Nazis in the Netherlands: A social history of National Socialist collaborators, 1940-1945
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5. The final stage: disillusion, disintegration and radicalization

Introduction

On Sunday, September 3rd, 1944, the Allied forces liberated Brussels; Antwerp followed the next day. Thus, the Dutch believed they could be liberated any minute. Rumors about an imminent German defeat were widespread. These rumors were given weight by the English radio announcement about the arrival of the Allied army in Breda in the southern part of the Netherlands. People told each other crazy stories about the approaching Allied army. Because of all these stories, September 5th was labeled “Mad Tuesday” (Dolle Dinsdag).803

These developments gladdened most Dutch citizens but troubled NSB members. Thinking their defeat was at hand, the German and Dutch National Socialists panicked. They dreaded the long-anticipated retribution. Because of their fear of retribution, NSB leaders chose to destroy troublesome documents in the Netherlands and to send NSB women and children to Germany. Nearly half of the NSB members, including a number of men, fled eastwards.804 In the CABR sample over one third fled after Mad Tuesday.805 From that moment onwards, the NSB was split in two, each group with its own perception of the impending Nazi defeat.

Almost half of the NSB members fled to Germany, thus excluding themselves physically from Dutch society. However, their temporary residence in Germany did not disrupt their ties with the Netherlands and with the NSB. Within this specific atmosphere they developed their ideas about National Socialism, the NSB, the future of National Socialism and their own future. NSB members who stayed in the Netherlands were confronted with a deteriorating NSB organization. They reacted differently to the altered organization and perspectives for the future; some persevered in their beliefs, while other NSB members became disillusioned. The historian Kooy noticed this pattern of simultaneous radicalization and disillusion in his study of the NSB members in Winterswijk.806 Disillusion led to a new group in the Netherlands: NSB members who resigned their membership. Their different reasons for

803 De Jong, Het Koninkrijk; Damsma and Schumacher, Hier woont een NSB'er, 136-142.
804 De Jong, Het Koninkrijk Xb, 281.
805 NA, CABR-files, 131 out of 322.
806 Kooy, Echec, 183, 225-226; De Jong, Het Koninkrijk, 185.
their resignations will be analyzed in this chapter.

The other category stayed in the Netherlands and retained its NSB membership; they persevered in their beliefs. This group was confronted with the disintegration of the NSB as well, and people belonging to this group had to rethink their relationship with the NSB. Their feelings of connectedness to their fellow members could have been enhanced in this final stage because of their shared uncertainty about the future. Under uncertain conditions people strongly identify with highly distinct entities.\textsuperscript{807} This connection may be an explanation for the clinging of NSB members to the NSB group. Moreover, many NSB members may not have seen other options beyond clinging to their NSB identities.

Within those NSB members remaining in the Netherlands a subgroup emerged; the most active group of NSB members in the Netherlands had been drafted into the \textit{Landwacht}. These men decided to work for the violent National Socialist internal police organization. This internal police organization gradually developed into a militia that came increasingly under the supervision of the German authorities. Perhaps the \textit{Landwacht} members were attracted to the organization because of the insecure situation that emerged after the alleged defeat. According to the psychologist Russel Spears, people are more likely to support violence if other avenues of change are ineffective, and desperate circumstances call for desperate measures.\textsuperscript{808} The insecure – one might even say “desperate” – period after Mad Tuesday led to a new impulse for the organization of the \textit{Landwacht} because Mussert took the opportunity to apply pressure to male NSB members to join. Consequently, the \textit{Landwacht} organization grew and became the main active National Socialist organization in the Netherlands.

Thus, the NSB members were divided into three different groups and a subgroup: the ones who withdrew (and thus in fact became nonmembers), NSB members in Germany, and NSB members in the Netherlands, the final group including a sub-division of radical \textit{Landwacht} men. Each group responded to the changing war opportunities and perceived the situation in its own way. After the alleged Allied victory in September 1944, the interactions, ideological commitments, activities and violence changed dramatically. Because the levels intertwined strongly, I analyze these levels together in this final stage of the German


\textsuperscript{808} Russell Spears, ‘Group rationale, collective sense’, 10.
occupation.

In order to analyze these groups on a grassroots level I have collected letters from the archives: letters of people who resigned their membership and letters of members who fled to Germany with their family members. These letters are interesting new sources to study this period of disintegration, disillusion and radicalization.

The eight months following the September crisis were an unsafe period for the Dutch. The period following the September crisis was characterized by the German declaration of a “total war,” which led to increasing terror against Dutch citizens. The war atmosphere was visible everywhere, for both nonmembers and NSB members. All inhabitants of the not-yet-liberated northern provinces were confronted with a harsh winter and food shortages. In the so-called Hunger Winter between 15,000 and 25,000 people died because of the shortages. The perils of the war, food shortages, the disintegration of the local government and the increased Nazi terror led to a tangible war situation. The period was filled with fear and hope about the future. In the case of NSB members, the fear became pressing and their hope was eclipsed by wishful thinking.

Disillusion

Mad Tuesday seemed the perfect opportunity for NSB members to quit the party. Unfortunately, it is unclear how many members resigned and how many stayed active members. However, we have some insights into the reasons for resignation because of the letters NSB members wrote to the NSB. This is a new source to analyze resignation and disillusion. Many letters of resignation ended up in the NSB archive, and these letters are an interesting source. Most of the remaining letters are from Utrecht and Amsterdam. The letters from Amsterdam members are the most extensive. Sixty-four resignation letters from Amsterdam members are dated from August 1944 till March 1945. All NSB members tried

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811 Romijn, Burgemeesters in oorlogstijd, 566-567.
812 De Jong, Het Koninkrijk, Xb, 315; Donker and Faber, Bijzonder gewoon, 53.
813 NSB Utrecht, September 1944-April 1945.
814 Of these letters, 24 were written in September 1944.
to justify their resignation by mentioning various reasons.

A less obvious reason for resignation from the NSB was most often stated as a key reason in the letters of resignation: frustration with the malfunctioning NSB organization.\textsuperscript{815} Members often expressed their “deep disappointment” toward the NSB, its leaders and its members.\textsuperscript{816} Therefore, members commented on the organization from which they were resigning. They blamed the organization instead of their own choices. Thus, members avoided seeing themselves as changeable and “cowardly” characters. The organization of the evacuation eastwards was blamed as well. A few members resigned when they returned from their stay in Germany. One member mentioned his negative experiences in Germany as one of the main reasons to resign.\textsuperscript{817} Another member expressed his discontent about the journey to the east. The NSB evacuated him with his family to Westerbork. In his eyes, the organization was problematic, and the behavior of other members filled him with “disgust.” Despite his aversion towards the NSB organization, he maintained his belief in National Socialism.\textsuperscript{818} For these members, their disappointment in the organization of the NSB was the main reason they left the party, not their disappointment or disillusion with National Socialist ideology.

It is a pattern one can see in the majority of the letters: it was the organization that had changed, while they had remained the same person. NSB members blamed the organization in order to portray themselves as stable personalities and maintain their self-esteem. They sought the reasons for leaving the party outside themselves not internally. Apparently, it was more difficult for members to distance themselves from the ideology they had believed in or still believed in. It was easier to blame something outside their belief system: the faltering organization. The resignation letters do not reveal whether the faltering functioning of the NSB was the real reason. It is quite possible that it is not. However, these letters do show us that NSB members willingly blackened the NSB in order to maintain a positive self-image.

Some members stressed other non-political reasons. They focused on personal

\textsuperscript{815} NIOD, 123, file 1918: January 1945, JN Varenhorst.
\textsuperscript{816} NIOD, 123, file1918, November 7th, 1944, NJ Voormeulen.
\textsuperscript{817} NIOD, 123, file1918, December 4th, 1944, PA Bosman.
\textsuperscript{818} NIOD, 123, file1918, November 8th, 1944, C Scheffer; “met walging vervuld.”
affairs as the main reason for leaving the party. One female member resigned because her NSB husband – the reason for her membership - left her for another woman. One man mentioned the importance of “domestic happiness.” But most personal affairs were related to the political situation. Two female members openly expressed their fear of retribution, not for themselves, but for their family. They feared the retribution promised by the resistance movement. These women expressed their wish to protect their family: a female virtue. Thus, members formulated personal reasons such as the protection of domestic happiness or the safety of their own family. In this manner, they drew a positive picture of themselves, full of virtues instead of fear. Moreover, these female virtues also connected to the National Socialist ideas about female behavior. Thus, the internal mindset remained unchanged and unchallenged. Again, personal weaknesses as reasons for resignation were avoided.

Another way of keeping up appearances was stressing renewed interest in religion. As mentioned in chapters 1 and 3, a tension existed between National Socialist ideology and Christianity. The Catholic Church officially allowed former NSB members to return to the church. Two members explicitly mentioned their return to the Catholic Church as a reason for resigning from the party. Another member mentioned Christianity in general as his reason for quitting the NSB. He added that he still sympathized with his NSB leader and did not lose his faith in National Socialism. Religion as a reason was also a motive that did not call into question someone’s weakness of character or ideological changeability.

Some members literally mentioned their “disillusion.” A long-term member resigned in March 1945, stating that “the ideals, which are so beautifully displayed, became completely neglected” and he expressed his “regret at having given the best 12 years of his

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819 A male NSB member resigned in November 1944 because he had lost everything: his house, his wife, his family. Therefore, he refused to sacrifice anything else for the NSB. Thus, with an about-face, he blamed the NSB organization as well, as an organization which destroyed everything he had loved; NIOD, 123, file1918, November 16th, 1944; I.C. Appels.
820 NIOD, 123, file1918, November 27th, 1944, Frau B Spaan-Auwen.
821 “Mijn huiselijk geluk boven alles gaat. Tevens in het feit dat het optreden van de Landwacht in de dagen van de spanning zulk een figuur heeft geslagen die ik niet met mijn eer en geweten kan overeenbrengen.”; NIOD, 123, file1918, September 13th, 1944; H. v.d. Bosch.
822 NIOD, 123, file1918: August 15th, 1944, Ms R. Lugthart; September 21st, 1944, Mrs J.S.J. van Wijk-van Beek (her husband died on the Eastern Front).
823 NIOD, 123, file1918, September 19th, 1944, NJ de Rooy; November 23rd, 1944, H.P. Rijkhoffe.
825 NIOD, 123, file1918, February 17th, 1945, H. Mulder; “Ik ben de 62 reeds gepasseerd, beter vind als een vergeten burger, dan als een verlaten idealist mijn verdere leven te slijten”; NIOD, 123, file1918, September 17th, 1944, N.J.A. Lagerwey.
life for an ideal, which proved to be a great fiction.” He did not blame the ideals but the way the NSB had executed these ideals. Therefore, he again blamed the organization instead of the ideology. A resignation letter from a postwar file from a NSB member in Hilversum shows disillusion with humanity in general. This member resigned in February 1944 because “even the NSB” was not able to construct a new society. He literally distanced himself from “cowardice” by stating that it “would not be cowardly to leave, but it would be cowardly to stay against my conscience.”

Members tried to avoid giving a “cowardly” impression. Therefore, the most obvious reason, the changing fortunes of war, remained largely unmentioned; almost none of the members mentioned the changing tide of the war as a reason to resign their membership. Only one NSB member explicitly admitted to having lost faith in a German victory. Most members tried to keep up the appearance of fearlessness. For this reason, members distanced themselves from those members leaving out of fear of an expected German defeat. A couple of NSB members, who resigned in October, mentioned that they did not want to resign in the critical days of September. Thus, they disassociated themselves from “cowardly” members.

In general, the majority of these 64 NSB members mentioned their disappointment with the NSB organization as the main reason for their resignation. In these letters disillusion was blamed on the National Socialist organizations, not on the Nazi ideology. Members wished to avoid the image of a changeable character, full of weaknesses and fear of a German defeat. Therefore, they blamed external factors: the church forced them, they wanted to protect their family and above all: the NSB had itself to blame.

826 “De zoo mooi weergegeven idealen zijn in de praktijk volkomen verwaarloosd geworden.’ And slechts mijn spijt over uitdrukken dat ik 12 van de beste jaren van mijn leven heb gegeven voor een vermeend ideal, hetwelk achteraf blijkt een groote fictie te zijn” NIOD, 123, file1918, March 3rd, 1945, H. Visscher.
827 “Ik zie het echter nu zoo, dat het niet meer laf is om te gaan, maar laf zou zijn om te blijven tegen mijn geweten in. Ik heb thans de overtuiging dat ook de N.S.B. niet in staat is om een betere samenleving te stimuleren en op te bouwen.”; letter February 21st, 1944; NA, CABR, file74405.
828 NIOD, 123, file1918: September 11th, 1944; writer claims to have written the letter on August 20th 1944.
829 NIOD, 123, file1918: September 11th, 1944; writer claims to have written the letter on August 20th, 1944.
830 NIOD, 123, file1918: October 15th, 1944, J. Mathot; October 16th, 1944, R Berends.
The second group of NSB members were those who had fled to Germany. They panicked in the early days of September 1944 and left their homes. They travelled through the eastern part of the Netherlands and were assigned different placements in Germany.

For the NSB the evacuation was a difficult process. The NSB organization had problems keeping its members under control. The NSB lacked trains to transport all members to the eastern part of the Netherlands and to Germany. Moreover, the NSB wanted the useful male NSB members to stay in the Netherlands. The NSB leaders intended to evacuate only NSB women, children, the disabled and the elderly; however, some men managed to join their families. According to De Jong, approximately half of all male, female, young and old members fled, nervously and in a disorderly manner. Of this group, 65,000 collaborators, including NSB members, arrived in Germany; half of whom settled in the Lüneburgerheide. The others stayed in the eastern or northern parts of the Netherlands.

After their arrival in Germany, some male NSB members were separated from their wives and children. The citizens of the host country were not always very pleased about the arrival of the Dutch refugees. Some Germans even perceived the NSB members as traitors to their home country. Moreover, the refugees all needed housing and food, which Germany had to provide.

In Germany, Dutch National Socialists experienced a change in their position in society: in the Netherlands they were seen as outsiders, while in Germany they were refugees. The experiences of NSB members in Germany can be analyzed by reading the letters they wrote to family members and friends in other parts of Germany and in the Netherlands. The postwar judicial investigators collected these letters. In these letters members wrote about their perception of the war, of Germany and of National Socialism. The letters are full of hope, fear, reassurances and plans for the future.

One of the main objectives was assuring their loved ones about their situation. Thus,

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831 Leiden, dagboeken Tuesday September 5th, 1944; ‘De NSB’ers verlaten in paniek Leiden’.
833 NIOD, Utrecht, February 25th, 1945, letter from Germany.
834 Tames, Besmette jeugd, 29-30.
835 Tames, Besmette jeugd, 29-30.
many members informed their readers about the large quantity of food in Germany. A girl wrote to her father that she was gaining weight in Germany and that she even had bacon.\textsuperscript{836} Another woman wrote a similar story to her father and her aunt. She bragged about the amount of food she and her husband had received. One could live like a “prince.”\textsuperscript{837} One of the reasons for these food-centered messages may have been to comfort family members back home. In Tames’s analysis of children of NSB members in Germany, the perspective on food is different: the children remembered shortages instead of plenty of food.\textsuperscript{838} But these memories could also be related to the “innocent child” story and the victimhood that children tried to claim; perhaps they remembered a more negative story than the situation had been in reality. And some memoires of children also mentioned the existence of enough food; sometimes they disliked the specific dish, but they gained weight during their stay in Germany.\textsuperscript{839}

It is possible that the food rations in Germany were reasonable but very different from what people were used to eating.\textsuperscript{840} The same mechanism is visible in the Netherlands in the period before September 1944. According to the historian Hein Klemann, until September 1944, the diet of the Dutch was actually healthier than before the occupation. The perception of food shortages was more serious than the actual food shortages: in other words, people still had something to eat, but because they were not able to eat the same food as they had before the war, it felt like a shortage of food in general.\textsuperscript{841}

Besides the abundance of food, the sustaining belief in a Nazi victory was a recurrent theme in letters from Germany.\textsuperscript{842} It is interesting that many members in Germany did not write about the victory of the NSB or Mussert. They wrote about Germany and Hitler. A woman wrote about how she kept her faith in the “genius” Hitler: “I have never believed

\textsuperscript{836} Letter October 11\textsuperscript{th}, 1944; NA, CABR, file 55673.
\textsuperscript{837} “Ik ben er echter nooit zo van overtuigd geweest dat Duitschland deze oorlog zal winnen als nu.”; NA, CABR, file 85816, letter December 6\textsuperscript{th}, 1944, to father and aunt Sien; NA, CABR, file 105389, letter from Luneberg Germany, February 18\textsuperscript{th}, 1945.
\textsuperscript{838} Tames, Besmette jeugd.
\textsuperscript{839} Iet van Bekkum, Vlucht naar Duitsland, 1944-1945. Verslag aan de hand van brieven van 2 kinderen (unpublished manuscript, 2006, collection NIOD) 8, 20, 29, 38, 50; Tames, Besmette jeugd, 31-36.
\textsuperscript{840} They disliked the German food; De Jong, Het Koninkrijk Xb, 292.
\textsuperscript{842} NA, CABR, file 105398, March 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1945, letter to sister-in-law and brother; Na, CABR, file 105244, letter October 10\textsuperscript{th}, 1944, from Germany.
more strongly in Germany’s victory than right now.” Apparenty, they were fully adjusted to the German Nazi environment and did not see a difference between the German and Dutch National Socialist cause. NSB members in Germany seemed to identify themselves increasingly with the German Nazis.

While the previous paragraphs may have suggested that everything was “fine” in Germany, not all members were happy about their situation as evacuees. A girl in Hamburg wrote to her aunt that she wanted to leave as soon as possible because it was a “giant mess” and she was homesick. Another problem that was mentioned was moral decay. A woman wrote to her husband in the Netherlands about children drinking beer.

On January 25th, 1945, Mussert wrote a letter to Seyss Inquart expressing his concern about a group of 14-year-old National Socialist girls who were paired with German soldiers on New Year’s Eve, with the idea that they would have sex. Historian De Jong also observed these annoyances about “asocial” members and Germans in his analysis of letters from several NSB officials in Germany.

The letters sent from NSB members on the German Eastern Front formed a separate category. In September 1944, a Dutch soldier sent a letter to his parents, describing his situation in Germany as follows: “It is hard here, but you have to sacrifice something for the final victory.” He strongly believed in a quick victory. Other soldiers wrote about their belief in the Nazi victory as well. The fact that soldiers wrote about their belief in the Nazi victory is not strange; on the one hand, they were fully integrated into the war culture at the front and, on the other hand, the letters were censored. Thus, even had the soldiers been disillusioned, they would not have written about it to their family members.

The soldiers were not the only ones who were connected with the Nazi war effort.
The NSB evacuees experienced many war-related phenomena: some had travelled in a train from the Netherlands to Germany that was bombed, others saw shootings and bombings in Germany, NSB boys were recruited for the army, and woman and girls had to work for the war industry as well.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 105244, letter April 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1945; NIOD, 1480, January 30\textsuperscript{th}, 1945; Tames, Besmette jeugd, 35, 39.}

The NSB members did not intend to stay permanently in Germany.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 105398, March 4\textsuperscript{th}, 1945, letter to sister in law and brother.} Mussert had tried to repatriate them in 1944, without success. Only in January 1945, did he manage to get permission for the members to return.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 19346, 94196, Letter January 26\textsuperscript{th}, 1945; Permit to return to the Netherlands.} Many members came back in the early months of 1945, from January till March 1945. One member wrote in January 1945 how much he looked forward to being an active National Socialist in his village again.\footnote{“Ik zou dolgraag de inwoners van Wijk [bij Duurstede, JD] weer eens willen bewerken met VoVa”; NIOD, Utrecht, January 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 1945.} However, the NSB leadership did not always encourage the return of NSB members. A member from Utrecht had been promoted to foreman of a police company and therefore was discouraged from returning.\footnote{NIOD Utrecht, February 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 1945, bureauleder van Erp to district leader Van der Land.}

While some were forced to stay, others were not so pleased to leave Germany and return back home. The reluctance was related to the (moderate) satisfaction about the situation in Germany and the rumors about the problems in the Netherlands. People feared what they would encounter when they returned. They had heard rumors about damaged houses and the shortages of food.\footnote{NIOD Utrecht, January 12\textsuperscript{th}, 1945.} One of the returnees regretted her return because she had appreciated the food and drink in Germany.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 19346, 94196, Letter December 17\textsuperscript{th}, 1944, February 19\textsuperscript{th}, 1945.} A woman, who stayed in Germany with her five children, was also reluctant to leave in March 1945; she dreaded the journey.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 21839, 94289, letters October 14\textsuperscript{th}, 1944, December 17\textsuperscript{th}, 1944, February 19\textsuperscript{th}, 1945.} Another young female member regretted her departure from Germany; Germany had been very exciting and “much more cozy” in her opinion.\footnote{While her family quarreled often with the anti-NSB family who lived in the farm, they had plenty of food. She appreciated the food and the safety because Germany was very dangerous; NA, CABR, file 105244, Letter from Scheemda, Groningen, the Netherlands, April 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1945 from Pieternella to Co.}

Another young female member regretted her departure from Germany; Germany had been very exciting and “much more cozy” in her opinion.\footnote{Tames, Besmette jeugd, 39-49.}

The limited expectations were not unlike the reality. In first instance, the evacuees were lodged in hotels, schools and farms in the northern part of the Netherlands.\footnote{Tames, Besmette jeugd, 39-49.}
NSB members finally returned to their former municipalities, they could find an unpleasant surprise. Some of the houses had been taken over by other people; they had been abandoned without any surveillance. Depending on the local government and NSB officials, someone had looked after the houses or not.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 19346, 94196, March 25th, 1945, letter from Hilversum.} Despite some surveillance and official guidelines about municipal protection, there were many reports of damaged houses.\footnote{On February 6th, 1945, a female member complained to the NSB that her house was occupied. She demanded the immediate return of her residence; NIOD, Utrecht, February 6th, 1945, Mrs J vd Heubel-\textit{v}. Putten; NIOD, Utrecht, March 12th, 1945; February 2nd, 1945; March 13th, 1945; March 16th, 1945. Municipal protection: NIOD, file1484, November 13th, 1944, letter of Evacuation office to the mayor of Amsterdam.} Houses of NSB members, who fled to Germany, were plundered or destroyed.\footnote{Heemstede gemeentepolitie, March 15th, 1945; April 15th, 1945; NIOD, Utrecht January 25th, 1945; NIOD, Utrecht, February 27th, 1945; March 12th, 1945, March 13th, 1945, March 16th, 1945.} The majority of these reports of damages were made in February and March 1945 when the house owners just had returned from Germany.

The damaged houses made the homecoming of NSB members often an unpleasant experience. They returned as unwelcome inhabitants, who were rejected by the people in their surroundings. While they had perceived themselves as evacuees or even as war victims, other Dutch citizens perceived them rather differently.\footnote{Tames, \textit{Besmette Jeugd}, 48-49.} Their stay in Germany had distanced them further from these non-NSB Dutch citizens, not only physically, but also mentally. NSB evacuees had identified themselves with the German cause and war machine. Thus, the NSB members returned from a militarized Germany – with which they sympathized – to a Dutch environment, where the majority of the people impatiently awaited the German defeat.

\textit{Disintegration}

A third group of NSB members decided to stay in the Netherlands and to remain in the party. These members belonged to a disintegrating NSB, which struggled to reorganize itself. The members themselves were confronted with this malfunctioning NSB organization, the food shortages and the fear of forthcoming retribution. Members who decided not to resign their membership had mainly two options: to quietly dodge all NSB activities or to fight till the very end.

In the post-September period, the organization was confronted with a low level of
activity and NSB members struggled with their belief in National Socialism. Interesting sources are available for the study of the processes of disillusion and radicalization during this period. Letters written by (former) NSB members were collected to be used at their postwar trials; the majority of these letters are from 1944 and 1945. In 37 cases out of the CABR-sample one or more letters were saved. In addition, a few diaries exist. These sources combined provide an interesting insight into the perceptions of a group of ideologically motivated people whose defeat seemed imminent. An analysis of these letters and diaries will show us this final stage of the occupation through the eyes of NSB members.

In the summer of 1944, the feelings of fear of retribution skyrocketed among NSB members. While rumors of retribution dated back to the fall of 1940, these rumors boomed after D-Day in June 1944, when the Allied forces landed in Normandy. The failed assassination attempts on Hitler in July 1944 increased the agitation, which is visible in the documents of individual NSB members. A prominent NSB member in Haarlem received a warning letter in his mailbox from the so-called “union of retribution,” wherein the possibility of his sudden death was added in parenthesis.866

In August 1944, an NSB propagandist from Hilversum wrote a letter to his ex-mistress, a nonmember. He wrote extensively about the unrest everywhere. While he still believed in Hitler’s secret weapons, he also asked her to bring all his manuscripts to a safe place in order to secure them for posterity. He even discussed the possibility of his own death. He added that he truly hoped that Hitler would win because it was “better for the majority of the people in Europe.”867 This letter shows us the mixture of fear and hope. On the one hand, he feared retribution, while on the other, he still believed in a Nazi victory.

In September, the fear of retribution became urgent. The early weeks of September were filled with panic and insecurity. On September 18th, 1944, an NSB member wrote to his girlfriend that he considered it was likely that “terrible things” would happen and that he was very nervous himself.868 The fiancée of an NSB soldier wrote to her fiancé about the horrible insecurity she had to endure. She felt the relief of non-NSB members about the evacuation


867 “Ik hoop dat Hitler wint. Het is beter voor het meerendeel der mensen in Europa”; Letter August 26th, 1944; NA, CABR, file 22952.

868 NA, CABR, file 105244, letter September 18th, 1944, from Han to Nel.
of NSB members. This insecurity was an important factor in the perceptions of NSB members. However, the insecurity was not all-encompassing, disrupting her life and plans for the future entirely. The young fiancée continued her preparation for their marriage: she even bought breakfast cloths.\textsuperscript{869} 

In order to have a closer look at an individual National Socialist life during and after Mad Tuesday, it is interesting to analyze the diary of a young girl from an NSB family in Gouda. During the end of August and the first weeks of September, Dini Vis wrote about the normal daily grind. That changed on Sunday September 3\textsuperscript{rd}. Her parents discussed evacuating to Germany. Dini also mentioned the changes in the German army. The day after, she was very nervous. On Tuesday she tried to flee eastwards by train. However, the situation was chaotic: trains were full, late, damaged by shootings, or missing, or the trains were even not allowed to stop at the platform. It was a hectic day; she forgot to eat the whole day. Finally, they just walked home.\textsuperscript{870} The first days she had been nervous and worried, but during the weeks that followed she was “bored to death.”\textsuperscript{871,872} In the period after Mad Tuesday, the main subjects of her writing are how bored she was and how much she liked to flirt with German soldiers. For that reason, she even regretted the fact that her house was not chosen as a billet for German soldiers.\textsuperscript{873} This diary shows us that the climax of uncertainty lay in the early weeks of September 1944. After this period, the main worries for this girl from an NSB milieu were those of a typical adolescent girl and not related to the war; except when they involved her beloved German soldiers.\textsuperscript{874}

Some NSB members reacted aggressively to the insecurity in September by provoking their neighbors. As mentioned in the previous chapter, an NSB official in Kromme Mijdrechtstraat fired a gun in the air on Mad Tuesday, frightening the curious crowd surrounding the fleeing NSB members. Another member in Amsterdam asked his neighbor to watch his house and furniture when he left for Germany. The NSB member threatened the neighbor should he refuse. The neighbor went to the police, who said that

\textsuperscript{869} NA, CABR, file 69339, Letters from Woerden, September 11\textsuperscript{th}, 14\textsuperscript{th}, and 26\textsuperscript{th}.
\textsuperscript{870} Waddinxveen. September 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 8\textsuperscript{th}, 1944; NIOD, Diary 1002.2.
\textsuperscript{871} At the end of September, she pitied the people who lived in the cities that were “invaded” by the Allies and worried about the future. In the meantime a non-NSB boy tried to seduce her; she rejected him because she preferred German soldiers; September 29\textsuperscript{th}, October 15\textsuperscript{th}, 1944, NIOD Diary 1002.2.
\textsuperscript{872} After the attack on a National Socialist, she scolded the “dirty” underground resistance movement; she hoped that the perpetrator would be tortured; October 16\textsuperscript{th}, October 18\textsuperscript{th}, 1944, Diary 1002.2.
\textsuperscript{873} November 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1944 Diary 1002.2.
\textsuperscript{874} For children in Germany a similar pattern: Tames, \textit{Besmette jeugd}, 33.
they were powerless in these kinds of situations.\(^{875}\) Both men were members of the \textit{Landwacht}, an organization that generally provoked disgust from the public, which will be discussed below.

Because approximately half of the NSB members fled to Germany and many members left the movement, the NSB organization disintegrated. The NSB leaders tried to prevent the exodus from their organization. On September 11\(^{th}\), 1944, Mussert’s office issued a statement to all district leaders of the NSB, ordering all authorities to remain at their posts and all men to sign up for the \textit{Landwacht}.\(^{876}\)

Actually, the disintegration of the NBS organization had started before September 1944. In the beginning of 1944 problems arose with NSB officials, including a shortage of staff due to the competition with Dutch and German National Socialist organizations.\(^{877}\) After September, the shortage of staff became more severe. NSB buildings were left empty, which made them vulnerable to attack.\(^{878}\) In the period after the September crisis, the NSB tried to purify its organization, by excommunicating members who had misbehaved during this period.\(^{879}\) This final attempt at resurrection failed to lead to a new impulse. The previously hopeful prospects about a powerful and prominent NSB seemed to lie far behind.

After the September crisis, the NSB had to reflect on its situation and tried to regroup its members.\(^{880}\) The regrouping was problematic because many complained about the NSB organization. It was a period in which complaints about the chaotic September days flourished. In October and November 1944, many members wrote about their frustrations with fellow members, about quarrels among members and the people who resigned at a time, “when others were fighting and dying for National Socialism at the front.”\(^{881}\)

Some local NSB members doggedly continued their NSB propaganda. Two of its

\(^{875}\) NA, CABR, file, 12657, 20974.

\(^{876}\) All women, disabled men and men above 60 years, who did not wish to evacuate were held responsible for their own fate. All men between 18 and 59 had to sign up for the \textit{Landwacht,} with the exception of local NSB leaders. If it should become necessary to withdraw, that should happen in closed vehicles that were protected by the \textit{Landwacht;} Utrecht 213-216, September 11th, 1944.

\(^{877}\) NA, CABR, file 26026 en 28345, letter January 27\(^{th}\), 1944 to Kardoes.

\(^{878}\) Empty NSB buildings and houses were an attractive object for destruction by needy and greedy citizens. In Heemstede, the NSB building was left empty by the local NSB organization. This empty building was an appealing target for children; Heemstede gemeentepolitie, December 28\(^{th}\), 1944; Heemstede gemeentepolitie, February 20\(^{th}\), 1945; reported officially to the police on March 20\(^{th}\), 1945.


\(^{880}\) Romijn, \textit{Burgemeesters in Oorlogstijd}, 576.

\(^{881}\) NA, CABR, file 105244, letter October 3rd, 1944.
sub-organizations, Winterhulp and the NVD, were still active at a certain level till March 1945. Even in April 1945, some remaining members tried to activate fellow members. One member from Utrecht wanted to sell newspapers on the street and wrote a letter to 80 members, but nobody answered his request. Many other local NSB leaders failed to carry our propaganda activities. NSB officials often mentioned the ambiguities of responsibilities and financial problems in their letters. In general, the activity level dropped dramatically. The number of copies of VoVa sold plummeted from 200,000 weekly to 15,000.

One young local NSB official from Utrecht who worked at the headquarters, Pieter Hormann, struggled with his relationship with the NSB. He wrote many letters to his National Socialist family. In November 1944, he mentioned his deep disappointment with the NSB organization because everything had “collapsed like a house of cards.” He experienced the turbulent September days in the NSB headquarters in Utrecht. According to his own notes, he never left the NSB building. He expressed his displeasure about the cowardly behavior of many NSB officials, who “sneaked around” in their civilian clothes, which made him “sick of the whole thing.” He saw many NSB officials flee. Hormann’s disgust increased further after some of the officials returned to the building. In his eyes, these officials wrongly tried to accuse the ones who had remained behind of stealing. In addition, they continued gossiping, and filled days with discussion and reports. He concluded gloomily that: “The Movement was a fiction. The only thing the NSB has achieved is that many people found the road to National Socialism through the organization.” He continued to maintain his enduring belief in Mussert, Hitler and in National Socialism. In January, his faith in the NSB had dropped even further. He

882 NIOD, Utrecht, December 15th, 1944; March 7th, 1945; March 10th, 1945; March 17th, 1945; Romijn, Burgemeeesters in oorlogstijd, 592, 595-596. Individual members still applied for coal or financial support to the NSB; NIOD, Utrecht, March 9th, 1945.
883 This member reported having sold 185 VoVa and 7 papers of the WA. He regretted the fact that after April 7, VoVa no longer appeared. Whenever they would reappear, he would sell them again, he promised; NIOD, Utrecht, April 15-16th, 1945.
884 NIOD, Utrecht, March 7th, 1945; NIOD, Utrecht, January 29th, 1945 and before.
885 De Jong, Het Koninkrijk Xb, 312.
886 NA, CABR, file 76881; “als een kaartenhuis ineengestort,” November 13th, 1944, to his family.
887 NA, CABR, file 76881; “in civiel zien rondsluipen,” “ik werd misselijk van het hele gedoe,” November 13th, 1944, to his family.
888 “De Beweging was een fictie. Het eenigste wat de NSB heeft bereikt, dat een groot getal menschen de weg naar het nationaal-socialisme door haar heeft gevonden, maar zooals het reeds voor September was, zoo is het nu veel sterker, de NSB verouderd en de idealisten, zie die werkelijk strijder voor het nationaal-socialisme willen zijn streven de NSB voorbij en blijft van de NSB alleen de schim over. Ik pleeg geen verraad tegen over
complained about only hearing from the NSB when they needed his contribution. He assumed the end of the NSB had finally come.

Despite Hormann’s loss of faith in the NSB organization, he still believed in his fellow members, his friends, and in the Nazi ideology. He stated that National Socialists could only become more fanatic because the harder they are attacked, the more fanatic they would become. He also maintained his belief in a German victory: “If asked when the war would be over, only one answer is right: when we have won it. Heil Hitler.”\(^889\) In February 1945, Hormann is even a bit optimistic about the future. He made plans for the future.\(^890\) His letters show us the internal tensions among NSB members, similar to those in the letters of resignation. On the one hand, they struggled with the malfunctioning of the NSB organization, and on the other, they still believed in the National Socialist ideology and Nazi victory. Their loyalty remained with National Socialism, while their letters criticized the movement.

New Year failed to bring NSB members new chances. The winter cold and hunger prevailed, and the fear of retribution persisted. However, not all members gave up.\(^891\) Like Hormann, members tried to be more positive from February 1945 onwards. In March 1945, the family of a Landwacht member dreamed about their reunion when the war was over. They planned a party on June 12\(^{th}\), on their 30-year anniversary and hoped for a family get-together in their hometown Leiden. Apparently, they failed to think about, or write about, the forthcoming defeat and retribution. Either they still believed in the Nazi victory or they pretended to in order to reassure their son.\(^892\)

The persistence in a belief in a Nazi victory was also related to the doomsday scenarios of a Nazi defeat, which would mean “the crumbling of their world.” A young NSB

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\(^889\) “In deze tijd kan je alleen maar fanatieker worden als nationaal-socialist, we hebben altijd gezegd, hoe harder ze op ons los hakken hoe fanatieker we worden.” and “Op de vraag wanneer de oorlog afgelopen is, is dan slechts een antwoord, en wel als wij hem gewonnen hebben. Heil Hitler”; NA, CABR, file 76881, Letter January 14\(^{th}\), 1945.

\(^890\) NA, CABR, file 76881, Letter February 18\(^{th}\), 1945, to his mother.

\(^891\) In the rural area around Utrecht, the local NSB leader spoke to farmers about his wish to continue his work for Mussert and the NSB in February 1945; “Het is mijn vurigste wensch zoo door te mogen gaan, tot heil van ons Volk Met en voor onze Leider Mussert wil ik de Gemeenschap dienen en alzoo medewerken aan de opbouw van een nieuw Europa en daarmede ook van ons zoo dierbaar Vaderland. Met Mussert voor Volk en Vaderland Hou Zee.”; NIOD, Utrecht, file 1484, February 1945, Utrecht, Veenendaal; Ad van Liempt, \textit{Verzetshelden en moffenvrienden} (Amsterdam 2011) 35; “dat [gelooft] houd ik vol tot misschien de Engelsen me de mond snoeren.” 35, 37.

\(^892\) Letters Leiden, March 8\(^{th}\), 13\(^{th}\), 1945 NA, CABR, file 95147; NIOD, Diary W.A.J.
man from Zeist wrote to his girlfriend, who had been evacuated to Friesland, about his
hopes and fears about the future in March 1945. He wrote that “losing meant perishing,”
which they had to prevent by all means. And if the anticipated victory could not be
achieved, his expectations about retribution were far from hopeful. He expected “nothing
but cruelty” from the antis and “their God”, who as a replica of the cruel antis would be
cruel as well. The negative visions about retribution reinforced the dichotomy between
losing and winning; although the wind was changing, members had to maintain their belief in
the Nazi victory.

From Mad Tuesday onwards, the solidarity with the Germans increased. Members
wrote as much about Hitler as about Mussert and included in their letters both the NSB
slogan “Houzee” and “Heil Hitler.” Also in official letters the solidarity between German
and Dutch National Socialists was stated. Thus, the NSB members both in Germany and
in the Netherlands increasingly felt themselves connected with Nazi Germany.

Generally, NSB members hoped, like the rest of the population, that the war would
be over as soon as possible, only with a different outcome. Therefore, many members
tried to be positive in their letters about the future, perhaps sometimes against all odds. On
April 2nd 1945, an NSB member from Maartensdijk (Utrecht area) wrote to his family about
his concerns regarding the situation in Utrecht. He had heard rumors about damaged
schools and poorly dressed and malnourished children. However, he wanted to avoid being
“bleak as a Reformed pastor,” because “we keep the spirits up.”

On the same day, an active NSB member from Kromme Mijdrechtstraat in
Amsterdam, Arie den Burger, wrote a more pessimistic letter to his National Socialist family.
He wrote about all the things that had been stolen from their family’s house. He also
mentioned the poor conditions in the city. His fellow members had disappointed him. He
wanted to protect his family by resigning from membership because he knew something

893 “Verliezen is voor ons ondergang en ondergaan mogen, willen en kunnen we niet”; NA, CABR, file 105244,
894 “Zou die God van die anti’s dan niet een heel klein beetje medelijden hebben met al die vrouwen en
kinderen. Ach nee, zoo wreed als ze zelf zijn zoo wreed hebben ze ook hun God gemaakt.”; NA, CABR, file
896 “Hoop dat alles gauw voorbij is”; letter March 4th, 1945, from Amsterdam; NA, CABR, file 12657, 20974..
897 “Zoo somer als een gereformeerde dominee” and “wij houden er den moed in”; NA, CABR, file 55673.
And on May 5th, a NSB leader used “Houzee” as a salutation in a letter.
898 NIOD, Utrecht May 5th, 1945.
horrible would happen as soon as the Allied forces invaded Amsterdam.\textsuperscript{899} Den Burger makes a defeated impression in his letter. The only little hope that he had left was that he still could resign from the movement. Another member of the \textit{Landwacht} was also not convinced of the Nazi victory. He wrote in March 26\textsuperscript{th} that something really special had to happen; otherwise the future would be dark; he hoped for the best.\textsuperscript{900}

Unlike Den Burger, most people who did – or at least seemed to - believe in the Nazi victory became radicalized in their belief in National Socialism and wanted to sacrifice everything they had for a Nazi victory. On April 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1945, a young NSB boy wrote to his father that his brother had signed up for the SS, which he approved of: “You can surely imagine that he would not be able to look us in the eyes, when the war has been won for us, and he did not help personally.”\textsuperscript{901}

Thus, while the first period of the September crisis was characterized by panic and disorder, the period thereafter was full of a combination of hope about a Nazi victory and fear of retribution; these two feelings reinforced each other. NSB members had nothing and everything to lose. In the winter of 1944-1945, NSB members in general perceived the pressing situation as “hit or miss.”\textsuperscript{902}

\textit{Further radicalization}

One National Socialist organization consisted of the most radical and violent National Socialists in the Netherlands during these perilous final eight months: the \textit{Landwacht}. Its members were the most violent and visible Dutch National Socialists. The \textit{Landwacht} included approximately 1250 professionals and 9000 local voluntary members in the summer of 1944. In September, Mussert summoned all male NSB members to join the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{899} NA, CABR, file 20834 and 13419, Letter April 2nd, 1945.
\item \textsuperscript{900} “Er zal nog wel iets bijzonders moeten gebeuren anders zie ik het n donker in maar laten we nog maar hopen dat er iets gebeurd waardoor er een goede wending komt”; letter March 26th 1945 from Groningen; NA, CABR, file 11089.
\item \textsuperscript{901} “Je kan je toch wel voorstellen dat hij ons niet oprecht zou durven aanzien als deze oorlog voor ons gewonnen is en hij zou er zijn persoonlijk deel niet bij hebben toegedragen”; letter April 1st, 1945, from Machiel to father; NA, CABR, file 105123, 85629.
\item \textsuperscript{902} Tames, \textit{Besmette jeugd}, 34-35.
\end{itemize}
organization. According to De Jong, half of the pre-September Landwacht members resigned in September. During that same period, the NSB recruited and activated as many new men as possible. Whereas before September, the NSB checked everybody strictly, now they recruited even handicapped NSB members. Male returnees from Germany had to sign up as well, especially if their wives and children had remained in Germany. After September the Landwacht, enriched with the new recruits, consisted of 6000 professional and 2000 voluntary members: thus far more professional and fewer voluntary members than before, which meant that more members received a salary for their activities.

The NSB ordered the Landwacht members to perform police tasks, assisting the Dutch and German police. In order to fulfill these tasks, members were ordered to control identification cards, enforce the night-time curfew, destroy the black market and track down hiding people. Thus, they executed the most unpopular and visible tasks of the Nazi occupation regime. To accomplish these tasks, Landwacht members were permitted to arrest people, search homes and make use of weapons.

The members had to be energized to fulfill these unpopular tasks. Therefore, local leaders tried to motivate their members. The local NSB leader Beukers in Noordwijk hoped to increase the productivity of local NSB members by appealing to their local loyalties: “you don’t want to be protected by men from the neighboring village, do you?” In this case, as in the NSB propaganda, Landwacht members were energized by local competition.

Anyone who signed up for the Landwacht became a member of an active and unpopular organization. The negative image of Landwacht members is well known. However, in the historiography of the Nazi occupation, the actions and perceptions of the

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903 The members of the NSB youth organization were mainly left alone. Only the evacuated members from Amsterdam in the eastern Netherlands were recruited; ‘Handleiding ten behoeve van de bijzondere rechtspleging vierde aflevering, 16 okt 1946’, file 42620; Dagboek W.A.J.
904 NA, CABR, file 95147.
905 NA, CABR, file 94134; NA, CABR, Inv nr 21839, NA, CABR, Inv nr nr 94289; 11089; 22086; 97118, 56593.
906 De Jong, Het Koninkrijk, Xb, 201.
907 Romijn, Burgemeesters in oorlogstijd, 552-553; NA, CABR, File 97520, 18370, 14481, 56941, nr 86.
908 “Landwacht is ter beveiliging van de NSB en ondervolging van de bijzondere rechtspleging vierde aflevering, 16 okt 1946’, file 42620; Dagboek W.A.J.
909 NA, CABR, file 94134; NA, CABR, Inv nr 21839, NA, CABR, Inv nr nr 94289; 11089; 22086; 97118, 56593.
910 Havenaar, Mussert; Houwink ten Cate en in ‘t Veld, Font, 108; De Jonge, Nationaal-socialisme, 180; Van der Zee, Voor Führer, Volk en Vaderland, 257.
Landwacht members themselves remains an unexplored subject. This study will explore their activities in order to shed some light on what they did and thought during the final stage of the occupation. Their postwar files reveal new perspectives on the members of this group.

Out of the CABR sample, 53 men participated in the Landwacht. These men were on average 40 years old when they participated in the Landwacht. The eldest was born in 1883 and the youngest in 1923; thus 61 and 21 years old in 1944. By far the majority of these men had had previous careers and experiences before joining the Landwacht. Coming from different backgrounds and age groups they were united in this active Nazi organization. Most had been connected with the NSB organization for a long time. The majority of the Landwacht members had actively participated in the NSB before joining the Landwacht; forty-one members had held official functions within an NSB organization, only twelve did not. Thirty-one had been a WA member. Thus, the Landwacht members generally had been active National Socialists, who, as WA members, had participated in violent actions on the streets. The majority believed in National Socialism; two thirds were ideologically committed to National Socialism. 911 They had been loyal members; Landwacht members were mainly long-term National Socialists. Twenty-two men had joined after May 1940. This means that 31, more than half of the group, were prewar members. The latter is an interesting result, considering the fact that only one third of the NSB members during the occupation had been members before 1940.912 Thus in general, these men had been loyal, active, ideologically committed NSB members before joining the Landwacht. They had been formed in the National Socialist movement and prepared for their participation in the most radical National Socialist organization in a radical period.

The Landwacht members operated in a period—the winter of 1944-45-- in which many of the Dutch suffered from hunger and cold. The harsh situation was exacerbated by the policies of Seyss Inquart. At the end of September 1944, Seyss-Inquart prohibited food transports for six weeks, a reprisal for the railway strike.913 This decision was one of the reasons that food and fuels were scarce in the so-called “Hunger Winter,” during which

911 33 out of 53.
912 NA, CABR, File 12499, 18303, 18370, 85351, 107785, 22678, 22730, 52561, 64233, 56307, 56941 86, 64643, 56910, 14481, 110161, 70873, 62909, 109741, 109790, 56104, 63824, 77033, 707, 20295, 64359, 95147, 95935, 92364, 63904, 87382, 21816.
913 Romijn, Burgemeesters in oorlogstijd, 587.
approximately 20,000 people died because of food shortages and cold.\textsuperscript{914}

While most Dutch people living in the western parts of the Netherlands suffered from food and coal shortages, the \textit{Landwacht} members had many options for obtaining food and fuels. The \textit{Landwacht} members received several benefits from their job. The professional members of the \textit{Landwacht} received a decent salary, per day or per month. In the summer of 1944, an older \textit{Landwacht} member who worked on a temporary basis earned 0.75 guilders an hour during the day and 1 guilder an hour during the night.\textsuperscript{915} While the salaries differed among members, in general, full time members received approximately 200 guilders a month.\textsuperscript{916} Another interesting aspect revealed by the postwar files is the long-term functioning of the payment of salaries. The salary system of the \textit{Landwacht} worked till the very end. In April 1945, members were still receiving their salaries.\textsuperscript{917} In addition to their salaries, all members received extra distribution of food and goods.\textsuperscript{918} Family members of \textit{Landwacht} and \textit{Landstorm} men received double portions of potatoes in the harsh winter of 1944-45.\textsuperscript{919} One member even mentioned the extra food as a reason to join the \textit{Landwacht}.\textsuperscript{920}

Whereas the \textit{Landwacht} members received benefits from the NSB, they also collected some extras themselves. Many former \textit{Landwacht} members admitted having stolen food, wine, linen, radios and other electrical appliances when searching houses or arresting people.\textsuperscript{921} Controlling the black market was a lucrative business as well. They could easily pilfer something.\textsuperscript{922} The stealing by \textit{Landwacht} members was revealed during their postwar trials.

The files of these trials also offer insights about how the \textit{Landwacht} arrests proceeded. One of the \textit{Landwacht} activities was trying to locate those in hiding. There are several examples of physical abuse in the files during the search for and arrest of these

\textsuperscript{914} Naar CBS, 1948; \url{http://www.niod.knaw.nl/nl/content.asp?z=/nl/CijfermateriaalDuitsebezetting.htm}, consulted on December 27th 2012.

\textsuperscript{915} NA, CABR, file 707.

\textsuperscript{916} NA, CABR, file 707.

\textsuperscript{917} NA, CABR, File 95147, was also handicapped. Another one 200 guilders a month file 92501; 205 guilders a month, file 20834 and 13419. One leading \textit{Landwacht} member received 6449 a year.

\textsuperscript{918} NA, CABR, File 21839, 94289, April 12\textsuperscript{th}, 1945. In April still choosing whether to stay at Landwacht: 62909.

\textsuperscript{919} NA, CABR, file 52561, 56104, 54405.

\textsuperscript{920} High NBS officials received them as well; NA, CABR, File 56307; NIOD, Utrecht, file 1484, February 28\textsuperscript{th}, 1945.

\textsuperscript{921} NA, CABR, File 56941.

\textsuperscript{922} NA, CABR, file 37445; 14487.

\textsuperscript{923} NA. CABR, file 64643; 56910.
Landwacht members were allowed to shoot a suspect but only if he was trying to escape or pointed his gun at the Landwacht member. This actually happened. In the very final phase, on April 27th, 1945, Landwacht members unsuccessfully tried to arrest a man and shot him dead while the man was trying to escape. These violent actions started before September 1944; at the end of August, two Landwacht members shot at an escaping cyclist. This violence was not an exception. Many arrests involved physical force, according to the statements of those who were arrested and the confessions of Landwacht members themselves. One member literally admitted at his trial to having treated an arrested man “pretty harshly.”

Due to their pilfering and violence, the Landwacht members made themselves quite unpopular. The negative opinions were expressed not only in words but in deeds as well. Landwacht members were a popular target for resistance movements, who used violence. From 1943 onwards, there were assassination attempts on Landwacht members.

Their negative image was sometimes shared among NSB members. NSB members expressed their doubts about the Landwacht in their resignation letters. NSB members also wrote about their doubts about the Landwacht in letters to family members and friends. A female member expressed her joy when the Landwacht members left her village in the end of September 1944. Another girl was relieved when on September 26th, the members of the Landwacht left her village. The negative image had reached NSB members in Germany too. In February 1945, one member in Germany wrote about his hope to repair the damage done by the Landwacht in the Netherlands.

In general, NSB members had a negative image; were individual Landwacht members perceived as even worse? Here we can see the same pattern as in the interaction of “normal” NSB members. The most aggressive ones, and the ones who financially enriched themselves,
were hated in their neighborhoods.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 21480.} A \textit{Landwacht} member who used threats to order his neighbor to safeguard his house received very negative testimonies.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 12657, 20974.} More moderate members received more positive reactions.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 55724, 57131, 21105, 87382, 21816, 109790, 97118, 56593.} The reactions of those around the \textit{Landwacht} member depended on the location of the member’s activities. A member in Amsterdam’s Zacharias Jansestraat was sent to Alkmaar and Hoorn, two cities 25 miles north of Amsterdam; here he arrested many people. However, because he was not active in his own neighborhood, his neighbors testified positively about him.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 85329, 2310, 63904.} One member was aware of this mechanism and asked for a transfer from the \textit{Landwacht} in Amsterdam, where he had to seize bicycles, to an eastern province of the Netherlands.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 64359.}

In the face of this public rejection \textit{Landwacht} members bonded with each other. Letters of a \textit{Landwacht} member to his fiancée in Bloemendaal show the conviviality and the camaraderie among members.\footnote{On February 20th; NA, CABR, file 42620, Letters February 5th, and 20th, and March 13th, 1945.} Four members of the voluntary \textit{Landwacht} decided to stay together in Bussum, ignoring the order to leave for other places. The four men together independently functioned in their municipality. This also means that the national leadership was not strong enough to maintain a strict, hierarchic structure.\footnote{NA, CABR, file 42620; Richard Bessel; \textit{Germany 1945. From war to peace.} (New York 2009) 16-17.} This example shows us both the local initiatives and camaraderie. In the meanwhile, members of the \textit{Landwacht} persevered in their belief in the Nazi victory, similar to the radicalization of German soldiers.\footnote{Russel Hardin reinterprets Jeremy Bentham’s fanaticism as a group-based phenomenon. “Fanaticism requires an exclusionary group because it needs isolation to protect spurious beliefs from critical challenges.”; Breton et al., eds, \textit{Political Extremism and Rationality} XV.}

The importance of bonding fits into general patterns of extremist group behavior. The isolation from outsiders protected the members from critical challenges. Therefore, they could maintain their belief in a Nazi victory even when the signs of a Nazi defeat became overwhelming.\footnote{NA, CABR, file21839, nr 94289.}

However, some members were discouraged as a result of the declining war prospects or the activities of the \textit{Landwacht} itself, and they wanted to resign from the \textit{Landwacht}. While Mussert aimed at increasing the size and unity of the \textit{Landwacht}, it was possible to leave the
The NSB agreed to allow members of the *Landwacht* to avoid participation in *Landwacht* activities if they worked for other NSB organizations. Participation in another NSB organization was thus seen as an acceptable excuse.

Other reasons were accepted as well. However, the NSB did not allow members to refuse all NSB activities without “good reasons.” One *Landwacht* member had voluntarily signed up because he wished to combat the black market. During one of his first actions, a colleague pilfered some things. He disapproved strongly of his stealing fellow *Landwacht* member. This theft, combined with his wife’s threats of divorce, led to his resignation from the *Landwacht* and the NSB. He was imprisoned for a few days. Resignations in April 1945 were punished as well. A *Landwacht* member who refused active service was arrested in April 1945. Two other *Landwacht* members who deserted in April 1945 were arrested because of this action. To sum up, one was permitted to resign if one was willing to still work in the NSB; otherwise resignation was punished.

Resignation was not always judged positively by a member’s National Socialist acquaintances. The wife of a *Landwacht* member wrote to her husband about the “nasty hypocrite” who resigned from the *Landwacht*. Perhaps she disliked the man because he deserted the sinking ship, while she stayed on board.

In addition to the *Landwacht*, another organization was mobilized. The *Landstorm* was supervised by the German *Waffen-SS*. While the preliminary task of the *Landwacht* was policing, members of the *Landstorm* had a military role; they had to defend the Nazi Netherlands against the Allied army. Because of all these reasons, the *Landstorm* was in fact a National Socialist organization but not an NSB organization; it was organized under German control. However, the *Landstorm* did recruit NSB members. One of the members, NSB member Jan Muyser from Noordwijk, wrote many letters to his mother from different *Landstorm* locations. This source shows us the military characteristics of the *Landstorm*. Muyser’s image of his himself is that of a soldier. On September 5th, he was excited about the forthcoming events; he looked forward to fighting and to throwing the Allied forces

944 NA, CABR, file18820; NA, CABR, file77033.
945 NA, CABR, file10161, 21046.
946 NA, CABR, file109790.
947 NA, CABR, file11089.
948 Heemstede gemeentepolitic, April 14th, 1945.
949 “Wat een gemeene huichelaars, ik ben woest gewoon weg”; Letter from Martha to her husband Varekamp, February 16th 1945; NA, CABR, file 11089.
950 Letter July 6th, 1944 from Veenendaal; NA, CABR, file 37267.
He assumed he would be arrested if the Allied invasion succeeded. His letters show us how militarized this *Landstorm* division was. They acted and perceived themselves as soldiers. Because they were physically separated from the rest of society, their perception of the war situation was fully nazified: the options were a Nazi victory or being arrested by the Allied army. This correlated with the perceptions of National Socialists in the *Landwacht* and/or the NSB.

The National Socialist defeat

NSB members and nonmembers had thought about retribution from 1940 onwards; finally the moment had arrived. NSB members did not know what to expect, but they knew it would not be pleasant. They reacted differently to the forthcoming arrests. One member tried to hide and thus avoid the first chaotic days of the liberation. Some members still believed they had nothing to fear. The letters that came to light in the postwar NSB trials reveal many mixed feelings of persistence, disillusion, reassurance and disappointment. However, most members did not know what to do. They just waited fatalistically for arrest.

For non-NSB members, it was the time to express pent-up hatred. The Dutch government in exile in London had warned everyone to refrain from arresting collaborators themselves because the arrests had to be executed in an orderly fashion. Whether the arrests were carried out chaotically or orderly depended on local circumstances. High-profile and despised NSB members received more attention; their arrests could be big happenings. When the leader of the Amsterdam youth NSB Ernst Zilver was arrested, a large group gathered around him and his associates. He was transported in a flatbed to prison. An active *Landwacht* member, who had financially flourished during the occupation, was beaten by his neighbors.

As Romijn argues in his study on the purge of Dutch collaborators, in the end it was

951 Letter July 3rd, 1944, and September 5th, 1944 from Veenendaal, CABR, file 37267.
952 NA, CABR, file 12657, 20974; police report of arrest; Dammsma and Schumacher, *Hier woont een NSB’er*, 143.
953 Tames, *Besmette jeugd*, 41-42; Dammsma and Schumacher, *Hier woont een NSB’er*, 142-144.
955 NA, CABR, file 64643.
not a desire for revenge which prevailed but pragmatism.\textsuperscript{956} In totality, 150,000 collaborators were arrested, including many NSB members; they were distributed among more than 100 prison camps in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{957} During the days of the liberation, perhaps a dozen collaborators were lynched; within the camps approximately 40 to 50 prisoners died. Forty were put to death after a trial. In France over 10,000 collaborators were killed, and in Belgium 230 collaborators were sentenced to death. The arrest of 150,000 people was an enormous and chaotic undertaking.\textsuperscript{958}

The insecure period, filled with fear of retribution and sometimes some hope, finally seemed to have come to an end in the Netherlands. Another insecure period started, involving their trials and sentences as well as their future as former NSB members within Dutch society. The camps with collaborators were packed; therefore the “lighter” cases were gradually freed. However, the return to society often went slowly because of discussions between officials of different institutions.\textsuperscript{959} The NSB members’ return to society, as well as their camp experiences is the subject of other research.\textsuperscript{960}

\textsuperscript{956} Peter Romijn, \textit{Snel, streng en rechtvaardig. De afrekening met de ‘foutie’ Nederlanders} (Amsterdam 2002).
\textsuperscript{957} Peter Romijn, \textit{Streng, snel en rechtvaardig}, Donker and Faber, \textit{Bijzonder gewoon}, 17; Belinfante, \textit{In plaats van bijltjesdag}, 53.
\textsuperscript{958} Romijn, \textit{Snel, streng en rechtvaardig}.
\textsuperscript{959} Romijn, \textit{Snel, streng en rechtvaardig}.
\textsuperscript{960} Legacies of collaboration: Ismee Tames, Helen Grevers and Bram Enning.