Nazis in the Netherlands: A social history of National Socialist collaborators, 1940-1945

Damsma, J.M.

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1. Propaganda and consciousness

Introduction

“We are so revolutionary and reject obeying all those older people whose chatter prevents us young people from actively participating in the building of our country.”\(^{130}\) (Ernst Zilver, October 12\(^{th}\), 1942, Amsterdam)

Ernst Zilver, leader of the National Socialist youth organization (Nationale Jengdstorm, NJS) in Amsterdam, expressed his revolutionary National Socialist feelings in a national NSB newspaper on October 12\(^{th}\), 1942. He was eager to participate in the building of a so-called “New Order.” During the years of the Nazi occupation, he was committed to the NSB and its aim to nazify the Netherlands. He continued to actively express his National Socialist ideas until the very end of the German occupation.\(^{131}\) This chapter focuses on the ideas of the NSB and its members during the German occupation.

In many national discourses, the ideological foundation of collaborationist movements is seen as something foreign or rather “un-national.” The fascist ideas were seen as imported from outside; they were, by all means, not supposed to be indigenous.\(^{132}\) Fascism is thus pictured as something alien that illegitimately infiltrated the national political culture. This “smuggling” mechanism fits into the widespread discourse that fascism is pre-eminently an “uncomfortable past.” According to Aristotle Kallis, fascist history raises too many “awkward questions about continuities with the past, about social attitudes to it and its political legacy for the future.”\(^{133}\) By portraying fascism as imported, people could erase this painful history and ignore the fact that fascism too was part of the historic continuity of

\(^{130}\) Translation of Dutch: “wij zijn revolutionnair en weigeren dus al die ouderen van dagen te gehoorzamen, die met hun keuveltjes ons jongeren verhinderen, actief mee te werken aan den opbouw van ons Nederland.”; NA CABR-file 21419.

\(^{131}\) NA CABR-file 21419; NIOD, Ernst Zilver, ‘Alles voor het vaderland’.


\(^{133}\) Kallis, Fascism Reader, 1.
In occupied Western Europe, the National Socialist regime was imported through military violence, but the ideology was – at least partly – homegrown. The idea of “fascism from outside” was reinforced by the supposition that all fascists were “isolated” within society. Collaborating fascists were tied only to their ideologically similar foreign occupier and thus distanced themselves from the indigenous society.

The same “isolated fascists from outside” discourse is visible in the Dutch case. According to De Jong, possibly the historian of the Second World War in the Netherlands, Dutch fascism came mainly from Germany. De Jong stated that the NSB was copied from the NSDAP and members of the NSB were “semi-Germans,” isolated within Dutch society. De Jong’s ideas were widely accepted and followed by other scholars. This image of National Socialism as something un-Dutch is related to ideas about Dutch political culture. Dutch political culture is generally portrayed as inherently anti-violent and moderate. The nonviolent political culture clashed with the obviously violent character of fascist parties, with their paramilitary organization and its preference for uniforms and parades. For that reason, it was unthinkable that a group of “real Dutchmen” could become hardcore fascists. Dutch fascism seemed a contradiction in terms.

Lately, Dutch National Socialism is increasingly analyzed as a fascist movement with radical roots. As explained in the introduction, the NSB was an inherently fascist movement in its first phase. Thus, by the time these indigenous “real” fascists got the opportunity to gain power by collaborating with the German Nazi occupier they had already adopted a fascist ideology and style. In the years before the occupation, the NSB had built up its own ideology and organization that it developed further during the German occupation. In this period, the collaborating fascists could expand their organization and gain power; the NSB had the chance to actively express and practice its ideas.

In this chapter, I will examine the fundamental principles of fascism from different angles. First, I will examine relevant theoretical concepts and debates. The relationship

134 Kallis, *Fascism Reader*, 1, 14.
136 About Dutch non-violent political culture and the objections against this image: Hermann von der Dunk, ‘Toen werd het levensgevaarlijk …’, 13-34; Romijn, Image of collaboration, 311-312.
138 Paxton, *The anatomy of fascism*, 10, 56 etc.
between ideology and practices was quite problematic in fascism, as fascism presented itself as the movement of “action” instead of “books.” I will also discuss the different relevant concepts of ideology, propaganda and conscience. Furthermore, I analyze to what extent the NSB members were ideologically motivated and what role opportunism may have played.

Second, I will discuss NSB propaganda and internal discussions during the Second World War. The NSB propaganda and ideas about the Nazi occupier are relevant because the NSB was a collaborating movement. To what extent did the NSB follow the German National Socialist lines of thought? What was discussed at local meetings? To what extent was there room for internal discussions? Finally, I will explore the role of Dutch National Socialist ideology in the lives and consciences of individual members of the NSB to see what influence NSB ideology may have had on the lives of individual members and how they perceived (from a bottom-up perspective) regional and national political discussions.

Principles of fascism and fascists

The concepts of ideology, propaganda and conscience

Fluid borders between ideology and action generally characterize fascist organizations. In fact, the fascist ideological framework is built around actions; a member of a fascist organization was an “action man” par excellence.\(^{139}\) Thus, in fascist movements in particular, it is of crucial importance to be aware of the connection between ideas and actions. And therefore, both political ideas and practices have to be analyzed.\(^ {140}\) This chapter examines the interrelationship between action and ideological principles, propaganda and conscience.

Why should someone bother about ideology if fascists themselves valued action above ideology? One answer to this question could be that in fact they did take ideology seriously. Fascists felt the need for ideology to develop a common goal and the promotion of internal cohesion. It made sense to put their ideas together in a consistent agenda in order to secure internal unity and to distinguish themselves from their political competitors. To mobilize people, fascist movements needed a narrative, a systematic body of concepts about

\(^{139}\) Morgan, *Fascism in Europe*, 4-5; Mosse, *Nazi culture*, xxvii-xxviii.

\(^{140}\) Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism*, 10, 56, etc.
society and human life.\textsuperscript{141} Although we have to keep in mind the centrality of action, fascist movements had unifying aims and principles.\textsuperscript{142}

The function of propaganda was to spread the movement’s ideas; it was the transfer from political ideology to the minds of individuals. In other words: it was the propagation of a doctrine.\textsuperscript{143} The task of translating ideology into a coherent narrative aimed at individuals took place in the propaganda offices where specialized party officials tried to influence people’s political opinions and decisions. Propaganda was spread through diverse media, such as newspapers, pamphlets, speeches, radio and film.\textsuperscript{144} Through these channels, propaganda made ideology accessible to a broader public. Thus, the content of propaganda dealt with what the party told the people, not what the conscience of individuals may have contained.\textsuperscript{145}

Historian Claudia Koonz made an important contribution to the study of Nazi ideology by formulating the concept of “Nazi conscience,” which includes elements of identity, awareness, idealism and an ethical standard.\textsuperscript{146} Nazi conscience is not about what to believe or what not to believe, but it defines the obligations of individual members to others. Therefore, it is strongly tied to the community because the moral obligations apply only to the own community and exclude everyone not belonging to that community.\textsuperscript{147} This community-centered concept is relevant in the analysis of a social history of Dutch National Socialists because it focuses on who belonged to the insider group and who belonged to the outsider group. National Socialists increasingly saw non-National Socialists as outsiders and Jews as extreme outsiders, who had to be permanently excluded from Dutch society. In addition, conscience included the sense of moral goodness together with an obligation to do (thus to act) right or be good. The Nazi concept of conscience includes the action of propagating a fascist community while excluding Jews.\textsuperscript{148}

The concept of conscience produces a possible connection between ideas and individual behavior. To what extent do people act according to their consciences? It is very difficult to explore the mindsets and true beliefs of individual people, even for those

\textsuperscript{141} Kallis, \textit{Genocide and Fascism}, 116.
\textsuperscript{142} Griffin, \textit{Modernism and fascism}, 181-182.
\textsuperscript{143} Mosse, \textit{Nazi culture}, 7.
\textsuperscript{145} Herf, \textit{The Jewish Enemy}, 15, 264.
\textsuperscript{146} Koonz, \textit{The Nazi conscience}, 4.
\textsuperscript{147} Koonz, \textit{Nazi Conscience}, 3-5.
\textsuperscript{148} Koonz, \textit{Nazi Conscience}, 3-5.
Currently alive. Determining the reasons for certain decisions taken by people in the past can be even more problematic. How to distinguish between acting as a National Socialist and being a National Socialist? It may be that many members expressed themselves as National Socialists but did not really believe in National Socialism as an ideology. All members could just have acted fanatically assuming that everyone else believed. In that sense, belief is not a precondition for action; group cohesion is. Thus, there are many objections that could be raised to discussing ideology. Nevertheless, the fact that ideology is difficult to track down does not mean that one should not try to reveal some of the ideals of individuals, especially because these ideals were targeted at action and thus had real implications.

We can identify at least two ways in which ideology functioned in tying individuals to the party. First, Nazi ideology had an external function: attracting individuals to join the party. On an individual level this means that people were ideologically motivated before they joined the NSB and would develop this motivation further after becoming members. Second, ideology had an internal function: to socialize the individual in a framework of political ideology and to immerse someone in National Socialist propaganda. Ideology played a role in attracting new members by offering new horizons. While the focus on personal reasons for membership is important, one should not focus solely on the reasons of becoming a member because the effects of ideology on those who had enlisted as NSB members were significant as well. Every member was exposed to National Socialist ideology or, to put it more precisely, to a specific form of Dutch National Socialism.

As the impact of action on ideology was important, three stages should be distinguished: feelings regarding National Socialism before, during and at the end of one’s membership. One could be a National Socialist before becoming a party member, or one could be socialized in an ideology of fascism during his or her membership. The changing political opportunities during the last phase of the occupation affected ideological pathways of beliefs as well. This chapter will deal with the first two phases; the last phase of disillusion will be discussed in the final chapter.

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149 Mario Ferrero, ‘Extremist groups tend to become more extreme’ in: Albert Breton et al., eds, Political Extremism and Rationality (Cambridge 2001) XIX.
150 Even the leaders did not necessary have to believe in the political organization they stood for, if they were interested in power the only thing was to act as if they believed; Russel Hardin ‘The Crippled Espistemology of Extremism’ in Breton at al., eds, ‘Political Extremism and Rationality’, 20.
151 For lively academic discussions about ideology; Mosse, Nazi culture; Herf, the Jewish enemy; Koonz, Nazi conscience et.al.
Discussing ideology of political movements includes the relationship between idealism and opportunism. Opportunism in politics can be seen as the absence of any ideological dedication. Much of fascist opportunism is inherent in the nature of every ideology called upon to shape a new society and is related to the discrepancy between the original ideals of building an entire “revolutionary society” and the harsh reality of day-to-day politics. Revolutionary ideals are extremely difficult to fulfill.\textsuperscript{152} Fascism is not exceptional in that sense. And opportunism is perhaps even more relevant in the case of collaborating political movements, where membership of this party could enhance the chances of success in the political sphere.

Opportunism could be separated into two forms: opportunism as a political strategy on a national level and opportunism as political motivation on an individual level. In fascist movements, the opportunistic element of leaders and followers is often stressed. Philip Morgan described leaders of interwar fascist parties: “they are usually portrayed as political opportunists (which politician is not?), politicians of action whose actions did not marry with their words, which were literally propaganda, and fixated on power ‘for its own sake’.”\textsuperscript{153} For that reason, I intend to combine the study of ideology with the study of political practices, confrontations and interactions.

\textit{Ideology of individuals}

Within Dutch historiography about Dutch National-Socialism, ideology is analyzed but always on a collective, national level, as determined by the top leadership and discussed in their publications.\textsuperscript{154} The individual level is underexplored, while the thoughts and actions of individual NSB members actually shaped the National Socialist movement in the Netherlands.

Individual NSB members can have been more than opportunists; they may have been ideologically motivated. We need to go beyond the assumption of opportunism as political motivation; there could be something ideological that made them tick. In fact, the

\textsuperscript{152} “There is no denying that as the gap widens between the final objectives and the initial blueprint for the remodeling of society, the discrepancy between ideology and practice becomes more important and thus encourages the tendency to accuse the regime of opportunism, or to disregard completely the ideology on which it claims to rely.”; Zeev Sternhell, ‘Fascist ideology’ in: Griffinand Feldman ed. Fascism Critical concepts in political science, 85.
\textsuperscript{153} Morgan, Fascism in Europe, 4.
\textsuperscript{154} Havenaar, \textit{De NSB tussen nationalisme en volks solidariteit}, De Jonge, \textit{Het nationaal-socialisme in Nederland}.
ideological foundation of their collaboration distinguished NSB members from economic or administrative collaborators. For these reasons, the ideological motivation of individuals should be included in the analysis of Dutch National Socialism. This decision does not exclude another crucial question: to what extent did their ideas correspond with those of non-NSB members? Were the ideas of NSB members generally nonconformist or were some of them actually widespread?

In order to formulate answers to these questions, I have studied the judicial records – brought together in the postwar procedures for the punishment of political collaboration – of the CABR sample from all ranks of the party and representing members from different socio-economic backgrounds. The testimonies of former NSB members are an important source when one analyzes individual membership. Of course, one has to take into account that those statements were made after the liberation of the Netherlands and, moreover, within the context of a judicial procedure. It could be even more problematic had ideological beliefs influenced the punishment meted out. That is not the case; No clear relationship can be discerned between the punishments and whether those punished were generally recognized by the judges as ideologically or financially motivated.\textsuperscript{155} It did not matter whether the accused were “real” fascists or stated that they did not believe in fascism at all. Keeping such criticism in mind, it is possible to say something about the ideological mindset of NSB members on the basis of their judicial records.

Their contemporaries generally saw individual members as opportunistic during and after the war.\textsuperscript{156} The NSB itself tried to use this image to encourage its members to work harder. To show everyone that the NSB was full of hardworking National Socialists instead of lazy opportunists, even NSB papers made fun of the opportunistic nature of many NSB members, whose only concern was to obtain a job.\textsuperscript{157} The NSB proclaimed that they preferred a “loyal known opponent” above a “fellow job hunter.”\textsuperscript{158}

However, opportunism does not tell the whole story. The NSB aspired to gain

\textsuperscript{155} Difference between top and base; Belinfante, \textit{In plaats van bijltjesdag}. “Brood-NSBers” were generally sentenced to 9 months’ imprisonment. Only if NSB members had enriched themselves publicly were longer sentences imposed. 474-479.

\textsuperscript{156} Damsma and Schumacher, ‘De strijd om Amsterdam’ 329-348.

\textsuperscript{157} \textit{De Zwarte Soldaat}, 23 III 1944.

\textsuperscript{158} NIOD, clippings file, \textit{De Volkskrant}, June 20th 1941.
power, but reality turned out to be quite different. Actually, in the first year of the
occupation NSB members confronted an unexpected lack of opportunities. It was only after
that first year that the NSB managed to become more involved in acquiring local political
power and exploring economic opportunities. Therefore, the opportunities for individual
members were actually rather limited. During that period there would have had to have been
more than just the possibility of personal gain that attracted Dutchmen to the NSB. And
after all, ideology and opportunism may in fact go hand in hand. Somebody could have
become a member hoping to pursue a career and then have been transformed into a fanatic
National Socialist during his or her membership.159

On the national level, one can point to Anton Mussert’s opportunism and to shifts in
national propaganda. In Dutch historiography, Mussert is often portrayed as an
opportunistic leader, who, for instance, did not actually believe in anti-Semitism, but made
many anti-Semitic statements in order to appease his followers: a so-called “man without
properties.”160 It is true when one looks at Mussert’s views they were not always consistent
over time. His anti-Semitism became more virulent when he thought it was profitable. One
can see the same pattern in national and local propaganda. This radicalization of ideas could
be related to opportunism, as a way to appease the German occupier. However, the fact
Mussert uttered increasingly anti-Semitic and pro-German phrases during the course of the
occupation can be attributed not only to opportunism. Idealism could have played a role as
well; Mussert may very well have believed in the things he said. It is difficult to analyze
whether Mussert really believed in anti-Semitism as an ideology. The only evidence is what
he said and what he did. His words indicate that he did believe in the ideology of the NSB,
from the party’s early beginnings onwards.

Whether or not NSB members were indeed opportunistic career hunters, ideology
did play a significant role in the minds and lives of NSB members. Analyzing the personal
statements of the CABR sample about ideology produces the following results.
Approximately fifteen percent of them said they actually did not believe in National
Socialism, neither before nor during their membership. So, for a minority of the NSB
members ideology played a less significant role. In approximately fifteen percent of the cases
in this sample not enough evidence could be found to label the statements accurately. These

159 NA, CABR, file 57408.
statements were sometimes contradictory or too fuzzy to pinpoint the respondent’s mindset. Seventy percent of the NSB members in the sample were ideologically driven or formed, according to their statements.¹⁶¹ Thus, it is apparent that the majority of NSB members were indeed attracted or affected by National Socialist ideology. For them National Socialist ideology was not an empty shell but a very real thing.

Hence, ideology played a significant part in the political lives of most NSB members, but the question remains: in which phase did it start to assume significance to them? Was it before or in the course of their NSB membership? What role did ideology play in attracting and recruiting NSB members? As in other decisions in life, the choice to join a fascist party was the result of a combination of different factors. Some members were passionately committed to fascism; others were drawn to the party by material incentives or peer pressure to follow family or friends.¹⁶² National Socialist ideology did attract new members to the NSB before and during the occupation. Many members aligned themselves with the NSB because of their belief in its program.¹⁶³ The young NSB-member mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Ernst Zilver, hoped that the NSB could bring unity and break through all party quarrels.¹⁶⁴ The aesthetics of fascism –its uniforms and military parades–could also be a reason for joining the NSB.¹⁶⁵ An active NSB woman stated that she was affected by “the increasing unemployment in big cities, the weak Dutch defense of the Dutch East Indies, and the state of emergency in the country side and the general moral weakening of our people.”¹⁶⁶ Her husband, a leading National Socialist, shared these thoughts and saw the NSB as the party that could unify the nation under a strong central authority.¹⁶⁷ This idea of “rebirth” or regeneration of the nation through implementing the fascist program fits into the framework proposed by fascism expert Roger Griffin.¹⁶⁸ Fascist ideas were an attracting element for NSB members.

¹⁶¹ NA, CABR-files; 327 files: 48 not, 49 unclear and 230 did believe.
¹⁶² See for example: Perry Willson, ‘Women in Mussolini’s Italy 1922-1945’ in: Bosworth, Oxford Handbook of Fascism, 203-221, here 211.
¹⁶³ E.g. NA, CABR, 97118 and 56593; 21723; 86395, 64311 and 4825; 86527; 23885; 24763 I; 61151; 18387; 19332; NA, CABR, 76441 and 8500; 54396.
¹⁶⁴ NA, CABR, 21419.
¹⁶⁵ NA, CABR, 17918.
¹⁶⁶ NA, CABR, 20139: “getroffen door de steeds toenemende werkloosheid in de groote steden, de werkloosheid van Nederlands Indie, de noodtoestand op ‘t platteland en de algemeene moreele verslapping van ons volk.”
¹⁶⁷ NA, CABR, 23816, 3014.
¹⁶⁸ Griffin, Loh and Umland, eds, Fascism Past and Present, West and East, 29.
Not all NSB members were ideologically committed; some were motivated by financial motives or by the possibility of getting a job, keeping their radio (which nonmembers were forced to hand in) or other motives of personal gain. In some cases their belief in National Socialism was connected with discontent about their own financial situation. Other reasons mentioned included peer pressure from friends or family members who were already party members. However, in general, the ideological aspect should not be underestimated. Among this group of Dutchmen, an ardent desire existed to create a completely new society through revolutionary means.

Ideology was an important instrument for socializing NSB members within the National Socialist party. Some members were ideologically more affected by their membership than others. Whether or not individuals decided to join the NSB for ideological considerations, they were influenced by its propaganda. One wood-merchant formulated his motives precisely that way: he stated that he became an NSB member because of idealism and then came under the influence of NSB propaganda. For the majority of NSB members ideology affected their mindset during their membership.

**Propaganda explored on a national, local, and individual level**

“We are revolutionary!”

After the German occupation the NSB jumped from a marginal position in the political spectrum to the position of an active political actor, which aimed at sharing power both in the national administration and at a local level. Here, the NSB could spread its ideas. However, the relationship between NSB members and the Nazi occupation administration also produced ideological dilemmas. Taking up local political responsibility meant making

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169 E.g. NA, CABR, 11864 and 19610; 40918; NA, CABR, 63220; NA, CABR, 97520.  
170 NA, CABR, 42336.  
171 *De Daad,* November 29th 1940; and: “Wij willen revolutionair zijn, weg met het lakse en lauwe gedoe.” (“We want to be revolutionary, away with the lax and lukewarm stuff”) in: *De Werker,* January 8th 1943.
clear choices, and NSB members could rule only because of German support. Therefore they continually had to balance their own aims against the wishes of National Socialist Germany. The Dutch version of fascism was indeed inspired by the NSDAP but had its own considerations and context as well. What was the typical Dutch brew of National Socialism? What actually were the specific Dutch aspects of National Socialism in the fields where NSB members had to make up their own ideas because they had to deal with specifically Dutch situations?

The NSB adopted its major lines of thought from foreign examples. The NSB too was in theory revolutionary, had a paramilitary department, was in favor of a corporatist organization of the economy, was anti-Semitic and was focused on the Dutch empire.\(^\text{172}\) However, some parts are more problematic for a collaborating movement than others.

I have distinguished five problematic issues: the view of society and of nonmembers; anti-Semitism; the Church; foreign examples; and the Dutch empire. Many of these subjects are related. Anti-Semitism was, for example, present in the NSB’s views of society, German policies and churches. Moreover, the different elements were not static but dynamic; the ideas within each field developed over time. The political opportunity structure depended on German favors and changed during the course of the occupation. Also, the international political scene altered dramatically. For these reasons, the opinions of NSB leadership and members changed from hopeful at the beginning of the occupation to fearful at the end.

To explore the developments of the ideas of the NSB, it is necessary to study both national and regional newspapers. The most important national newspaper was *Volk en Vaderland* (Nation and Homeland), in short *Vova*. This was a weekly paper in which the principles of National Socialism were extensively explained; in 1943 200,000 copies were distributed. From 1936 onwards, a daily newspaper appeared in addition to *Vova*: *Het Nationale Dagblad* (HND). Its circulation never reached the *Vova* level: approximately 20,000 were distributed daily.\(^\text{173}\) Another relevant newspaper was the paper for the paramilitary department of the NSB, the WA: *De Zwarte Soldaat* (The Black Soldier). To include the local level, I studied *De Daad* (The Action), the newspaper for members in Amsterdam, Hilversum and Haarlem and their rural surroundings, and *De Werker*’ (The Worker), the same sort of

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\(^{172}\) “Revolutionary till the end” (“De revolutie gaat voort”) *Volk en Vaderland*, September 29th 1944.

\(^{173}\) De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk* VI, 382.
paper for Utrecht and its rural areas.\textsuperscript{174} Within historiography there is a consensus about the major disputes within the NSB; therefore differences between the national and regional propaganda newspapers, and cooperation or conflicts between the papers will be identified. A last source I use is the archive of the NSB itself, which includes letters of NSB members and leaders, and reports of party meetings. Thus, I include not only the external propaganda but the internal statements and discussions as well.

If most Dutch fascists were as ideologically dedicated as argued above, what did they believe? Did the national NSB propaganda reach the hearts and minds of individual members? In order to study the consciences of NSB members I have analyzed letters and diaries from the time of the occupation and testimonies in postwar files of former NSB members. In addition, I have explored the possible clashes with nonmembers. This National Socialist conscience of NSB members may have conflicted with their ideas and values and discussing such clashes may help us to understand even better what NSB members actually were up to.

\textit{View of society and outsiders}

The NSB had far-reaching ideas about the future of Dutch society. One of the key aims of the Dutch National Socialists was to abolish the old divisions within society and to create one national, unified community.\textsuperscript{175} So, in addition to their struggle against communism and democracy, they also strove for their ideal of a strong community of the Dutch people.

Striving towards national community was a common element in all fascist movements; the Netherlands case was particular as Dutch society in the 1930s was characterized by its so-called “pillarized” political and social structure, divided into roughly four groups: Catholics, Protestants, socialists, and liberals.\textsuperscript{176} The NSB was an outsider and one of the main opponents of this structure, and it saw itself as the champion of unification in a divided society.

As a small minority within Dutch society, the NSB had to determine how to reach

\textsuperscript{174} \textit{De Werker}, published from December 1st, 1940.
\textsuperscript{175} Morgan, \textit{Fascism in Europe}, 101; Te Slaa and Klijn, \textit{De NSB}, 792; Nationaal Socialistische Beweging in Nederland, Programma met toelichting (1 and 2), (1932) 3, 11, 13.
\textsuperscript{176} Lijphart, \textit{Verzuiling}, 28-29.
out to the majority. Did NSB members see themselves as part of a mass movement or did they see themselves as a revolutionary vanguard that was ignored by a large part of the society? In other words: how did the movement try to persuade political outsiders or to condemn their opponents?

The NSB assumed it represented the true will of the people and of the Dutch nation. During the first public WA meeting in Amsterdam on November 9th 1940, Mussert stated that only the NSB members represented the true Dutchmen. And in his eyes, the NSB, although a minority, was the right agent for reshaping Dutch society because throughout history “conscious minorities” had accomplished revolutions in society. Therefore, the NSB had to be a vanguard movement, in which NSB members belonged to the revolutionary elite of the National Socialist society. This idea was spread through both national and local propaganda. NSB members had to behave themselves as politically conscious “model citizens for the rest of society,” as the local leadership told the members in Naarden.

The NSB claimed to stand in the center of society not on its fringe. The National Socialist Women Organization stated in 1943 that they wanted to stand “in the community, not next to it.” In spite of their marginal position, the NSB still hoped to be able to convince the rest of the society to join their struggle. Disappointing results, of course, had their effect on their propaganda strategies.

In the beginning, the NSB tried to reach out to nonmembers. On New Year’s Day in 1941, the NSB issued a letter wherein it asked everyone to work together with the NSB, and if everyone were to agree, then 1941 shall be a happy year for you, “full of freedom, prosperity and peace.” In Amsterdam, the NSB even launched a magazine geared toward nonmembers in 1941. In this paper the NSB tried to attract new members by using negative propaganda tools. The paper portrayed the anti-National Socialists as rich, fat, cowardly people, afraid of scornful glances from neighbors and colleagues, and lacking the courage to stand up. In this way, the NSB tried to blemish the “real” opponents and, in that way,

177 Diary November 10th 1940, De Wilde, RAL.
178 August 8th, 1941, NIOD access number 298, file 29.
179 NIOD, 1498, Naarden, October 10th 1943, report of the local NSB group meeting.
180 (“Wij willen in ons volk staan, niet er naast”) NIOD, NSVO, 1194, 10 March 1943.
181 Letter Ernst Voorhoeve, January 1st 1941, Diary H. de Wilde, Regionaal Archief Leiden (RAL).
182 Het Werkende volk, October 1st 1941.
183 Het Werkende volk, April 29th, 1942.
portray the NSB more positively.

Such continued efforts did not produce the expected results. There was a strong divergence between the ambition to mobilize the masses and the reality of rejection by many Dutch citizens. The NSB increasingly saw itself as a small minority fighting for a revolution, against all opposition.184

From its start, the NSB cherished a culture of victimhood. The NSB members saw themselves as fighters for the good, who were unduly hampered by the opposition. Immediately after the German victory, the NSB papers had claimed this position of victimhood, when many leading National Socialists were interned in the Dutch East Indies, an enormous disgrace, according to the NSB. Almost every week, the NSB published articles about the terror they had to endure and the hate, the lies and imputations that NSB members had to deal with. The NSB propagandists complained about the undeserved opposition they confronted.185 In NSB propaganda the assassinations and terror were presented as a leading force, strengthening the faith of NSB members.186 The claim of an “underdog position” is clearly visible in the following passage, in which the Utrecht NSB paper quoted Mussert’s words of 1935 in July 1941, when he piled accusations on his pre-war political opponents:

Remember! It was not us who started to turn the Dutch from office because of their political beliefs, they did;
We did not allow street terror, they did;
We did not ban meetings, they did;

184 NIOD, 220a, January 7th 1942, Amsterdam; “De beweging zal in den staat altijd een kleine minderheid zijn, een ‘keurtroep.’”
185 For example, Volk en Vaderland May 24th 1940; NIOD access number 298, file 14, Feb 25th, 1943.
186 Katherine Stroebe,, Is this about me? Responding to subtle discrimination. Beyond an individual versus group perspective ([Leiden] 2009) 23-25. In theories about the impact of discrimination it is argued that it can threaten peoples’ worldview. Therefore the targets of discrimination have to reshape their worldview. The constantly negative attitude of the majority of the members of Dutch society could have posed a threat to the worldview of NSB members.
We did not set up a concentration camp, they did;
We did not deprive the press for a political opponent, they did.\textsuperscript{187}

These lines reveal the feelings of maltreatment and of “they struck first.” These feelings were prominent within the NSB. The NSB saw a dichotomy within society between those who were in favor of the NSB and those who opposed National Socialist ideology. In that sense they polarized political opinion. In NSB rhetoric, nonmembers were referred to as “antis.” The latter rejected the ideology and organization of the NSB. Members of the NSB were urged not to visit their theaters or cinemas or patronize their shops.\textsuperscript{188} “Antis” were accused of gossiping about NSB members. According to the NSB, being against the NSB had become “fashionable.”\textsuperscript{189}

In addition to the generally negative attitude towards the NSB, the NSB was confronted with outbursts on specific occasions. In 1941, on the birthday of Prince Bernhard (husband of Princess Juliana, heir to the throne of the Kingdom of the Netherlands) many opponents wore a white carnation to show their support for the royal family. The NSB denounced these actions as “brutality and stupidity without borders.”\textsuperscript{190} NSB members tried to convince everyone of the uselessness and hopelessness of the anti-behavior and thoughts.\textsuperscript{191} This reaction also reveals the frustration among NSB propagandists about the constant stream of opposition.

Nonmembers were portrayed as “un-national” cowards, unjustified in looking forward to the Nazi defeat. Some nonmembers were supposedly too afraid to admit their preferences for the NSB.\textsuperscript{192} Along with mocking the fear of the antis, the NSB also complained about their hope. When in 1944 the Allied invasion became an increasing threat,
the NSB tried to ridicule the support for this invasion with the slogan: “How do antis see the invasion? As liberation of the nation.”¹⁹³ One group in particular was portrayed as specifically “un-national” cowards: the Jews. The Jews were by far the most extreme antis in the eyes of the NSB; the Jews were most heavily accused of propagating anti-fascist messages and of a lack of “real” national consciousness. These images were visible within different national and local propaganda papers.¹⁹⁴

To conclude, in the first year of the occupation the outsiders were seen as possible participants in the Nazi revolution; later on this hope was gone and the outsiders were increasingly seen as cowardly, unwilling people. Even though the NSB kept trying to reach out to opponents, their cult of victimhood and policy of polarization prevailed. This was a process that fits into patterns of other fascist movements.¹⁹⁵ Meanwhile in the Netherlands, the NSB and its “antis” drifted further apart.

The views of society held by individual NSB members corresponded with the ideas propagated in both regional and national National Socialist newspapers. In the CABR sample, one NSB member literally mentioned the ideal of the volkgemeenschap (unified community) in one of his letters during the occupation.¹⁹⁶ Five former NSB members declared in their postwar statements or contemporary letters their current or previously held belief in a unified national community.¹⁹⁷ In five percent of the files I found evidence of support for the unification of the Netherlands or for the Dutch people.¹⁹⁸ One engineer in Amsterdam explicitly expressed to his NSB superiors his wish to contribute to the building of a new community.¹⁹⁹

NSB members complained about the behavior of their opponents, the “antis,” such as the Nederlandse Unie. In the files of eight former NSB members, these members mentioned misunderstanding or opposition of nonmembers.²⁰⁰ In March 1945, one NSB member wrote

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¹⁹⁴ De Werker, May 15th, 1942; Volk en Vaderland, May 24th, 1940.
¹⁹⁵ Paxton, The anatomy of Fascism, 41.
¹⁹⁶ Letter of Hormann to the WA, NA, CABR, file 76881.
¹⁹⁷ NA, CABR, file 91860, 105244, 95025, 17780, 74405.
¹⁹⁸ NA, CABR, pro “unity of the Netherlands”: file 21723, 23816, 91860, 55673, 85351, 57408, 70873, 94377, 11089, 2149, 20294, 56601; pro “Nederlandse volk”: file 20083, 85827, 86527, 55380, 52518.
¹⁹⁹ Letter of Staargaard to the NSB, NA, CABR 91860.
²⁰⁰ NA, CABR, file 21723, 17833, 17828, 52561, 22952, 71127, 105244, 85351, 20022.
in a letter to his girlfriend that the “antis” were very cruel and that their God was cruel as well.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 105244.} Here we can see criticism of opponents combined with criticism of religion.

The belief in a unified community was not only a fascist ideal; it was held by supporters of other political movements as well, for example the Nederlandse Unie. The latter was founded in July 1940 by three men: Hans Linthorst Homan, Jan de Quay and Louis Einthoven. They aimed at uniting the Dutch people as a patriotic platform to strengthen the Netherlands. They excluded the NSB and emphatically rejected any idea that the NSB would lead the unification process.\footnote{Ten Have, De Nederlandse Unie. 221-228.} The NSB aimed at a unified Dutch community without the Jews, while the Nederlandse Unie aspired to a unified Dutch community with the Jews and without the NSB.

The nonmembers did not share the National Socialist ideas about them; they did not see themselves as cowardly outsiders but as insiders in Dutch society.\footnote{Belinfante, In plaats van bijltjesdag, 464.} Nonmembers compared the NSB to cancer: unlike the plague, it attacks the body from the inside. In a certain way, the German occupation had brought about an atmosphere of togetherness and even of “gezelligheid” (the cherished Dutch ideal of coziness); however, NSB members were not invited.\footnote{Van der Boom, We leven nog, 39-43, 81, 126, 133; Diary Johann Henrich Kasten, May 10th, 1941, RAL.}

\textit{Anti-Semitism}

The NSB aimed at a national unified community. However, the unified community did not include all Dutch citizens; the National Socialist New Order had to be built without the Jews.

Discussing anti-Semitism within the NSB is even more important in the Dutch case because of the so-called “Dutch paradox.” The Dutch paradox stands for the high percentage of Dutch Jews who were killed during the Shoah, while the level of anti-Semitism was relatively low, compared with neighboring countries.\footnote{De Haan, ‘Imperialism, Colonialism and Genocide’, 301, 304-314. See for an overview of the historiography of comparative research; Pim Griffioen and Ron Zeller, ‘Vergelijking van Jodenvervolging in Frankrijk, België en Nederland, 1940-1945. Overeenkomsten, verschillen,oorzaken’ (Amsterdam 2008) 38-72.} This lower level of anti-Semitism might have caused a lower level of anti-Semitism in the NSB.

From the party’s founding onwards, anti-Semitism was a prominent factor in the ideology of the NSB. The NSB developed itself increasingly as an openly anti-Semitic party.
in the 1930s and even more during the occupation.\(^{206}\) On national as well as local levels the NSB expressed its anti-Semitic ideas, and its national and local newspapers were used to connect almost all troubles to the Jews.

In general, within National Socialist propaganda the exclusion of the Jews is highly related to the ideal of a unified community.\(^{207}\) The latter could be reached only by excluding the Jews from society. In February 1940, the NSB explained the intertwining of their struggle for a unified community and their anti-Semitism in an article in *VoVa*. Because the Jews were a danger to the national community, their departure had to be supported, the journal argued, out of “love for our community.”\(^{208}\)

Anti-Semitism remained a central element in NSB propaganda during the war. From the beginning of the occupation onwards, the NSB published many anti-Jewish statements, in public speeches, posters and papers.\(^{209}\) In local newspapers, one can find many articles dealing with the “solutions” to the “Jewish problem” (*Jodenvraagstuk*).\(^{210}\) Their anti-Jewish statements were not limited to propaganda alone. The internal reports were full of anti-Semitic quotes and actions as well, and thus the NSB ventilated an uncompromising anti-Semitic ideology.\(^{211}\)

What were the central elements in their propaganda against the Jews? The main focus of NSB papers was on the supposedly “anti-Dutch” character of the Jews.\(^{212}\) For example, in the fall of 1940 an Amsterdam-based NSB paper printed that within Dutch national identity there was no place for a Jewish culture.\(^{213}\) And in the WA paper, the National Socialists stressed the “enormous gap” between “the Jew” and “the Dutchman.”\(^{214}\) According to the NSB, the Jews did not belong to Dutch society; they had to be excluded from the national community.

The propaganda went further than placing the Jews outside the national community;
the NSB even proclaimed the danger of the Jews to Dutch society. The Jew was the “evil genius,” the enemy of all inhabitants of the Netherlands. In the local NSB paper of the Utrecht area, the “Jewish danger” was often discussed.\footnote{De Werker, December 15th, 1940, January 8th, 1941, April 12th, 1941.} It was supposedly their own fault; the Jews themselves had caused the NSB’s “burning hate against the Jews.”\footnote{De Daad, September 27th, 1940; De Daad May 28th, 1943.} The anti-Semitic WA paper discussed the Jews’ eagerness to rule over “us,” even in a period when the deportation of the Jews was operating at full blast.\footnote{De Zwarte Soldaat, April 1st, 1943.} The Jews were portrayed as an “ally of the devil.”\footnote{De Zwarte Soldaat, February 4th, 1943.} They were also described as the most important danger for Christians: they were the “enemy of Death of the Christian.”\footnote{De Zwarte Soldaat, April 13th, 1944.} Even in April 1944 – when most of the Dutch Jews had already been deported – “the Jew” was still labeled as the main enemy of National Socialism and of the “white race” and was perceived a threat to national unity.\footnote{De Zwarte Soldaat, April 6th, 1944.}

One of the central arguments of the National Socialists was the connection of the Jews with the main enemies of National Socialism. As in German anti-Semitic propaganda, the Jews were seen as the protagonists of both unbridled capitalism and communism. According to the NSB propaganda, the Jews were allies of communist Soviet Union and of capitalist England and the United States of America. Many articles were written following this line of argument. And one of NSB’s most widely spread pamphlets stated this relationship: “Yankee Englishman-Bolshevik dancing to the tune of the Jewish clique.” In 1941 this poster was stuck to windows and put between the pages of the telephone book.\footnote{Illustration and Police Archive Heemstede, 31 August 1941.} The NSB portrayed the Jews as belonging to a united international conspiracy, which was trying to conquer the world. The Jews were held responsible for the Second World War and thus for D-Day, and all the other mischief happening to Nazi-Germany and its allies. In other Nazi words: the Jews were guilty of everything.\footnote{Volk en Vaderland, June 9th, 1944; Herf, The Jewish enemy, 183-230.}

In addition to excluding the Jews from their national united utopia, the NSB papers also frequently supported German anti-Jewish policies.\footnote{Wout Ultee and Ruud Luijkhx, ‘De NSB als een massa agressief tuig? Artikelen over joden in het Nationale Dagblad 17-5-1940 tot 5-9-1944’ in: Henk Flap and Marnix Croes, eds, Wat toeval leek te zijn, maar niet was. De organisatie van de jodenvervolging in Nederland (Amsterdam 2001) 117-144, here 124-125.} In national NSB newspapers the
deportation of the Jews was praised.\textsuperscript{224} The NSB encouraged German and Dutch National Socialist actions against the Jewish population. The NSB specifically supported the German liberation of “Jewish-capitalism” in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{225} The NSB supported German measures to save the Dutch from the Jewish threat, which they saw as an important issue. The WA paper stated in the spring of 1941 that if the last Jew left the Netherlands, the nation would be a better place to live.\textsuperscript{226} And in March 1942, the Amsterdam NSB proudly announced that the Zandvoort community was “free of Jews.”\textsuperscript{227}

In anti-Semitic propaganda, Amsterdam takes a special place. More than half of the population of Dutch Jews lived in Amsterdam. The NSB labeled it as a “Jewish city.”\textsuperscript{228} The anti-Jewish policies were most evident in the capital, and one can see how the local NSB newspaper continued to encourage those actions against the Jewish community. In September 1942 the Amsterdam NSB paper stated: “The Jewish problem is being solved gradually but radically by the German government by removing the Jews from our country.”\textsuperscript{229} The local NSB leaders in Amsterdam supported German anti-Jewish policies unconditionally. The Amsterdam-based NSB leadership did not only applaud passively; they also encouraged NSB members to actively post signs “prohibited for Jews” and discouraged them from buying from Jews.\textsuperscript{230} The Jews had not only to be “cleared” physically; their spirit had to be cleared as well.\textsuperscript{231} NSB members disdained anyone opposing Nazi anti-Jewish policies.\textsuperscript{232} The NSB even thought that the German policies could go further. The WA paper wrote disparagingly about how the German Nazis did not recognize those who were one-quarter Jewish as Jews.\textsuperscript{233} Such statements reveal the aggressive anti-Semitic tone of NSB propaganda in the city from which the largest number of Dutch Jews was deported.

In analyzing local and national newspapers, it becomes clear how deeply anti-Semitic—and thus a true representative of fascism in the Netherlands – the Dutch National

\textsuperscript{224} Landheer, \textit{De stem van de NSB}, 57-58.
\textsuperscript{225} Vlekke in Amsterdam, NIOD, HSSPF, 033, August 26th, 1940.
\textsuperscript{226} De \textit{Zwarte Soldaat}, April 29th, 1941.
\textsuperscript{227} De \textit{Daad}, March 27th, September 4th, 1942.
\textsuperscript{228} De \textit{Zwarte Soldaat}, January 21st, 1941.
\textsuperscript{229} De \textit{Daad}, March 27th, September 4th, 1942.
\textsuperscript{230} De \textit{Daad}, June 12nd, August 21st, 1941.
\textsuperscript{231} De \textit{Werker}, July 19th, 1941.
\textsuperscript{232} De \textit{Werker}, October 25th 1941; May 15th 1942.
\textsuperscript{233} De \textit{Zwarte Soldaat}, May 25th, 1944.
Socialist movement was. In its anti-Semitic propaganda the NSB presented itself as a real fascist and National Socialist movement.\textsuperscript{234}

With regards to the NSB members I have scrutinized, one should keep in mind that suspects often tried to downplay their anti-Semitism in trials.\textsuperscript{235} Still, not all members denied anti-Semitic feelings. In at least 35 cases out of the CABR sample there is evidence of anti-Semitic behavior and/or thinking.\textsuperscript{236} A former NSB member stated that after the German invasion she could finally “align herself with a party which was as anti-Semitic as she.”\textsuperscript{237} An NSB member from Noordwijk stated in her trial that her dislike of the Jews was still undiminished.\textsuperscript{238} During the war, another female NSB member from Noordwijk, a little village near the North Sea, wrote in a letter that she just had read a “really interesting” book about Jews. She suggested that all the Jews should be thrown into the sea or even be used to fill up the Zuiderzee (a big lake in the Netherlands).\textsuperscript{239} In 1943, one active but undisciplined member wrote from jail to his parents that he “hoped to be able to experience the final battle against Judaism.”\textsuperscript{240} A female member in Amsterdam reacted happily to the first steps to remove the Jews from the public life, so she finally could go somewhere “without ever having to look at those Jews’ mugs anymore.”\textsuperscript{241} Some members unconditionally supported German policies against the Jews, such as an employee from Leiden University who adored Hitler and supported his “solution to the Jewish question.”\textsuperscript{242} Despite one man who said he became an NSB member to save his Jewish wife, there is little evidence of pro-Jewish thoughts or behavior among NSB members.\textsuperscript{243}

The level of anti-Semitism in Dutch society during the occupation is, perhaps surprisingly, an ill-explored subject. As historian Evelien Gans points out in her study of postwar anti-

\begin{footnotes}
\item[234] Kallis, \textit{Genocide and fascism}, 117, 121.
\item[235] Browning, \textit{Ordinary Men}.
\item[236] NA, CABR, file 97118, 86456, 86527, 55380, 85351, 17658, 55750, 76881, 74278, 21723, 76441 (Guepin declared his opposition the deportation of the Jews but wrote an article in the \\textit{Zwarte Soldaat} in which he called the Jews “a curse”), 20109, 17828, 52561, 22952, 62639, 40918, 57408, 63824, 64359, 56275, 106402, 97389, 86201, 74278, 42353, 70682, 106964, 95061, 63551, 37042, 14487, 21491, 85302.
\item[237] NA, CABR, file 95061.
\item[238] NA, CABR, file 95061.
\item[239] NA, CABR, file 74278.
\item[240] NA, CABR, file 20109.
\item[241] NA, CABR, file 106402: “zodat je nu eindelijk ergens rustig heen kunt gaan zonder eeuwig tegen die Jodentronies te moeten kijken.”
\item[242] NA, CABR, file 37042.
\item[243] NA, CABR, file 13795.
\end{footnotes}
Semitism in the Netherlands: we know almost nothing of the levels of anti-Semitism within the silent majority. Dutch prewar society is regarded as being less anti-Semitic than Germany or France. Combined with the high percentage of Jews who were killed, this phenomenon—as mentioned before—is labeled as the “Dutch paradox.” While anti-Semitism before the war was relatively low, those feelings probably increased in wartime. Various newspapers of the resistance noted that the level of anti-Semitism rose during the occupation. While thorough research is still lacking, several historians conclude that anti-Semitism had an upsurge after the liberation. This development was the result of the isolation of the Jews in society, anti-Semitic propaganda, and perhaps the feelings of shame and guilt about the Gentiles’ lack of courage to help the isolated and persecuted Jews.

Nevertheless, this did not mean that this level of anti-Semitism among the general public rose as high as that among NSB members. So, there was a gap between the ideas of NSB members and those of nonmembers.

*Church*

The next key element of National Socialist ideology relates to the relationship of the NSB with the church. More than fascism, Nazism is known for its anti-religious, anti-Christian views on society. However, in a religious society such as the Netherlands was at the time openly non-religious parties were not the most successful.

Religious institutions rejected the NSB from the 1930s onwards. The Reformed (Calvinist) and the Catholic Church both banned NSB members in the 1930s from sacraments. The relationship with different churches and religion in general remained difficult during the years of the Nazi occupation. According to the Catholic bishops, those

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246 Mosse, *Nazi culture*, 235-240, 244-247.

247 *De Daad*, March 6th, 1942.
who became National Socialists placed themselves “outside the church.”

The Catholic Church employed several methods to express its discontent with the NSB. In November 1940, the Church reinforced its statement from 1936, suggesting that Catholics should not belong to the NSB. Priests refused to offer their spaces to WA members or similar organizations. In January 1941, the Catholic Church refused the sacraments to all NSB members. However, this ban on sacraments was aimed not only at the NSB group; sacraments were withheld from socialists and communists too, and the latter two groups were even mentioned first in the guidelines of the Catholic Church in January 1941. In the same month, local church leaders received an instruction about NSB membership: Catholics were allowed to join the NSB only if they were forced to, and they were not permitted to wear a uniform, badge, or to attend NSB meetings or contribute to NSB propaganda.

In 1942, the Catholic Church openly expressed the irreconcilability between Catholicism and National Socialism. In April 1942, the archbishop stated that “the National-Socialist worldview was diametrically opposed to Christianity and was a severe threat to our Christian faith and our Christian morals.” In June 1943, the Catholic Church issued guidelines for former NSB members who wanted to say farewell to the NSB and return to the Catholic Church. The former National Socialist and “born-again” Catholic had to abjure National Socialism by saying that he or she “abhors National Socialism and rejects it as incompatible with Christian principles.” From that moment onwards, NSB membership was prohibited and reading National Socialist papers was strongly prohibited. And children of NSB members could be baptized only if they were raised in the Catholic faith.

Catholics had to refrain from participating in National Socialist sub-organizations as

248 NIOD, WA, file 1093.
250 PG(?) 13 February, 1942.
252 January 27th 1941, Aartsbisschop en bisschoppen in Nederland 259a: 72f, RAL. Houwink ten Cate and In ’t Veld, Font, 96.
253 RAL, January 13th 1941, 259a: 72f. Opposition from the church in 1941; Kooy, Echec, 100; C.J. Rogier, Katholieke Herleving (Den Haag 1956) 593.
255 April 1942, aartsbisschop en bisschoppen, 259a: 72f, RAL.
256 RAL, 259a: 72f Haarlem, June 7th, 1943; “Ondergeteekende verklaart bij dezen onder eede, dat hij het nationaal socialisme onder iedere vorm verwerpt en verfoeit als strijdig met de christelijke beginselen.”
well. From its establishment in 1940, the Catholic charity organizations were prohibited from aligning with the National Socialist charity organization Winterhulp; neither were they permitted to support this organization financially.\(^{257}\) In April 1942, this guideline was reinforced: even individual cooperation with Winterhulp or NVD was discouraged.\(^{258}\) However, the Church did not prohibit schools from accepting help from the NVD.\(^{259}\) In December 1941, the Diocese of Haarlem published a statement that Catholics should not join the Kultuurkamer; at that moment, they could still be passive members of the NSB.\(^{260}\) Participation in other National Socialist organizations was discouraged or forbidden too.\(^{261}\) Wearing uniforms or badges from NSB or NJS was not tolerated at school.\(^{262}\) It was forbidden for Catholic boys to join the *Landwacht*, SS, or sport camps of similar organizations.\(^{263}\)

Many Dutch Reformed ministers ended up refusing to conduct National Socialist wedding ceremonies.\(^{264}\) The attitude of the Dutch Reformed Church was diverse, with some clergy harboring an implicit or explicit National Socialist inclination.\(^{265}\) In 1942, the Catholics, Reformed and Dutch Reformed churches established an interdenominational dialogue, in order to express their common dissatisfaction with the policies of the National Socialists.\(^{266}\) In this hostile environment, the NSB had to reconsider its standpoint regarding religion and the church.

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257 December 23rd, 1940, RAL, 259b: 11.
258 April 20th, 1942, letter to Catholic councils of the poor, 159 b: 11, RAL.
259 RAL, Bisdom Haarlem, November 9th 1942, 259a: 72f.
259b RAL, December 29th, 1942, Bisdom Haarlem: “not allowed to go to meetings, or read the NSB propaganda”; RAL, January 13nd, 1941, 259a: 72f; 259a: 72f, Haarlem, May 13th, 1944.
260 RAL, Bisdom Haarlem, December 7th, 1942, NAF forbidden because umbrella organization NSB. 259a: 72f; Haarlem, 19 October 1942, 259a: 72f, artsenkamer; Haarlem, April 15th 1942, NAD discouraged.
261 Haarlem, March 23nd 1942, 259a: 72f.
263 Henk Tijssen, *De dominee van de NSB. Boissevain en zijn gang van de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk naar het Nationaal Socialisme* (Kampen 2009) 153.
The intensified antireligious direction of the National Socialist regime posed a dilemma for the Dutch National Socialists. The NSB was confronted with antireligious German Nazism and opposition from Dutch churches. The NSB standpoint regarding the churches in the Netherlands was complicated and influenced by external dynamics. Given the bans on participation in National Socialist parties issued by the church, it became more and more difficult for the parties to reach out to religious communities. On the one hand, Dutch National Socialists tried to connect with religious people. On the other hand, the NSB opposed religious institutions, such as the Church. The NSB perceived religion more as an individual experience than an institutional affair. Therefore, the NSB beginning in the 1930s proclaimed that it disliked the Church as an institution but favored religion.

Mussert called himself and his party religious in the 1930s. The first point of the NSB 1937 party program was its faith in God (Godsvertrouwen). During the occupation, local meetings often ended with singing the sixth verse of the national anthem, the verse in which faith in God takes a central place.

By analyzing NSB papers, it becomes clear that the NSB openly referred to Christianity during the occupation. “Trust in God” (Godsvertrouwen) remained one of the party’s leading principles. Although Christianity in itself was accepted and even proclaimed, the relationship with the churches was complicated. The NSB openly protested against the actions of different religious authorities, such as the ban on Catholic funerals for NSB members. The NSB propagandists proclaimed that it was not religion that the NSB opposed; they were in fact Christians themselves. However, they tried to explain that the Church should be denied political power in order to prevent the “bad” influences of capitalism. The Church had to be politically neutral and separated from politics; the NSB advocated a complete separation between the state and religious institutions.

The NSB ideologues connected the Christian religion clearly to “the Jewish question.” According to the NSB papers the Jews were anti-Christian and therefore seen as a danger to the national identity. The NSB introduced the term “Christian-anti-Semitism.” The NSB saw

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267 But also religious Nazi officials, such as Seyss-Inquart.
268 De bronnen van het Nederlands Nationaal Socialisme (1937).
269 Reports about local meetings June 23rd, 1941, September 23rd, 1942, May 23rd, 1943, NIOD, file 1498; De Daad, May 1st, 1942, November 6th, 1942, April 28th, 1944. They sang this faith-oriented verse instead of the first verse, in which the “German blood” is mentioned.
270 De Zwarte Soldaat, February 18th, 1941; NIOD, ATL, file 2049, June 1942; NIOD, 123, file 1473-76, January 10th - December 17th, 1941.
271 De Zwarte Soldaat, December 24th, 1940, January 7th, 1941, April 29th, 1941.
anti-Semitism in itself as a Christian vocation. In order to support this principle they quoted anti-Semitic texts by Martin Luther. The Jews were portrayed as the cause of degeneration of Christian morality and the Church. Therefore, the NSB openly questioned the churches’ protests against the deportation because, according to the NSB, the Christians were denying their own history, in which they always had opposed the Jews. The protests of the Church were presented as evidence of its ties with the Jews, Bolshevism and capitalism.

One of the ways the NSB tried to convince religious nonmembers to support the party was by emphasizing their shared aim of fighting against the communist Soviet-Union. The NSB regularly pointed to Christians’ rejection of communism to bolster their cause. NSB papers tried to persuade Christian non-NSB-members to unite with them in order to win the fight against the “Bolshevik danger.” Such statements were frequently used by the NSB in the first period of Hitler’s war against the Soviet Union.

In this respect, the region in which the NSB operated also mattered. In the local NSB paper from the Utrecht area –de Werker- more articles about churches were published than was the case in Amsterdam. One of the explanations could be that in the area surrounding Utrecht people—the so-called Dutch Bible Belt-- were more strongly attached to religious institutions.

The NSB had its own religious NSB organization (Evangelie en Volk). There were some NSB Reformed ministers with influence as well. Reverend Boissevain –based in Leiden- was one of the main religious thinkers of the NSB and Reverend Ekering –based in Amsterdam- was one of the most popular and active National Socialist ministers. He married and buried National Socialists and gave many sermons. In this context Ernst Zilver, the leader of the National Socialist youth organization, pleaded in a national paper that members should have the opportunity to fulfill their religious duties. However, the religious NSB

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272 De Zwarte Soldaat, November 29th, 1944.
273 De Zwarte soldaat, April 13th, 1944; De Zwarte Soldaat, April 20th, 1944. As mentioned above, the Jews were connected with communism.
274 Volk en Vaderland, January 31st, 1941; August 1st, 1941.
275 Landheer, De stem van de NSB, 72.
276 De Zwarte soldaat, July 7th, 1941 and July 11th, 1941.
277 E.g. De Werker, March 29th, 1941.
278 Tijssen, De dominee van de NSB (Kampen 2009).
279 Ekering, Boissevain etal.; Tijssen, De dominee van de NSB; NA, CABR, file 20294. Also in other communities, for example Reverend Reeser in Winterswijk: Kooy, Echec, 31-34.
280 June 11th, 1943, Algemeen handelsblad, NA, CABR, file 21419.
organization did not last. It disappeared in November 1941. The NSB increasingly saw Christianity as a tool to reinforce their anti-Semitic agenda and less as a separate standpoint that had to be defended. This coincided with generally more German and radicalized propaganda on all fronts.

All in all, the NSB attitude towards the Church started off with benevolence and rapprochement and developed into a more distant and restrained approach. The NSB still valued the trust in God highly and even saw Hitler as sent by God. However, religion played a subordinate role in NSB propaganda. The religious NSB organization did not survive to the end of the war. Religious communities and National Socialism drifted apart, as the NSB opted for the German Nazi line of thought.

Thus, National Socialism and Christianity had a difficult relationship. In the Netherlands, Mussert tried to combine both. It is interesting to see if and how individual National Socialists reflected upon this issue. From the CABR sample, only six members expressed themselves negatively about the Church. Nine members were active within one of the churches during the occupation and their membership. Four clearly struggled with the combination of faith in the Church and National Socialism. It seemed as if the Church did not play a major role in the lives of the majority of the NSB members. This idea corresponds with the high percentage of NSB members who did not belong to any church community. From this sample approximately 25 percent were not aligned with any Church, while nationally 17.1 percent were not religious.

The Church was an important subject of conflict between NSB members and nonmembers. Those who belonged to a religious community were influenced by the standpoints of their church and saw the NSB as an antireligious movement. A teacher in Amsterdam, an opponent of the NSB, was bewildered that a Reformed minister had joined the NSB. Churches kept the NSB at a distance; religion and the NSB drifted apart, as did members of religious communities and members of the NSB.

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281 Tijssen, *De dominee van de NSB*, 109.
282 NA, CABR, file 86456, 75637, 61802, 11089, 21046, 104411, 107613, 94224.
283 NA, CABR, file 20294; STPD 41, 21723, 97118, 56593, 56104, 105208, 21419, 105014, 96973.
284 NA, CABR file 12499, 18303; 52561; 76881.
286 NIOD 244, file 1179.
The Big Brothers

As a Dutch nationalistic movement, the NSB not only had to relate itself carefully to a foreign occupier; it also had to think about how Dutch National Socialism fit into Western European fascism. Until now, in historiography it was often assumed that the NSB was first pro-Mussolini and changed in the late 1930s towards aligning itself with Hitler. Of course, it would not surprise anybody that during the occupation the NSB looked increasingly in the direction of the German Nazis. Contacts between members of the NSB and German Nazis became institutionalized during the Nazi occupation. But the NSB could have perceived itself as a representative of a broader international fascist movement instead of a Nazi Germanic one. How did the NSB reflect on developments in Germany and Italy and which examples were quoted in NSB papers?

We had and have solidarity with the Blackshirts of Mussolini and the brownshirts of Hitler. But (…) this solidarity does not exclude solidarity with our own nation, which goes above all.²⁸⁷ (Anton Mussert, August 1941)

In the 1930s, Mussert had spoken with admiration about the achievements of Mussolini. Despite the image of Dutch fascists as semi-Germans, they felt also related to Italian fascists. This feeling of a shared mission and ideology did not stop with the German occupation. Mussolini was quoted several times during the period of the German occupation, as a companion in the struggle for fascism.²⁸⁸

The NSB saw itself as the Dutch representative of a broader international fascist movement. A speech by the National Socialist mayor in Hilversum is a fine example of the views of National Socialists on the connections between the NSB and foreign examples of fascism. In the summer of 1940, he points to the many good things accomplished by the

²⁸⁷ Speech by Mussert at a meeting with German NSB members; De Zwarte Soldaat, August 8th, 1941. See also Volk en Vaderland, April 22th, 1943.
²⁸⁸ De Werker: Mussolini December 1st, 1940; Mussolini and Hitler January 18th, 1941; Mussolini and Hitler March 1st, 1941, Mussolini September 27th, 1941 and Mussolini July 17th, 1942.
regimes in Italy, Spain and Germany. Every citizen had to respect these accomplishments by Nazi Germany. While pointing out the importance of the Dutch identity, he also expressed admiration for the “great” and “brilliant” man Hitler. References in NSB papers to Hitler greatly outnumbered those to Mussolini. Pictures of Hitler were put on the front pages of local newspapers, for example, on his birthday. They referred to German Nazis as “German comrades.” The NSB propagandists liked Mussolini but now worshipped Hitler. Mussert wrote in 1943 that it was God who had sent Hitler to Europe. After the allied invasion on D-Day, Vova announced that Mussert had sent a telegram to Hitler assuring him that the NSB stood behind Hitler. The attack on Hitler in July 1944 was described in the NSB newspaper as a “monstrous crime.” And even after the alleged Nazi defeat on Mad Tuesday, the WA paper stated: “we follow the Führer.” On May 4th, 1945, Vova placed an obituary for the “heroic death” of Hitler. According to this NSB paper, Hitler was not only the greatest figure and Germany’s greatest son but above all the greatest European of all times.

However, this adoration of Hitler did not mean that all NSB members saw themselves as servants of the German Nazis. The main dispute within the NSB was concerned the extent to which the Dutch nation had to be incorporated within the German Reich. One tendency, following the SS orientation of NSB deputy leader Meinoud Rost van Tonningen, saw itself as part of Germany, while Mussert’s group viewed itself mainly as working together with the Germans to establish National Socialism in the Netherlands and at the same time defending Dutch interests. Members of this group argued about the notion that only fighting for Dutch National Socialism could prevent a takeover by German

289 Utrechts Archief, June 24th, 1940
290 De Werker: Mussolini and Hitler January 18th, 1941; Mussolini and Hitler March 1st, 1941; Hitler April 12th, 1941, Hitler January 30th, 1942, Hitler April 17th, 1942, Hitler June 19th, 1942; Hitler January 29th, 1943; Hitler January 16th, 1943; Hitler June 25th, 1943; Hitler October 29th, 1943; Hitler June 16th, 1944; De Daad, October 11th 1940, Mussert visited Hitler; January 30th, 1942, with pictures of Hitler and about German comrades; July 28th, 1944 explanation about attack on Hitler.
292 Volk en Vaderland, June 9th, 1944.
293 Volk en Vaderland, July 27th, 1944.
294 De Zwarte Soldaat, September 20th, 1944.
296 Volk en Vaderland, September 8th, 1944; and “met Duitsland voor een vrij Nederland”; Noord Hollands archief, het Gooi, meeting Hilversum December 1941; about disputes: July 15th, 1943, National Archives, London.
National Socialism. Even on the small, local level, such as a NSB meeting, members disagreed about Mussert’s position regarding Hitler.

In discussing the NSB attitude towards National Socialist Germany, the relationship with the NSDAP becomes relevant as well. In Dutch historiography the NSB is labeled as a semi-NSDAP, and NSB members as semi-Germans. It is true that these two organizations had many similarities, in ideological and political practices. As the NSDAP was older, bigger, and more successful than the NSB, the NSB looked to the NSDAP for inspiration. The construction of the NSB was very similar to that of the NSDAP: both emphasized the importance of lower-ranked officials and territorial and functional subdivision. Both parties tried to increase participation of their members. Hence, the NSB resembled the NSDAP in many ways.

NSB officials mentioned the NSDAP in propaganda and in internal reports. In internal NSB reports it becomes clear that the NSB and the NSDAP closely interacted with each other. The NSB promoted interaction with NSDAP members. In the summer of 1941, the NSB urged its members to comradely greet members of the NSDAP, the German SA, the SS and the Hitlerjugend. Members went to co-organized meetings. They could attend joint film screenings for members of the NSB and the NSDAP. From 1943 onwards, there were weekly joint Sunday morning screenings in Utrecht. NSB leaders tried to enforce companionship between NSB and NSDAP members; therefore, in order to promote a joint “pan meal,” they proclaimed in a local NSB paper that they would have dinner: “Together with our German comrades in close companionship!”

This development of Germanization sometimes frustrated local party leaders. In January 1944, a local NSB leader complained about the overrepresentation of NSDAP members in a joint activity. He was disappointed about the minority of NSB members compared with NSDAP members. In addition, he thought that NSDAP officials occupied

297 NSVO-meeting, NIOD, file 1498, July 25th, 1940.
298 NIOD, file 1498, May 20th, 1943, Naarden and Bussum.
299 Regionaal Archief Haarlem, access number 223, file 19, in 1942.
300 De Werker, August 2nd, 1941.
301 De Werker, March 15th, 1941, March 29th, 1941, January 9th, 1942, June 5th, 1942, October 8th, October 15th 1943.
302 Regionaal Archief Haarlem, July 12th, 1942, 223, 1, 2 De Werker, September 24th, 1943.
303 “Tezamen met onze Duitsche kameraden in hechte kameraadschap!”; De Werker, November 8th, 1941.
304 NIOD, file 123, 1498, 1944.
more privileged seats than the NSB officials.\textsuperscript{305} It was also during that same year, in July 1944, that an NSB propagandist distanced the NSB from the NSDAP. According to the writer, the NSB had always been more focused on quality than on quantity, whereas the NSDAP valued quantity over quality of members.\textsuperscript{306}

Despite points of critique, the NSB depended greatly on the NSDAP as inspiration, as co-organizer of National Socialist activities in the Netherlands, and as a natural supporter. In analyzing the influence of foreign examples for the ideology of the NSB, it becomes clear that NSB ideology was internally disputed and therefore dynamic, with some fixed elements. Dutch National Socialists looked at the German and Italian conquests as empire building; they received inspiration from those examples. However, the national NSB standpoint regarding Germany was not unanimous and became more problematic over time.

In discussing the NSB in the period when NSB members collaborated actively with the German occupier, their views about German Nazism reveal their mindset. The files indicate that many individual NSB members did not deviate from the official national party line regarding Nazi Germany. In fact, most members were Germany oriented. Seventy-six members of the CABR sample, one out of four, mentioned Hitler or expressed pro-Hitler feelings by having Hitler paraphernalia, greeting people or closing letters with “Heil Hitler,” taking an oath on Hitler and/or displaying the flag on Hitler’s birthday.\textsuperscript{307}

These NSB members saw National Socialist rule as the new order in politics and society, to be shaped in the near and distant future. They believed in the future of National Socialism and thus in a German victory.\textsuperscript{308} Some NSB members elaborated on this issue: they believed, for example, in a European Union under Germany’s leadership.\textsuperscript{309} An active female National Socialist said that the only opportunity for the survival of the Netherlands

\textsuperscript{305} Reports and agendas of meetings and NSB group and circle councils, NIOD file 123, 1498.
\textsuperscript{306} Instruction LRVV June 20th, 1944; NA, file 20.09.08, 588, 23 July 1944.
\textsuperscript{307} E.g., NA, CABR, files 86456, 20294, 21723, 23885, 22267, 20109, 18086, 18116, 55706, 17610, 17828, 17833, 19980, 17780, 14486, 55673, 55447, 52561, 19332, 22952, 57232, 56649, Hendrikus Johannes Kolsteeg, 97765, 63486, 54294, 74410, 76881, 69339, 110161, 26026, 56601, 707, 76436, 61106, 56275, 42336, 105377, 85816, 106402, 105208, 107176, 85465, 105398, 105244, 95025, 20625, 21419, 74278, 37267, 19346, 94196, 22718, 37445, 63220, 21839, 94289, 37223, 105486, 94247, 106964, 97466, 94817, 101669, 23823, 64411, 37042, 105489, 12230, 21105, 21491, 86142, 106731, 85302, 106092, 86639, 105976, 13374, 105454, 85878, 21042.
\textsuperscript{308} E.g. NA, CABR, files 97112, 55196, 61151, 56307, 56941, 40918, 22952.
\textsuperscript{309} NA, CABR, files 86456, 75637, 91860, 86182, 105667.
would be joining Germany. For many members, a future filled with National Socialism and German National Socialists seemed a realistic and desirable prospect.

Many members looked up to the fascist foreign examples. A young student from Amsterdam was impressed by the achievements of Hitler and Mussolini, and how they made their nations “great and powerful.” He hoped that the NSB could do the same for the Netherlands. The belief of NSB members in Germany often included adoration of Hitler. An Amsterdam NSB member wrote a letter during the war, declaring his willingness to be guided by his loyalty to Mussert and by his “rock-solid faith in our Führer A. Hitler.” One elderly NSB member was very impressed after he had read Mein Kampf. A teacher at the school for arts in Hilversum thought of himself as more pro-German than as pro-NSB. He wrote his mistress in August 1944 that he looked forward to Hitler’s victory and that this victory would be better for the majority of the European people. On the NSB-controlled national radio he gave many anti-Semitic talks, where he hoped that Hitler would keep out the “Jewish-Mongolian” storm from the East. In the end NSB members increasingly leaned towards Germany and saw Hitler as the savior of their National Socialist future.

As in the national and local NSB propaganda, there were disputes about the extent to which Nazi Germany had to be followed. In addition to this explicitly pro-German faction within the party, there also was a more pro-“Dietsch” (greater Netherlands) group inside the NSB. They tried to maintain the independent position of the Netherlands and align themselves with Flanders and even with South Africa: all the Dutch-speaking regions in the world. This group was dedicated to Mussert, while the German-oriented people listened to Rost van Tonningen and to Hitler. The “Dietsche” group was especially well represented within the youth organization of the NSB. The leader of the youth orchestra Walter Janssens of the NSB expressed himself frequently along these lines. Consequently, there were bitter divisions within the Dutch National Socialist movement. However, the disputes were carried out among the NSB officials, not the ordinary members. The latter

310 NA, CABR, file 20083.
311 NA, CABR, file 18116.
312 NA, CABR, file 22267; NIOD 216c.
313 NA, CABR, file 22718.
314 “Ik hoop dat Hitler wint. Het is beter voor het meerendeel der mensen in Europa.”; NA, CABR, file 22952.
315 NA, CABR, files 21648, 85551; and NIOD diary.
seemed less interested or influenced by disputes between NSB officials; they chose unconditionally for Nazi Germany.

In their views of the German occupier the NSB members clashed with the nonmembers. Their adoration of Hitler and Mussolini was not shared by people who were not aligned with the NSB. Loyalty towards the German Nazi occupier was the main cause of disputes between NSB members and nonmembers. The Germans were awful, but the NSB members were supposed to be even worse than the Germans.  

\[Dutch\ empire\]

A final central aspect within the wartime NSB is its conception of the colonial empire and the Dutch Indies. The NSB had always been a fervent supporter of a Dutch empire. In the 1930s, the NSB leaders constantly proclaimed the importance of the Dutch Indies for the Netherlands. This became problematic with the German occupation. Dutch National Socialists could still glorify their country’s past as an empire, but at the same time they had to deal with a colony that was occupied by the ally (Japan) of its own most important supporter (Germany). Here, the standpoint of the German Nazis clashed with the Dutch party’s prewar ideas. The NSB had to determine their new position carefully.

The Dutch had possessed a large colonial empire, which served as a source for national pride and glory. The Netherlands had controlled the Dutch Indies for three centuries. In the 1930s, the NSB was one of the most prominent promoters of a powerful and above all Dutch East Indies. In addition, the National Socialist movement received a significant amount of money from its supporters overseas. Therefore, the NSB had a hard time defining its own position regarding the Dutch Indies during the German occupation.

In the months following the German invasion, the Dutch colonial administration arrested German and German-oriented persons, among them members of the NSB. Hundreds of leading National Socialists were seen as possible traitors and were therefore

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316 Van der Boom, *We leven nog*; Diary Kasten, RAL.
317 Tessel Pollmann, ‘De Indische NSB’.
318 Tessel Pollmann ‘De Indische NSB’; *De Zwarte Soldaat*, August 8th, 1941.
The NSB expressed its concern about these NSB prisoners. The interned “comrades” were regularly mentioned in NSB papers. The NSB saw those internments as a true disgrace. In addition to proclaiming the disgrace of the internments, the NSB wanted to maintain contacts with the NSB members overseas. The NSB informed its members about how to send their letters to those who were interned in the Indies. Later, the NSB announced that the NSB members had been shipped to an internment camp in Suriname and therefore that would be the new destination to send letters to.

The NSB also tried to influence the policies in the Dutch East Indies and wanted the German Nazis to help them. NSB leaders complained to the German administration about the lack of German support. They tried to persuade the Germans to ask the Japanese to liberate the interned members in October 1940. However, their efforts were without success.

Local NSB leaders dealt with the “Indies-issue” at several NSB meetings during the first period of the occupation. Communication with its members was one of the main aims of the NSB on this issue. The Dutch Indies, the colonial past and the internment of NSB members were discussed at numerous party gatherings. At meetings of the National Socialist Women’s Organization the issue was particularly popular. One female member of the NSB often held presentations about the Dutch Indies, the NSB members who were interned there, and the hard life Western women faced in the colony. She touched on the race issue and proclaimed the superiority of the Western race compared to the Eastern race. The subject of the Dutch East Indies was on the agenda the first year of the occupation. Afterwards it became problematic because of Japan’s position as the conqueror of the Dutch East Indies.

External international factors put the NSB in a difficult position. In the autumn of 1940, after the Axis pact of Germany, Italy and Japan, the NSB did not anticipate an imminent Japanese conquest of the Dutch Indies. Nevertheless, Japan did invade the

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319 Jennifer Foray, *The Kingdom shall rise again*, 179.
320 Foray, *The Kingdom shall rise again*, 180-181; *Volk en Vaderland (Vova)* June 7th 1941.
321 *De Zwarte Soldaat*, December 24th, 1940, May 30th, 1941, August 1st, 1941.
322 *De Daad*, July 17th, 1942; *De Werker*, July 24th, 1942.
323 *De Werker*, July 16th, 1943. Foray, *The Kingdom shall rise again*, 182; *Vova*, February 12th and July 16th, 1943.
324 HSSPF, 077, October 15th, 1940.
325 NIOD, file 1498, January 20th, 1941, February 20th, 1941, February 24th, 1941.
326 *Volk en Vaderland*, September 27th and October 11th, 1940.
Dutch Indies successfully. The NSB had to choose between their own principles (pro-colonial, against Japan) and those of Nazi Germany. The national NSB papers kept silent when the Japanese invaded the Indies, which suggests the indecision among NSB leaders. The NSB clearly had problems with defining its position on this delicate subject. Local leaders were urged not to discuss this subject too often at party meetings.

After a period of silence, the NSB finally gave up the idea of the Dutch East Indies because they did not see another option given Germany’s alliance with Japan. Historian Jennifer Foray examined this struggle in her study of Dutch views on the Dutch Indies during the war. According to Foray, the NSB was more concerned with validating its own ideology than with the connection with the Dutch Indies itself.

The fact that the Netherlands was now separated from the Indies did not mark the end of the Dutch National Socialist colonial ambition. Partly because of German pressure, they tried to relocate their colonial aspirations to Eastern Europe. From that moment onwards their view was towards the near East. The NSB leaders wrote about the –in their eyes- unrealistic expectations of their opponents; it would be impossible to reconquer the Dutch Indies. The NSB said they relied upon “realism”; the propaganda labeled the Queen’s aspirations as unrealistic and its own as realistic and preferable. The NSB had resigned itself to the loss of the Netherlands’ Asian empire and decided to support the Germans and the Japanese; they dropped the East Indies and wished to build up a European empire together with the German Nazis.

Once the NSB had decided to accept the loss of the Dutch Indies, the NSB leaders tried to alter the image of the Japanese occupation. They blamed the Americans, the Jews, the English and the weak prewar government for the defeat. They did not see Japan as the aggressor. The official party line in 1943 stated that the Dutch Indies would come under the influence of Japan, as the Asian living space (levensruimte). The European continent would

327 *Volk en Vaderland*, February 1942.
328 NIOD, Indische Zaken acces number 123, file 2056.
331 *De Werker*, November 20th 1942, June 18th, 1943; Foray, *The Kingdom shall rise again*, 195; *Volk en Vaderland*, August 1942.
332 *De Zwarte Soldaat*, October 28th, 1943 and March 23rd, 1944.
333 *De Zwarte Soldaat*, between August 1941 and September 1942 no articles about the Indies; *De Werker*, January 30th 1942, Foray, *The Kingdom shall rise again*, 193.
become a Germanic sphere. The prewar government was a “safer” (less controversial) subject for the NSB. It was the prewar democratic government, which was responsible for the loss of the Dutch colony. In June 1943, Utrecht NSB leaders stated that it was the prewar government who surrendered the Indies to the United States of America and England. The NSB could always complain about past shortages of military personnel or the general “weaknesses of the democratic system.” Another favorite subject in the national WA magazine was the weakness of the Indies as a result of the Jewish influences. The Jews were blamed for the military shortcomings that had weakened the Indies. The Jews were evil, and while the Indonesian population was portrayed as inferior and different, it was not, however, as dangerous as the Jews. The racial classification of the German Nazis required the Dutch National Socialists to think about the position of those with Indonesian blood. The NSB tried to explain why the East Indian race differed from the Jewish race. According to the NSB, the East Indians mingled better with the Dutch and did not oppose Dutch interests. Moreover, the lack of new influx of “Indian blood” would assure the final disappearance of the East Indian race.

In analyzing NSB’s standpoint regarding the Dutch Indies, it becomes clear that there were points of dispute between Dutch and German National Socialists on this subject. In internal letters NSB members expressed the difference between the Dutch and German standpoints, as a result of the centuries-long colonial experience for the Netherlands and the lack of a similar record for Germany. According to an internal circular, the NSB leaders distanced themselves partly from the Germans. In their eyes the German worldview was different because of their lack of a long tradition of colonial empire. The German administration concluded the same: the NSB took a different stand on the race issue. However, these disputes were internal; in its propaganda the NSB backed up the German views in the end.

All in all, an exploration of the NSB standpoint regarding the Dutch East Indies shows the flexibility of Dutch National Socialist ideology. It also demonstrates the initial

334 De Zwarte Soldaat, July 1st, 1943.
335 De Werker, January 30th, 1942; Foray, The Kingdom Shall Rise Again, 189-193.
336 De Zwarte Soldaat, June 27th, 1941.
337 De Zwarte Soldaat, May, 30th, 1941.
338 De Zwarte Soldaat, September 17th, 1942.
339 NIOD, 123, file 2056, March 9th, 1941.
340 NIOD, NSB ‘Indische Zaken’, acess number 123, file 2056.
341 NIOD, HSSPF, file 033, January 21st, 1941.
quarrels between Dutch and German National Socialists about this subject. However, it does not reveal major disputes between National Socialist newspapers. Some newspapers explained National Socialist ideology more extensively, but the core position did not differ much. This corresponds with the findings of historian Jeffrey Herf in his study of Nazi propaganda. Moreover, the propaganda illustrates the focus on race, empire and the military, which fits into general fascist ideas.

The issue of the Dutch East Indies also distinguished the NSB from the rest of Dutch society. Fifteen members from my sample expressed their interest in this subject, or they had lived in the Dutch Indies before becoming an NSB member in the Netherlands. NSB members who had lived in the Dutch Indies before the occupation felt particularly nostalgic concerning strong colonial government. However, the issue of the Dutch Indies does not often come up in letters or other personal statements of NSB members. Thus, the issue was more debated within the NSB organization than experienced on an individual level.

In general, NSB opponents agreed with the NSB members that the Dutch colony was something to cherish and fight for. Many Dutchmen did not want to give up the colony. Unlike the NSB organs, the resistance papers pointed to Japan as the aggressor, not to the English and the Americans. Most of the Dutch did not exhibit any enthusiasm for the colonization of Eastern Europe; the NOC (Dutch East Division) was quite unpopular. All in all, the national NSB ideas about the Dutch Indies did not correspond with general public opinion in many ways: the party’s concentration on NSB internees and their final support for the Japanese occupation were not reflected in the opinions of their Dutch opponents.

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343 NA, CABR, 20139, 23816, 3014, 91860 en 86182 en 105667, 23885, Johannes Theodorus van Rossum, 17833, 17828, 55447, 13759, 17686, 70873, 97695, 70682, 23823, 86197, 105458.
344 NA, CABR, Johannes Theodorus van Rossum, 20139, 23816, 3014, 91860, 86182, 105667.
345 HSSPF, 077, October 8th, 1940.
346 Vrij Nederland, February 1942; Foray, *The Kingdom shall rise again*.
347 Unsuccessfully, the NSB tried to reach out to nonmembers; Het werkende volk, August 13th, 1943.
348 Arrests in Dutch Indies were comparable with those in the Netherlands before May 1940.
Increasing gap

After exploring the ideology of European fascism, Dutch National Socialism and the ideology of individual NSB members, one can draw the following conclusions: Dutch National Socialism was a revolutionary form of fascism, and individual members were increasingly influenced by a National Socialist mindset. The National Socialist ideas were spread by a coherent set of propaganda that emphasized the need for a purified national community, without Jews and non-National Socialist “cowards.” This National Socialist conscience is crucial in understanding the social position of National Socialists within Dutch society.

The NSB increasingly followed the German Nazi ideas in its propaganda. The NSB newspapers supported German measures against the Jews. Anti-Semitism is virulent in NSB propaganda. While anti-Semitism was a common foundational view in both Dutch and German Nazism, the NSB changed its views on other subjects, due to its alliance with the Nazi regime. The NSB moved away from its originally pro-religious standpoints; religion became decreasingly important in its organization. While the NSB was one of the most outspoken advocates of the Dutch empire built around the Dutch Indies, it decided to settle for colonization of Eastern Europe instead of maintaining support for the lost colony. Both the national NSB organization and individual NSB members chose unconditionally to support Hitler and his Nazi Germany. NSB officials did quarrel about the Dutch East Indies and to what extent they had to follow Nazi Germany. However, individual members seemed to be less interested in these disputes. For them, support of the NSB meant support of Adolf Hitler.

National Socialist ideology did play a role in the lives of individual NSB members. It was not always ideology that attracted them to the party, but National Socialist propaganda influenced the majority of NSB members to adopt National Socialist ideology. A majority of Dutch National Socialists believed in the rightness of a revolution in order to create a National Socialist New Order, putting distance between NSB members and nonmembers, especially concerning who were the “right” advocates of the Dutch people.

Differences of conscience between NSB members and the rest of society did exist and increased over time. The groups differed in their views about society and who belonged to the nation and about their relationship with the occupier. The National Socialist mindset
and worldview of NSB members differed from those of their compatriots. They increasingly looked differently at the world and at Dutch society, especially in terms of who did or did not belong to the Dutch nation and citizenship.

The political convictions of individual NSB members differed significantly from nonmembers on several fronts, and the gap increased during the occupation. The latter shift is connected with the dynamic instead of static ideology of fascist groups. Members of fascist collaborating groups developed ideologically during the period of the occupation. As a result of their support for the Germans and the general rejection by their non-fascist environment, they became more radical in their ideas. Many fascist groups (collaborators and occupiers) were “self-obsessed.” During the Nazi occupation they became more radicalized and inward looking. They became more out of touch with reality and with the non-fascist members of society.\(^\text{349}\) The process of nazification coincided with a process of radicalization and general rejection. This led to an increasing gap between the fascist worldviews and perception of reality and that of nonmembers. NSB members were indoctrinated by a revolutionary ideology, which radicalized during the years of occupation. Failing in their efforts to reach out to the general public, the NSB increasingly decided to consider itself as a revolutionary vanguard. Thus, they distanced themselves even more strongly from the non-NSB-Dutchmen.

\(^\text{349}\) Kallis, *Genocide and Fascism*, 282.