

Taking care of the resistance. The turbulent
history of The 1940-1945 Foundation

het verzet

Zorg voor

**de roerige geschiedenis
van Stichting 1940-1945**

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Raid and arrest

Arie van Namen from the resistance group Vrij Nederland (Free Netherlands) attended the Foundation's founding meeting. "It was the most dangerous meeting I had ever attended during the war. You didn't know who was who. I had been given a piece of paper. Someone else had another one like it. The two pieces had to fit together."

Arie was also there when the Sicherheitsdienst raided on 12 January 1945: "We ran into the garden. I was looking down the barrels of four revolvers. I was immediately made to go and lie on the ground... We laid there for an hour in the snow."

Three resistance members escaped; the others were arrested. Arie was among them. He was sent to the Weteringschans prison in Amsterdam. "Every day, I thought we were all going to die. It was a terrible time."

As it turned out, the Foundation had been betrayed by the lawyer who had drawn up its deeds of incorporation. The resistance shot the

traitor dead. Arie survived to become the director of The 1940-1945 Foundation.

Quote:

“It was the most dangerous meeting I had even attended during the war.”

Arie van Namen on the founding meeting of The 1940-1944 Foundation, later The 1940-1945 Foundation.

1944-1945 Foundation, betrayal, deaths

Autumn 1944. The south of the Netherlands had been liberated; the rest of the country was expected to follow soon. On 13 October 1944, representatives from 21 resistance organisations – from left to right – gathered in deepest secrecy on the Keizersgracht in Amsterdam. They created The 1940-1945 Foundation to provide post-war support to the families of resistance fighters who had been either killed or disabled.

They met every two weeks, at a different place every time, until they were one day raided by the German Sicherheitsdienst. They had been betrayed. A wave of arrests and executions followed. The Foundation's preparations more or less ceased until the liberation in May 1945. Then the Foundation moved into a building on the Herengracht in Amsterdam and was renamed The 1940-1945 Foundation.

Caption

Drawing of Herengracht 527 in Amsterdam, the Foundation's head office, made by an employee.

1945-1950 Moving forward together

In the first years after the war, the Foundation grew quickly. It represented all the major resistance organisations, except for those from the province of Friesland, which remained independent. Regardless of underlying political differences, there was great solidarity and pride in their shared resistance. The Foundation cared for former members of the resistance and their families. It was flooded with requests for help.

One person wanted a bicycle because he had difficulty walking on a wounded leg; another asked for an advance on lost salary.

The volunteers had more work than they could manage; paid roles were soon added. Fifteen district offices were created in addition to the head office in Amsterdam, each with a director and numerous volunteers who remained indispensable to the Foundation.

From 1947 onwards, pensions began to be paid out on the basis of the Extraordinary Pension Act 1940-1945. The Foundation drew up reports on the resistance work and personal circumstances of the applicants, and sent them with recommendations to the Extraordinary Pension Council. It was the Pension Council which decided whether to award a pension or not.

Quote:

“The queen was there. She saw me and asked me how my health was now. We had a really nice chat.”

Antoon van Nispen tot Pannerden, patient at Het Loo Palace.

Convalescent homes

Many members of the resistance – who had worked under immense pressure and lost comrades – were physically and mentally broken.

Convalescent homes were set up for them: six in the Netherlands and two in Switzerland. The Convalescent Home Foundation was created working under the umbrella of The 1940-1945 Foundation. Queen Wilhelmina made part of Het Loo Palace available as a convalescent home. It was not suitable, but the queen insisted, and the Foundation could not refuse. Wilhelmina continued to live there herself and often visited the patients.

The mood among the traumatised patients was sometimes sombre. One of them recalled how: “Yesterday was a day for the melancholy. Driehuis cried; Mrs Bergsma was down. Hans talked about suicide plans. Koos is short of

breath and downcast. He is also in very bad shape.”

The convalescent homes were shut in 1948 and the resistance members were sent to normal institutions for their recovery.

Proxy marriage

Berend Pepping refused to work in Germany, went into hiding, but was betrayed and ended up in a labour camp in Germany. There, in early 1945, he became very ill; he underwent eight operations. In the hospital, he met the German nurse Else, who gave him a lot of care and attention.

Summer 1946, Berend was able to return to the Netherlands. He began a correspondence with Else. At convalescent home Kareol in Aerdenhout, he wrote: “I feel so terribly lonely and alone here. There’s no-one to talk to. I get angry with everyone; I’ve been so curt. Then your letter arrived this morning, and now there’s sunshine in my heart once more.” Kareol was closed in 1948 and Berend was sent to the Dutch convalescent home in Davos, Switzerland. After

much difficulty, he got permission to marry Else by proxy. His Dutch fellow patients and the staff empathised with him; a nurse played the bride. They decorated his bed and provided flowers.

Quote:

“On the first night, I shared a room with someone who started to tell me very scary things. I thought, ‘God, where have I ended up?’ It’s unimaginable what those people had gone through.”

Nurse Fredy Linschoten - ter Wengel.

Display case

Quote:

Resistance fighter Klaas Dijk was sent to a convalescent camp in Denmark in 1945, partly organised by The 1940-1945 Foundation. He wrote in his diary: “Such a real, post-war, illegal mood. We don’t want to do anything, and prefer to be alone. We understand each other. Other, non-illegal workers will never be able to get this.”

Berend Pepping’s photo album with pictures from Aerdenhout and Davos.

Fundraising campaigns

During the first years after the liberation, millions were raised by the Foundation annually. Part of the money was used to supplement the sometimes meagre resistance pensions.

The first major fundraising campaign was launched on 31 August 1945, Queen Wilhelmina's birthday, and lasted a week. The queen herself donated 500,000 guilders. Part of the campaign was a spectacle, 'The Netherlands commemorates', in Amsterdam's Olympic Stadium. The stadium was packed. The campaign week raised a total of nearly 16 million guilders.

From 1946 on, The 1940-1945 Foundation organised an annual fundraiser around Liberation Day. In addition, there were all sorts of smaller initiatives. The Dutch donated to them generously. But after a few years, the revenues dropped from nearly six million in 1946 to a little more than a million in 1954. The last national fundraiser was in 1955. After that, most revenue came from regular donors and legacies.

Display case

Captions:

Entrance ticket and programme booklet for the 'Liberation Game'. In 1946 – as in 1945 – there was a great spectacle in the Olympic Stadium in Amsterdam. The proceeds were donated to the Foundation.

In the city of Maastricht in 1948, an exhibition was held of 1,500 dolls in traditional costumes from all over the world. Princess Juliana lent some dolls from her private collection. The exhibition went on tour to more than ten other cities in the years that followed, raising 166,700 guilders between 1948 and 1950.

Flyer handed out by former members of the resistance about boycotting The Ramblers' performance.

Thank you card for contributing to the Foundation that people could place in their windows to let collectors know that they had already donated.

These bronze coins were sold for the Foundation's benefit in the 1940s. At a later stage, they were given to Foundation volunteers who had gone above and beyond in their efforts, and to staff members as anniversary and farewell gifts.

After the liberation, resistance fighter Dinant van Mourik volunteered with his twin brother Nico to fight in the Dutch East Indies. Nico died. In 1948, Dinant organised a fundraiser for The 1940-1945 Foundation. The Foundation sent him a coin as a thank you. Dinant wrote to the Foundation: "If this coin is offered to me as a reward, I will have to refuse it, as it was my duty to do this for everyone who has lost their lives and sacrificed themselves for our country and people. We can never do enough for the family members that survive them..."

In 1947 and 1948, Dutch soldiers overseas raised 31,000 guilders for the Foundation.

Flyer asking people to donate an hour's wage to the Foundation. "Remember these ration cards?"

Fortunately, you no longer need them. What you must never forget is that many thousands of brave women and men gave their lives in the resistance...”

Cigarette packets, the proceeds of which were given to the Foundation.

“Make a rule of using a National Auxiliary Stamp” was the slogan under which National Auxiliary Stamps were sold in 1946 and 1947. A contribution was made to the Foundation with the purchase of every stamp. It raised 190,000 guilders.

Entrance ticket and flyer ‘The Netherlands remembers’

Game of the Goose published on the occasion of The 1940-1945 Foundation’s 10-year anniversary.

Activities

Front: Hour’s pay fundraiser Province of Limburg, 1948, 25,000 guilders.

Back:: The foundation called on people to donate an hour's pay to the victims of the resistance. This raised 25,000 guilders from the mines in Limburg.

Front: National campaigns, 1945-1955, nearly 40.8 million guilders.

Back: In the first ten years, the Foundation received almost 41 million guilders from the annual national fundraisers.

Front: Amsterdam tram ticket fundraiser, 1950, 29,000 guilders.

Back: "Help The 1940-1945 Foundation. Ask for a one-guilder tram ticket." The surcharge from the ticket went to the Foundation. The seller offered an attractive prize draw. This raised 29,000 guilders.

Front: Donations from collaborators, amount unknown.

Back: Sometimes people convicted of collaborating with the Germans were ordered by judges to donate money to the Foundation as a

condition of their release. The Foundation did not want this. The Foundation only accepted voluntary donations providing there was no release in exchange.

Front: Former members of the resistance Frits Slomp and Lodewijk Bleijs raised money, total amount unknown.

Back: Two important members of the resistance, Reverend Frits Slomp and Father Lodewijk Bleijs, gave joint lectures about the resistance. They also raised money for the Foundation.

Sometimes as much as 1,000 guilders in a day.

Front: Friendship Train 1949, 11,419.33 guilders.

Back: The Friendship Train was an exhibition about the resistance in various countries, with an emphasis on the resistance among railway workers. It had nearly 27,000 visitors. It raised more than 11,000 guilders for the Foundation.

Front Ticket revenue from The Ramblers performance, 1946, 1,500 guilders.

Back:: The Ramblers dance orchestra had performed for the Germans during the occupation. In 1946, they performed in the concert hall in the town of Haarlem. Former members of the resistance handed out pamphlets opposing the performance. There was booing from the audience and a smoke bomb was thrown. The performance was stopped. The concert hall donated the ticket revenue to the Foundation.

Table

Looking for loved ones

Nico Staal was one of the first political prisoners to return from Dachau concentration camp. After being interviewed on the radio, he received dozens of letters and cards from people looking for their loved ones. Nearly 7,000 members of the Dutch resistance had died in captivity under the Germans. The repatriation of survivors from the camps was slow.

Nico and other political prisoners helped track down missing persons. Partly for that purpose, in June 1945, the communist resistance member

Jan Lemaire and others such as Ed Hoornik set up the Bureau for Former Political Prisoners, which was incorporated into The 1940-1945 Foundation.

Taking notes on the dead

Jan Lemaire had been back from Sachsenhausen concentration camp for less than three weeks when he set up the Bureau for Former Political Prisoners. He had survived a death march, walking from camp to camp. While on his way, he wrote in his notebook: “21 April. Marching all night long. The first dead after an hour. 22 April. We are no longer marching but crawling along the road, dead tired. 23 April. The journey is awful. Stragglers are shot dead.” Jan wrote down the names of any Dutch people who had died, so he could inform their relatives.

In June 1945, Jan made notes on the Bureau’s first meeting in the same notebook. A magazine was printed, *Appél*, with photos and details of missing persons, to be distributed among returning political prisoners.

Other organisations were also set up to find missing persons. From 1947 on, this work was handled exclusively by the Central Office of Information of the Dutch Red Cross in The Hague.

Captions:

The Foundation's missing persons form.

Appél magazine containing details of missing persons.

Cards sent to Nico Staal.

Recruitment of employees among former resistance fighters.

Instructions for aid application.

Application form for financial assistance.

Thank you gift for volunteers and employees, 1950.

Cemetery of Honour

About 2,000 people – mostly members of the resistance – were shot by German occupiers during the Second World War. Hundreds were buried anonymously in the dunes. Their graves were subsequently traced. A provisional

committee for the establishment of a Cemetery of Honour was set up and it worked closely with The 1940-1945 Foundation. This later became the Cemetery of Honour Foundation in the town of Bloemendaal.

In the summer of 1945, 422 dead were exhumed, most of whom were given places in the new Cemetery of Honour that autumn. This was inaugurated on 27 November 1945 with a commemoration for the victims and the reburial of the communist resistance fighter, Hannie Schaft, the only woman among the reburied victims. Queen Wilhelmina and Prince Bernhard were in attendance. There was a strong sense of solidarity among the thousands of attendees.

Quotes

“Thousands upon thousands had gathered together to pay their last respects to the dead.”
Newspaper Haarlemsch Dagblad, 1945.

“Every year on 4 May, Remembrance Day, we went to the Cemetery of Honour. My mother had been in the resistance. We knew only too well

that 4 May was a traumatic day for my mother. But I only learned later that we visited the grave of a resistance friend of hers. It was a tribute to her.”

Marike van Doorn, daughter of resistance member, Paulina van Venetiën.

“My father was shot dead because of his resistance work. I’ve attended commemorations at the Cemetery of Honour, but I’ve always found them difficult. I invariably felt trapped. It was the resistance member who lay there, and I missed my father.”

Trijneke Blom-Post, daughter of resistance fighter, Johannes Post.

Volunteers and paid staff

“People felt at home at the Foundation. I think that was largely to the credit of the volunteers.”

Jan Driever, historian and former director of the Foundation.

Caption:

Nearly every municipality had at least one Foundation representative with such a sign by the front door. Those involved could always ring the bell with questions.

From generation to generation

The Foundation took on some 8,000 volunteers in 1945 and subsequently 12,000. Nearly all of them had a resistance background. 'We take care of you and yours', was the overriding theme. That motto was passed down from generation to generation, as in the case of Rie Boekhout-Jonker – who distributed newspapers during the war – and her daughter Ineke. Ineke: "My mother was always involved with the Foundation. I grew up with it. The Foundation was just part of things. What didn't my mother do? Delivering flowers, making home visits, organising vacation weeks, you name it." Ineke also became a volunteer for the Foundation: "Gee, don't you want to help? Yes, then you just do it. It went without saying... You just fall into it."

Day and night for the Foundation

Nearly all of The 1940-1945 Foundation's early employees came from the resistance. Kees Reitema, for example. He had served on the board of Group 2000, Jacoba van Tongeren's resistance group that helped people in hiding. He worked tirelessly for the Foundation. His son said: "Actually, his approach to work wasn't good. It wasn't good for his family either because he was at it 24 hours a day. But he couldn't do anything else. He'd been in the resistance and this was the legal sequel to his illegal work. That's what he called it. And he took it quite far."

1950-1960 Cold War and struggle

People of different political persuasions had worked together in the resistance against a common enemy. Communists had played a major role in the resistance. When the Cold War flared up in the late 1940s, the capitalist United States stood in direct opposition to the communist Soviet Union. In 1948, the communists seized power in Czechoslovakia. Former resistance fighter, Paul

de Groot, leader of the Dutch Communist Party (CPN) said that his party would support the Soviet Union if it got into a war against “Dutch Big Capital”. Members of the resistance of other political persuasions considered this treason. Emotions ran high.

Communists were banned from the boards of some regional branches of the Foundation. This was discussed by the management board, who ultimately decided that the Foundation stood for solidarity and that it should continue to represent people of all political persuasions.

Cold War

Quote:

“During the resistance, we learned to value one another. We promised to work together to care for the victims of the resistance. We must honour that.”

Arie van Namen, chair of The 1940-1945 Foundation.

Management board discussion

The district board in the city of Groningen decided that communists should be banned from working for the Foundation. Chief executive Henk van Riessen agreed, on the grounds that Dutch communists had committed to supporting the Soviet Union in the event of war. After all, the resistance had fought for a country without foreign domination.

Arie van Namen claimed this was actually a betrayal of the past and that the Foundation should not ban communists. He believed that the Foundation should keep politics out of the picture: “The Foundation only assesses whether people have been in the resistance and not the motive behind their involvement.” In the end, there was no formal ban on communists, but in practice there were no communist members on the management board between 1951 and 1980.

Should widows of communists be entitled to extraordinary pensions?

Communists who applied for extraordinary pensions were met with opposition. In Groningen, the district administration ruled that 42 widows of deceased communists – who had made and distributed the illegal communist magazine Noorderlicht during the war – should not receive extraordinary pensions, because their resistance had been in defence of the communist ideal rather than their native country. The management board recommended that the Extraordinary Pension Council should grant the widows a pension anyway because communism was no ground to deny it. The Foundation believed that it was not the motives for resistance that mattered, but the actual resistance carried out.

The pensions were finally granted in 1951.

Social care

One of the Foundation's core tasks was the provision of social care to resistance widows and their children, and to resistance fighters who were

disabled or had mental health problems. In the first instance, most of the care was provided by former members of the resistance because they were able to put themselves in the shoes of the 'cared for', as the Foundation expressed it. But it soon became apparent that they often lacked knowledge and skills. Training was introduced for employees. The aim of the care was rehabilitation for independence.

Quote

“We must not make people dependent but must raise them to stand on their own two feet.”

Jan Smallenbroek, chairman of the Foundation.

Support for widows

The director of the Amsterdam district office, Andries Jan Teunissen, set up a special project in which resistance widows without children helped resistance widows with children. This provided support to families, and gave widows without children a way to use their time meaningfully. Teunissen: “Gradually, the number of women who wanted to provide help increased. It had the

benefit of giving people the feeling of belonging to something, like a large family. This has increased solidarity and many families have been helped through great difficulties.”

The help was often patronising too. Teunissen: “The mother should know that there is an institution behind her, supporting her strongly, but also pointing out her mistakes and shortcomings.” Nevertheless, the project was a success and provided support to many women.

Farm campsite full of former resistance fighters

A workshop was set up in the province of South Holland for disabled resistance fighters. Arie Man in 't Veld from the town of Vlaardingen went to work there in 1954. He had been with the early resistance group De Geuzen during the war and had been detained in several concentration camps.. As a result of tuberculosis, he was unable to do much. He wanted to marry his girlfriend Nel van Delft, but only if he could provide for himself. He was unable to do so; they broke up.

Arie wanted to manage a campsite. When an old farmhouse in the province of Overijssel was put on the market, the Foundation helped him with a loan. Arie refurbished De Kiekebelt farm with the help of friends from the resistance. He got back in touch with Nel and they got married in 1958.

The farm campsite was a success. Besides many other visitors, it became a meeting place for former resistance fighters. “De Kiekebelt meant everything to Arie and Nel”, according to the daughter of one of their resistance friends. “They were able to run it together. And they were able to welcome all those people from the resistance. Because it provided contact with people who shared in the same fate.”

Children’s holidays

From 1946, holidays were arranged for the children of families that the Foundation supported, usually organised by Het Vierde Prinsenkind Foundation. The holidays gave the mothers a break and the children a carefree holiday.

Janny Wierenga's mother had been left on her own with eight children after her husband and 116 others were executed in March 1945 in retaliation for resistance activity. Janny went on a children's holiday: "Every morning you got to raise the flag and I wanted to do that so badly. I was about eight years old at the time and went and stood at the front. And then I was chosen. That was the most important thing about the holiday."

It created feelings of belonging. Coen van 't Riet, son of perished resistance fighter Albert van 't Riet: "Then eight of us would sit on one bed and sometimes we'd talk about our fathers. They were often stories of bravery, but more intimate ones too

Captions

Wierenga Family with Janny on the right.

Coen van 't Riet (front row, third from right) on a day trip organised by The 1940-1945 Foundation.

Scholarships

Between 1953 and 1984, the Foundation granted scholarships to 1,077 children of deceased resistance fighters. The scholarships were loans that had to be (partially) repaid.

Coen van 't Riet was able to study theology thanks to such a scholarship: "After I'd applied for the scholarship, I had to do a psychological test at the Foundation. Now, I performed well on the test and that made me proud. When I was studying, I had to notify the Foundation of my academic results once a year, I think."

Bertie Veldwachter, whose father had been executed shortly before the liberation, came knocking at the Foundation's door asking for help with further training to become a district nurse: "The foundation gave me funds to help me do that training. I was really grateful for it. It increased my self-reliance and independence."

Display case

Captions

Pocket knives from Het Vierde Prinsenkind Foundation, which organised the holidays.

Thank you postcard formed by children on holiday in the province of Zeeland.

Emblem made at the workshop for disabled resistance fighters in South Holland.

Report on a day at the zoo for children from the Foundation in the city of Utrecht, 1950.

Photo book of a children's holiday organised by The 1940-1945 Foundation. Right: hoisting the flag. Left: photo reorders.

Thank you letter for Sinterklaas gifts donated by The 1940-1945 Foundation, 1953.

Hannie Schaft commemoration

Resistance woman Hannie Schaft used to be commemorated every year at the Cemetery of Honour in the town of Bloemendaal. Communists championed her as a symbol of the communist resistance. As a result, the Queen's Commissioner of North Holland, Baron de Vos van Steenwijk, decided in 1951 to ban the

commemoration. He was afraid there would be a communist demonstration and arranged for the police, soldiers and four armoured cars to be there as a precaution.

Despite the ban, more than 5,000 people gathered. Hannie's resistance friend, Truus Menger, recounted how the group was broken up: "...I ran to one of those armoured cars. I screamed, 'Do you really want to shoot me? I would have given my life for you! Hannie gave her life for you.' They questioned our integrity, which was the only weapon we had in our fight against Nazism."

Caption:

Hannie Schaft commemoration.

Quote

"There is nothing to suggest any anti-Dutch or pro-German intentions."

Report The 1940-1945 Foundation

Worthy?

The widow of resistance fighter Jos Bouman applied for a pension for her children. Jos had brought ration coupons to hiding places, founded a resistance group, and in 1944, committed an armed robbery with others at a distribution office in The Hague. It went wrong; Jos was caught and died in Neuengamme concentration camp.

There is no doubt that Jos was in the resistance and that he died because of his resistance work.

But Jos had previously worked voluntarily in Germany. Therefore, was his conduct 'worthy'?

The Foundation thought so. Jos was unemployed and went to work in Germany out of economic necessity: "There is nothing to suggest any anti-Dutch or pro-German intentions."

But the Extraordinary Pension Council judged that Jos' behaviour was undeserving and that his children were not entitled to extraordinary orphans' pensions. Nonetheless, after multiple appeals, the pensions were granted eight years later.

Was that justified? What do you think?

Dilemma

Should the children of a perished resistance fighter have been awarded extraordinary pensions if the man also worked for Nazi Germany?

Extraordinary pensions: not rewards for resistance

From 1947, relatives of deceased or disabled members of the resistance could apply for extraordinary pensions. These shouldn't be rewards for resistance. Therefore, a 'causal link' had to be demonstrated between resistance work and death or disability. And the applicant needed to have always behaved as a 'worthy' Dutch citizen.

The 1940-1945 Foundation drew up reports on the resistance work and financial and social circumstances of applicants. The Extraordinary Pension Council decided whether to grant them an extraordinary pension. The Foundation then arranged for its payment, sometimes supplementing it from its own funds, if the Foundation considered the pension too low.

Spying on communists

Some former resistance fighters went to work for the National Security Service (BVD) shortly after the war. One of the roles of this secret service was to keep a watchful eye on communists.

In 2024, research by Dutch newspaper Het Parool revealed that dozens of BVD files on left-wing resistance fighters included information taken from client files of The 1940-1945 Foundation. Many people associated with the Foundation were shocked. Tinie IJisberg, the daughter of an executed communist resistance fighter, said: “If it is true that the Foundation passed information on to the BVD for years, I think it’s really wrong. My mother distrusted almost everyone, but not the Foundation. I’m terribly angry. Some people say that the central management can’t have known about it, but still. It happened under their responsibility, and it should never have happened. It would be a real breach of trust and privacy.”

Others reacted more laconic. Hannie de Loos-Borsboom: “We all knew that as communists, we

were being watched. Sometimes someone at a meeting would say: 'look, there's a plant'. But the Foundation was a place you trusted; you expected all your information to be safe there, although the Foundation changed over the years, and privacy is never guaranteed when there are major political interests. That's why I wasn't so very shocked or surprised."

The current board of the Foundation has commissioned a study of how data from the Foundation ended up at the BVD. That study is still ongoing.

1960-1970 Among themselves

From the 1960s on, the Foundation's work was increasingly sidelined. Prosperity in the Netherlands was growing. Many resistance fighters had built careers for themselves and put the war behind them. But resistance fighters continued to seek each other out. They felt a strong need for shared activities; mutual bonds were often close. The Foundation had been organising holiday weeks for widows and meet-

up days since 1946, and these remained popular. “We had all gone through the same experiences and were bound by our shared destiny. You could tell your story”, as one resistance widow put it.

Quote

“If you walked down and saw a window hanging like that, then you knew: someone from the Foundation lives there, one of us.”

Joke Scheepstra, daughter of resistance group leader Liepke ‘Bob’ Scheepstra.

Quote

“My father received an annual Christmas gift from the Foundation. That would prompt him to bring up his own stories. It was an opening to tell them to us again. I can still hear my mother sighing, because she had heard the story so many times...”

Joke van den Heuvel, daughter of former resistance fighter Kees van den Heuvel.

Cabinet

Captions

“My mother kept that basket in a wooden pull-out drawer under the granite countertop in the kitchen. She used it every day. It was on the table every day and it created a warm feeling. The feeling of sitting around the table together, of sharing. A sense of togetherness. I still use it.”

Riny Peeters-Bakker, daughter of resistance fighter Gerrit Jan Bakker, who died in Mauthausen concentration camp.

Christmas cards from Queen Wilhelmina.

From its five-year anniversary onwards, the Foundation always sent yearly Christmas gifts to the people it looked after; in the early years, these were often silver-plated utensils, but from the 1970s they became simpler, things like towels or stained-glass windows. Gifts were also given to employees or volunteers on anniversaries and for farewells.

These often contained depictions of the three daisies from the Foundation's logo. In the

Netherlands during the Second World War, the daisy had become a symbol of resistance; it referred to the birth of Princess Margriet in 1943.

Dutch Royal House

Queen Wilhelmina had a strong bond with the former resistance and the Foundation. In September 1945, she became patroness. Every year from 1950 to her death, she sent Christmas cards to people with disabilities from their resistance work. Sometimes she drew the pictures on the cards herself. When Juliana became queen, she took over the role of patroness. Juliana often attended Foundation celebrations and fundraisers.

Captions

Queen Juliana receiving flowers from the Foundation on the thirtieth anniversary of the liberation.

The 1940-1945 Foundation at the parade at Soestdijk Palace for Queen Juliana and Prince

Bernhard's 12½-year wedding celebration, 9 March 1949.

Queen Juliana unveils monument of the resistance in Overloon, 1972. The monument is a donation from people helped by the Foundation, in gratitude to The 1940-1945 Foundation.

Until the last farewell

Josephine Korsten-Beelen's father, Mathieu Beelen, had organised an escape line during the war, smuggling Jews, resistance fighters and allied pilots out of the Netherlands. Since 1976, he had been one of the loyal regulars at the province of Limburg social club of The 1940-1945 Foundation, which went by the acronym 'soos'. Josephine became a board member after her father's death. "People lived towards the soos every month. It took priority over everything." A banner was made for the soos. Other organisations of former resistance fighters or camp prisoners had their own banners too. "If the soos was there, so was the banner. In a flag

stand, together with the Dutch flag. Wherever the soos went, the banner went too. Until the last farewell. Including at my father's funeral. It was such a close bond; it's not something you could find elsewhere."

Ladies' holiday weeks

Immediately after the war, Mrs Driebergen-van der Meiden – 'Aunt Wien' – was the only woman on the board of The 1940-1945 Foundation. On her initiative, annual ladies' holiday weeks were launched in 1946. "At first, the board wasn't interested. All eight of them shook their heads and said, 'That's going to be one big cryfest.' I thought that was nonsense, and I wasn't afraid of tears. I thought that if those women felt the need to cry, they should be allowed to do so with us. The holiday weeks have been a great success." Despite the expense, the Foundation always decided to continue them. The last ladies' holiday was organised in 2018. The last participants were too old to go on after that.

Quote

“When you see how many holiday weeks were organised, how many meet-up days... That was all driven by volunteers.”

Jan Driever, historian and former director of the Foundation.

1960-1980 Issues that bind, delayed trauma and new groups

During the 1960s, society showed an increased interest in the Second World War. In the 1970s, social issues helped reunite the divided former members of the resistance, communists and non-communists. Emotions ran high, especially around the ‘Breda Three’ – three German war criminals imprisoned in the city of Breda who were potentially going to be released.

During this period, the number of applications for extraordinary pensions did not decrease as expected. They actually grew explosively. The trauma of war was continuing to surface among many former members of the resistance. They

applied for extraordinary pensions, suffering from depression, insomnia and nightmares. In the same period, benefits were introduced for victims of persecution and the Foundation drew up reports for these too. There were many more applications than expected. The Foundation could barely cope with the workload.

War criminals

In the 1960s and 1970s, several issues arose around war criminals. The trial of Adolf Eichmann, organiser of the Holocaust, began in Jerusalem in 1961. In 1976, the arrest of Dutch war criminal Pieter Menten got a lot of attention in the Netherlands. The most controversial were the Breda Three – the last German war criminals in prison in Breda.

Minister of Justice Dries van Agt was considering their release. This aroused anger and pain among many former resistance fighters and victims of persecution. In 1972, an emotional hearing took place in the ‘Second Chamber’ (the Dutch Lower House of Parliament; the equivalent of the House of Representatives), where they

were allowed to speak. It was broadcast live on television. The following day the gripping documentary *Now do you get it?* was broadcast on TV, about how a traumatised former concentration camp prisoner was being treated with the help of LSD. In the end, The Breda Three were not released.

Film clips around the 'Breda Three', duration:

5min45

Hearing and protests against releasing the 'Breda Three'

Mirjam Huffener, daughter of a Jewish Holocaust survivor and resistance fighter, about the 'Breda Three'

Documentary *Now do you get it?* by Louis van Gasteren in which a traumatized former concentration camp prisoner is being treated with LSD. The film was aired just before the Dutch Lower House of Parliament voted on releasing the 'Breda Three'

Quote

“Releasing these three would mean indiscriminately trampling upon a major part of the population’s sense of justice.”

Mr Vink, on behalf of the South Holland 1940-1945 Foundation Working Group, at the hearing in the Second Chamber on the Breda Three.

Hearing at the Second Chamber

In 1972, while people cried and protested at the Binnenhof (Parliament complex in The Hague), 39 people at the Second Chamber spoke out against the release of the Breda Three. They were representatives of 43 organisations, mainly former resistance fighters and victims of persecution. There were two speakers from The 1940-1945 Foundation. Mr Kuster spoke on behalf of the Contact Committee for North Holland: “We have to ask, is Minister Van Agt, with his plans for release, not deliberately further opening the wounds of many thousands of Dutch people which will never heal?”

The management board did not believe that the Foundation could or should speak on behalf of the entire former resistance and, to the disappointment of many former resistance fighters, did not take a stand. A new organisation, the Central Body for the Former Resistance and its Victims (COVVS), did take a firm position. Faced with the horror of the release of the Breda Three, communist and anti-communist former resistance fighters came together in the COVVS.

Quote

“No person or organisation is entitled to take a stand on behalf of the entire resistance.”

Management board of The 1940-1945 Foundation.

Recognition for new groups

In 1968, former Dachau prisoner Ed Hoornik argued in Mies Bouman’s much-watched television programme that Jewish victims should also be given extraordinary pensions.

In 1972, the Benefit Act for Victims of Persecution 1940-1945 (WUV) was passed for Jewish, Roma

and Sinti victims in Europe as well as Dutch victims from the Dutch East Indies, among others. The 1940-1945 Foundation was its co-executor. The number of requests exploded. From 1978, England voyagers – people who had gone to England during the war to fight Nazi Germany from there – were entitled to apply for extraordinary pensions through the Foundation too. Before this time, their applications had been assessed by the Minister or Secretary of State. This led to discussions about applications from Jewish England voyagers. Had they gone to England to fight the Nazis, or for the purpose of survival?

Quote

“We had to behave in a very official way, because we had to be productive. I wanted it to be more human.”

Frans Reitema, employee of The 1940-1945 Foundation.

Victims of persecution

Frans Reitema was one of the new employees who handled the numerous requests from victims of persecution. He was only allowed to conduct one interview per report. “People often had the greatest of difficulty in telling their stories. That meant you needed to have multiple conversations. But we had to be productive. I didn’t think it was justified. I wanted it to be more human.”

No money was made available to provide victims of persecution with social workers, despite the great need. “A disgrace”, said Frans. “There were people about whom I thought, I either have to refer them or I might be able to help them myself somehow. But that wasn’t allowed.”

It bothered Frans so much that he wrote Princess Beatrix a letter begging for social support for victims of persecution. He also talked anonymously to a journalist from the Dutch magazine *Vrij Nederland* (Free Netherlands) to bring the matter out into the open.

From 1983, the Foundation received a modest subsidy from the government for social workers for victims of persecution.

Caption

Letter from Frans Reitema to Princess Beatrix

Jewish England voyager

The Jewish England voyager Simon d'Oliveira tried for years to get an extraordinary pension in vain. He had fled to France in May 1940 and then travelled illegally via Spain, Jamaica, America and Canada to England, where he joined the Dutch troops. Simon suffered from depression and anxiety as a result of his war experiences. He applied for a pension.

The Foundation approved his application, but the Extraordinary Pension Council decided that Simon had gone to England for reasons of survival and not to fight with the Allies.

Once he had received his final rejection, Simon wrote an emotional letter to Prince Bernhard:

“Because I am of Jewish origin, I ‘merely’ had to escape the German occupier. I can’t prove that I

went to England to help in the fight against the Nazis. I think that's pure discrimination." It did not change anything. After twenty years, Simon gave up.

What do you think, should Simon have been given a pension?

Dilemma

Should Jewish England voyagers have been given extraordinary pensions if they were unable to prove that their purpose was to fight Nazi Germany?

Display Case

Captions

Rien Kromhout witnessed the execution of four prisoners on a death march. To process that, he made a sculpture during therapy: "It was as if the bullet, targeted at someone else, had also hit me. I've tried to express it, but I'm unable to do so in words. I'm full of grief, and it's like I'm brimming over with it. In the pottery department, I was given instructions to make as large a head as I could. I made it and it was these four men who

were senselessly murdered. That was the relationship that emerged between the head and me.”

Henk Roovers’ parents helped people in hiding and distributed illegal newspapers. Henk was four years old when the Germans raided a home further down the street. A neighbour ran into their house with incriminating material. Henk: “Four-year-old me was standing in the kitchen and I can still see the panic in my father’s eyes. The intruders were less than thirty metres from our front door; they could also have broken in at any time.”

Henk started therapy at Centrum ‘45 in 2005. He made several drawings in creative therapy.

Jewish Chaim Gomes de Mesquita survived Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. In therapy at Centrum ‘45 in the 1970s, he made this sculpture, which, on behalf of the entire group of clients at the time, was offered to the institution. It depicts the state of mind of the clients: on the

outside there is nothing special to see, but on the inside there are holes.

Quote

“My father hardly slept at night, if at all. There was a lot of smoking and banging around the house at night. He was the sweetest of men, but his unpredictability made him very hard to live with. He spent eight months in a clinic and had creative therapy. He became calmer as a result.”
Selma Kromhout, daughter of resistance fighter Rien Kromhout.

Delayed trauma

Right into the 1970s, war trauma emerged among many former resistance fighters who had been focusing on work and family for years. Some of their children had mental health problems too. From 1978, children born during or shortly after the war also became eligible for benefits and therapy if their trauma was related to their parents' resistance work. This psychological help was provided, among others, at Centrum '45. The

1940-1945 Foundation was closely involved in the establishment of this centre.

Caption

Prince Bernhard at the start of the construction of Centrum '45, 1972.

Quotes

“In 1970s, my father was mentally broken. I had left home by then. My mother complained that he was having nightmares at night. Sometimes she had bruises on her face because my father hit around during his sleep.”

Josephine Korsten-Beelen, daughter of resistance fighter Mathieu Beelen.

“In our family, our father was a permanent presence despite his absence. He wasn't there, but he was always there. And I found that difficult. My mother would talk about him every day and that had repercussions on us. As the youngest child, I had to fill that void.”

Janny Wierenga, daughter of executed resistance fighter Jan Wierenga.

“After my divorce, I got cancer and then burnout. I went into therapy and then it became clear that I had never completely processed the fact that my father was shot. Unbelievable that at the age of forty I still got into such trouble... And my son also suffered, he also had therapy.”

Bertie Veldwachter, daughter of executed resistance fighter Jan Albertus Veldwachter.

“Pure fear, pure mortal fear. That was the deepest image within me.”

Henk Roovers, lived through the war as the child of resistance fighters and later made this drawing during therapy.

Reverse burden of proof

As the war became more distant, it became increasingly difficult to demonstrate a ‘causal link’ between resistance work and (psychological) complaints; a condition for granting extraordinary pensions. In 1971, the Foundation campaigned to have this condition abolished, jointly with the

National Contact Group for Resistance

Pensioners 1940-1945 (LKG), founded in 1965.

The LKG was founded out of discontent with The 1940-1945 Foundation. More and more people with extraordinary pensions felt that the Foundation was losing its connection with its supporters. But over time, the Foundation and the LKG started to work together. The chairs of both organisations made a united plea to the Second Chamber for an important change in the law: the 'reverse burden of proof'. Applicants no longer needed to prove causal relationships. The causal relationship between resistance work and (psychological) complaints was assumed, as long as no other cause was apparent.

Caption

In 1979, the LKG held a demonstration during the announcement of the verdict of the trial against war criminal Pieter Menten.

LSD

Since the 1950s, psychiatrist Bastiaans had been using LSD and other drugs for the treatment of

people traumatised by their resistance work. These drugs helped patients relive and process their traumatic experiences. This sometimes made it possible to prove 'causal links' between signs and symptoms and resistance experiences, a requirement for the allocation of extraordinary pensions. After the introduction of the reverse burden of proof in 1971, this was no longer necessary.

But drugs remained a frequent part of Bastiaans' treatments. Many former resistance fighters claimed to have been helped by them. Bastiaans' colleagues considered his methods controversial because of the risks involved in drugs and the false memories they can cause.

Quote

"Initially, the causal link between my complaints and my experiences in the camps was denied. Then I was put under the care of Professor Bastiaans. I was given pentanol as a way of bringing my subconscious to the surface. The second time I used it, I went all the way back to

Auschwitz! I'd been endlessly judged and ultimately 100% rejected."

Henk van Moock, was sent to a series of concentration camps for his resistance work.

False accusation of millions in fraud

In 1975, a book was published about Eibert Meester's treatment with LSD. During his treatment, he had relived some fantastic acts of resistance. He received an extraordinary pension. Then Panorama magazine published how Meester had not been active in the resistance at all, which turned out to be true. After much wrangling, his pension was withdrawn. The Foundation came under heavy criticism.

In 1979, Elsevier wrote that 25% of extraordinary pensions had been granted on false grounds and that many applications had been wrongly rejected. The Foundation was even accused of millions in fraud in an article in Panorama. An anonymous employee claimed that there was "gross incompetence" among the staff.

The Foundation took the matter to court and won an interim order: Panorama was obliged to make

a correction. The Foundation commissioned an independent review to refute the allegations. The report was published in December 1981 and was mostly positive about the Foundation.

Caption

Article in Panorama about Eibert Meester receiving unjustified extraordinary pension, 1976.

Quotes

“Real resistance fighters would, if they knew, rise from their graves to put an end to the shambles at the Foundation.”

Anonymous employee of The 1940-1945 Foundation, 1980.

“It is safe to assume that the occasional mistake has been made in the 30,000 cases assessed by the Foundation. This can be expected in any human operation. So far, however, only ten cases have been reported...”

Gerard Londo, board of The 1940-1945 Foundation, 1984.

1980-1990 Need for recognition

New nuclear weapons rekindled tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to protest against plans for the placement of cruise missiles in the Netherlands. Many former resistance fighters demonstrated too, although the Foundation did not take a stand because, as usual, it wanted to remain neutral.

There was an economic crisis in the early 1980s. New far-right political parties were emerging, which were targeting people arriving in the Netherlands from its (former) colonies and workers from Islamic countries. There were parallels with Nazism, to the great concern of many people from the resistance. Increasing numbers of former resistance fighters felt the need to share their Second World War experience, so that it could never happen again. They went into schools to talk about the dangers of exclusion and war. They sometimes became active in the peace movement and took the

initiative to establish memorial centres, monuments and the Resistance Museum in Amsterdam.

Pensions as a form of acknowledgement

Public opinion increasingly viewed extraordinary pensions as rewards for resistance. The Foundation was opposed to this. In the late 1970s, two out of three applications were rejected because they did not meet the criteria. This was often seen as a denial of the resistance's past and led to emotional objections and appeal procedures. Furthermore, the waiting times between applications and final decisions were long. There was growing criticism and frustration about the Foundation.

Attack

In 1980, feelings of not being acknowledged led to an act of desperation. In May 1980, someone whose application had been rejected threw two Molotov cocktails through the window of the

Foundation's Amsterdam office. No one was hurt, but it took months to repair the damage.

The 1940-1945 Foundation and the Extraordinary Pension Council took measures to reduce waiting times and handle many applications within eight months. It also introduced an entitlement to social work from the Foundation for applicants during the application process.

Quotes

“If you don't need a pension, don't apply for one. And if you find yourself in need, you should apply for it. People have forgotten that the resistance pension is not a right, but a privilege.”

Huib Ottevanger, former chairman of the Groningen district of The 1940-1945 Foundation.

“Fortunately, only one file, which was still on one of the tables, suffered serious damage in the fire. All the other 3,000 pending files were unharmed... But the smoke damage was enormous.”

Frans Reitema, director of Amsterdam/Province of North Holland district of The 1940-1945

Foundation, following an attack on the Foundation offices in Amsterdam.

Acknowledgement of women?

Beginning in the 1980s, increasing numbers of women applied for extraordinary pensions in their own right because they had been involved in the resistance. As in the case of Elly Groen, who applied in 1983. She and her husband had run a transit house at their café for people going into hiding. “I, like my husband, was aware of everything that was going on in the house. I did the housekeeping, cooked and did laundry for people in hiding. I was very anxious at that time and my life was often very tense; also regarding my young children.” The Foundation concluded that Elly was entitled to an extraordinary pension in her own right, but the Extraordinary Pension Council was of the opinion that she had only provided support services for her husband’s resistance. Her request was rejected.

Quotes

“We did not enter the resistance to get a ribbon, but to get the Krauts out. During the war, I saw so many acts of heroism and self-sacrifice from ordinary boys who never got anything in return and who have disappeared into oblivion. It goes without saying that I can never accept a ribbon.”
Jacob van der Gaag, former resistance fighter.

“In 1940-1945, people committed resistance out of necessity! Not to be honoured or acknowledged.”

Huib Ottevanger, former chair of district Groningen of The 1940-1945 Foundation.

“I am anxiously keeping my father’s resistance memorial cross here at my office. For me, it’s also a piece of acknowledgement. The acknowledgement that he died for his native land...”

Albert Bakker, son of resistance fighter Gerrit Jan Bakker.

Dilemma

What do you think? Are distinctions a good way of honouring former resistance fighters?

Distinctions: pro or con?

The 1940-1945 Foundation was opposed to distinctions from the outset. Not only because it was opposed to hero worship, but also because it was impossible to determine who was and who was not deserving of a distinction. In 1946, a Resistance Cross was created at Queen Wilhelmina's request. It was awarded posthumously 95 times, with two exceptions. The widow of resistance fighter Johannes Post had his Resistance Cross framed. Her daughter Trijneke Blom-Post said: "On the one hand, I know that they said we just did our duty. There's no need to say thank you for that. But on the other hand, the Resistance Cross did hang prominently in the front room..."

During the 1970s, some former resistance fighters felt an increasingly pressing need for distinctions to acknowledge their resistance. They set up a foundation that awarded Resistance

Memorial Crosses, starting in 1980. The 1940-1945 Foundation was opposed and provided limited cooperation, and many resistance fighters did not apply. Nonetheless, some 15,000 Resistance Memorial Crosses were handed out.

From 1990 Winding down and the future

The Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and in 1991 the Soviet Union was dissolved. The Cold War was over. The resistance generation had been slowly fading away since the 1990s. In 2002, The 1940-1945 Foundation merged with the Civilian War Victims Foundation (SBO), which had been founded in 1981 for the often overlooked civilian victims of, among other things, bombings, evacuations and forced labour. From 1984 onwards, this group had also been entitled to benefits under the Benefit Act for Civilian War Victims 1940-1945 (WUBO).

The 1940-1945 Foundation continues to work for its final clients. There are still volunteers who

organise activities and social workers who maintain contact. The board has plans to continue to use the ideas, knowledge and experience of the Foundation for the benefit of society in the future.

Quote

“In the future, we will put the knowledge and experience of the Foundation to broader use for our constantly evolving society. This is because what was once important remains so to this day: caring for each another, standing up for each other, justice, loyalty and steadfastness.”

Board of Directors The 1940-1945 Foundation.

Film portraits of those involved in The 1940-1945 Foundation, duration: 17min55

Jan Driever, historian and former director
Foundation 1940-1945

Daan Ingelse, son of resistance fighter

Mirjam Huffener, daughter of a Jewish Holocaust survivor and a resistance fighter

Mieke Wilms, organiser holiday weeks

Josephine Korsten-Beelen, daughter of
resistance fighter and president Limburg Social
club

Leny Laenen-Nanninga, daughter resistance
fighter