

A REICHSKOMMISSARIAT
German Civil Government in the Netherlands
1940-1945

by

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PREFACE

The Second World War, unleashed in 1939, caused great political upheavals and changes in the world, particularly in Europe. Many of the European nations were attacked and overrun by the powerful German armies. Some countries escaped a German invasion and consequent occupation by declaring and maintaining neutrality. These were Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal and Ireland. Other nations such as Italy, Finland, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria chose to take sides with Germany, the last three responding under German pressure. With the exception of Finland, even these German allies experienced some form of German occupation. The following countries were all invaded and occupied by German troops: Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Yugoslavia, Greece, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Soviet Union. Only the Soviet Union escaped complete military defeat and occupation. England, with the exception of some of her Channel islands, was able to withstand a German invasion.

The Germans devised various arrangements to govern the occupied territories and to rule their populations. The Dutch historian, A. E. Cohen, has distinguished six different types of government applied to the areas just mentioned. The first of these was incorporation into Germany proper. This was applied to large areas of western and northern Poland, to the eastern Belgian provinces of Eupen and Malmede, the Saar, Austria, Danzig, and the Lithuanian district of Memel, and large areas of Czechoslovakia which, accord-

ing to German judgment were inhabited by Sudeten Germans. These areas were administered as part of Germany. The second type of government was de facto annexation. The areas to which this was applied were placed under a civil administrator who received his authority from the German Minister of Interior. Luxembourg, the eastern French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, the former Duchies of Lower Styria and Carniola, which belonged to Yugoslavia before the war, were annexed in this fashion. The third form of government was annexation as Nebenland (adjoining land). This implied the status of a protectorate of Germany. This position was assigned to the Polish General-Government. The fourth form of government was placement under a Vollmachtiger (Representative) of the German government. This was applied to Denmark, and at the end of the war also to Hungary and northern Italy.

The fifth type of occupation government was military administration. This was instituted in Greece, Serbia, Belgium, and Northern France. The sixth and final form of occupation government was the Reichskommissariat, or German civil administration. This implied that a high ranking Nazi official was appointed by Adolf Hitler as Reichskommissar (High Commissioner) to administer the specified territory. The High Commissioner was authorized to select a group of men to function as his aides, and this group of officials constituted the office of the High Commissioner designated as the Reichskommissariat. This form of government was in-

stalled in the small Baltic countries, the Ukraine, Norway, and the Netherlands.¹

This thesis deals with the Reichskommissariat instituted by the Germans in the Netherlands in May of 1940. The objective of this study is to sketch in large outlines the development and organization of this Reichskommissariat, To define its objectives and reasons for its existence, to arrive at some conclusions concerning its authority and influence both on the Dutch governmental administration and on the highest Nazi authorities in Germany, and to make some judgments about the success or failure of the Reichskommissariat. Above all, however, this study aims at giving a description and an analysis of the relationships of the highest officials in the Reichskommissariat. Consequently, this study deals with the individual authority, ambitions, and activities of these German officials, as related to the Reichskommissariat. This is no chronological study or analysis of the nature of the German occupation in the broadest sense of the word. Space and time do not even permit the author to dwell on the details and the sub-departments of the Reichskommissariat. Instead, after a general description of the organization of the Reichskommissariat, only the most important trends and events will be selected to adequately provide answers to the questions under consideration.

1. A. E. Cohen, "Opzet en structuur van het Duitse Reichskommissariat in Nederland," Notities voor het geschiedwerk (Amsterdam: Rijksinstituut voor oorlogsdocumentatie, mimeographed, n.d.), No. 16, pp. 1-2.

Most studies dealing with the German occupation of the Netherlands emphasize the suffering inflicted on the Dutch by the Germans and the heroic resistance offered by most loyal Dutchmen. Little attention is paid to the German leaders, unless their activities were of immediate consequence to the circumstances just mentioned. The average Dutchman hardly knew his rulers, except perhaps their names. Disagreements among the German rulers were suppressed by stringent censorship. When the war ended, the Dutch would rather remember their unjust suffering and their heroic struggle than their unwanted German masters. Most historical studies in this topic have a tendency to cater to this sentiment.²

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is introductory. It provides the setting by narrating the events leading up to the installation of the Reichskommissariat. The second chapter is an attempt to relate the development of the Reichskommissariat, speculating on the reasons for its institution and its objectives. In addition, this chapter sketches the organization of the Reichskommissariat. Chapter three deals with the personalities and the involvements of the most prominent officials associated with the Reichskommissariat. The fourth chapter describes the significant relationships between the Reichskommissariat and the leading Dutch civil servants and also with the leaders of the Dutch National Socialist Party (NSB). The

2. Dr. Louis de Jong, prominent Dutch historian in occupational history, expresses a similar sentiment in the foreword of *The Netherlands under German Occupation 1940-1945*, by Werner Warmbrunn. (See Bibliography)

fifth chapter is concerned with the relationships between the Reichskommissariat and the highest Nazi leaders in Berlin. The final chapter presents some of the conclusions reached through this study.

The principal and unpublished sources used for this study are located at the State Institute of War Documentation³ in Amsterdam, Holland. This Institute was created in 1945, and has since accumulated a large collection of documents pertaining to the Second World War in general, and the involvements of the Netherlands in this event in particular.

Few studies on the German occupation in the Netherlands are written in or translated into English. One of the most reliable works on this topic in English is the recently (1963) published book The Dutch under German Occupation by the American scholar, Werner Warmbrunn. Many of the English translations of titles and terms in this study are borrowed from the source just mentioned. One of these titles is High Commissioner (Reichskommissar), which other English works usually have translated as Reich Commissioner. Foreign terms have been underlined in this study. However, frequently used terms such as Reichskommissariat, Fuehrer-referring to Adolf Hitler, and the Reich⁴ are considered

3. The Dutch name of this Institute is Het Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie. It operates under the auspices of the Dutch governmental Department of Education, Arts, and Sciences. In this study the Institute is hereafter referred to as R.v.O.

4. The term Reich literally translated as Empire, is used throughout this thesis in reference to the so-called Third Reich or Nazi controlled Germany.

so familiar in this thesis that they will hereafter no longer be underlined. The reader will find that, contrary to scholarly practice, often the initials rather than the first name of persons are used in this study. This is usually the case with citizens of the Netherlands, where the practice of using initials instead of full names prevails. Translations of direct quotations are by the author, unless the source is in English, which is indicated by the footnote reference.

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Louis de Jong, Director of the State Institute of War Documentation, who assisted in the selection of this subject, suggested useful sources, and made the services of the State Institute of War Documentation available to me. My appreciation also goes to several of the members of Dr. de Jong's staff who kindly assisted in finding useful source material. Finally, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor Charles Sidman, Assistant Professor in History at the University of Kansas, whose encouragement and suggestions have been an invaluable asset in the completion of this study.

CHAPTER I

IN THE GRASP OF THE THIRD REICH

In the early morning of May 10, 1940, the German war machine rolled unannounced across the Dutch borders. For the Dutch people this signaled the end of a century of peace and the beginning of a period of foreign occupation, which had its last precedent in the days of Napoleon.¹

The invasion was not a complete surprise. Since the German assault on Poland in September, 1939, which was followed by the French and English declaration of war on Germany, huge armies had been facing each other on the Franco-German border.² The Netherlands, in keeping with her century old tradition, reasserted her "axiomatic neutrality" in a formal declaration on September 1.³ The other small democracies of Western Europe, including Belgium, took a similar position, and both Hitler and the Allies gave

1. Napoleon made Holland a province of the French Empire, and the Dutch have always considered this the period of French occupation. The only war on Dutch soil since that time was in 1830 and 1831. This was actually a civil war between the Belgians and the Dutch. The war divided the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, composed by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, into the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Kingdom of Belgium. During the First World War, Holland managed to remain neutral.

2. C. Smit, "De buitenlandse politiek voor Mei 1940," Onderdrukking en verzet (Arnhem: Van Loghum Slaterus, 1947-1956), Vol. I, p. 63. Onderdrukking en Verzet (Suppression and Resistance) is hereafter referred to as O.e.V.

3. Humphrey Higgens, "The Netherlands: Political Antecedents to the German Offensive," Ininitial Triumph of the Axis, A Survey of International Affairs (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 122. A Survey of International Affairs is hereafter referred to as S.I.A.

assurances not to involve these countries in the conflict.⁴ It is doubtful that Hitler intended to keep his promise, for on November 20th he signed a secret order which included references to invasion and occupation of Belgium and Holland.⁵ This the Dutch did not know, nevertheless, an acute fear of war remained throughout the winter and the early spring. This fear became evident when the Dutch High Command withdrew military leaves on November 9 and January 12. Intelligence agents expected the invasion as early as November 12,⁶ but apparently the Germans changed their minds. When Norway and Denmark were surprised with an invasion in early April, it was obvious that the same fate might well befall Holland and Belgium. On April 19, the Dutch government officially declared military mobilization. War seemed imminent, but as the day of invasion predicted by intelligence agents was continually postponed, people became skeptical of the intelligence. Consequently, the invasion on May 10 was still a surprise.⁷

The official German excuse for the invasion was outlined in the German White Book of 1940. It stated that the Allies were planning an offensive against the Ruhr via Dutch and Belgian soil, that

4. E. N. van Kleffens, Juggernaut over Holland (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), p. 75.

5. International Military Tribunal, Document 440-PS, (Nuremberg: 1948), Vol. xxvi, p. 37ff. Hereafter referred to as I.M.T.

6. L. de Jong, De Bezetting (Amsterdam: Querido, 1963), Vol. I, pp. 33-34.

7. Ibid., p. 34.

the Dutch were biased in their neutrality by allowing British planes to fly over their territory, that the Dutch concentrated their defenses on the German border, that they supported Allied secret service activities which aimed at the overthrow of the German government -- the so-called Venlo incident,⁸ that the Netherlands cooperated with the Allies in military matters, and above all, that the German armies were not entering Holland as enemies but to protect the low countries from an Allied invasion and to insure Germany's security.⁹ No doubt, these assertions contained elements of the truth. For example, one of the documents printed in the German White Book contained a request for Allied¹⁰ aid against the Germans. Such documents were actually to be found in Paris and London before the war started, but the Germans failed to mention that they were not opened till after hostilities had begun. The sincerity of Holland's neutrality

8. S. P. Best, The Venlo Incident (London: Hutchinson, 1949). This incident involves the capture of two British intelligent agents on the Dutch-German border in 1939. The British thought they had taken up contact with representatives of the German General Staff, which allegedly was planning to overthrow Hitler. However, the Germans had planned this event from the beginning and used it afterwards in propaganda against both the English and Dutch.

9. The German Foreign Office, "Allied Intrigue in the Low Countries," Full Text of White Book No. 5 (New York, 1940), pp. xxiii-xxviii.

10. Allied is used here in reference to France and England and will later be used to denote those nations who united in their struggle against Nazi Germany.

could not be successfully challenged.¹¹ The true German motivation was expressed by Hitler himself in a secret speech to his Commanders in Chief on November 10, 1939. Here he asserted that the low countries must be invaded in order to create a base for attack on England. He added that no one would ever mention the invasion again once the war was won.¹² The invasion served two strategic purposes, to form a base for attack on England and to protect the continent from being invaded by the Allies.¹³

The Dutch were serious about neutrality, an attitude which was in evidence in their foreign policy. They kept aloof from complicated alliances and did not commit themselves politically to any powerful nation. In 1936 they turned down a non-aggression pact with the Germans. That same year they were instrumental in the formation of the so-called "Oslostaten" agreement, which freed the members of this group of small states from the obligations of the League of Nations.¹⁴

Further evidence of their genuine faith in neutrality was their unpreparedness for war, both psychologically and militarily. The first was expressed in a mixture of complacency and devotion to peace. The Dutch wished to be left alone primarily because

11. Smit, p. 67.

12. I.M.T., Vol. xxvi, Document 786-PS, pp. 334-355.

13. Viscount Chilston, "The Occupied Countries in Western Europe," Hitler's Europe, S.I.A., p. 435.

14. Smit, pp. 30, 60-61.

they felt powerless in the midst of strong and well armed nations. Once military defeat occurred, others were blamed for it. One of the popular songs of the day blamed both Hitler and England, Hitler because he preyed on small and unequal neighbors and England because she always came too late in extending the promised helping hand.¹⁵

The short five-day war was probably the greatest evidence of unpreparedness and belief in neutrality. In contrast to Belgium, which was invaded on the same day, Holland was able to bring only half the number of men to the battlefields, although it had a larger population.¹⁶ It was, however, not so much the lack or shortage of manpower that caused weakness and consequent defeat, as the superiority in training and equipment of the Germans.¹⁷ Whereas Holland had not participated in the First World War, the war as well as its subsequent developments had provided training and produced leadership for Germany. In addition, recent military operations in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, and Norway had added to the competency of the Wehrmacht (German Armed Forces).

15. H. Daalder, "Nederland en de wereld," Notities voor het geschiedwerk (Amsterdam: Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, mimeographed, n.d.), No. 31, pp. 4 and 14. Notities voor het geschiedwerk will hereafter be referred to as Notities.

16. de Jong, De bezetting, Vol. I, p. 35. This source points out that Holland brought ten divisions in the field, while Belgium had twenty divisions.

17. Ibid., p. 38; de Jong, The German Fifth Column, p. 3.

In contrast to Hitler's emphasis on the rapid expansion of the Wehrmacht in the 1930's, Holland had spent very little on defense. In the years 1935, 1938, and 1939 the legislature passed special appropriations to improve the situation, but these measures were too late to be effective in 1940. As a consequence, arms were old-fashioned and insufficient.¹⁸ In contrast to the powerful German Luftwaffe (air force), the Dutch air force was powerless. Of the 104 available planes, only 52 were modern. Against this number, the Germans had approximately 800 at their disposal.¹⁹ The Germans also profited from striking the first blow. Before they could get off the ground, 43 of the 70 ready Dutch planes were destroyed or impaired by the unexpected German attack on the air fields.²⁰ There was also a shortage of artillery, automatic weapons, and anti-aircraft. Practically no tanks were available, and most of the fortifications were still unfinished.²¹ The Germans, on the contrary, were very well prepared.

For the Dutch, the five-day war was not completely void of heroism, considering the disadvantages under which they operated. They lacked hinterlands; only 100 miles separated the German border

18. D. A. van Hilten, "Kort Krijgsgeschiedkundig overzicht van de periode voorafgaande aan de oorlog op Nederlands grondgebied," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 126-130.

19. de Jong, De bezetting, Vol. I, p. 38.

20. D. A. van Hilten, "Flitsen uit de oorlogsdagen," O.e.V., Vol. I, p.250.

21. van Hilten, "Kort Krijgsgeschiedkundig overzicht...", pp. 126-135.

from the North Sea. They were also the victims of German haste and brutality, of which the bombing of Rotterdam became the symbol.²² Perhaps the Germans were running behind schedule, and had expected to take Holland in one day, saving their troops for the war in Belgium and France.²³ In November of the previous year, Hitler was not certain of the attitude of the Dutch army. He seemed to think that Holland might give in peacefully,²⁴ like the Danes had done. On the contrary, the Dutch fought the Germans.

Although the German army forced the Dutch to retreat continually, it was the superior strength of the German air force that drove the Dutch to a quick surrender. The Dutch drew some benefits from having studied German air force tactics practiced in Norway. This enabled them to prevent the German scheme of capturing the Dutch government and the Queen on the first day of the war.²⁵ However, they could not avoid the German capture of the Rotterdam airfield and the huge Moerdijk bridge, which

22. de Jong, De bezetting, Vol. I, pp. 50, 54-55.

23. Kleffens, p. 75. The Dutch Minister of Defense, E. van Kleffens, made this assertion soon after the Dutch defeat.

24. van Hilten, "Flitsen uit de oorlogsdagen," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 152.

25. de Jong, De bezetting, Vol. I, pp. 44-45. The Germans landed paratroops on three airfields outside of the Hague in an attempt to encircle the city. Captured German paras were in possession of maps leading to the Queen's palace. The Dutch were able to eliminate the paras on the first day and make the escape of Queen and government possible.

severed them from the Allies, and precipitated the German breakthrough and the bombing of Rotterdam.

The hoped for support from the Allies, requested immediately following the attack, did not arrive. Some French troops did support the Dutch in the defence of the South-West river deltas and the protection of the mouth of the Scheldt river. When the Dutch signed the agreement of surrender on the 15th of May, it did not include these areas. Fighting continued here until the 19th when a separate treaty was signed.²⁶

In order to justify their quick defeat, many of the Dutch blamed, in addition to Hitler's treacherous attack and England's dilatory aid, the so-called Fifth Column for the military disaster. The Fifth Column was assumed to consist of Germans residing in the Netherlands and Dutch National Socialists, and was believed to have sympathized and actively supported the invading German army. Numerous rumors, which unfortunately were often perpetuated by the radio and the press, circulated in the still unoccupied parts of the country.²⁷ German para-troopers were supposed to be disguised as Dutch police and mailmen.²⁸ Bridges and other strategic points were said to be attacked by Germans in civilian

26. van Hilten, "Flitsen uit de oorlogsdagen," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 241ff.

27. de Jong, The German Fifth Column, pp. 72-77.

28. van Kleffens, p. 119.

clothes and in Dutch military uniforms.²⁹ The rumors were particularly alarming in the Hague where Dutch traitors were reported to be shooting from the windows at civilians and soldiers. The military had to clear the streets in order to defeat the imaginary enemy.³⁰ As de Jong points out, these reports were generally untrue. No proofs of shootings, disguised para-troops, deposition of arms, pre-planned guiding of German troops, and disloyalty in the ranks of the Dutch military have been produced.³¹ Fear transformed the actual political Fifth Column, the Dutch National Socialists who identified themselves with their German comrades, into an imaginary military Fifth Column. Actually, the Dutch National Socialists had taken a passive position.³²

Once the Germans had broken through the Dutch lines, the city of Rotterdam bombed, and Utrecht and other cities threatened with a similar ordeal, there was nothing left to do but to sue for peace. General H. G. Winkelman, Commander in Chief of the Dutch armed forces, who had been designated the highest governmental authority by the departed government on May 13th, addressed the nation on May 14th. He announced the capitulation and requested

29. de Jong, The German Fifth Column, p. 69.

30. S. J. R. Monchy, Twee ambtsketens (Arnhem: Van Loghum Slaterus, 1946), p. 229.

31. de Jong, The German Fifth Column, pp. 169, 186-187.

32. Ibid., pp. 69, 134, 147, 195, 267, and 296.

orderly behavior from the citizens in order to make a good impression on the occupier.³³

The document, containing the terms of the capitulation, was signed on the following day by General Winkelman for the Netherlands and General Von Kuechler for Germany.³⁴ Dutch soldiers were to be considered prisoners of war. All arms had to be handed over to the victors except those possessed by Dutch officers. The officers continued to be responsible for their subordinates. The Dutch administration continued to discharge its responsibilities under the supervision of the German military authorities.

The management of the country will, until the German government makes a definite settlement, temporarily be performed by a German administration, which will utilize the existing Dutch authorities.³⁵

For fear of being captured by the Germans and consequently disabled from continuing the war against the Germans and governing the remainder of the Kingdom, the Queen and her ministers fled to England and remained there for the duration of the war. On May 10, the ministers of Foreign Affairs and of the Colonies had already left for England. The following day, the Crown

33. "Winkelman's Proclamation," Nederland in logstijd, March, 1948, no. 2, p. 21.

34. J. H. W. Verzijl, "De capitulatie," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 264.

35. Ibid., pp. 273-276. The quote is article 8 of the capitulation agreement, p. 275.

Princess and her family followed suit, and on the 13th the Queen and her cabinet left.³⁶ From London, the government in exile administered the East Indies until its occupation in 1942 by the Japanese. It organized the Netherlands Legion, which, together with the armed forces in the East and the ships which Winkelman had ordered to leave Holland before the capitulation, fought on the side of the Allies in both East and West.³⁷

The fleeing government entrusted Winkelman with complete authority over the Netherlands. The disorder was so great that the transfer of power was done orally by two cabinet members who had remained behind a few hours longer.³⁸ The constitution did not even provide for such a government, but since legislation was no longer possible the government used its emergency powers.³⁹

The Secretaries-General, the permanent heads of the departments and representatives of the ministers, were to aid Winkelman in his office, and follow his orders. Their function changed from chief executive to virtual minister, since their tasks came to include what previously had been the ministers' responsibility.⁴⁰

36. de Jong, De bezetting, Vol. I, pp. 46-49

37. H. S. Ashton, The Netherlands at War (London: Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1941), p. 67; Verzijl, p. 264.

38. A. L. Scholtens, "De Secretarissen-Generaal," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 399. The Ministers M. P. L. Steenberghe and A. A. van Rhijn stayed behind to discharge the transfer of authority.

39. L. A. Donker, "Wetgeving," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 357.

40. Scholtens, pp. 399-400; A. E. Cohen, "Het ontstaan van het Duitse Reichskommissariat voor Nederland," Notities, No. 91, p. 3.

After the capitulation, Winkelman remained the head of the Dutch administration. He continued to issue decrees, which were respected by the German military government. Generally, the decrees dealt with innocent matters like labor, reconstruction and trade, but he also made some important appointments.⁴¹ After the Germans introduced a civil government, Winkelman's authority was curtailed extensively. The High Commissioner limited his authority to the supervision of the demobilization of the Dutch army. The majority of Winkelman's decrees, about twelve in number, were issued between May 21 and May 29 during the short-lived German military government.⁴²

The High Commissioner, Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart, considered the presence of Winkelman a nuisance. In a secret report to Hans Lammers, head of the Reich Chancellery, Seyss-Inquart revealed that Winkelman received public ovations, was greeted with the national anthem, in short, was treated as a "Vizekonig" (vice king). What seemed to bother Seyss-Inquart most was the fact that the Secretaries-General considered Winkelman their legitimate superior, and asked his advice before committing themselves.⁴³ Seyss-Inquart

41. H. M. Hirschfeld, Herinneringen uit de bezettingstijd (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1961), p: 36. Hirschfeld was one of the Secretaries-General who remained in office for the duration of the war. He was appointed by General Winkelman.

42. Donker, pp. 358-360.

43. "Het eerste rapport van Seyss-Inquart", Nederland in Oorlogstijd, December, 1947, No. 15-16, pp. 174-175. This document will hereafter be referred to as Seyss-Inquart's First Report.

solved the problem by having Winkelman arrested and taken to Germany on July 1, 1940.⁴⁴

The initial weeks of the occupation provided a pleasant surprise. Evidently, the Dutch had expected the worst. Several persons committed suicide on the day of the capitulation, choosing to die rather than to live under the German regime. Some of the most prominent cultural leaders were among them.⁴⁵ But as the anticipated atrocities did not take place, and the German soldiers turned out to be friendly neighbors who patronized the business districts considerably, when Hitler returned to all the Dutch soldiers their freedom,⁴⁶ when life seemed to go on normally, and when, in addition to all this, nature granted 1940 a beautiful summer, most Dutchmen began to accept life as worth living again.⁴⁷

From May 15 until May 29, the date on which the Reichskommissariat was formally inaugurated, a military administration supervised governmental activities. The German military authorities

44. S. Veldmeyer, "De Nederlandse beroepsofficieren, adspirant-officieren en adelborsten in krijgsgevangenschap," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 288.

45. de Jong, De bezetting, Vol. I, p. 56.

46. Verzijl, p. 276. The Germans played this up as a personal favor from Hitler, showing his good-will and kinship to the Dutch people. In May, 1942, and April, 1943, the officers and soldiers respectively were returned to the status of prisoners of war and taken to concentration camps or labor camps in Germany. Large numbers, however, refused to go and went into hiding instead.

47. Hirschfeld, p. 40.

had been preparing for the occupation since October, 1939, when the Bureau Fremde Heere West prepared a booklet on the Netherlands. That same month, the Quartermaster-General took measures in the formation of a pure military government in the to-be-occupied territories. In November, 1939, the plans were ready, and on May 9, 1940, Hitler signed them.⁴⁸ The measures planned were in conformity with the regulations concerning war on land, agreed upon in the Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907.⁴⁹ Accordingly, after the capitulation, General Falkenhausen, of Army Group B West, the highest military authority in Belgium and the Netherlands, became the chief governmental authority in both countries.⁵⁰

General Falkenhausen had done a good share of the planning of the military administration himself. The organization was oriented territorially rather than functionally, which might have been expected from the military, especially since the war was still going on in Belgium and France. According to the capitulation agreement,

48. A. E. Cohen, "Het ontstaan van het Duitse Reichskommis-sariaat voor Nederland," Notities, No. 91, p. 3.

49. Texts of the Peace Conference at the Hague, 1899 and 1907 (London: Ginn & Co., 1908), pp. 45ff and 203ff. Among the agreements reached at the Peace Conferences were the following stipulations concerning military occupation of enemy territory. The native population should not be pressured into taking an oath of allegiance to the occupying power, the population should not be compelled to do military service for the enemy, and the occupied territory should be governed in agreement with the existing customs and laws of the population.

50. J. H. W. Verzijl, "De inrichting van het Duitse bestuur," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 325.

the Dutch civil administration was taken over by the military authorities. It also accepted General Winkelman as the head of the administration, and respected the decrees he issued.⁵¹ In general, the German military was conciliatory to the Dutch civil administration.⁵²

However, the Dutch officials were not without fear of the intentions of the occupiers, especially the fear of Holland losing identity as a nation through annexation or partition.⁵³ Already the Netherlands were under the same administration as Belgium. Besides, the regional military administrators conferred with the provincial representatives of the Dutch administration without consideration of the central authorities of the land.⁵⁴ Those fears were not without justification, because a report made a few months later by the High Commissioner showed that the partitioning of parts of Holland had been considered.⁵⁵

The original plans of the Quartermaster-General called for a chief administrator added to the army group staff, a commander for each of the provinces, and one for each of the municipalities.⁵⁶

51. Ibid., p. 325.

52. Wohlthat Dossier, Interview, p. 5; Hirschfeld, p. 34.

53. Cohen, p. 3.

54. Ibid., p. 4; A. E. Cohen, "De positie van de secretarissen-generaal tijdens de bezetting," Notities, No. 78, p. 5.

55. Seyss-Inquart's First Report, p. 179

56. Cohen, "Het ontstaan van het duitse Reichskommissariat voor Nederland," Notities, No. 91, p. 3.

Instead of the provincial units, the capitulation agreement instituted three regional administrative units.⁵⁷ The organization of the Dutch administration, of which the departments were operated under the Secretaries-General, remained largely as it was.

Because of the short duration of the military government few decrees were issued. These were primarily concerned with the re-establishment of law and order and normalization of daily life. They included regulations on the possession of fire arms and the establishment of rate of exchange of Dutch and German money.⁵⁸ With the inauguration of the civil government, these decrees remained in effect.

The military government was not established long enough to get fully organized and functioning, although a considerable staff of administrative personnel was imported from Germany. Its initiative was stifled when, on May 18, Hitler appointed Seyss-Inquart to formulate a civil government for the Netherlands. This new government was installed on May 29, at which time General Falkenhausen and the majority of his administrative staff left for Belgium where they continued the military government of that country. Some of the administrators, however, stayed in the Netherlands to work for the Reichskommissariat. Among them were several of the

57. J. R. de Groot, "De Duitse Wehrmacht in Nederland," Notities, No. 20, p. 2.

58. Donker, p. 355.

future provincial Representatives (Beauftragte) of the High Commissioner, Dr. Hermann Conring, Dr. Werner Ross, and Ernst Schwebel.⁵⁹

59. Conring, Ross and Schwebel remained in the Netherlands for the duration of the war. Schwebel became a rather intimate friend of the High Commissioner, and participated in the negotiations of the capitulation of the German army in the Netherlands in April and May, 1945.

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE REICHSKOMMISSARIAT

On May 18, 1940, Adolf Hitler issued a decree establishing a Reichskommissariat in the Netherlands territories.¹ The following evening, it was made public through announcement on the radio. The news of the decree took the military leadership on the still active western front completely by surprise. Until this time the military authorities in Duesseldorf, Germany, had been working on the completion of a military administration for the Netherlands. They had closed the Dutch borders to keep out political and economical profiteers.² General Franz Halder, Chief of the General Staff, noted in his diary that this action, "demonstrated once more the utter dishonesty of our top leaders in relation to the O.K.H."³ Helmuth Wohlthat, the Commissioner to the Netherlands Bank under the military government, also expressed

1. This decree was published as decree No. 87 in the Reichsgesetzblatt of 1940, and as order n. 1, in the Journal of Decrees of the Netherlands. The latter was published both in the German and Dutch languages, under the official title of Verordnungsblatt fuer die besetzten Niederlaendischen Gebiete. English translations of this decree can be found in: Raphael Lemkin, Axis Rule in Occupied Europe (Concord: Rumford Press, 1944), p. 446; Margaret Carlyle, (ed.), Documents on International Affairs 1939-1946 (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), Vol. II, p. 201. Hereafter referred to as D.I.A.

2. Cohen, "Het ontstaan van het Duitse Reichskommissariat voor Nederland." Notities, No. 91. p. 3.

3. Franz Halder, The Halder Diaries, mimeographed, n.d., Vol. IV, p. 17. The OberKommando des Heeres (L.K.H.) was the High Command of the German army.

his regret about the replacement of the military administration. He approached Goering, the Commander of the German Air Force and close associate of Hitler, and asked him to persuade Hitler to withdraw the decree. Goering, however, convinced Wohlthat that such a request would be futile.⁴

In the decree of May 18, the Austrian, Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart, was named High Commissioner (Reichskommissar) of the occupied Netherlands territories. At that time Seyss-Inquart was serving as deputy to Governor-General Hans Frank in the General Government of Poland. In this position, he had felt like a "fifth wheel on the wagon."⁵ He therefore requested front service on May 10. He also asked Himmler, Reichsfuehrer of the SS and Chief of the German Police, to plead his case to the Fuehrer, and effect a favorable transfer for him.⁶ Apparently Hitler had not forgotten the useful cooperation he had received from Seyss-Inquart in the Anschluss of Austria. The appointment as High Commissioner of the Netherlands was Seyss-Inquart's reward.

On May 19, Seyss-Inquart conferred with Hitler, who authorized him to organize his own staff for the establishment of a civil government. Hitler insisted, however, that two councilors be included in this staff. These men were Hanns Albin Rauter, appointed by Himmler to represent the SS, and Fritz Schmidt, a

4. Wohlthat Dossier, Interview, p. 4

5. Cohen, "Het ontstaan van het Reichskommissariat voor Nederland," Notities, No. 91, p. 5.

6. Seyss-Inquart's First Report, p. 173.

German Westphalian, appointed by Rudolf Hess and Martin Bormann of the Party headquarters. By May 23, Seyss-Inquart had made the remaining major appointments. These included the two Austrians, Hans Fischboeck and Friedrich Wimmer, who were friends of the High Commissioner. Each of these four key assistants received the title of Commissioner-General (Generalkommissar).⁷ The German Foreign Office, which had played a much more important role in the formation of the Norwegian Reichskommissariat, was also allowed to send a representative to the Dutch Reichskommissariat. The Foreign Minister, Ribbentrop, appointed Otto Bene to this position.⁸

Seyss-Inquart spent May 23 and 24 in Berlin organizing the Reichskommissariat. In cooperation with Wimmer he formulated his first two decrees which became a quasi-constitution and basis for the new administration.⁹ The structure of the Reichskommissariat was wholly based on the authority and design of the Fuehrer's decree of May 18. The members of the new civil government met with Hitler in his military headquarters, the Eifel, on May 25. Hitler lectured to them about the history of the Netherlands for about one hour, and, according to Rauter, talked favorably about the Nether-

7. Cohen, "Het ontstaan van het Duitse Reichskommissariat voor Nederland," Notities, No. 91, pp. 5-6.

8. A. E. Cohen, "Instelling van het Reichskommissariat voor Nederland in het licht van het Noorse precedent," Notities, No. 29, p. 5.

9. Cohen, "Het ontstaan van het Duitse Reichskommissariat voor Nederland," Notities, No. 91, pp. 5-6.

lands, expressing his regret for having had to invade it. After this meeting, Bormann, Himmler, Rauter, Schmidt, and Seyss-Inquart had an additional conference.¹⁰ No doubt, the business of governing the Netherlands was discussed here.

With the exception of Bormann and Himmler, this group flew to Holland on the next day and reported to General Falkenhausen. They agreed to set June 1 as the day of transfer from military to civil government, but Hitler wanted this done at the earlier date of May 29.¹¹ Accordingly, on that day the High Commissioner gave his inaugural address in the historic Ridderzaal in the Hague, where the Queen traditionally gives her annual speech from the throne (Troonrede). The haste of making this earlier transfer caused a great deal of confusion. For instance, no official stationery had been prepared for the new government, and there was inadequate housing for the new officials.¹²

During the previous month, on April 21, 1940, Norway had been placed under a Reichskommissariat. But as Hitler was not satisfied with that particular arrangement, he planned for the Reichskommissariat in the Netherlands to be somewhat different. The Norwegian civil government was plagued by dual authority. The High Commissioner, Josef Terboven, represented the Party, while the

10. Rauter Dossier, Interview 2, p. 7.

11. Seyss-Inquart's First Report, p. 173.

12. Cohen, "Het ontstaan van het Duitse Reichskommissariat voor Nederland," Notities, No. 91, pp. 6-7

Norwegian betrayer and leader of the Norwegian National Socialist Party, Vidkung Quisling, was authorized as Minister President by the German Foreign Office. Hitler tried to avoid these difficulties in the Netherlands by conferring undivided authority on Seyss-Inquart, and making him directly responsible to the Fuehrer.¹³

The decree of May 18 stated:

The High Commissioner is guardian of the interests of the Reich and is vested with supreme civil authority. He shall be directly responsible to me and shall obtain instructions and orders from me.¹⁴

What motivated Hitler to grant Norway and the Netherlands Reichskommissariats is still an unsolved problem. German National Socialists always gave the impression that this was a great favor bestowed by the Fuehrer. To them, the establishment of a Reichskommissariat implied that these countries were allowed to maintain their independence,¹⁵ a favor which found its origin in the racial affinity of the Dutch and Norwegians to the Germans. The purpose of the Reichskommissariat was to give temporary political guidance to the Dutch. After a while they were expected to respond voluntarily to National Socialism, as an inherent urge characteristic of true Germanic peoples. Seyss-Inquart expressed this sentiment in his inaugural address when he said that the Germans were "not to stay as occupiers, but to build a new Europe." The

13. Ibid., pp. 1-3

14. D.I.A., Vol. II, p. 201.

15. Rauter Dossier, Interview No. 2. pp. 7 and 14-15.

Dutch and Norwegians were considered part of the so-called Greater German Reich (Grossraum),¹⁶ which in itself was a denial of independence.

The Dutch historian, Professor A. E. Cohen, has suggested that the Reichskommissariat was actually a temporary solution. It was a cautious move on the part of Hitler. Being immediately under his supervision, he could do with it what he wished at any given time.¹⁷ The fact that Norway and Holland were not essential bases for the continuation of the war against England, as were Belgium and France, may have been further reason for replacing the military government.¹⁸ Dutch administrators favored a non-political military administration as the lesser of two evils,¹⁹ but their opinion did not influence the decision.

Regardless of what Hitler's motivations and objectives might have been, during the five years of occupation that followed, it became clear that the promised independence associated with the status of Reichskommissariat was very limited. In practically every

16. A. E. Cohen, "Opzet en structuur van het Duitse Reichskommissariat in Nederland," Notities, No. 16, p. 9; Max du Prel and Willi Janke, Die Niederlande im Umbruch der Zeiten (Wuerzburg: Konrad Triltsch Verlag, 1941), pp. 84 and 90. The National Socialist myth of The Reich embodied the expectation of the establishment of a never ending Reich, a Europe ruled by the racially superior Germanic people.

17. Cohen, "Het onstataan van het Duitse Reichskommissariat voor Nederland," Notities, No. 91, p. 51.

18. A. E. Cohen, "Opzet en structuur van het Duitse Reichskommissariat in Nederland," Notities, No. 16, p. 2.

19. Hirschfeld, p. 42.

aspect of life, close cooperation with the policies of the leaders of the German Reich was forced upon the Dutch population. The Reichskommissariat became the instrument in the hands of the Germans to enforce such policies. It instituted a complete totalitarian regime, which aimed at penetrating all phases of public and private life. The mass media, especially radio and press, were exploited to their fullest capacity for Nazi propaganda. Broadcasting was controlled by National Socialists, both Dutch and German. Newspapers had to comply with the wishes of the High Commissioner both in what they were forced to publish and what they were not allowed to publish. The Germans attempted to erase all memories of the pre-war royal government by changing names of streets and other public facilities. This process of molding public opinion to the National Socialist taste has been called Nazification (Nazificatie). Four different stages of nazification can be noted, differing in method and intensity during the five years of occupation. The first of these lasted from the beginning of the occupation until January, 1941. It was characterized by a relatively friendly attitude of the Reichskommissariat to the Dutch, and is identified by the term "fraternization." The second period lasted until the German defeat at Stalingrad, the turn of the tide in the war. This period was an expression of complete nazification. All possible means of propaganda were employed to persuade the Dutch to adopt National Socialist ideology. The third period lasted from early 1943 until September 5, 1944. During this time, nazification was intensified

with the use of brute force to make the Dutch conform to the wishes of the occupiers. The fourth and last period started on September 5. On this day, referred to as Mad Tuesday (Dolle Dinsdag), rumors of the swift approach of the Allied armies caused German and Dutch National Socialists to flee in great disorder in the direction of the German border. After this day, Holland was in the frontline of the war, and military considerations became more prominent. During this period, which lasted until the end of the war, May 5, 1945, a new attempt at fraternalization was made by the occupiers.²⁰

In addition to political interests, the Reichskommissariat had economic objectives in the Netherlands. Holland had to be utilized for the benefit of Germany. She was made an economic experiment for the Grossraum ideal. Goering, head of the Four Year Plan, had promised that the Dutch would be treated on an equal basis with the Germans.²¹ Instead, the country was gradually and systematically exploited.²²

Nazification was also evident in dealing with government personnel. The Dutch administration, which was maintained by the Reichskommissariat, was gradually infused with pro-German or National Socialist civil servants. For example, by July, 1944, 52% of the mayors were convinced National Socialists or sympathizers

20. J. B. Th. Spaan, "Pers en Propaganda," O.e.V., Vol. II, pp. 131-134.

21. A. J. v. d. Leeuw, "Het Economic Bestuursapparaat der Duitsers in Nederlands," Notities, No. 17, p. 2.

22. B. M. Telders, Verzamelde Geshriften, Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1947), Vol. IV, pp. 333-334.

of the German and National Socialist cause.²³ The leading Dutch National Socialist Party, the N.S.B. (Nationaal Socialistische Beweging), received a political monopoly when other political parties were prohibited.²⁴ According to Seyss-Inquart's secret report to the Reich Chancellory, his objective was to gradually replace all high ranking Dutch civil servants by Germans.²⁵ This intention was never carried out. During the course of the war, however, most high ranking civil servants were replaced by members of the N.S.B. This is what Seyss-Inquart may have had in mind when he referred to Germans.

Before the war, the Netherlands had a constitutional monarchy, whose governmental functions were divided into executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The German occupation brought a sudden end to this tradition, and substituted an authoritarian regime for it. In a decree to the occupied Netherlands, it is stated:

To the extent required for the fulfillment of his duties, the Reich Commissioner for the occupied Netherlands territories assumes all powers, privileges, and rights heretofore vested in the King and the government in accordance with the Constitution and the laws of the Netherlands.²⁶

23. Werner Warmbrunn, The Dutch Under German Occupation (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), p. 38.

24. Hirschfeld, p. 73.

25. Seyss-Inquart's First Report, p. 179.

26. Raphael Lemkin, Axis Rule in Occupied Europe, Concord, N. H.: Rumford Press, 1944), p. 448. Lemkin uses the term Reich Commissioner where in this study this title has been translated as High Commissioner.

All branches of government were thus united in one person, the High Commissioner. The legislature was not allowed to meet again after the German invasion. The political parties were restrained in their activities until July, 1941, when they were officially banned.²⁷ Only the NSB was allowed to continue in existence. In addition to this favor, the NSB received immense support from the Germans. As early as July, 1940, a prominent National Socialist, Rost van Tonningen, was granted leadership of the Marxist parties and all their auxiliaries.²⁸ The Judiciary was least disturbed, but here too there were innovations. German courts were established alongside of the existing Dutch courts. So-called Peace Courts with National Socialist judges were established to deal with the increased economic offences, resulting from the violations of strict economic regulations.²⁹ Seyss-Inquart also appointed special legislative organs to operate under his supervision. Most important among these were the four Commissioners-General.³⁰ Of course, Hitler always reserved the right to interfere if he wished. He remained the axis around which everything turned, and this included the occupied territories gained by conquest but not incorporated in the Reich. Seyss-Inquart always referred to Hitler's decree of May 18 as the basis

27. Ibid., p. 458-461.

28. Willem Drees, Van Mei tot Mei (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1948), p. 52.

29. Warmbrunn, pp. 38-40.

30. Lemkin, pp. 449 and 453.

for his authority. The Netherlands laws could remain only if they were compatible with the Fuehrer's decree.³¹

Seyss-Inquart's position entitled him to the Vortragsrecht, which meant that he could make direct contact with the Fuehrer.³² Seyss-Inquart, however, made little or no use of this right. His correspondence, very little of which survived the war, indicated that communication usually went by way of Hans Lammers, Chief of the Reich Chancellery, or by way of Himmler.

Ideally, the Reichskommissariat was governed by the leadership principle (Fuehrer-prinzip), by which the leader's orders were unquestionably respected and carried out. Officially, at least, Seyss-Inquart was respected as the leader. In vital matters, however, his authority was continually challenged. Cohen claims that the Commissioners-General Schmidt and Rauter, through the influence of Bormann and Himmler, were the actual bearers of authority rather than Seyss-Inquart.³³

In agreement with the decree of the Fuehrer, and after the example of the military government, Seyss-Inquart maintained the Dutch administration to carry out his orders. The Reichskommissariat was a supervisory structure which directed and inspected the Dutch administration. The High Commissioner was supported by several aids. His immediate assistants were the four Commis-

31. Ibid., p. 448.

32. Het Process Christiansen (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1950), p. 34.

33. A. E. Cohen, "Het Ontstaan van 'Der Arbeitsbereich der NSDAP in den Niederlanden'," Notities, No. 26, p. 8.

sioners-General. They were his confidants.³⁴ To each of them he assigned a portion of his major responsibility to keep the governmental administration operating in a desirable manner. Four work areas were created, each headed by a Commissioner-General. These were:

1. Administration and Justice (Verwaltung and Justiz).
2. Finance and Economics (Finanz and Wirtschaft).
3. Public Security (Sicherheitswesen).
4. Special Affairs (Besondere Verwendung).

Friedrich Wimmer, the Commissioner-General of Administration and Justice supervised the governmental departments of Internal Affairs, of Justice, and of Education, the Arts and Sciences. This included all matters of personnel in the administration, all matters dealing with the courts, appeals, education, churches, the publication of the Journal of Decrees, archives, and the involvements of German citizens in the Netherlands, including German schools.³⁵ In addition, governmental bureaus which did not fit in any of the other departments were placed under his jurisdiction.³⁶

Hans Fischboeck, Commissioner-General of Finance and Economics, supervised the departments of Social Affairs, of Finance, of Traffic and Waterways and Works, of Economic Affairs, and of Food, Fisheries, and Agriculture. Altogether, Fischboeck had approxi-

34. Du Prel and Janke, p. 85.

35. Ibid., p. 36; L. A. Donker, "Bestuur en Wetgeving," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 324.

36. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 2, p. 5.

mately fifty bureaus or sub-departments under his control. These included the supervision of the postal services, foreign exchange, all industry and trade, and the property of the exiled monarchy and non-German aliens. Also included was a representative department of Goering's Four Year Plan. The continuation of the war added much import to economics, and gave rise to extensive intercourse between the German and Dutch bureaus. The representatives of the German bureaus (Reichsstellen) were members of the Department of Finance and Economics. In their contact with the heads of the Dutch bureaus, they were supposed to act as representatives of the High Commissioner. In reality, however, they often ignored the authority of the Reichskommissariat and dealt directly with the Dutch authorities. Since many of these representatives were economic experts, lacking political motivations, it gave the Dutch authorities an opportunity to drive favorable bargains for their country. Usually their only limits were the minimum and maximum demands of the authorities in Germany.³⁷

Wartime Germany was plagued with multiple supervision also in economic affairs. This problem extended into the occupied territories. In economics a heavy competition was carried on between the German Ministry of Economics and the Office of Economics and Armament (Wirtschafts und Ruestungsamt) of the German army. Each had his

37. A. J. v.d. Leeuw, Huiden en Leder 1939-1945, (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1954), pp. 67-70

agents in the occupied territories.³⁸

Fritz Schmidt, the Commissioner-General of Special Affairs, supervised the department of Public Health and the newly created departments of Propaganda and Arts. Schmidt was the political advisor to the High Commissioner and was specifically concerned with Dutch public opinion and politics.³⁹ He supervised Radio broadcasting, the press, theaters, and even art and architecture. The non-profit organizations also fell under his jurisdiction. In addition, he cared for the political and ideological welfare of the Germans in the Netherlands, as acting head of the Arbeitsbereich Niederland der NSDAP.⁴⁰ Schmidt supervised the Labor Service (Arbeitsdienst), which became an instrument of Nazi indoctrination for 18 year old youths, who were obligated to spend six months in work camps. The Provincial Representatives of the High Commissioner were also placed under Schmidt, since they were also concerned with public opinion and propaganda. Besides his contact with the Party headquarters, Schmidt also maintained contact with the German Minister of Propaganda.⁴¹

Hans Albin Rauter, the Commissioner-General of Public Security, had no governmental departments under his jurisdiction.

38. A. H. v.d. Leeuw, "De Rijksbureaux onder Duits en Nederlands Gezag," Notities, No. 62, pp. 6-8.

39. Warmbrunn, pp. 28-32.

40. Du Prel and Janke, p. 87. An Arbeitsbereich was an administrative unit of the National Socialist Party. The Arbeitsbereich Niederland will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter V.

41. J. H. W. Verzijl, "De inrichting van het Duitse bestuur," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 324.

But since occupied Holland was a police state, his actual power and influence was far reaching. In addition to his Commissioner-General post under the High Commissioner, he held the office of Superior SS and Police Chief (Hoehere SS - und Polizeifuehrer) under Himmler. In this dual function he headed the German police and SS in the Netherlands. This consisted of the Security Police (Sicherheitspolizei), the Order Police or Green Police (Ordnungspolizei), and the SS armed forces (Waffen SS). The Security Police consisted of the Criminal Police, the Secret State Police or Gestapo, and the Security Service, which was the central investigation agency of the Reich. The head of the Security Police was Rauter's deputy. The Dutch police was under the jurisdiction of the German Police, and consequently under the authority of Rauter.⁴² He reorganized the Dutch police into a more uniform system and under a unified command, enlarged it, and started a police school which taught its students SS tactics. Rauter also controlled all higher appointments in the Dutch police.⁴³

In addition to the four Commissioners-General, the High Commissioner had special Representatives (Beauftragten) to carry out the duties of his office. One of these Representatives headed the Netherlands Bank. Each of the eleven provinces and the two largest cities, Amsterdam and Rotterdam, had a Representative assigned to it. The provincial and city Representatives were the confidants, the eyes and ears of the High Commissioner.⁴⁴ They were not admin-

43. F. R. Mijnlief, "De Nederlandse politie tijdens de bezetting," O.e.V., p. 424; Du Prel and Janke, p. 117.

44. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 1, p. 13.

istrators, but politicians who were concerned with the shaping of public opinion.⁴⁵ They had no power over the police and the courts, but kept watch over the local governments so that they did not act contrary to the policies of the High Commissioner. Once or twice a month the Representatives met with the High Commissioner or the Commissioner-General of Special Affairs.⁴⁶ Generally, they were appointed by Bormann, on the recommendation of Schmidt. Most of them were party members from the old days (Alte Kämpfer).⁴⁷

Otto Bene, the representative of the German Foreign Office, also had a function in the Reichskommissariat. His duties covered the departments of Foreign Affairs and Colonies, but since the war terminated the activities of these departments, nothing remained but to care for non-German aliens in the Netherlands. One of his primary responsibilities was to supply the German Foreign Office with information concerning conditions in the Netherlands. But as the importance of the German Foreign Office itself decreased, Bene's authority dwindled in importance, until finally his position was little more than a formality. Of the 29 personnel of his office, only four were left at the end of the war.⁴⁸

Seyss-Inquart's personal office or Chancellery was referred to as the Praesidial Abteilung. Dr. Hans Piesbergen, a German civil servant had charge over it. Problems that required an immediate

45. Du Prel and Janke, p. 101.

46. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 1, p. 13

47. Seyss-Inquart's First Report, p. 176.

48. Bene Dossier, Doc. 3, p. 10.

decision were taken care of in the Chancellery.⁴⁹ At the end of the war, Piesbergen gave orders to burn the archives of some of the departments.⁵⁰

The Reichskommissariat, being of a supervisory nature, initially only had a small staff. At first its total number of employed personnel was only approximately 1,200. Later this number grew extensively. On May 15, 1943, the rolls indicate a work force of 2,280 of which 62% (1,425) were Germans and the remainder (855) were Dutch nationals.⁵¹ This number did not include the department of Public Security. Schmidt was primarily responsible for the large number of German nationals among the Reichskommissariat personnel. Many of them were Germans who were living in Holland when the German invasion took place. In addition, the department heads had brought their own staffs with them from Germany and Austria.⁵²

Once a week Seyss-Inquart met with his notable aids, usually on Friday, from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. In these government sessions (Regierungssitzungen) no notes were taken. The purpose, according to Rauter, was only to give advise to the High Commissioner. If he wished, he could accept it, but he made the final decisions.⁵³

49. D.I.A., Vol. II, p. 205.

50. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 1, p. 10.

51. Organizational and personnel posters of the Reichskommissariat, R.v.O., Amsterdam.

52. Cohen, "Opzet en structuur van het Duitse Reichskommissariat in Nederland," Notities, No. 16, p. 8.

53. Rauter Dossier, Interview 2, p. 12.

In many ways, these government sessions concerned routine matters. Important cases were discussed privately with the High Commissioner.⁵⁴ Participants in these sessions included the High Commissioner, the four Commissioners-General, Bene of the Foreign Office, and Piesbergen of the Chancellery. These participants were all under the immediate supervision of Seyss-Inquart. They wrote monthly reports for the High Commissioner, but they received their orders orally.⁵⁵

The offices of the Reichskommissariat were first established in the Hague, the seat of the Dutch government. Beginning in the fall of 1942 the main offices, including some of the Dutch administration, were moved East because of fear of an Allied invasion.⁵⁶ The Hague is situated on the North Sea coast and would have easily fallen into Allied hands had a successful invasion occurred. These moves disturbed the offices exceedingly, because it involved the hiring and firing of personnel and the improvisation of new office space. The executives of the Dutch administration were hesitant about leaving their traditional location. The pre-war Secretaries-General threatened to resign but did not carry out their threats. Gradually all the German offices were moved to the eastern parts of the Netherlands (close to the German border), for the most part in the town of Apeldoorn, but also in Zwolle, Amersfoort, and Velp.

54. Ritterbusch Dossier, Interview 1, p. 11.

55. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 1, pp. 11-12.

56. A.L. Scholtens, "De Secretarissen-Generaal," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 411.

Rauter's archives were moved to Velp at the end of 1943, and burned there in September 1944.⁵⁷ That same month, Piesbergen ordered the destruction of Wimmer's archives in Apeldoorn.⁵⁸ In the beginning of September 1944 there was an almost complete exodus of the remaining offices to the east. Only small contact offices remained in the Hague. Seyss-Inquart himself spent the last six months of the war in Apeldoorn, returning to The Hague only for an occasional visit.⁵⁹

The German troops stationed in the Netherlands during the war were not under the jurisdiction of the High Commissioner. They were subject to a Military Commander (Wehrmachtsbefehlhaber Niederland). On May 20, 1940, Hitler appointed the Air Force General Friedrich C. Christiansen to this office. In military matters Seyss-Inquart was subordinate to the Military Commander, while in civil concerns the situation was reversed.⁶⁰ The Military Commander's duties were threefold: coastal defence, military jurisdiction, and the demobilization of the defeated Dutch army. In regard to this last duty he took over the functions of the Dutch Department of Defence. First Christiansen demobilized the Dutch army, but later he made the soldiers prisoners of war again,

57. Rauter Dossier, Interview 8, p. 16.

58. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 1, p. 10.

59. Schwebel Dossier, Doc. B, pp. 7 and 16.

60. D.I.A., Vol. II, p. 201. Since the office of the Wehrmachtsbefehlhaber was separate from the Reichskommissariat it will not be treated in this thesis, except when it effected the Reichskommissariat.

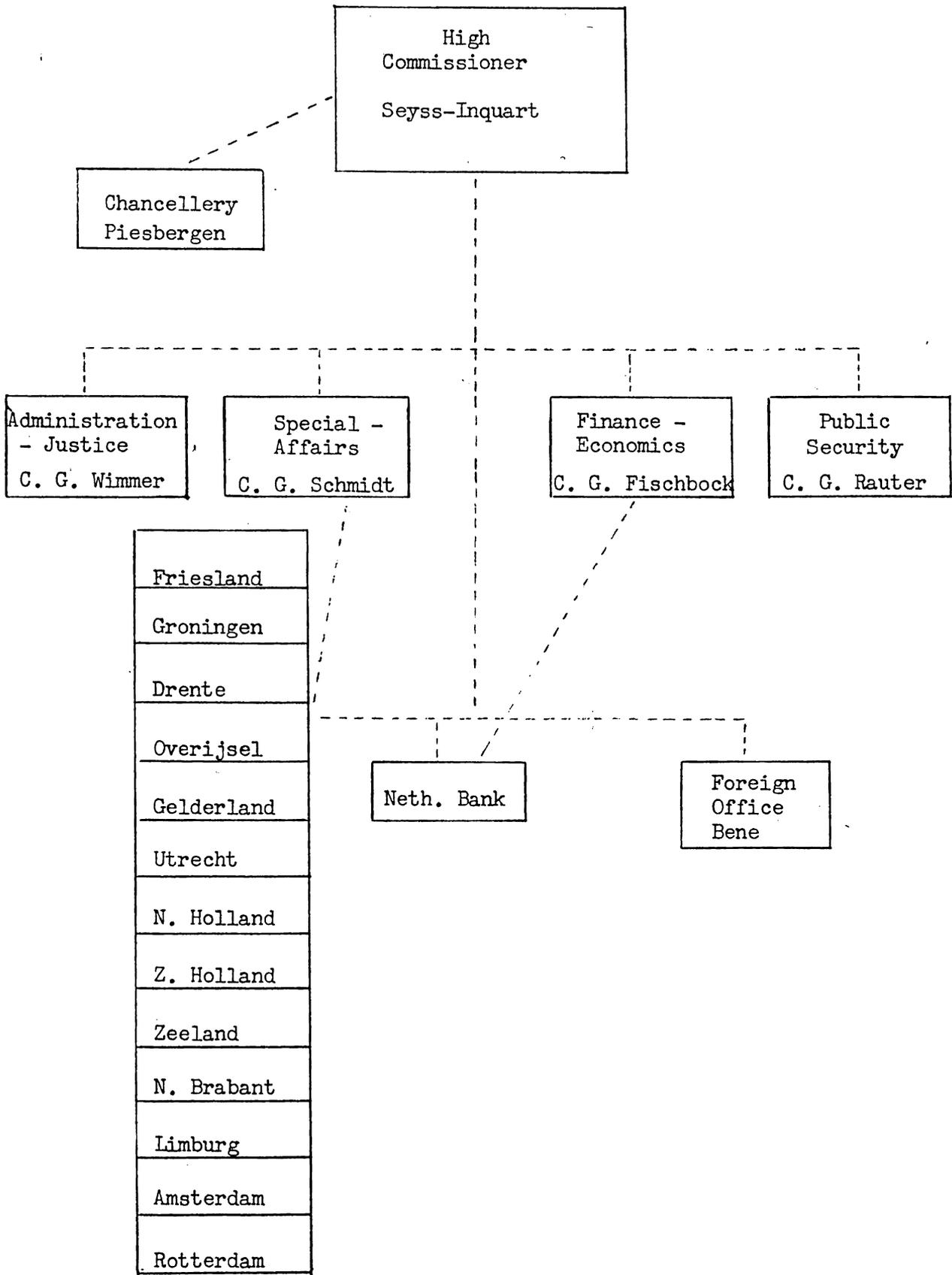
the officers in May, 1942,⁶¹ and the lower ranks in April, 1943. The reasons for these actions were to obtain labor for the war industry in Germany and to weaken the Dutch resistance.⁶² Provisions were made that, in case of an emergency or military threat to the Netherlands, the Military Commander should take over the civil administration also. These arrangements led to disagreements between Christiansen and Seyss-Inquart.⁶³ Usually, such conflicts ended in favor of Seyss-Inquart. Even Commissioner-General Rauter proved to be Christiansen's superior, when it came to conflicts between these two.⁶⁴

62. A. Dalen Gilhuys, "Het Afwikkelingsbureau," O.e.V., Vol. I, pp. 280-283.

62. S. Veldmeyer, "De Nederlandse beroepsofficieren....," O.e.V., Vol. I, pp. 312-314.

63. L. A. Donker, "Wetgeving," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 357.

64. J. R. de Groot, "De Duitse Wehrmacht in Nederland," Notities, No. 20, p. 4.



CHAPTER III

PROMINENT PERSONS IN THE REICHSKOMMISSARIAT

Two interesting observations can be made about the top personnel in the Reichskommissariat. First, almost all of the German administrators retained their posts throughout the five years of occupation. Only the Commissioner-General Schmidt had to be replaced, and this was due to his death in 1943. Even Schmidt's successor, Willi Ritterbush, was not new in the Reichskommissariat. He had previously served as a provincial representative. Second, almost all of the prominent officials were Austrians. This included Seyss-Inquart, and three of the four Commissioners-General. Only Schmidt and his successor, Ritterbush, were Germans. In most cases these men had brought personnel from their previous assignments, which increased even more the total number of Austrians. The Germans in the Reichskommissariat tended to resent the Austrians, and referred to them as the Danube Club (Donau Club). It is possible that Hitler chose Austrians for this assignment because they did not constitute as much of a threat to the Dutch as would Germans, and thus would be more successful. It is more likely, however, that the choice was unintentional, resulting from the fact that Seyss-Inquart happened to be Austrian. In practice the Austrians had more difficulty adjusting to Holland and understanding the Dutch than did their German colleagues.¹

1. Schwebel Dossier, Doc. B, pp. 22-23.

Most significant among the German officials was the High Commissioner himself. A Sudeten German, Seyss-Inquart was born in Stannern near Iglau, Moravia, on July 22, 1892. Iglau was a Pocket of German-speaking people in what is presently Czechoslovakia, but which was then in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Seyss-Inquart was appointed as High Commissioner in the Netherlands because the assignment appealed to him and because the leading Nazis had promised him a high ranking position in the Reich. Owing to his cooperation with the Germans in the Anschluss of 1938 (the joining of Austria with Germany), Goering had promised that Seyss-Inquart would receive a Reich Ministry post within a year. For the time being, he was pacified with the Governorship of Austria (Stadthalter), a post Hitler conferred on him March 15, 1938, four days after the German army had marched into Austria. As Governor Seyss-Inquart had very little authority since Hitler had also appointed a High Commissioner whose task it was to regulate the liquidation of the Austrian state. On May 1, 1939, several weeks after the time limit, Seyss-Inquart was appointed Reich Minister without portfolio. Apparently this did not entail much work, for on the following October 12 he was sent to Poland to serve as deputy to Governor-General Hans Frank.² Seyss-Inquart was obviously not satisfied with this subordinate

2. I.M.T., Vol. XV, pp. 633 and 636.

position and accepted the High Commissionership as promotion and as partial satisfaction of his aspirations which were still directed toward a Reich Ministry appointment.³

The great majority of the Dutch population regarded Seyss-Inquart as an intruder and a suppressor, particularly as the war progressed. This attitude was evidenced by his cool reception on his arrival in the Netherlands, and by the refusal of the Secretaries-General to honor his invitation to a banquet.⁴ Experiences like this caused him to dislike his stay in the Netherlands, and may have contributed to his inability to learn the Dutch language.⁵

The Dutch generally identified Seyss-Inquart with the Austrian Anschluss. Consequently, he was regarded as the Austrian traitor. Seyss-Inquart's involvement in Austrian politics began in 1937, when he was appointed State Councilor (Staatsrat) by the Austrian Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg. Although not a member of the Nazi party at that time, his German Nationalist leanings satisfied the German Nazis to see in Seyss-Inquart their representative. Further German Pressure on Austria, climaxed by the famed conference between Hitler and Schuschnigg on January 12, 1938, led to Seyss-Inquart's appointment to the Austrian cabinet. Four days later he was installed as Minister of Interior and the

3. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 1, p. 3.

4. Seyss-Inquart Dossier, Doc. B, p.2.

5. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 3, p. 3.

Police. German pressure, which aimed at the unification of Austria and Germany - on German terms - continued. In a last attempt to avoid the Anschluss, Schuschnigg called for a plebiscite on the matter, which was answered by a German ultimatum requesting the appointment of Seyss-Inquart as Chancellor, or an invasion of German troops. On March 11, Seyss-Inquart replaced Schuschnigg as Chancellor, but the German invasion took place none-the-less. The new Chancellor did nothing to stop the German troops. Instead, the following day he went to Linz to welcome Adolf Hitler as the liberator of Austria.⁶ Seyss-Inquart was not held responsible for the Anschluss at the Nuremberg trials in 1946. The Anschluss was declared open aggression on the part of Germany for which Goering proudly claimed the leading role.⁷ The Dutch, never-the-less, considered Seyss-Inquart the Austrian traitor.

As the highest governmental authority in occupied Holland, possessing supreme judicial, legislative, and executive powers, Seyss-Inquart was officially responsible for the atrocities imposed on the Dutch people. Although he never personally officiated in shooting hostages, deporting Jews, and building concentration camps, he did support such actions by either signing the orders or allowing them to be carried out in his territory by other Nazi officials. Even though he later claimed that he had not been aware of some of

6. Gustav Steinbauer, Ich war Verteidiger in Nuernberg (Vienne: Eduard Kaiser Verlag, 1950), pp. 60-61.

7. Ibid., p. 378.

the barbarous treatment given to Jews in concentration camps, he made no more than a half-heated effort to find out about the conditions of his subjects.⁸ It was primarily for his activities in the Netherlands that the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg found him guilty of crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, and sentenced him to death in 1946.⁹

Seyss-Inquart's behavior was motivated by a mixture of opportunism and principled idealism and sentiment, each of these being modified and conditioned by the existing circumstances. Ever since his entrance into politics in 1937, opportunism seemed to play a dominant role, although his principles were periodically disclosed. Had it not been for the latter, the Dutch might have suffered more. It seems quite obvious that, although Seyss-Inquart enjoyed his elevated position, he took no pleasure in imposing harsh measures on the Dutch, and often would not have done so had authorities in Berlin not insisted on them. At times Seyss-Inquart was criticized by the party for being too lenient on the Dutch.¹⁰ Himmler attacked him for being soft on the Jews.¹¹ Seyss-Inquart protested to Hitler about Heydrich's interference with the Jews in the Netherlands, and only allowed Heydrich to carry out his designs when the Fuehrer gave official approval of these measures.¹²

8. I.M.T. Vol. XVI, pp. 1-2 and 19-20.

9. I.M.T. Vol. I, p. 367.

10. Rauter Dossier, Interview 2, p. 8.

11. Ritterbusch Dossier, Interview 1, p. 7.

12. I.M.T., Vol. XVI, pp. 19-20 and 193.

According to de Jong, Seyss-Inquart often placed his weight in favor of the Netherlands, although this is hard to document.¹³ Especially after the successful invasion of the Allies in the summer of 1944, Seyss-Inquart was less responsible for the increased terror of the occupiers since the country went gradually under the control of the SS.¹⁴ Hirschfeld, one of the Secretaries-General, asserted that Seyss-Inquart could not be held responsible for the atrocities that took place after December 1, 1944.¹⁵ During the final stages of the war, he disobeyed Hitler's "scorched earth" decree, which demanded that all assets be destroyed before the Germans surrendered an area to the enemy.¹⁶ A few weeks before the end of the war he made contact with the Allies and achieved the pseudo-neutralization of the western provinces of the Netherlands, which saved these areas from becoming a theatre of war and enabled the Allies to fly in food for the starving population.¹⁷ These actions may have been motivated by true humanitarian concerns, principles gaining over selfish interests when Seyss-Inquart realized that the Nazi cause was doomed to failure. It seems more likely, however, that he acted in anticipation of his trial, and prepared grounds for a mercy plea.

13. v.d. Leeuw, "Het economische bestuursapparaat der Duitsers in Nederland." Notities, No. 17, Discussions, p. 13.

14. J. B. Th. Spaan, "Pers en Propaganda," O.e.V. Vol. II, p. 134.

15. Seyss-Inquart Dossier, No. B, p. 28.

16. I.M.T., Vol. XVI, pp. 3 and 12.

17. I.M.T., Vol. XVI, p. 230.

Seyss-Inquart's personal ambition and desire for promotion, aided by the circumstances of the war and the nature of the Nazi regime, usually suppressed the basic principles he seemed to possess. He did not consider the High Commissioner-ship the limit of his aspirations, but hoped to be promoted to head of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His subordinates in the Reichskommissariat were also aware of these ambitions.¹⁸ These aspirations, no doubt, made him carry out measures from which he otherwise might have refrained.

When it was too late to enjoy his success, Seyss-Inquart's ambitions were rewarded. In his political testament, Hitler appointed Seyss-Inquart Minister of Foreign Affairs. In this capacity he crossed the North Sea on May 4, three days before the capitulation of Germany, to confer with the new leader of the Reich, Admiral Doenitz, who had established headquarters at Flenzberg, on the German-Danish border. In his attempted return to the Netherlands, Seyss-Inquart was arrested in Hamburg.¹⁹

Among the top Nazi leaders Seyss-Inquart occupied a mediocre and peripheral position. He was respected, but not idolized. One of his greatest drawbacks was that he had no long standing tradition in the party. He did not join the NSDAP till after the Anschluss had been accomplished, on March 13, 1938. His party

18. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 2, p. 10.

19. I.M.T., Vol. XVI, p. 17.

number was in the 7 millions.²⁰ On the otherhand, he enjoyed the moderate respect of his Nazi colleagues. Evidence of this was his appointment by Hitler, just prior to the Fuehrer's death, and the additional fact that his was the only appointment honored and maintained by Doenitz. Goebbels also spoke respectfully of Seyss-Inquart. In his diary, Goebbels noted that, owing to Seyss-Inquart, the Netherlands was governed better than any other occupied territory. Later he added that Seyss-Inquart was capable of greater tasks than the High Commissionership in the Netherlands.²¹

Seyss-Inquart's subordinates in the Reichskommissariat considered him intelligent, reserved, cool, serious, hard working, principled, and quiet. Of the 21 major war criminals at Nurenburg, intelligence tests rated him as the second highest, with an IQ of 141. He was surpassed only by the ex-German Finance Minister Hjalmer Schacht, with an IQ of 143. Herman Goering and Admiral Doenitz followed as third and fourth each with IQ's of 138.²² Seyss-Inquart was an avid reader. At Nurenburg, he upset the librarian, for he had read every work available in the library.

Even as a child, Seyss-Inquart was very quiet. He claimed that he won most of his court cases through silence.²³ In Holland

20. Steinbauer, p. 161.

21. The Goebbels Diaries (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948), pp. 426 and 493.

22. Steinbauer, pp. 60-61.

23. R.v.O., Confidential interview directed by Dr. L. de Jong of the State Institute of War Documentation, p. 3. Hereafter referred to as de Jong interview.

he was considered by many as cool and impersonal. Even his closest associates felt that he usually hid behind a mask.²⁴ Seyss-Inquart liked sports, and lived a simple life; he never drank, and smoked very little.²⁵

Seyss-Inquart showed great interest in religious and cultural matters. He was a great lover of music, especially of Bach and the latter's St. Matthew Passion. At his villa in Holland, Sunday musical matinees, with 60 or 70 persons present were quite common.²⁶ Until his death, Seyss-Inquart remained a practicing Roman Catholic, the religion in which he was born and raised. He was educated in a Jesuit school, and during his student days he was active in the Young Catholic Movement.²⁷ It has been said that all of his expressions seemed to have a pseudo-religious element.²⁸

Why was this religious, cultured, intelligent man a Nazi? This question cannot be answered in one sentence, since it consists of several interrelated factors. Without doubt, Seyss-Inquart's background played a dominant role in his political outlook. At the age of 12 he was beaten up by a group of Czech boys, which was, no doubt, a typical occurrence in ethnically mixed populations areas.

24. Seyss-Inquart Dossier, No. B, p. 2.

25. Piesbergen Dossier, Interview 1, p. 11.

26. de Jong interview, pp. 6-7.

27. Rauter Dossier, Interview 2, pp. 2 and 12.

28. Cohen, "Opzet en structuur van het Duitse Reichskommisariat in Nederland," Notities, No. 16, Besprekingen, pp. 6-7.

According to a psychiatric report this event must have influenced Seyss-Inquart in favor of a strong German nationalistic attitude.²⁹ In addition, there was the disheartening experience of the First World War, in which Seyss-Inquart fought as the youngest company commander in the Austrian army. He fought in Russia, Rumania, and Italy, and was heavily decorated for military bravery.³⁰ His disillusion must have been similar to that of German soldiers in Munich who became the vanguard of the German National Socialist party. All these experiences quickened in him the greater German outlook, which idealized the unification of all Germans into one nation and which persuaded him to support the idea of the Anschluss, and drew him toward National Socialism.³¹

For many years, Seyss-Inquart remained aloof from politics. He attended to his law practice, which he established in Vienna after the war; he had passed his final examinations in corporate law in 1917, while on a military leave. His contacts with the Austrian National Socialist party dated back to 1931, when he supported it financially.³² Apparently, not until 1937 did he see the need to promote his convictions politically, and accepted a post in the Austrian government. Seyss-Inquart had contact with Nazi leaders prior to the Anschluss, but he did not establish close

29. G. M. Gilbert, "Seyss-Inquarts persoonlijkheid," Nederland in Oorlogstijd, No. 4, December, 1949, p. 10.

30. Steinbauer, p. 159.

31. Ibid., p. 161.

32. I.M.T., Vol. 15, p. 615.

connections with them.³³ According to his own testimony, he believed in the Anschluss as the best solution for Austria's predicament, but contrary to the settlement imposed by Hitler, Seyss-Inquart had hoped to maintain a degree of autonomy for Austria.³⁴

Only after the war had ended, when opportunistic dreams had lost their chances of realization, did Seyss-Inquart allow principles to govern his thoughts and behavior again. This was expressed in his last words, preceding his execution on October 16, 1946, after having been sentenced to death by hanging by the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg.

I hope that this execution will be the last act of the tragedy of this Second World War, and that a lesson may be learned from this so that peace and understanding may be realized among the nations. I believe in Germany.³⁵

The most notorious of the German officials in the Reichskommissariat was without doubt Hans Albin Rauter, nicknamed the hangman (de beul). He was born in 1894, in Klagenfurth, Karinthia, in Austria, where his father was a well-to-do forester. In his youth, Rauter was already known as a fighter, an inclination that he never lost.³⁶ He studied to be an engineer, but at the age of 19 his studies were interrupted by the First World War, which

33. Steinbauer, p.

34. Ibid, p. 143.

35. Ibid., p. 387

36. L. de Jong, "Hanns A Rauter - persoon en daden," Nederland in Oorlogstijd, March 1949, No. 1, p. 3.

caused him to volunteer for service in the Austrian army. He fought in Italy and Albania, was wounded twice, and left the army at the end of the war as a Company Commander. War remained with Rauter, however, After the German pattern he organized two large Freecorps, semi-illegal para-military organizations, with which he fought Marxists, Poles, Yugoslavs, and Hungarians. In 1921, he went with the Bavarian Freecorp Oberland to Upper-Silesia to fight the Poles. The ideal of a Greater Germany was Rauter's dream. After the Freecorps were declared illegal by the Allies, Rauter was instrumental in the organization of the Steierische Heimatschutz, the Home Guard, in which Seyss-Inquart also held membership. Rauter became its Chief of Staff. When in May, 1923, the Heimatschutz was declared illegal, Rauter went to Germany. He later returned in Austria, for in 1931 he was an accomplice in the Pfrimer coup, an unsuccessful attempt of the National Socialist-oriented Home Guard to overthrow the government. Again Rauter fled to Germany. This time Hitler, whom Rauter had known personally since 1921, asked him to take the leadership of his fellow exiled Austrians in Germany. In 1934 Rauter became a German citizen. The following year he joined the S.S. and was given the rank of Oberfuehrer, which was equivalent to Colonel in the German army. He was periodically promoted, until in 1943 he was made General of the Police and Obergruppenfuehrer in the S.S., two ranks lower than the Reichsfuehrér S.S. Himmler and equal to the honorary rank held by Seyss-Inquart. Ironically, Rauter never

became a member of the National Socialist party, for the equally ironic reason that he did not want to become involved in politics.³⁷

When Rauter was assigned to the Netherlands in May, 1940, Seyss-Inquart was not particularly pleased. But, Rauter asserted proudly after the war, Hitler insisted on his appointment.³⁸ In his dual function as Commissioner-General under Seyss-Inquart and as S.S. and Police leader under Himmler, Rauter's influence was unequalled in occupied Holland. Every week he interfered in the lives of thousands of people.³⁹ Added to his official capacity was his personal ambition. This led to his involvement in the administration and made him aspire to become the sole executive power in the country. Wherever he interfered, it seemed that his influence was prevalent.⁴⁰ Rauter became the symbol of Nazi terror. Death sentences and other proclamations of terror always bore his signature. Rauter was Himmler in the Netherlands.⁴¹ There was considerable correspondence between Rauter and Himmler, much of which survived the war since Himmler failed to order the destruction of his archives. During periods of crisis, like the February, 1941, strike in Amsterdam and the nation-wide strike in

37. Rauter Dossier, No. E, pp. 139-144.

38. Ibid., Interview 2, p. 1.

39. de Jong, "Hanns A. Rauter - persoon en daden," p. 1.

40. N.K.C.A. in't Veld, Vijf brieven van Rauter aan Himmler mimeographed, n.d., p. 4.

41. Het Process Rauter (Den Haag; Nijhoff, 1952), pp. 12-21.

April and May, 1943, the two men had daily telephone contact.⁴² On such occasions, Rauter seemed to make the decisions in the Netherlands. Rauter was in charge of the establishment of concentration camp Vught, a transit camp for Jews waiting to be taken to the east. He was also largely responsible for the so-called silbertanne actions, which were reprisals for the killing of Dutch National Socialists.⁴³ Rauter's name was on the order which forced the Dutch to hand in their radios. He was also responsible for the administrative reorganization of food distribution, which led to issuing new identification cards. This was actually completely outside of his jurisdiction, but Wimmer and Fischboeck had intentionally failed to carry out the measure. Rauter wanted to use this as a device to squelch the resistance movement by starving its members.⁴⁴

Unlike Seyss-Inquart, Rauter liked Holland very much. He seldom went to Germany for trips or vacations as did many of his colleagues. Twice he feared that Himmler was going to change his assignment by sending him to Norway or to Poland. Later he offered this as a reason for his strict obedience of Himmler's orders.

42. Rauter Dossier, No. D, p. 147.

43. Ibid., No. D, p. 121. The silbertanne (silver fir tree) actions implied that for every Dutch National Socialist killed by the resistance movement, three arbitrary Dutchmen had to be shot. Rauter's orders for such actions were often signed by the drawing of small fir trees on the written decree.

44. Ibid., No. D, p. 147.

Rauter had a sharp intellect. He thought and talked so fast that stenographers had a difficult time keeping up with him. When in prison after the war, and faced with almost certain death, he still showed great interest in history and the contemporary world. He was anxious to read anything he could obtain, and he studied English, Dutch and mathematics. Rauter did not seem to have any close friends. In the Reichskommissariat he called no one by the familiar "du", nor was he addressed that way by anyone. He seemed to lack any understanding of the concept of friendship; friends meant to him only names of people. When trying to relate the story of his life, he skipped his childhood and started with the war.⁴⁶ Rauter never recognized his guilt; he always had some excuse, even for his worst actions. Although he was raised a Roman Catholic, he cut all ties with the Church and never renewed them, though he considered himself a believer.⁴⁷

Rauter had great respect for the Dutch resistance movement. They were "hard" men, as he would say. He hoped to have them as his friends, and felt that they should be the ones to govern the Netherlands. He even managed to arrange a meeting with some of the resistance leaders for this purpose.⁴⁸ But Rauter only understood their toughness, not their ideals.

45. Ibid., No. D, p. 185, and No. B, p. 24.

46. Ibid., No. B, Reports on the 1st and 2nd interview by L. de Jong.

47. de Jong, "Hanns A. Rauter - persoon en daden," p. 3.

48. Rauter Dossier, Interview 1, pp. 3 and 13.

Basically, Rauter liked to think of himself as a soldier. His happiest time came in September, 1944, when Holland became involved in the scene of war, and Rauter could actually participate in it. In October he organized the Kampfgruppe Rauter, made up of units of the German police, the Waffen S.S., and the Wehrmacht, to combat paratroopers behind the front. In February, 1945, he became Commander of an army corps, numbering 30,000 men. Rauter's military career did not last long, however. On the night of March 6, his car was stopped and he was shot by members of the resistance movement at Woeste Hoeve between Arnhem and Apeldoorn. These men were not aware of the significant catch they had made, as they were only interested in the car driven by Rauter and his companions. Critically wounded by eight bullets, and with all of his companions dead, Rauter was left behind in the cold night. Early the next morning he was discovered and taken to a hospital. Approximately 400 Dutchmen paid for this accident with their lives. Many of them were shot on the spot as a reprisal measure.⁴⁹

Against all expectations Rauter recovered from his wounds, though he had to spend the remainder of the war in hospitals. The retreating German army carried him to Germany, and on May 9, he was arrested by the British in a hospital near Hamburg. The following April 6 he was surrendered to the Dutch and imprisoned

49. Ibid., Interview 7, p. 7.

in Holland. In 1948 he was sentenced to death by a Dutch court, and executed on March 25, 1949.⁵⁰

Dr. Fredrich Wimmer, the Commissioner-General of Administration and Justice, was a long time friend of Seyss-Inquart. He lacked the personal ambition of Rauter and Seyss-Inquart, and followed obediently in the latter's shadow. Seyss-Inquart liked Wimmer, and they addressed each other by the familiar "du".⁵¹ When Seyss-Inquart became Chancellor of Austria, Wimmer was his Secretary of State. In this capacity he accompanied Seyss-Inquart to Linz to welcome Hitler to Austria.⁵² He remained Seyss-Inquart's assistant until the latter went to Poland, but even then they kept in touch with each other. During this time, Wimmer was Chief Administrator (Regierungspraesident) at Regensburg, Austria. When Seyss-Inquart approached him about going to Holland he resisted at first, but in the end agreed to go.⁵³

Wimmer was born in 1897, in the Austrian city of Salzburg. He received a university education in Law and in Art History, and spent a considerable amount of time in Sweden as an Art Historian.

In Holland, Wimmer remained a close friend of Seyss-Inquart. When the High Commissioner was out of the country, Wimmer usually represented him. In September, 1944, he became the permanent deputy

50. Het Process Rauter is an account of the trial.

51. Schwebel Dossier, No. B, p. 21.

52. Steinbauer, p. 107.

53. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 1, p. 4.

of the High Commissioner.⁵⁴ Wimmer had great fear of Rauter, whose dominant personality made of him a powerless, subservient tool. For this reason he also immensely disliked him.⁵⁵

On the whole, Wimmer had very little influence on the Reichskommissariat. One situation in which he showed some initiative was the intent to transform the famous University of Leiden into a Front Universitaet, an educational institution completely saturated with Nazi ideology. At the party headquarters in Munich there was great interest in the project, but the hesitance of Bormann and Himmler, and later the turn of events of the war, made Wimmer's project fail.⁵⁶

His colleagues considered Wimmer a calm, gentle, and polite person, more a scholar than a governor. Spengler influenced him greatly, Wimmer asserted. He declared after the war that he was not an anti-Semite. He said that to him there was little or no difference between races, and that circumstances in Holland had forced him to act against the Jews.⁵⁷ When he came to Holland in 1940, he declared that there existed no Jewish problem in the Netherlands.⁵⁸ It appears that Wimmer was expressing a wish,

54. Hirschfeld, p. 179.

55. K. J. Frederike, Op de bres (Den Haag; Nijhoff, 1945), pp. 16-18.

56. A. E. Cohen "Frontuniversitaet Leiden," Nederland in Oorlogstijd, March, 1948, No. 2, p. 17.

57. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 3, pp. 7 and 13.

58. J. J. van Bolhuis, "Enkele hoofdfiguren van het Duitse bestuur," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 350.

which unfortunately did not come true. Wimmer stated that the NSDAP had become completely corrupt by the end of the war. Himmler and Bormann were madmen, he added.⁵⁹

After the war, Wimmer spent at least a year in a Dutch prison and a few years in a denazification camp in Germany. He never returned to the Netherlands for trial, though some requested his return.⁶⁰ In 1946 he testified on behalf of Seyss-Inquart at the Nuremberg trials.

Fritz Schmidt, the Commissioner-General of Special Affairs, was the only German among the top civil servants of the Reichskommissariat. Sometimes he was referred to as Schmidt-Muenster, because he came from the city of Muenster, and because this distinguished him from the numerous Schmidts in Germany. Because Muenster was close to the Dutch border, Schmidt was able to understand the Dutch people and their administration better than the Austrians. Born in Eisleben in 1903, Schmidt had little formal education. He worked his way up through the party.⁶¹ Although he had had little formal education, compared to his fellow German administrators, Schmidt was a tremendous propaganda leader and made numerous political speeches.⁶² He was able to perceive the feelings and opinions of the Dutch, and he tried to present Nazi

59. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 2, pp. 6 and 16.

60. Ibid., "Nota betreffende de zaak Wimmer."

61. Rauter Dossier, Interview 2, p. 11.

62. Bolhuis, pp. 346-347.

demands in such a manner that it would be acceptable to them.⁶³
 Unfortunately for him, he tackled an impossible task.

Schmidt was also a great opportunist. For the sake of realizing his objectives he managed to get his hands into practically everything. His influence led to the abolition of all political parties, except the Dutch National Socialist party (NSB), which he manipulated for his own designs.⁶⁴ He had considerable influence in the administration, the dismissals and appointments of personnel, both in the Reichskommissariat and the Dutch administration, a function which rightfully belonged to Wimmer.⁶⁵ After 1942, he represented Fritz Sauckel, the Plenipotentiary for Labor Mobilization in the Reich.⁶⁶ In order to be more successful in the political indoctrination of the Dutch he effected the creation of a new governmental department, that of Nurture, Science, and Protection of Culture, a derivative of the Department of Education, Arts, and Sciences.⁶⁷ In addition, Schmidt pushed the Jewish question in the Netherlands.⁶⁸ Schmidt was the only actual rival of Rauter, both in authority and in personal ambition. He was supported in his policies by Bormann, who enhanced Schmidt's

63. Warmbrunn, p. 32.

64. Rauter Dossier, No. D, p. 155.

65. Frederiks, p. 16.

66. Rauter Dossier, No. D, p. 155.

67. A. L. Scholtens, "De Secretarissen-General," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 408.

68. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 1, p. 7.

authority with the creation of the German Arbeitsbereich in the Netherlands, the Dutch section of the NSDAP.⁶⁹ The ensuing struggle between him and Rauter contributed to Schmidt's untimely death in 1943.⁷⁰

Willi Ritterbusch succeeded Schmidt in the office of Commissioner-General of Special Affairs. He took his position on July 9, 1943. Ritterbusch was not completely new in the Reichskommissariat, for in 1940 and 1941 he had served as Special Representative of the High Commissioner in the province of Noord Brabant. He had spent the intervening years at the party headquarters in Munich, where he just wasted time as there was little work to be done. Born in Verden, Saxony, Ritterbusch was a relatively early party member in Northern Germany. He joined the NSDAP in 1925. Together with his brother he wrote a pamphlet in those early days, and distributed it for the cause. By profession, Ritterbusch was a school teacher, but - apparently through an inheritance - he ended up managing a small pottery factory. The economic depression ruined his firm, and according to Ritterbusch, socialists aided his misery by burning down the factory. For a while he was unemployed, but soon after the Nazi seizure of power, he was appointed mayor of the small town Piesteritz, and later served as party district leader.⁷¹

69. Cohen, "Onstaan en Betekenis van 'Der Arbeitsbereich der NSDAP in den Niederlande'," Notities, No. 26, pp. 5-6.

70. Both the Arbeitsbereich and the problem of Schmidt's death will be dealt with in detail in Chapter V.

71. See Ritterbusch Dossier.

Ritterbusch has been described as a colorless party official.⁷² Compared to Schmidt, he showed less interest in administrative matters and more interest in his work as leader of the Arbeitsbereich, or work with the Germans in Holland.⁷³ On the whole, the department of Special Affairs decreased in prominence after Schmidt's death, partly because Ritterbusch lacked the personal ambition and drive of Schmidt, but also because Bormann seemed to have abandoned his personal interests in the Netherlands.

Ritterbusch was a shy and fearful person. Like many others, he believed that Schmidt had been murdered by the S.S., and he feared that unless he was careful the same fate might become his. As much as he could, he stayed out of the limelight. He usually sent representatives to important meetings.⁷⁴

After the war, Ritterbusch shared the fate of several other German officials by being imprisoned in the Netherlands for a few years. After his release he returned to Germany to live in Bavaria.⁷⁵

Dr. Hans Fischboeck, the Commissioner-General of Finance and Economics, was a friend of Seyss-Inquart from the early days of their youth. Fischboeck was born in Horn, in lower Austria, in 1895. He served as an officer in the First World War. After the war he studied law, but ended up as a bank president in Vienna.

72. Warmbrunn, p. 33.

73. Schwebel Dossier, No. B, p. 31.

74. Bolhuis, p. 347.

75. See Ritterbusch Dossier.

In February, 1938, Seyss-Inquart encouraged Fischboeck's entrance into the Austrian Government, which reaped success in March when Seyss-Inquart became Chancellor. Fischboeck became Finance Minister, and in this capacity liquidated this ministry in the process of making Austria a province of the Reich.⁷⁶ Like Seyss-Inquart Fischboeck's actions were motivated by personal ambition. His eyes were also focussed on a prominent position in the Reich. His ambition came to fruition in January, 1942, when he was appointed Reich Commissioner for the regulation of prices (Preisbildung). Following this appointment Fischboeck was seldom in Holland, although he retained his post as Commissioner-General.

During the war, Fischboeck directed the systematic exploitation of the Netherlands, and he discharged his mission quite successfully. The Dutch called him the murderer of their country's prosperity, and one of the Secretaries-General referred to him as a most cunning plunderer.⁷⁷ Fischboeck was an intelligent man and a good economist, which made him the more dangerous as an adversary.⁷⁸ His objective was to integrate the Dutch economy into that of Germany. For this reason he abolished the currency frontier between the two countries as early as 1941, which simplified the drainage of the Dutch resources.⁷⁹ Fischboeck also made the Dutch

76. Ibid.

77. van der Leeuw, p. 5.

78. Wohlthat Dossier, Interview I, p. 6.

79. Hirschfeld, p. 50.

pay for the cost of the German occupation troops, a practice contrary to international law and against the capitulation agreement. He also designed the plan of registering all Dutch males between the ages of 18 and 40, in order to solicit manpower for the German war industry.⁸⁰

With Fischboeck spending most of his time in Germany, his responsibilities were attended to by Fiebig, who came to the Netherlands in 1940 as representative of the German Minister of Armament and Munition, Fritz Todt. When Albert Speer succeeded Todt in 1942, and reorganized the ministry, Fiebig managed to capture all the important economic positions, until he became the dominant figure in the economic affairs in occupied Holland. By 1943, he controlled the total production of industry, and in 1944, he became the official deputy of Fischboeck, which meant that he was virtually in control of all the economic functions.⁸¹

In the end of the war Fiebig's influence was very damaging. First he tried to convert the Dutch industries into participation in the German war industry. When this failed, he ordered the destruction and hauling away of all machinery. He wanted to make sure, he admitted, that Germany was not going to be fooled again as in France and Belgium, where the Allies were able to capture intact machinery and goods.⁸²

80. Seyss-Inquart Dossier, No. B, pp. 10, and 18-20.

81. v.d. Leeuw, "De Rijksbureaux onder Duits en Nederlands Gezag," Notities, No. 62, pp. 26-27.

82. Hirschfeld, pp. 121 and 163.

Otto Bene, the representative of the German Foreign Office, was a quiet man who usually stayed in the background. Although he was a convinced National Socialist, he interfered little in political affairs. He had almost no influence in the activities of the Reichskommissariat, although he was allowed to take part in the weekly councils of the High Commissioner, in which he only had an advisory voice.⁸³

Bene was born in Kloster, on the Baltic coast of Germany, in 1884, and received his education in Hamburg in business administration. For several years he remained in Hamburg as a merchant, but from 1926 till 1936 he represented his firm in England. He joined the NSDAP in 1931, and was leader of the party in England during his residence there. Returning to Germany in 1936, he was employed by the ministry of Foreign Affairs, and was sent to Italy the following year. Until 1943 he held the title of Consul General at Milan, and was at the same time governmental representative for South Tirol. After his additional appointment to Holland in 1940, he traveled back and forth between Italy and the Netherlands.⁸⁴

One of Bene's most important involvements in the Netherlands dealt with hostages. On orders of the High Commissioner he had to submit a list of 350 names of prominent Dutch citizens, of whom many were taken as hostages and several were killed. This action was in retaliation for arrests of Germans by Dutch in the then Dutch East Indies.

83. Bene Dossier, No. 2.

84. Ibid., No. 2.

In 1944, Bene lost favor with the German authorities temporarily, and was recalled to Berlin. After two months he returned to his position in the Netherlands without knowing the reason for his recall. After the war, Bene's lack of influence did not save him from a few years of imprisonment.⁸⁵

Dr. Hans Piesbergen, the head of the High Commissioner's Chancellery, had been an administrative official for many years before he went to the Netherlands in 1940. He was a rather independent person. Wimmer complained that Piesbergen was unwilling to place himself under his jurisdiction. Consequently, the personnel of the Chancellery remained independent of the Department of Administration and Justice.⁸⁶ Piesbergen was also one of the few officials in the Reichskommissariat who liked Rauter. The two went hunting together. Unlike the persons dealt with above, Piesbergen was not an early party member and Nazi by conviction. He joined the NSDAP in 1933, as did several of his colleagues, in order to keep his job.

Before Piesbergen went to Holland, the Germans used his administrative abilities in Czechoslovakia and Poland, to set in order local governments. Probably he was sent to Holland because of his previous experience in occupied territories, and because he knew the country and its people quite well. He had relatives in the Netherlands whom he visited frequently. As head of the

85. Ibid., No. 4 and No. 9.

86. Wimmer Dossier, Interview I, p. 6.

Chancellery, Piesbergen did the important correspondence for Seyss-Inquart. He also attended the weekly conferences. During the last days of the war he managed to escape to Germany, where he was arrested, but also released again because the British felt that his record did not warrant imprisonment.⁸⁷

The special representatives of the High Commissioner were of only minor consequence in the workings of the Reichskommissariat compared to the higher officials discussed above. On the average, and contrary to the top officials, the special representatives had a much higher rate of replacement, as the list below shows.⁸⁸

87. Piesbergen Dossier, Interview I, p. 9.

88. R.v.O., "De Beauftragten," Notities, No. 27. Following is a list of provincial and city representatives. The list is compiled by the R.v.O.

<u>Friesland:</u>	Dr. Hermann <u>Conring</u> Dr. Werner <u>Ross</u>	begin - 30-7-1940 30-7-1940 - einde
<u>Groningen:</u>	Dr. Hermann <u>Conring</u>	7-6-1940 - einde
<u>Drente:</u>	Dr. Kurt <u>Hartong</u> Robert <u>Thiel</u> Heinrich <u>Sellner</u> Adolf <u>Brandes</u>	begin - 29-7-1940 29-7-1940 - 22-10-1941 22-10-1941 - 1-5-1944 1-6-1944 - einde
<u>Overijssel:</u>	Dr. Kurt <u>Hartong</u> Dr. Werner <u>Schröder</u> Karl <u>Weidlich</u>	begin - 31-7-1940 31-7-1940 - 11-3-1943 11-3-1943 - einde
<u>Gelderland:</u>	Dr. Emil <u>Schneider</u>	7-6-1940 - einde
<u>Utrecht:</u>	Henning <u>von Winterfeld</u> Dr. Arthur <u>Joachim</u> Adolf <u>Brandes</u> Siegfried <u>Sommer</u> Adolf <u>Brandes</u> Fritz <u>Himmerich</u> Bruno Max <u>Müller-Reinert</u>	begin - 26-7-1940 26-7-1940 - 10-8-1941 10-8-1941 - 22-10-1941 22-10-1941 - 20-4-1942 20-4-1942 - 29-6-1942 29-6-1942 - 14-10-1942 14-10-1942 - einde

It is also interesting to note that very few of the positions were filled at the beginning of the occupation, but were gradually occupied after a few months.

There is, therefore, no need to deal with these Beauftragte separately in this study. One of their number, however, deserves some special attention owing to his involvements in the activities of the Reichskommissariat at large. He is August Schwebel, the special representative of the province of Zuid Holland. Schwebel made a favorable and important impact towards ending the war in the Netherlands. When Seyss-Inquart began to lead a more ambulant life, and all the main offices had been removed from the Hague, Schwebel - whose headquarters were also in the Hague, it being the province of Zuid Holland - stayed behind to represent the High Commissioner. The latter returned only periodically, and during such visits stayed

<u>Noord-Holland:</u>	Dr. Werner <u>Ross</u> Martin <u>Seidel</u> Walter <u>Unger</u> Dr. Werner <u>Schröder</u>	7-6-1940 - 30-7-1940 30-7-1940 - 7-1-1942 7-1-1942 - 31-10-1942 11-3-1943 - einde 1)
<u>Zuid-Holland:</u>	Ernst <u>Schwebel</u>	juni 1940 - einde
<u>Zeeland:</u>	Dr. Franz <u>Linde</u> Willi <u>Münzer</u>	1-6-1940 - 26-7-1940 26-7-1940 - 1-12-1944
<u>Noord Brabant:</u>	Alfred <u>Weber</u> Willi <u>Ritterbusch</u> Robert <u>Thiel</u> Heinrich <u>Sellmer</u>	2-6-1940 - 31-7-1940 31-7-1940 - 17-9-1941 22-10-1941 - 22-4-1944 1-5-1944 - einde
<u>Limburg:</u>	Alfred <u>Weber</u> Wilhelm <u>Schmidt</u>	2-6-1940 - 26-7-1940 26-7-1940 - 15-11-1944
<u>Amsterdam:</u>	Dr. Hans <u>Böhmcker</u> Werner <u>Schröder</u>	16-9-1940 - 21-6-1942 21-6-1942 - einde
<u>Rotterdam:</u>	Ernst <u>Schwebel</u> Carl <u>Völckers</u>	begin - 26-7-1940 26-7-1940 - einde

with Schwebel.⁸⁹ Consequently, a friendship developed between the two, which enabled Schwebel to become a contact man between Seyss-Inquart and the Dutch Secretaries-General, the resistance movement, the Dutch Government in exile in London, and eventually, the Allied High Command. This resulted in the successful negotiations described before.⁹⁰

The Commanders of the Security Police (Sipo), who by nature of their offices were the deputies of Rauter, had a significant influence in occupied Holland, especially during the last years of the war. Their importance is usually overlooked because they stood in the shadow of their chief, the Higher S.S. and Police Leader North-West. The first of these Sipo Commanders, Nockeman, was in the Netherlands such a short time that his importance is insignificant. He was replaced by Dr. William Harster, a professional police officer. Probably because of this latter fact, Harster's actions were relatively conservative compared to his successors. Harster was transferred to Italy in October, 1943, and replaced by Erich Nauman.⁹¹

Before his assignment to the Netherlands, Nauman had spent two years in Poland and Russia as a commander of Special Commandos (Einsatzgruppen), which were engaged in wholesale shootings of Jews and alledged Communist leaders. Now he tried to introduce the methods applied in the east to the Netherlands. For this reason,

89. Hirschfeld, pp. 134 and 154.

90. See page 43.

91. Warmbrunn, p. 41.

he made his subordinates more independent, so they could act without going through legal channels. In cooperation with Rauter, Nauman was involved in the silbertanne actions. He did not get along with Rauter, however, and on the latter's request Nauman was replaced in June, 1944.⁹²

Nauman had received his military training from the secret Black Reichswehr during the early 1920's. Afterwards he had a thriving business, but he felt more attracted to Röhm and the S.A. and left the business world. He became a regimental commander in the S.A. In the S.S. he held the rank of Brigadefuehrer, which was equivalent to Major General in the Reichswehr. After the war, Nauman managed to escape war criminal and denazification courts and hid in Bavaria for two years, working as a farm hand. After two years, he was apprehended, however, and was sentenced to death by a German court. After two unsuccessful appeals he was executed in June, 1957.⁹³

Dr. Karl Georg Schoengarth was the last commander of the Sipo in the Netherlands. "The Unknown Contemporary", a biographer dubbed him, because of his tremendously harmful influence, though he was generally unknown. Like Nauman, Schoengarth had previous experience in the east. He was Commander of the Security Police in Poland from 1941 till 1943, under Hans Frank. Before going to the Netherlands,

92. Nauman Dossier, No. 2.

93. A. E. Cohen, "Schuldig Slachtoffer: De derde Befeelshaber der Sicherheitspolizei en Sicherheitsdienst in Nederland," Notities, No. 90, pp. 5 and 9-16.

he served one year in the Waffen S.S. on the eastern front.

Schoengarth had lived a very active life. In 1920 he participated in the Kapp-Putsch as a freecorps soldier. In 1922, he joined the NSDAP. He studied and made a career as a lawyer. In 1933, he joined the S.S., and two years later he became a member of the Gestapo.⁹⁴ His previous experiences with the Einsatzgruppen in the east inspired him to organize them also in the Netherlands, and in September, 1944, they started their operations against the resistance movement behind the front. After the attack on Rauter in March, 1945, Schoengarth officially took over Rauter's position, although he had already taken over the police duties in September when Rauter became involved in the war effort. Schoengarth was said to be habitually drunk those days and was largely responsible for the massive shootings that followed the attack on Rauter. The best excuse for his deeds, stated after the war, was that instead of shooting hostages he shot "death candidates," men who had been sentenced to death or soon would be by some quickly operating German court.⁹⁵

In February, 1946, the British sentenced Schoengarth to death, on the charge of willfully shooting English airmen. He was briefly returned to the Netherlands for questioning, and was executed in May, 1946, in Germany.⁹⁶

94. A. E. Cohen, "Een onbekende tijdgenoot," Notities, No. 71, p. 2.

95. Schoengarth Dossier, No. I, pp. 1-2.

96. Ibid., No. 7.

CHAPTER IV

THE REICHSKOMMISSARIAT AND THE DUTCH ADMINISTRATION

When the High Commissioner took over the executive and legislative powers of the Netherlands, he maintained the Dutch administration to execute the policies of his office. There were several reasons for this action. In the first place, the Germans considered the Dutch administration to be in good condition when they took over the government of the country.¹ Second, Seyss-Inquart felt that he needed the Dutch civil service corps for various reasons. Their stay would provide continuity of government, and consequently a smooth transfer of power. In addition, the maintenance of the heads of the governmental departments, the Secretaries-General, would give the policies of the High Commissioner a sense of voluntary approval on the part of the Dutch, since the Secretaries-General would attach their signatures to the decrees. Finally, as Seyss-Inquart stated in his First Report, the existing administration was needed because National Socialist and rightist elements in the Netherlands were unable to supply capable personnel to replace the current civil service corps.²

Soon after Seyss-Inquart came to the Netherlands, he summoned a conference with the Secretaries-General, at which he requested them to remain at their posts. If they did, he demanded that they

1. Wimmer Dossier, Interview 1, p. 16.

2. Seyss-Inquart's First Report, pp. 173 and 176.

support his policies. However, they could resign without fear of repercussions whenever they felt they were unable to obey. After consultation with General Winkelman, whom the Secretaries-General still regarded as head of the Dutch administration, they decided to accept Seyss-Inquart's offer.³ One of the main reasons for this action was that if they stepped down, Dutch National Socialists would have been more than anxious to take their places.⁴ Those of the Secretaries-General who remained in office throughout the war continually used this as an excuse to retain office.

Cooperation with the Germans was quite common at the beginning of the war. The Germans, flushed with victory, tolerated no resistance, nor did the defeated people contemplate resistance on any large scale.⁵ Outside the German hegemony in Europe there was little hope. Many persons, including prominent Dutch individuals, adjusted their outlook to the new course of events. The eminent Dutch statesman, Hendrik Colijn, who had been prime minister from 1933 until 1939, wrote a pamphlet which called for a compromise with the Germans and adjustments to the new direction of Europe under German leadership. The Prime Minister of the Dutch government in exile, D. J. de Geer, played an even more defeatist role. In defiance of his fellow ministers and the Queen, he returned to

3. Frederiks, p. 8.

4. Ibid., p. 11; Hirschfeld, p. 69.

5. Ibid., p. 8.

the Netherlands and offered to cooperate with the Germans.⁶

The example set by the Secretaries-General had a great influence on their subordinates. Now the civil servants could do little else but remain at their posts. From the very beginning, however, there was a lack of wholehearted cooperation with the Reichskommissariat. Less than two months after the installation of the German civil government, Seyss-Inquart noted in his First Report that the Dutch civil servants were bothersome. They always wanted to be forced to act, so that they would not be responsible for the consequences.⁷

The decision of the civil servants to stay on the job was not just a matter of choice. The council of ministers, foreseeing the possibility of a war and the ensuing predicament of the civil servants, had prepared some guidelines, the Directives of 1937 (Aanwijzingen). Unfortunately, these Directives were not satisfactorily distributed, and consequently not always adhered to. Besides, the Directives were quite vague; they were not adapted to total and modern warfare, which added to their poor workability. On the other hand, they did provide some direction, where otherwise there might have been chaos and indecision.⁸ In order to make the Direc-

6. Warmbrunn, pp. 131-132. Colijn's pamphlet is entitled *On the Border of Two Worlds*, (Op de grens van twee Werelden). He soon rejected his own thesis of the pamphlet when he saw the true intentions of the Germans. In the course of the war he was placed in a German concentration camp, where he died in 1944.

7. Seyss-Inquart's First Report, p. 177.

8. L. Bosch Ridder van Rosenthal, "De Aanwijzingen," *O.e.V.*, Vol. I, pp. 385-387.

tives more specific and functional, the resistance movement secretly published and distributed a commentary on the Directives in May, 1943. This commentary received the approval of the government-in-exile a few months later.⁹

The civil servants were also obligated to sign a loyalty declaration, but Secretary-General Frederiks was able to exempt most of the officials, although newcomers had to sign it. In March, 1943, students had to sign a similar declaration or face expulsion from school and forced labor in Germany. Approximately 16% of the students in higher education signed, quite a change in attitude compared to the first months of the occupation,¹⁰ when practically all of the civil servants complied with German demands.

Also during the first year of the occupation, in October, 1940, all civil servants including university professors and school teachers were required to sign an Arian declaration (arierverklaring), which indicated that the signers were neither Jewish or at least less than one fourth Jewish, nor married to or engaged to a member of the "Jewish race." Apart from the approximately 1% Jews among the civil servants, practically all signed the declaration, most of them under protest, however.¹¹ Among the protestors were all the pre-war Secretaries-General.¹² A few civil servants refused to sign and resigned from their posts. When all Jews were dismis-

9. Warmbrunn, p. 121.

10. F. W. Blase, (ed.), Studenten onder de bezetting (Amsterdam: Kirchner, 1946), pp. 12-14.

11. de Jong, De bezetting, Vol. 1, p. 127.

12. Seyss-Inquart Dossier, Doc. B, p. 17.

sed from their positions soon afterwards, most of their fellow civil servants supported them financially, instead of resigning in sympathy.¹³

The position of the College of Secretaries-General as well as the attitudes of the individual Secretaries-General were of primary importance, both for the Reichskommissariat and for the Dutch government; the Secretaries-General were the higher officials who managed the governmental departments under the supervision of the respective minister who formulated the policies of the government. The Secretaries-General worked out the details for implementing these policies. The office of the Secretary-General was left over from the centralized authoritarian government prior to 1823. This office was democratized and maintained by the constitutional monarchy following 1848.¹⁴ When Queen Wilhelmina and her Cabinet left for England during the short war against Germany, the Secretaries-General were ordered to support General Winkelman as acting head of the Dutch government. The Secretaries-General became in essence acting ministers as well as managers of the departments, which gave this office far greater significance than it had previously enjoyed. Seyss-Inquart maintained them in the positions which they held under Winkelman, and officially granted them certain legislative powers.¹⁵ The exec-

13. B. A. Syes, De February staking (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1954), p. 22.

14. Cohen, "De positie van de Secretarissen-Generaal tijdens de bezetting," Notities, No. 78, pp. 9-10.

15. Scholtens, "De Secretarissen-General," O.e.V., Vol. I, pp. 399-400.

utive powers of the Secretaries-General were far reaching. Frederiks, the Secretary-General of Internal Affairs, for example, appointed all the mayors of towns and municipalities with a population under 50,000. Before the war these appointments were made by the crown. Seyss-Inquart appointed the mayors of the larger cities himself.¹⁶

Traditionally the Secretaries-General operated as a unit, called the College of Secretaries-General. They held meetings resembling those of the council of ministers for the sake of coordinating the administration. These meetings increased in importance after the war, since the position of the Secretaries-General had become more consequential. Until July, 1941, the College was chaired by A. M. Snouck Hurgronje, Secretary-General of General Affairs and Foreign Affairs. After this date, and until the end of the war, Frederiks took the leadership. The unity of the College did not last very long, however. When, in 1941, Seyss-Inquart appointed National Socialists as Secretaries-General, two factions arose with the old Secretaries-General in one camp and the National Socialist members in the other. Toward the end of the war, the old Secretaries-General began meeting in secret in order to insure national interests against the political and economic exploitation of the Nazis.¹⁷ These meetings aroused the suspicion of the Germans, and the SD was ordered to arrest the old Secretaries-General. While the SD were trying to gather suf-

16. Ibid., p. 406.

17. Ibid., p. 404.

ficient evidence to justify the arrests, the war came to an end.¹⁸

The agreement made with Seyss-Inquart that the Secretaries-General could resign if they did not agree with the policies of the Reichskommissariat also implied that Seyss-Inquart could dismiss them if they refused to carry out or acted against the policies of the High Commissioner. Both cases occurred rather frequently during the war, with the result that by the end of 1943, only three of the eleven original Secretaries-General remained in office.

The first to leave was C. I. Ringeling, the Secretary-General of Defense. Ringeling was dismissed in the summer of 1940 because he kept consulting General Winkelman in matters of the administration.¹⁹ The second to leave was A. L. Scholtens, Secretary-General of Social Affairs. Scholtens resigned in August, 1940. He was followed in September of that year by G. A. van Poelje, the Secretary-General of Education, Arts, and Sciences. Van Poelje's difficulties with Seyss-Inquart arose from the fact that the former gave his personnel a holiday on the Queen's birthday. In March, 1941, two more Secretaries-General left. One of these was L. J. A. Trip, of the Department of Finance and also President of the Netherlands Bank. Trip resigned because he could not agree with Fischboeck on financial policies. The other was J. C. Tenkink, the acting Secretary-General of Justice. He left

18. Naumann Dossier, Doc. 3.

19. Seyss-Inquart's First Report, p. 175.

because he refused to comply with Wimmer's orders to take actions against the Jews. Snouck Hurgronje resigned in July, 1941, because he was unwilling to endorse the German war effort and propaganda against the Soviet Union, which had been drawn into the war against Germany the previous month. The Secretaries-General D. Six of the Department of Colonies, and D. Spitsen of the Department of Waterways and Works were by the nature of their assignments able to avoid sensitive issues. Eventually they were unable to justify their cooperation with the Germans, and at the end of 1943 they also resigned.²⁰

The three remaining Secretaries-General, Hirschfeld, Verwey, and Frederiks remained at their posts until the end of the war. Dr. H. M. Hirschfeld managed the Departments of Commerce, Industry, and Shipping, and of Agriculture and Fisheries. In 1944, he was also entrusted with the newly founded Department of Traffic. Hirschfeld was an intelligent and capable economist, who was willing to compromise with the Germans so that he could retain his position in order to maintain the Dutch economic and social order until the war came to an end. He played a daring and often dangerous game to achieve his objectives. Although his father was a Jew, most of the high German officials respected him greatly. At the end of the war, Hirschfeld played an important role in the negotiations between Seyss-Inquart and the Allies. He was a witness at the Nuremberg trials in the case against Seyss-

20. Scholtens, pp. 407-410.

Inquart.²¹

G. A. Frederiks, the Secretary-General of Internal Affairs, felt it his duty to remain in office for the benefit of his country. He preferred to collaborate and compromise with the Germans rather than to allow an opportunist successor to ignore completely the best interests of the Dutch. As a consequence of his actions Frederiks acquired many enemies among Germans, Dutch National Socialists, and Dutch patriots alike. Dutch National Socialists made an attempt on his life in September of 1944. With the approval of Seyss-Inquart he went into hiding after this incident.

A. T. Verwey, the acting Secretary-General of Social Affairs, had succeeded Scholtens when the latter was dismissed in 1940. Verwey was willing to make far reaching concessions for the sake of preserving the public health of the Dutch population.

On the whole, the three Secretaries-General in question were motivated by humanitarian impulses. They believed that they could do more good by staying in office than by resigning, even if this meant participation in evil acts. In many ways their good intentions bore fruit, but they were also forced to assist in measures harmful to the Dutch. The example of the Secretaries-General provided many unprincipled and apprehensive civil servants with an excuse for collaboration, even when this could have been avoided. The three officials were violently attacked by the secret press

21. The involvements of Hirschfeld and Frederiks in the operations of the war time administration and close association with officials in the Reichskommissariat are of great importance to the student of the Reichskommissariat. Both men have published accounts of their experiences.

of the resistance movements. Verwey's collaboration, in particular, went farther than seemed necessary, although he was also able to benefit the Dutch in many ways. The positions of Hirschfeld and Frederiks were sympathetically judged by the Dutch post-war government, and they were honorably released from their posts.²²

In addition to introducing the Reichskommissariat as a supervisory structure in the Dutch governmental system, the Germans also made several changes in the existing government. First of all, the function of the legislative arm of the government was completely taken over by the High Commissioner. The legislative bodies, the Estates-General (Staten Generaal) consisting of a First and Second Chamber, were temporarily suspended. Frederiks was able to avoid their immediate and complete dissolution.²³ The traditional democratic processes came to a halt. No elections were held for the duration of the occupation. As early as July, 1940, the Marxist parties, including the Communist Party (CPN), the Social Democratic Workers, Party (SDAP), and the Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (RSAP) were placed under the supervision of the prominent Dutch National Socialist, Rost van Tonningen. At the same time the largest Dutch Association of Trade Unions was placed under H. J. Woudenberg, another Dutch National Socialist. In June, 1941, all political parties, with the exception of the Dutch National Socialist Party (NSB), were officially dissolved. Gradually many of the party leaders were made hostages or interned for the purpose of

22. Warmbrunn, pp. 122-127

23. Frederiks, p.67.

eliminating illegal party activities. However, some of the remaining party leaders were able to participate in the resistance movement.²⁴

On order of the High Commissioner the local governments, provinces, and municipalities were deprived of their last vestiges of self government. First the provincial councils were placed under the supervision of representatives of the High Commissioner.²⁵ In August, 1941, these councils were dissolved completely. The former Commissioners of the Queen retained their posts, but their titles were changed to Provincial Commissioner (Commissaris der Provincie), and their authority was increased by relegating to them the work of the dissolved councils. It was not long, however, until eight of the eleven Provincials Commissioners were replaced by NSBers,²⁶ members of the Dutch National Socialist Party. The municipal councils were also dissolved and replaced by Governmental Commissioners (Regeringscommissarissen).²⁷ The whole development was aimed at the introduction of the National Socialist leadership principle, which implied one man rule.²⁸

The Judiciary retained a reasonable degree of independence, particularly in non-political cases. On several occasions Dutch

24. Warmbrunn, pp. 122-127.

25. Seyss-Inquart's First Report, p. 177.

26. J. in't Veld, "De Provincies," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 456.

27. J. Meulenbelt, De duitse tijd (Utrecht: Bruna, 1955), p. 86.

28. J. in't Veld, "De Gemeenten," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 441.

judges adjusted their sentences, taking into account the harsh treatment in the German controlled prisons. On the other hand, the High Commissioner exerted his right to interfere whenever he wished. He tended to appoint pro-German judges, and dismissed others who deviated too much from the German demands. The Dutch High Council (Hoge Raad), the highest judicial body in the Netherlands, continued its activities throughout the war. It made many concessions to the occupiers, and Seyss-Inquart appointed several NSBers to fill vacancies in it. However, the NSBers never had a majority in the Council. The government-in-exile denounced its authority in the fall of 1944 because of its collaboration with the Germans. After the war, the Council was severely criticized, but its members responded with an excuse similar to that of the Secretaries-General; that, if they had resigned, their places would have been taken by National Socialists.²⁹

The Dutch police was placed under the jurisdiction of the German Order Police, and consequently under Rauter. At the beginning of the war, the Dutch police took strong action against aggressive demonstrations by the NSB and its auxiliary organizations, which resulted, on occasion, in clashes between these demonstrators and the police. Gradually, however, both the leadership and the ranks of the police were replenished with pro-German elements. First in 1941 and again in 1943, Rauter reorganized the Dutch police so that the once locally controlled police forces

29. Warmbrunn, pp. 127-130

lost their independence and were absorbed into the State Police (Staatspolitie). Rauter trained NSBers in the police school in Schalkhaar in order to make the Dutch police politically more reliable. Furthermore Rauter began using the Dutch police for German political purposes, for example, in arresting Jews. These measures caused many loyal policemen to cooperate with the resistance movements, and eventually to go into hiding. There were also many policemen, however, who obediently cooperated with the German authorities.³⁰

The Germans also made some changes in the existing Dutch administration. The first of these innovations was the separation of the Department of Education, Arts, and Sciences into two different departments in the fall of 1940. One was named the Department of Education, Science, and Protection of Culture, (Opvoeding, Wetenschap en Cultuurbescherming) and was primarily concerned with formal education and youth concerns. The other was called the Department of Propaganda and Arts (Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten), and was concerned with public media, literature, and the arts. The latter was a replica of the Department of Propaganda in Germany under Goebbels, and was designed to further the nazification of the Dutch. In 1941 a new Department of Special Economic Affairs (Bijzondere Economische Zaken) was created for the purpose of coordinating economics under stricter National

30. F. R. Mijnlief, "De Nederlandse politie tijdens de bezetting," O.e.V., Vol. I, pp. 420-429.

Socialist control. The Department of Foreign Affairs was dissolved.³¹ Seyss-Inquart also created the Advisory Committee Woltersom, named after its chairman. This was a committee of seven persons who were to provide the Reichskommissariat with advice concerning economic conditions in the country.³²

Some of the most consequential changes effected by the Germans in the Dutch administration were in the area of personnel. The fears of the Secretaries-General that in case of their resignation they would be replaced by NSBers were justified. By the end of the war many Dutch National Socialists had been appointed to prominent positions, both local and national. A large number of prewar mayors were removed, especially during the year 1943, and replaced by members of the NSB or persons who were favorably inclined toward National Socialism. Whereas before the war there were no NSB mayors, in January, 1943, their number was 120. This meant that thirty-nine percent of the Dutch population was under local NSB control. By the following October these figures had increased to 240 NSB mayors administering forty-five percent of the population. By July, 1944, these figures were 275 and almost fifty-two percent.³³

31. Warmbrunn, p. 36.

32. A. J. v.d. Leeuw, "De Rijksbureaux van Handel en Nijverheid en het georganiseerde bedrijfsleven," Notities, No. 61, pp. 9-11.

33. J. in't Veld, "Gemeenten," O.e.V., p. 453. The percentages given are actually quite conservative, since they do not include the population of Amsterdam, the largest city in the Netherlands, which, as a matter of course, had an NSB mayor.

There were few highly educated persons among the membership of the NSB. Consequently, few of their number qualified for the office of mayor, to which traditionally only highly educated citizens were assigned by royal appointment. For this reason a special school was organized to offer rapid training courses for the office of mayor. Many of the newly appointed mayors received their training here.³⁴

Most of the high civil servants, such as the Secretaries-General, appointed during the war were also members of the NSB or persons sympathetic toward National Socialism. These included the few highly educated NSBers, persons who had held prominent positions before the war.

The first of these appointments was the prominent NSBer, M. M. Rost van Tonningen, as Commissioner of the Marxist parties in July, 1940. Rost van Tonningen had been employed by the League of Nations for some years as an economic adviser. At the outbreak of the war he was a representative of the NSB in the Second Chamber. After Rost van Tonningen failed to transform the leftist parties into groups sympathetic to National Socialism, he was released from his duty and appointed President of the Netherlands Bank in March, 1941. The following month he received the additional appointment of Secretary-General of the newly founded Department of Special Economic Affairs. In these capacities he was responsible for the printing of tremendous amounts of paper money,

34. Scholtens, p. 414.

the increase of the national debt, and the payment of the German occupation troops from the Dutch treasury.³⁵

Another appointment in July, 1940, was that of the NSBer J. H. Woudenberg as Commissioner of the socialist-oriented Netherlands Associations of Trade Unions (NVV). The following year he acquired the same positions with the Protestant and Roman Catholic trade unions. Woudenberg also met with much opposition and organized labor disintegrated shortly in the Netherlands.³⁶

In September, 1940, Seyss-Inquart appointed the NSBer R. van Genechten as Attorney-General. After he suffered a nervous breakdown, Genechten was released from this position in January, 1943, and designated Commissioner of the province of Zuid-Holland. In that same year he was also appointed Professor of Criminal Law at the University of Leiden. Before the war he had lectured on political economy at the University of Utrecht.³⁷

The NSBer J. J. Schrieke was appointed Secretary-General of the Departments of Justice and of General Affairs in July, 1941. Before the war he was a prominent jurist, who served the Dutch government for many years in both the East and the West Indies.³⁸

T. Goedewaagen was appointed Secretary-General of the new Department of Propaganda and Arts in November, 1940. After

35. Ibid, p.404.

36. Warmbrunn, pp. 136-138

37. I. Schoeffler, Het Nationaal-Socialistische beeld van de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden (Arnhem: Van Loghum Slaterus, 1956), p. 321.

38. Winkler Prins Encyclopaedie (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1947), Vol. 16, p. 512.

loosing favor with the principle leaders of the NSB, however, he was released from this responsibility and appointed Professor of Philosophy at the University of Utrecht. Before the war he also lectured in Utrecht and was co-founder and editor of the General Journal of Philosophy and Psychology.³⁹

The NSB sympathizer J. van Dam was named Secretary-General of the Department of Education, Science, and Protection of Culture in November, 1940. He appeared to make an earnest attempt to compromise the Dutch interests and German demands. Van Dam's major problems were the issues between university students and the German authorities, which started with the dismissal of Jewish professors, and led to the closing of the University at Leiden and eventually to forced labor in Germany for many of the students.⁴⁰

Another important appointment by the Germans was that of the NSBer Max Blokzijl. Although his position, Head of the Press Division in the Department of Propaganda and Arts, lacked formal importance compared to other positions, his actual influence on the Dutch was far greater. Blokzijl, a former journalist for a prominent Dutch newspaper in Germany, was a great agitator -- the Goebbels of the Netherlands. Approximately 800 of his speeches were broadcast in the Netherlands during the war, and to this number can be added another 150 public speeches. Several of these were published in a book called Brandende kwesties (Burning

39. Schoeffler, pp. 322-323.

40. Warmbrunn, pp. 146ff.

Problems).⁴¹

The leader of the NSB, Anton Adriaan Mussert, was not satisfied with lesser appointments. He had higher aspirations. Like Quisling in Norway, he wanted to maintain an independent Netherlands under an NSB government, headed by himself. In 1931, when Mussert was chief engineer of the provincial government in Utrecht, he founded the NSB. His was an addition to the several already existing small fascist parties in the Netherlands. The NSB appeared to have more appeal than its rivals, for in the elections of 1935 it received almost eight percent of the votes. From that time on, however, its strength gradually decreased. At the time of the German invasion it had four deputies in the Second Chamber, representing four and one-fifth percent of the voters in 1937. During the provincial elections in 1939 this percentage dropped below four percent.⁴² The NSB was never a mass movement as intended by its founder. In 1940 its membership was approximately 50,000, which increased during the early years of the occupation to about 100,000.⁴³

The NSB resembled the German NSDAP in such outward appearances as its name, National Socialist Movement, and its red and black colors. On the other hand, it did not share the NSDAP's anti-Semitism; in the early years of its existence it admitted Jews to membership. Mussert was also unfamiliar with Hitler's Mein

41. Het proces Max Blokzijl (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1946), pp. 12-15.

42. Schoeffler, pp. 64-66.

43. Warmbrunn, p. 89.

Kampf when he founded the NSB in 1931.⁴⁴ The ideology of the NSB showed a greater resemblance to Italian Fascism than to German National Socialism. Like Fascism, the NSB had "restorative" tendencies. It idealized the glorious past of its nation, especially the 17th century which is known as the golden age of the Netherlands. The NSB hoped to recreate this golden age. Throughout the thirties, the NSB rejected the so-called German National Socialist "nihilistic dynamism," which Mussert outlined as revolution through force, racism, anti-Semitism, and state absolutism. However, in the end of the thirties the NSB drifted gradually toward German National Socialism in its outlook and sympathies.⁴⁵ During the occupation Mussert pretended that the ideology of the NSB and the NSDAP had always been identical.⁴⁶

Mussert maintained his personal and ideological aspirations throughout the war. He informed Hitler of these intentions by sending him a series of five notes and by four audiences which he had with the Fuehrer during the war. In his lengthy notes Mussert proposed the formation of a League of Germanic Nations. Hitler would be the over-all Germanic Fuehrer, but each nation would retain its autonomy, being allied only by a common leader, by a common ideology, by racial ties, and by economic and military cooperation. Mussert wished to enlarge the Netherlands by incorporating Belgium

44. Schoeffler, pp. 63 and 64.

45. Warmbrunn, pp. 85-86; de Jong, De bezetting, Vol. II, p. 21.

46. A. E. Cohen, (ed.), Vijf Notas van Mussert aan Hitler (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1947).

and her colonies in her domain, which would make Holland the second largest nation in the Germanic League.⁴⁷ Mussert wanted this Dutch empire under the leadership of himself and his party. His aspiration found partial fulfillment when on December 12, 1941, Hitler proclaimed him Leader of the Dutch People. In return, Mussert swore an oath of loyalty to Hitler as Germanic Leader.⁴⁸ Ironically all but the first of Mussert's five notes were intercepted by Seyss-Inquart and never reached the Fuehrer.

It appeared that Hitler was pleased with Mussert's allegiance. He may have contemplated giving Mussert a share in the government of the Netherlands. In October, 1942, Schmidt and Seyss-Inquart presented Mussert to Hitler, apparently with the request to give him a share in the government. By this time, however, Hitler had changed his mind and refused to comply with their request. Apparently he feared a repetition of the unsuccessful experience in Norway.⁴⁹ The following January Mussert was pacified with the permission to form a Political Secretariat (Staatspolitiek Secretariat), an NSB cabinet which had the appearance of a government, but with only advisory powers.⁵⁰ Seyss-Inquart and his subordinates still reserved the final decisions for themselves, and the NSB cabinet, or "shadow cabinet" as it was often called, was seldom con-

47. Ibid, p. 20.

48. Ibid, p. 64.

49. J. C. H. de Pater, "Doel van het Duitse civiele bestuur in Nederland," Notities, No. 80, pp. 5-6.

50. D.I.A., Vol. II, p. 207.

sulted. The pre-war Secretaries-General in particular never honored it by asking for its advice.⁵¹ The Dutch resented the Political Secretariat, preferring any German government as the lesser of evils. They viewed the NSB as a group of traitors who were already part of the German machinery that had caused the war and brought them so much misery.⁵² By the end of the war, three of the eight members of the Political Secretariat had been assassinated by the resistance.

51. Hirschfeld, p. 80.

52. Warmbrunn, p. 84.

CHAPTER V

THE REICHSKOMMISSARIAT AND THE REICH

If the Dutch high civil servants and the NSB leaders had any effect on the Reichskommissariat at all, it was very little compared with the forces generated in Berlin by the top Nazi leaders. Their influence increased as the war progressed, until the Reichskommissariat had become a pliant tool of the various instruments of power in Berlin. Organization and policy in the Reichskommissariat fluctuated with the trends and developments in the Reich at large. Speer's reorganization of the economic functions serves as an example here.¹ When the war was over, Seyss-Inquart used this overruling impact as an excuse to show his lack of influence, asserting that he had been simply an administrator who carried out orders of his superiors.² The impact of the top Nazi leaders was so strong that little of the official authority of Seyss-Inquart remained. Cohen defined the Reichskommissariat as a "conglomeration of representatives of all possible German authorities."³ The Secretary-General Frederiks asserted that no governmental structure could be imagined where division was so great and opposing views

1. v.d. Leeuw, "Het economische bestuurs-apparaat der Duitsers in Nederland," Notities, No. 17, p. 1.

2. J. H. W. Verzijl, "De inrichting van het Duitse bestuur," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 329.

3. v.d. Leeuw, "De rijksbureaux onder Duits en Nederlands gezag," Notities, No. 62, p. 7.

so obvious.⁴ Another Dutch writer, W. A. Boellaard, summarized the situation as follows:

The German potentates, however powerful they were, were in the long run only puppets in the hands of the most prominent Nazis in Germany.⁵

The resulting disunity and bickering among the top officials of the Reichskommissariat was a simple reflection of similar conditions among the members of the higher echelons of the party and the German Reich. Trevor-Roper points out in the Last Days of Hitler that the alleged integration and centralization of the German state was a pretense. He feels that instead of a monolythic totalitarian regime, the Nazi state had greater resemblance to an oriental court. The Nazi state was made up of numerous private empires, armies, and intelligence agencies, which were continually competing with each other. He adds that this "irresponsible absolutism is incompatible with totalitarian administration," and that it leads to suspicion between the competing authorities, who guarded themselves by amassing power in their own hands at the expense of the state.⁶ At the Nuremberg trials of major war criminals, Ribbentrop testified that at least thirty different agencies competed in the gathering of intelligence.⁷

4. J. J. van Bolhuis, "Enkele hoofdfiguren van het Duitse bestuur," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 342.

5. A. F. G. van Hoesel, "Over de psychologie der Duitse methoden," O.e.V., Vol. I, p. 596.

6. H. R. Trevor-Roper, The Last Days of Hitler (New York: Macmillan Co., 1947), pp. 1-2.

7. Ibid., p. 1.

The principle of Hineinregieren (competition in government) extended from Germany to all the occupied territories. Rivalries among Himmler, Bormann, Goering and the army, were also carried on by their respective representatives. Often this created plural subordination among the lower officials, who were responsible to two different authorities. Rauter, for example, was responsible to Himmler as well as to Seyss-Inquart. Schmidt, Fiebig, and others were in a similar position. However, for the sake of the Reich's mythical unity and practical considerations the officials of the Reichskommissariat were expected to work together in harmony.⁸

Adolf Hitler, who until his death remained the axis around which everything moved and who always made the ultimate decisions, seemed to encourage this kind of competition among his subordinates. He made no attempt to create order, unless a feud threatened to get out of hand and endanger his own position. Instead, he played his subordinates against each other, using their individual interests.⁹ After the war, Rauter testified that Hitler had encouraged the rivalry between Bormann and Himmler.¹⁰

Several of Hitler's immediate subordinates had interests which did not primarily consider the wellbeing of the Reich or its Fuehrer, but were motivated by personal ambition. Most of these

8. Cohen, "Opzet en structuur van het Duitse Reichskommissariat in Nederland," Notities, No. 16, p. 6.

9. Trevor-Roper, p. 36.

10. A. E. Cohen, "Gezage en machtsverhoudingen in Duitsland," Notities, No. 10, p. 7.

ambitions also found expression in the Netherlands. Perhaps the least important of these was the Foreign Minister, Ribbentrop. His authority had been diminishing like a fading star ever since the war had started. He had little or no influence in the Netherlands, which accounts for Bene's meager and declining influence in the Reichskommissariat.¹¹ His position, as compared to that of Himmler and Bormann, illustrated how party functions became ultimately superior to state functions, and that the Reich government became identified entirely with party leadership.¹²

Albert Speer, the Reich Minister of Armament and Ammunition since 1942, had a strong influence in the Netherlands. His organization in 1942 caused a corresponding overhaul of the economic functions in the Netherlands. He succeeded in employing the Dutch industries for the German war effort, though not without resistance from Dutch industrialists.¹³ Fiebig, who was officially under the jurisdiction of Fischboeck and Seyss-Inquart, represented Speer and enjoyed a great amount of independence.¹⁴ During the first half of the war there was much competition between the independent civil and military economic agencies. In September, 1943, however, Speer was able to combine these functions

11. Bolhuis, p. 336.

12. Cohen, "Gezags en machtsverhoudingen in Duitsland," Notities, No. 10, pp. 2-4.

13. v.d. Leeuw, "De Rijksbureaux van Handel en Nijverheid en het georganiseerde bedrijfsleven," Notities, No. 61, pp. 21-22.

14. Seyss-Inquart Dossier, Doc. B. p. 5.

under his own leadership.¹⁵

In addition to the civil and military economic agencies there was a third economic office, the Four Year Plan, under the leadership of Goering. From its inception in 1936, it had a virtual monopoly in the economic affairs of the Reich and its territories. By 1942, however, both Goering and the Four Year Plan proved to be failures; at that time the Plan was six months behind schedule, which was detrimental to the extensive war in which Germany was engaged. In a last frantic attempt to make his plans succeed, Goering called a conference with all the representatives of the occupied territories. At this meeting, in August, 1942, Goering made excessive economic demands from the occupied countries for the benefit of the German war effort. He ordered the elimination of economic boundaries in order that the exploitation of the occupied territories might be accelerated.¹⁶ Goering was not successful, however, which caused Speer to come to the forefront. The Four Year Plan continued to exist, in name at least, but it degenerated into a purchasing center of art pieces, thus encouraging the black market.¹⁷ Goering was even willing to use the services of Jews in these pursuits.¹⁸

15. A. J. v.d. Leeuw, "Duitse economische politiek," Notities, No. 11, Besprekingen, p. 5.

16. L. de Jong, "Die Raeuber - Anno 1942," Nederland in Oorlogstijd, No. 5, September, 1948, pp. 57-59.

17. v. d. Leeuw, Huiden en Leder, p. 67.

18. v. d. Leeuw, "Het economische bestuursapparaat der Duitsers in Nederland," Notities, No. 17, p. 3.

As Plenipotentiary of Labor in the Reich, Sauckel also became involved in Dutch concerns. His representatives in Holland were Fischboeck and, after 1942, Schmidt. Hitler had allowed Sauckel to make his own judgments in matters of labor.¹⁹ Sauckel forced hundreds of thousands of Dutch workers to labor in Germany, causing many Dutch factories to close down.²⁰ He was also behind the reinterment of 300,000 Dutch war veterans who were ordered to work in Germany. At the end of the war he instigated raids in several of the large cities to meet his need for man power.²¹

Another prominent Nazi leader whose influence and interests affected the Netherlands was Martin Bormann, the Chief of the Party Chancellery (Parteikanzlei), and private secretary of the Fuehrer. Bormann was dominant in the Party Chancellery even when Rudolf Hess was still its official director. When he succeeded Hess in 1941, his influence increased extensively, because it placed the whole party machinery at his disposal. As Hitler's secretary he had constant and direct access to the Fuehrer whom he influenced considerably. Like many of his rival Nazi leaders, Bormann had personal ambitions which included the leadership of the party in case of Hitler's death. Bormann has been described as being "insatiable in his appetite for the

19. D.I.A., Vol. II, pp. 48-49.

20. v.d. Leeuw, Huiden en Leder, pp. 213-215.

21. Warmbrunn, p. 74.

reality of power." For this reason he tried to remove all rivals from the favor of the Fuehrer.²² Bormann had the whole party machinery at his disposal, which he manipulated for his own interests. Schmidt was his representative in the Netherlands.

Bormann's major rival was Heinrich Himmler, who had similar objectives. Working his way up in the ranks of the party as leader of the S.S., he became leader of the German police in 1936, and was appointed Reich Minister of Interior in 1943. Whereas Bormann used the party machinery which encroached primarily on the governmental administration, Himmler increased his power by expanding the S.S.²³ This expansion impaired the influence of the army which was now confronted with an additional branch of the armed forces, the Waffen-S.S. Through his complete control over the police and his encroachment on the armed forces, Himmler's influence was strongly evident throughout the Reich and its territories. In August, 1942, he received the additional authority for dealing with the German population groups in Norway, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands.²⁴

Generally speaking, the Nazi leaders did not show great interest in the Netherlands. With its 12,000 square miles and less than nine million people, it seemed relatively insignificant to them. Hitler was never in the Netherlands. According to Cohen,

22. Trevor-Roper, p. 14.

23. Ibid, p. 36.

24. D.I.A., Vol. II, p. 139.

he devoted not more than a few minutes per month to the Netherlands.²⁵ Of the top Nazi leaders, Goering and Himmler seemed most interested in Holland. Goering liked to go there to relax and drink a glass of beer.²⁶ He was attracted mostly by Dutch paintings and diamonds.²⁷ Himmler expressed an active interest in the Netherlands, but he visited Holland only five times at the most.²⁹

Seyss-Inquart's position, although officially equal to other top Nazi leaders directly under Hitler, was in reality quite inferior. He pretended to be equal to them, but he had no powerful machinery at his disposal. Seyss-Inquart had to depend solely on the personal support of Hitler. He had practically no influence in the party, as he had no tradition as, nor connections with prominent "old fighters," since he did not join the party until 1938.³⁰ On important issues Seyss-Inquart seldom acted independently in exerting the powers of his office. One exception to this was his refusal to accept Heydrich's representative. Heydrich had received authority from the Fuehrer to execute the Nazi policy regarding the Jews in the Reich and its territories.

25. A. E. Cohen, "Enige gegevens betreffende Hitler's bemoeienis met Nederlandse aangelegenheden," Notities, No. 73, p. 12.

26. Wohlthat Dossier, p. 5.

27. Seyss-Inquart Dossier, Doc. B, pp. 3-4.

28. Ritterbusch Dossier, Interview 1, p. 9.

29. Rauter Dossier, Interview 2, p. 20.

30. Cohen, "Gezags en machtsverhoudingen in Duitsland," Notities, No. 10, p. 7.

When he sent a representative to carry out his plans in the Netherlands, Seyss-Inquart interfered by returning Heydrich's representative and appointing his own.³¹ The SS policies were eventually carried out nonetheless. As a rule, however, Seyss-Inquart submitted to rival authorities, especially Himmler, Speer, and Goering. He seemed to act as a subordinate, possibly because he feared he might lose favor and consequently ruin his chances for promotion.³² According to one witness, Seyss-Inquart acted very submissive in the presence of Himmler. He never spoke, unless it was in response to Himmler's questions.³³ When summoned by Goering to discuss the economic conditions of the Reich, Seyss-Inquart was so overpowered by Goering's vulgar and rude manner of addressing him that he refrained from further participation in the discussion.³⁴ Although the leadership principle was supposed to govern all aspects of the National Socialist state, in reality it applied to Hitler only.

Competitive government and plural subordination of the Nazi regime were often an advantage for the Dutch. It resulted in an increased independence of both the Secretaries-General and the heads of Bureaus. The situation often

31. Rauter Dossier, Doc. D, pp. 175-176.

32. Cohen, "Opzet en structuur van het Duitse Reichskommissariat in Nederland," Notities, No. 16, p. 5.

33. W. A. H. C. Boellaard, "Verhoor door Heinrich Himmler," O.e.V., Vol. I, pp. 596-599.

34. L. de Jong, "Die Raueber - Anno 1942," p. 65.

enabled them to deal directly with the Germans rather than going through the Reichskommissariat, and usually led to compromises favorable to the Dutch, especially in the area of Economics.³⁵

The struggle for power which developed in the higher echelons of the Reich and party was largely extended to the occupied territories. In Holland it usually assumed its own peculiar expression, depending on the strength or weakness and the interest of the persons involved.

One of the problems that manifested itself in the Reichskommissariat in the Netherlands was concerned with press and propaganda. The feud was primarily between Goebbels and Dietrich, the Fuehrer's Press Chief. The High Commissioner and the NSB, however, also became involved in the problem. Through his confident, the Commissioner-General Schmidt, Goebbels had a representative agency in the Netherlands, called the Department of Press and Propaganda. The two also affected the creation of the Department of Propaganda and Arts in the Dutch administration. It was patterned after its German counterpart under Goebbels. The NSB also was interested in the area of propaganda. Through Max Blokzijl, head of the Press section of the Department of Propaganda and Arts, the NSB leaders hoped to extend their influence. They were soon disappointed, however, for Blokzijl sympathized with German interests. Dietrich, jealous of Goebbels, managed to draw Seyss-Inquart into the conflict, and together they set up an independent press department,

35. v.d. Leeuw, Huiden en Leder, p. 5. Van der Leeuw illustrates this fact very clearly in this study of the Bureau of Hides and Leather, after which this book is named.

which was under the immediate authority of the High Commissioner. This department was dominant in matters of the press until the fall of 1944. It held weekly conferences in which the Dutch journalists were informed what Seyss-Inquart forbade them to publish and what they were forced to publish, if their newspapers were to survive.³⁶ Throughout the war the SS also had its own independent propaganda and press agency operating in the Netherlands. After September, 1944, this agency became the dominant instrument in matters of the press and propaganda.³⁷

As a rule, the feuding parties in the Netherlands fought for their superiors in Berlin primarily because of personal ambitions, which involved the hope that they could gain promotions from the victory of their superiors. Jealousy of fellow officials was also a motivating factor. Correspondence between Rauter and Himmler indicated that the former resented the SS promotion received by Wimmer. He tried to get Himmler to reconsider the promotion by complaining that Wimmer was not a sincere SS member, that he never wore his SS uniform, and that he had "weltanschaulische unklarheit" (ideological vagueness). Rauter suggested that Bene should be promoted instead of Wimmer, since the former was a staunch National Socialist and should not be lower in rank than Wimmer.³⁸

36. J. B. Th. Spaan, "Pers en propaganda," O.e.V., Vol. II, p. 147.

37. Ibid., pp. 129 and 147.

38. Wimmer Dossier, Doc. A and B.

Another rivalry in the Reichskommissariat was between Fiebig, as representative of Speer, and the representatives of Sauckel. This problem also found its origin in Berlin.³⁹

Rauter also had difficulties with Gottlob Berger, his fellow SS officer who was in charge of the Reich Security Main Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt). In this capacity Berger insisted on controlling the recruiting and political training of the SS in all Germanic countries, while Rauter wished to maintain complete control of the SS in the Netherlands.⁴⁰

The conflict between Nazi leaders that had greatest repercussion in the Netherlands was between the SS and the NSDAP, between Himmler and Bormann, and between their emissaries, Rauter and Schmidt. The nature and outcome of the problem depended on several factors, but primarily on the personalities and positions of these four men, and the development of the war. Rauter's dual position, Commissioner-General in the Reichskommissariat and Higher SS Leader and Police Leader (HSSuPF) under Himmler, was of considerable consequence in the situation. Himmler had created the office of HSSuPF to provide him with regional deputies. Their function was to coordinate the different SS agencies, like the Order Police, the Security Service, and the Waffen SS in their respective regions. They served Himmler as a check to keep the

39. van der Leeuw, "Het economische bestuursapparaat der Duitsers in Nederland," Notities, No. 17, p. 5.

40. N.K.C.H. in't Veld, Vijf brieven van Rauter aan Himmler, p. 5.

local and sectional leaders from becoming too independent of the SS leader.⁴¹ The duties of the HSSuPF depended on regional needs, and the interest which Himmler had in the respective areas. Generally speaking, they represented both the police and the political interests of the SS. Thus Rauter was Himmler's political representative in the Netherlands.⁴²

Rauter was a high ranking officer. Both in the general SS and in the Waffen SS he was Obergruppenfuehrer, which was comparable to full general in the German army. He was surpassed in rank only by Oberstgruppenfuehrer and the Reichfuehrer SS, the rank held only by Himmler himself. As HSSuPF Rauter was under the immediate supervision of Himmler and consequently had direct access to him. At times they had telephone contact twice a day. Rauter also had much personal contact with Heydrich, the Chief of the Reich Security Service.⁴³

Rauter had two positions and three titles. These were: SS-Obergruppenfuehrer and Generaal der Waffen-SS, Hoehere-SS und Polizeifuehrer, and General kommissar fuer das Sicherheitswesen. These were not only very impressive as letterheads, but they expressed actual authority and were read with fear.⁴⁴ As Commissioner-

41. Hans Buchheim, "Die Hoehere SS und Polizeifuehrer," Vierteljahrshefte fuer Zeitgeschichte, October, 1964, No. 4., pp. 362 and 373.

42. Ibid., p. 370.

43. Rauter Dossier, Interview 7, p. 14.

44. L. de Jong, "Hanns A. Rauter - persoon en daden," Nederland in Oorlogstijd, March, 1949, No. 1, p. 1.

General he had the legislative authority to issue decrees, and as police leader he could carry out provisions contained therein.

It was, however, not so much Rauter's police but his political mission that led to conflict with his fellow Commissioner-General, Schmidt. Like Rauter, Schmidt had a dual function. As Commissioner-General he stood equal to Rauter, having the same prerogatives. In many ways he enjoyed the backing of Goebbels, but more importantly that of Bormann. Through Bormann's confidence and support Schmidt had the leadership of the Germans in the Netherlands, organized as the Labor Section (Arbeitsbereich der NSDAP in den Niederlanden), which was an administrative division of the party. Although Seyss-Inquart was the titular head of the Arbeitsbereich, for all practical purposes Schmidt acted the part. In this elevated position he was party high official (Hoheitstraeger), almost equal to party Gauleiter.⁴⁵ Through careful maneuvering, and not without opposition, Bormann and Schmidt had changed the status of the Netherlands from the party's Foreign Organization (Auslandorganization) to the status of Arbeitsbereich. The only other case where this was done during the war was in the Polish General Government under the ini-

45. Cohen, "Ontstaan en betekenis van 'Der Arbeitsbereich der NSDAP in den Niederlanden,'" Notities, No. 26, pp. 6-7. A Gau, or Reichsgau, was an administrative unit in Nazi Germany which wielded superior administrative and political powers in the area. Prior to 1933, when the NSDAP came to power, the Gau was an administrative unit of the party, created for the purpose of taking control of the national administration as soon as political power had been secured. The Gauleiter was the chief executive in the Gau.

tiative of Hans Frank. Schmidt's authority was far reaching. By way of comparison, his functions were divided between three different persons in occupied Norway.⁴⁶

It was Schmidt's personal ambition that had made him acquire this position. It was also his ambition that brought him in conflict with Rauter. Schmidt was not satisfied with his pseudo-Gauleiter position; he wanted to be Gauleiter in fact. Bormann, who became increasingly anxious about the growth of the SS and the power of Himmler as a threat to his own position, was willing to support Schmidt.⁴⁷ For the purpose of making Holland into a Gau, the two encouraged many Germans to go to the Netherlands to take positions in the Reichskommissariat. This upset the SS leaders, as correspondence to Himmler indicated.⁴⁸ Schmidt also won Seyss-Inquart's approval for the appointment of several NSBers to prominent positions in the Dutch administration. Schmidt was willing to exploit the NSB for the realization of his own objectives. This was the reason why he encouraged Mussert to try to establish an autonomous NSB government. Schmidt, supported by Seyss-Inquart, was even willing to seek the approval of Hitler for these plans.⁴⁹

46. Cohen, "Opzet en structuur van het Duitse Reichskommissariat in Nederland," Notities, No. 16, p. 7

47. L. de Jong, "De dood van Fritz Schmidt," Nederland in Oorlogstijd, June-July, 1948, No. 4, p. 49.

48. Ibid., p. 52.

49. de Jong, "Hans A. Rauter - persoon en daden," p. 4.

These objectives were opposed by Rauter, who followed Himmler's greater German policies, which aimed at the annexation of the Netherlands by Germany. Incorporation in the Reich was generally favored by Germany.⁵⁰ But the development of the war and the uncertain status of the Dutch colonies delayed the actual realization of these aims.⁵¹

During the first year of the war, the problem between the party and the SS was not yet well defined. In August, 1942, however, the SS began to assert itself and seemed to be gaining over the party. This was evidenced by the appointment of Himmler to deal with the relations between the German population groups in Denmark, Norway, Belgium, and the Netherlands, which implied SS dominance in the occupied territories in the west.⁵² A few months later, however, the tide appeared to be turning in favor of the party. Rauter, who feared that Mussert might actually be appointed President of the Netherlands by the following summer,⁵³ had a long talk with Seyss-Inquart on November 13, 1942, in which he tried to dissuade Seyss-Inquart from supporting Schmidt on this matter.⁵⁴ For several months, however, Schmidt appeared to

50. Warmbrunn, p. 25.

51. Seyss-Inquart's First Report, p. 402.

52. D.I.A., Vol. II, p. 139. This decree, contradictory as it may seem, left the Foreign Organization and the Arbeitsbereich its former authority, which supplied an additional element of competitive government.

53. Rauter Dossier, Interview 3, p. 1.

54. de Jong, "Hans A. Rauter - persoon en daden," p. 16.

be winning the contest, as evidenced by numerous appointments of NSBers to important positions.⁵⁵

Actually, only the outward appearances of Schmidt's plans differed from Rauter's. Basically, he also wanted the annexation of Holland, but not without the realization of his personal ambitions. Like Rauter, he knew that the NSB was very unpopular with the Dutch people and that an NSB government would inevitably fail. The Dutch preferred a German civil government, and the Secretaries-General had warned that if Mussert were to become President he would resign.⁵⁶ Schmidt wanted Mussert and the NSB to fail. This would give him the opportunity to intervene in order to make Holland a Gau of the German Reich, and become Gauleiter himself.⁵⁷

Schmidt's intricate plans miscarried. On June 27, 1942, radio reports informed the public that he was killed in a train accident while returning from an inspection of coastal fortifications in France. Many people, including Mussert and Ritterbusch, believed that Schmidt had been murdered by the SS in order to remove him as an obstacle to their policies. Mussert, who maintained this view to his death, never doubted the sincerity of Schmidt's friendship toward him and was courageous enough to ask Himmler personally to have the murderers of Schmidt apprehended.⁵⁸

55. "Himmlers vertrouwensman," Nederland in Oorlogstijd, July, 1947, No. 4, p. 155.

56. Hirschfeld, p. 77.

57. Cohen, "Onstaan en betekenis van 'Der Arbeitsbereich der NSDAP in den Niederlanden,'" Notities, No. 26, p. 9.

58. de Jong, "De dood van Fritz Schmidt," pp. 48-56.

Substantial evidence was unearthed after the war to demonstrate that Schmidt committed suicide by falling out of a moving train. Apparently he was losing the battle against Rauter and the SS, and in the face of defeat and disappointment he chose to end his life, making it appear an accident.⁵⁹ Speculations have been made that Bormann failed to give Schmidt the promised support, and that Bormann sacrificed Schmidt in order to maintain his still superficial friendship with Himmler.⁶⁰ Without Bormann, Schmidt was a helpless man against Rauter and the SS. It has been suggested that by June of 1943, Schmidt had already lost the conflict with Rauter, and that he was about to resign from his position and go to the eastern front to fight in the Waffen-SS. This would have been a tremendous humiliation for Schmidt, since he held a rank equivalent to sergeant in the Waffen-SS, although he had an honorary rank of General in the general SS.⁶¹

Seyss-Inquart tried to copy Hitler in his attitude toward the conflict between Rauter and Schmidt. He never consistently and wholeheartedly supported any of the feuding parties. During the first year, he favored Rauter, although Rauter claimed that he and

59. L. de Jong, "Nieuw materiaal over Schmidts dood," Nederland in oorlogstijd, September, 1948, No. 5, pp. 12-13.

60. Ritterbusch Dossier, Interview 1, p. 8.

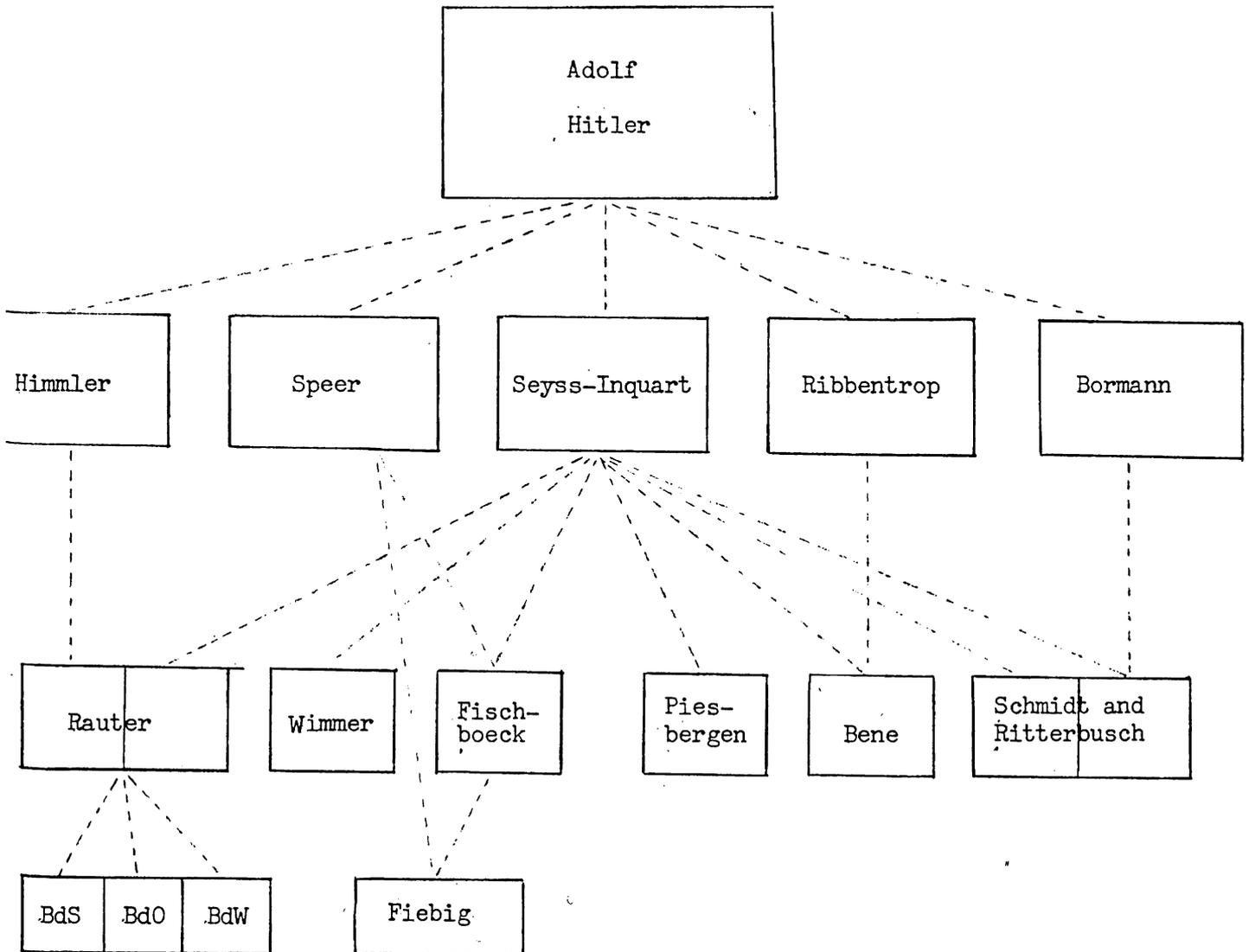
61. Cohen, "Ontstaan en betekenis van 'Der Arbeitsbereich der NSDAP in den Niederlanden,'" Notities, No. 26, Discussions, p.4.

Seyss-Inquart were usually cool toward each other.⁶² When Schmidt's prospects of success grew, Seyss-Inquart tended to support him. Seyss-Inquart was even willing to support Mussert's participation in government, even though he had a low estimation of Mussert's leadership abilities, which he regarded as far below the average Gauleiter.⁶³ On the whole, he tried to imitate Hitler's behavior in such circumstances. He tried not to get involved in a quarrel until the opportune moment when he could act and take personal advantages from it. Thus, he strengthened his own position by the weakening of the parties involved in the conflict.⁶⁴

62. Rauter Dossier, Interview 11, p. 10.

63. Ibid., Doc. D, p. 147.

64. Hirschfeld, p. 77.



The chart on p. 38 represents the theoretical and ideal hierarchical structure of the Reichskommissariat, according to which all authority originated from the Fuehrer and entered the Reichskommissariat directly from the latter and through the High Commissioner.

This chart reflects the more realistic situation. All authority was still derived from Hitler, but it was disseminated into the Reichskommissariat through various channels. It illustrates how dual subordination and competitive government became the order of the day.

This chart shows the relationship of the Reichskommissariat to the Reich Government. It includes only those elements of the Reich government that were of primary importance to the Reichskommissariat.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The Dutch people did not want the German occupation. Only after Germany proved to be their superior in military strength and forced them to choose between extensive destruction or occupation did they accept the latter. At this time, the future of Holland was uncertain. At best, the Dutch expected to be ruled by a German military administration, as approved by international agreements in 1899 and 1907. The creation and installment of the Reichskommissariat was unexpected and unwelcome, although one may wonder if anything could be considered unexpected under these circumstances. There was, however, little that the Dutch could do to change the verdict of the Germans, who at this time were intoxicated with their military strength and consequent victories. Besides, the situation could have been worse. At first the Germans showed themselves to be much more reasonable and understanding than had been expected. Although the Reichskommissariat was disliked as a government of oppression, there were two alternatives which the Dutch feared even more — the formation of an NSB government, or annexation to the Reich.

Initially, the officials of the Reichskommissariat left the impression that their presence in the Netherlands was of a temporary nature. The Dutch would eventually have to determine their own political course. The Germans had come to the Netherlands to insure that this course was compatible with National Socialist ideology and interests. It seems quite certain that the Germans expected the Netherlands to eventually become a province of the

German Reich. They wished, however, that the Dutch would voluntarily choose annexation to Germany. Consequently, the Reichskommissariat used all persuasive powers at its disposal to condition the Dutch for making this choice. However, this program of nazification had just the opposite effect. In the previous century, Bismarck had predicted that the Dutch would eventually request incorporation into the Reich. This was not without some justification for there were extensive similarities between the Dutch and German cultures. German music and other cultural expressions had always found a hearty welcome in the Netherlands.¹ However, forcing the issue, as the Nazis did, had the reverse effect. Democratic traditions had deep roots in Holland and could not easily be replaced by National Socialism, which was German and not Dutch, as the Commissioner-General Wimmer stated after the war. Nazification aroused resistance which became particularly active when Germany's chances of winning the war decreased. The Dutch hostility against the Germans increased in intensity. Goebbels, for one, was aware of this attitude, and stated this in his diary. In September, 1943, he expected the projected Allied invasion to take place in the Netherlands, because the native population would support invaders. He called the Dutch the most "insolent" and "obstreperous" people in the west.²

1. Adriaan J. Barnouw, The Pageant of the Netherlands (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952), p. 329.

2. Goebbels, pp. 434.

The Reichskommissariat was a supervisory governmental structure. It was called into existence by Hitler, and was designed to accomplish his purposes. It was organized according to German interests, fitting their needs, their objectives, and the benefits of powerful persons and institutions in the Reich. Its function was similar to that of the Dutch Council of Ministers, or cabinet, which instead of receiving its authority from the legislature, derived it from the various authorities in the Reich.

The leading officials in the Reichskommissariat were predominately Austrians. This was primarily due to the fact that the principle appointee, Seyss-Inquart, was Austrian and selected his aids from among his friends.

The prominent persons in the Reichskommissariat came to the Netherlands for different reasons. Their motives included ideological zeal, allegiance to friends, and the call of duty. In most cases, their positions were rewards for having aided in the successful development of the existing political structure. The primary factor that motivated these men to go to the Netherlands and discharge their responsibilities was opportunistic personal self interest. This was particularly true of Seyss-Inquart, Schmidt, Fischboeck, and Rauter. They were primarily interested in promotion, and the accumulation of power in their own hands. For this end they were willing to act in defiance of those humane principles which they may have possessed prior to their involvements in National Socialism. There were times, however, when these German rulers wished to use their powers for the benefit of their subjects. But

as a rule they discovered that the totalitarian system they represented allowed for little or no individual initiative. Their only alternatives were unreserved obedience or loss of favor in the eyes of their superiors, which might signal the end of their existence. Eventually they even avoided the consideration of any of the alternatives to the blind obedience of carrying out orders. This is illustrated by Ritterbusch' admission that he never touched a newspaper of the secret press or listened to an enemy broadcast.³ Such was the caliber of the persons who governed the Netherlands for five years.

The German rulers, both of the civil and military administration were highly interested in maintaining the existing Dutch administration. They needed it because they would have been unable to replace it by equally qualified pro-German or National Socialist civil servants. The willingness of the large majority of the Dutch civil service corps to cooperate with the enemy was cleverly exploited by the German authorities. The example set by the Secretaries-General had a decisive influence on the attitudes of the lower civil servants. It must be admitted, however, that the Secretaries-General were faced with a real dilemma. Perhaps their partial collaboration did eventually benefit the Dutch people more than their resignation might have.

The relationship between the Reichskommissariat and the NSB was a continual attempt of mutual exploitation. The NSB leaders,

3. Ritterbusch Dossier, Interview I, p. 12.

motivated by a mixture of idealism and opportunism, wished to establish an autonomous NSB government for the Netherlands. This intent was feared by the Dutch and exploited by the Germans, who made extensive use of the NSB in their nazification campaigns. The NSBers mistakenly believed that faithful collaboration with the Nazis would ultimately lead to the realization of their dreams.

The nature of the German Nazi state gave rise to competitive government and dual subordination. The feuds between the top Nazi leaders in Berlin were transplanted to the occupied territories, including the Netherlands. Here the feuds were often carried on with equal ferocity, modified by the distinct personalities and circumstances of the leading Nazis in the particular area. A constant fight over spoils and succession characterized the history of National Socialism. This battle intensified as the war drew to a close. The Reichskommissariat also became involved in this struggle, which caused division in the ranks of its personnel. This is best illustrated in the conflict between Rauter and Schmidt. Such divisions contributed to the weakening of the authority of the Reichskommissariat, and ultimately made it an extension of the Battle between the contesting top Nazis.

Throughout the war, the basic structure and organization of the Reichskommissariat remained unaltered. There were few changes in personnel. Most of the high ranking officials retained their posts throughout the war. During the first years of occupation a stream of decrees were issued by the Reichskommissariat. This gradually diminished as the war took an unfavorable turn for the

Germans, and an increasing share of activities were carried on illegally by the Dutch population. This made many of the decrees irrelevant and impossible to carry out.

This change in the development of the war, and the resulting German call for a "total war" had a great effect on the Reichskommissariat. Its original objective of peaceful nazification of the Dutch population became impossible because of the turn of events. Instead, Holland became more and more the victim of economic exploitation, and German rule was increasingly executed by terror, a characteristic of the police state. When in the fall of 1944 the Allied armies reached the Netherlands, which became a scene of war until May of the following year, the influence and the authority of the Reichskommissariat decreased drastically. After September, 1944, the occupied parts of the Netherlands were largely ruled by the SS.

The most important conclusion concerning the authority of the principal leaders of the Reichskommissariat is that they were actually without authority. They were only the pawns of their superiors in Berlin. Including Seyss-Inquart, they only pretended to have power, which, in the final analysis, was possessed by their Nazi overlords, and ultimately by Adolf Hitler.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The German occupation of the Netherlands has captured the imagination of many a writer in Holland, including several historians. A flood of books on the topic, both fiction and nonfiction, appeared immediately after the war. A special journal, Nederland in oorlogstijd (The Netherlands during the war), was published from 1946 until 1950. After a gradual decline, new interest in the occupation period arose during the fifties. This was answered with the publication of several reputable historical treatments of the era and of particular problems and events.

Most of the literature on the German occupation in the Netherlands is in the Dutch language. Consequently, the bulk of the bibliographical references in this study are Dutch. There are a few books on this topic in English, however. Since many of them were written during the war, they are not completely reliable. First, the authors were not well acquainted with the conditions in the Netherlands, as there was no free flow of communications between the German occupied territories and the Allied countries. Second, most of the authors were personally involved in the struggle against the Nazis. As a consequence, their works contain a considerable amount of invective and unfavorable value judgments against the Germans. The Netherlands at War by H. S. Ashton, and Juggernaut over Holland by the Dutch Minister of Defence, E. van Kleffens are good examples of this. These two studies deal with the German attack on the Netherlands, and show considerable bias

and misrepresentation. Another account of the occupation, Five Years of Occupation, by J. Boolean and J. C. van der Does, and published by the underground press, merits the same criticism. The Lion Rampant by L. de Jong and J. W. F. Stoppelman can also be classified with this group. It is an abridgement and translation from a four-volume work, Je Maintiendrai, written by de Jong. Although this is the most reliable in this category, the book still shows many weaknesses. De Jong wrote this book while he was employed by the Dutch government in exile, and working for the Dutch broadcasting system Radio Oranje. Other books belonging to this general category include the following: The Resistance of the Churches in the Netherlands by J. H. Boas, and Military Operations in the Netherlands by P. L. J. Doorman. All these works do contain valuable information, but they should be judged with the aforementioned criticism in mind.

After the war, few studies on the topic appeared in English. The few that have been published, however, are scholarly and reliable. One of these is The German Fifth Column in the Second World War. by L. de Jong. This is a translation from the Dutch, and deals only in part with the Netherlands. Very recently, the American scholar, Werner Warmbrunn, has written an excellent and inclusive study on the topic, The Dutch under German Occupation. Most of the published documents and monographs published by the State Institute of War Documentation contain English summaries, which provide the student not able to read Dutch the opportunity to acquaint himself with the material.

Very little work has been done in German on the German occupation in the Netherlands. Some attempts were made during the war to describe the German government in Holland, but these studies usually contain more propaganda than fact. They tend to describe the ideal rather than the real situation. One of the books fitting this classification, and which has been referred to in this study is Die Niederlande im umbruch der Zeiten, written by Max du Prel and Willi Janke. The latter was Seyss-Inquart's press assistant during the war.

An abundance of unpublished documents on occupation history is located in the State Institute for War Documentation (R.v.O.) in Amsterdam. Of this material the dossiers of several prominent officials of the Reichskommissariat were of specific importance for this study. These dossiers are folders of documents which were accumulated after the war. They contain letters, telegrams, warrants, police reports, testimonies, declarations, and transcripts of interviews. These interviews were particularly important, since this thesis deals primarily with the personnel and the personal relations of the leaders in the Reichskommissariat. The interviews were conducted by professional historians, largely by Dr. L. de Jong and Dr. A. E. Cohen of the R.v.O. Most of the interviews took place soon after the war while the subjects were interned in Dutch prisons. Some of them were held in German prisons, and a few in the homes of the subjects. There are twelve transcripts of such interviews with Rauter, which were held in a freezing, improvised prison in the city of Arnhem during the winter of 1946-47, two years before Rauter was executed.

Another prominent source for this study was the Notities voor het geschiedwerk (Notes of the History), or at times referred to as Notities voor het hoofdwerk (Notes of the Chief Work). This is a collection of over one hundred papers and special studies written by several Dutch historians, mostly affiliated with the R.v.O. They deal with special problems in occupation history. They are usually accompanied by the minutes of the meetings in which these papers were presented. The Notities were written and compiled for the purpose of developing a five-volume comprehensive history of the German occupation. The plans were to publish these volumes between 1956 and 1960. However, in view of the immensity of the task and the increasingly urgent demand for scholarly literature on the occupation, these plans were abandoned. Instead, the R.v.O. sponsored the writing and publication of several monographs. Several of these monographs have been published and a few have supplied valuable information for this study.

The historical journal Nederland in Oorlogstijd was published by the R.v.O. One of the most valuable contributions of the journal was its publication of important documents of the occupation. Among these were Seyss-Inquart's First Report, an account of Goering's conference with the heads of the occupied territories, and several posters and proclamations. All of these were of great value to this study.

The R.v.O. published several other documents in book form. These include the transcripts of the court cases against several prominent Nazis such as Christiansen, Mussert, Rauter, Blokzijl,

and van Genechten. In addition, Mussert's five lengthy notes to Hitler were printed by the R.v.O.

Other published documents used for this thesis include the Trial of the Major War Criminals (I.M.T.), which provided essential information regarding Seyss-Inquart's involvements in occupied Holland. In addition, Documents of International Affairs 1939-1946, edited and compiled by Margaret Carlyle, furnished several important documents. This collection was of special value since it contained documents from the Journal of Decrees (Verordeningen blad voor het bezette Nederlandse gebied), which is not available in the United States. Gustav Steinbauer, Seyss-Inquart's defendant at Nuremberg, published a memoir account of the trials entitled Ich War Verteidiger in Nuernberg. This book is largely concerned with that part of the trial which deals with the Anschluss. Steinbauer quotes much of Seyss-Inquart's trial not printed in the Trial of the Major War Criminals.

Numerous diaries and reminiscences of the war period are available. Most relevant to this study were Op de bres (1945) by G. A. Frederiks, and Herinneringen uit de bezettingstijd by H. M. Hirschfeld. As Secretaries-General, these persons were closely affiliated with the leading authorities in the Reichskommissariat and this enabled them to get first hand information about the activities and personal relations in the Reichskommissariat. Van Mei tot Mei, some of the reminiscences of Willen Drees, the chairman of the Social Democratic party after the German invasion, furnished helpful insights to the political developments during the occupation.

Additional special studies which constituted a valuable source for this thesis are Het Nationaal Socialistische beeld van de geschiedenis der Nederlanden by I. Schoeffler, and The Last Days of Hitler by H. R. Trevor-Roper. The first is a scholarly exposition of the development of National Socialism in the Netherlands, and its relationship to Italian Fascism and German National Socialism. Trevor-Roper discloses the continual struggle for power among the immediate subordinates of Adolf Hitler.

One of the most valuable sources for this thesis was Onderdrukking en Verzet, edited by J. J. van Bolhuis and others. This is a bulky four volume collection of studies concerned with special aspects and problems in occupation history. Most of the authors are specialists in their field rather than historians. For example one of the ex-Secretaries-General deals with the position of the Secretaries-General during the war, while the military aspects are treated by high ranking officers in the Dutch army. Most of the authors had been personally involved in the problems with which they dealt. Onderdrukking en Verzet appeared between 1947 and 1955 in 49 sections, which were later bound in four volumes. Although not dispassionate in judgment, Onderdrukking en Verzet is on the whole quite factual and contains a large quantity of source material, such as documents, interviews, testimonies, and eye witness reports.

Two of the most recent and comprehensive studies on the occupation are The Netherlands under German Occupation by Werner Warmbrunn, and De bezetting (The Occupation) by Louis de Jong.

The former is a book developed from a dissertation written at Stanford University. It represents years of research in Second World War documents at the Hoover Library and at the R.v.O. Warmbrunn's book has had a very favorable reception by Dutch historians. De bezetting, by de Jong is a series of five paperback books which are reproduced from recent television broadcasts. Although addressed to a popular audience, it represents the views of one of the greatest authorities on the subject. The first three volumes of De bezetting have been published in 1961, 1962, and 1963 respectively, while volumes four and five are expected to appear in 1964 and 1965. De bezetting includes several documents and photographs pertaining to the German occupation.

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