

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies
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Persecution and Deportation in Western Europe
– Rescue and Survival of Jews in Occupied Western Europe – A Reappraisal
Translation: E05 Report on the rescuing activity in Zwolle

LO report Zwolle. (2). [LO stands for *Landelijke Organisatie voor Hulp aan Onderduikers/National Organisation for Assistance to People in Hiding*]

Early '42, Ds. Frits came to Bijl with a teacher from the gymnasium. Frits already had some contacts, and when Bijl wished to join in too, a decision was made to get together and discuss the state of affairs.

Directly involved were:

De Vries (Buwalda), Hilbert and Jacques from Kampen
Peter from Friesland
Niek Boven (the tall one)
Zandbergen from Hoogeveen
Juul from Meppel
Oome [Uncle] Jan from Ruinerwold
Hoogerheide from Rotterdam
Tante [Aunt] Riek from Winterswijk
Jaap Kroon.

The number kept growing. Soon, Cary Stomp [Stemp?] and Nienaber from Driebergen, Henk Vosje from Meppel from [the organization] Trouw, Henk Kruithof from Hengelo, Wikkerink (from Aalten?) joined as well.

Later, Block and Theus from Zuid-Holland [South Holland] and Pos and Brinkman from Noord Holland [North Holland] joined.

In the beginning, the meetings were always held at Bijl's, but as the number of participants continued to grow this became too dangerous and another venue was sought. This was found in the Zuiderkerk [South Church] (Reformed) and has been the center for a very long time. We sometimes alternated between Zwolle and Meppel, but Zwolle always remained the "Beursplaats" ["Exchange Hall" – i.e., their main meeting place].

In '42 Jan from Zwolle joined as well. The idea was that he would take over the local work from Bijl, since the latter, being a retired commander of the OD [Ordedienst, a Dutch illegal/underground organization], was overloaded.

In the beginning, it was a bit of a mess with the people in hiding. The mistake was made to bring the West to the North and the East. If that were to continue, they would have no way to find shelter for all those people. Also, you had the result that in one or the other village there was a series of farmhands with an unmistakable Rotterdam accent.

Then began the very first setting up of the provincial contacts, who came to the “Beurs” [the Exchange] with their people in hiding, whom they [not clear if “they” refers to the Beurs or the provincial contacts, or both] tried as much as possible to accommodate in their own province. Thus, the problematic issue somewhat remained that, for example, Rotterdam people went to the countryside, but not to the extent that it was going to be dominant.

For Jews who were in hiding there was no specific structure. They were considered regular people in hiding and as such sought to obtain shelter.

What did they do about money in the beginning?

They did peddler work with family and acquaintances, and those in their turn had family and acquaintances, too. In this way, they gradually acquired their regular customers.

Already at the very beginning, Ds. Frits had found some local people for a staff, who also brought in their contributions. Yet they were sometimes in dire financial situations and were at their wits' end.

The little circle was still relatively small and the number of people in hiding grew by the day. You could also place a crude sign in front of the door with the [intended] message that here and there one could deposit a gift as well as people in hiding.

In those days Jan from Zwolle went around from here to there by bike and rummaged through anything that was not nailed down.

A contact in Berkum sometimes managed to convince the farmers to cede their ration cards, although often without the voucher for sugar, but in this way they could still assist the hostesses in the city.

Late '42, Cary came for the first time to the “Beurs” [Exchange] with forged insert sheets. How had he gotten them? They were not in the habit of inquiring about such things. They were there. Period.

Due to the sizable expansion that was observable every week, they were also meeting in Arnhem and Amersfoort, where, thanks to the good care of Hilbert, they once were able to receive a pound of eel at the law firm. They also sometimes went to the Zutphen Consistory.

Probably after the arrival of North Holland at the “Beurs” [Exchange] the meetings were opened with prayer and closed with a word of thanksgiving.

The trips to these meetings were often wonderfully reckless. With about 5, 6 people in a carriage, and then just chatting. One person was carrying a briefcase with the stuff in it, one carried a notepad with him. That was still possible in the beginning. The inspection control was not yet so strict, but when it started to dawn on the “mof” [the Jerry/German] that something was going on within the Dutch population, it became crazier. The trips were then no longer so "cozy," which also was a good thing.

Thank God, no raids were carried out there in the first period.

Because Bijl, who was a former commander, had many contacts, these were also widely used for the LO work. For instance, there was “the green one” [“De Groene”] (Henk Beernink), who had an address in Zwollekerspel where he could obtain as much bread as the gentlemen desired on days of the meetings.

After the arrest of Bijl in connection to the OD [Ordedienst] work and after he was taken into military captivity, the LO work passed into the hands of Jan from Zwolle.

When it turned out that it became too informal and that too many technical matters such as ration cards, PBs [identity papers], national registration certificates [identification cards needed to receive rationed items], etc. had to be treated, it became desirable to send the same people as much as possible.

Then people from the following locations – Zwolle, Berkum, Kampen, Dalfsen, Hattem, Wapenveld, Heerde, Oldebroek, Elburg, Nunspeet, Hardenberg, Heemse, Hasselt, Zwartsluis, and Vollenhove – gathered in Zwolle, and made the following subdivision:

Hattem-Wapenveld-Heerde: 1 delegate, M.v.d. Ziel
Oldebroek, Wezep, Elburg, Nunspeet 1 delegate, Deetman or Baene
Kampen, N.O.Polder 1 delegate. v.d. Kamp
Noord-Westhoek: 1 delegate, Jan Streker (?)
Zwolle-Berkum 1 delegate, Jan Haan
Dalfsen-Lemelerveld-Ommen: 1 delegate, Van 't Zand.
Heemse-Hardenberg-Gramsbergen-Dedemsvaart-Slagharen: 1 delegate, Schutte or Oostenbrink.
Raalte-Wijhe: 1 delegate Theo Meterman;

The “Beurs” [Exchange] now became “Top” [head office].

The meeting place was also the Church Office of the Reformed Church.

The Beurs work was now taken over by the provincial or district meetings. The “Top” took care of the technical issues, such as liaisons with the CDK [Centraal Distributie Kantoor/Central Distribution Office] and other resistance groups.

Jan from Zwolle, who also attended the meetings of the “Top,” gave this – after it was going to become a weekly event – into the hands of Wim, who had by then been an employee for a while. This person always attended the meetings and distributed the information further down.

Provincial meetings were also held in Zwolle.

Besides the PBs [identity papers], as well as false papers, that one could get from the Bourse, an F.C. [Falsificatie-Centrale/Falsification Center] was established, which was fully furnished and equipped with every kind of stamp and paper. The F.C. took care of the surrounding area and was overseen by Cor.

From June '43 to August '44 Harry was courier of Jan from Zwolle. He has also, among other things, established the contacts for the different (small) groups in Zwolle, for the issuance of ration cards.

To establish cooperation with the NSF they received from the “Top” a Turkish pass and with that they thus teamed with the NSF. With Wim NSF they have always had a pleasant cooperation. This contact was also maintained by the courier.

The items were brought to Jan from Zwolle or Wim LO and selected, from where they were again taken or sent by courier. The case of Wim lent itself perfectly for this purpose. It could have been any of the people shopping, except that a certain category always decamped to the furniture department.

On the day that the entire municipal administration of Vollenhove had found a safe haven here, the “landwacht” [a Dutch paramilitary auxiliary police unit] carried out a raid, but had to accept returning empty-handed.

The next day Jan from Zwolle, Wim and Harry transported the administration to a safer place. From that time it was located at the private address.

Janny, Wim’s courier, took care of the pending cases.

For the information, there was a good connection with Trouw. Later, they were granted a special man for this, Henk, who worked for the CID [“Criminele Inlichtingendienst”? Criminal Investigation Service?].

A telex device from the railways was removed by Simon and Jan. Thus, among other things, we also had a telex connection with Utrecht.

There was also a good cooperation with the TD. Teo, the TD man in Overijssel, was also one of the district leaders.

When, in the summer of '44, it became dangerous because of the numerous arrests which were taking place, the hiding work came almost to a standstill and urgent messages were delivered at home to Jan from Zwolle or Wim.

After Sept. '44 there was little contact between them.

The Noord-Veluwe [North Veluwe] went on to form their own group with Albert and Wim from the Veluwe [district]. Wim worked together with the Ruiters Group which was later incorporated into the LO level.

The instructions came into their possession through the so-called "Trouw" [fidelity, allegiance] line.

After Wim LO was arrested in January '45, the leadership was taken over by Cor from the FC with assistance from Janny and De Vries, who, after the disappearance of Harry, became KP [Landelijke Knokploegen? National Assault Teams] in the team of Jan from Ommen, became courier and remained so until the end.

A. W. Bijl, head man
J. Haan (Jan from Zwolle)
C. de Jonge (Cor FC)
D. Smit (Janny, teacher Christian School at Eibergen)
W. Wieringa (Wim)
Theo Weterman (Theo TD, Raalte)
D. Smit, Petrarcalaan 69, Utrecht.

translated by Jeremy Schreiber