Lard, lice, and longevity: a comparative study of the standard of living in occupied Denmark and the Netherlands, 1940-1945
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Poverty in Moneyed Times

Drawing, 1945, by Bo Bojesen, first published in Mandens Blad.

Introduction
This Danish cartoon, which appeared in 1942 in the satirical magazine Blæksprutten, depicts a rather fat farmer comfortably seated on the back of a pig, bank book in pocket, the two of them held aloft by a crowd of emaciated Danes. Windfall agricultural profits and the consequent rising cost of living for the rest of the population had clearly had an effect on public opinion. Such profits had also had an
effect on political discourse: on returning from exile in Britain, the first postwar prime minister – Christmas Møller – bluntly stated that farmers could ‘not reasonably expect to maintain a price level they had obtained during the war at the expense of society as a whole’.\(^{220}\) High food prices had enriched farmers at the expense of both the Danish treasury and their non-agrarian compatriots. In the Netherlands, similar sentiments existed and, as indeed in Denmark, continued to exist after the war. Lou de Jong, long the dominant historian of the occupation, wrote in scathing terms of the poverty visited upon the urban poor by rising food prices, depriving them of their legitimate share of the dwindling food supplies in the country.\(^{221}\) In the light of the previous chapter, this moral indignation is easy to understand: the cost of living rose considerably in both Denmark and the Netherlands, threatening the real incomes of many consumers and driving up profits in agriculture as well as in various other sectors. To many wartime and postwar commentators, inflation was not merely a consequence of impersonal economic circumstances, but a failure of producers to muster sufficient solidarity with their poorer compatriots.

One may question, however, whether the popular image of a suffering underclass of impoverished workers is quite correct. After all, not only prices but also wages rose during the war, and unemployment all but disappeared. Gruesome accounts of wartime poverty can be found in Dutch and Danish archives, but most contemporary depictions of Danish and Dutch working-class life do not fit the image of persistent economic misery, or do so only inconsistently. True, people were often cold, insufficiently dressed and otherwise negatively affected by the war, but their incomes generally rose. For many people at the lower end of the income scale, circumstances were in many respects improving, not least because they finally had the opportunity to earn an income themselves. As a result, Copenhagen bars and clubs were bursting not only with German troops but also with Danish youths, who indulged in drink, jazz and dancing, often to the despair of their elders. Many working-class men in Copenhagen appear to have had a sufficient income to purchase expensive cigarettes on the black market. In the Netherlands, pawnbrokers went bankrupt for want of customers, while savings banks were overwhelmed by

\(^{220}\) Quoted in: Rostgaard Nissen, *Til fælles bedste* 304.

people wanting to open a new account. These are hardly signs that the proletariat was short of money during the occupation.

In the Netherlands, rising wages and declining unemployment were complemented by radical improvements in public welfare. Late in 1941, the Dutch Nazi propagandist Max Blokzijl proudly claimed that:

... in spite of war and other problems, unemployment has been successfully fought, wages, prices and taxes have been adapted, social insurance has been expanded, child support legislation has become effective, on 1 September 1941 universal health insurance was introduced and as of 1 October, unemployment benefits have been increased significantly. 222

It is hard to see how these measures (for Blokzijl was not lying) would not have improved the lot of the very poorest among the Dutch.

Although, as should be clear from the previous chapters, the war years were not good years in terms of civilian consumption in either Denmark or the Netherlands, while life became ever more barren for most, the very poorest were on their way up, if only relative to their wealthier compatriots. The gap between rich and poor appears to have been closing rather than widening. Hence, the question in this chapter is whether the war really was such a bad time for the poor in Denmark and the Netherlands, or whether in fact it was a period of relative prosperity. The second question is whether changes in the position of the relatively poor can explain the observed differences between Denmark and the Netherlands.

The bleak 1930s
Before investigating the development of wealth and poverty in the two countries, it is important to take account of the relative wealth in each country on the eve of the occupation. Expressed in international purchasing power, GDP per capita in the Netherlands stood at a mere 80% of that in Denmark. Although the slightly higher price levels on the Danish domestic market lessened this difference (at foreign

222. M.H.L.W Blokzijl, Brandende kwesties: een keur uit en een bewerking van de 'Radiopraatjes' gehouden door Max Blokzijl (Amsterdam 1942) 46.
exchange rates) somewhat in real terms, it remains significant. The Great Depression had had a more profound impact on the Dutch than on the Danish economy, and had taken much longer to loosen its grip.223

Apart from overall wealth, the distribution of the available wealth differed considerably. The consecutive Danish social-democratic governments under Thorvald Stauning had championed relative budgetary restraint during the 1930s, but had nevertheless laid the basis for the now almost proverbial Danish welfare state. In the Netherlands, four conservative governments under Colijn had done very much the reverse in the same period: in reaction to the crisis, they had dismantled many of the welfare provisions that had previously existed, and depressed wages. The early (1931) devaluation of the Danish kroner, as opposed to the late (1936) devaluation of the Dutch guilder, had left the Danes considerably more leeway.224 In terms of welfare policies, taxation and social insurance, the Netherlands was still relatively far removed from the welfare state the country was to become after the war, and which Denmark was already on the way to becoming. At the time the Wehrmacht invaded, Denmark was a more egalitarian state than the Netherlands.225 The difference is reflected in the ownership of relative luxuries such as radios, which were considerably more common in Denmark than in the Netherlands.

223. A. Maddison, The World Economy: a Millennial Perspective; see also: van Zanden, Een klein land; Hansen, Økonomisk vækst.
Figure 7.1: Nominal wage development in Denmark and the Netherlands, 1929-38 (1929=100)

Source: Mitchell, International historical statistics, 189

Welfare and tax

Fiscal and welfare policies changed little in Denmark during the occupation, but did in the Netherlands. In terms of welfare policies, the Dutch quickly caught up with the Danes during the war years, and not primarily on German initiative. During the 1930s, the Dutch parliament had withstood calls for socio-economic reform, but the absence of democratic controls during the occupation enabled Dutch administrators to push through such reforms. In the different Dutch political climate after the war, these changes were not contested, despite the politically dubious way in which they had been introduced. Health insurance and tax reforms were both introduced in 1941. Unemployment benefits were increased and the authorities stepped up public service provisions, notably in the field of (remarkably enough) child health.226

Still, the improvements in the fate of the Dutch poor brought about by these reforms should not be overstated. Increased unemployment benefits, however much Blokzijl trumpeted about them, mattered relatively little in an era when unemployment was virtually unheard of – and eventually made illegal. The overhaul of the system of

226. Hirschfeld, Herinneringen uit de bezettingstijd; Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de volksgezondheid (various issues).
taxation, on the other hand, shifted the burden of taxation towards the well-to-do and favoured families with children. On the other hand, people with the lowest incomes did not profit from this development, perhaps even the contrary. Before 1941, people with an annual income of less than 800 guilders (which was a very low income) had been officially exempt from taxes, whereas those with a somewhat higher income were informally exempted, because the fiscal authorities did not deem it financially prudent to collect taxes from people in these groups. With the introduction of the new wage-based taxation system, these people became taxpayers. Universal health insurance, on the other hand, mattered a great deal to the standard of living of the poorest. Access to health care improved considerably after 1941, leading to increased pressure on the medical services but allowing the most vulnerable groups to receive the medical attention they needed. Another advantage for some low-income families was the introduction of child support: from 1941 onwards, families received a state allowance for their third child and any subsequent children. Because the amount of this allowance was income-dependent, poor but child-rich families received some three guilders per month for their children, which did not cover the cost of raising them but certainly helped.

These policy changes helped the Netherlands to close the public welfare gap with Denmark. There, the war years had not been a period of great public policy innovation, unsurprisingly given the relative political continuity. Although the Dutch poor did not all gain much from tax reforms and the like, their improved access to medical care, which was improving in many respects, was certainly a great stride forward, especially because this was an era in which infectious disease was increasing to dangerous levels. However, the question remains whether and, if so, to what extent the Dutch also caught up with the Danes in terms of wage levels and employment opportunities.


228. CBS, Economische en sociale kroniek 281.
The scourge of unemployment

In the first half of the twentieth century, unemployment and poverty went hand in hand. In both Denmark and the Netherlands, and for that matter everywhere in Europe at the time, unemployment benefits were so low that those living on them were, if not destitute, certainly extraordinarily poor by any standard. Unemployment was high in prewar Denmark and the Netherlands, so that a sizeable underclass of paupers was always very visibly present. Consequently, contemporary political and economic thinking focused to a large extent on the problem of mass unemployment, a focus that was of formative influence on prevailing attitudes towards totalitarian regimes. In the years leading up to the occupation, many in Denmark and the Netherlands were acutely aware that unemployment was no longer a problem in either Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. The limited pro-German sentiments that existed in the two occupied countries stemmed to a considerable extent from admiration for this very feat.

Those who had been impressed by the German achievement of full employment were not disappointed. Many of the notions people had about the advantages of the Nazi economy may have been based on propaganda and misinformation, but full employment had indeed been achieved in Hitler's Germany by, at the latest, 1938.\textsuperscript{229} Thereafter, the labour market came under ever-increasing pressure as Germany shifted from a peacetime economy towards one ready to wage total war. Mass mobilization for military service and military production drained the German economy of labour power, more than compensating for the loss of employment caused by lowered civilian consumption.\textsuperscript{230} German full employment came at a price of relatively low overall standards of living, as a consequence of both shortages and relatively low wages. This was, of course, the quintessence of an economy waging total war: the full productive capacity of the economy was put to use, but not to increase the welfare within the country. After Denmark and the Netherlands had involuntarily become part of the German economic realm, the war economy of the Reich began to literally absorb many of their unemployed by employing Dutch and Danish workers in Germany. Even more people, however, were

\textsuperscript{229} Overy, \textit{War and economy} 42.
\textsuperscript{230} Overy, \textit{War and economy} 60.
employed by the Dutch and Danish industries that were busy producing for Germany. In addition, huge numbers of workers were needed to build defence works. In some cases, increased indigenous employment arose from import substitution. As explained in Chapter 3, the severance of Denmark and the Netherlands from world markets posed serious problems. While many products, such as chocolate, simply became unavailable, others were replaced by indigenous alternatives. Most of those, such as locally grown tobacco and fish-skin shoes, were of little consequence for the labour market. The exception to this was mining: both in Danish lignite and turf mining and in Dutch coal mining, increasing numbers were employed. As explained in Chapter 3, during the occupation indigenously produced fuel to a large extent replaced imported coal. By 1942, some 50,000 Danes were winning turf and a further 5000 were employed in lignite mining. In the Netherlands too, lignite and turf were won during the occupation; however, even at its high point in 1943, lignite mining employed only 353 people nationwide – thrice as many as before the war, but nevertheless an insignificant figure in the bigger picture. Turf and coal winning employed more people, but the effect of new mining industries was on the whole less marked in the Netherlands than in Denmark. It is difficult to estimate retrospectively how many people were employed by import-substituting manufacturing in the two countries. Suffice to say that except in the case of mining, the effect of import substitution was in all certainly much smaller than the upsurge of indigenous industry driven by German demand.

In the course of the occupation, both Denmark and the Netherlands entered a prolonged era of full, or almost full, employment. High employment, moreover, did not end after liberation. While the First World War had been followed by a major slump, employment remained high for years after 1945 in both Denmark and the Netherlands. As unemployment disappeared, so did the most serious prewar cause of poverty and the grave economic threat that had been looming over almost

231. Klemann, Nederland 231; Hansen, Økonomisk vækst 97-98.
232. Hansen, Økonomisk vækst 101; CBS, Kroniek 50; Klemann, Nederland 263.
233. Klemann, Nederland 231; Bundgård Christensen et al., Danmark besat 670; Andersen, De gjorde Danmark større.
234. As, indeed, in Europe as a whole. Milward, The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945-51.
all working-class families during the interwar period. Still, the disappearance of unemployment from the Dutch and Danish economies was not, as is sometimes suggested, achieved overnight. As is shown in figure 7.1, unemployment took several years to decline to low wartime levels. Hence, a sizeable number of families in both countries endured the difficult economic circumstances of the early 1940s without an even remotely sufficient income.

**Figure 7.1: Estimated unemployment (percentage of male labour force) in Denmark and the Netherlands, 1938-46**

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The data presented in this table suffer slightly from statistical incompatibilities between the two countries. Reliable data on unemployment in Denmark for this period are available only with regard to those with unemployment insurance. Since the social insurance systems of the two countries differed profoundly, a comparison is difficult to make. The data presented here for Denmark (i.e. registered unemployed compared with the male population of working age) in all likelihood underestimate unemployment, not least because labour in Germany has not been included. Nevertheless, the general trend towards low unemployment is clear. Cf. Hansen, Økonomisk Vækst 231, Klemann, Nederland 433, Mitchell, International Historical Statistics 163.

As the unemployed in both Denmark and the Netherlands were gradually absorbed into the expanding labour market, a sizeable infrastructure for the state employment
of the long-term unemployed was dismantled. Relief works had long been seen as the answer to unemployment. Those engaged in such work, however, had to make do with meagre wages for performing mostly physically straining work, often in remote places. It is worth noting that these organizations, which employed as many as 400,000 in the Netherlands, mostly disappeared in the course of the war, and with them disappeared a class of working poor. The dismantling of relief schemes and the absorption of their workforces into regular (and better paid) employment, meant that the standard of living of the former workforces increased considerably. Weekly incomes could easily double when workers moved from relief works into regular employment.235

**Working for war**

Few forms of economic exploitation in Denmark and the Netherlands were as successful as the mobilization of their labour potential for the German war industry. Germany suffered a chronic shortage of manpower, which numerous Danish and Dutch men, as well as a handful of women, were to help to solve. During the decades that have passed since the war, those who worked for or in Germany have occasionally been decried as treacherous collaborators, but such moral indignation has been rare and where it existed it usually proved highly selective. Rather than delving into questions of ethics and national loyalty, the focus here is on the consequences that working for Germany had for the occupied economies and for the lives of the Danes and Dutchmen employed, directly or indirectly, by the Third Reich.

One of the most common ways in which Danes and Dutchmen were employed by Germany was in the building of the military infrastructure to defend the continent against an invasion by the Allies. As soon as Europe’s west coast had been conquered and the westward drive of the Wehrmacht forces had come to a halt, work was started on what was to become the Atlantikwall – the westernmost fringe of the Westwall, the line of defence that was to protect the Reich against attacks from the west. The Atlantikwall – a wall-like complex of bunkers, barbed wire, artillery and

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trenches – was truly gigantic; longer than the Great Wall of China, it was one of the largest and most heavily fortified defence works ever built. Today, the coastline of both Denmark and the Netherlands is still adorned with seemingly endless rows of old bunkers, silent witnesses to the immense effort made to defend the Reich. As D-Day proved, even the Atlantikwall was eventually penetrable by the Allies (albeit at a staggering human cost), but that did not make the building of the Atlantic defence works less significant to the economies of the occupied countries.

Although the building of the Atlantikwall commenced as soon as the western coastline of continental Europe had fallen into German hands, construction was stepped up after it became clear that the westward advances of the Reich had come to a definitive halt. The initial coastal defence, which had consisted of easy-to-erect structures, was no longer considered sufficient after 1942, when the threat of an invasion from the west became increasingly acute. During the winter of 1942-43 and again in 1944, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel toured the western coast to inspect the defence works, and found them – especially those in Denmark – to be insufficient. After his visit, the building of fortifications reached a truly staggering scale. The accessible, thinly populated plain of Jutland seemed an ideal inroad into Germany for an invasion from the west; consequently, it was here that Berlin ordered some of the heaviest fortifications to be built. No sea or airborne invasion of Jutland ever took place, but the preparations for it had a marked impact on the Danish labour market and the living standards of thousands.

In both Denmark and the Netherlands, though especially in the former, the building of defence works created numerous, often well-paid jobs. In addition, the German military, officialdom and the Organization Todt employed a sizeable number of people for other tasks in the two countries. Paperwork, interpreting and the like were often done by locals. Building activities of a more incidental nature – such as the building of airstrips and barracks – offered many young men the opportunity to make some quick money in temporary employment. Doing so, moreover, was not

236. Bundgård Christensen, Bo Poulsen and Scharff Smith, Dansk arbejde – Tyske befaestningsanlaeg (Kopenhagen 1997) 35.
considered particularly treacherous by their contemporaries, nor was working in, say, a wharf that produced ships for Germany.  

The Danish and Dutch wartime economies were geared towards German interests; in addition, thousands of Danish and Dutch men worked in Germany itself. Initially, work in Germany was not mandatory in either country. Workers were, however, stimulated to seek employment in Germany. Danish unions, aware of the fact that Dutch and other unions had been thoroughly Nazified after the invasion, were keen to avoid running into trouble with the German authorities and so actively encouraged workers to seek employment in Germany. The Danish government itself was likewise willing to lend considerable assistance to the administration and organization of labourers who were working on the other side of the country's southern border. Although definitive proof appears to be lacking, there is reason to believe that in certain cases unemployment benefits were made conditional on accepting work in Germany. Over the course of the war, roughly 128,000 Danes – the majority of them young and unskilled – travelled south to find employment.

In the Netherlands, unlike in Denmark, there was a tradition of cross-border labour. In the border region between Germany and the Netherlands, numerous people had been working across the border for decades. During the occupation, their numbers swelled. Ben Sijes has estimated number of Dutch workers who were employed in Germany at some point during the occupation, but remained resident in the Netherlands, at roughly 104,000. Of these workers, the bulk (some 30,000 annually) were employed in Germany in the period between 1940 and 1943. Although this was much higher than in the 1930s, when the inconvertibility of the Reichsmark had made cross-border labour unattractive, it was certainly no novelty. In addition to people from the border regions, thousands of Dutch workers from elsewhere in the Netherlands worked in Germany during the early years of the occupation. As in Denmark, the wartime authorities did much to stimulate labour migration to Germany, but unlike in Denmark, these policies had a lineage dating

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237. Bundgård Christensen et al., Danmark besat 204; Klemann, Nederland 267.
238. Jensen, levevikår 88; Stræde, op. cit.
239. See Chapters 4, 5 and 6.
back to well before the German invasion: already in December 1936, the Dutch government had officially adopted a policy of refusing benefits and employment in the relief works to people who had refused jobs in Germany. Only when the Netherlands mobilized its army in 1939 was the policy of stimulating labour migration reversed, albeit secretly, so as to not unnecessarily antagonize Germany. In practice, convertibility problems were such a hindrance that few people actually went to Germany, although the legislation far antedated German rule.

However, Germany was not satisfied with the level of pressure exerted on Dutch workers. As of March 1942, labour service in Germany (Arbeitseinsatz) was made compulsory. Dutch men aged between 18 and 45 were required to report for work unless they were employed in kriegswichtige (war-essential) jobs or were otherwise indispensable. From then onwards, labour in Germany was truly coerced, and raids were held, occasionally at least, to round up those who had not reported themselves. The Arbeitseinsatz was, from the perspective of German economic interests, a failure. Well over 300,000 men went into hiding, while many more found ways to have their jobs registered as kriegswichtig. In all, the Arbeitseinsatz caused the removal of some 242,000 workers to Germany, but extracted more than double that number from the official Dutch economy.

Discussions on wartime labour in Germany almost invariably centre on the question whether workers were enslaved victims or eager volunteers. In reality, most were neither. Some, not least many of the ex-workers themselves, have portrayed their fate as that of slaves, forced into performing degrading and exceptionally hard work under inhuman circumstances, underfed and in constant danger.241 Even in the Netherlands, however, so many managed to escape the Arbeitseinsatz that possibilities to escape labour in Germany were relatively ample.242 In some cases, as in that of Dutch men rounded up in raids, it is clear that people were truly forced, but for the most part it is unclear what level of coercion was used or how viable

242. Klemann, Nederland 275
strategies for evasion were. In most cases, one should think of coercive measures as one of a number of push factors behind labour migration.\textsuperscript{243}

What was important for most of the workers who took up work in Germany – be they volunteers or coerced workers, Danes or Dutchmen – was what labour in Germany meant for their own standard of living and that of their families. In so far as work in Germany was voluntary, and it clearly was to a certain extent, push and pull factors were as important as in any other labour migration. Push factors are not difficult to find. Many if not most of the labourers who went to Germany left very little behind. Especially for many of the young males, staying at home meant living with their parents, with very few career opportunities, little personal freedom and only minimal purchasing power. To many of the youngsters who left their native country during the early years of the occupation, labour in Germany offered an escape from a particularly dreary and uneventful life at home. In extensive poster campaigns, the authorities emphasized adventurousness and solidarity among workers, as well as the lucrative wages and excellent labour conditions, clearly aiming to enthuse the young to opt for German rather than local jobs.\textsuperscript{244}

Germany indeed had some interesting opportunities to offer. Danish and Dutch labourers were considered the racial equals of Germans (as long as they were not Jewish, that is) and therefore formed the very top of the hierarchy within the foreign labour force. The grim fate of, for example, Poles, who were often worked to death and lived under appalling conditions, should not be confused with the conditions under which these workers lived. Although their presence in Germany was at least partly coerced, Dutch and Danish labourers in Germany were not slaves. The duration of their employment in Germany was typically between six and twelve months, during which they were housed, fed and, importantly, paid. Although wages were generally lower in Germany than in the migrant workers' home country, they were certainly not dramatically low. Given the composition of the population of

\textsuperscript{243} A. van Son, 'Between tradition and coercion: Dutch workers in Germany and Belgium, 1936-1945' in: Forced laborers and POWs in the German war economy = Lavoratori coatti e prigionieri di guerra nell’economia di guerra tedesca.

workers (i.e. mostly young and unskilled), it is doubtful that they would have made much more at home. The German authorities had arranged for some or all of the wages to be sent back to the home countries with relative ease, although not all workers chose to use the option. The operation of such systems was at times faulty, and always slow, but for the most part worked reasonably well.²⁴⁵

As the war progressed and Germany's military prospects gradually worsened, the attractiveness that working in the occupying country may have had, paled rapidly. After the United States joined the Allied war effort, German factories and cities were subjected to frequent and often highly effective bombardments. The risk of falling victim to Allied violence was greater in Germany than in the Netherlands or Denmark, and consequently labour in Germany became much less attractive than it had been. Life in Germany became notably less pleasant, stories of unpaid wages began to seep through to Denmark and the Netherlands, and workers were increasingly kept in Germany for longer than their official term. By 1944, working in Germany had become an option that few Danes or Dutchmen would have considered in the absence of coercion.

**Wages beyond control**

The decline in unemployment coupled with the entirely new employment opportunities arising from the circumstances of military occupation could hardly fail to impact employment relations. The labour shortage that soon arose in many sectors almost forced Danish and Dutch employers to raise wages. Especially in Denmark, there was an acute danger of losing one's skilled labour force to better-paid employment elsewhere. Besides, the inflation of the war years, as described in the previous chapter, necessitated a rise in wages. On the other hand, rising wages were themselves a threat to price stability, and the authorities in both countries believed it necessary to curtail the looming rise. They found support among the German authorities in both countries. If work in German factories was to remain attractive, the wages offered in Germany had to remain at least roughly on par with those paid in the occupied countries. Moreover, German companies were to be able to employ people within the occupied states as cheaply as possible.

₂⁴⁵ Sijes, *De arbeidsinzet* 426.
There was an acute need, therefore, to develop a viable infrastructure to control wages. In both Denmark and the Netherlands, this infrastructure was based on an institutional structure dating back to the 1930s. In Denmark, wages were to a large extent negotiated between the trade unions (united in the De Samvirkende Fagforbund) and the central employers’ organization (Dansk Arbejdsgiverforening). Theirs was to be a more or less cooperative relationship, setting wages in a responsible manner, with the active support of the government. Already in 1939 they adopted the *solidaritetslinie* (solidarity line), which aimed to protect the lowest-paid workers against rapidly rising prices by paying them bonuses and supplements.\(^\text{246}\) In practice, however, the collaboration between employers and unions proved far from easy. In the wake of wartime inflation, unions strove for increased wages, especially (but certainly not exclusively) in the lowest wage brackets. Danish employer organizations were not keen to yield to these demands. They were particularly concerned to maintain the long-term competitiveness of Danish industry, fearing for their position in a postwar European economy, and therefore aimed to keep wages down.\(^\text{247}\) Despite these disputes, the pact held for the duration of the war. Neither employers nor unions were willing to risk the *solidaritetslinie*, not least because both parties were happy to have so far kept the German authorities at bay and did not want to give the occupier a pretext to intervene.\(^\text{248}\)

Danish unions and employers’ organizations were quite aware that arrangements were different in the Netherlands. In 1942, Dutch trade unions were dismantled and integrated into a new National Socialist trade union – the Nederlands Arbeids Front (NAF; Dutch labour front) – which caused the majority of members to leave their union. Employers’ organizations had been sidelined. That is not to say that the traditional negotiating partners were entirely silenced in the Netherlands. Wages were mostly determined by the College van Rijksbemiddelaars (board of national mediators) and the College van de Arbeid (labour board). These organizations, while not free of National Socialist interference, remained reasonably


\(^{247}\) A. Lund, *Dansk Industriebertening. Industrien under den Tyske besættelse* (Copenhagen 1949) 320.

representative organs for the negotiation of employment conditions and wages. One may question, however, how far the powers of these bodies went. Contrary to the situation in Denmark, the German authorities proactively interfered with Dutch wage levels, allowing wages to rise only when this was deemed inevitable, and encouraged convergence of wage levels. In so doing, they hoped to stimulate workers to seek employment in Germany and avert wage competition between employers. In Denmark, on the other hand, the Odel committee (named after its head, Axel Odel), which was responsible for German supervision of the Danish wage level, generally kept its distance.249

In both Denmark and the Netherlands, wages did rise during the occupation, and often rose considerably. In the wake of rising prices, raises were simply necessary to avoid the severe impoverishment of Dutch and Danish workers. That is not to say that they climbed the income ladder with ease. Nor was the rise in wages evenly spread: during the occupation, wages converged; that is, lower wages rose more than higher wages, and rural wages rose more than urban wages. Both the indigenous and the German authorities were keen to prevent the lowest paid from falling into the poverty trap of unaffordable rations. Not all raises were conscious policy choices, however: even in the regulated economy of the war years, things did not always go as planned. Market pressures certainly contributed to the rising wartime wages.

There are reasons to believe, moreover, that prescribed wages were being circumvented at least occasionally. Pressed for labour as they were, at least some Danish and Dutch employers attempted to attract workers by offering higher wages than they were legally allowed to pay. Especially in Denmark, where the German building sites on the west coast paid fabulous wages, many indigenous employers had no choice but to follow suit. In the Netherlands, the iron and the steel industry struggled to remain remunerative, caught as they were between price-conscious military customers and increasingly expensive skilled workers.250 However, neither

250. Lommers, Wartime Wages, 51; Klemann, Nederland 282.
the nature nor the extent of illegal payments in excess of official wages can be assessed with any level of precision. Unlike other evasions of economic policies, illegally raised wages had little priority among law enforcers, at least when compared to black marketeering and illegal pricing. Wage control evasions would have been difficult to detect in any case. Obviously, even a limited accountancy exercise would bring to light overpayments, but in cases where hours that were paid for were never worked, wages were paid out of illegal profits, or wage increases were veiled in bogus promotions, illegal wage-raising would have been very difficult to uncover even if the evasion of wage restrictions had had priority.

The position of workers in Denmark and the Netherlands was in many respects similar, but there were a number of important differences. The threat of being forced into the Arbeitseinsatz made many Dutch workers wary of losing their job and many Dutch employers wary of firing them. The Dutch authorities had gone to considerable lengths to ensure that workers were rigidly linked to their jobs, which made firing them exceedingly difficult. The resulting inflexibilities of the Dutch labour market meant that it was relatively difficult for workers to shift to another job in order to reap the benefits of higher wages. In Denmark, the labour market was considerably less rigid and workers could consequently switch jobs with relative ease. A second important difference between the two countries was that from 1942 onwards, the Netherlands also had a clandestine labour market, which was more or less administered by the resistance movement and in which men in hiding for the Arbeitseinsatz were employed as farm hands, builders or factory workers, or to engage in whatever employment was readily available. Also, partly because of employment retention to avoid Arbeitseinsatz, some hidden unemployment appears to have existed within regular industry.

Nominal wages rose in both Denmark and the Netherlands. Officially, these rises were mostly 'corrections' to compensate for increased prices, but in reality the two nations' wage structures underwent more fundamental changes than such

252. Klemann Nederland 255, 256
terminology suggests. In both countries, but especially in the Netherlands, wages became more equal. By the end of the war, lower wages had risen more than higher wages, wage differences between skill levels had diminished considerably and rural areas had caught up with the urban wage level. These developments were the outcome of a dynamic process of wage formation in which bureaucratic controls, German interference and an overstretched labour market played a role. Many postwar commentators, especially in Denmark, have emphasized the very orderly and well-managed development of wartime wages, but labour markets in both countries were more dynamic than has been suggested.  

The degree of wage compression between regions, skill levels or professions can be expressed as the ratio between two average wage levels. The lower this ratio, the smaller the difference between the two categories. Over time, ratios changed, predominantly downwards in most of the cases at hand, as can be seen in figures 7.2 and 7.3 below. While these calculations are fairly straightforward, it should be noted that any comparison of them rests on somewhat shaky foundations. Categorizations of skill levels, regions and industrial sectors differed between the two countries, which hinders comparison. In Denmark, for example, labour statistics discern between only two skill-levels – skilled and unskilled – whereas the Dutch statistics differentiate between unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled. A very precise comparison is therefore impossible to make, but the general trends can easily be discerned from the available data.

Figure 7.2: The development of the ratio of the wages of skilled to those of unskilled workers in the Netherlands, 1939-46

Source: CBS, Maandschrift, 1939-46. For the years 1940-45 including secret appendixes; and own computations. The graph was made by Suzanne Lommers.

Figure 7.3: The ratio of the wages of skilled to unskilled workers in Denmark, 1938-46

Source: Danmarks Statistik, Statistiske efterretninger See graph 7.2.. The graph was made by Suzanne Lommers.
As these figures show, convergence between skill levels was relatively uncommon in Denmark. It should be noted, though, that these data, published by Danmarks Statistik, were provided by the united Danish employers’ organization. Since this organization had a clear interest in appearing to be following regulations, it is certainly conceivable that the data they provided were intended to give the impression of orderliness rather than to be entirely truthful. Moreover, as time progressed, some employers opted out of the Dansk Arbejdsgiverforening altogether, thus ridding themselves of the cumbersome obligation to report wages.

Despite all these caveats, a number of interesting observations can be arrived at on the basis of these wage series. First, there was a clear difference between the levels of wage convergence in relation to skill level in these countries. Again, it is difficult to be quite precise, given the differences inherent in the statistical procedures underlying the available data. What is clear, however, is that in the late 1930s the wage differences between skill levels in Denmark were considerably lower than they were in the Netherlands. Low-paid Dutchmen had more catching up to do, and they began doing so during the occupation. Although especially skilled workers became in short supply during the occupation, it was in particular unskilled workers who significantly improved their bargaining position, mainly as a result of the disappearance of unemployment in their skill group. In the Netherlands, this improvement caused the wages of unskilled workers to rise in comparison with those of their more skilled colleagues. In Denmark, where wages for unskilled workers were higher to begin with and unemployment disappeared more slowly, such improvements did not materialize until much later. As can be seen in figures 7.2 and 7.3, wages converged strongly and almost universally in the Netherlands, and most strongly in those sectors where wage inequality had been greatest before the

255. Statiske Efterretninger, various issues.
256. See page 197 below.
257. Hansen, Økonomisk vækst 84.
occupation (e.g. in the textile industry). In Denmark, on the other hand, no such trend is evident.

Although the development of Danish wages in relation to skill was uneventful, regional wage differences were in flux. As shown in figure 7.4, regional wage convergence was reasonably strong in Denmark, and these data in fact underestimate the upward development of wages in rural areas. For a number of reasons, the impact of German military construction work in the countryside was considerably greater than was reported. There are several reasons to be particularly sceptical about the moderate rises that appear in statistical yearbooks for the countryside, and more specifically for Jutland. Major construction work on the Atlantikwall was being done in Jutland, and as the area was relatively thinly populated, the construction activities (and the turf fields and lignite mines) offered unprecedented employment opportunities. As the war progressed, the wages of those working at the military building sites began to rise much faster than the wages of ordinary workers. After Field Marshal Rommel had visited the defence works along the Danish coast in early 1943, and expressed his dissatisfaction, the officers responsible were under considerable pressure to do better, and especially to do more. This resulted in the remarkable situation that the leadership of the German building sites began to compete both among themselves and with indigenous employers to attract workers by offering higher wages. Independent as they were of official bodies and the Danish government, they could raise wages almost unchecked. Gradually, the wages paid to those working at the German building sites began to far exceed local wages.259

259. Bundgård Christensen, Poulsen and Scharff Smith, Dansk arbejde 45.
The local labour markets were profoundly disrupted by this development. Certainly to young, unskilled rural Jutlanders (and to many from elsewhere in Denmark), who had previously been among the lowest earning workers in the country, the comparatively astronomical wages – sometimes double the normal hourly wage – offered by the Organization Todt were irresistible. If they were to hold on to their workers, local employers and the Danish building contractors working on the Atlantikwall had little choice but to follow suit. Unsurprisingly, this gave rise to complaints. When, for example, Tirstrup airport was expanded in 1943, so many workers from the area were hired that local employers had to increase wages by between 20% and as much as 45% in order to remain fully staffed. The Danish firm Klammt, itself working on the erection of bunkers on the west coast, found that it simply could not find any workers at the rates agreed upon by unions and the employers’ organizations.\(^{260}\) One of the consequences of this development was that more and more Danish employers left their organizations in order to be able to hire at market wages on the hard-pressed labour market of (especially) Jutland. This not only undermined the

\(^{260}\) Lommer, *Wartime Wages* 46.
corporatist foundations of Danish labour market policies, but also means that reported wages as appear in the statistical yearbooks should be considered relatively unreliable, certainly where they relate to Jutland in the later years of the occupation.

In the Netherlands, the development of wages was strongly influenced by changes in German policies. The drain of Dutch workers caused by the introduction of the Arbeitseinsatz was much greater than the number of workers who actually went to Germany. The extraction of over half a million workers from the regular labour force had a massive impact on the Dutch economy. The sudden shortage of workers was aggravated, moreover, by labour hoarding on the part of employers. Even though production plummeted and limitations on firing employees were relaxed, many employers were keen to hire and hold on as many workers as possible. After Stalingrad, the demise of Germany and the end of the war seemed perhaps not imminent but certainly possible. Manufacturers were understandably keen to ensure that they would have a sizeable labour force at their disposal when the war ended, and were especially keen to keep skilled workers on their payroll. The renewed mobility of workers and the very tight labour supply during the second half of the occupation made it increasingly difficult to contract workers, not unlike the situation in Denmark (albeit for different reasons).261

Judging from official statistics, the pressure on the labour market led to a very substantial wage raise in the Netherlands in 1945 and 1946, immediately after the liberation. Partly, this increase may have been caused by the shorter hours worked after the war for the same wage, but this cannot fully account for so substantial an increase. One might suspect, as in the case of Denmark, that workers in the later war years were secretly paid in excess of official wages. While excess payments undoubtedly took place, the effect was in all likelihood smaller than it was in Denmark. In the first place, the threat of the Arbeitseinsatz probably was real enough for many workers to accept a relatively moderate wage if it provided them with secure employment within the Netherlands. Nor were employers able to make such excessive profits as in some sectors in Denmark, because labour productivity was relatively low.262 Only when the war had ended, raw materials again became

available and the threat of labour in Germany had disappeared, did wage levels rise to market equilibrium level. Regrettably, wage data for 1944 are shaky, mainly because Dutch manufacturing came to a standstill during the last months of that year. Consequently, it is difficult to establish how wages developed in the later phase of the war. What is clear, however, is that average wages of unskilled workers no less than doubled between 1938 and 1946, a development that reduced inequality in the Netherlands significantly and far outlasted the war years.
Figure 7.5 Wage developments in the Netherlands, per skill level according to collective agreements (1939=100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Skilled</th>
<th>Semi-skilled</th>
<th>Unskilled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CBS, Maandschrift, 1939-46. For the years 1940-45 including secret appendixes

Although it would be going too far to claim that the development of Dutch wages during the twentieth century was caused only by the structural changes in the labour market during the 1940s, such changes were certainly part of a crucial changeover from the prewar labour market – where much of labour was unorganized, wage differences were relatively great and the lower strata of the labour force lived in poverty – to one where labour was highly organized, unskilled workers were much better paid and unemployment was almost non-existent. One could argue that there was a convergence of wages not only in Denmark and the Netherlands, but also between the two countries, because the Netherlands developed much of the institutional framework of a welfare state as was already coming into existence in Denmark during the 1930s.

Beating inflation
Did rising wages safeguard low-income households in Denmark and the Netherlands from the onslaught of inflation? The answer to that question depends not only on the

development of wages, but also on the development of prices. Using the Paasche price index calculated in Chapter 6, the changing incomes of poor workers can be assessed in more real terms. As can be seen in figure 7.6, despite rising wages, real wages dropped significantly in both countries, and more so in Denmark than in the Netherlands. The difference between the two countries is obviously due to a large extent to the declining availability of especially foodstuffs in the Netherlands, which lowered the amount of money people could legally spend, and hence diminished the budgetary impact of rising prices. It should also be noted that if black market prices were included in these data, the price indexes would look quite different.

Figure 7.6: Real wages of unskilled workers in Denmark and the Netherlands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost of living index (Paasche)</th>
<th>Nominal wage index (unskilled)</th>
<th>Real wage index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>155</td>
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<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>159</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: see figures 6.7, 7.2 and 7.3*

Although the Danes seem to have been affected by a much stronger decline in real wages than the Dutch were, that would not be an accurate interpretation of these figures. Since the Paasche price index takes account of the declining availability of goods, the Danish price index relates to a considerably richer pattern of consumption, whereas the Dutch unskilled workers suffered a setback even when the much lower availability of goods is taken into account. Moreover, the purchasing power of Danish workers was higher to begin with, so that the decline in their real income was slightly less problematic. Nevertheless, in both countries those at the
lower end of the income scale suffered a significant setback for the duration of the occupation.

This decline was a potentially serious problem. In so far as people's incomes did not keep up with inflation, even if the declining availability of goods is taken into account, the effectiveness of economic controls would have been seriously compromised. The common wartime complaint that inflation threatened the incomes of the relatively poor is supported by these calculations. Such problems may well have had an impact, moreover, beyond the part of the population it immediately affected. People who could not, within the legal economic sphere, achieve the standard of living mapped out for them by the authorities, were prone to turn to the illegal economy, thereby eroding economic controls. Moreover, wartime poverty may well explain the observed different epidemiological consequences of the war in Denmark and the Netherlands. The question who were poor – and at which point in time – is therefore highly relevant.

In both Denmark and the Netherlands, unskilled workers made up around 30% of all households. Of these people, especially non-agrarian workers were in trouble, since those employed in agriculture, at whatever level, did relatively well in the wartime economy. The remainder – the predominantly urban proletariat – was still a large group, and a very diverse one. Many of those classified as unskilled were young or very young, and their low skill-level was a consequence of their recent arrival in their profession. As time went by, many of these youngsters would have acquired greater skills, and hence have received higher pay. Young workers often, though not always, were people with relatively low expenditure, often living with their parents and without children of their own; therefore, in most cases they were in all likelihood quite able to deal with the temporary pressures of wartime inflation. These were also the workers who were best able to reap the benefits of the wartime economy, working for high wages in military construction, working in Germany or otherwise engaged in the temporary employment that came with the occupation. Young men, and to a lesser extent young women, were often mobile and flexible – and as such hardly the most vulnerable groups in Danish and Dutch society.

Others were less lucky. People on a low income who had young children and limited skills were often in no position to profit fully from the new employment opportunities provided by the occupation, weighed down as they were by familial
responsibilities. Only when the children were older did things look brighter. With the ample employment opportunities of the war years, children of around 14 or older could now contribute more easily to family incomes. The same, though to a lesser extent, was true for women. In both Denmark and the Netherlands, female employment and wages rose, to the extent that after the war it proved impossible to find housemaids, as the market for domestic services was drained of young women, who preferred to work elsewhere.264

It should be noted that, generally, the war years were a period of rapid promotions. Eager as many employers were, especially in Denmark, to raise salaries the official ceiling, bogus promotions and invented functions were an easy way to raise incomes. Redefining a job was an easy way to changing the wage paid for it. Likewise, the increasing bureaucratization of Danish and Dutch society helped many, especially the educated, to climb relatively quickly through the ranks, receiving ever higher incomes on the way. The greatest promotions, if one can call them that, were of course those of the unemployed, who left the underclass to join the working, wealthier communities. That said, the formerly unemployed were often late in acquiring new employment, and hence had to fend for themselves during the first war years on very low incomes at a time of runaway inflation. Hence, the increased unemployment benefits mentioned by Blokzijl would indeed have been a necessary correction to protect the unemployed from destitution.

The unwaged
Although wage earners, at least in so far as they belonged to the lower strata of the labour market, did not do particularly well during the war years, they were not necessarily the worst affected. Several groups that did considerably worse can be identified. First of all, of course, Jews – who in the Netherlands were robbed, incarcerated and murdered, and who in Denmark had to flee – were in a dismal position. Communists and the other political enemies of Nazism were likewise worse off, even if they escaped persecution. In those cases, however, economic ruin was only one aspect of overall persecution and, in retrospect, hardly the most significant one. However, there were also people who did not fall victim to racial or political

264. Klemann, Nederland 413; Kjersgaard, Danmark 318.
persecution but nevertheless suffered heavily as a consequence of wartime economic circumstances.

Some of those people, especially in the Netherlands, were self-employed. Ambulatory traders were often unable to adapt to the rigidities of the managed economy. One widowed vegetable-pedlar in the Netherlands was evacuated from her domicile in The Hague, only to find it impossible to set up business again in Amersfoort, some 50 kilometres to the east, because her cart had to be adorned with a sign saying that she would sell only to her regular customers, who had not, however, moved with her. Likewise, some businesses were simply impossible to continue during the war, for example, those requiring raw materials that were no longer available or those that were importers from overseas. Some businesses were closed as non-kriegswichtig. Yet, the discontinuation of businesses was not the norm. Many small businesses, especially those involved in the trading of foodstuffs, in fact prospered.

Those who did not earn a living at all were less fortunate. The elderly mostly depended on pensions, leaving them relatively exposed to the economic problems of the occupation. Pensions were often more rigid than wages, if they were adapted to the price level at all, and many elderly were consequently vulnerable to wartime inflation. Moreover, it was not only the incomes of the elderly that were inflexible: so, too, were the elderly themselves, at least according to some contemporaries. One Dutch official quoted an elderly citizen in order to describe the lack of understanding: ‘I’ve been eating an egg with my breakfast as long as I can remember, so why on earth should I stop doing so now?’ Such reports are rare, however, and it seems unlikely that coupon rationing really was too difficult to grasp for the majority of older people. More remarkable, perhaps, is that organizations such as the Polscommissie and the Ernærings- og Husholdningsnævnet appear to have paid only minimal attention to the elderly, a fact that is perhaps more illustrative of contemporary attitudes towards the aged than of their standard of living.

So far as we can tell today, older people in Denmark and the Netherlands had not been not very active in the informal economy. Both physically and socially, many

265. NA, RBVVO, Weekverslagen 12-11-1942.
266. NA, RBVVO, Weekverslagen 3-1942.
elderly lacked the capabilities to fully engage in the informal economy. As long as rationing and price controls ensured their access to necessary goods and foodstuffs, this was a drawback rather than a disaster. But when the economic organization in the western Netherlands collapsed during the famine winter, the ability to function in the informal economy became a matter of life and death. Some of the elderly Dutch, namely those who were not cared for by able-bodied family members or acquaintances, proved very vulnerable.\textsuperscript{267}

Similar problems affected the institutionalized population. Prisoners and hospitalized patients (and especially the mentally ill among the latter) were mostly unable to fend for themselves. Again, as long as sufficient diets and heating could be provided, this was inconvenient rather than dangerous. As Dutch rations plummeted, however, incarcerated people were neither provided with nor able to find themselves sufficient diets.\textsuperscript{268} Aside from the Dutch famine, the quality of life of the people incarcerated in prisons and prison camps depended to a large extent on who was running the institution and on what basis people were incarcerated there. In the Netherlands, especially the political prisoners in camps at Amersfoort and Vught were routinely subjected to barbarous treatment by their German captors.\textsuperscript{269} Jewish citizens had been interned in the Westerbork camp, only a few miles from the German border. The food, reportedly, was good in Westerbork, perhaps not surprising given its very rural location, but the quality of life was nevertheless low there, mostly because of extreme overcrowding and the ever-present threat of deportation.\textsuperscript{270}

In Denmark, prisons and even prison camps remained for the most part under Danish control, which ensured that the beastly treatment that befell some prisoners the Netherlands could for the most part be avoided. Some political prisoners were in fact given preferential treatment by the wardens. That is not to say that the dependence of prisoners on their jailers was unproblematic. The occupation significantly drove up the number of inmates in the Danish prison system. The

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{267} See page *** above.
\bibitem{268} Verslagen en mededelingen betreffende de volksgezondheid 1944-1945 847.
\bibitem{269} G.G. von Frytag Drabbe Künzel, Kamp Amersfoort (Amsterdam 2003).
\end{thebibliography}
combination of increased crime and the incarceration of political delinquents caused serious overcrowding and consequent discomfort, for example when the Vestre Fængsel (a prison in Copenhagen) doubled the number of inmates per cell. The prison camp in Horserød on the other hand, where Danish communists were interned until 1943 (when many of the inmates were arrested by the Germans and deported), was reportedly a fairly comfortable place to stay, with a reasonably friendly staff.\textsuperscript{271}

Somewhere in between the insane and the criminal, at least from the perspective of policy makers and law enforcers, was the section of society described as 'antisocial'. A small section of the population of Denmark and the Netherlands did not fit sufficiently well in the orderly societies of which they were part, to partake in its economic life on any but the most basic level. Addicted, unemployed or disposed to crime, some people were unable to function in society in an acceptable fashion. During the first decades of the twentieth century, these people had become the focal point of considerable government attention and, in many cases, repression. Misfit people or households were segregated from the rest of society in separate communities; in Denmark, they were even sterilized to prevent their procreation.\textsuperscript{272}

Many such people, however troublesome their relationship with the authorities may have been, had been dependent on benefits before the war and were difficult to employ even during the occupation. Some of these people, however, appear to have been particularly able to function in the shadow economy of black markets and petty crimes that was rampant in both countries during the war years. The fate of these groups and their impact on wartime society and especially the wartime economy remain to be investigated properly.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Waging total war was hard work. Even though the Second World War was an orgy of destruction rather than a constructive period in the economic history of Europe, for many people the full employment it caused was a great bounty. This was the case in

\textsuperscript{271} K. Aabye, 'Glimt af livet uden for murene' Glimt fra Livet uden for Murene' in: \textit{Danmark under besættelsen} 304.

particular for the hundreds of thousands of unemployed in Denmark and the Netherlands. The vastly improved employment opportunities in both countries helped the unemployed to improve considerably their relative wealth (relative, that is, to their compatriots).

With time, wages began to rise, both legally and illegally. This rise, however, was not sufficient to compensate for the impact of wartime inflation on the real incomes of especially the urban working classes in either country. Although the impact thereof was felt more readily in the Netherlands, where wages had been lower to begin with, many people at the lower end of the income scale in both Denmark and the Netherlands suffered a significant decline. This came in addition to the more general decline described in Chapters 4 and 5, which affected all but the lucky few in the occupied countries. Since inflation was and remained a serious constraint on the consumption of consumer goods in both Denmark and the Netherlands, it can be safely assumed that those affected developed strategies to cope with their low real incomes. These strategies more often than not involved black marketeering.