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DUTCH AUGUSTINIANS AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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ABSTRACT

L'articolo esamina le prove affrontate dagli agostiniani olandesi durante la seconda guerra mondiale. All'inizio dell'occupazione tedesca dei Paesi Bassi nel 1940, la maggioranza dei cattolici si era ormai integrata nello stato nazionale olandese. La maggior parte di loro fu insensibile alle lusinghe del fascismo e del nazismo, che consideravano un "nuovo paganesimo". Altri, soprattutto i giovani cattolici più istruiti, non erano soddisfatti dell'accondiscendenza dei loro *leader* politici ed ecclesiastici e desideravano cambiamenti radicali. Come educatori e sacerdoti in cura d'anime, gli Agostiniani si confrontarono con entrambi i punti di vista. Questo articolo esamina dapprima il loro atteggiamenti verso la politica di destra, verso l'antisemitismo e la democrazia parlamentare negli anni tra le due guerre, per poi soffermarsi sulle vicissitudini della provincia agostiniana d'Olanda in tempo di guerra, e si conclude con una valutazione degli effetti di lunga durata dell'occupazione sulla comunità agostiniana olandese.

DUTCH AUGUSTINIANS AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

During the First World War (1914-1918) the Netherlands, wedged precariously between Germany and England, managed by some miracle to retain its neutrality. At the beginning of the Second World War (1939-1945), the Dutch government again declared neutrality, which remained intact for nine months. On 10 May 1940, however, German forces invaded the country, the Dutch army capitulating after Rotterdam was destroyed in an air raid some days later. The German occupation lasted until the autumn of 1944 for the south of the country, and the spring of 1945 for the north, which experienced famine during the last winter. Other than in Belgium and northern France, where military rule was put in place, the Netherlands came under a civilian administration. This not only strove to put the country's industry and labour force at the disposal of the German war effort, but also attempted to "Nazify" the Dutch "brother nation". The first aim was realised by and large; not so the second, although the closely related drive to eliminate the Jewish community was chillingly successful. A minority of the Dutch population offered active resistance, while others cooperated with the German regime or supported it. There was, however, no general sympathy for Nazism or for integration into the *Third Reich*¹.

The failure of Nazi attempts to win Dutch hearts and minds was due to many factors. One of them was the fact that the existing ideological allegiances of the population were relatively strong; allegiances which in the case of the Protestant and Catholic parts of the popu-

¹ E.H. KOSSMANN, *De Lage Landen 1780-1980. Twee eeuwen Nederland en België*, II. 1914-1980, s.l. 2005^e, pp. 141-205; Jan Bank's new study *God in de oorlog. De rol van de kerk in Europa 1939-1945*. Amsterdam 2015, appeared too late for me to consult it for this article.

lation were also religious in nature². The clerical leaderships of these denominations protested against German repression during the occupation, as the bishops famously did in July 1942 at the instigation of Archbishop Johannes de Jong of Utrecht (1885-1955, archbishop 1936-1955). Equally important, however, was that choices made by the ecclesiastical and political leaders of these groups during the decades prior to the war ensured that Dutch Protestants and Catholics remained generally immune to the allure of fascism and Nazism. This article sets out to examine the example of a relatively small subgroup of the Catholic ecclesiastical leadership in the Netherlands: the Augustinian Province. It does so primarily with a view to contributing to the historiography of this religious order in the twentieth century. But it also hopes, as a case study, to shed light on how the dynamics of religious and political allegiances among the clergy played out in a situation of violence and repression. It will first briefly outline the position of Catholics in Dutch politics and society at the time of the outbreak of the war, before looking at Augustinian attitudes towards politics in the pre-war years. It then examines the province's wartime vicissitudes, before drawing conclusions as to the effects which the war had on the province's history.

The Augustinians were one of many institutes of religious clergy in the Netherlands. Their province was modestly sized, having in 1936 110 priest members, a figure that was below the average. This made them much smaller than institutes such as the Franciscans with 575, the Jesuits with 341 and the Dominicans with 306 priest members³. This is not to say that the Augustinians were an insignificant presence in the Dutch Catholic church. They took pride in their status as an old order with a respectable monastic and spiritual heritage, which they had only recently begun to discover. This gave them a certain prestige which newer congregations lacked, even institutes that were much larger. Moreover, by the time of the German invasion, the Augustinians had established a reputation as educators of the sons of middle-class and higher middle-class Catholics. They had three secondary schools, located in Eindhoven and Venlo in the south-east of the country and in Haarlem near Amsterdam, all three authorised by the state to award recognised degrees, and all three geared towards educating future candidates for the order as well as members of a lay

² G. HARINCK, L. WINKELER, *De twintigste eeuw*, in H.J. SELDERHUIS ed., *Handboek Nederlandse kerkgeschiedenis*, Kampen 2006, pp. 723-912: 745-746, 782-783.

³ T.A.J. JANSEN, *De pater op de pastorie. Het aandeel van de regulieren in de parochiële zielzorg van Nederland 1853-1966*, Nijmegen 1976, pp. 262-263.

elite⁴. The Augustinians had thus secured a modest, but definite place in Dutch Catholic society, and this makes them suitable subjects for the research that is being proposed here.

Catholics, the Dutch nation state and right-wing politics before the war

The relationship of Catholics to the Dutch nation state was traditionally not without its ambiguities, but by the 1930s they had become thoroughly integrated into it. Throughout the period of the Dutch Republic (1581-1795) they had been tolerated, but without full freedom. The French Revolution brought legal emancipation, but it was not until mid-century that there was a new departure. As government interference in religious affairs was severely restricted by the liberal constitution of 1848, Catholics (and other religious denominations) began to build their own “sub-society” or “pillar”: being a Catholic became not just a matter of church attendance, but something that had to be lived also in the social and the political sphere⁵. The social mobilisation of the Catholic population on confessional grounds was intended to isolate Catholics from objectionable aspects of modern culture and from the influence of non-Catholic ideologies. At the same time, its embrace of other aspects of modernity, even if on specifically Catholic terms, also furthered the modernisation of the Catholic population. Among other things, it ensured that few Catholics thought of overthrowing the institutions of the state, but rather sought to gain a share of the power within the existing system⁶. The liberal rewriting of the Dutch national narrative – specifically the de-emphasising of Protestantism as a constitutive element – also made it easier for Catholics to feel Dutch: this period saw the birth of *katholiek Nederland* or “Catholic Holland”⁷. The emergence of a Catholic political party – the *Roomsche-Katholieke Staatspartij* (RKSP) or “Roman Catholic State

⁴ See for this B. HEFFERNAN, *Een kleine orde met allure. De augustijnen in Nederland, 1886-2006*, Hilversum 2015 (forthcoming).

⁵ J.M.M. LEENDERS, “Zijn dit nu handelwijzen van een herder...!” *Hollands katholicisme 1840-1920*, s.l. 2008, pp. 1027-1028.

⁶ T. SALEMINK, *Katholisches Milieu und demokratischer Nationalstaat. Orthodoxe Modernisierung in den Niederlanden*, in U. ALTERMATT, F. METZGER ed., *Religion und Nation. Katholizismen im Europa des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 2007, pp. 177-202.

⁷ J. ROES, *In de kerk geboren. Het Nederlandse katholicisme in anderhalve eeuw van herleving naar overleving*, in «Jaarboek van het Katholiek Documentatiecentrum», 24 (1994), pp. 61-102: 82.

Party” – in 1918 symbolised this acceptance of the Dutch democratic nation state. So did the appointment in that year of a first Catholic prime minister, Charles Ruijs de Beerenbrouck (1873-1936; prime minister 1918-1925 and 1929-1933).

During the interwar years there were Dutch Catholics who rejected this accommodation with parliamentary democracy. Their aspirations with regard to their religion made them view fascism or Nazism as attractive political propositions. The generation of Catholics that came of age in the years following the First World War was the first to comprise many educated to university level – for instance at the Catholic University of Nijmegen that was established in 1923. Among these new intellectuals were young men who despised the bourgeois culture of the previous generation, with its emphasis on the organisational triumphs of the Catholic “pillar”, its predilection for sentimental devotions and its subservience to a patriarchal clergy. They yearned for a radical, deep and virile Catholicism, for an “authentic modern Catholic voice” that could serve as an antidote against the complacency of the older clergy and the RKSP’s leadership, as well as against the decadence of modern society that rendered it prey to bolshevism⁸. Among them were the *Jongeren* or “The Young”, a group of Catholic intellectuals and writers. Some of them saw resemblances between Nazism and their vision of Catholicism, and joined right-wing organisations. Their choice invited bitter reproaches from *Jongeren* who regarded fascism and Nazism as anti-Christian ideologies⁹.

The allure that radical right-wing politics had for some sections of the Catholic population was compounded by the continuing existence of a Catholic strand of anti-Semitism. Marcel Poorthuis and Theo Salemink have shown that calls from Catholic conservatives around 1900 for the curtailment of civil rights for Jews were countered by a new generation of Catholic politicians, who advocated respect for the fundamental human and democratic rights of all citizens, regardless of their race or religion¹⁰. In the decades that followed, this second view became mainstream among Catholics in the Netherlands, although it did not lessen their attachment to religious anti-Semitic

⁸ M. DE KEIZER, *Inleiding*, in M. DE KEIZER, S. TATES ed., *Moderniteit. Modernisme en massacultuur in Nederland 1914-1940*, Zutphen 2004, pp. 9-44: 35-36. See also P. LUYKX, *Andere katholieken. Opstellen over Nederlandse katholieken in de twintigste eeuw*, Nijmegen 2000, pp. 25, 228.

⁹ LUYKX, *Andere katholieken* cit., p. 17; M. POORTHUIS, T. SALEMINK, *Een donkere spiegel. Nederlandse katholieken over joden, 1875-2005. Tussen antisemitisme en erkenning*, s.l. 2006, pp. 357-401.

¹⁰ POORTHUIS, SALEMINK, *Een donkere spiegel* cit., pp. 91-97.

themes such as decide and the blood curse. The more virulent strand continued to exist as a minority phenomenon, to merge during the war with Nazi-style racial anti-Semitism in the case of a number of Catholic seminary professors¹¹.

Despite the existence of minority groups with Nazi and racist views, most Dutch Catholics remained loyal to the institutions of the state and continued to regard the RKSP as their instrument for wielding political power. This is not to say that they were lovers of parliamentary democracy during the difficult years of economic crisis in the thirties. Many were critical of the weakness of the political system and of plutocratic capitalism, which gave rise to “new paganism” in the forms of socialism and communism as well as fascism and Nazism. Inspired by Pope Pius XI’s (1922-1939) encyclical *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), the Catholic labour movement regarded corporatism as a third way between capitalism and socialism¹². Fascists, too, advocated corporatism. Paul Luykx has pointed out, however, that the Catholic and fascist versions of corporatism differed considerably, with the former conceived as a way of «mobilising social forces to defend Catholic interests» rather than as a prop for a totalitarian state¹³. Most Dutch Catholics regarded fascism and Nazism not as kindred ideologies, but as manifestations of the new paganism that was repugnant to their religion. It was no surprise therefore that the bishops in 1934 warned the faithful against Anton Mussert’s (1894-1946) Nazi party, the *Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging* (NSB, “National Socialist Movement”). Two years later they forbade Catholics from supporting the NSB.

Dutch Augustinians, politics and anti-Semitism before the war

The history of the Dutch Augustinian Province during the decades leading up to the war shows many examples of these various contrasting attitudes. When Dominicus Duijnstee (1873-1941), one of the first Dutch friars to become widely known, died in 1941, his eulogist gently mocked his frequent professions of attachment to the House of Orange-Nassau¹⁴. But at the time Duijnstee began to speak

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 463-465.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 277-280.

¹³ LUYKX, *Andere katholieken* cit., pp. 289-294.

¹⁴ Draft *necrologium provinciae*, 18 March 1941 (Mariënhage priory, Eindhoven, *Klooster Mariënhage, Eindhoven* [KME], Archives of the Dutch Augustinian Province, *Archief Nederlandse Augustijnenprovincie* [ANA], personal file 55).

and write – he was ordained in 1898 – it still had a certain symbolic significance for a priest to be an ardent royalist. In one of his first books, published between 1911 and 1913, he argued at length that his non-Catholic countrymen need fear no repression were Catholics ever to come to power in the Netherlands. He was a fiery apologist for Catholicism, but also a strong believer in the integration of Catholics into the nation¹⁵. Conflicting views on anti-Semitism were also in evidence among his generation of Augustinians. During a debate organised by the seminarians' debating club in Eindhoven in 1892, two young friars clashed on the subject. One of them argued for strong legal measures against Jews, whom he called the «only evil in the social order». His opponent condemned incitement to hatred and stated that as far as the law was concerned, «freedom is for everyone»¹⁶. For this latter Augustinian, there was nothing in the Catholic faith that obliged him to reject the democratic principle of tolerance of the enemies of the church.

The embarrassment with which the province greeted an outburst of secular anti-Semitism by one of its members in 1934 suggests that this latter view came to prevail in the interwar years. In May of that year Matthias Wesselink (1897-1956) caused a small media storm with a piece he wrote in the parish newsletter of Saint Rita's parish in Amsterdam, where he had been a curate before setting sail for the mission in Bolivia. He wrote his last contributions on the ship, and in one of these he spoke contemptuously of seeing the «shining body of a [...] *pichem* of a Jew or dirty Jewess» at the first-class swimming pool on board¹⁷. The quote found its way into the Jewish weekly *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, and caused much adverse publicity¹⁸. The parish priest of Saint Rita's apologised quickly for having omitted to censor Wesselink's piece¹⁹.

The apology was partly due to the effects of press attention and the bishop of Haarlem's displeasure at the affair²⁰. But a number of examples from the writings of Augustinian seminarians during the 1930s show that Wesselink was out of step at least with his more in-

¹⁵ F.X.P. Duijnste, *Kerk en staat in hunne wederzijdsche verhouding van kerkrechtelijk en geschiedkundig standpunt beschouwd*, Leiden 1911-1913.

¹⁶ Minutes of meeting Cassiciacum Literary Academy, April and 2 June 1892 (The Utrecht Archives, *Het Utrechts Archief* [HUA], 1392-2: ANA, 3946).

¹⁷ Wesselink diary, 22 May 1934 (HUA, 1392-2: ANA, 3016). *Pichem* is a derogatory term for Jews.

¹⁸ *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 29 June 1934.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 6 July 1934.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

tellectual confreres. In his contribution to the students' debating club, a young Athanasius van der Weijden (1910-1994) gave a damning review of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. He condemned Hitler's obsession with the sins of the Jewish «destroyer of culture» and criticised the *Führer's* many «unproven statements» in regard to the racial question. Hitler's racism was also un-Catholic, because it left no place for «the direct ordering of each human being personally to God»²¹. And his fellow student Honorius Moonen (1909-1964) emphasised the Apostle Paul's Jewish identity, which he interpreted positively: «He was a real Jew, with a heart that burned hotly for idealism, combined with a will that was capable of strong perseverance, and this also gave him the ability to act». Paul «was a member of the fierce desert people», who had «the purest Semitic blood, a soul that could burn for a noble ideal, an immutable and determined will, a drive to communicate with all people». Of course Paul's conversion perfected all these qualities but, according to Moonen, Paul was a fiery Christian precisely because he was a real Jew²². Moonen's dream of a forceful, virile and noble Catholicism was explicitly devoid of anti-Semitism.

Several Dutch religious orders had young members who were sympathetic to the *Jongeren* during the interwar years, although very few sided with those *Jongeren* who adopted Nazism²³. The situation was no different for the Augustinians. Their main exposure to radical young Catholics was through their three secondary schools. Augustinians who were sent to university to obtain degrees in subjects they were afterwards expected to teach at school encountered such young radicals at university. And there were *Jongeren*-sympathisers among the lay teachers at the schools. One of them was the writer Gerard Wijdeveld (1905-1997), who taught Greek and Latin at *Triniteitslyceum* (Trinity College) in Haarlem between 1927 and 1944²⁴. Wijdeveld gained national notoriety in 1930 by publishing a cutting satire on RKSP leader Monsignor Willem Nolens (1860-1931). He criticised Nolens for being a politician more than a priest, and specifically for betraying the Catholic mission in the Dutch East Indies for reasons of political expediency. His attack on Nolens was typical of the *Jon-*

²¹ Folder Cassiciacum Literary Academy, undated (HUA, 1392-2: ANA, 5326).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ J.A. DE KOK, *Acht eeuwen minderbroeders in Nederland. Een oriëntatie*, Hilversum 2007, p. 469; M. MONTEIRO, *Gods predikers. Dominicanen in Nederland (1795-2000)*, Hilversum 2008, pp. 246, 248-249.

²⁴ *Gedenkboek Triniteitslyceum 1922-1947*, Haarlem s.a., p. 95. On Wijdeveld see also M. SANDERS, *Het spiegelend venster. Katholieken in de Nederlandse literatuur, 1870-1940*, Nijmegen 2002, pp. 273-275.

geren attitude to the older generation: he called Nolens a «sly priest of opportunism», fond of cigars and wine, whose purple cassock and clerical collar belied his willingness to jeopardise the eternal salvation of indigenous people for political gain. Wijdeveld's diatribe was perhaps received with covert glee by some of his young Augustinian colleagues in Haarlem. Although not normally unsympathetic to young radicals, the provincial, Servus Makaay (1893-1959; provincial 1929-1935 and 1938-1946), was not pleased, however. The backlash threatened to damage *Triniteitslyceum's* reputation²⁵. Nor is it likely that Wijdeveld's gradual conversion to Nazism during the thirties gained him plaudits from his Augustinian employers and colleagues. The friars responsible for the province's minor seminary in Venlo were reported to have said around that time that their school was «the last stronghold of a truly Christian culture» that an eastbound traveller would encounter. Hitler's «pagan National Socialism» began at the German border five kilometres away, followed further east by the «godless Communism of Russia»²⁶.

The Augustinian Province during the Second World War

Like many of their countrymen, the Augustinian provincial and definitors were conscious in the late thirties that war was imminent and they took a number of measures to ensure that the province would not be taken by surprise²⁷. A man of impressive organisational talents, Makaay presented a detailed emergency plan in April 1939 for the event of a German invasion²⁸. But Makaay was also one of the first of Wijdeveld's generation; an Augustinian critical of his forebears' almost exclusive emphasis on parish ministry and of their clerical rather than religious or monastic outlook. He was, moreover, a promoter of the Dutch province's discovery of Augustine and his spirituality in the run-up to the Augustinian jubilee of 1930. It was more important in his view to prepare the friars spiritually for the war that was to come. In February 1940 he wrote that the times in

²⁵ For the episode see SANDERS, *Het spiegeland venster* cit., pp. 292-293 and E. KIEFT, *Het plagiaat. De polemieek tussen Menno ter Braak en Anton van Duinkerken*, Nijmegen 2006, p. 142.

²⁶ G. DE GRAUW, P. DE GRAUW, *Een piano in de hemel. Verhaal voor twee stemmen*, s.l. 2004, p. 93.

²⁷ Circular letter Ephraem Hendriks, 29 September 1938 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 108).

²⁸ Minutes of definitory meeting, 18 April 1939 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 63).

which they lived «could carry with them the total or partial destruction of everything that has been brought about over the course of the years». For Makaay, these were just outward things. «Come what may», he continued, «our *interior* disposition, our love, our ideals, no created power can take from us»²⁹. This attitude was typical for his generation: the Catholic faith and the religious life ultimately rested not on physical structures or social organisations, but on a deep, inner conviction.

The first days of the war in May 1940 were frightening and chaotic, but calm soon returned. Not much changed for the province in the first few months. The Dutch soldiers that had been billeted in the priory of Culemborg since May 1939 were replaced by a group of some 300 German soldiers³⁰. And in Haarlem, *Triniteitslyceum* and the adjacent priory were confiscated in November for the duration of the war³¹. For the best part of a year after this incident, nothing further happened. Then in early October 1941, the *Wehrmacht*, the German army, confiscated the priory, college and minor seminary in Venlo³². One priory after the other followed: in March 1942 the recently completed new presbytery of Saint Augustine's parish in Utrecht, in April 1942 the building in Maarssen that had just been purchased to serve as a monastery for the contemplative nuns of the Second Order, in the same month the Eindhoven priory of Mariënhage and the secondary school and boarding school, in September the Nijmegen priory and in December what remained of the Culemborg priory. With the exception of a number of presbyteries, only the priory of Witmarsum in Friesland remained in Augustinian hands at the end of 1942; three quarters of the friars had to leave their dwelling place. All of them found lodging elsewhere, although sometimes they were forced to move again as their refuge was confiscated too. Augustinians who had the temerity to set foot again on confiscated property were arrested³³.

The German policy of Nazification included attempts to shut down channels of mass communication that were not in state hands and to gain control over the myriad Catholic social associations. In August

²⁹ Report Servus Makaay, 21 February 1940 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 38).

³⁰ Minutes of definitory meeting, 17 May 1939 and 19 July 1940 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 63).

³¹ Minutes of definitory meeting, 21 November 1940 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 63). See also Haarlem report, in «*Analecta Augustiniana Provinciae Hollandicae*», special edition, 8 (1946), p. 1.

³² Acts of provincial intermedium, 1943 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 39).

³³ Mariënhage report, in «*Analecta Augustiniana Provinciae Hollandicae*», special edition, 8 (1946), p. 45.

1941 the editor of the provincial monthly *Moeder van Goeden Raad* («Mother of Good Counsel») was given notice that the periodical was banned with immediate effect due to «paper scarcity»³⁴. The Augustinians subsequently received questionnaires from the «Commissioner for non-commercial societies and foundations», who was trying to obtain control over Catholic associations³⁵. In October 1941 Makaay instructed the priors of the houses not to complete any more questionnaires without consulting him³⁶. The bishops' countermeasure was to designate Catholic social associations as integral constituent bodies of the Catholic church, thus safeguarding them from German interference. This also happened with the different legal holdings that the Augustinians had established to manage their real estate³⁷.

The war also claimed victims among the Augustinians and their parishioners. The province was hit in July 1943 by what may be called the worst disaster in its history. The Amsterdam parish of Saint Rita was celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary that month. A children's mass was scheduled for 17 July, the second day of a festive triduum. Just before the end of the mass the air raid siren sounded. That happened more often, because the church was located close to the airplane factories of Fokker, a target for Allied air raids. It was decided to keep everyone in the church because this would be safer. Suddenly the building suffered a direct hit, causing a three metre-deep crater in the church floor. Two children and nine adults perished and many were injured, including choristers who jumped from the choir balcony. The botched air raid cost more than 160 lives across North Amsterdam³⁸.

One Dutch Augustinian lost his life on account of the war: Brother Willibrordus Tadema (1891-1945) of Venlo. In late October 1944 five brothers from the priory there were taken by the *Grüne Polizei* (Order Police) and ordered to dig anti-tank trenches in Germany. Life in a labour camp proved too harsh for Tadema, who succumbed in

³⁴ Acts of provincial intermedium, 1943 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 39).

³⁵ J. VAN VUGT, «Should it happen that God should permit...» *The political and legal situation of orders and congregations in the Netherlands*, in J. DE MAEYER, S. LEPLAE, J. SCHMIEDL ed., *Religious institutes in Western Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. Historiography, research and legal position*, Leuven 2004, pp. 277-308: 301-302.

³⁶ Makaay to the priors, 19 October 1941 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 108).

³⁷ Makaay to De Jong, 21 January 1942 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 81).

³⁸ Report of St. Rita's priory, Amsterdam, in «*Analecta Augustiniana Provinciae Hollandicae*», special edition, 8 (1946), pp. 73-74.

March 1945³⁹. The youngest members of the province were also forced to work for the Germans in February 1945, after the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security Service) visited the priory of Witmarsum, which housed the noviciate. All non-priests younger than 50 were taken and had to dig trenches in Drenthe in the north-east⁴⁰. The young friars stayed there for the duration of three months, dressed all this time in their habits. This did not always meet with positive responses, whether from guards eager to teach these aspiring members of the elite a lesson, or from fellow labourers resentful of the novices' insistence on their otherness. One of them stated afterwards: «We [learned] not to be too hasty in considering our exceptional state an advantage»⁴¹. In fact, the Augustinians' entire experience of the war was an exercise in the forced breaking down of divisions, between the monastery and the world, between priest and layman and between Catholic and non-Catholic.

Antagonism towards the occupying forces cost one Augustinian priest particularly dearly. Christophorus Vasen (1905-1967) worked as an assistant priest in the Utrecht parish of Saint Monica's. There was a family in this parish that sympathised openly with the NSB, something forbidden by the bishops under their 1936 ban. Vasen reminded the family of this in March 1942 and told them that he would refuse to administer the sacraments to them if they persisted. A fortnight later he was arrested on charges of *Deutschfeindlichkeit* or "hostility to the Germans". Having spent a number of miserable months in Dutch prisons and in Amersfoort concentration camp, he was sent to Dachau in July. He remained there in the company of many priests, among them Benedikt Švanda, an Augustinian from Brno in Czechoslovakia, until the camp was liberated in April 1945⁴². Much attention was given in the province to Vasen's unenviable fate, both by offering «prayers and sacrifices» for his intention, and by sending food and clothes through the Red Cross, the Swedish envoy in Berlin and the German Augustinians of Würzburg⁴³.

³⁹ A.K. DE MEIJER, *Augustinus in de Domstad. 350 zielzorg van de augustijnen, 1636-1986*, Utrecht 1986, p. 61.

⁴⁰ DE MEIJER, *Augustinus in de Domstad* cit., p. 61.

⁴¹ [C. MERTENS], *Monnikenwerk in Drente*, s.l. 1947, p. 29.

⁴² Typed account of Vasen's war-time experiences, undated (HUA, 1392-3: ANA, 1368); Švanda: *Priesterblock 26 im KZ Dachau (September 1941 bis Kriegsende. Gesamtverzeichnis der Lebenden)*, s.l. 1947 (HUA, 1392-3: ANA, 1368).

⁴³ See for instance circular letter by Makaay, 26 June 1942 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 108).

Dutch Augustinians and the resistance

The involvement of Catholics in resistance against the German occupying forces has been the subject of some historical debate. That Catholics were much less involved in resistance activities than other sectors of the Dutch population is a hypothesis now discredited; it was more that they remained aloof from non-Catholic resistance organisations. Catholic priests, moreover, were less likely than Calvinist ministers to call for acts of armed resistance from the pulpit. Catholics who engaged in resistance activities frequently used the existing infrastructure of Catholic associational life, although it is probably true that they were less likely to use violent means than other groups in society⁴⁴. Most of these conclusions also hold true for the Augustinians. There are a number of stories of Dutch friars who were involved in resistance activities; almost all of them used the existing infrastructure of their parish or school. Philippus Esser (1896-1972), parish priest of Saint Augustine's church in West Amsterdam, was arrested towards the end of the war and detained for a week when it transpired that he had been storing ammunition for the resistance in the crypt of his church⁴⁵. Previously, Esser and his curates had helped young men who had been called up for the *Arbeitseinsatz* (the German forced labour programme) to find hiding places, providing them also with means of sustenance⁴⁶. Callistus Herraets (1908-1981), a history teacher at Saint Thomas of Villanova's College in Venlo, was involved in a local resistance group, and also offered shelter to people on the run in the priory⁴⁷. Other Augustinians did the same. Two priests in the presbytery of Tuindorp-Oostzaan, a working-class area of Amsterdam, sought out safe houses among farmers in the surrounding countryside⁴⁸. In Culemborg, the presbytery was often tipped off about raids beforehand, probably by an Augustinian from the nearby priory who managed to extract information from soldiers billeted there. Two curates then went to warn occupants of safe hous-

⁴⁴ LUYKX, *Andere katholieken* cit., pp. 301-306.

⁴⁵ Anon. to Esser, 10 July 1954 (KME, ANA, personal file 148/2).

⁴⁶ West Amsterdam report, in «*Analecta Augustiniana Provinciae Hollandicae*», special edition, 8 (1946), p. 5.

⁴⁷ B. POELS, *Vriend en vijand. Mémoires. Het aangrijpend feitenverhaal over het verzetswerk op de Zwarte Plak verteld aan Jan Derix*, Venlo 1977, p. 180. See also Herraets' speech for *Radio Herrijzend Nederland*, undated (HUA, 1392-3: ANA, 303).

⁴⁸ Tuindorp-Oostzaan report, in «*Analecta Augustiniana Provinciae Hollandicae*», special edition, 8 (1946), p. 95.

es in the target area⁴⁹. A curate of Saint Thomas of Villanova's parish in Nijmegen had to go on the run himself just before the end of the war because his activities for the resistance had attracted the attention of the Germans⁵⁰. One friar is on record as having condemned the Germans from the pulpit. Pancratius Langeveld (1909-1976), *magister fratrum clericorum* in Nijmegen, was arrested in 1942 for having publicly denounced the killing of five Dutch hostages in August of that year, but he was released after interrogation⁵¹.

The more common response to the war was simply to get on with daily life and to try to avoid trouble, as it was for most other religious and indeed for the population in general⁵². One student at the minor seminary in Venlo had the following memory of life there (the minor seminary was part of Saint Thomas of Villanova's College, a regular secondary school): «We certainly did not live in a *deutschfreundliche* ["German-friendly"] atmosphere, but neither was there more or less militant hostility to the occupying force. The facts were simply the way they were». He explained the absence of strong opinions by pointing to the fact that a number of pupils at the school came from Nazi families. That carried certain risks. When one pupil once expressed subversive opinions, he was immediately suspended and sent home. But he was allowed back again after a few weeks when German reprisals failed to materialise⁵³. That internal discussions at schools could indeed lead to German interventions was evident from the example of Gerard Wijdeveld at *Triniteitslyceum* in Haarlem. Resentment against him on account of his Nazi sympathies was growing among colleagues and pupils, but effective measures were impossible without risking trouble. This led to «violent scenes in the teachers' room and strong protests from the pupils», which in turn caused the *Gestapo* to visit the school on two occasions⁵⁴. The Augustinians eventually managed to get rid of Wijdeveld in August 1944⁵⁵.

There was also a lot priests could do in the field of humanitarian aid. Several houses helped to distribute food, especially the presbyteries that had not been confiscated. Thus the Augustinians of Nieu-

⁴⁹ Report of St. Barbara's parish, Culemborg, *ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

⁵⁰ Report of St. Thomas's parish, Nijmegen, *ibid.*, p. 103.

⁵¹ Nijmegen priory report, *ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵² MONTEIRO, *Gods predikers* cit., p. 376.

⁵³ J. SAELMAN, *Het Casino, Kaldenkerkerweg 162, Venlo, oktober 1941 – juli 1944. Herinneringen*, undated, p. 5 (KME, ANA, 6360).

⁵⁴ «Oorlogskroniek over klooster en Lyceum te Haarlem», undated (HUA, 1392-2: ANA, 3729).

⁵⁵ Staff card Wijdeveld (HUA, 1392-2: ANA, 3754).

wendam collected food from farmers in the neighbourhood and subsequently distributed it among parishioners in their city parish⁵⁶. The friars of Saint Rita's parish in Amsterdam estimated after the war that they had distributed no fewer than 100,000 kilograms of vegetables to hard-hit families during the famine months of late 1944 and early 1945⁵⁷. When the priests of Venlo blessed and distributed the traditional Saint Nicholas' bread on the feast day of Saint Nicholas of Tolentine in 1942, one student at the minor seminary inquired whether «saints were now also doing business on the black market»⁵⁸.

The Dutch Augustinians traditionally maintained friendly relations with their German counterparts, especially with the community at Würzburg, where Dutch friars had gone to study as recently as the 1930s⁵⁹. The difficulties which the German Augustinians were experiencing at the hands of the Nazi regime even at that time proved in retrospect to be a foreshadowing of things to come for their Dutch guests⁶⁰. The fact that the German Augustinians provided Vasen with bread in Dachau every week is one indication that relations did not cool as a result of the German occupation⁶¹. This impression is strengthened by the fact that the German friars became a strong source of financial assistance to the Dutch province from the start of the war. In November 1940, the German provincial Engelbert Eberhard (1893-1958) wrote to Makaay to say that the number of mass stipends received had increased to such an extent that they were unable to say the corresponding number of masses within the time set for them. Eberhard therefore offered to pass them on to the Dutch province⁶². At the end of September 1943 Makaay told the definitors that he had already received almost 90,000 guilders in mass stipends from the German province: no small amount in difficult times⁶³.

⁵⁶ Nieuwendam report, in «Analecta Augustiniana Provinciae Hollandicae», special edition, 8 (1946), p. 26.

⁵⁷ Report of St. Rita's parish, Amsterdam, *ibid.*, p. 81.

⁵⁸ Diary minor seminary, 1940-49, 20 September 1942 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 737).

⁵⁹ See for instance minutes of definitory meeting, 9 September 1930 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 61).

⁶⁰ A. KUNZELMANN, *Geschichte der neuerrichteten deutschen Augustiner-Ordensprovinz*, in «Cor Unum. Mitteilungen an die deutsche Augustinerfamilie», 27 (1969), pp. 17-30.

⁶¹ Makaay to the priors, 31 January 1943 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 108).

⁶² Eberhard to Makaay, 11 November 1940 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 1046).

⁶³ Minutes of definitory meeting, 28 September 1943 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 63).

Conclusion

When Makaay and the definitors held their first meeting after the liberation, in July 1945, the provincial was able to draw up a relatively positive balance sheet. All prisoners except Willibrordus Tadmema had returned unscathed – physically at least – and none of the province's buildings had been irreparably damaged. Seminary courses had continued during the war so that there were no significant delays. The most important material loss was that of the Eindhoven priory's library, which went up in flames when its temporary storage place was bombed⁶⁴. The years directly following the war were taken up by the reconstruction of the country's infrastructure and society; and this was also what occupied the attention of most Augustinians. Memory of the horrors of the war faded quickly. In September 1945, Makaay wrote that he had long intended to write a letter «expressing our strongest indignation at the injustices and the crimes which the enemy committed in our dear fatherland». But «because we have all given free rein to our feelings about this on a number of occasions, we now feel fully satisfied in this respect»⁶⁵. This attitude was common at the time. It did not make for a warm welcome to those who were returning home from captivity and had harrowing experiences of their own to come to terms with.

In the longer run, however, it is possible to identify two ways in which the Second World War changed the mentality of the Dutch Augustinians. The first was to do with their internal community life. Most Augustinians had been forced during the occupation to leave their priories and seek lodging with lay hosts or in secular buildings. The lengthy billeting of soldiers in Culemborg also brought with it close daily contact with lay people. This experience of life outside the priory, in close proximity to lay people, including women and non-Catholics, had an effect on the province. Monastic enclosure had to be abandoned, the daily rhythm of liturgical celebrations and communal activities was interrupted and hierarchical subordination came under pressure as orders from German authorities had to be obeyed and the struggle for the bare necessities of life swept all other considerations away. All of this contributed to narrowing the divide between the monastery and the world. It was no coincidence that the province decided in the late 1940s to build two guesthouses

⁶⁴ Minutes of definitory meeting, 16/17 July 1945 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 63).

⁶⁵ Circular letter by Makaay, 19 September 1945 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 108).

for lay visitors, in the priories of Culemborg and Witmarsum⁶⁶. In the long run it helped prepare the ground for new theological insights about the relationship between the clergy and the laity, and about the purpose and organisation of the religious life.

The second change was to do with the Augustinians' perception of their place in Dutch society, their identification with Dutch nationality. The war had created new categories of belonging in the Netherlands that cut across the confessional and ideological divides that had dominated since the mid-nineteenth century. One of these new categories was the division between *fout* ("wrong") and *goed* ("right") – the former designating collaborators, the latter resistance fighters and, by extension, anyone who had not supported the Germans. The war bound everyone who had not been *fout* together in a renewed sense of national identity. In many ways the memory of the war became a new national foundation myth that replaced older narratives which had looked to the sixteenth-century revolt against Spain. The war fostered a sense of Dutch identity that superseded, or was at least wholly separate from, religious affiliation⁶⁷. In February 1946, Hubertus Verbeeten (1916-1946), an Augustinian who served as a chaplain in the Dutch army, was shot dead by Indonesian freedom fighters while his battalion tried to re-establish control over the old colony⁶⁸. In his eulogy, Makaay offered high praise: Verbeeten had «fallen as a hero on the field of honour, for God and Fatherland»⁶⁹. Before the war, it would have been most unusual for an Augustinian provincial to speak in this way about the «Fatherland». In the sixties, a later generation would bring this new sense of Dutch self-awareness to bear on religious and ecclesiastical affairs.

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⁶⁶ Culemborg: minutes of definitory meeting, 20 November 1946 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 63); Witmarsum: circular letter Van Nuenen, 1 January 1947 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 109).

⁶⁷ MONTEIRO, *Gods predikers* cit., p. 372.

⁶⁸ Minutes of definitory meeting, 16/17 July 1945 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 63).

⁶⁹ Minutes of definitory meeting, 14 March 1946 (HUA, 1392-1: ANA, 63).

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