a helping and caring one, women - both single and married - were not only considered to serve their families only, but also the nation. The *NSVO* got her own periodical *De Nationaal-Socialistische Vrouw (NSV)* and her own motto '*Het Hartvuur Heilig - Het Haardvuur Veilig*' ('The Fire of the Heart Sacred - the Fire of the Hearth Safe'). By then Op ten Noort was considered the heart of the *NSVO* and her work was valued by *Reichskommissar* Seyss-Inquart and Hanns Rauter, Himmler's representative in the Netherlands.⁵⁰

Although the Germans proclaimed the *NSB* the only official party in the Netherlands in 1941, the power of Mussert was waning, the relatively moderate direction within the party giving way to more radical currents, to supporters of the Great German ideal. Mussert did not succeed in making membership of the *NSB* obligatory for members of the *NSVO*, because Keers and Op ten Noort preferred incorporating other - also non National Socialist - women's organisations first. In their view demanding *NSB* membership could put off the members of the other organisations. This was not an unlikely assumption, given the fact that even *NSB* members themselves did not always want to be recognised by wearing the *NSB* insigne in the form of a triangle, the so-called '*NSB Driehoeksspeld*'. Another sign of Mussert's fading power was his fruitless attempt to prevent the foundation of the Dutch *SS*, which was based on the paramilitary German *Schutzstaffel* and which was opposed to any independence of occupied countries within the *Reich*. Mussert found himself to be officially in charge of the Dutch *SS* and its foreman Feldmeijer, be it only in name as the real leaders were Himmler and Rauter.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Letter Julia op ten Noort, 12 January 1940 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 34678.

⁵⁰ Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, pp 103-105, p 127.; Marrenga, 'De Nationaal-Socialistische Vrouwenorganisatie', pp 198-199.

⁵¹ See for further information regarding the Dutch *SS*, renamed *Germaanse SS* in 1942: *De Jonge, Het Nationaal-Socialisme in Nederland*, pp 171-172; De Jong, *Het koninkrijk*. References to be found in the *Register on the scientific edition*.

Remarkably enough the *NSVO* turned out to be a platform where Mussert's influence still was felt when he replaced the radical leadership by a more moderate one. This unexpected change took place early 1941 during the yearly meeting. The ladies Keers and Op ten Noort were given to understand that they were thanked for their contribution, that Mussert would value their future input, but in a different capacity and that the - female - leadership would rotate every two years, given the strains on the families involved. A motivation which seemed to fit in with the earlier line of thought regarding appropriate tasks for women, although it is striking that Op ten Noort was single and Keers was childless. Also the role of Rost van Tonningen within the *NSVO* seemed to come to an end. Moreover his actions in the *NSB* were curbed, restricting his functions to purely economic ones. This direction was accentuated when he was appointed *president-directeur* (president and CEO) of the *Nederlandsche Bank* and secretary-general of finances.⁵²

Consolidation of the *NSVO*

The new leader of the *NSVO*, Olga de Ruiter - van Lankeren Matthes had given in to pressure by Mussert to accept the job of leading the *NSVO* in a purely Dutch spirit, but only for one year. The pressure was needed since De Ruiter had resigned earlier from performing social work in the *NSB*, because of her duties as mother and wife. De Ruiter was against radicalisation and made it clear that the *NSVO* was not a political, but a women's organisation. The basic difference with her predecessors was her rejection of the Great German ideal. The *NSV* was changed in name - from *Nationaal Socialistische Vrouw* to *Nederlandsch (sic) Vrouwenleven* - and in content. The radical and political tone, also as a result of contributions of the former leader Keers, was changed and the emphasis shifted to raising children and other so-called female issues. The activities of the various sections following the model of the *NSF* were intensified. These sections varied from the *Moederdienst* to the section *Propaganda* to the section *Vorming*, which educated women to serve their people. De Ruiter established the section *Volks- en Gezinshuishouding* which informed women about practical issues like clothing, nutrition, and how to make the most of their money. A helping hand was given to *NSB* families that needed support by the section *Hulp en Bijstand* which worked closely together with the *Nederlandse Volksdienst (NVD)* and *Winterhulp Nederland (WHN)* - other organisations based on a German model. In the summer of 1941 De Ruiter proved to be a great fundraiser, collecting money with the *NSVO* women and the female members of the *NSB* for the German Red Cross, ten days after the German invasion of Russia. The focus of the

⁵² Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, p 105, pp 131-133; De Jonge, *Het Nationaal-Socialisme in Nederland*, pp 171-172.

activities of the *NSVO* shifted towards the war, knitting for the men on the Eastern Front and visiting the wounded in hospitals.⁵³

After the initial year Mussert did not accept the resignation of De Ruiter and she continued - supported by her deputy Louise Couzy - to expand the organisation of the *NSVO*, raising the number of members from 6500 in February 1941 to 20.000 by the beginning of 1943. The growth was partly due - as envisaged by Op ten Noort - to the abolition of former *NSB* women's clubs. Women from all sorts of background joined the initial members which were mainly upper class. What Op ten Noort presumably had not foreseen was that the reorganisation within the *NSB* resulted in less independence for the *NSVO*. As of early 1942 the organisation fell directly under the deputy leader of the *NSB* and was forced to cooperate with other organisations, like the *Nederlandse Arbeidsfront* and the *Nederlandse Arbeidsdienst* (two labour organisations).⁵⁴

On the occasion of the birth of her fifth child De Ruiter left the *NSVO*, one and a half year later than originally planned. She recommended her deputy as being single and therefore able to give her best efforts to the organisation. Other reasons for her resignation were that Mussert was becoming too radical and possibly that her husband had a conflict with Mussert.⁵⁵

The *NSVO* towards the end of the war

Couzy, the former deputy, was indeed appointed as successor of De Ruiter. The *NSVO* was again under the leadership of a woman believing in the Great German ideal. The main contribution of Couzy lay - as early as in April 1944 - in assisting with the preparations of an impending evacuation starting with the women and children. Such an operation was foreseen as a result of the for the *NSB* unfortunate turn of events leading to the seemingly rapid approach of the allied forces.⁵⁶

The actual evacuation started with German women and children on the 3rd of September, followed after two days on '*Dolle Dinsdag*' (Mad Tuesday) by Dutch National Socialist women, their children and *NSB* members, unfit to serve in defence. Rauter had promised to vacate the *Judendurchgangslager* in Westerbork, which would be the first stop for the National Socialists, going from there mostly to camps on the *Lünenburgerheide* in

⁵³ Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, p 146, pp 152-158.

⁵⁴ Marrenga, 'De Nationaal-Socialistische Vrouwenorganisatie', pp 198-205; Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, pp 135-149, pp 157-158. See for more information about the *NVD* and *Winterhulp Nederland: De Jong, Het koninkrijk*. References to be found in the *Register on the scientific edition*.

⁵⁵ Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, p 105, pp 151-164.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, pp 206-208.

Germany. Several of these camps were overcrowded and in these bad conditions it was the main task of Couzy to take care of mothers and infants. The other women and girls were forced by the local authorities to work, for instance in weapon factories, leaving their children unattended in the camps. Positive propaganda was also a major task of Couzy and she stated that it was - given the circumstances - only fair that the Dutch women would assist their German hosts, giving their best for the National Socialist state. Like the activities of the *NSVO* had shifted towards the war, the ideology concerning married women had shifted from serving the family to serving the state.⁵⁷

In January 1945 Mussert was shocked to learn during a visit that the *Waffen SS* was recruiting amongst the *NSB* members. In February about 20.000 evacuees were re-evacuated to the north of the Netherlands, whereas a couple of thousand evacuees preferred to stay in Germany. The last involvement of the *NSVO* was to help the re-evacuated.⁵⁸

Summary

When looking into the motivations of Dutch women who went to the Nazi East, it is important to picture the ideas regarding women in Dutch National Socialism. These ideas present in theory the degree of freedom of choice offered to the women within this ideology. In the early years of the *NSB* not much attention was paid to the image of women. As from 1934 two different directions can be discerned, a moderate binary gender view, implying that women should marry, have children and busy themselves with tasks in the female sphere of caring, serving, understanding and helping while being focused on their families. Single women could find their fulfilment by performing the same kind of tasks focusing on the *Volk* instead of on their family. Mussert, Gunning and De Ruiter can be ranked among the representatives of this concept. A more radical view was voiced by Rost van Tonningen, Op ten Noort - whose influential, but temporary, position has been shown - Keers and Couzy. Their Great German sympathies seemed to offer more chances for single and married women in case the situation called for it. The situation seemed to be calling - as has been shown in the historiography regarding the German women - when the developments in the war resulted in a shortage of labour in the war industry and the defence artillery, but also during the East Colonisation.

It should be noted that the female stereotype as voiced in the brochure *Actueele vragen* was used by both directions at will. Mussert displaced the single Op ten Noort and

⁵⁷ Ibidem, pp 208-211; Marrenga, 'De Nationaal-Socialistische Vrouwenorganisatie', p 212.

⁵⁸ Matthée, *Voor volk en vaderland*, pp 211-215; Marrenga, 'De Nationaal-Socialistische Vrouwenorganisatie', p 212.

the childless Keers arguing that leadership positions could only be fulfilled for two years by the same person. Otherwise there would be too much strain on their families.

Consequently he pressured the wife and mother of four De Ruiter - who had quit her activities exactly in order to serve her family better - to take over. The representatives of the more radical view stated that the newly erected *NSVO* was not a political organisation, but after the German invasion they were outspoken in their support for the Great German view and the *SS*, which led to the change in leadership initiated by Mussert. The independence of the new leader was curbed, in turn she thought Mussert too radical and resigned.

In the last phase of the war the leader of the *NSVO* was mainly involved with helping evacuated National Socialist women and children, stating that the circumstances called for the full involvement of women outside their families, despite their children. This indicates a pragmatic approach towards the image of married women. Already during the war a shift took place from the expectation that married women would be focusing on their family to the expectation that their actions would be directed primarily towards the *NSB* and the war, culminating in their working in war factories once they were evacuated after *Dolle Dinsdag*.

By then the radical Rost van Tonningen was already for over two years involved with economics, instead of with women. He developed the idea of the Dutch contributing through the *NOC* to the German quest for *Lebensraum* in the Nazi East, a venture that involved farmers and labours, two other groups where he had sought support initially for his position within the *NSB*. Before learning more about this new project some background information will be given regarding the countries in the Nazi East where the *NOC* would become active.

Chapter 2 The Nazi East

The Dutch women who went to the Nazi East traded the Netherlands for Ukraine, the Baltic States and Belarus. It is important to realise that the circumstances in these regions differed significantly from the situation in the Netherlands when studying the motivations of the Dutch women to take part in the venture of the *NOC*. Together with the National Socialist view of women - which has been elaborated in the previous chapter - and the *NOC* itself - which organisation will be highlighted in the next chapter - the local circumstances constituted the setting in which the women were acting. The perception of these conditions might have played a role in the decision of the women to volunteer to go to the East, although it should be kept in mind that it is not clear which information was available to them at the time.⁵⁹ However, it seems probable that once the women arrived in the region the circumstances might have influenced their decision whether or not to stay there, albeit it is hard to know exactly with which aspects of these circumstances the women were confronted during their stay. This chapter will provide some background information about the region on basis of well-known studies, unfortunately without being able within the framework of this paper to do them justice by paying attention to the interesting debates and nuances that form their core.⁶⁰

General information

In the period between 1933 and 1945 around fourteen million civilians were murdered in the 'bloodlands', which region included besides Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic States also central Poland.⁶¹ The victims were unarmed - mostly women, children and the elderly - indigenous people of above countries, including the Jewish population. Most Jews in the Nazi East were murdered close to their homes, not gassed in a combination of labour and extermination camps like Auschwitz, not even in pure extermination camps like Treblinka, but shot in the open air, next to ditches, for instance at Babi Yar near Kiev and Ponary near Wilna (currently Vilnius). Starting in 1942 with the Final Solution the killing was probably less out in the open, although not easy to conceal. Jews from other European countries, including Germany and the Netherlands were first transported to the

⁵⁹ See for research regarding the Dutch awareness about the fate of the Jews: Bart van der Boom, *'Wij weten niets van hun lot.'* *Gewone Nederlanders en de Holocaust* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2012).

⁶⁰ See for instance for continuity in imperialism: Mark Mazower, *Hitler's Empire. Nazi rule in occupied Europe*. (London: Penguin Group, 2009), Wendy Lower, *Nazi empire-building and the Holocaust in Ukraine*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005) and A. Dirk Mozes, 'Empire, colony, genocide: keywords and the philosophy of history' in A. Dirk Mozes (ed), *Empire, colony, genocide. Conquest, occupation, and subaltern resistance in world history* (New York / Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), pp 3-40; for a comparison between the policies of Hitler and Stalin: Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin*. (2nd ed. London: Vintage, 2011).

⁶¹ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, pp vii-x.

'bloodlands' before being killed or exposed to 'extermination through labour'.⁶² Non-Jews were killed as well, mainly by starvation - the Soviet prisoners-of-war (POWs) and citizens of besieged cities - and by shooting in reprisal actions. Also entire elites were eradicated after either the Soviet or the German invasion. While Hitler mainly killed citizens of other countries, Stalin murdered mainly his own, albeit merely those of the non-Russian territories, amounting to a third of the above fourteen million.⁶³

The Baltic States and Belarus

When Operation Barbarossa - the invasion of Russia by the German armies - started in the summer of 1941, Belarus and the Baltic states were amongst the first territories which were seized by the Germans. Two years earlier these regions were granted by the Germans to the Russians on the occasion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, followed by the actual invasion by the Soviets in June 1940. The Lithuanian elite was mostly deported to the Gulag, some of them escaping to Germany. They would view the Germans as their liberators, a view that was not shared by the Lithuanian Jews. The majority of these lived already for generations in Wilna, the former medieval capital of Lithuania, also known as 'Jerusalem of the North'. The city had been Polish in the interwar period and was granted to Lithuania by the Soviets, a year before they invaded the country.

After the Germans had arrived, a massive shooting of the Jews from Wilna took place in July 1941 at the nearby Ponary Forest with the help of selected and trained Lithuanians, who readily believed the Nazi propaganda that the Jews were responsible for the Soviet terror. In total about 115,000 Jews were killed by the end of the year. Another 34,500 were interned in camps and ghettos and used as labourers. In addition to what happened to the Jews ethnic Germans were moved the following years from Lithuania to Poland and back, like pawns on a checkerboard.⁶⁴

Latvia had also suffered under the Soviet rule and when the Germans approached Riga Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners were shot by the Soviets. The Germans made sure to select members of the non-Jewish families that suffered the most to help them with the elimination of the Jews, for instance by burning them alive in the Riga synagogue. By the end of the year another 25,000 Jews were shot near the capital by German

⁶² Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, p 379, pp 409-411.

⁶³ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, pp vii-x.

⁶⁴ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, p 189-193, Von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, 'The Dutch in the Occupied East and the Holocaust', p 59; Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, p 175, p 451.

Einsatzkommandos. Around 3.700 able-bodied men were housed in ghettos in order to perform forced labour.⁶⁵

Estonia had not resisted the invasion of the Soviets and the local population probably felt more humiliated than in the other two Baltic States. Also here the main part of the political elite was deported. Those nationalists who had been in hiding welcomed the Germans as liberators and those who had been collaborating with the Soviets wanted to cooperate in capturing and killing the few Estonian Jews partly in order to avoid being victimised themselves. This did not work out as planned, once the Jews were eliminated the persecution targeted perceived former collaborators.⁶⁶

In several important places in Belarus, for example Bialystok - which had been Polish till the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact - the Germans used their own forces to kill the Jews, setting an example which was followed by the local Polish in the region. The space in the camps and the ghettos left vacant by the assassinated Baltic Jews, was filled up at a great pace by transporting the German Jews to these destinations in the winter of 1941-1942, often leading within months to their death.⁶⁷ Also here local men were moved to Germany to work, while women and children - not being useful from an economic point of view - were shot.⁶⁸

Ukraine

Further to the south the fertile soil of Ukraine played a key role in the visions of Stalin and Hitler. Both envisaged this region as the decisive factor in fulfilling their fantasies of ruling the whole continent. In 1933 - the year of the rise of Hitler - the communist system built by the Soviets seemed a better alternative than the western capitalist system, which was suffering from the ills of the Great Depression, unemployment and famine. In reality though a mass starvation took place in Ukraine as a result of Stalin's reforms. Prosperous farmers had earlier been declared 'kulaks', a class that was depicted as being inhuman and which had to be destroyed by death or exile, thus depriving the other farmers of their leaders. Farms were collectivised. All grain, even seed grain for the next season, had been collected and people in the countryside had already killed their livestock and all other animals around for food. In one of the most fertile regions in the Soviet Union probably

⁶⁵ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, p 193-194; Mazover, *Hitler's Empire*, p 175-176.

⁶⁶ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, p 193-194.

⁶⁷ Mazower, *Hitler's Empire*, p 174-175.

⁶⁸ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, p 244.

around 3.3 million Ukrainians died of hunger, virtually unnoticed outside the country till it was too late.⁶⁹

Although the threat of starvation was diminished the next year, in the years to come the famine was followed by the Great Terror, an ethnic murder of a quarter of a million Soviet citizens, an action mainly directed against the Polish. The largest populations were exterminated in Belarus and in particular in Ukraine.⁷⁰ The Great Terror was succeeded by another terror by another perpetrator in 1941. The Germans had a huge population to feed and wanted to use the collective farms in Ukraine, without having to feed the indigenous city population. The farmers were seen as tools that could be used and disposed of at will. A Hunger Plan was developed, but never carried out, because the dreamed swift German victory did not materialise. Instead of a structured plan to starve the population a pragmatic approach was followed by instructing the German soldiers to take whatever food they needed from the conquered land. This also resulted in the starvation of the local population and the POWs, but in a more random way. The nationalist leaders who initially thought of Hitler as an accomplice in reaching their goal of an independent Ukraine for Ukrainians only, were bitterly disappointed.⁷¹ Still the Germans found enough local auxiliaries to kill around 180,000 Jews in the Shitomir region alone between mid-1941 and fall 1943.⁷² In the meantime, following the fall of Stalingrad early 1943, a violent partisan struggle emerged in Ukraine. This struggle was not a war between Soviets and Nazis only, but also a feud between various local ethnic and political groups fighting the Nazis and at the same time struggling for power once the Germans would have disappeared.⁷³

Summary

It is impossible to do the situation in the East justice in such a general and brief manner. Still it is clear that the Baltic States, Belarus and Ukraine - the destinations for the Dutch women involved with the *NOC* - had already suffered dearly under both the Soviet and the Nazi rule when the first women arrived in 1942. As opposed to the situation in the Netherlands and other countries in the West, where Jews were transported eastwards and no massacres happened in public, shooting and killing Jews did happen in the streets or nearby cities. For a variety of reasons parts of the local population were also inclined to

⁶⁹ Ibidem, p 19, p 24-29, p 53.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, p 89, p 99.

⁷¹ Lower, *Nazi empire-building*, pp 12-13.

⁷² Snyder, *Bloodlands*, p. 165-172; Lower, *Nazi empire-building*, p 63-70

⁷³ Lower, *Nazi empire-building*, pp 180-181.

persecute the Jews or at least assist the Germans in doing so, for instance in the Shitomir region in Ukraine till the fall of 1943. While non-Jews and POWs were not treated as badly as the Jews, their fate was generally not to be envied and the local population was moved to and fro at will. As from 1942 - the year in which the Jews from Western Europe were transported to labour and extermination camps - the killing took place more secretly. After the fall of Stalingrad early 1943 a fierce partisan war started with resistance groups fighting the Germans and struggling for local power. The regions in the Nazi-East were not only politicised to the bone, they were also the stage of crimes against humanity.

The case studies in the last chapters of this paper will be used to show the motivations of the women to go to the Nazi East, but also to see whether the conditions described had any influence on their decisions whether or not to stay there. The vastness of the region, the timing of the massacres and the extent to which the women had contact with the local population have to be taken into account while trying to establish what the women knew about the political situation in which the local population and especially the Jews were treated like *Untermenschen*. Only once indications have been found that the women were aware of the circumstances, it can be assumed that these played a role in their decision making. Before turning to the women however, there is still the *NOC* to be reviewed, the organisation which constituted - together with the view of women in Dutch National Socialism and the circumstances in the Nazi East - the stage on which the women were acting.

Chapter 3 *Nederlandsche Oost Compagnie (NOC)*

The *NOC* can be seen as the vehicle which transported the Dutch women to the Nazi East, but it was more than that. It was also a National Socialist framework in which the women operated, developing and strengthening contacts and relationships. It provided a model of behaviour in the regions that had suffered and still were suffering from a foreign occupation. The framework and the relationships could influence the motives of the women to go to the Nazi East and their decision whether to stay there. On the other hand the women could influence the relationships by their behaviour and ultimately even some aspects of the *NOC* model. It is therefore interesting to get a global impression of how the *NOC* came into being and developed, while focusing on the conditions, circumstances and possibilities offered to the women. Especially when enlightening these possibilities the voices of the actors will already be heard in this chapter, because of the use of archival material besides secondary literature.

Prelude

Shortly after the start of Operation Barbarossa the Dutch authorities were requested by the Germans to send professional farmers on a voluntary basis to the East in exchange for a share in the grain production. The employment offices were informed that this contribution was in no way to be seen as connected to the warfare. The Dutch farmers were supposed to occupy leading positions and would wear uniforms to make this clear to the indigenous workers. In order to take care of logistics and other practical matters the *Commissie tot Uitzending der Landbouwers naar het Oosten (Culano)* (Commission for sending farmers to the East) was founded and in November 1941 the first farmers headed eastwards to work for the *Landbewirtschaftungsgesellschaft Ostland (LO)* in the occupied regions.⁷⁴

Despite his earlier ideas - which were close to the German National Socialist visions regarding *Lebensraum* - Mussert was not amused by this action. He feared that the Netherlands would lose its best workers to the Germans and he stated that he would bear no responsibility for the project, upon which statement several volunteers withdrew. Most of the volunteering farmers were no professionals, but small gardeners with business problems or farmer's sons who had no possibility to obtain a business of their own in the Netherlands. Also former convicts signed up, which was facilitated by the local police providing them with a declaration of good behaviour shortly after they left prison. The

⁷⁴ Ben A. Sijes, *De Arbeidsinzet. De gedwongen arbeid van Nederlanders in Duitsland, 1940-1945*. ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhof, 1966), pp 107-108. De Jong, *Het koninkrijk*, Part 5, pp 132-136.

experiences of the pioneers were predominantly negative and in March 1942 the activities of *Culano* were suspended, having sent about 600 farmers to the East.⁷⁵

An additional couple of hundred Dutch labourers left for Rowno in Ukraine in spring 1942 in the framework of the *Werkdienst Holland*. They built two camps, including their own and were involved in several projects for the ill-famed *Reichskommissar für die Ukraine* Erik Koch.⁷⁶ Like *Culano* the *Werkdienst Holland* had image problems, 'they hired everyone who volunteered' and the transports were remarkable, consisting of '(...) valuable furniture from Dutch royal palaces and houses of Jews, expensive paintings, tapestries, porcelain (...) - a long list of royal and other valuables followed - while the workers '(...) have no clothing, scarce underwear, no shoes and boots'.⁷⁷

Contrary to Mussert, Rost van Tonningen was taken with these initiatives to colonise the Baltic States, Ukraine and Belarus in order to create *Lebensraum*, not only for the Germans, but also for the Dutch. For him it was a logical - and even more fitting, because more Germanic - continuation of the long Dutch tradition of colonisation in the Dutch East Indies. This territory was lost to the Japanese in the spring of 1942 and colonising the East could be seen as a compensation. Rost van Tonningen foresaw a favourable position within the German *Reich* for the Netherlands after the war - which would obviously be won by Germany - and an important position as Minister of Finance for himself.⁷⁸

The NOC - external challenges

In June 1942 the *Nederlandsche Oost Compagnie (NOC)* was founded following contacts between Alfred Rosenberg, chief of the German *Ostministerium* - the ministry for the occupied Eastern Territories - and Rost van Tonningen.⁷⁹ The institute was a partnership between the State and the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam and it took over the responsibility from the *Werkdienst Holland* for recruiting, screening and sending Dutch workers to the East and also for the care - the *Betreuung* - during their stay. In this way Rost van Tonningen endeavoured to create a monopoly regarding the East in the Netherlands, which was promised by the Germans, but not carried out. Several subsidiaries were founded for - amongst others - the fishers, the construction workers and the dredgers. The diligent efforts of Rost van Tonningen to involve Dutch industries - also

⁷⁵ Te Slaa en Klijn, *De NSB*, p 745; Sijes, *De Arbeidsinzet*. pp 107-108.

⁷⁶ Barnouw, *Oostboeren*, pp 24-26; De Jong, *Het koninkrijk*, Part 6, p 456.

⁷⁷ Report Ir Marinus van Doorn, 26 October 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 362.

⁷⁸ Barnouw, *Oostgermanen*, pp 32-33.

⁷⁹ Von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, 'The Dutch in the Occupied East and the Holocaust', p 62.

outside *NSB* circles - were fruitless, just a handful of entrepreneurs, most of them *NSB* members, took the opportunity of going East. Fuelled by a newspaper article which stated that the Nazi East could host approximately a third of the Dutch population many companies were afraid of being forced to send labour to and to develop activities in the East instead of in the Dutch East Indies.⁸⁰

Another deception was caused by the treatment of the Dutch in the East. The idea that they and their German neighbours were Aryan brethren which should be treated alike was also not put into practice. This may have been caused partly by the fact that - despite the promises about future possibilities of owning farms in the Nazi East - again it was not the *fine fleur* of the Dutch labour force who volunteered, which did not stop - at least some of them - to share the German view of the indigenous people. One of the inspectors wrote enthusiastically about the energetic behaviour of some Dutch farmers when Ukrainian labourers failed to report for work. They went together with a German *Oberleiter* to the local village 'to catch around ten men in order to kill them and persuade the others to resume working'. Only seven men were caught, the others were nowhere to be found. The inspector was especially impressed by the *Oberleiter* who went on this mission as calm as ever, like he was chasing hares instead of humans. He concluded his report by stating that Mrs Lagerweij - the secretary in Rowno - would also send her report indicating the farmers suitable to stay in Ukraine.⁸¹ The story of chasing the Ukrainians is not corroborated by the postwar judicial files of the farmers involved. In one file no trace about the incident was found, in the other it was presented by the farmer as just a story invented to mislead the inspector who was considered a bore.⁸² Even if this is true - and there seems no way of knowing this - it indicates that the story in itself was plausible and acceptable enough for the inspector to note in an official report as an accomplishment.

In her consequent report Mrs Lagerweij mentioned that preferably the leadership of the training centre would be handled in the future by the Dutch, without German supervision. Her boss - who was German - had a keen eye for the interests of the Dutch farmers, but he was an exception and his hands were tied. If no changes were made, she was not optimistic about the good outcome, but she was still prepared to commit herself. She ranked the farmers fit to stay in the East, the two who - supposedly - chased the

⁸⁰ Barnouw, *Oostgermanen*, pp 40-43.

⁸¹ Report Jan van Barneveld concerning journey September/October 1943 October 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 84. The full name of Mrs Lagerweij is Martha Staalmeester Lagerweij, in many files either the name Staalmeester or Lagerweij is used. I will mainly use the name Lagerweij in this paper.

⁸² *Proces-Verbaal* Jacob de Rooy, 13 June 1945 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 31216.

Ukrainians were among them.⁸³ The influential position of Mrs Lagerweij was also indicated by Ir van Hees who was the representative in Rowno at the time. In a letter to headquarters in The Hague he mentioned a complaint by a farmer, who claimed to have written to the local representatives of the *NOC*. According to Van Hees 'neither *kamske* Lagerweij, nor I' had received such a letter. Probably the farmer had written to a certain Boukje Schimmel and headquarters would be well advised to make perfectly clear that the lady in question was 'no representative of the *NOC*'. This phrasing seems to imply that Mrs Lagerweij was indeed considered a representative of the *NOC* by Van Hees and moreover that Van Hees was confident that his opinion was shared by the director of the *NOC*.⁸⁴

The *NOC* - internal problems

Apart from the external problems, also the internal structure of the *NOC* was the cause of much strain, the real power being executed by the presidium of Rost van Tonningen - as president - and his deputy Rambonnet, although *NSB* member Daniël Krantz was appointed director, residing in the headquarters in The Hague. No love was lost between the two offices, which resulted in the urgent advice of Krantz to a confident to secure a - presumably incriminating - file regarding Rambonnet, which had been reported as lost.⁸⁵ Another source of irritation were the *NOC* representatives who were nominated in Berlin, Rowno in Ukraine, Kauen and Wilna in Lithuania and Riga in Latvia and who were subject to visits of inspectors sent by The Hague.

The contacts between all these actors were characterised by a lack of mutual understanding and the tone of the correspondence was insulting more than once. The representative in Wilna, Ir Berger, complained about the winter uniform for the women - including his wife - and the deficiency of 'warm appropriate underwear - that because of these traits does not need to be ugly - ' and boots. The privation was even worse because the inspectors from The Hague - who were only around for a short period of time - were 'decorated from tip to toe in a uniform with golden adornments' and were wearing nice boots.⁸⁶ Krantz agreed that the winter outfit for ladies was faulty compared to the outfit for gentlemen, but there was nothing for sale at the moment so that the wishes for 'warm (but not ugly) underwear' could not be fulfilled. He advised to transform some men's underwear into female attire 'to your own liking' and showed himself willing to send upon request the

⁸³ Report Martha Staalmeester Lagerweij concerning the Dutch Farmers in Ukraine 14 October 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 84.

⁸⁴ Letter Hendrik van Hees to *NOC* The Hague, 1 December 1943 in *n NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 126.

⁸⁵ Note Daniël Krantz regarding meeting on 13 June 1943, undated in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 98.

⁸⁶ Letter Lodewijk Berger to Daniël Krantz, 28 September 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 127.

necessities for such a project. Finally he mentioned being under the impression that Berger still felt disadvantaged - despite several attempts from the side of the headquarters to cure him from this unfounded feeling - 'but then again, we are no medical doctors'.⁸⁷

One of the inspectors, presumably spotless in uniform and boots, wrote in his report as late as early 1944, that generally speaking the most remarkable trait in the East was a total lack of earnestness, as well as the abundance of complaints about the lack of understanding for the local circumstances displayed by 'The Hague'. He continued by stating that the administration was at fault when in Dutch hands, when Polish bookkeepers were involved the situation was significantly better. The selection process for Dutch volunteers should become much more strict.⁸⁸ This point of view seems to underline the earlier statement of Anna Berger, the wife of the representative in Wilna, that 'much more than in the Netherlands we have to work with inferior human material, even if we had all the cooperation from headquarters our task would still be very heavy; let that not be forgotten in The Hague!'.⁸⁹ It is not quite clear whether the phrase 'inferior human material' was referring to the inadequate Dutch, to the indigenous workforce or both, but it is evident that Mrs Berger felt that support by 'The Hague' was missing.

The burden as a result of the strained internal relationships was aggravated by the fact that the contacts with the Germans were complicated and that it was not at all transparent who in Berlin was responsible for what. The *Reichskommissariate* in the occupied East for instance, had their own agendas, hardly allowing any influence of the *Ostministerium* and other Berlin-based institutes. The *Ostministerium* even lost more ground when the SS gained influence in 1943 in the formally independent *Nederlands Oostinstituut (NOI)* under the supervision of W. Goedhuys. This institute became responsible for the information and education of the Dutch colonists, guarding the National Socialist ideology.⁹⁰

Operational risks and optimistic phantasies

Two training centres for farmers were founded, Rogatschew near Rowno and Waka-T near Wilna, where most farmers only stayed for a short period. Some of the farmers in Ukraine were consequently appointed *Stützpunktführer* at huge agricultural enterprises - founded under Stalin - of over 10.000 acres. According to the leader of the training centre in

⁸⁷ Letter Daniël Krantz to Lodewijk Berger, 20 October 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 127.

⁸⁸ Report journey Wilna - Waka T - Lentvaris - Baltoje Voke - Malpils January 1944, author unknown, 15 February 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 150.

⁸⁹ Report Anna Berger - van den Brink concerning the representation of interests of representatives and employees in the East, 28 June 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 1030.

⁹⁰ David Barnouw, *Rost van Tonningen*. p 113.

Rogatschew, the difficulties in such a job were partly due to the inequality between the Dutch and the Germans. In Ukraine - where the Dutch were mainly stationed in the regions Kiev, Shitomir and Rowno - the punishments were administered by the Germans, an enormous difference with the Dutch East Indies where one just beat the hell out of people and took whatever one liked, supported by the motherland.⁹¹ Moreover the job was not without hazards, also because the Dutch - who were generally considered as cowards by the Germans - were insufficiently armed to resist attacks by partisans. 'Pieterse (...) the end of this brave fellow was a shortage of ammunition. Strietman did not defend himself and got arrested, Pieterse did fight, but did not have sufficient ammunition: who is being arrested for that?' noted an NOC-inspector rhetorically in his report, after both the training centre in Rogatschew - of which the leader and his men surrendered immediately - and *Stützpunktführer* Pieterse had been attacked by partisans.⁹² Mrs Lagerweij was present during the attack at the training centre and she defended in her report the Dutch leader of the centre, criticising the lack of adequate weapons.⁹³ She was not among the Dutch who left Ukraine out of fear for partisans, even before the evacuation started early 1944 when the Russian troops were advancing.⁹⁴ Only after the evacuation she was transferred to Kauen, where she was not equally valued. The local representative reported that her independence was not to be negotiated and requested to replace Mrs Lagerweij with a secretary '(...) if possible with a charming appearance (...)'.⁹⁵ NOC headquarters in The Hague replied that they regretted to hear that there was a disagreement between the representative and Mrs Lagerweij about the best way to fill in the position of secretary and that so far she was always highly valued. Moreover '(...) we have to inform you that we are still so old-fashioned that in business we rely more on professional behaviour and good character than beauty. We have seen enough in the East and have heard enough about certain relationships not to stick to these old-fashioned ideas.'⁹⁶ Despite this viewpoint Mrs

⁹¹ Report / dairy Izaak de Raadt about journey 8 - 12 January 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 599.

⁹² Report Jan van Barneveld regarding trip to Ukraine September 1943, undated in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 84.

⁹³ Letter Piet Smit to NOC The Hague, 29 August 1943, in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 126; report Martha Staalmeester Lagerweij concerning the Dutch Farmers in Ukraine 14 October 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 84.

⁹⁴ Overview *Der 9. Transport niederländische Bauern; Abreise aus den Haag am 26.5.43* in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 778; Report 21 January 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 778.

⁹⁵ Notes regarding meeting Daniël Krantz and Wieger de Haan in The Hague on 6 March 1944, 8 March 1944, author unknown in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 100; letter Bram Strik to NOC The Hague, 10 February 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 972.

⁹⁶ Letter Daniël Krantz to Wieger de Haan, 11 February 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC* inv.nr. 123.

Lagerweij was transferred to Lemberg where she left once the air raids were approaching, being of the opinion that under the circumstances 'a man should take her place.'⁹⁷

Also most farmers who went directly to Lithuania from Ukraine had disappointing experiences, because of the much smaller scale of the farms in Lithuania and also because the 'Dutch Ukrainians' were used to leading a too generous life.⁹⁸ Some gardeners who were stationed in Estonia were more optimistic. One wrote to Rost van Tonningen that the Dutch were not the real enemies of the population, 'their only archenemy is the Jew, the Bolshevik (...). I hope to narrate later many remarkable examples of the thirst for blood of the Jews.'⁹⁹ The enthusiasm of him and a working mate was moderated almost instantly. They had been deluded by the head of the agricultural department of the *NOC* in the Netherlands, which department was formed by the head and an assistant and which was housed in the head's home in Arnhem. The head - a certain Ir van der Velden - had promised them big greenhouses founded - and subsequently deserted - by Jews. 'The only glasses around were to be found on our faces' and it was an impossible mission to work the land, despite the fact that they had found 'a plough with 2 horses and a prisoner'.¹⁰⁰ Still one of the gardeners retained some of his original spark, dreaming of a permanent stay, a wonderful future and the possibility of his wife and family coming over. Half a year later he complained bitterly to the representative in Riga about the housing situation, about the *Gebietskommissar* who refused to do anything about it and about the 'strangest assignments' he and his comrades got from the new '*Gebietslandswirt*', turning the place into a 'nuthouse'.¹⁰¹ It seems unlikely that his family joined this gardener, although the reunion would have matched exactly the vision of Van der Velden of the glorious future of the Dutch in the East. In his opinion the Baltic States were better suited for this purpose than Ukraine and 'White Ruthenia' which regions were unfit for Dutch women and children to stay.¹⁰² He pointed out that it was common knowledge that especially in horticulture there was a great demand for labourers, which

⁹⁷ Notes *NOC* The Hague, author unknown, 11 May 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 980. Although the name of Mrs Lagerland is mentioned instead of Lagerweij it becomes clear from the notes of 10 May 1944 and an *Aktennotiz* regarding the return of Mrs Lagerweij on 12 May 1944, that it concerns Mrs Lagerweij. No mention of Mrs Lagerland being in the vicinity at the time has been found.

⁹⁸ Letter Jacob Troost to Daniël Krantz, 29 February 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 637; Report journey Wilna - Waka T - Lentvaris - Baltoje Voke - Malpils January 1944, unknown author, 15 February 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 150.

⁹⁹ Letter Gerrit van Lent to Rost van Tonningen, 12 July 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 612;.

¹⁰⁰ Letter Reinier van der Ven, addressee unknown, 25 July 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 613; letter Eduard van der Velden to Rost van Tonningen 8 March 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 612; letter Reinier van der Ven to unknown addressee, 17 November 1942 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 607.

¹⁰¹ Letter Gerrit van Lent to *NOC* representative Riga, 6 December 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 669.

¹⁰² Appendix report first journey to Lithuania with accompanying letter Eduard van der Velden to Rost van Tonningen, 6 December 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 612.

resulted in households with numerous children. Precisely these households could fulfil a very important role in Germanising the East, although currently only real 'pioneers' could succeed, because of the difficult circumstances.¹⁰³

Job opportunities

Apart from the positions for farmers, fishers, dairy experts, agronomists, craftsmen, labourers, construction workers and dredgers another category of jobs was available in the Nazi East. In current terminology some of these positions would fall in the category middle management. These were the representatives, the leaders of the training centres, the housemasters and housekeepers. Although the latter had been placed under the housemasters, in more than one case they were in charge of others as well. This category is obviously much smaller than those of the farmers and the labourers - unfortunately I did not have a chance to find out how small - and it is here that the most independent jobs for the women were found. These posts varied from bookkeepers, secretaries and typists to teachers, nurses, hairdressers, housekeepers and florists to cleaning ladies and a single journalist. Although in March 1944 apparently a regulation was drafted that no visa were to be granted any longer for female administrative personnel, in practice women still went to the East.¹⁰⁴ Rules were getting stricter though, in the beginning women did not necessarily need a job - it was sufficient if they wanted to help their husbands - later it was obligatory to hold a position.¹⁰⁵ It might be that some jobs were created especially to enable married women to follow their husbands to the East. This notion seems to be supported by the fact that some housekeepers earned a salary and others just got '*scheidingsgeld*' (separation money).¹⁰⁶

Changing between different kinds of jobs was quite easy for the women, housekeepers became hairdressers or bookkeepers. The same held true for men, a job in a bicycle repair shop in the Netherlands was changed for a job as gardener in the East.¹⁰⁷ Also boundaries between jobs - and gender - were not always clear, for instance between the leader of a training centre and the housemaster. Between the housemaster and the housekeeper there could be friction as well, once resulting in the dismissal of a housemaster at Waka-T, because he had refused to bring a bottle of vodka to the room of the housekeeper.

¹⁰³ Report Eduard van der Velden regarding the eighth journey to the East, 4 May 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 616.

¹⁰⁴ Letter Daniël Krantz to Berlin, Kauen, Wilna and Riga 8 March 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 126.

¹⁰⁵ Letter Zacharias Veringa to *NOC Wilna* 18 April 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 127.

¹⁰⁶ Letter Eduard van der Velden to *NOC The Hague*, 19 July 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 669.

¹⁰⁷ *Proces Verbaal* Berend Moerheuvel, 4 February 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09*, inv.nr. 68543.

Guidelines were drafted to prevent such misunderstandings from happening again.¹⁰⁸ Apparently these did not help, given the complaint of Truus Spoelder - the housekeeper in 1944 - that the leader of the training centre was a real cook, meddling in her kitchen and that she preferred an independent job and clearer boundaries.¹⁰⁹ One of the farmers was reported to be cooking, because Mrs Spoelder was apparently not able to cater for such a big company. A plea for help was sent to The Hague, it was absolutely necessary that a housemaster was hired and imperative that he did not have a wife 'men together is ok, but no women, they have brought us nothing but grief'.¹¹⁰ Perhaps this notion was crossing the mind of a staff leader when he advised one of his men to listen with compassion to complaints - even when childish - 'in a motherly and patient fashion' in order to give the people the idea that they were satisfied with the answer given.¹¹¹ The fluidity of jobs and gender was seen as well in the functions in the offices where secretaries were known to operate as deputies to the representatives.¹¹²

The end

In the summer of 1944 - about six months after Ukraine had been evacuated - the same fate was reserved for the Dutch men and women in Belarus and the Baltic states. Main settlements like the market-garden Malpils, near Riga, the peat bog Baltoje Voke and the estate and training centre of Waka-T near Wilna, as well as the smaller ones were cleared out hastily, saving what could be saved, although everyone applied his or her own definition of what was possible under the circumstances.¹¹³ The headquarters in The Hague requested those involved with the evacuation to write reports in an attempt to evaluate the proceedings. Five of these reports were written by women.¹¹⁴ The single 25-year-old housekeeper Jopie de Boer at Waka-T took the opportunity to bend the gender boundaries. She was new in the Nazi East, arriving in Lithuania just days before the actual evacuation started. According to several reports she refused to take the seat which had been reserved for her in a car, preferring to flee with the transport of *panjewagens* - horse

¹⁰⁸ Letter and proposal for division of labour NOC The Hague to head training centre Waka-T, 26 March 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 599.

¹⁰⁹ Letter Truus Spoelder - Kraan to representative NOC Riga, 14 February 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 128.

¹¹⁰ Report Jan van Barneveld concerning journey Waka-T 9 - 23 November 1943, January 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 144.

¹¹¹ Report Evert Brons about labourers for NOB, 17 November 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 136.

¹¹² Quarterly report about period 1 April - 1 July sent with letter Lodwijk Berger to NOC The Hague, 10 August 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 1025.

¹¹³ See various reports evacuation summer 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 151, 152, 1044.

¹¹⁴ Report Antonia Matthijssen, 10 July 1944; report Hendrika van der Sterre - Netel, 25 July 1944; report Jopie de Boer, 29 July 1944, report Petronella de Groen, 4 August 1944, all in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 151; report Els Wantenaar, 20 July 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 1044.

drawn farm wagons - right through the middle of an area in which partisans were active, 'not losing her balance at any time'.¹¹⁵ In her own report Miss De Boer stated that she preferred the *panjewagens* in order to make herself useful 'by cooking etc.' She herself had been treated well by all, but she felt '100% braver than a great deal of the gentlemen'.¹¹⁶ Unfortunately it is not known whether this remark was valued by the headquarters in The Hague, but apparently Miss De Boer felt at liberty to express herself in this way.

The evacuation of Lithuania would virtually be the end of the heydays of the *Oostkolonisatie*, although some people were reallocated amongst others in the Krakow region. The *NOC* headquarters were transferred from The Hague to Berlin, with a subsidiary in Balkow near Ziebingen, where 5 women and 10 men were stationed.¹¹⁷ Also the *NOI* was transferred to the East, the wife of director functioning as his deputy when he was absent.¹¹⁸ Initially there was an optimistic ring to the correspondence of the *NOC*, referring to better times when people would be sent to the East again. These better times did not come, also Berlin and Balkow were evacuated as the war was approaching its finale.¹¹⁹ Although at least 5000 volunteers had been sent eastwards by the *NOC* the whole enterprise turned out to be a failure which had cost the state millions of guilders.¹²⁰

Summary

The *NOC* was initiated in the summer of 1942 by the *Ostministerium* in cooperation with Rost van Tonningen to streamline the contribution of the Dutch to the colonisation of the Nazi-East, which had failed earlier with *Culano* and the *Werkdienst Holland*. Because of the war situation the *NOC* had to evacuate Ukraine in early 1944 and the Baltic States and Belarus in the summer of the same year. Therefore it is not easy to judge whether the venture of the *NOC* would have become a success if it had been given more time. It is clear however that the Germans did not keep their word regarding the conditions of Rost

¹¹⁵ Report events Kauen and journey back via Königsberg-Metgethen to the Netherlands 1 July 1944 - 19 July 1944 Harm Boersma, undated; letter W. Goedhuys to Daniël Krantz 24 August 1944; all in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 151.

¹¹⁶ Report 'My personal impressions about the stay in the East' Jopie de Boer, 29 July 1944, in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 151.

¹¹⁷ Letter Daniël Kranz and Hendrik van Hees to Berlin, 1 November 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 1007; letter with overview personnel, Albert Braat to *NOC* Berlin, 2 January 1944 (sic!), inv.nr. 650; Barnouw, *Oostgermanen*, pp 168-174.

¹¹⁸ Letter Piet de Groot *NOI* to *NOC* Balkow 11 December 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 652.

¹¹⁹ See for example: letter *NOC* to Cornelis van Nagele, 15 September 1944 The Hague in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 1008; letter *NOC* to Mantel, 24 October 1944 The Hague in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 1007; letter *NOC* to Albert Tadema, 8 November 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 1007.

¹²⁰ De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk*, Part 6, p 463; Von Frijtag Drabbe Künzel, 'The Dutch in the Occupied East and the Holocaust', p 63.

van Tonningen. There was never a monopoly for the *NOC* regarding Dutch activity in the East and the Germans were fighting amongst themselves to further their own agendas, the *SS* gaining influence at the expense of the *Ostministerium*. Moreover the *Reichskommissare* did not follow orders of Berlin. The Dutch were not treated as equals of the Germans except by the partisan groups, resulting in attacks on Dutch farmers and the training centre.

Apart from these external problems, the internal structure and procedures of the *NOC* did not further smooth operations either. Selection of the Dutch work force was not strict enough and relations between presidium, headquarters, representatives and inspectors were strained and marked by distrust.

It was under these difficult circumstances that the *NOC* offered possibilities for women. At first they did not need to have a job in the East and were allowed in principle just to take care of their husbands. Later this was prohibited, although it might be that jobs were especially created for the purpose of allowing the women to follow their husbands. Independent jobs for women were found mostly in the offices and in the realm of care. Job and gender boundaries were not always distinct and the *NOC* seemed to offer chances to men and women for transgressing them. It is remarkable to see that the director of the *NOC* personally spent time on seemingly trivial matters in the private sphere like the availability of women's underwear in the East. This does not seem fitting for a man according to the National Socialist ideology. The leader of the training centre in Waka-T interfered with the tasks of the housekeeper. Even if she was not qualified for the job as he apparently thought, he was transgressing gender boundaries by busying himself with her tasks.

Also some women were pushing against the gender limits and were allowed to do so. In 1943 Mrs Lagerweij sent her judgement about which farmers were man enough to stay in the Nazi East in an official report to the headquarters in The Hague. She favoured farmers who at least were thought to be capable of killing members of the local population. The casual way in which the inspector mentioned that her report would follow his and the way in which Van Hees wrote about her to the headquarters in The Hague imply that her status as a representative of the *NOC* was accepted by the director. Moreover Mrs Lagerweij wrote letters about appropriate weapons and the desirability of the Dutch taking over the leadership of the training centre from the Germans, not exactly the first subjects that spring to mind when thinking about the female sphere. Mrs Lagerweij did not flee - as many Dutch men did - from partisan attacks either. However, after being evacuated she did not succeed in building up the same position in Kauen, where transgressing the

gender boundary proved more difficult for her and where she was possibly rejected by the local representative because she was not pretty and too independent. The local representative was reprimanded by headquarters, but Mrs Lagerweij was transferred again. Once the air raids approached she did not like being in the East any longer and went back to the Netherlands, suddenly hiding behind the stereotypical view that being in such circumstances was nothing for a woman. Mrs Berger in Wilna wrote about 'inferior human material' and mentioned the missing support from The Hague. Also these issues seem to be more in the political or public domain than in the private sphere where women belonged according to the ideology within the *NSB* and the *NSVO*. After the evacuation of Lithuania in the summer of 1944 Miss De Boer wrote that she felt much braver than most men, refusing to take the relatively comfortable place reserved for her in a car and Mrs Goedhuys acted as deputy to her husband, who was director of the *NOI*.

It seems that the image of Dutch women in National Socialism which grew gradually more pragmatic during the war was reflected in the chances offered to women and men within the *NOC* to transgress gender boundaries and defy rules in the Nazi East. Now the stage has been set, it is time to put the actors in the limelights. In the next chapter some figures will be presented about the marital status, age and occupations of the women, before turning to three case studies about single women, showing that not only husbands can be followed.

Chapter 4 About women, husbands, fathers, brothers and lovers

In this chapter the image evoked by Barnouw that just a few women went to the Nazi East and that they were following their husbands will be tested. This will be done by providing some figures about the women concerning their marital status and possible functions in the East, followed by some observations and notes regarding these numbers. The relevant information was obtained by scrutinising both the archives of the *NOC* and the postwar judicial files of the women. After the numerical part of this chapter three cases of single women will be presented - obviously not following their husbands, but perhaps other men - based on research in the same files. It is therefore helpful to remember the complications and possibilities presented by postwar statements. Everyone had in principle their own reasons to make a statement in a certain fashion, representing themselves and others in a way they considered to be in their best interest. The influence of the party who is posing the questions and recording the statement is present in the text, but difficult to discern. What can be detected, however, is a glimpse of what the subjects who were interrogated thought would be acceptable to share with their interrogators.

Simple questions, complicated answers

The seemingly straightforward questions 'Were the women who went to the Nazi East married and did they have a job?' turned out to be frustratingly difficult to answer. Apart from the possibility - discussed in the last chapter - that the *NOC* created some functions especially for the women who wanted to join their husbands, there are other pitfalls which deserve mentioning.

First of all it became clear that not all women mentioned in the archival material were sent to the Nazi East, several worked for the headquarters of the *NOC* in The Hague, six went to Berlin and three to other places in Germany, albeit in one form or the other through the *NOC*. One - a master in social geography - was based in The Hague and was thought to be heading for Rowno on a so-called inspection journey, but travelled actually to Berlin.¹²¹ It should be noted that women who went to Germany after *Dolle Dinsdag* are not included in these figures. Two other women were indeed sent on inspection trips from The Hague to the East, either as a kind of financial controller or in a more journalistic function.¹²² Of eighteen women their intention to go to the East is clear, but it remains hazy

¹²¹ Report W. Goedhuys and Anna van Asch about journey to Berlin 5 - 11 February 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 136.

¹²² Report Eduard van der Velden concerning journey 8 - 29 September 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 611; letter Bram Strik to *NOC* The Hague, 4 February 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr.123; report W. Goedhuys and Anna van Asch about journey to Berlin 5 - 11 February 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 136.

whether they actually departed, let alone arrived. In 1943 a letter was written regarding the burning question who should pay for some uniforms, one belonging to 'Miss Prins, of her we do not know where she remained', the sender did not seem to care either, only wanting to know who should pay the bill.¹²³ Similar uncertainty was felt in the same year when the wife of a bookkeeper had not arrived to take up her job in a laundry ten days after the agreed date, whether this was the agreed date of departure or arrival is not clear. In this case someone cared, the office in Rowno informed The Hague that the husband was worried and requested to be informed. It turned out that the wife was first delayed because her visa was not ready and was further detained as a result of the 'Zugsperre'.¹²⁴ Probably she never made it to the East, as the situation in Ukraine was deteriorating at the time. These anecdotes underline the necessity of finding a confirmation that the women not only departed for the East, but actually arrived there as well.

Some figures about the women - marital status, occupation and age

In seventy-seven cases women seemed indeed to have arrived at their destinations. Of the several categories mentioned above I shall focus on the women that went to the East in one way or the other - either in order to stay there for a couple of months or more, or who went on inspection journeys - their combined number totalling to seventy-nine. Of two single women it is not known which jobs they were performing and of thirteen more it is only known that they were in the East with their husbands, no specific job was indicated and they are included in the category 'following husbands or?'. (See table 1, diagram 1 and 2). Two women worked in a garden, two were journalists, twenty-two had a job in the category care - which also includes the hairdressers and the florist - and thirty-eight worked in an administrative function which is indicated in the table and the diagrams by the category office. These functions could vary from being a typist to a secretary, like Mrs Lagerweij. The women who were switching functions have been designated to the category of their first known job.

To form an idea about the women, it is also interesting to find out to which age category the women belonged. No date of birth has been found of twenty-five of the seventy-nine women, the others were born between 1886 and 1924, which implies they were between the age of fifty-three and fifteen at New Year's Eve 1939. In 1940 - the year in which the war reached the Netherlands - eight women turned forty or older, six of them being

¹²³ Letter Everhard Ridder to Hendrik van Hees, 1 October 1943 NOC The Hague to Rowno in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 972.

¹²⁴ Notes telephone conversation Abraham Harmsen with Hendrik van Hees, 27 September 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 1014; letter Johan Spits to Berlin, 30 September 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 976.

married, eleven - of whom seven were married - reached the age of thirty up to and including thirty-nine and seven stayed under twenty, which did not stop two of them to be joined in matrimony. By far the biggest group was formed by the 'twens', twenty-eight women fell in this category of whom eleven had a husband. In table 1 absolute figures about the women, age category, marital status and occupations are given. Diagram 1 provides the opportunity to see at a glance the absolute figures regarding marital status and occupations. In diagram 2 the percentage per occupation is shown, regardless of age or marital status.

Table 1 Age, marital status and occupations women (absolute figures)							
age reached in 1940	number of women	married (m)		office	care	other	following husbands or ?
		single (s)					
unknown	25	m	14	4	2	0	8
		s	11	6	1	2	2
40 and over	8	m	6	2	3	0	1
		s	2	1	1	0	0
30 - 39	11	m	7	3	2	1	1
		s	4	2	2	0	0
20 - 29	28	m	11	3	5	0	3
		s	17	13	3	1	0
under 20	7	m	2	0	2	0	0
		s	5	4	1	0	0
subtotal married		m	40	12	14	1	13
subtotal single		s	39	26	8	3	2
total			79	38	22	4	15

Diagram 1 occupations and marital state (absolute figures)

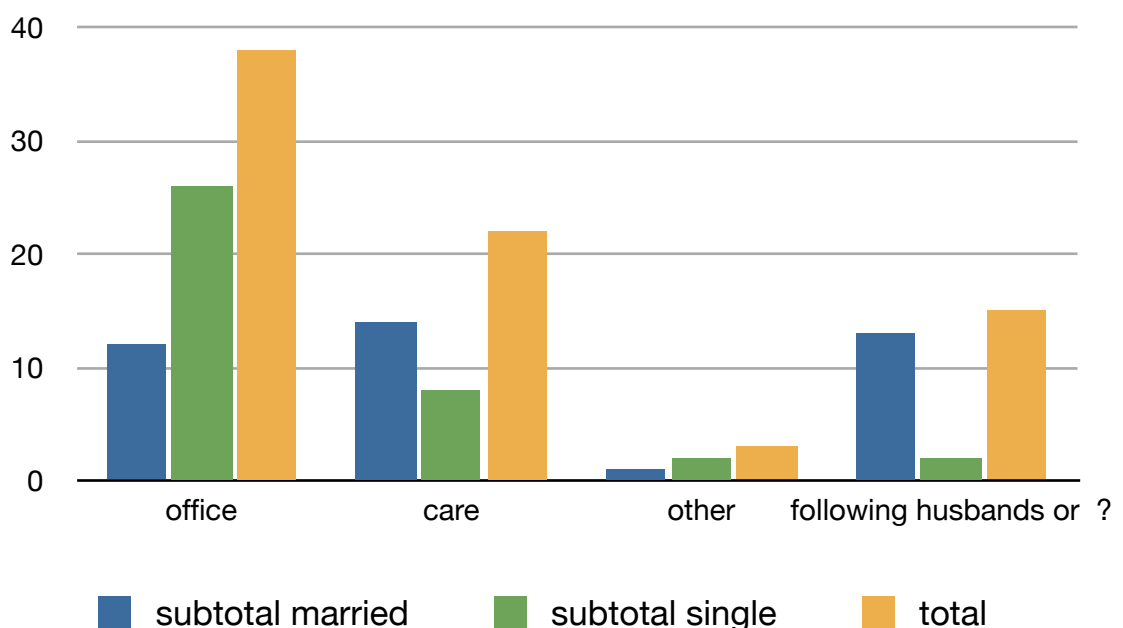
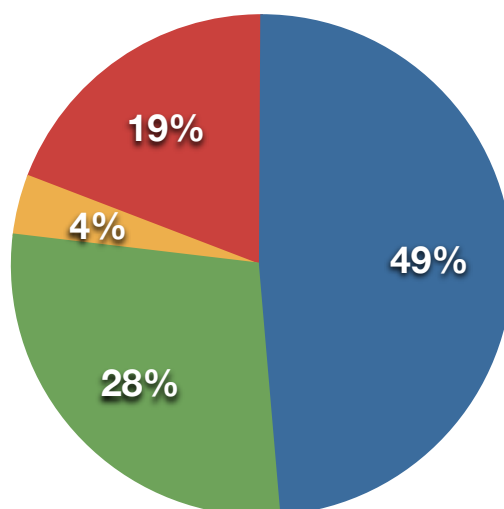


Diagram 2 occupations (%)



● office ● care ● other ● following husbands or ?

The enumeration - which may seem tedious to some and fascinating to others - serves a goal. In the first place it provides some insight into the ages of the women when they went eastwards. Further it conveys - this is not shown in the table, but can easily be detected - that almost half - twenty-six out of fifty-four - of the women of which the dates of birth are known, could not follow their husband - even if they wanted to - because of the simple fact they lacked one. This corresponds with the image arising when the total of seventy-nine women is taken into account, almost half of the women - thirty-nine - were not married when they left.

Some notes regarding the figures

As usual when working with figures - which can show almost anything one wants them to show - some notes are in order. Although almost half of the women were not married, they could have been involved with a man and decided to follow him, or they could have gone to the East as part of the family they grew up in. In at least two cases daughters of agrarian leaders were listed.¹²⁵ Also the women could have been obeying orders or taking advice from their fathers or from other male relatives and friends. Again the consultation of the archival material can be clarifying.

To start with the bad news: regarding twenty-one of the seventy-nine women next to nothing is known on the basis of the current research. The available information indicates

¹²⁵ Report of the proceedings of the *Nederlandsche Oost Compagnie (NOC)* 1942-1944, 4th quarter, page 4, in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 14.

that they did arrive in the East and their names were mentioned, sometimes as an appendix to their husbands, sometimes with their maiden name added and sometimes they appeared as Miss 'So and So'. By looking closer it can be discerned that widows and occasionally divorcees were indicated with Mrs, which has to be taken into account when reading the above information about married women.¹²⁶

Another pitfall is shown by the case of Wietske van der Kolk - Kooistra who stayed for three months at the training centre near Rowno as a housekeeper - taking care of 'the boys' as she addressed the farmers - before she was declared unsuitable for the job, despite the fact that she had ample experience and good references. During a subsequent visit at NOC headquarters in 1943 she complained about the Dutch leaders' attitude towards Ukrainian women. The leaders had stated that they - the leaders - were 'the rulers' and that they - the Ukrainian women - 'had to obey'. Mrs Van der Kolk had informed one of the leaders that if he was indeed a '*heerscher*' (ruler), he should behave as a '*heer*' (gentleman) and not as a swine.¹²⁷ After the war she referred to Mrs Lagerweij as a fury in her treatment of Ukrainian females.¹²⁸ Mrs Van der Kolk went to Rowno on her own, after her husband had decided to 'bring a sacrifice for the Great German thought' by enrolling in the *Waffen SS*.¹²⁹

So only if the corresponding Mr is explicitly referred to as being in the East it can be assumed he was around and therefore could be followed, which information is lacking in two of the above cases, which is just another warning to be careful with figures.

The good news is that more information is available about fifty-eight women, although obviously no complete pictures can be reconstructed. As it is not feasible in the current framework to illuminate all cases, a selection has been made, illustrating various points of interest. Now that it has been discovered that at least seventy-nine women went to the Nazi East through the NOC and that almost half of them did not have a husband to follow, one can look into other possible men in the lives of the women, using three cases as example.

¹²⁶ Sometimes divorcees are also indicated with Miss, which does not influence their being actually single at the time.

¹²⁷ Report visit Mrs Wietske van der Kolk - Kooistra to NOC The Hague, author unknown 26 March 1943 in NIOD, *Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 599.

¹²⁸ *Proces-Verbaal* Martha Staalmeester Lagerweij, 2 July 1946 in NL-HaNA, *Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 109603.

¹²⁹ Decision conditional suspension of charges against Wietske van der Kolk - Kooistra, 8 May 1946 in NL-HaNA, *Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 109439.

Three stories about fathers, brothers and lovers

One of the 'twens', Sofie Huisman, born in 1919, stated during an interrogation after the war that she went to the East against her will and as a result of severe pressure of her father, who was a *NSB* burgomaster. Both she and her mother detested the *NSB*, but joined the movement to pacify him. Miss Huisman had been bullied during her time at school and in her work because of her assumed *NSB* sympathies. It seemed to her that it did not matter whatever she did, the image of being a National Socialist would stick with her and she would therefore be excluded anyway. The *NOC* seemed to offer an opportunity to flee from the pressure from her father and to avoid the exclusion she felt. After the war Miss Huisman stated that once she arrived in Ukraine she found everything to be corrupt and wanted to resign, but that her resignation was refused.¹³⁰ However, at the time it was noted by an unknown author that Miss Huisman would prefer staying in Rowno, after being evacuated from Kiev immediately upon her arrival in September 1943.¹³¹ Whichever way, apparently she was sent to Wilna, where she was fired within two weeks as the result of a row with some of the 'gentlemen' of the *NOC*, the quotes being hers. Her father stated after the war that it was quite normal for men to enrol women in the *NSB* and that he had done the same for his daughter, be it with her approval.¹³²

During the war it was noted by a third party that Miss Huisman wanted to stay in Rowno. Whether she has made a statement to that effect is unknown, but no reason has been found why the third party would make this up. It is likely that she did not last very long in the East. According to her own postwar testimonial Miss Huisman seemed to be fleeing in a direction opposite to her intentions, claiming that it did not matter whatever she did, because of her father. She emphasised a lack of power on her part, being a victim of the persuasion of her father. She emphasised a lack of power on her part, being a victim of the persuasion of her father. Also her mother was presented by her as being powerless to resist her husband, apparently indicating an inclination towards the gendered idea that women were powerless and unable to resist decisions or opinions of men. It is not unthinkable however that Miss Huisman hid a different opinion about herself - it is quite adventurous and independent to go to Ukraine in the middle of the war - because she thought that her interrogator would fall for her story and would think her innocent. It seems

¹³⁰ *Proces-Verbaal* Sofie Huisman, 27 February 1948 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 107371.

¹³¹ Report travel Berlin, Cracow, Lemberg, Stolbunow, Winniza, Kasatin, Kiev 14 - 17 September 1943, author unknown, 24 September 1943 in *NIOD, Archief* 176 *NOC*, inv.nr.152; handwritten notes, author unknown, 22 September 1943 in in *NIOD, Archief* 176 *NOC*, inv.nr. 152.

¹³² *Proces-Verbaal* Sofie Huisman, 27 February 1948 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 107371.

safe to say that her aversion of the *NSB* did not prevent her from working for a National Socialist organisation like the *NOC*.

The circumstances were totally different for Maria van der Linde, a secretary, who was born in 1917 and lived alone. She became *NSB* member against the wishes of her family who were 'anti'. During her interrogation after the war she described herself as being pro-German at the time. Financial advantage and a taste for adventure were given by her as main reasons to volunteer for the *NOC*. As the procedure took very long she decided to work for the *Zentrale Handelsgesellschaft Ost*, which was arranged by the *NOC*. Miss Van der Linde went to Kiev in January 1943. Later she worked in Melitopol staying in the East for over half a year, before being evacuated because of the advancing Russian troops and also because of health reasons, of which no further details are known. Upon recovery she was sent to Riga, but resigned after ten days, first stating after the war that she did not like the work and later that she could not agree with the political situation. Consequently she joined the Dutch consulate in Marseille, working for the former head of *Winterhulp Nederland*.¹³³

The postwar claim of Miss Van der Linde that she could not agree with the political situation in Riga seems implausible, given the fact that she did not mention the same about her stay in Ukraine and moreover continued working with National Socialists afterwards. Her first statement that she did not like the work seems in accordance with information sent during the war by the *NOC* office in Riga to the headquarters in The Hague. Apparently someone else was already doing the work intended for Miss Van der Linde, who was subsequently entrusted with other tasks. These tasks were not to her liking and she did not perform them well, whereupon she was dismissed. The subsequent offer of working for the *NOC* in The Hague was refused by Miss Van der Linde.¹³⁴

The influence of the father seems very limited, the whole family being 'anti' and Miss Van der Linde being pro-German herself, which she admitted after the war. She claimed that she went to the Nazi East because of the favourable financial situation and her sense for adventure. These two motivations are not in line with the helping and caring image - even for single women - within National Socialism. That she was indeed looking for adventure seems to be underlined by her later function in the south of France. Miss Van der Linde mentioned that she disagreed with the political situation in Riga, after her initial

¹³³ *Proces Verbaal* Maria van der Linde, 23 October 1945 and *Proces Verbaal* 27 December 1944 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 31664.

¹³⁴ Letter Pieter van Straten to Daniël Krantz, 14 February 1944 in *NIOD, Archief* 176 *NOC*, inv.nr. 972.

statement that she did not like the work. Perhaps it only dawned upon her in a later phase that she could use the fact that she left Riga shortly after her arrival to her advantage. No signs from during the war have been found that she had problems with National Socialism, only with the tasks she had to perform.

In December 1945 Maria van Deventer, again a secretary, born in 1920, told her interrogator that - being from a National Socialist background - she thought she was doing the right thing by supporting the National Socialist cause.¹³⁵ She was sent to the East in the framework of the *Werkdienst Holland* in 1942 together with one of the first groups, first working in Koningbergen and till August 1943 in Rowno. After being employed for two months by the *Landbewirtschaftungsgesellschaft Ukraine (LBGU)*, she started as a secretary for the *NOC* representative in Rowno.¹³⁶ From January till July 1944 she worked in the same capacity for the representative in Kauen.¹³⁷ After the evacuation of Lithuania she worked in the *NOC* headquarters in The Hague, where her resignation was requested, which was initially refused by the *Gemeentelijk Arbeidsbureau (GAB)* (municipal employment agency). Apparently the resignation was granted after the *NOC* had stated that according to her mother she had left in the beginning of September for Germany.¹³⁸ In the testimonial of Miss Van Deventer she was pictured as an eager and competent girl, 'who especially in the East had shown to be completely aware of the position and responsibilities her function entailed. Also foreign representatives spoke highly of her.'¹³⁹ In March 1944 the local representative in Kauen was equally enthusiast. He had high demands and was looking for a steno-typist preferably 'a twin sister' of his secretary 'if such a creation exists'.¹⁴⁰

A younger brother of the secretary - the assumption he was indeed her brother is based on the fact that they shared their home address in the Netherlands as well as their family name and moreover were of approximately the same age - also referred during his interrogation after the war to his National Socialist background and mentioned that he had evaded the *Arbeitseinsatz* by going to Ukraine in 1943. He received help in achieving a

¹³⁵ *Proces-Verbaal* Maria van Deventer, 10 December 1945, in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 109475.

¹³⁶ Letter Hendrik van Hees to *NOC* The Hague, 20 November 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 126.

¹³⁷ Testimonial Maria van Deventer by Hendrik Jansen and Zacharias Veringa, *NOC* The Hague, 7 December 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 48.

¹³⁸ Letters Hendrik Jansen and Zacharias Veringa *NOC* The Hague to *GAB*, The Hague, 25 September 1944 and 24 October 1944 both in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 48.

¹³⁹ Testimonial Maria van Deventer by Hendrik Jansen and Zacharias Veringa, *NOC* The Hague, 7 December 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 48.

¹⁴⁰ Letter Wieger de Haan to *NOC* The Hague 24 March 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 123 .

post there from his namesake - another relative - who was already in the East working for the *NOC*.¹⁴¹ It is remarkable that - despite the fact that the brother claimed that his relative was already in the East - the relative was indicated with 'II' (Roman 2) and he himself with 'I'. Both of them went to Germany once Lithuania was evacuated.¹⁴²

A younger - supposed - sister went to Rowno in June 1942 for the *Werkdienst Holland* as well. She returned to the Netherlands in May 1943 and married a *NOC* employee who worked in Rowno, the two of them also sharing the address of Maria in the Netherlands.¹⁴³

Although there is no hard evidence about the family relationships in this case, I think it is plausible to state that the three Van Deventers mentioned above were siblings. It is more difficult to discover who was influencing whom. Because the brother had a namesake, it is not possible in all cases to know which of the two was doing what, also because the 'I' and 'II' were not always used. Moreover it remains a question whether the younger sister followed her husband-to-be to the East or if she met him in Rowno. Yet it seems fair to state that the background of the siblings, being raised in a National Socialist family played a role. The older sister stayed for a long time in the East and was apparently regarded both by the *NOC* headquarters, the Dutch representatives and foreign representatives as worthy of her function within the *NOC*. This seems to implicate that in her function she had connections with the outside world and that her behaviour was considered politically correct. What the exact nature of her public role was, remains unfortunately hidden.

Summary

It is safe to state that there were more Dutch women in the Nazi East than we might conclude on basis of the study of Barnouw. When looking at the marital status and the functions of women it has been discovered that about eighty women went to the Nazi East, most of them were working in an administrative function as typist or secretary. The second largest group found a destination in caring jobs, like housekeeping, cleaning and nursing. Of fifteen women it is not known what their function was, thirteen of those might have been just following her husband. About half of the women were married to a man who was actually in the East, which leaves the other half single, divorced, widowed or operating on

¹⁴¹ Letter Hendrik Jansen and Zacharias Veringa to *GAB* The Hague, 25 September 1944; in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC* inv.nr. 48; insurance file 1935 Dirk van Deventer, undated in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 498; *Proces-Verbaal* Dirk van Deventer, 26 June 1946, in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 109666.

¹⁴² Report (incomplete) about reallocation personnel entry 13 August 1944 Königsberg, author unknown, in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 152.

¹⁴³ Letter Onno van Zanten to *GAB* The Hague, 15 May 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 16; <http://gw5.geneanet.org> accessed on 18 January 2013; letter Piet Smit to *NOC* The Hague, 4 September 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 971.

her own, despite being married. The main age group was formed by the 'twens' of which even a smaller part was married.

The image of the women as creatures just capable of following their husbands can equally be discarded on basis of the figures regarding the marital status of the women. Moreover married women did not necessarily follow their husbands either, as the case of the married housekeeper Mrs Van der Kolk shows.

Even when the women - and the men - were not married, relationships and family ties could play a role in the choice to go to the Nazi East. Two of the three secretaries mentioned the influence of their fathers and family. Still it can be argued that - despite the influence - the women took their own decisions to go to the Nazi East, Miss Huisman because she wanted to flee from the pressure from her father and Miss van Deventer because she thought she was doing the right thing. Miss Huisman represented herself as being innocent and victimised, like her mother, while she apparently took the decision to go to the Nazi East on her own. This representation was in accordance with the binary gender image in National Socialism at the time. The case of Miss Van der Linde - who came from a family of antis - shows that it was possible to go against the wishes of one's father and family. By doing so she was transgressing gender boundaries, which she also did with her statement that she went to the East for financial reasons and because of the adventure. Similar representations and behaviour have been found in the study of Harvey. The statement of Miss Van Deventer seems in line with the binary gender view, her actions corresponded to the way in which she was raised and the example set by her father. From her story it becomes clear, however, that in turn she might have influenced her younger brother and that it is not always possible to see who was following whom. It can also be concluded that the women acted in a way they found suitable, in their circumstances. To catch these nuances - which are undermining stereotypes - women, and also men, have to be studied as individuals - like it has been done amongst others by Harvey - and not as a group, as in the studies by Koonz and Bock. Once the unilateral en gendered view is abandoned that women are following their husbands or other men, other interactions between the various actors becomes visible. The cases of the three secretaries have demonstrated that it can be questioned who is following whom. In the next chapter it will become apparent that men can be following women as well, even though it might seem different in the beginning.

Chapter 5 Who is following whom and other stories

When attempting to answer the question about the motivations of the Dutch women to go to the Nazi East the focal point so far has been on relationships with husbands and other men in the lives of the women, although also other aspects seemed to play a role like financial incentives and a taste for adventure. Keeping this in mind and without abandoning the idea that relationships play an important role in the motivations it seems refreshing to turn the tables and to see whether men were following women. A selection of citations will show that this indeed happened and two case studies will illustrate that even though it might seem at first sight that the women were following the men, close reading shows differently.

Who is following whom

For an inhabitant of the small village of Opperdoes, the issue was clear. He wrote to the NOC that his plans to go to the East could not be realised as his wife and close relatives, but especially his wife, were dead against the idea and he did 'not have the courage to get my way against the wishes of my wife'.¹⁴⁴ Although such a straightforward remark is quite unique, other references were made to women influencing the choices of men. This might be seen as an open door, but apparently it is not, given the scarce attention paid to this matter so far in the relevant Dutch historiography.

When it was decided to fire the secretary at Baltoje Voke at an earlier date than her requested resignation as result of her pregnancy Ir Berger wrote that 'she had not concealed her wish to stop working now she was married'. Also her husband showed a huge indifference towards the peat business since the marriage and he - Berger - would not regret it if the husband would resign earlier than agreed as well, following the example of his wife.¹⁴⁵ For a so-called peat foreman Visch it was imperative that his wife came to the East, even if it was against the recent regulations which did not allow women to do so. If she would not come, the foreman would not return from his leave in the Netherlands, something he had already indicated half a year earlier. The issue was considered so important that the *Gebietskommissar* Wilna-Land would write a letter to and - if possible - call the *Ostministerium* about this issue.¹⁴⁶ Although there were more men in the East by the name of Visch who were involved with peat, it seems likely that approval was obtained,

¹⁴⁴ Letter Karel de Krom to Eduard van der Velden, 26 May 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 612.

¹⁴⁵ Letter Lodewijk Berger to NOC The Hague, 25 May 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 127.

¹⁴⁶ Letter Visch to Lodewijk Berger, 16 October 1943 and letter Lodewijk Berger to Daniël Krantz, 17 March 1944 both in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09*, inv.nr. 94374; letter Anna Berger - van den Brink to Daniël Krantz, 24 March 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 127.

because the names of both husband and wife appear in the reports regarding the evacuation of Lithuania.¹⁴⁷

Apparently for some husbands it was a condition for coming or returning to the East that their wives would be joining them. In the following two narratives this will be taken a step further when we encounter a lover and a brother following women in their life.

The case of the two bookkeepers

Els Wantenaar, born in 1918, was a mother of newborn twins, living in concubinage just after the war. The twins were premature by one month and robbing them of the breastfeeding of the mother would be robbing them of their chances of living.¹⁴⁸ During the war Miss Wantenaar was an unmarried bookkeeper, having a relationship with another - much older, catholic and married - bookkeeper, who would become the father of the twins and who listened to the name of Leendert Dubbeldam. In 1943 Dubbeldam wrote to Wantenaar from Ukraine that there was a job opportunity and she started as a bookkeeper with the *Ukraine Torf* in October of the same year.¹⁴⁹ Although at first sight this seems a typical case of a woman following her lover, I would like to argue differently.

As early as 1933 Dubbeldam had joined the *NSB* when he saw National Socialism flowering in Germany, a country where he had spent many holidays. Because he did not agree with the German invasion in Poland he resigned. Consequently he applied for the *Vrijwilligerslegioen* (volunteers legion) in order to fight bolshevism at the Eastern front, but was turned down because of his age. His wish to get out of the domestic sphere - living in disharmony with his wife - and 'because I met this girl' enforced his desire to go to Ukraine. Further attempts were fruitless 'because I was no *NSB* member and was known as anti-German'. He separated from his wife, decided to become *NSB* member again and even became active in this organisation in order to enhance his chances of going to the East. In July 1943 he finally succeeded to leave for Ukraine through the *NOC*. This is a very brief resume of what Dubbeldam told his interrogator after the war.¹⁵⁰ The phrase 'because I met this girl' seems to be begging for further explanation.

According to her postwar statement Wantenaar had been member of the *NSB* from 1935 till April 1940, resigning because she could no longer endorse many of its principles.

¹⁴⁷ Report Jan Visch concerning evacuation Baltoje Voke 12 July 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 151.

¹⁴⁸ Statement midwife, 1 September 1945 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09*, inv.nr. 105363.

¹⁴⁹ *Proces-Verbaal* Els Wantenaar, 8 August 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09*, inv.nr. 105363; *Proces-Verbaal* Leendert Dubbeldam 4 October 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09*, inv.nr. 85147.

¹⁵⁰ *Proces-Verbaal* Leendert Dubbeldam, 4 October 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09*, inv.nr. 85147.

Only later she found out that her resignation was not accepted. In the beginning of 1941 she had no means of living. This left her not much choice and she left for Germany in order to earn money.¹⁵¹

From Germany and later also from other places Wantenaar wrote long letters to Dubbeldam during the times they were apart. Partly these letters can be described as love letters, but they contain other information as well. It seems therefore a valuable - be it unilateral - source while trying to unravel the relationship between the two bookkeepers.¹⁵² It can be assumed that these letters give a better insight in the actions of both Wantenaar and Dubbeldam than the judicial files, because they were written at a time that they could still believe that Germany would win the war. Wantenaar only had to create an image which was acceptable to Dubbeldam and perhaps the German censors, but she did not have to consider immediate prosecution.

In April 1941 she wrote to Dubbeldam about the *NSB*. 'You will be bitterly disappointed once you hear my opinion (...) what were you thinking (...) you do not need to become a member because of others, you need to become a member for yourself (...) I am sorry to say that you are not quite fitting in yet (...) you have been the one who has been saying ugly things about the organisation (...)'. She could understand that he would be upset with her, but '(...) just think about it (...)'. The next day she wrote that she was glad that he was admitted again although she did not feel he really deserved it. Congratulations were in order and she was convinced that he would do his utmost to make a success of it.¹⁵³

There were other obstacles apparently because consequently she wrote that she did not understand Dubbeldam who at the same time was prepared to do anything to become a member of the *NSB* again and 'on the other hand you are seeking to support our enemies', referring to Van Rappard, another Dutch National Socialist, who was in favour of the Great German ideal and embraced the racial theory.¹⁵⁴ Admittedly there were also in the *NSB* 'arrogant types', of course it was too good to be true that only '*kereis*' (tough guys, in this case also including women and the elderly) were members, but it was impossible that currently 'a Jew would wear the *NSB* badge'. She understood that Dubbeldam would not become member of the *NSB*, because he did not trust Mussert, and

¹⁵¹ *Proces-Verbaal* Els Wantenaar 8 August 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363.

¹⁵² Letters from Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam in the period from April 1941 - May 1944 are retained in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363.

¹⁵³ Letters Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam, 29 and 30 April 1941, in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363.

¹⁵⁴ Letter 10/13 October 1941 from Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363; De Jong *Het koninkrijk*, Part 4, p 435.

people that did not trust Mussert, did not belong in the *NSB*.¹⁵⁵ Apparently Wantenaar had misunderstood - unfortunately it does not become clear how - the reason of the resignation of Dubbeldam and she advised him another time to become a member, hopefully he would get his old number back.¹⁵⁶ According to her he could make himself useful for the *NSB* in his spare time. First of all, though, he should be convinced himself that this was the best way forward.¹⁵⁷ As Dubbeldam mentioned in his statement, he indeed did apply for membership and she was happy to hear so. She could hear him rage against someone who is not mentioned, although she did not share the opinion of Dubbeldam - about what is not clear - which according to her was probably too unilateral. Also his pessimistic view about the Dutch independence was not hers, as long as Mussert was around, the Dutch position would be safeguarded. Wantenaar questioned whether Dubbeldam really thought that the Germans needed the miserable few guilders of the *Winterhulp*, the German collections amounting to 'billiards and billiards'. In addition every German worker had to pay a certain amount of his salary every month, for the foreign workers this was voluntary. She herself donated 1,5% of her net salary with love monthly, this was apart from the regular collections.¹⁵⁸

In July 1941 Wantenaar judged '*de Unielui*' - people of a movement aiming to work 'in a Dutch way' together with the Germans, directed against the *NSB*¹⁵⁹ - to be acting shamelessly 'we can consider ourselves lucky to be occupied, otherwise our lives would not be safe'. Hopefully Mussert would soon be 'tidying things up thoroughly'. She was equally interested in the birthday of Mussert and the newborn son of Rost van Tonningen.¹⁶⁰ Her loyalty to National Socialism went further 'Do camps for Jews also exist in the Netherlands? Good!'¹⁶¹

The letters tell us that the statement of Wantenaar after the war that she was against the principles of the *NSB* was far from the truth. Also they provide insight in the possible motivations of Dubbeldam to renew his membership of the *NSB*. Obviously he was worried

¹⁵⁵ Letter Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam, 14 October 1941 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363*.

¹⁵⁶ An old membership number meant a low number, indicating that the membership was stemming from before the war and the member involved was not amongst the opportunists that only became member after the Dutch capitulation.

¹⁵⁷ Letter Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam, 4 November 1941 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363*.

¹⁵⁸ Letters Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam, 16 November 1941 and 15 December 1941 both in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363*.

¹⁵⁹ De Jong *Het koninkrijk*, Part 4, pp 543-545.

¹⁶⁰ Letters Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam 18 May, 23 July and 16 November 1941 all in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363*.

¹⁶¹ Letter Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam 7/8 August 1941 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363*.

about the future independence of the Netherlands under Mussert, a view not shared by Wantenaar. She urged him to swallow his pride, at the same time challenging him whether he was worthy being a member of the *NSB*. Dubbeldam might have been more radical than Wantenaar, given the fact that he considered joining the movement of Van Rappard, but apparently he followed her advice.

Despite the good salary Wantenaar got homesick. She was surprised to find herself defending the queen against her German co-workers, knowing they were right and hoping herself that the queen would never come back.¹⁶² She returned in February 1943 to Amsterdam and to Dubbeldam, who left a few months later for Ukraine.¹⁶³ In September of the same year it became obvious that Wantenaar's views regarding Jews had not changed. She wrote that she had borrowed a bicycle from her work to run an errand, which bicycle had been stolen when she briefly parked it. She regretted the incident, but it could have been worse, it could have been a private bike, fortunately this was just a 'jodenfiets' (a bicycle belonging to Jews). After telling Dubbeldam that she wanted him to write finally whether she could join him in the East, stating that if it was impossible to do so before the fall, she was planning to go to Germany, she referred to her new *Dienststelle*, which was formed by three capital villas '(...) it is a shame of these beautiful houses. Luckily these were "jodenhuizen", so not of normal people.'¹⁶⁴ In October she joined Dubbeldam and the two of them returned to the Netherlands after the evacuation of Ukraine.¹⁶⁵

After a short interval in the Netherlands Wantenaar was hired by the *NOC* and sent to Kauen to work for the *NOB* on a salary of fl. 180,- instead of fl. 142,- she earned in the Netherlands. Once Wantenaar was stationed in Kauen, Dubbeldam wanted to follow her, which was not easy. Wantenaar was optimistic at first and advised Dubbeldam to request silver adornment when getting his uniform made, it would look nice and it meant a higher rank.¹⁶⁶ Then she complained that the take-over of the *Holländerdienst* from the Germans by the *NOC* was still not achieved. Moreover she had a bone to pick with the *NOC*

¹⁶² Letter Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam, 16 November 1941 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363.

¹⁶³ *Proces-Verbaal* Els Wantenaar, 8 August 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363; *Proces-Verbaal* Leendert Dubbeldam, 4 October 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 85147.

¹⁶⁴ *Proces-Verbaal* Els Wantenaar, 8 August 1946, letter Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam 22 August 1943, both in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363.

¹⁶⁵ *Proces-Verbaal* Els Wantenaar, 8 August 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363.

¹⁶⁶ Letter Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam, 28 March 1944 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363.

regarding her allowance, and felt supported by the head of the *NOB* Zeegers, who was in the same situation. Zeegers, who was already convicted for fraud before the war, who traded in involuntary abandoned houses of Jews when he was still in Rotterdam, who went to the East to build the so-called '*Holland-huis*' in Kauen, since he needed the money badly and who was supposed to be in charge of the *NOB* locally.¹⁶⁷ To him Wantenaar dedicated her report regarding the evacuation of Lithuania, because of his cowardly behaviour, his lack of both tact and knowledge of the German language, and the fact that - according to her - he knew nothing about the construction business.¹⁶⁸ Even so she had spoken to Zeegers about Dubbeldam, but this had not been of much help, especially not as there was already a competitor for Dubbeldam in Kauen, who - besides knowing all the ins and outs - also mastered the German language, performed well in his job and was liked by the people. She would hate to double-cross this Dirk van Deventer, the brother described in the previous chapter.¹⁶⁹

Wantenaar herself had settled in fine after an initial uncomfortable period, although she liked the Russians and the Polish better than the Lithuanians whom she considered 'lazy, filthy and unreliable (...) ugly women (...) the elderly ones like real monsters (...) young men are scarce so I cannot judge them'. Her room was the best of all, a result of being 'the only chicken amongst the roosters'. She only had to say the word and the men would do anything for her. Also she had enough money to buy supplies. There had been a very interesting '*Arbeitstagung*' - which had given her insight in the Lithuanian character - the only downsides had been that the Germans had actually composed the whole programme and that high representation from the *NOC* in the Netherlands had been lacking. The Dutch had made fools of themselves again, helped by fact that the local representative could barely speak properly, let alone give a decent speech, a task which had been performed now out of sheer desperation by a Dutch visitor. Following this exposition Wantenaar gave Dubbeldam strategic advice on how to handle his resignation, how to proceed with his job application, telling him that he should get a contract with the *NOC*, what should be stated in the contract and how to arrange his trip to Kauen. He should consider applying for a job in Wilna, which was said to be much nicer than Kauen and not too far away. She would try to arrange that she could spend the weekends in Wilna,

¹⁶⁷ Letter Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam, 26 April 1944 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363; *Proces-Verbaal* Jacob Zeegers, 25 July 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 31666; letter Daniël Krantz to Wieger de Haan, 28 March 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 123.

¹⁶⁸ Report Els Wantenaar, 20 July 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 1044.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibidem*; letter 12 September 1943 Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363.

already leaving on Friday evening. Wantenaar made it perfectly clear that the idea of returning to Holland was no option as far as she was concerned '*Zeker daar saampjes arremoe lijden en voor een paar centen werken*' ('Being happily together, sharing poverty and working for a pittance, I'm sure'). She continued to advise about the most desired products in Kauen - firestones, vodka, underwear, lingerie straps, old clothes - how these were best smuggled into the country and reprimanded Dubbeldam for writing too often in his letters about the black market 'you are so stupid with those things, you know that the letters might be opened, you could be in big trouble and your chance to be sent out here might be jeopardised'. She had plans for a '*Versorgungsstelle*' something 'you could not bother the gentlemen in The Hague with' and for other improvements not specifically mentioned. Finally she wanted Dubbeldam to request the *NOC* to provide him with a revolver, because it was dangerous in the region and she wanted to use his small one.¹⁷⁰

The end of the story was that Dubbeldam indeed went to Waka-T to take up a job as a bookkeeper on 10 June 1944, only to be evacuated on the 3rd of July. He noticed that not Mr but Mrs Berger was in fact the head of the office and voiced the opinion in his report of the evacuation that there was something to be said for that, if only she had been equipped with the relevant capacities, which obviously was not the case. The report of Dubbeldam regarding the evacuation of Lithuania is much more detailed than the one by Wantenaar, narrating about air raids, bombed stations, casualties and sabotage. It also mentions that he had worked the night before being evacuated, taking orders from amongst others Mrs Berger. Wantenaar was also in Wilna that weekend. 'We were shocked to see that Dubbeldam had sent for his fiancée', noted Berger in his report, for him this was an indication that no one in Kauen had any idea of what was going on in Wilna.¹⁷¹ Berger did not have a high opinion of Kluizenaar who only had taken over a third of the workload of his wife, while being paid a salary that was twice as high, 'not to mention his ridiculous attire (cap adorned with gold and two golden bars)'.¹⁷² Apparently Kluizenaar had surpassed the expectations of Wantenaar who - as we have seen - would have settled for silver. After being evacuated from Lithuania, Wantenaar worked some time for the same salary for the *NOC* in The Hague, before getting fired and joining the redundancy pay scheme.

¹⁷⁰ Letters Els Wantenaar to Leendert Dubbeldam, 26 April and 7 May 1944 both in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 105363.

¹⁷¹ Report Leendert Dubbeldam concerning evacuation Wilna, 25 July 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 1044; report Lodewijk Berger regarding evacuation Wilna, 3 August 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 151.

¹⁷² Letter Lodewijk Berger to Daniël Krantz, 20 July 1944 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 152.

When reflecting on the above, also in this - strongly condensed - part of the story told by the letters various elements can be discerned. Wantenaar started out following her 'fiancee', but before long it was the other way round and he was the one following her. Her letters give the impression that she was having a good time in the East, enjoying both her status as 'the only chicken' in the house and the money she earned by working and on the black market. She did not like the local population, seemed not bothered by the question why there were so few young men around, only noting that this prevented her from judging them. It is remarkable that she liked the Polish and Russian population better, no reason for this preference was given. It was evident that she felt that Jewish people were of a different kind, a kind that did not matter. She was telling Dubbeldam what to wear and what to do, making it very clear that she did not want to return to the Netherlands and that he had to make sure - one way or the other - that he found a way to join her in Lithuania. In addition she cautioned him about mentioning the black market.

In her report for the director of the *NOC* she did not hesitate to criticise her male superior. It seems safe to say that she - like Mrs Berger - did not belong to the 'following' kind. It is remarkable though that once her whole scheme of Dubbeldam getting a job at Waka-T succeeded and she visited him according to the plans she had devised, the interpretation of Berger was 'that Dubbeldam had sent for his fiancee'.

A young idealist with a mind of her own

Elisabeth Tuinstra and her brother Robert - who was five years her senior - both worked in Ukraine in 1943.¹⁷³ As she was only nineteen at the time it seems plausible to presume that he would have been the leading party and that she was following him. Studying the files will prove differently though.

From the postwar statements of Elisabeth it can be concluded that she was sixteen when the war started. She came from a *NSB* background and was member of the *Nationale Jeugdstorm*, a National Socialist youth organisation. She went to Germany on a voluntary basis to be educated as a Kindergarten teacher - '*fröbelonderwijzeres*' - and became member of the *NSB*. She returned to the Netherlands in the summer of 1942 and stayed there till August 1943, when she went with her future husband to Ukraine, where she worked as a secretary at the same company that employed him. He was at least partly responsible for closing private Dutch milk factories mainly in Frisia in order to send the equipment to Ukraine. In the fall of 1943 they returned to the Netherlands and got married,

¹⁷³ Transportlist *NOC* The Hauge to Melitopol, Ukraine, 17 August 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 318; letter Tj. van der Zee to *NOC* Rowno 26 November 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 972.

only to be divorced again in 1944. Elisabeth claimed that she tried to terminate her membership of the *NSB*, but that this would only be possible after the war.¹⁷⁴ After her divorce Elisabeth worked for the Burgomaster of Hoogeveen, who gave her the responsibility to grant exemptions for compulsory labour in Germany, which prerogative she used 200 times. In a postwar letter she indicated that she was convinced that her parents had meant well, raising her in a National Socialist fashion, but that she requested to take her background into account when judging her case.¹⁷⁵

The image of a young woman - not following her brother, but her future husband and the lessons she learnt at home - can easily be distilled from these statements. Fortunately there are also testimonials by witnesses who were interrogated about the behaviour of Elisabeth. From these it can be inferred that Elisabeth was seen on a regular basis with German soldiers who took her for a ride through the neighbourhood. Moreover she reported the man next door - whom she disliked - to these befriended German soldiers for giving signals to English airplanes. The soldiers sacrificed a night's sleep, but did not detect anything.¹⁷⁶ At school - where Elisabeth was studying before finishing her education in Germany - she was forbidden to wear a badge memorising the dead of Peter Ton, who was murdered in 1940 and who could be described as a *NSB* martyr. Elisabeth refused to remove the badge from her clothing, left the building while threatening her teacher that she would hear from her again. After the war her teacher reported that she got a visit from a police officer who wanted her to settle the issue, which she refused. She stayed with her decision, also when receiving written orders from the *NSB* to admit Elisabeth again. When visited by two gentlemen - one of whom spoke German - she rephrased the letter of recommendation they wanted her to sign and never heard anything about the issue again.¹⁷⁷

When interrogated again subsequently to these witness statements, Elisabeth admitted disliking and reporting her neighbour. She also admitted the contacts with the German soldiers, which - according to her - had been purely platonic. She denied threatening her teacher though, she had not contacted the *NSB* about the incident either, but had spoken

¹⁷⁴ *Proces-Verbaal* Elisabeth Tuinstra, 22 May 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 55217; *Proces-Verbaal* Roelof Vlug, 18 April 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 47197.

¹⁷⁵ Letter Elisabeth Tuinstra to *Tribunaal* Utrecht, 20 September 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 55217.

¹⁷⁶ *Proces-Verbaal* Elisabeth Tuinstra, 22 May 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 55217.

¹⁷⁷ *Proces-Verbaal* Elisabeth Tuinstra, 21 March 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 55217.

to her father and another gentleman.¹⁷⁸ The new information obtained by scrutinising the statements of witnesses leads to the supposition that Elisabeth - despite her age - had much more to answer for than was apparent on basis of her initial statement, like an attempt to betray her neighbour. Why she did not admit reporting her teacher to the *NSB* is not clear. Still there is no shred of evidence which places her in a leading role in her contacts with men. This changes when we turn to two letters Elisabeth wrote during the war to her brother Robert.

As we have seen Elisabeth went to Germany to continue her education. Subsequently she worked for a German family from September 1941 till June 1942.¹⁷⁹ In this period she wrote two enthusiastic letters to her brother, mentioning that tasks formerly performed by ten persons, were now out of necessity done singlehandedly. This was possible because the *Führer* inspired the people, 'when you are at work you can feel him standing by you'. She had spoken to the future boss of Robert, her brother was obviously planning to go to Germany as well. The future boss was 'a very sweet man, I really liked him'. Elisabeth had reached an agreement with him on how to proceed, she gave instructions to Robert about organising temporary leave of his current job, creating an opportunity to return in case the new position was not to his liking. She also provided details about the tasks involved - Robert had to learn about the technical side of brakes first if he wanted to sell them - and stated that she would inform the future boss that the salary was too low. She would arrange a room and suitable contacts for Robert, not being sure that she would be around at the time of his arrival.¹⁸⁰ Whether Robert went to Berlin and met his sister is not sure, but as we have seen both are mentioned in the *NOC* files, as being employed in Ukraine.

Elisabeth Tuinstra, who was only sixteen when the Germans invaded the Netherlands, seems to have been an idealist. She and her five-year-old brother came from a National Socialist background and she requested after the war to keep this in mind when judging her. She adapted her postwar statements once she was confronted with testimonials from witnesses, acknowledged socialising with German soldiers and an attempt to betrayal. She had a mind of her own and did not hesitate to show it, when wearing the commemorative badge for Peter Ton. It is not clear why she did not admit reporting her teacher, it might be that she actually did not do it herself, but that her father was involved. Even when

¹⁷⁸ *Proces-Verbaal* Elisabeth Tuinstra, 22 May 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 55217.

¹⁷⁹ *Zeugnis* Elisabeth Tuinstra by Mrs Gärtner, undated in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 55217.

¹⁸⁰ Letters Elisabeth Tuinstra to her brother, 12 March and 6 May 1942.

Elisabeth adapted her statements an important aspect of her story remained untold and it is not known whether she concealed the influence she had on her brother on purpose. It is only in her letters during the war that she mentioned her preparatory actions in order to obtain a job for Robert in Germany, negotiating about his salary and developing a plan of action. These activities seem not in line of what was expected from a Dutch National Socialist woman. Elisabeth still was very young when she was entrusted with the task to grant exemptions for compulsory labour and she made use of it. Whether this statement is true, is hard to judge, it might be that she wanted to present herself after the war as someone who had protected fellow citizens.

Closing the circle

'Time and space are running out' as Wantenaar wrote in one of her letters to Dubbeldam. Still there are some loose ends, which require two more - short - case studies. The first is about a husband following a wife and the other shows that - at least one woman - was aware of some of the local circumstances in the Nazi East.

Early 1944 the newly wed Annie Moerheuvel joined her husband when he returned to Lithuania. After the evacuation of the region they were separated, she ended up working in an ammunition factory for the SS with her sister, while he was working in a garden, both in Germany. When it became clear to Berend Moerheuvel where his wife was and that she would get no permission to join him, he quit his job and started working for the SS as well, to be near her.¹⁸¹ After the war both claimed that she only had been taking care of his housekeeping in the East. This is contradicted by the information of a Dutch employment office in which can be read that she actually worked for the NOC.¹⁸² However, this might have been one of the jobs especially created for the women. The couple did mention that they had worked in the factory in Germany, but stated that this was compulsory.¹⁸³ Although this might have been valid in her case, it is clear from the correspondence during the war that her husband was not forced to join her at all. Other war time correspondence reveals that Mrs Moerheuvel had co-signed letters from her husband to his cousin.¹⁸⁴ In

¹⁸¹ Letter Berend Moerheuvel to Hein Doeks, 25 October 1944, letter *Overzahlmeister Lw Dienststelle 114 to Rittergut Eichwege* 19 November 1944, in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 1007; *Proces-verbaal Annie Moerheuvel - Moens*, 9 June 1945 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09*, inv.nr. 90273.

¹⁸² *Proces-Verbaal Annie Moerheuvel - Moens*, 10 December 1945 and note *GAB Dordrecht* without date both in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09*, inv.nr. 90273; *Proces verbaal Berend Moerheuvel*, 29 January 1946 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09*, inv.nr. 68543.

¹⁸³ *Proces-Verbaal Annie Moerheuvel - Moens*, 8 October 1945 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging 2.09.09*, inv.nr. 90273.

¹⁸⁴ The cousin might also be a nephew, the Dutch term for both is similar '*neef*'.

these letters Mr Moerheuvel compared his own uneventful life to the one of the cousin, chasing partisans in Croatia and fighting with the SS against the Russians.¹⁸⁵

The case of Mrs Moerheuvel therefore shows that not only male relations, but also husbands did follow women. The letters to the cousin prove that Mrs Moerheuvel must have known and probably approved of the fighting against the partisans, although this is different from experiencing similar actions at first hand.

Such an experience was documented by Jeltje Timmerman, who was member of the NSB and active in the NSVO. She lived in concubinage in Lunteren with a man of a bad reputation, who worked for the NSB. They only married when dismissal was announced for unmarried men.¹⁸⁶ Once Tjibbe Timmerman went to the East, his work and attitude was appreciated.¹⁸⁷ His wife followed him, despite the fact that it seemed that the NOC wanted to destroy her passport and visa and she only made it to the East by turning to the German authorities and arranging her own transport.¹⁸⁸ Her own bad reputation - which made it difficult to get a job - was disputed by Van der Velden who referred to it as 'the result of gossip'. He wanted to know whether headquarters in The Hague did realise what it meant 'especially for a woman when her name was besmirched.'¹⁸⁹ The woman herself wrote about her journey that she had walked a long way '(...) through the jungle and the snow (...)', that she had been terribly spoiled being the only woman in the transport and that the journey was longer than expected. She felt at home in Wilna and compared it to the Netherlands ('...') everything is huge, life is much more free. It is such a relief to be away from the suffocating atmosphere in Lunteren'.¹⁹⁰ In another letter she referred to the hatred between the Polish and the Lithuanians, which resulted in the brutal killing of thirty Polish women and children. Her husband had to be present when 'het zaakje' (the remains) had to be exhumed and he was sick the whole evening. 'This is real Bolshevism',

¹⁸⁵ *Proces-verbaal* Annie Moerheuvel - Moens, 9 June and 10 December 1945 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 90273; *Proces-verbaal* Berend Moerheuvel 12 March 1946, letter cousin to Berend Moerheuvel, 22 January 1944, letter Berend Moerheuvel to cousin, 3 March 1944 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 68543.

¹⁸⁶ Report concerning Tjibbe Timmerman, author unknown, 22 January 1942 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 47884; *Proces-Verbaal* Jeltje Timmerman - Sloot, 7 April 1949 in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 28674.

¹⁸⁷ Letter Anna Berger - van den Brink to Daniël Krantz, 27 November 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 127.

¹⁸⁸ Letter Lodewijk Berger to Daniël Krantz, 9 December 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 127; letter Eduard van der Velden to Daniël Krantz 9 December 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 607.

¹⁸⁹ Letter Lodewijk Berger to Daniël Krantz, 27 November 1943 in *NIOD, Archief 176 NOC*, inv.nr. 127;

¹⁹⁰ Letter Jeltje Timmerman - Sloot, 23 December 1943 to unknown addressee in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 28674.

but she sometimes wondered if the Dutch were any better if they were given the chance.¹⁹¹

Summary

First impressions are not always right as has been demonstrated in several case studies. The farmer from Opperdoes was quite specific in stating that he did not have the courage to go against the wishes of his wife, but most stories are not as straightforward. Husbands refused to leave for the East or to stay there if their wives were not permitted to join them. It seems possible that special jobs for these wives were created once it was obligatory for everyone in the East to work. Els Wantenaar and Elisabeth Tuinstra seemed to have been following their respective fiancée and future husband, but when looking closely it can be distinguished that they were followed by the fiancée and an older brother. Not only were these women followed, they clearly indicated how this following should be handled, they were - at least - co-directors of the play and had their own motives to go to the East. There is no evidence found that Annie Moerheuvel did orchestrate the job change of her husband, but it can be assumed that he did so in order to be near her, as was stated in the correspondence. Mrs. Moerheuvel knew about the fighting of the partisans in Kroatia, but there is no sign that she did witness fights or atrocities in her immediate surroundings. This was different for Jeltje Timmerman who wrote about the killing of Polish women and children and her husband being involved in the aftermath, but she did not indicate that this persuaded her to leave the Nazi East. She was enjoying her freedom far from the village of Lunteren.

The circle has been closed by telling the narratives of women who were followed by men and by giving evidence that at least one of the women had experienced killings at close range. Now the findings of this paper need wrapping up in order to find out what has been discovered about the motivations of the Dutch women to go to the Nazi East.

¹⁹¹ Letter Jeltje Timmerman - Slood, 28 June 1944 to unknown addressee in *NL-HaNA, Justitie / CA Bijzondere Rechtspleging* 2.09.09, inv.nr. 28674.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

Images of Dutch women in the Nazi East have been reconstructed in this paper, using contemporary reports, letters, and postwar judicial files as sources. Together with 'solid' information based on some figures these images have resulted in new insights regarding Dutch women in the Nazi East.

Admittedly - and as expected - the reconstructed images of Dutch women - and men - in the Nazi East are fragmented and vague. Apart from the source material which is obviously incomplete, a clear view is hindered as well by several layers - including the layer added by the women, their interrogators and myself - between the present and the past. These layers and the *hindsight* of knowing how the war ended, separates the reader of this paper from the actors in the Second World War.

The new insights are the result of two premises. The first is a basic conviction that it is valuable, interesting and even necessary to look into the history of women as well as men, because the two categories are closely intertwined and influencing each other. The second is a - just as basic - conviction that there are power mechanisms at work in society which are not always clear at first sight, but which can be detected and deconstructed by using the concept of gender and discourse analysis. In the wake of several studies regarding German women and National Socialism in which stereotypes have been unmasked, this approach has proven - also for the Dutch situation - the usefulness of ego-documents, judicial records and other archival material, besides secondary sources. The deconstruction was successful, because the women have been studied as individuals with individual circumstances and individual choices and not as a homogenous group. The agency of the women - the space for the actors within the structures as defined by De Certeau - has been interpreted in this way.

The general image of Dutch women in the Nazi East was mainly shaped by the study of Barnouw, the only study dealing exclusively with the *Nederlandsche Oost Compagnie (NOC)*. According to this study only a few women were involved and these were just 'following their husbands'. This unilateral image seems to be in line with the early image in the *NSB* and *NSVO*, as well as with early historiography regarding German women and National Socialism in which women were first ignored and later depicted either as innocent victims or as monsters, deviations which were not really human. Although some studies regarding Dutch women and National Socialism are more nuanced it still is not customary to include women in the historiography of Dutch National Socialism like it is done in the German counterpart. The findings in this paper imply that an adjustment of the image

sketched by Barnouw is in necessary, a conclusion that has been reached by partly using the same files, but reading them in a different way, applying gender analysis.

By reading the files in a different way it became apparent that not an occasional woman was going eastwards, but that at least seventy-nine women did. Admittedly this may not seem significant when comparing this number to the total of at least 5000, but as I argued these women were mainly to be found in jobs belonging to the so-called middle management. The positions held by the women were mostly in domains that could be qualified as 'administration' and 'care' and seemed to have a supporting character. Generally speaking therefore these occupations could be seen as fitting the image of the ideal - caring and helping - National Socialist woman on the brink of the war. The distinction made between married and single women, the first being devoted to their families, while the second could regard the *Volk* as her family, may have been valid in the first period when women went eastwards. At the time it was apparently enough for a woman to help her husband, later - at least theoretically - this was no longer admissible, everyone who went to the East had to work. It is possible that the *NOC* was solving the problems of husbands who wanted their wives around by creating jobs that did not really exist. The later shift in the viewpoints of *NSB* and *NSVO* was therefore translated in the practice of the Dutch women in the Nazi East as well.

However, helping a husband - in whatever way - is only possible if you are married and half of the women was not. Several case studies have shown that the women were also influenced by other male relatives and relations like fathers, brothers and lovers. That this does not necessarily mean that the choices of the women were in line with the wishes of their families, was demonstrated by Maria van der Linde who came from an 'anti' background. That men could be following women as well becomes clear when closely reading the story of Els Wantenaar, who - although she was following her lover first - was followed by him in the end. She gave him advice regarding his membership of the *NSB* and about every possible personal and public issues, including the black market. Much of this advice he seemed to follow.

Also Maria van Deventer, Anna Berger - van den Brink, Jopie de Boer, Martha Staalmeester Lagerweij, Elisabeth Tuinstra and Jeltje Timmerman can hardly be described as docile women and some of them did capture responsible positions for themselves, influencing the local circumstances.

Maria van Deventer was respected by Dutch and foreign representatives alike, Anna Berger was perceived as being the real boss at Waka-T and Martha Lagerweij indicated which farmers were fit to stay in the East, choosing also the ones who - supposedly - had

chased indigenous men. By doing so she was influencing the lives of the local population, even if the story about the killing was not true, something we do not know. The accusation by the housekeeper in Rowno that she acted as a fury seems not farfetched. The same farmers were involved in the chasing as the ones Mrs Van der Kolk had been complaining about to the *NOC*, because they behaved like swine.

When looking at the women and their motives it cannot be ruled out that for some of them their main motive was to follow their husband, or at least to be with him. Apart from this motivation there is a whole range of others, women were looking for better financial circumstances like Els Wantenaar and for adventure like Maria van der Linde, they were fleeing from circumstances they did not like as Sofie Huisman did and looking for National Socialist ideals like Elisabeth Tuinstra and Martha Lagerweij. Some were ambitious and were grasping the opportunities offered in the colonising project like Anna Berger. Also the combination of several motives was possible and even likely. It seems that the women acted as they saw fit under the circumstances, which were of course very diverse.

The gender and job boundaries in the East were not always strict. Men were performing tasks normally attributed to women like cooking and listening to complaints like 'a good mother'. One housemaster was so involved with the work in the kitchen that the housekeeper left, she wanted an independent job. The director and representative of the *NOC* wrote about remaking underwear. Women were judging, instructing, correcting and advising men, sometimes feeling a 100% more courageous than men and stating so openly. It also became clear that the name of a job did not always indicate how the job was performed, as was demonstrated by the stories of Maria van Deventer, Martha Lagerweij and Anna Berger. Men were known to report to women as Dubbeldam to Anna Berger.

Still the stereotypes did exist and sometimes these were used by the women to their advantage, sometimes they were used against them. Mrs Lagerweij, who did not seem to flinch at either the partisan attack or the rude behaviour towards Ukrainian women, thought it was best that a man took her place, once the air raids were approaching Lemberg. She did indeed leave. The representative in Kauen was looking for a preferably good-looking secretary, presumably one that did not consider it too important to operate independently like Mrs Lagerweij. She was transferred, not he, although he was reproached for this remark by headquarters in the Hague. It seemed that also the Dutch women had to balance on a thin line like the German women described by Elizabeth Harvey.

A last word has to be said about the Nazi East. It seems clear that at least some of the women were aware of the maltreatment of indigenous people, although not necessarily of atrocities against Jews as described by Wendy Lower. Wietske van der Kolk - Kooistra left Ukraine because she was fired, despite good references. She did not like the way Ukrainian women were treated and complained already during the war about men behaving like 'swine'. The same men were favoured by Martha Lagerweij. Jeltje Timmerman mentioned the killing of Polish women and children, but did not return to the Netherlands because of this incident. Els Wantenaar did not think that Jews were 'normal' people, she was glad that there were camps for them in the Netherlands.

Being a woman did not mean that one was either powerless and innocent or a fury. Like for men it was equally possible for women to be something in between these opposites. The Nazi East provided them with opportunities to bend the gender boundaries, but personal relationships definitely played a role in setting the limits. This is shown by the case of Wietske van der Kolk, who was considered capable in a sphere of caring and helping, but did not fit the model in which local women were treated badly by the leaders of the training centre and Martha Lagerweij. Martha Lagerweij seemed to have been thriving in these conditions where she could act with authority in the relation with the local population and the farmers, supported by the local representative. She probably helped shaping the model in which Wietske van der Kolk did not fit. Even so she was not valued by the local representative in Kauen presumably because she was lacking the so-called female qualities. These interactions between actors, female and male, are important and deserve more research, which could perhaps lead to recognising patterns of behaviour, despite all the nuances. Before doing so researchers have to be aware of the invisible groups. The contribution of this paper lies in telling the stories of some of the women who have been living in the shade, showing that it is worthwhile to put them into the light.

Appendix

The archival material used for this paper needs some more explanation than can be given in the Introduction. It has already been mentioned that the general files regarding the *NOC* kept at the Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies *NIOD* in Amsterdam are fragmented and partly not ordered. Some files show signs of burning and water damage - perhaps the result of an attempt to destroy them - which makes them hard to read. From some handwritten and other notes it is not clear who the author is. These hurdles fall in the normal category of doing archival research. Orderly lists of personnel administration do exist, unfortunately in different versions with the same date or without date, making it complicated to figure out which list is the right one. As soon as a woman appeared on such a list however, I have included her in my list of women, in some cases only to find out later that they did not arrive in the East as has been indicated in chapter 4. Many of the women however, are not to be found on these lists and their names and birth details were retrieved from correspondence, reports, insurance overviews and notes, where they were sometimes mentioned as subjects and sometimes as asides. I have browsed 181 of these files. It should be noted that there is a privacy rule regarding all the files for which filling out and signing of a form is sufficient. For some of the files however, it is needed to seek permission in writing from the director of the *NIOD* which was fortunately granted for this paper.

Name and details of birth - date and preferably place - are necessary in order to request the *Nationaal Archief* to check whether there is a postwar judicial file present in the archives. Sometimes an approximate year of birth is sufficient. Before getting any information though a research proposal had to be submitted to the archivist for approval, which was granted subsequently. Even when permission is granted however, the date of birth should be over a hundred years ago, or proof should be submitted that the person in question is dead, either by providing a statement of the *Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie (CBG)* - which costs additional time and Euro 3,95 per search, regardless of the result - or by providing a clear picture of a gravestone or similar evidence. Given the scope of this paper I have chosen to request first the files of women and men of whom the date of birth was over hundred years ago, or for whom I could find proof of their demise. This means that the selection of the files was rather randomised, defined in the first place by the data found in the files consulted in the *NOC* archives and secondly by the conditions for accessing the postwar judicial files. These conditions were complicated by the refurbishing of the *National Archief* which comprised the period available for my research. As a result

the postwar judicial files could only be accessed on appointment and on Mondays, while a restricted capacity was available for researchers. As it was not possible to make a reservations for a whole range of Mondays, this obviously has resulted in Mondays falling out, because of being fully booked. These circumstances have limited the time for accessing the files in the *National Archief* and there was no time to turn to the *CBG*.

These restrictions can be seen as limiting only, but to me they are an indication that there must be much more material out there waiting to be studied. Even from the seventy-four postwar judicial files that were accessed - thirty-six of women and thirty-eight of men - only a fraction have been incorporated in this paper. It should be noted that some of the files barely have any contents, while others offer sufficient material for nice case studies illustrating various research questions. Given my research questions about the motivations of the Dutch women to go to the Nazi East, the number of women going played a role and I wanted to find as many women as time allowed. Apart from the files of the *NOC* that remained untouched, there is even more material that can be researched for names and backgrounds of women like the *NSB* and *NSVO* files kept centrally at the *NIOD* or in regional archives.¹⁹² I am therefore confident that more stories worth telling are waiting for research.

¹⁹² The exact locations are to be found via: www.archieven.nl (accessed on 25 June 2013).

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