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11. The Second World War and Dutch Society: Continuity and Change

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IN Dutch colloquial usage, the expressions 'before the war' and 'after the war' imply that the Second World War was a turning point in the recent history of the Netherlands. 'Before the war' conventionally stands for solidity, quality and decency, and 'after the war' for instability, uncertainty and unrest. But sometimes 'before the war' calls to mind unemployment, social misery and archaic relations, and 'after the war' material prosperity and greater compassion. In all cases this colloquialism betrays a consciousness of a great and fundamental difference in which the war itself is the breach. To some it represents the nadir in history: two authors entitled their popular book about the occupation *De Lange Nacht* (The Long Night).¹ On the other hand, this same period has been considered as one during which the purest and noblest notions captivated the imagination of the Dutch. This was not only expressed through the resistance and the general state of mind during the war, but also in the ideas which were developed concerning post-war society. Pure and high ideals came to the fore. But when it came to realizing these ideals after the defeat of Germany, it seemed that, yet again, less lofty principles prevailed. This ambivalence is reflected in the title of another publication written for a wide public *Visioen en Werkelijkheid* (Vision and Reality).² The Second World War is here considered as the most important breach in the modern history of the Netherlands.

Yet in recent publications³ it has been suggested, more than once,

* The author wishes to acknowledge his debt to Miss I. van Dijk and Miss A. Lavelle for translating his paper.

¹ M. Smedts and C. Troost, *De Lange Nacht* (Amsterdam, 1965).

² *Visioen en Werkelijkheid. De illegale pers over de toekomst der samenleving* (ed. B. Bakker, D.H. Couvée and J. Kassies, The Hague, 1963).

³ E.g. I. Schöffer, 'Het trauma van de nederlandse nederlaag', *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis*, LXXXIV (1971), 536-51; R. Roegholt, 'De onvoltooide democratie', in: J. and A. Romein, *De Lage Landen bij de zee. Een geschiedenis van*

that the degree of continuity was at least as great, if not greater. Schöffers, for example, posits that 'many of the pre-1940 threads could be taken up after 1945'.⁴ If there is a watershed in the most recent history of the Netherlands, then this may be located in the 'sixties, rather than in the period of occupation.

In this analysis of the influence the Second World War exerted on Dutch society, I shall direct my attention to two aspects. After examining the degree to which the war, and the symptoms directly related to it, dominated life in the Netherlands during the period 1940-45, we come to the question of continuity and change already mentioned. Although historical studies on the Second World War are legion, unfortunately for our purposes scholars have not addressed themselves to these particular points. Because definite and precise information is often wanting my conclusions will be necessarily tentative. On many aspects we have to make do with impressions culled from the available literature. A constraint of a different order is the lack of space which has sometimes compelled us to be excessively brief.

In order to assess the impact of the Second World War on Dutch society and political life, I have been especially influenced by the analysis of Marwick,⁵ who distinguishes four modes in which twentieth-century society has been influenced by war. War in his view is, in the first place, 'destructive and disruptive', brings loss of life and health and inflicts material damage of all kinds. Secondly, it is a 'test of a country's social and political institutions', which may weather the storm, collapse or emerge to function more efficiently

het nederlandse volk (Amsterdam, 1973⁵), ch. xxx; H.J.A. Hofland, H. Keller and H. Verhagen, *Vastberaden, maar soepel en met mate. Herinneringen aan Nederland 1938-1948* (Amsterdam, 1976); H.J.A. Hofland, *Tegels lichten of ware verhalen over de autoriteiten in het land van de voldongen feiten* (Amsterdam, 1972). Publications of political scientists usually do not single out the war but consider the history of the Netherlands from $\pm$ 1920 to $\pm$ 1960 as one period, e.g. A. Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley, 1975²); H. Daalder, 'The Netherlands: opposition in a segmented society', in: *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies* (ed. R.A. Dahl, New Haven and London, 1966).

⁴ Schöffers, *ibid.*, 546.

⁵ A. Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (London, 1965); A. Marwick, *Britain in the Century of Total War: War, Peace and Social Change* (London, 1968); A. Marwick, 'The Impact of the First World War on British History', *Journal of Contemporary History*, III (1968), 51-63. And especially A. Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century. A Comparative Study of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States* (London, 1974).

than before. Thirdly, war can lead, in conjunction with the second mode, to greater participation: this may include military participation, but also the emancipation of women, political participation of social groups, the position of the working classes and so on. Finally war is a 'colossal emotional and psychological experience', which manifests itself in various ways. Each of these four modes consists of a number of components, which naturally bring us back to specific aspects of society: economic relations, political events, social development, etc. Two observations can be made concerning the applicability of Marwick's approach to the Netherlands. Of course his analysis rests mainly on the experience of society in Britain during the First World War, that is the experience of an actively belligerent country. The Dutch situation is entirely different because the Netherlands was an occupied territory during the Second World War. Strictly speaking, the war in 1940 lasted for only five days, so that the Dutch role as a belligerent was not significant. This difference could be of importance for the impact of the war.

In historical studies on the Netherlands in wartime, collaboration and resistance appear to be the most important problems.⁶ According to many authors, this choice outweighed all other considerations in the mind of the population. In his preface to Warmbrunn's study, L. de Jong, without doubt the most important contemporary author, asserts: 'The real life of peoples of occupied Europe lay between the two extremes of collaboration and resistance' and 'Unwilling adjustment was the rule – intentional resistance the exception.'⁷ But observations of this sort can rarely be verified from documentary evidence. There are, in fact, no trustworthy data for determining the state of mind of the population in an occupied territory. The diaries at our disposal⁸ usually claim our attention and they certainly give information concerning their authors themselves, but they cannot give us anything more than a vague and uncertain indication of the prevailing climate of opinion. It was indeed exceptional for someone to keep a diary. Even the press, both the censored as well as the underground, should be treated with the utmost reserve.

⁶ The most important studies are published in the series of the *Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie* (State Institute of War Documentation). The culminating work of that Institute is L. de Jong, *De geschiedenis van het koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de tweede wereldoorlog* (7 vol., The Hague, 1969–76, work in progress). In volume VII which appeared after the completion of this paper can be found additional information relating to some of the themes developed below.

⁷ W. Warmbrunn, *The Dutch under German Occupation 1940–1945* (Stanford, London, 1963), pv.

⁸ A selection of diaries in: *Dagboekfragmenten 1940–1945* (The Hague, 1954).

Though all observations on public opinion and the mood of the population are inevitably impressionistic, I would venture to suggest that the choice between collaboration and resistance had a special significance for Dutchmen holding high office. Especially at the beginning of the occupation, little direct German influence was experienced by most people, but senior civil servants were confronted with the decision: cooperation or withdrawal.⁹ Company directors had to decide whether or not to accept orders from the Germans, but in most cases their decisions only became crucial much later in the war. My impression is, however, that the majority of the population, rather than seeking a place on the scale between collaboration and resistance, were relieved that this was unnecessary. After the excitement of the first days of war and the first few months of tense waiting, it seemed, to the relief of most people, as if the normal routine went on as before. In fact, for part of the population, the miserable conditions of the 'thirties began to improve somewhat, because the number of unemployed fell continually throughout the war (even though this was partly caused by the deportation of labour abroad). It was not until the war began to affect daily life more intensely, and escape from its consequences became more difficult, that the war began to influence the general state of mind more deeply. For most people it was not the choice between collaboration and resistance that first came to mind, rather a concern to stay out of harm's way as far as possible. Rather than face this difficult choice most Dutchmen wanted nothing more than an end to the war. In an analysis simply concerned with the choice between collaboration and resistance, it might be quite proper to interpret the non-committal attitude as somewhere midway between these two poles, but it is artificial and scarcely helpful when it comes to reconstructing the mood and conduct of the occupied population.¹⁰

To my mind, the most satisfying picture of the situation during the occupation is given by Warmbrunn in his *The Dutch under German Occupation*. He distinguishes two phases: 'The long wait '40-'44' and 'The final winter '44-'45.' In the latter period there was 'great hardship and tragedy' for the whole population, which was most acute in the cities in the west of the country. During that winter life was totally dominated by the war and its consequences.

⁹ See the diary of a burgomaster: J.J.G. Boot, *Burgemeester in bezettingstijd* (Apeldoorn, s.a.).

¹⁰ See also the recent suggestion that the Dutch people would have adopted the Nazi ideology had the Germans won the war: *De SS en Nederland. Documenten uit de SS-archieven 1935-1945* (ed. N.K.C.A. In 't Veld, The Hague, 1976), I, 423.

Before that it had been different. Warmbrunn even speaks of a 'honeymoon', gradually giving way to a state of conflict, that intensified, especially after the spring of 1943. Except for rationing and curfew the 'normal daily routines' continued undisturbed for most people, during the first stages of the occupation. Of course a war was on, and the German occupier a reality, of which the Dutch people were aware, but in most cases this induced what I would call a 'conservative reflex': in other words people withdrew from public view into small trusted circles. Only later, when the restrictive measures of the Germans and other unpleasant consequences of the war became so intrusive that they could no longer be kept from the fireside, did survival force people to take bolder initiatives, travelling in search of food and organizing a system of barter for essential commodities.¹¹ The circumstances of the regions differed, but generally speaking the inhabitants of the towns and the western Netherlands as a whole suffered most: in the south of the country a different situation obtained.

Two groups in the population were affected almost immediately by the occupation. The Jews were persecuted by the Germans from the very beginning,¹² but with the exception of the strike in February 1941, large-scale opposition to this policy was lacking: people did not want to become involved. The unemployed were another group to feel the direct effects of the occupation: as part of the *Arbeits-einsatz* (contribution to the German war effort, a euphemism for forced labour) pressure was put on them to work in Germany.¹³ It was mainly the *Arbeitseinsatz* which gradually brought more and more people into contact with the occupier and, therefore also, with the war. This and the ever increasing cost of living led to more resistance and, more importantly, to a favourable climate for resistance. In most cases people did not choose to join the resistance, they tended to 'find' themselves in it.

The impact of the *Arbeitseinsatz*, and therefore of the war and its consequences on the Dutch population, can be gauged from the following figures. In the first six months of the occupation around 100,000 men had been sent to work in Germany and this number gradually rose until by July 1944 it reached 530,000. Included in this figure are the 100,000 so-called 'border workers'. In the course of

¹¹ Warmbrunn, *The Dutch*, pp. 11-17 and 99-120; the quotations have been taken from pp. 11, 14 and 100.

¹² J. Presser, *De ondergang. De vervolging en verdelging van het nederlandse jodendom 1940-1945* (The Hague, 1965).

¹³ B.A. Sijes, *De arbeidsinzet. De gedwongen arbeid van Nederlanders in Duitsland 1940-1945* (The Hague, 1966).

time about 140,000 returned. These figures, however, do not show the growing threat to much larger sections of the population. Rationing, which had been introduced in 1939 for sugar and some vegetables in order to test the system, affected nearly all foodstuffs very early in the war.¹⁴ It was largely successful¹⁵ until the winter of 1944–5 when, especially in the cities in the west, food supplies broke down badly, so that by the last week of the war there was only sufficient food to provide one pound of both potatoes and bread for each inhabitant.¹⁶

In the first quarter of 1945 the average consumer was rationed to a daily calorific intake which in the worst affected parts could be as low as 619, after having declined gradually from 1,800 at the beginning of 1941 to 1,700 at the end of 1943. Midway through 1944 the figure fell abruptly from 1,500 to 1,000 at the end of the year.¹⁷ The cost of living index, which until the middle of 1944 was calculated on the basis of 1938–39 = 100, shows a gradual rise to around 150, the wage index to 110–35.¹⁸ It was not until the winter of 1944–5 that the estimated black market prices, obviously always higher than the official prices, shot up, sometimes even hundredfold. The death-rate followed the same pattern, rising gradually at first but much more sharply at the end of the war.¹⁹

Although the impact of the war was at first comparatively slight, society was nonetheless influenced in various ways from the very beginning and people were aware of the war and followed its development. A recent publication of the *Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek* (Central Statistics Department), presents, in diagramatic forms, statistical information for various fields since 1900.²⁰ In most diagrams the war years are readily recognizable either because these years appear on the graphs with peaks and slumps, especially in the last year of the war, or by the lack of data for this period, which is another pointer to the exceptional circumstances. Even without a training in statistics, it is evident that the period 1940–45

¹⁴ *Bericht van de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (6 vol., Amsterdam, 1970–1), V, 2339.

¹⁵ Joh. de Vries, *De nederlandse economie tijdens de 20ste eeuw. Een verkenning van het meest kenmerkende* (Antwerp and Utrecht, 1973), p. 157; P.W. Klein, 'Germaanse supermarkt', *Bericht van de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, V, 2352.

¹⁶ S.L. Louwes, 'De voedselvoorziening', *Onderdrukking en verzet. Nederland in oorlogstijd* (ed. J.J. van Bolhuis, C.D.J. Brandt, H.M. van Randwijk and B.C. Slotemaker, 4 vol., Amsterdam, s.a.), II, 623.

¹⁷ Louwes, *ibid.*, II, 621; *Bericht van de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, V, 2338.

¹⁸ Centraal bureau voor de Statistiek (C.B.S.), *Economische en sociale kroniek der oorlogsjaren 1940–1945* (Utrecht, 1947), pp. 264–5.

¹⁹ C.B.S., *75 jaar statistiek van Nederland* (The Hague, 1975), tables 13, 18; p. 13.

²⁰ C.B.S., *ibid.*, *passim*.

was exceptional, and careful analysis of the data can furnish us with a more sensitive impression. Some scholars have, for example, been able to make correlations between the fluctuations in marriage and birth and the course of the war, and in this way show how the war affected the life of Dutchmen, even though they were not always conscious.

Smulders sees a connection between the high marriage rate of 1939 and the general mobilization, and he explains the decline in 1940 and 1941, partly as compensation for the premature mobilization-marriages, and partly as a result of the uncertainty caused by the war.²¹ In 1942, however, the figure rose again as a result of delayed marriages. The threat of the *Arbeitseinsatz* could also have contributed to the rise. In 1943-4 the course of the war and worsening circumstances led to another decline. Immediately after the war was ended, the figure rose markedly.²² Van den Brink studied the correlation between the monthly birth-rate and the corresponding conception figures. He was able to establish an often striking connexion between the decline in conception and, for example, the outbreak of war (both in September 1939 and May 1940), intensified German action (e.g. at the beginning of 1941), German and Japanese military successes and the disappointment of *Dolle Dinsdag* (Tuesday, 5 September 1944) when it seemed, for a moment, that liberation was imminent. In the same way he relates peaks in the birth-rate to the Allied successes (e.g. D-day and the German defeat).²³

When the post-war situation is compared with the pre-war years certain points stand out. From a demographic standpoint the death of 250,000 people as a direct result of the war,²⁴ and the population explosion of the immediate post-war years, are especially striking.²⁵ Yet their effect on the long-term demographic development of the

²¹ T. van den Brink, *Eerste resultaten van een statistische analyse van de loop der geboortecijfers in Nederland* (Amsterdam, 1949); C.B.S., *Huwelijksvruchtbaarheid, een cohortanalyse* (ed. R.H.M. Smulders, The Hague, 1973). Not only the prospect of war was important. Consideration must also be given to such long-term factors as age and sex, and in the short term to the disruption of supplies and family life. Nevertheless the influence of war was remarkable.

²² C.B.S., *75 jaar statistiek*, table 13, 14; *Bericht van de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, V, 2338.

²³ Van den Brink, *Eerste resultaten*, pp. 33-4.

²⁴ Estimate of the *Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie*: 240,000 (including Indonesia). According to the C.B.S. these were $\pm 230,000$ (excluding Indonesia), C.B.S., *Economische en sociale kroniek*, p. 231. The number of dead has been variously estimated anywhere between 210,000 and 280,000 (the latter figure is a projection derived from a calculation of the total population if the death rate had been 'normal').

²⁵ C.B.S., *75 jaar statistiek*, table 13; p. 9.

Netherlands is slight, hardly more than a wrinkle in the constantly rising total population rate.²⁶ It is true that in the long run the demographic impact of the war is discernible in the population groups by sex and age (the so-called population-pyramids), but the deviation is relatively small.²⁷ Also, the religious composition of the population did not change much, with, of course, the notable exception of the Jews, but even before the war they only formed rather less than 2 per cent of the total population.²⁸ Again the tendency for people to enter professions with greater social standing, which had been under way at least since the end of the First World War, does not appear to have been greatly influenced by the Second World War.²⁹ Finally the division of the working population over the different sectors shows that the gradual shift from agrarian to industrial and white collar sectors, which had been evident since 1900, continued with no marked interruption during the occupation.³⁰

This brings us to the economy, where the influence of war can be clearly demonstrated, most obviously in material damage, which has been assessed at approximately twenty-five or twenty-six thousand million guilders at pre-war prices.³¹ In the first years after the war the whole economy was directed towards the 'reconstruction and recovery'. This was the aim behind the rehabilitation of the monetary system, rationing, wage and price control, and the Marshall Plan: there was also a far greater degree of government intervention in order to combat the imminent and existing chaos. Gradually more normal conditions returned. By 1949-50 the level of prosperity was at least on a par with the pre-war standard. Government intervention lessened as a result, although it continued to be more intense and deliberate than it had been before the war.

Perhaps the real importance of the war lies less in the material destruction it caused than the opportunity it gave to the government for taking social and economic initiatives. Certain arguments can be advanced in support of this thesis: the Welfare State of the 'fifties was a long way from the depression of the 'thirties. Still I would like to draw your attention to certain considerations which

²⁶ C.B.S., *ibid.*, table 9; p. 9.

²⁷ C.B.S., *13e Algemene Volkstelling 31 mei 1960 IV Geslacht, leeftijd en burgerlijke staat* (Hilversum, 1965), p. 10.

²⁸ C.B.S., *75 jaar statistiek*, table 37.

²⁹ J.J.M. van Tulder, *De beroepsmobiliteit in Nederland van 1919 tot 1954. Een sociaal-statistische studie* (Leiden, 1962), p. 90.

³⁰ De Vries, *Nederlandse economie*, p. 14.

³¹ Estimate based on claims for damage according to the *Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie*; De Vries, *Nederlandse economie*, p. 88. P.W. Klein, 'Oorlog en armoede', *Bericht van de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam, 1971), VI, 2738 calls quantification in the matter guesswork.

call in question the decisive impact of the war on the Dutch economy. First of all, the change in economic policy should not be overestimated. The aim remained, as before, the creation of the optimum conditions for free enterprise, and the restoration of a free market and a free choice of production and consumption.³² True the government shouldered the responsibility for its operation; though intervention had occurred on an increasingly large scale before the war, the government after the war intended to do so on a long-term basis. Moreover, the change needs to be seen in the perspective of the economic crisis in the 'thirties. It was the failure to resolve the economic problem rather than the war which prepared the Netherlands for government intervention on a grand scale, though it is also true that the shock effect of the war certainly eased the transition from unintentional to deliberate government intervention, on the basis of a widely accepted Keynesian concept.³³ But this development was indeed already evident in the cabinet crisis of 1939, as a result of the changing social and political position of the Roman Catholic Party. The choice of the Social Democrats as coalition partners in the government implied the acceptance of an interventionist economy before World War II.

Thirdly, the macro-economic analysis also points to the importance of continuity. Joh. de Vries in his examination of the Dutch economy during the twentieth century considers growth the essential underlying economic trend despite the delays and stagnation caused by the two World Wars and the depression.³⁴ Important symptoms of this were the growing dependence on the world economy, increasing industrialization, diminishing regional differences and the intensification of the government's role. While the period after the Second World War is regarded as a new phase, it fits nonetheless into a pattern of development, whose origins are to be found in the industrial revolution. One can therefore argue that, after the stagnation of the 'thirties, this phase sees a resumption of the main line rather than a new start.

The active support the government gave to industrialization, since the late 1940s, also fits into the same mould. It was not so much the war but the spectre of unemployment, which played an important role in the shaping of this policy, although the alarming increase in population and the severing of links with Indonesia also

³² De Vries, *ibid.*, 174. See also G. Brouwers, 'Tien jaar economische politiek' in: *Tien jaar economisch leven in Nederland. Herstelbank 1945-1955* (The Hague, 1955), pp. 76-106.

³³ De Vries, *Nederlandse economie*, pp. 170-1.

³⁴ De Vries, *ibid.*, *passim*.

fostered conditions for an active policy of State involvement in the economy. The direct influence of the war was limited, although the shock of the war probably made people more willing to accept an interventionist economy.

The housing shortage is often cited as proof of the long-term effects of the war, and with some plausibility: the loss of at least 100,000 dwellings, combined with a backlog in new house construction was not easily made good. But the long-standing shortage of houses cannot be explained by the war. When the housing needs were calculated insufficient weight was attached to the steep rise in the growth of the population and the demand for more spacious accommodation, which people came to expect. Neither of these developments can be properly ascribed to the war.³⁵

There was then no question of the war making a clear break in the underlying economic structure, though even the pre-1940 economy was not static, despite the stagnation caused by the depression. The war had shaken society to the core and therefore the early post-war years of 'reconstruction and recovery' were still deeply influenced by the war. This mental climate prepared people to adapt to far-reaching changes in economic policy. These were not, however, fundamental changes within the capitalist system of production, nor was there any question of undermining the system itself. Indeed capitalism became more firmly entrenched because it now received more active and conscious support from the State.³⁶

In the field of industrial relations the *Stichting van de Arbeid* (Foundation of Labour), formed in secret during the occupation, asserted itself immediately after the war. Closer cooperation between the pre-war employer and employee organizations in the interests of national prosperity was the aim. The 'conflict situation', allegedly characteristic of labour relations before the war, was to be replaced by the 'harmony-model', which owed something to the greater national solidarity and unity forged during the war. Class struggle would be replaced by class peace, social harmony and prosperity. The government endorsed this by passing the *Buitengewoon Besluit Arbeidsverhoudingen* (Extraordinary Decree on Labour

³⁵ W. Roest, *Bouw en economische groei* (Deventer, 1973), especially pp. 89-91; Klein, 'Oorlog en armoede', p. 2738 states that $\pm$ 165,000 houses were rendered uninhabitable and that there was a backlog of 300,000 houses directly after the war. According to the *Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie* 100,000 were totally destroyed and 50,000 seriously damaged. C.B.S., *75 jaar statistiek*, pp. 34, 35.

³⁶ De Vries, *Nederlandse economie*, p. 174 refers to a mixed economy probably implying a fundamental change. Although this might seem to be simply a question of terminology it is worth noting that already in the 1930s the State was intervening in the economy.

Relations) of 1945, and giving the government through the *College van Rijksbemiddelaars* an important mediatorial role in labour relations. In 1950 a more detailed piece of legislation on the structure of the economic order was introduced in the form of the *Wet op de Bedrijfsorganisaties* (Industrial Organizations Act).³⁷ All this was indeed new, although not as novel as was enthusiastically suggested at the time. Windmuller, the best commentator on the development of industrial relations in the Netherlands, emphasizes time and again the continuity with pre-war development: 'Consultation and co-operation between and among unions, employers and government for the mutual furtherance of public and private interests had become, by 1940, the hallmark of the Netherlands industrial relations system.'³⁸

The devastating experience of the war certainly reinforced the readiness to cooperate, but the structure of the first post-war years was more in the nature of a conclusion rather than a new beginning. In so far as the foundations were laid for such a beginning, in the regulations for the *Publiekrechtelijke Bedrijfsorganisatie* (Industrial Organization under Public Law) it was a 'dismal failure'.³⁹ Moreover the social legislation should be regarded as a continuation of developments already under way before the occupation.

There was another phenomenon, which manifested itself at the end of the war, and during the first few years following it, which, had it succeeded, would have truly broken new ground in the field of industrial relations. This was the *Eenheidsvakbeweging* (Unified Trade Union Movement), later the *Eenheidsvakcentrale* or EVC (Trade Union Unity Centre). The EVC advocated a more radical trade union policy and was not afraid of conflict. For a few years the EVC was a dangerous rival to the traditional trade unions, especially the Socialist *Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen* (Dutch Alliance of Trade Unions),⁴⁰ and therefore threatened the continuity. Recent publications on the EVC make it clear that, as a result of the war and the consequent hardship, there was a broad

³⁷ J.P. Windmuller, *Labour relations in the Netherlands* (Ithaca, 1969); F. de Jong Edz., *Om de plaats van de arbeid* (Amsterdam, 1956); D.U. Stikker, *Memoires. Herinneringen uit de lange jaren waarin ik betrokken was bij de voortdurende wereldcrisis* (The Hague, 1966³).

³⁸ Windmuller, *ibid.*, 86.

³⁹ Windmuller, *ibid.*, 290.

⁴⁰ G. Harmsen and B. Reinalda, *Voor de bevrijding van de arbeid. Beknopte geschiedenis van de Nederlandse vakbeweging* (Nijmegen, 1975), p. 282. For 1945 no reliable data are available. In 1946 the NVV had increased its membership from 162,323 to 242,645; in 1947 it was back to the pre-war level of 300,000 and was still rising steadily. The membership of the EVC however never rose above 176,873 the figure reached in 1948; Harmsen and Reinalda, *ibid.*, 432.

radical trend among the working classes, manifested in restiveness and rejection of the existing social and economic order.⁴¹ Admiration of the Soviet Union also played a prominent role. With the return of 'normal' conditions, however, the radicalism diminished: with the coming of the Cold War, the EVC fell increasingly under the control of the Communist Party. The system was threatened, but not for long.

In politics, too, the slogan of renewal was much in vogue. This state of mind was best expressed through the *Nederlandse Volksbeweging* or NVB (Dutch People's Movement). After the unity achieved during the war many politicians believed that, under no circumstances, should pre-war conditions be allowed to recur, with their social fragmentation and deep political and cultural divisions based on confessional differences. Naturally, the pace could not be maintained, but ostensibly much did change: some political parties vanished, others changed in name or shifted their ideological position. Moreover, the alliance of confessional parties in the pre-war cabinets was now extended to embrace the Social Democrats. The leader of the Roman Catholic Party, Romme, referred to this development as the 'Nieuw Bestand' (New Agreement); other commentators described the new coalition governments, which lasted for more than 10 years, as 'Roman and Red', although some smaller Protestant parties also participated. Another reason for supposing that the political situation had changed was the electoral successes enjoyed by the communists: in 1946 they captured ten seats, whereas before the war they only held three. Here was yet more evidence of the growing radicalism among the working classes, who looked with admiration to the Soviet Union. If they had pursued this line it would have caused a real change in political relations, but this newfound radicalism quickly disintegrated. The Cold War and the consequent anti-communist propaganda, the gradually increasing prosperity, the disillusion caused by the evaporation of the wartime idealism and the disconcerting wrangling within the Communist Party, all contributed to the downfall of this radicalism.

The *doorbraak* was another expression of the ideology which inspired the NVB. The idea behind it was that differences of opinion in religion should not be allowed to divide political and labour organizations. Had it succeeded, it would have brought an important change in the Dutch political system. Although in practice the

⁴¹ Harmsen and Reinalda, *ibid.*, *passim*; G. Harmsen and L. Noordegraaf, 'Het ontstaan van de Eenheidsvakcentrale', *Te elfder ure*, XIV (1973), 791-852; P. Coomans, T. de Jonge and E. Nijhof, *De Eenheidsvakcentrale 1943-1948* (Groningen, 1976).

doorbraak was a complete failure, a new progressive party did emerge: the *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour Party). Taking as its basis the ideas behind the *doorbraak*, the *Partij van de Arbeid* welcomed progressives, irrespective of their religion or other *Weltanschauung*.⁴² There was also a new 'liberal' party (the *Partij van de Vrijheid*, Freedom Party, later the *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*, Peoples Party for Freedom and Democracy) which might have served as a conservative complement, although this party was less enamoured of the *doorbraak* ideology. These developments did not however lead to the dissolution of the confessional parties, which was so essential for the *doorbraak*. From the beginning the protestant *Anti Revolutionaire Partij* (Anti Revolutionary Party) refused to be tempted by the *doorbraak*, and even rejected the formation of a single protestant party. The other main protestant party, the *Christelijk Historische Unie* (Christian Historical Union) lost some of its most prominent members to the new Labour Party, but came through the elections at least as strong as before the war. Hopes for the *doorbraak* were however wrecked by the resurrection of the Roman Catholic Party, renamed *Katholieke Volkspartij* (Catholic Peoples Party), which retained the loyalty of virtually all the catholic voters.⁴³ Therefore, all that the *doorbraak* accomplished was to change the name and broaden the ideological basis of the Social Democratic party, and this was a development which had started well before the Second World War.

The new Labour Party therefore bore a strong resemblance to the pre-war Labour Party, which had swallowed up the *Vrijzinnig Democratische Bond* (Liberal Democratic Party) and the *Christen Democratische Unie* (Christian Democratic Union); it did not represent the completely new progressive party, for which there had been so much enthusiasm in the *Nederlands Volksbeweging*. This came out clearly in a speech on national renewal, broadcast by Vorrink, the chairman of the Social Democratic Parties before and after the war, on 30 January 1946. After initially having stressed the importance of renewal, he earnestly warned against forsaking too lightly the positive aspects of the past, and he closed with this remark: 'We are making this new start at the point where our own course of development converges with that of others, who have come to the conclusion that a socialist renewal of society is re-

⁴² H.M. Ruitenbeek, *Het ontstaan van de Partij van de Arbeid* (Amsterdam, 1955).

⁴³ A.F. Manning, 'Geen doorbraak van de oude structuren; de confessionele partijen na 1945', in: L.W.G. Scholten e.a., *De confessionelen* (Utrecht, 1968), pp. 61-87.

quired.⁴⁴ The affiliation of the Labour Party with the Socialist International was also symptomatic of the political continuity. The most striking feature of party politics in the long run after the war is the loss of the liberal-democratic grouping, which had been part of the political spectrum since the turn of the century. Another casualty was the radically pacifist Christian Democratic Union, which though small had been present throughout the inter-war period.

The broad coalition of confessional parties and Labour, the 'Nieuw Bestand', in politics represented a change from the exclusively confessional parties, which despite all their internal difficulties, dominated the government during pre-war years. But again it must be emphasized that, after much hesitation in the 'thirties, the catholics had already in 1939 decided in favour of cooperation with the Social Democrats. The shock of the war made the transition appear more abrupt than it really was, and probably gave the new alliance more solid foundations than it might otherwise have had. It could even be argued that the failure of a thorough-going renewal, that is the *doorbraak* and radicalization of the working classes enabled this coalition, which was only apparently new in 1945, to endure until 1958.

Also symptomatic of the underlying continuity in domestic politics is the continuity in political leadership. The most prominent post-war politicians had also held leading positions before the war. To name some examples from the various parties: Drees, Vorrink, Banning, Joeke, Oud, Schouten, Tilanus, Romme, Van Schaik, Kortenhorst, De Groot. In contrast most of the leaders in the *Nationale Volksbeweging* vanished from the political scene altogether. In this movement intellectuals were especially predominant:⁴⁵ during and directly after the war they had been forced to leave their isolation and believed that, given the circumstances, they should accept social and political responsibility. They soon found themselves caught up, sometimes to their embarrassment, in consultations with the traditional political *élite*, which went on throughout the war. A good example of this political involvement of the intellectuals took place in the camp for hostages at St. Michelsgestel. This politically inexperienced group was particularly receptive to all kinds of progressive ideas and plans for the renewal

⁴⁴ Speech by K. Vorrink in: *Jaarboek 1975 van het studie- en documentatiecentrum nederlandse politieke partijen* (Groningen, s.a.), pp. 84-94; quotation on p. 93.

⁴⁵ The *Program en toelichting van de Nederlandse Volksbeweging* (Amsterdam, s.a.²), had 441 signatories, 215 of whom were university graduates, among them 21 professors.

of Dutch society. However, they tended to forget that programmes devised by the *élite* would not necessarily win acceptance from the electorate, especially when these envisaged the radical transformation of the system. When the movement for national renewal foundered the intellectuals retreated to their ivory tower. Only the Labour Party retained the loyalty of some progressive intellectuals but, in general, political indifference was once more characteristic of intellectual circles, and remained so until the 'sixties.

One last consideration concerning the political scene: a feature of politics in the 'thirties had been the questioning of the parliamentary system, though this was usually vague and poorly articulated.⁴⁶ It is not impossible that here lay the seeds for change, for traces can be discerned in the programmes of national renewal during and after the war, but the ideological struggle against authoritarian Nazism, which was also being waged during the war, made any anti-parliamentarian movement impossible. Because anti-parliamentarianism had been compromised it no longer offered an alternative after the war. As a result the forces of continuity were strengthened. Not until the 1960s were doubts expressed again about the formal democratic system and this time from a very different quarter.

After this discussion of the social and political developments we can be quite brief about what is perhaps the most characteristic feature of Dutch society: '*verzuiling*' (literally, 'pillarization'). This term is used to describe the segmentation of political, cultural and social activities and the division of the population into sub-cultural social groups which, through their *élites*, usually behind the scenes, co-operate at the national level to overcome this division into confessional-political blocs. Neither the solidarity created by the war, the longing for greater national unity and renewal nor the upsurge of political awareness among the working class could break down 'the pillars of society'. Even the failure of the existing political system and certain of its leaders in 1940 could not bring about its overthrow: evidently it was more resilient than many had thought.

Within a short period the old leaders (or their successors in the same mould) revived the traditional organizations, despite the post-war chaos and the demand for renewal. The monopoly of the traditional channels of communication was restored and the old sanctions (whether formally or not) were re-invigorated, in order to maintain or recover the hold of traditional values on the population. A good example is furnished by the re-establishment of a

⁴⁶ A.A. de Jonge, *Crisis en critiek der democratie* (Assen, 1968).

catholic political party.⁴⁷ For some time the bishops watched the many political activities, including those of catholics, with concern. Meanwhile they carefully brought the catholics back into a party of their own. Virtually all catholics, including those who had been active in the movement for national renewal, followed their spiritual leaders. The intervention of the bishops greatly assisted the recovery of *verzuiling*. In a recent study of the broadcasting system, entitled *Nationaal of Verzuild*, the process by which the five *verzuilde* broadcasting corporations regained their position, despite opposition from renewers, and also the government, is clearly shown.⁴⁸ To the question '*Nationaal or verzuild*' the answer was plain: '*verzuild*'. The same applies elsewhere. The system of confessionally and politically segregated organizations was easily maintained, though in some respects modified, usually in the interests of greater efficiency. The 'conservative reflex', inherent in *verzuiling*, which had been checked during the war, was again in full swing.

Although there were portents of change in the 'fifties, it was only in the 'sixties that the whole system started to break down. This is not the place to explain developments in the 'sixties, but it is pertinent to ask why the system survived the ostensibly more violent shocks of the war. Arguably the *verzuiling* did not collapse after the war precisely because the chaos and great material problems required the use of the old and trusted political framework. Discipline and tractability were widely accepted as essential for the reconstruction and recovery of the post-war Netherlands. It was not really a good time for experiments. During the 'fifties the industrialization, which had been stimulated to some degree by the war, banished scarcity and furnished material prosperity. The structural weaknesses of the *verzuiling* then became more obvious and provoked a new onslaught. Significantly *doorbraak* and radicalism were both characteristics of politics in the 'sixties. This would seem to imply that the far-reaching changes, which took place during this decade, were the delayed response of Dutch society to the war.

This plausible idea deserves further careful research and at present it is impossible to express any well-founded opinion. But I am still sceptical of this hypothesis and incline to the view that after the war there was a complete restoration of the pre-war system. In the first place, the critique of *verzuiling* bore a very different character in the immediate post-war years to that of the 'sixties. More

⁴⁷ Manning, 'Geen doorbraak', pp. 61-87.

⁴⁸ H. van den Heuvel, *Nationaal of verzuild. De strijd om het nederlands omroepbestel in de periode 1923-1947* (Baarn, 1976).

evidence is therefore required before a clear link can be established between the two movements of protest. Moreover, there is very little proof that the confessional-political blocs were weakened internally by the war: they may well have been reinforced.⁴⁹ Finally as I argued above, the industrialization and the affluent society can only to a limited extent be attributed to the war. According to this argument they are considered the condition and the cause of the collapse of *verzuiling*. It seems superfluous to introduce yet another explanation, namely that the system had been fatally harmed by the war, but the damage was concealed for a time by special circumstances. The influence of the prosperity (to define a complex phenomenon briefly, and therefore simplistically) may perhaps be less shocking and destructive than the war. It is, however, not at all unlikely that what happened was a gradual, or even creeping, erosion of the system, ending in an apparently sudden eruption. Such a situation was probably aggravated by influences from abroad.

It is now time to balance the argument, for so far the account has been rather one-sided. The impression has been given that the renewal was hollow and that in fact continuity, and political stability, were, despite the shock effects of the war, the hallmarks of Dutch society and politics after 1945. This is misleading. The imposition of a temporary military government, which was only dissolved in March 1946, the measures for reconstruction and recovery and the treatment of Dutch collaborators had far-reaching consequences immediately after the war.⁵⁰ The war, too, profoundly altered the position of the Netherlands in the world, especially in the field of foreign policy and de-colonization. Finally, consideration should be given to the psychological effects and experiences of the war.

Without any question the loss of the Dutch colonies in Asia is directly related to the war there. This is not to say that, without the Japanese occupation, there would have been no withdrawal from Indonesia. But the timing and manner of the Dutch departure were strongly influenced by the war. The de-colonization did not leave Dutch society untouched and that influence continued well beyond the first post-war years. It aroused a political conflict which had,

⁴⁹ See J.P. Kruyt and W. Goddijn, 'Verzuiling en ontzuiling als sociologisch proces', *Drift en koers. Een halve eeuw sociale verandering in Nederland* (ed. A.N.J. den Hollander, E.W. Hofstee, J.A.A. van Doorn en E.W. Vercruysse, Assen, 1968), pp. 227-63.

⁵⁰ F.J.M. Duynstee and J. Bosmans, *Het kabinet Schermerhorn-Drees 24 juni 1945-3 juli 1946* (Assen and Amsterdam, 1977); K. Groen, *Landverraders. Wat deden we met ze?* (Baarn, 1974).

until then, lain dormant. Before the war, for example, many fewer people were prepared to accept Indonesian independence than after 1945, although even then the conditions for that independence excited much controversy. But more than ever, the fate of the 'Indonesian possessions' affected the lives of all classes of people; many had relatives there and many young Dutchmen had done military service in Indonesia. These fears were reinforced by the continuous influx of repatriates and, later, *spijtoptanten* (people, who had initially opted for Indonesian nationality but later changed their minds). In general the Dutch people were frightened of what the future would bring from a material point of view: the watchword *Indonesie verloren, rampspoed geboren* (Indonesia lost, disaster born) probably increased emigration from the Netherlands.⁵¹ The international nature of the conflict with the Indonesian republic forced the Dutch to adopt a considerably more active foreign policy than had been the case before the war. But we should be careful not to exaggerate the effects for, however important this conflict with Indonesia was, domestic problems still dominated politics. And in the 'fifties the emotional and economic adjustment to the loss of the colonies proved less painful than had been expected, though the the 'fifties the emotional and economic adjustment to the loss of the of the empire profoundly altered the relations of the Netherlands with the world and brought about a major shift in the Dutch economy.

It was not only the colonial issue which directed foreign policy into another channel. Probably more important in the long run was the abandonment of a pre-war policy of neutrality and non-alignment in favour of a decisive participation in NATO and the European Common Market.⁵³ The inability to prevent the German invasion in May 1940 played an important role in this. The pattern of international relationships also changed as a result of the war. During the German occupation the Dutch government in London, for all its lack of influence, had been a formal member of the Western Alliance. After the war the government did not immediately

⁵¹ B.P. Hofstede, *Thwarted exodus. Post-war overseas migrations from the Netherlands* (The Hague, 1964); C.B.S., *75 jaar statistiek*, table 9 and 21.

⁵² A. Lijphart, *The trauma of decolonization. The Dutch and West-New Guinea* (New Haven, Conn., 1966); C.V. Lafieber, *Nieuw Guinea en de Volkskrant* (Assen, 1968).

⁵³ A. Vandenbosch, *Dutch Foreign Policy since 1815. A Study in Small Power Politics* (The Hague, 1959); H. Daalder, 'Nederland en de wereld 1940-1945', *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis*, LXVI (1953), 170-200; A. van Staden, *Een trouwe bondgenoot. Nederland en het atlantisch bondgenootschap 1960-1971* (Baarn, 1974).

advocate the formation of a strong regional alliance; indeed this was at first emphatically rejected. The creation of a strong international security system through the United Nations was the main objective of Dutch policy. The Hague actively championed the rights of small nations and international justice. Both were traditional elements of Dutch foreign policy and so were the moralizing characteristics associated with them. These elements were never lost sight of. In 1948 the rapidly increasing tensions of the Cold War and the need for closer co-operation in western Europe to overcome the material problems, both consequences of the Second World War, persuaded the Netherlands, without more ado, to join the western alliances. This completed the reorientation of Dutch foreign policy, which was widely supported until the end of the 'sixties. The isolation of Dutch public life, a consequence of the policy of neutrality, now came to an end. Dutch society was now exposed to American culture and values: earlier influences had usually come, if at all, from Germany. For example, before the war Dutch academic life had closely echoed the German universities but after 1945 British and American accents predominated.

There is not much documentary evidence concerning the psychological effects of the war, but there can be no doubt that it played a decisive role in the private lives of many people. The more extreme sorts of reaction are described by Bastiaans and Cohen.⁵⁴ Even today the effects of war are still discernible. Some time ago a psychiatric clinic was specially founded for war victims.⁵⁵ Again the war disrupted the lives of many families, either because one of the parents, usually the father, did not survive, or because marriages broke down as a result of prolonged separation or other strains imposed by the war. In the period 1946 to 1948, there was an exceptionally high divorce rate.⁵⁶ In many cases physical and mental distress caused by hunger and the fear of capture by the Germans could have a permanent effect. It is probable that part of the generation conflict, which was so acute in the 'sixties, can be traced back to this. Furthermore, for the small number of people in the resistance this period, when they had risked their lives for their ideals, took on an immense significance and the post-war years

⁵⁴ J. Bastiaans, *Psychosomatische gevolgen van onderdrukking en verzet* (Amsterdam, 1957); E. A. Cohen, *Het duitse concentratiekamp. Een medische en psychologische studie* (Amsterdam, 1952).

⁵⁵ The psychological difficulties of many war victims attracted public attention during the emotional discussion concerning the question of the release of the last three German war criminals in the Netherlands. This prompted the founding of a special clinic in Oegstgeest.

⁵⁶ C.B.S., *Echtscheiding in Nederland 1900-1957* (Zeist, 1958), p. 11.

often brought bitterness and disillusion. Then there are the surviving Dutch National Socialists and the volunteers who fought alongside the Germans on the eastern front. The experiences of the war and the subsequent humiliation will have left a lasting imprint on the course of their lives. The same goes for all those directly caught up in the colonial conflict, especially the repatriates and *spijtoptanten*. In short, the Second World War, and especially the last year, was a traumatic experience for many people who lived through it. The denazification and the movements for national unity and social harmony were often avenues of escape from the trauma. But around 1950 the vividness of this experience began to fade and in many respects life resumed its pre-war pattern. The mentality of the 'fifties resembled that of the 'thirties, the *verzuilde* society had reasserted itself and photographs of the period even suggest visual similarities. But the experience had neither been mentally digested nor forgotten by many individuals.

By way of a conclusion, let us return to Marwick's categories. The destructive effect of war had been demonstrated from the statistical information about numbers killed, the value of the property damaged and the consequences of the loss of the most important colonies. The material losses were made good within four or five years, and Dutch political institutions triumphantly withstood the test of the war. Though during the war most of them were temporarily suspended, they reappeared virtually unchanged at the end of the war. The only significant break with the past was in the field of foreign policy. The third category, 'participation', is in this case difficult to assess. In support of this, one might point, perhaps, to the reinforcement of the position of the working classes and the temporary increase in political involvement but, in the long run, the pre-war political and social system, which had fostered political submission and tractability, remained unchanged until the 'sixties. The emotional and psychological experience was immense, especially in the private life of many people. In public life, after a few years, the experience of the war was reserved for ceremonial occasions.

In short, the Second World War did not renew Dutch society as one might have expected from Marwick's studies on the impact of modern war. This can probably be attributed to the Netherlands having experienced the war as an occupation. Dutch society was therefore not exposed to the test of modern warfare. The defeat was an accomplished fact within five days and German officials then took over the government. In the first years therefore life continued normally and later, when the situation deteriorated, the occupier

provided a scapegoat for everything unsatisfactory and unpleasant. As a result the desire for the restoration of the pre-war situation was stronger than the demand for the renewal of society. If the chaos caused by the war curbed the 'conservative reflex' from operating during the war, it was given free rein after 1945. In spite of the clarion call for renewal, changes were only made when there was no alternative or where the groundwork had already been laid before the war. A good example is post-war economic and social policy, where change was produced less by the war than by the spectre of unemployment in the 'thirties.

I would not for one minute deny that the war interfered with life in the Netherlands, especially in its closing stages. The effects also manifested themselves after the war, and sometimes even dominated Dutch political and social life in the first post-war years. However in the long run it is not the degree of change but the measure of continuity which stands out. The answer to the question of influence depends therefore on whether one looks at the short or long-term effects. At the outset I drew attention to the Dutch habit of drawing a distinction of 'before the war' and 'after the war', as though the Second World War represented a drastic break with the past. While this may be true for many who lived through the war, its impact on the course of Dutch politics, society and culture is far less obvious. If there was a decisive transformation in the contemporary history of the Netherlands this should be sought in the 'sixties rather than in the Second World War.