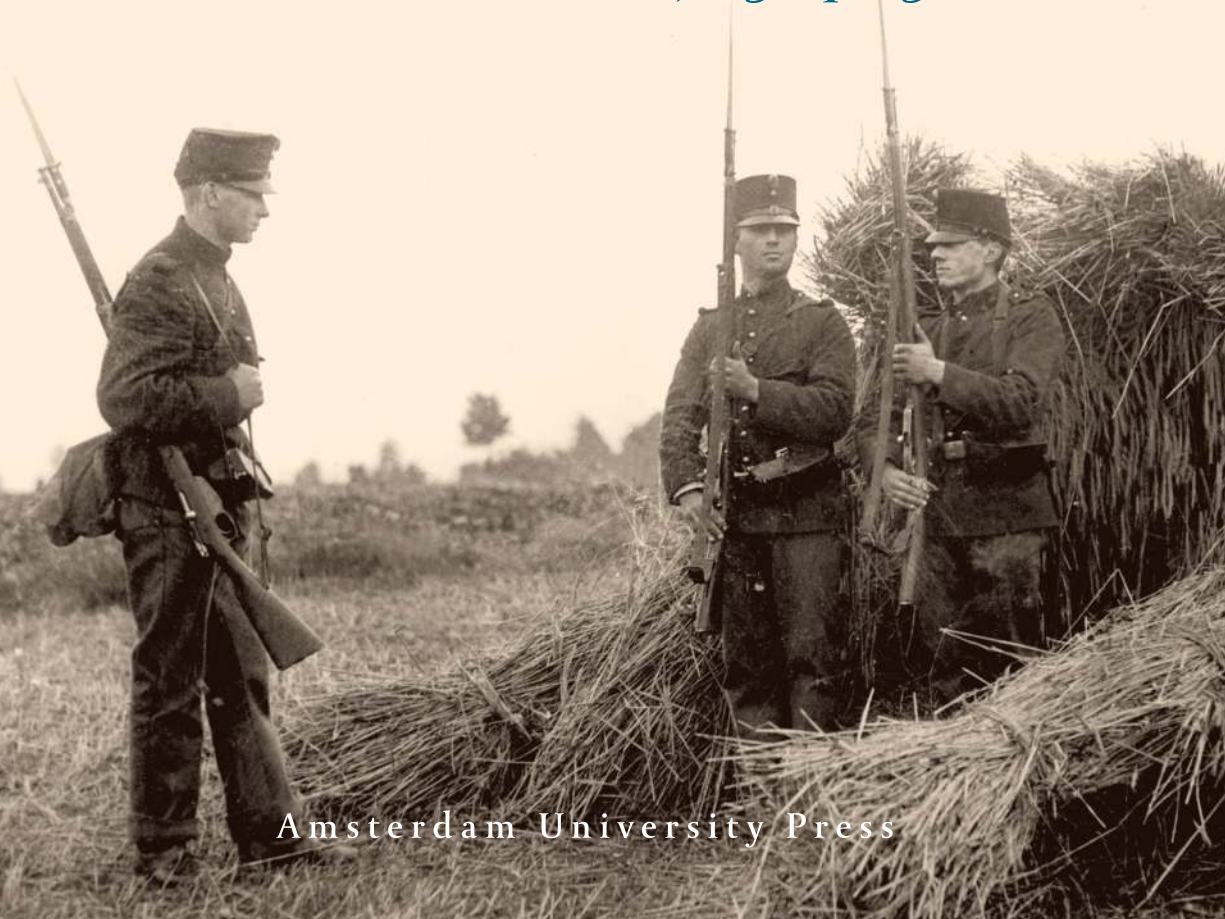


Maartje M. Abbenhuis

The Art *of* Staying Neutral

*The Netherlands in the
First World War, 1914-1918*



Amsterdam University Press

THE ART OF STAYING NEUTRAL

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Maartje M. Abbenhuis

AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Auckland, New Zealand
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Preface

Dutch culture does not make much allowance for the display of military ceremonies or traditions. An explanation can perhaps be found in the absence of a real aristocracy since the beginning of the Netherlands as a more or less recognisable state. There was of course an occasional count or baron around, but they didn't add up to an impressive number, nor did they earn themselves pages in the history books as brave warriors, or even as elegant horsemen in manoeuvres or parades. The army offered the sons of some families a career, but the menial tasks involved were mostly left to foreigners and the proletariat. Uniforms, feathers, and brass insignia usually featured as indispensable decorations for the House of Orange during the nineteenth century, but that had no further consequences. The only army that won considerable admiration in the Netherlands was that of the Boers in South Africa at around the turn of the century. The Boers were seen, according to the tradition of republican virtue (Machiavelli), as ordinary farmers and burghers bravely defending their goods, families and independence. In that sense it wasn't even a real army, but simply a nation bearing arms to fight with courage and cunning against a regular army that misbehaved on a terrible scale, as was to be expected from so-called professionals. In the Netherlands, there was no trace of a 'National Efficiency Campaign' as was found in England to increase physical strength, no cultural appreciation for military prowess as in France, let alone the pervasiveness of military values in national life as in Germany. While the empire in the East Indies was brought under direct rule with considerable aggression, the homeland itself had no intention whatsoever of getting entangled in any European conflict. In case the Netherlands was invaded, it was prepared to leave more or less half of the country as indefensible and withdraw behind the *Hollandse Waterlinie* (Holland Waterline), which meant that large stretches of land were flooded and turned into morasses (with strongholds at key positions). If this didn't work then only Amsterdam, surrounded by a ring of fortifications, would be defended until allies came to the rescue. All this seemed sensible and above all not very expensive, but also not very valorous; in some ways not unlike the hobbits in the peace-loving Shire as described by J.R.R. Tolkien ('And the world being after all full of strange creatures beyond count, these little people seemed of very little importance. But...').

When the July 1914 crisis exploded into war and all across Europe men hastened to their military destinations, the Netherlands was very quick to mobilise its army. A journalist from the Social-Democratic paper *Het Volk* (The People) reported a conversation with 'a comrade in uniform': 'What a misery. Do you see my family over

there? Yesterday I put my last wages in my wife's hands. What will become of them? I have always worked hard, have a decent little house, turned an honest penny. Was all that care and trouble over a decade all in vain? And why? Heaven may know why all this is happening.' This summed up the sentiments of the nation: War was not only disrupting ordinary life and civilisation as such, it was also incomprehensible. Let us pray that we can avoid the miseries of this war. But praying was not quite enough. It took a great military effort, skilled diplomacy, political wisdom, and a bit of luck to maintain some vestige of independence. The Netherlands was spared the most frightful costs of the war, while the killing and maiming during the war were in the true sense of the word unimaginable. Still some hardship befell the country. During the war, Queen Wilhelmina visited several cities and had to be rushed along lines of protesters crying loudly 'Hunger! Hunger!' The last two years of war in particular brought a lot of misery to many households due to the combined effects of harsh German mandates and an economic blockade imposed by Britain and the United States. Staying 'neutral' until the end of the war obliged the government to accept a considerable reduction in the standard of living of its citizens. The armistice of November 1918 did not come a moment too soon.

But then, at last, it was all over. The Netherlands resumed its old ways, becoming the Shire again. The Great War vanished from memory. It had all been just 'a faulty past' in which the world had gone astray. Basically, this peace-loving country had had nothing to do with it, except of course as a victim. Curiously enough, it left only a blank page in the nation's history. After some time had elapsed, a 'comprehensive journalistic chronicle' was published in two volumes by P.H. Ritter, general editor of a newspaper, entitled *De Donkere Poort* (The Dark Gate). This 1931 publication offered the first complete picture of the Netherlands in wartime, starting abruptly in July 1914 and ending suddenly in November 1918. Ritter modestly noted that his book might be of some use for future academic historians. But if this was supposed to be an invitation it fell flat. Some academic historians did convene a Dutch Committee for the Research of the Causes of the World War (1924-1937). At the centre of that committee was N. Japikse from Leiden University, who set foot onto the hazardous field of 'contemporary history' because he doubted the concept of 'Alleinschuld' as was hammered out in Versailles. This meant that only Germany was guilty of instigating the war. This kind of research was perhaps eminently befitting historians in a neutral country, but it was greeted with few signs of appreciation from abroad and had the tendency of strengthening the Dutch view that the Great War was something that had little to do with the Dutch past. The Second World War subsequently completely obliterated what little attention there had been for the Great War. In common parlance, 'the war' means the Second World War; the First World War is nowadays hardly recognised any more (as is sometimes evidenced in television quiz shows); politicians don't make any allusions to it in their more ambitious speeches; there is nothing like Remembrance Day, a statue, museum or site that keeps the memory alive. It is only in the past decade that battlefield tourism has become popular. The tourists go mostly to Flanders Fields with a very successful guidebook *Velden van weleer* (Fields of Old) by Chrisje and Kees Brants (1993).

But perhaps these tourists are mostly attracted by an interesting historical themepark, of the kind David Lowenthal has written about, that of history as 'a foreign country'; which in this case, as far as the Dutch are concerned, has to be seen in the most literal sense.

The only exception to this general trend is the publication of the three-volume *Nederland in de Eerste Wereldoorlog* (The Netherlands in de First World War) by C. Smit published in the period 1971-1973. But this ended up being a slightly disappointing enterprise: He offered not so much a general analysis of the Netherlands during the war, but focussed on key aspects and details of foreign policy, heavily based on formal documents. Symbolic of the minimal amount of attention the Great War attracted during this time was the chapter on it in the valuable *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* (General History of the Netherlands), which appeared in the period 1976-1983 in fifteen heavy volumes. The subject was dealt with in twelve pages and rumour has it that they had to be written on very short notice, after the editors had originally overlooked this episode in their general outline and planning. All this seems like a long time ago. The last few years have seen a remarkable growth of interest in the First World War as an important phase in Dutch history. To name only a few outstanding works: in 1998, Marc Frey's *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Niederlande* (The First World War and the Netherlands), which is especially good on economic developments; in 2000, Evelyn Roodt's *Oorlogsgasten* (Guests of the War), which is particularly interesting regarding the help that was offered to refugees and the section on the detainment of prisoners of war; in 2001, Hubert P. van Tuyll van Serooskerken's *The Netherlands and World War I*, which offered remarkable insight regarding the importance of the quick mobilisation and the diplomatic activity needed to uphold neutrality; in 2001, Paul Moeyes' *Buiten schot* (Out of Range), which offered a general and complete image of this period for the first time for a general public; in 2002, Ivo Kuypers' *In de schaduw van de grote oorlog* (In the Shadows of the Great War), which creates a striking argument about this period as one that brought the state, trade unions, and employers together in what might be considered the beginning of the welfare state or the 'poldermodel'; and, more recently in 2004, Ron Blom and Theunis Stelling's *Niet voor God en niet voor het Vaderland* (Not for God nor the Fatherland), a voluminous study on left-wing resistance to the war. The present book by Maartje Abbenhuis follows this new trend. Although she lived and worked in New Zealand, it is the result of her archival research in the Netherlands, which was perhaps stimulated by a Dutch ancestry. It is well-written and highly interesting, but the question of course is: Is there something left for her to tell?

Abbenhuis' book is founded on the highly original interweaving of internal and external developments. Until recently, the social and economic developments in the Netherlands were seen as the direct consequences of the policies of the warring countries. The blockade by Britain and the German blackmail tactics reduced vital imports of food and coal, which meant that the intake of calories in the Netherlands dropped, the heating of homes became very insufficient and industry had to stop its machines due to a lack of energy. According to this view, Dutch society was passive, the victim of external conditions. Van Tuyll has shown that this image is only partly cor-

rect: Staying neutral required very active diplomatic endeavours. Abbenhuis has taken us much further along that line. While the army was vital for defending Dutch neutrality, it was essential that the military's hold on society remain strong: Traditional liberties had to be set aside; the transport system had to be at full capacity to be able to move personnel and materials; the distribution of food had to, first of all, be geared to the needs of the army; telegraph and telephone lines had to be monitored; borders trespassers had to be thwarted; and public order in society – which became increasingly more important as the war went on – had to be guaranteed, if necessary by force. At some point, 75 per cent of the country was under direct military surveillance. Symbolically enough, the military headquarters of the Stelling Amsterdam were housed in the best hotel in the city, the Amstel Hotel (nowadays the choice of royalty, business tycoons, and pop stars). It is too simple, however, to analyse this as a kind of imperialism of men in uniform, always impatient with politicians, let alone with left-wing revolutionaries or even liberal notions of civil rights. All these measures – and more – were the direct consequences of defending neutrality as such. That is to say, neutrality cannot be seen simply as the exclusive task of the army; it was also the plight of the nation. Society had to accept a level of militarisation, which as Abbenhuis shows, came along with a lot of misunderstandings, hard bargaining, and bitter conflict. In 1914-1918, the Netherlands had to deviate sharply from its non-militaristic or even anti-militaristic tradition, but resumed it shortly after the events. Because, after all 'nothing had happened' all these efforts already seemed ridiculous after a few years. For example, the Social-Democratic writer A.M. de Jong wrote a highly successful 'military novel' in 1928, *Frank van Wezels roemruchte jaren* (The Glorious Years of Frank van Wezel), which made a lot of fun of military life during the war years. The Dutch forgot the war, thereby completely overlooking the ominous turn European history had taken. Abbenhuis has written a well-balanced and very informative book on 'the art of staying neutral', an art the Dutch themselves did not fully understand at the time and quickly forgot for the most part afterwards.

Piet de Rooij
University of Amsterdam

Introduction

The War Knocked on Our Door, It Did Not Step Inside:¹ The Netherlands and the Great War

Throughout the continent, Europeans met the coming of war in August 1914 with excitement, fear, and agitation. This was as true for residents of a small, neutral country in the northwestern corner of Europe as it was for the inhabitants of nations who were to fight and die by the millions. For over four years, the Dutch lived in the shadow of a war that was being waged violently in nearby Belgium and France. Throughout that period, they feared an invasion, mobilised the army and navy, and many prayed that their neutrality would be safeguarded. And it was. But neutrality was not a magic charm that staved off the nasty effects of warfare. On the contrary, in remaining neutral, the Dutch were presented with a multitude of challenges, crises, and disasters that affected every facet of life. Over 400,000 men between the ages of 20 and 40 were conscripted into the armed forces, removed from their families and livelihoods. The war hampered the shipments of vital goods, while the rationing of fuel and foodstuffs became increasingly common and stifling. Hundreds of thousands of foreigners, both civilians and soldiers, sought sanctuary in the country, presenting a mammoth refugee problem for the authorities. The government introduced new laws and regulations, created special distribution and administrative bureaux, and used the military to handle matters for which it had no other solutions.

The Netherlands between 1914 and 1918 may have seemed an island of calm amidst the uproar and chaos in the surrounding countries, but behind the peaceful façade hid a worried nation facing a highly uncertain future. There was nothing self-evident in Dutch neutrality during the Great War and it certainly was impossible for the nation to remain aloof – *afzijdig* or ‘disinterested in taking sides’ – while its warring neighbours challenged its interests and interfered with its well-being. Due to the Netherlands’ geographic proximity to several of the combatant states, the Dutch could not avoid the repercussions of the war. *Wilhelmine* Germany flanked the eastern border; Belgium, scene of much fighting on the western front, was situated on the southern border; with France further south still; and to the west, across the Channel, lay the concentrated naval might of Great Britain. All of the combatants made demands upon Dutch neutrality and used their powerful positions to exact compliance. Despite being surrounded, caught ‘between the devil’ (Germany) and the ‘deep blue sea’ (ruled by Britain),² the Netherlands managed to remain neutral. It did so by compromising with each belligerent when and where possible, even at the expense of conceding its own independence and neutrality. Its citizens hoped fervently that their neighbours would accept these compromises, and they often did. The Dutch also protected their non-belligerency by upholding the standards of behaviour expected of them as neutrals.

This book provides an overview of the precarious position the Great War forced upon the Netherlands. It is primarily a study of neutrality, which answers the following questions: How does a neutral state protect its security, uphold its independence, and safeguard the prosperity of its citizens in times of war? How does it prevent violations of neutrality from occurring? It is also a study of the impact of ‘total war’³ on non-belligerents, all the more pertinent since in their relationship with neutrals, most of the belligerents extended the military conflict by other means, i.e., economically, politically, and psychologically. The Netherlands played a key role in the Great War and the advantages the warring parties gained from its neutrality actually helped to protect its security.

Neutrality formed a central tenet of Dutch foreign policy and its interests prior to 1914. Neutrality seemed to best guarantee the security and welfare of the nation and its economy, both on the continent and in its colonies. In fact, neutrality had become a celebrated part of the Dutch national psyche and promoted the international face of the Netherlands as a paragon of peace and prosperity in an increasingly unstable world. Above all, nations like the Netherlands and Belgium were drawn to neutrality because it seemed to certify their territorial security. However, given that the relationship between the major European states became increasingly confrontational between 1900 and 1914, the Belgians and the Dutch realised that they may not survive a future continental conflict with their neutrality or security intact.

The fear of continental war had two immediate results for Europe’s neutral states in the two decades before the outbreak of the Great War. Firstly, the rights and obligations of neutrality, drawn up in The Hague Peace Conference of 1907 and the controversial London Declaration of 1909, offered a standard of behaviour that bound neutrals and combatants alike. Secondly, the growing tensions between Europe’s great powers, highlighted by their arms race and the build up of naval might, ensured that neutrals focussed on improving their own defences and military strength. In wartime, neutrality had to be protected, and the Dutch armed forces took on the tripartite role of defence, deterrence, and upholding neutrality regulations. These actions were undertaken to prevent and arrest neutrality violations from within and outside its territorial borders; to act as a deterrent against possible infringements (what Efraim Karsh described as a ‘negative neutrality’ strategy);⁴ or, in the worst case scenario, to defend the nation against invasion, after neutrality failed. The neutral country had to be prepared for two alternative wartime scenarios: One in which it remained neutral and neutrality had to be upheld, and another where it was invaded. Neutrality largely stood and fell on the ability of the military to uphold international law as well as to act as a defence force. Defence and neutrality were, however, not necessarily mutually compatible.

The Dutch tend to misrepresent or, rather, under-represent the Great War in their national history, and tend to subscribe to the view of a Dutch archivist who in 1999 after explaining my research interests exclaimed: ‘We were neutral! What is the point of studying that?’ Until recently, historians of the Great War have neglected the role of neutrals as much as the historians from this neutral country had neglected the role of the war. Fortunately, this trend is changing. It has been quite some time since

Nils Ørvik's research in 1953 where he correctly surmised that the Great War saw the decline of neutrality as a valuable foreign policy for small states.⁵ The case of Belgium during the Great War, and even more so, the cases of neutral Europeans during the Second World War, proved Ørvik's case only too clearly: The supposed foundations of neutrality recognised by international law – impartiality, territorial integrity, freedom of the seas, and the right to trade unhindered – only applied when neutrals could force acceptance from their warring neighbours. For belligerents, the stakes during 'total war' were too high to let the letter of the law interfere with their wartime conduct. Hence, small, neutral states had to engage deftly in the art of compromise, had to be willing to sacrifice certain legal rights as well as aspects of their sovereign independence for the sake of avoiding war. In the Second World War, most of Europe's neutrals only remained so based on their ability to provide Hitler's Germany with necessary trade, finances, or strategic security.⁶ In other words, neutrality had basically disappeared as a universally recognised legal concept by 1939. The Great War was a major step towards its demise.

While it may seem self-evident in the world of the strong that the weak must yield to the mighty, in the years prior to 1914, nations like the Netherlands and Belgium saw neutrality as an opportunity to look after their own interests. As G.W. Kernkamp, a Dutch journalist-cum-historian, proclaimed in his press reports during the Great War, neutrality was not an end in itself, but a means of remaining independent (*zelfstandig*). When neutrality undermined the sovereign independence of the Netherlands in 1917 and 1918, Kernkamp argued that neutrality was no longer a viable foreign policy.⁷ The pre-war optimism in neutrality expressed by the Dutch was supported by international conventions agreed to and, in some cases, created by the great powers themselves. The Dutch population, therefore, had reason to feel confident that neutrality would prevent them from having to participate in a future war and enabling it to maintain a modicum of normality. These expectations may have been idealised and naïve and do not necessarily reflect government policies and beliefs, but they were prevalent among many Dutch citizens. By 1918, of course, this optimism had turned sharply into pessimism, and the war proved, once and for all, that the popular expectations attached to neutrality in 1914 were unrealistic on a continent filled with nations intent on destroying each other.

Yet, even in the interbellum period, the Netherlands did not jettison the idea of neutrality – if only because it had few viable alternatives. The country toyed with League of Nations membership, opting for a foreign policy of *zelfstandigheidspolitiek* (policy of independence), a word coined by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.A. van Karnebeek (1918-1929), to represent the nation's compromise between limited involvement in collective security and an avowed declaration of independence in its foreign dealings. But when the League of Nations failed spectacularly in the 1930s, the Dutch returned to the familiarity and comfort of neutrality. Van Karnebeek himself publicly endorsed neutrality as late as 1938:

we [the Dutch] are caretakers of a territorial integrity that is very important for the political balance in Europe and for peace. *We are trustees!* We are in charge of ensur-

ing that this integrity is not endangered and is not complicated. Our position rests on trust that can be placed [by others] in us. We, therefore, have to avoid the appearance that our position, even in time of peace, is useful to another, whichever, power. Rooted in our trusteeship is an obligation to uphold the integrity of our territory, as well as a categorical imperative of defence. *The function that we fulfil in the political structure of Europe is a function that rests not only on our own interests, but on those of Europe. Our calling is not only that of neutrality in times of conflict, but of independence in general as a permanent political manifestation.*⁸

Certainly not everyone was as positive as Van Karnebeek about the value of the Netherlands' international position in 1938. Several important figures, including Nicolaas Bosboom (Minister of War, 1914-1917) and General C.J. Sniijders (Commander-in-Chief, 1914-1918) published warnings during the interbellum years that security would be much harder to guarantee in a future conflict.⁹ Other political leaders were also under no illusions in the 1930s. They realised that the Netherlands had few feasible options; it remained a small nation flanked by powerful neighbours.¹⁰ In many respects, holding on to neutrality was a last ditch effort to maintain some independence on an increasingly insecure and unstable continent. Neutrality also served as a faint hope, seemingly endorsed and guaranteed by Adolf Hitler himself. The country's only true hope, of course, was that Hitler would abide by his promises, which he did not make a habit of doing. Nevertheless, the rapid capitulation to Nazi Germany in May 1940 came as a huge shock to the Dutch, shattering any illusions they still harboured for neutrality.

In the most simplistic terms, the case for the demise of Dutch neutrality in the Second World War – namely, that it depended upon the decisions and actions of other states – can also be made for the First World War. There is no denying that if one of the major powers had wanted to invade and conquer the Netherlands between 1914 and 1918, it could have done so without too many problems. The military strength of the country, while not insignificant, was not impressive enough to keep the large armies of Germany or, for that matter, Great Britain and France at bay. As we shall see in chapter 1, there were a number of reasons why the warring nations chose to uphold Dutch neutrality during the war, ranging from economics to military strategy. While in 1914, the Netherlands as a neutral offered advantages to both sets of belligerents, these had all but disappeared by 1918. As a result, the last year of the war was an extremely difficult one for the Dutch. They were saved in large part by the fact that the combatants' attentions were firmly focussed elsewhere.

But by looking primarily at the position of Germany, Britain, France and the United States vis-à-vis Dutch neutrality one loses sight of one of the most important factors regarding neutrality, namely the Netherlands' chameleonic position during the war. Neutrality depends not only on the wishes and expectations of combatant states but also on the ability and capacity of the neutral to sustain an expected level of behaviour. Neutrals must adhere to certain key international laws: to act with due care in treating warring parties with equal levels of impartiality and (dis)interest, and

to give them equal (dis)advantage. Neutrals must also abide by the expectations of belligerents and to compromise between them when they clash. One should not dismiss the neutrality commitments made by the Dutch themselves during the Great War. Hence, the focus of this book is not so much on the international situation surrounding Dutch neutrality (which has received its due, although not overwhelming, attention in the historiography)¹¹ but on its domestic context. The primary actors in the coming pages are the people and organisations that enforced the nation's neutrality, most notably within the armed forces. The themes in this book will, therefore, revolve around the viability of the armed forces, and especially the Royal Dutch Army (*Koninklijke Landmacht*), to fulfil both positive and negative neutrality goals: to uphold international obligations, to act as a deterrent to attack, and to maintain adequate defence. But it is not only a study of the military aspects of neutrality; it is also a study of a nation in crisis. While the following chapters analyse the rise and fall of Dutch neutrality, they cannot do so without commenting on the consequences of the war for the nation and its people. Therefore, this is not a study of foreign politics, diplomatic relations, or economic threats, although they do have a place in the coming narrative, but a study of the mechanics of neutrality, defence, and the impact of war on a nation precariously situated 'between the devil and the deep blue sea'.

Chapter

I

A Nation Too Small to Commit Great Stupidities:¹ The Netherlands and Neutrality

The essence of neutrality is the avoidance of war, namely, the avoidance of involvement in the wars of others. But despite its deceptively simple definition, neutrality is not a homogeneous concept. It has changed meanings over the centuries, reflecting the concerns of states adopting it as their foreign policy and those desiring to challenge its validity. Neutrality has a long history going back as far as the sixth century BC when Milesians abstained from supporting either Ionian Greece or Persia.² During the Middle Ages, it was common practice for warring parties to refrain from sinking ships of countries not involved in the conflict.³ In the fifteenth century, neutrality became a vaguely defined quasi-legal term referring to nations that opted out of a particular war. Neutrals at that time could profess partiality to one side or another and could supply it with all manner of materials, including military goods.⁴ Neither contraband regulation nor impartiality were widely observed, although neutral ships were protected from privateering.⁵ Napoleon's disregard for the proclaimed non-belligerency of several European countries, including the Netherlands, entailed the death of old-style neutrality, and the birth of neutrality based on international law.⁶ Influenced by the American Act of 1794, territorial integrity and impartiality became the cornerstones of neutrality in the 1800s.⁷ International conventions, such as those formulated at the Paris Conference of 1856, at Geneva in 1864, in The Hague in 1899 and 1907, and at the London Conference in 1909, aimed to regulate the laws of warfare and the rights and obligations of neutrals in time of conflict and peace. They provided the basis for neutrality in the first half of the twentieth century.

Since 1909, in legal terms, neutrality defines a relationship among nation-states in wartime, namely between those who fight and those who choose not to. Although nations can profess neutrality in peacetime, the conditions of neutrality only apply in time of conflict. International neutrality laws place clear obligations on the behaviour of belligerents and non-participants with regard to each other, and in return guarantee the latter certain rights of territorial integrity, security and unhindered trade (except for contraband). It is an extremely attractive option for states that have little to gain and much to lose by becoming involved in war. Needless to say, neutrality is much more than a definition in international law. Neutrals have to work within the complex web of inter-state relationships, which often do not adhere to the wording of legal documents nor to the arbitrary wishes of countries wanting to remain detached from their neighbours' activities. Hence, in time of war, neutrals tread unsteadily, much like a juggler walking a tightrope. They have to balance themselves

between the demands and concerns of warring sides while attempting to keep their own interests in play. It is all too easy for a juggler to lose his balance, drop the balls, and plummet into the beckoning void.

During the nineteenth century, nations regarded neutrality as a viable foreign policy. Small states were especially attracted to neutrality, as it seemed to guarantee some control over their destinies in an international arena where great powers were growing ever stronger. In real terms, small states could not compete, or even attempt to compete, with the armed might or accumulative resources of their neighbours. Adhering to strict neutrality became an exceedingly appealing option to protect their sovereignty. The move to regulate and define neutrality laws helped to increase these expectations. It was not for nothing, then, that the word *neutraliteit* (neutrality) in the Dutch language has associated connotations of *zelfstandigheid* (independence) and *afzijdigheid* (aloofness).

Yet, the implementation of neutrality as foreign policy was far from straightforward, especially for a small country. Despite attempts at aloofness and the expectation, as H.T. Colenbrander explained in 1920, that it 'was self-evident that nobody would busy themselves with the Netherlands',⁸ neutrals were not cocooned from international realities. Neutrality did not guarantee independence in time of war, although it was a way of possibly safeguarding it. Instead, states relied on two vital prerequisites for their neutrality to work: firstly, the means to uphold necessary neutrality regulations and to protect themselves from breaches thereof, and, secondly, the willingness of other states to recognise their neutral status.⁹ Neutrality can only work if a country can uphold its security in the face of threats. As Efraim Karsh explained:

On the face of it, neutrality is the opposite of the 'typical' policy followed by the small state. Given its narrow power base, one would assume a tendency on the part of the small state, particularly while confronting a great power, to try to balance its inherent weakness by drawing on external sources of strength. Neutrality is the opposite situation: one in which the small state, of its own accord, chooses to rely exclusively on internal sources of strength rather than on powerful allies. But if neutrality does not constitute the 'typical' policy of the small state, it clearly and blatantly depicts both the relative weakness of the small state, as well as the room for *manoeuvre* available to it.¹⁰

The Netherlands in the Great War provides a fascinating case of a small weak state with an interest in neutrality as a means of protecting its independence and security. It managed to stay out of the world conflict while its neighbours were dragged into the war. It could easily have suffered the same fate as neutral Belgium. Why did the Netherlands not become a belligerent between August 1914 and November 1918? How did it remain neutral? These two questions are especially pertinent given the well-substantiated claim by Nils Ørvik that the Great War witnessed a decline in the viability of neutrality as a foreign policy option for small states.¹¹ Nineteenth-century conceptions of neutrality based on international law were not tenable during a general war involving the world's major powers. As Wilhelm Carlgren stated in relation to neutrality in the Second World War (which holds equally true for the Great War):

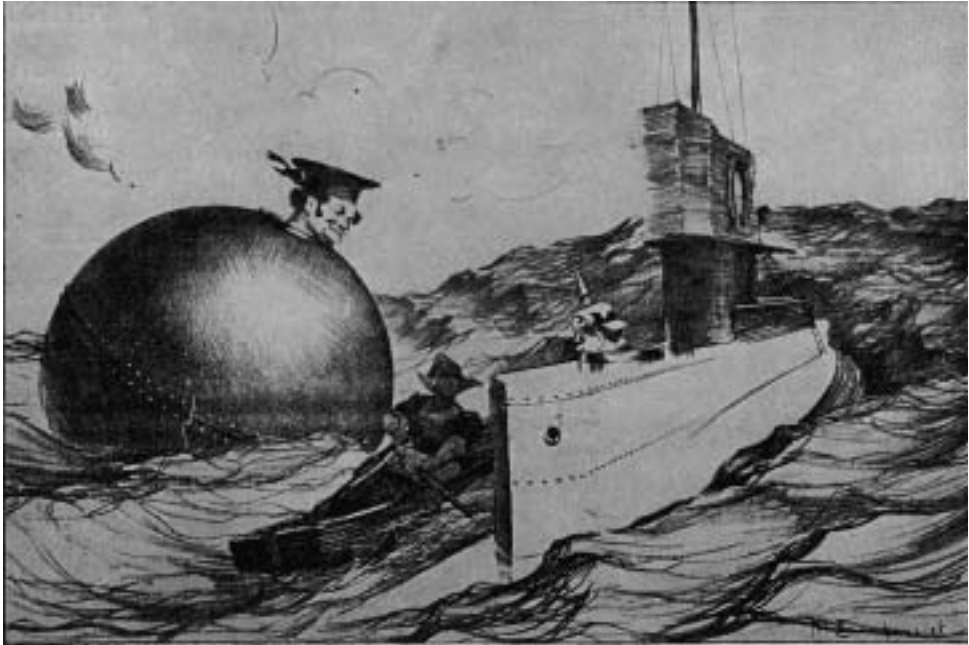
in the Great Powers' scheme of things... respect for neutrality and the rules of neutrality carried far less weight than regard for their [own] interests. A small country, which wished to live through a World War with its freedom and independence intact, was obliged to adopt in full measure a corresponding scale of values.¹²

This leads to a further question: What value did neutrality have in protecting Dutch security and independence in the face of domineering great power demands? Put simply, very little. Yet when the belligerents perceived some advantage in Dutch neutrality, it could prove immensely fortuitous.

The survival of Dutch neutrality during the Great War relied on many factors. First and foremost, it depended on successful diplomacy and trade negotiations with the warring parties, especially Great Britain, Germany and, after 1917, the United States. Dutch relations with the belligerents have received much, although by no means exhaustive, attention in the historiography of the war.¹³ Secondly, how the great powers viewed the advantages and disadvantages of Dutch neutrality was vital to its continued feasibility. Historians have given considerable thought to this aspect of neutrality maintenance as well.¹⁴ Thirdly, what the Dutch did to protect themselves from neutrality violations, to advertise the benefits of neutrality (in the eyes of belligerents) and to diminish its costs, had an equally important bearing on whether they could stay out of the war. It is this third aspect – the domestic requirements of neutrality – that has received far less notice in the study of neutrality or in the history of the Great War. Of course, none of the three elements exist in isolation, nor can they be studied as such, since what a neutral does is closely related to its relations with other states, which, in turn, affects how they view the merits of its neutrality. The choice for the researcher is in deciding from which angle to pursue the issue.

For the Netherlands, staying neutral was a complex matter given its peculiar situation in Europe and the intense interest of the warring powers in its activities. It had to uphold international laws, maintain impartiality, preserve territorial integrity, protect trade relationships, and reinforce military deterrence. Since the Dutch were unlikely to enter the conflict of their own accord, they could only be forced to join through an openly belligerent act.¹⁴ Everything the Netherlands did, therefore, had the potential to give reason for either the *Entente* or Central Powers to reassess their interests and to invade. What was so peculiar about the Netherlands was that it was so vulnerable: it was surrounded by major military powers (Germany, Great Britain and France); was geographically wide open to invasion; had immense strategic value; ruled a large and virtually undefended empire with numerous natural resources; and relied on foreign sources for military supplies, grain, fertilizers and fuel.¹⁶ More than any other European neutral, except Belgium, the Netherlands seemed to offer every reason for the belligerents to force the country into the war. Yet, its vulnerability also provided the key to the ultimate success of its neutrality. The warring sides could not allow their enemies access to the advantages that the capture of the nation afforded. It was better to have the Netherlands neutral than to have it participating in the war on the other side. Being caught between the devil and the deep blue sea may have been the bane of the Netherlands; in the end, it was also its saving grace.

Illustration 1: Between the devil and the deep blue sea



A contemporary cartoon of the Netherlands (in her rowing boat) perilously caught between the threatening might of Great Britain (sea mine) and Germany (U-boat).

The Allure of Neutrality

The attractions of neutrality for the Dutch were manifold. After the Napoleonic Wars, the Netherlands no longer counted among the influential nations of Europe. It effectively became a third-rate power when Belgium seceded in 1839. Security issues were paramount for the monarchy, but allying with one of its stronger neighbours was difficult since the Netherlands acted as a buffer zone between France and Britain and later between France, Britain and the new German Empire. An alliance with one might provoke the other. The country had strategic merit not only because of its geographic location, but also because it controlled the mouths of three important rivers, namely the Rhine, the Maas (Meuse) and the Schelde (Scheldt). The Rhine linked the North Sea with the German industrial heartland of the Ruhr and stretched into Alsace and Lorraine, provinces repeatedly fought over by the French and Germans. The Maas ran from the Netherlands through Belgium (Namur) and down into France. In turn, the Schelde was the only outlet to the sea for the Belgian city of Antwerp and was considered, like the Maas and Rhine, to be a vital trade route into the continental mainland. Control of one or all three rivers gave considerable territorial advantages in north-west Europe.

In many ways, the Netherlands profited from its geo-strategic position because each of the powers had sufficient reason to keep the others from exerting too much

influence there.¹⁷ This was especially important because the Dutch army and navy stood little chance against the armed forces of its neighbours. Not only were they outmatched by the material superiority of Germany, France, and Britain, geographic considerations made effective defence even more difficult. Unlike another neutral nation, Switzerland, the Netherlands lacked defensible boundaries. While the Swiss could hide relatively securely behind their mountain ranges, the Dutch had no such advantage. Theirs was, and remains, an extremely flat country. The Netherlands' only other natural ally is water. An elaborate inundation network could be brought into play (the *Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie*, New Holland Waterline) with the potential to hold up an attack from the east. However, its success relied on the foreknowledge of an impending invasion as raising water levels took several days. The railway system complicated defence further because the railway lines ran sufficiently close to the border with Germany to require a full-scale mobilisation at least three days before invasion from that direction.¹⁸ Dutch military commanders were under no illusions that defending level territory against a well-organised, well-trained, and much stronger armed force would be extremely difficult.

The advantages of neutrality were obvious. The security of the Netherlands within Europe was complicated, however, by the possession of a large empire outside the continent. For centuries, it had looked abroad for its prestige, status, and commercial strength. The colonies, especially the East Indies, were critical to the economic development of the 'motherland'; moreover, they entitled the Dutch to a measure of international standing.¹⁹ Between 1880 and 1914, during the so-called 'Age of Empire' when European states along with the United States and Japan focussed on the formal and informal domination of the world,²⁰ the Dutch recognised that their many colonies might become the objects of international rivalry. The issue of empire thus became important to the policy of neutrality at home, as a threat to an overseas possession could result from a conflict within Europe while an imperial dispute could influence a continental war.

The Netherlands did not have the military or naval strength to protect its overseas dominions. Instead, it looked to consolidate its hold over those colonies that were deemed most important²¹ and removed itself from areas that were indefensible or jeopardised relations with other states. It pulled out of the Gold Coast in West Africa in 1871 for these reasons, while furthering its hold over the East Indian archipelago in Bali, Aceh, and Celebes.²² A related complication was that only British naval power could effectively protect the Dutch empire.²³ As a result, the Netherlands maintained a more than amicable relationship with Britain throughout the nineteenth century despite 'short-lived, if intense, periods of strain'.²⁴ Some historians have suggested that the British-Dutch relationship included an implicit recognition that Britain would come to the Netherlands' aid if its colonies were threatened. This military aid, they argued, extended beyond the colonies to the Dutch state in Europe as well.²⁵ Yet, while the Dutch were dependent on British goodwill and naval strength in imperial matters, they also recognised that a formal alliance with Britain could not guarantee security within Europe: Britain's small standing army could not protect the Netherlands from its most likely enemy, Germany. That the Netherlands

Map 1: The Netherlands



Marking major railway lines, important places, and fortified positions (dark grey lines)

had a close trading relationship with Germany necessitated a careful diplomatic balance and an eventual reassessment of its friendship with Britain, especially after Anglo-German relations soured in the beginning of the new century. After 1900, it was no longer feasible to rely on Britain as a 'natural protector'.²⁶ Queen Wilhelmina publicly addressed this concern in 1905 by declaring that the country needed neutrality now more than ever because none of the great powers could safeguard the Dutch at home or abroad.²⁷ She further reiterated: 'The Netherlands must arm itself against England, France and Germany'.²⁸ At any rate, many of the Dutch loathed the idea of an alliance with Britain after the Boer War (1899-1901), a conflict that fomented profound pro-Afrikaner (and anti-British) sentiments.²⁹ In the careful balance of power wrought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, obvious allies were few and far between.

Neutrality, furthermore, made extremely good business sense. Over the ages, the Netherlands developed as a commercial mediator within and outside Europe. Its economy relied heavily on seaborne trade. In 1914, for example, the Dutch merchant marine was larger than that of the French, Italians, and Spanish. Its merchants were able to capitalise on the country's favourable geographic placement, giving easy access to the seas and useful river and rail routes into Europe. In time of war, this access was endangered, but neutrality allowed markets to be maintained and kept sea routes open, at least in theory. Trade concerns played a significant role in the formulation of foreign policy, which was made even more necessary as the Netherlands had substantial reciprocal trade relationships with both Britain and Germany, where its goods and freight were exchanged for German and British raw materials. The Netherlands could not give up one trading partner for another. This made neutrality, in the case of a war between Germany and Britain, a matter of economic prudence as well as military necessity.

Yet, over time, neutrality became more than a recognised key to independence and profitable trade. By the turn of the century, it was a *raison d'être* for the Dutch national character. Neutrality symbolised Dutch virtue in the popular mind. Its moral quality was closely linked to the ideology of the religious blocs in Dutch society and was tinged with pacifism.³⁰ Political-religious leaders, such as Abraham Kuyper, proclaimed that their nation fulfilled a missionary role in the world, that it was predestined to preserve international peace and the legal order by means of setting an ethical example.³¹ This helped to turn neutrality into an inviolable principle, as much a 'sacred political dogma' as a religious one.³² But, even the non-religious *zuilen* (literally 'pillars', social blocs) were attached to neutrality, as it was an important aspect of national identity. In some respects, neutrality existed as a unifying theme across the various social ranks, reflecting a commonly held nostalgic view of national history and furthering the country's status as 'a small nation with an impressive past'.³³ Neutrality was seen as the next logical step in a proud tradition of religious freedom and human rights, harking back to the Golden Age of Grotius in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a time when the Netherlands stood at the pinnacle of its economic, artistic, and intellectual prowess.

The remarkable absence of Dutch militaristic ambitions, of the type that held sway in Germany, France, and other European nations around 1900, was closely related to their conceptions of nationalism and neutrality. The Dutch perceived it as unnatural to place the army in a spot of primary importance, a place they reserved for trade, finance, transport, and industry.³⁴ Furthermore, a neutral state was by definition non-aggressive. As an instrument of aggression, therefore, the armed forces were little admired, despite the fact that Dutch history was sprinkled with great military victories that continued to be celebrated. The Netherlands undertook several long and aggressive military campaigns in the East Indies, especially in Aceh (1873-1900) but also in Bali (1906) and Celebes (1910).³⁵ Many did not view the Indonesian campaigns as expansionism, but rather as asserting control over territory that the country already 'owned'. They were domestic matters deemed of little concern to the outside world, and bearing no relationship to the Netherlands' neutrali-

ty policy or passivity on the international scene. Yet, there was a latent understanding that a nation desiring greatness, as the Netherlands had been great in the past, needed to use its military resources for this end. Neutrals, on the other hand, could not harbour such ambitions without seriously risking the credibility of their non-belligerent status.

Apart from the size of its empire, by the turn of the nineteenth century, the Netherlands' only claim to international significance was its neutrality. For the Dutch, involvement in the legalisation of neutrality carried with it cultural self-esteem. Neutrals did not resort to violence (except within their own colonial sphere), but rather to rights and obligations set down in international law. A people who could place themselves above power politics and military ambitions were morally superior: more learned, more cosmopolitan, and more unselfish, or so they thought.³⁶ By holding the Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907 in The Hague, and building the Carnegie Peace Palace in the same city, the Dutch enhanced this self-portrait: the Netherlands was a nation unlike others; it had outgrown political and military ambitions and was concerned only with peaceful trade. Such perceptions of neutrality were entrenched in Dutch identity by 1914. Of course, the perceptions themselves did not greatly influence foreign policy choices made during or after the war, but they did legitimise non-involvement among the population. The chosen path was clearly to remain aloof from any war as long as Europe allowed.

*The Cornerstone of Northwest Europe*³⁷

The Netherlands held a strong position in the balance of power in nineteenth-century Europe. In 1815, at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the great powers sanctioned the creation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, a territory that included Belgium and Luxembourg. The united Low Countries acted as a buffer zone between France, Great Britain, and Germany. Neutrality was attractive because siding with any of the large states would have upset the equilibrium. Even combined, Belgium and the Netherlands were not large enough to exert significant influence in international affairs; they were, in the words of one commentator, 'too large for a napkin but too small for a tablecloth'.³⁸ This would remain a major stumbling block to closer Dutch-Belgian relations after Belgium declared its independence in 1830. Once Belgium officially seceded in 1839, its geo-strategic importance was heightened, since it bordered both France and Germany and provided a territorial barrier between Britain and France. For almost entirely this reason alone, Europe's major powers (Britain, France, Prussia, Austria-Hungary, and Russia) imposed a state of permanent neutrality on Belgium, guaranteeing that they would come to its rescue if it were attacked.³⁹ The Netherlands did not have its neutrality guaranteed, principally because it was not as pivotal to separating the west European nations. Yet the conditions that forced neutrality on Belgium made it equally attractive as a voluntary foreign policy for the Netherlands.

With the rise of Germany/Prussia as a major power in Europe and the creation of Bismarck's complicated system of alliances (1862-1890), the leanings of particu-

lar states, however small, became increasingly important. Countries like the Netherlands had the potential to upset the Bismarckian balance drastically and, as a result, small European states gained significance far beyond their size.⁴⁰ By remaining neutral, the Netherlands helped to maintain the status quo. To a certain degree, the Dutch were aware of their ability to tip the balance and believed that their neighbours would respect the nation's neutrality for the same reason. It reinforced the idea that neutrality was not only sacred to themselves but to other Europeans as well.⁴¹ This belief was borne out by the Franco-Prussian War, when the French and Germans upheld the neutrality of the Netherlands and Belgium.

In the dozen or so years leading up to the outbreak of the Great War, two increasingly antagonistic camps replaced Bismarck's carefully constructed balance-of-power system. Germany and its ally Austria-Hungary found themselves surrounded by a loose alliance of Russia, France, and Great Britain. In the atmosphere of tension and rivalry that pervaded these years, the neutrality of certain states took on a different relevance. As the likelihood of conflict became more a question of 'when' than 'if', neutrals could not simply hope that their sovereignty would be recognised by the two powerful factions. The range of advantages and shortcomings of neutrality now came into sharp focus, affecting the options open to the major powers as well as the likelihood of neutral nations being forced into a war. It was no longer a question of neutrals helping to keep Europe at peace, but rather of avoiding becoming involved in war themselves. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the Netherlands, like many other small European states, embarked on improving its armed forces and defences from 1899 onwards.

Whether a small state entered the Great War was principally decided by the policies of the most powerful belligerents. Hence, Belgium was invaded by Germany in August 1914 because it provided the easiest route into France for the German armies. Neutral Italy and Romania decided to join the Allied war effort in May 1915 and August 1916 respectively because the potential gains, if the Allies were victorious, were too great to pass up. With similar justifications but from the other side, Bulgaria joined the Central Powers in September 1915.⁴² The Netherlands did not follow suit. An important reason for Dutch neutrality during the war, and one often stressed by historians, was the reluctance of key belligerents, especially Great Britain and Germany, to force the Netherlands' hand or to invade. Germany's original Schlieffen Plan (1905) had provided plans for German armies to move across the Dutch province of Limburg then through Belgium to sweep around Paris and so defeat France. Its architect, Chief of the German General Staff, Field Marshal Count Alfred von Schlieffen, believed it provided the most direct and useful route to France, a goal worthy enough to justify the violation of the acknowledged neutrality of both Low Countries.

Nevertheless, Schlieffen's successor, Helmuth von Moltke, made a drastic change to the plan in 1908, avoiding Dutch territory entirely and squeezing his armies through the small section of the German-Belgian border instead. He had good reason for doing so. While crossing Limburg made sense in logistical terms, allowing the German armies to avoid the heavily defended fortifications at Liège (Luik) and

offering five more railway lines into Belgium,⁴³ it also meant that the Netherlands would be dragged into the war. The 200,000-man Dutch army – by no means a negligible number – would have to be defeated before troops could concentrate their attentions southwards towards France.⁴⁴ It might fatally delay the advance and undermine the ultimate purpose of the plan: to conquer France as quickly as possible so that Germany could then concentrate its forces on the eastern frontier against France's ally Russia. The extra time and resources freed up by avoiding the Netherlands were crucial. At the same time, in acknowledgement of Britain's interest in the mouths of the Schelde, a German invasion of the Netherlands through Limburg could precipitate an attack by Britain on the Schelde towards Antwerp, thereby throwing the rapid defeat of France further into disarray.⁴⁵

A second pressing reason for keeping the neutral Netherlands out of any future war involved economics.⁴⁶ For Von Moltke, the potential strangulation of Germany's economy through a blockade by Britain's Royal Navy figured prominently in his thinking. Neutral countries could supply foodstuffs and other materials, offsetting the disadvantages of a blockade. The port of Rotterdam was already the second most valuable gateway for overseas goods imported by Germany.⁴⁷ As well, the sourcing of raw materials from the Dutch East Indies (especially quinine, rubber, tin, and petroleum)⁴⁸ could not be ignored. Dutch entry into the war would see this trade go entirely to the *Entente Cordiale*.⁴⁹ It was much better, therefore, to keep the Netherlands neutral so that it could remain the economic 'windpipe' through which Germany could 'breathe',⁵⁰ at least until Germany had defeated Russia.

When Germany invaded Belgium during the night of 3 August 1914, it had the economic value of Dutch neutrality very much in mind. The day before, the German government officially recognised the neutrality of the Netherlands, although it was quick to request that its Dutch counterpart give it benevolent (*wohlwollend*) treatment.⁵¹ At least until late 1916, the impact of the Netherlands as a source of foodstuffs for Germany cannot be underestimated. The million tonnes received by Germany in 1915 and 1916 accounted for 50 per cent of Germany's agricultural imports.⁵² German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg even asserted that his country could continue fighting on two fronts until the end of 1916 because of this trade.⁵³ There were other pressing reasons for supporting Dutch neutrality in the first few war years: the Netherlands provided flank cover against a possible amphibious assault by the Allies on Germany's western frontier⁵⁴ and granted credit for Germany's foreign purchases.

During 1917, the situation changed. The Allied blockade became more successful after the United States entered the war, and neutral countries relied almost exclusively on their domestic produce to feed themselves. This reduced the volume of goods available for trade with Germany, which decreased further after the Allies negotiated a series of agricultural agreements, forcing the Dutch to export half their surpluses across the Channel. Even smugglers had fewer goods to move across the eastern border. The attraction of Dutch neutrality, therefore, dimmed for Germany. In recognition, the German leadership had fewer qualms about demanding more comprehensive concessions from the Dutch and the threat of war increased consider-

Map 2: The Netherlands and the Schlieffen Plan, 1905 and 1908



ably. Although Germany verged on declaring war on several occasions after February 1917, it never did so, mainly because it had more urgent war aims. Admittedly, strong reasons for invading the Netherlands did exist – among which the use of the territory as an Allied spy base must not be underestimated – but they were definitely less important than the defeat of the Russians in the east and the rest of the Allies and associated powers in the west. For Germany at least, continued Dutch neutrality remained preferable to opening up another front.

For Great Britain (the other major potential threat to the Netherlands), there was one compelling reason why it would not violate its neutrality in 1914, however much it may have wanted to do so. It simply could not infringe the rights of a neutral when it had ostensibly entered the war in the name of protecting those of 'little Belgium'.⁵⁵ Hence, on 5 August, the British government announced it would respect Dutch neutrality as long as it received the same rights as the Central Powers.⁵⁶ In terms of blockading Germany, the irony of the situation was that it would have been

much better for Britain if the Netherlands had entered the war on either side. For the same reason that Germany valued Dutch neutrality – to circumvent a blockade – the Allies despised it. As a report of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) concluded in December 1912:

In order to bring the greatest possible pressure to bear upon Germany, it is essential that the Netherlands... should either be entirely friendly to this country, in which case we should limit their overseas trade, or that they should be definitely hostile, in which case we should extend the blockade to their ports.⁵⁷

Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, reinforced the strategic advantages of a belligerent Netherlands in September 1914:

From a purely naval point of view, war with Holland [sic] would be better for us than neutrality. Their reinforcement of German naval forces would be puny, and the closing of the Rhine, which we could accomplish without the slightest additional effort, is almost vital to the efficiency of the naval blockade.⁵⁸

It is little wonder then that Britain and its allies had few reservations about restricting Dutch shipping. Along with Germany's U-boat attacks on neutral ships, the Allied blockade of neutrals presented one of the most blatant contraventions of neutrality laws during the Great War.

In practical terms, however, even if it had wanted to seize Dutch territory, Great Britain had few realistic chances of doing so. Germany would not have allowed it, and it was highly unlikely that an amphibious assault by the Allies could succeed before the Kaiser's armies captured the Netherlands' heartland. Despite the CID's assertions in 1912, Britain did not wish to see Germany controlling the Netherlands. It would not only have opened up ports on the North Sea and Channel, from which the Germans could launch naval operations, it would also have provided airfields close enough to bomb the British Isles.⁵⁹ Likewise, enemy control over the mouths of the Rhine, Maas, and Schelde had to be avoided. Moreover, the potential long-term consequences of German dominance over the Netherlands frightened British policymakers:

Practically [they] recognized that while Germany had a very great interest in keeping Holland [sic] neutral in an Anglo-German war, as this would assure her a flow of goods through the Dutch neutral ports in spite of a British blockade, the British had an almost equal interest in a neutral Holland, for the moment Holland ceased to be neutral she would be overrun by Germany and though Britain would then be able to block the traffic over Holland, the end of the war would probably find the Germans so strongly entrenched in that country that some sort of close, permanent relations between the two countries would have to be acquiesced in.⁶⁰

In such a scenario, the only real benefit would have been the capture of resources in the Dutch East Indies, but this was definitely a minor victory if Germany already controlled northwest Europe.

If it was preferable to have the Dutch on the Allied side rather than neutral, it was certainly preferable to have them neutral than occupied by Germany. Neutrality at least allowed the Allies the use of the Netherlands as a base from which to obtain intelligence from Germany and occupied Belgium, and enabled Belgians to escape and join the Allied armies.⁶¹ In fact, the Head of the British Imperial General Staff acknowledged that had it not been for its intelligence operations in the Netherlands, its entire secret service would have collapsed during the war.⁶² As we shall see, Germany was also gravely concerned about Allied intelligence operations, so much so that in 1915, it went to the huge expense and effort to erect a lethal electric fence along 300 kilometres of the Belgian-Dutch land border.

Dutch neutrality remained an on-going problem for Britain during the war. While the Allies remained in a precarious military position, they could not afford to have the Netherlands join Germany. This meant that right up until September 1918, when the tide on the western front finally turned in favour of the Allies, they had to prevent the Dutch from participating in the war. It meant that while they pressured the Netherlands into all manner of economic concessions, when it came to the crunch, Dutch independence had to be accorded higher priority. As a result, through 1917 and 1918, the Allies had little choice but to let the Netherlands compromise its neutrality in favour of the Central Powers. With the increased pressures placed on the Dutch by the Germans, neutrality ceased being as attractive as it might have been for the Allies, yet they could not afford to violate it themselves. Thus, it was the balance of conflicting great power interests in the Netherlands that was chiefly responsible for keeping the country out of the war.⁶³

Dutch Neutrality During the Great War

While the major belligerents had much to do with the continued non-participation of the Netherlands in the Great War, this would have been impossible had it not done everything in its power to make neutrality attractive to them. Because the neutrality stakes were so high, how ably the country exercised its obligations and agreements was central to its continued non-belligerency. As a result, the Dutch had to uphold the strictest standards of impartiality; they also did their utmost to abide as closely as possible by relevant international laws. Next to the United States, before it became a belligerent, the Netherlands was the most vocal neutral in its protests against neutrality violations.⁶⁴ But when protests and recourse to international law failed, only flexibility and compromise could take their place. Neutrality may have had idealistic connotations in the public mind, but its preservation had a clear pragmatic end: to stay out of the war at whatever cost.⁶⁵

To this end, the Dutch placed a strong emphasis on humanitarian activities. They sent ambulances to the various war fronts in eastern and western Europe,⁶⁶ facilitated food shipments to occupied Belgium,⁶⁷ enabled the exchange of injured prisoners of war between Britain and Germany (at the expense of the neutral government), and offered to intern prisoners of war as well as enemy civilians within their own borders. They also tried to facilitate peace negotiations, albeit unsuccessfully,

again with the hope of being seen as indispensable. Likewise, Dutch diplomatic staff looked after the interests of citizens of various belligerent nations who resided in enemy territory: they represented Turkish, Austria-Hungarian and German civilians in the *Entente*-friendly states of China, Brazil, Greece, and Siam (now Thailand) and did the same for Allied expatriates in Germany, occupied Belgium, Bulgaria, and Turkey.⁶⁸

Apart from humanitarian activities, everything was done within their own borders to dissuade would-be invaders. The mobilised army and navy manned the frontiers, patrolled territorial waters, and sought to increase the size and strength of their forces and defences. Military deterrence was a central component of neutrality: other states might think twice about invading if the costs involved were deemed too great. While the Netherlands could never compete on anything like equal terms with the armed might of Germany, Britain or France, it could, or so it hoped, increase its military strength sufficiently to be seen as a nuisance. The armed forces were equally important for the practical aspects of neutrality maintenance: by preventing border violations, whether they came in the form of foreign troops, smuggled goods, spies, or aeroplanes. These tasks were essential, firstly, because they signalled that the country had the right intentions and was prepared to do its utmost to protect itself, and, secondly, because they warranted that the belligerents had no legal reason to invade.

Naturally, both sides tried to gain the maximum advantage out of Dutch neutrality and endeavoured to minimise the benefits for their opponents. Initially, their demands were relatively easy to accommodate and the compromises made did not interfere too drastically with the strictures of international law nor with the well-being of the country. After the first year of conflict, as the costs of war increased, the number of casualties rose, and the stalemate on the western front deepened, the belligerents used the neutrals to claim advantage over their opponents in other ways. By late 1915, economic warfare among the belligerents intensified by means of blockades and the indiscriminate sinking of enemy merchant ships. Increasingly, neutral nations became the victims of these attacks and the Netherlands was no exception. Through 1916, economic restrictions imposed by Great Britain and Germany made the Netherlands' position increasingly difficult and upholding strict neutrality ultimately untenable. Finding compromises took far greater diplomatic skill than ever before and, once the United States entered the war in April 1917, it was nigh impossible to steer a middle course. During the last two years of the war, the Netherlands' situation became perilous. In attempting to stay out of the war at whatever cost, it lost much of its sovereign independence and its domestic economy suffered.

By 1917, many of the advantages of keeping the Netherlands neutral had been lost to the *Entente* and Central Powers. Furthermore, the deterrence value of the Netherlands' armed forces had decreased significantly. On all grounds – diplomatic, economic, and military – neutrality had been severely circumscribed. What kept the Netherlands out of the war at this point was not its strict adherence to law or its abidance by impartiality standards, both of which had to be renegotiated with the combatants. Nor was continued non-belligerency dependent on the same reasons that Great Britain and Germany had respected in August 1914. Instead, it would

seem that neither Britain and its allies nor Germany and its allies were willing to force the Netherlands into the war. They did not have the resources available to divert troops to another field of battle. Instead, the combatants forced as many concessions out of the Dutch who, in turn, tried to accommodate them wherever possible.

The following pages will take up the story of how the allure of neutrality, which gleamed so brightly for an entire century (1815-1914), could be dulled in a period of a little over four years. It does so by analysing the mechanics involved in staying neutral during a world war: What does a country have to do within its borders to uphold neutrality and keep invaders away? Specifically, the role played by the armed forces, the so-called 'police force' of neutrality, will be evaluated. Of all the resources and institutions at its disposal, the Dutch government relied on the military, especially the army, to protect the territorial integrity, sovereign existence, and security of the country. How successful it was in undertaking these tasks will be assessed, as will the difficulty of keeping hundreds of thousands of conscripted men mobilised for such a long time without ever entering into battle. Above all, what the next eleven chapters illustrate is how hazardous walking the tightrope between peace and war actually was, let alone juggling the various interests along the way.

Chapter

2

A Pack of Lions: The Dutch Armed Forces

*We live free, we live happy, Hoorah!
Injustice no man among us will ever allow.
That's why whoever crosses our borders
Shall find a pack of lions here.
Hoorah, Hoorah, Hoorah!
Hoorah, Hoorah, Hoorah!*

– Willem Steiner, 'Mobilisation Song', August 1914¹

The Dutch armed forces – army, navy and air branch – were responsible for security and defence. They were also responsible for protecting the country's international neutrality obligations 'on the ground'. Proclaiming neutrality alone, of course, could not guarantee independence in wartime. Measures had to be put in place to protect the integrity of both land and sea borders, to supervise cross-border traffic, and to deal with any breaches of neutrality. At the same time, military preparedness was essential in case neutrality failed and one of the Netherlands' neighbours invaded. In line with developments in other European states, the Dutch military leadership did its utmost to improve the armed forces' defensive capabilities in the years leading up to 1914. This was, in itself, not easy given the peculiar geography of the country and general loathing of military service among its population. This chapter serves as an introduction to the main players in the coming narrative, and highlights some of the pressing concerns for the military leadership even before the Great War began and Dutch neutrality was declared.

Strategies for Defending of the Indefensible

The strategic directives of 1911 and 1913 outlined the scenarios that the General Staff expected the Netherlands to face in any future war. Defence strategies had changed little, in essence, since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. Defending the Netherlands meant defending its centre. Most cities, industrial, and commercial areas were located within the aptly named Fortress Holland (*Vesting Holland*) that encompassed the provinces of North and South Holland. At the core of the fortress, 42 fortifications encircled the city of Amsterdam, the position to which armed forces (and civilians) would retreat if the outer defences were breached. With some justification, commentators described the fortified position as one of the strongest in Europe,² although its strategic value had decreased markedly by 1914 due to vast improvements in

mobile artillery. The strength of the defences lay in the use of inundation. The Netherlands' characteristic landscape, so cherished by tourists, artists and locals, posed a defensive nightmare, at least in theory. Flat featureless terrain provided little natural protection against invasion, so fortified lines and inundations were vital. Over the centuries, the Dutch had developed an intricate network of sluices, canals, dykes, and dams to control the ever-present danger of flooding. The network used to keep water out could be reversed when necessary to flood the plains and, thereby, it was hoped, halt any invaders. The inundations were regulated from the New Holland Waterline, Fortress Holland's first defensive line in the east.

While the fortifications remained important in the strategic directives of 1911 and 1913, Lieutenant-General C.J. Snijders and his General Staff also sought to incorporate greater defensive flexibility by deploying a mobile field army outside Fortress Holland. Snijders was influenced by a European trend that stressed offence as the best means of defence.³ The increased range and capacity of the railway network made the operation of a mobile army particularly feasible.⁴ After 1900, conscripts were trained for duty within the field army first and would only be transferred to the fortifications upon the completion of their initial conscription period (of anywhere between five to eight years). In other words, the fortifications were to serve as the last line of defence, rather than the first.

The General Staff hoped that a field army could defend the outer provinces and uphold the country's neutrality obligations at its borders. However, the Netherlands' geography provided two further problems that had to do with the shape of the provinces of Limburg and Zeeland. They were impossible to defend, yet essential to the country's neutrality. Limburg jutted out into Belgium and Germany, an easy target for an attack from either direction. The province was too thin, too flat, and too long. An invader could easily cut off any troops stationed there. The Maas river further complicated matters; it ran along the Belgian border and sliced Limburg from the rest of the Netherlands. As a result, the strategic directives provided only token defence to Limburg: enough troops to blow up the Maas bridges, nominally protect its three borders, and make an advance through the slender territory difficult. Yet this paper-thin bulwark was absolutely necessary to deter Germany (a potential benefactor of the Limburg route), and to convince other nations, especially Britain and Belgium, that the Dutch would protect their territorial integrity there.⁵

Zeeland was vulnerable to attack from two directions as well: on land via Belgium, and by sea via the Channel. The province contained the two mouths of the Schelde and consisted of a series of islands, split from each other by river tributaries and sea inlets. As in Limburg, troops stationed in Zeeland could easily be isolated from the rest of the country. Here again, the General Staff allocated only a token defence force. An option considered in 1910, amid much international controversy, involved constructing a large fortified position at Vlissingen (Flushing), on the western mouth of the Schelde.⁶ Britain, Belgium, and France accused the Netherlands of giving in to German pressure on the matter, implying that the country was neglecting its neutrality were the nation to go ahead with the plan.⁷ In the end, the project was abandoned although foundations were laid. While artillery pieces des-

tined for Vlissingen were ordered from German Krupps factories, the war broke out before they could arrive. Krupps refused to fill any foreign orders after August 1914.⁸ Nonetheless, the controversy indicates how centrally the river and the province of Zeeland could figure in a continental dispute involving the major powers and meant that Zeeland's neutrality had to be carefully defended, perhaps more so than any other part of the country.

Having to Do One's Duty: Conscription

In order to ensure the best possible defence, the country needed well-trained, well-equipped and well-led armed forces. Like most European nations, the Netherlands' constitution compelled its male citizens into military service.⁹ Unlike its European counterparts, however, low pay, a general dislike for military service, and an in-bred suspicion of military traditions discouraged most Dutch men from volunteering.¹⁰ Officers tended to be the only volunteers and were generally perceived with the same disdain as farmers, as one contemporary put it, being neither greatly liked nor appreciated.¹¹ It was not that the Dutch were necessarily anti-military in these attitudes, but they were definitely non-military: the armed forces were 'necessary' but they remained an 'evil' nonetheless,¹² which helps to explain why conscription was absolutely essential, why there were considerable officer shortages before and during the war, and why the mobilisation in August 1914 was generally unpopular.¹³

Regardless of public opinion, the length of conscription, type of training, and requirements of service were adjusted in the decade leading up to the outbreak of war, with the hope of improving not only defence but also increasing the army's deterrence effect. In an era of European arms races and rising militarism, there was a perceived need among the military leadership to persuade parliament to legislate for improvements. In 1898, parliament passed a personal conscription law,¹⁴ stating that on 1 January following the year of their eighteenth birthday, all men should sign themselves up for a conscription lottery, which occurred in the year they turned twenty.¹⁵ There were several grounds for disqualification, including certain physical criteria, such as heights under 1.55 metres, medical unfitness, a brother already serving, previous dismissal from the armed forces, a religious vocation, or a criminal record.¹⁶ A *kostwinnaarschap* ('breadwinner's status') plea could, if the Minister of War agreed, exempt a person from conscription, as long as his family was seriously economically disadvantaged.¹⁷ If a conscript intended to move to the colonies in the near future he could avoid compulsory service as well, a clear indication of the importance of empire to national interests.¹⁸

Interestingly enough, in an attempt to obtain the best possible soldiers, a tightening of fitness criteria occurred in 1912 so that fewer men passed the medical examination.¹⁹ Effectively, it cancelled the supposedly random nature of conscription and made the lottery less significant. For example, in the city of Dordrecht in 1914, 477 young men turned twenty. Of these, 132 were freed from conscription through brother service, previous military employment, *kostwinnaarschap*, religious association, and criminal behaviour. Another 150 were rejected due to medical unfitness. In all, 195

were available for the lottery. Only eight of these were freed via the lottery – very few compared to the large number declared unsuitable on medical grounds.²⁰ Not surprisingly, the High Command adjusted the medical criteria during the war so that as many men as possible could be conscripted, regardless of their fitness to serve. It also cancelled the lottery.²¹ The quantity of soldiers, rather than their quality, became paramount.

Before 1914, successive Ministers of War faced numerous obstacles in trying to increase military budgets and conscription levies, as parliament was typically loathed to spend money on defence. H.P. Staal (Minister of War 1905-1907), for example, resigned from his post in 1906 when the First Chamber of the Estates General refused to accept his proposals.²² Despite significant population increases after 1861 (from 3.5 million to 5 million in 1901), it took forty years for parliament to raise the yearly conscription figure from 11,000 to 17,500.²³ The figure improved further in 1912 to 23,000.²⁴ Yet, up to 50 per cent of men were never conscripted and, thus, never served. Another problem was the quality of training received by conscripts. From 1901 onwards, while 70 per cent of the annual intake was fully trained (eight and a half months for infantry and 18 months for the cavalry), the rest were trained for only four months.²⁵ When compared to the two years of training undertaken on average in the conscript armies of Germany and France, this was deemed inadequate.²⁶

Hendrik Colijn (Minister of War 1911-1913) managed to implement widespread changes in the armed forces when he took office. International crises in Morocco, the Balkans, and elsewhere made the Netherlands' position far more precarious. Europe was becoming increasingly unstable, and in recognition of the need to boost security, parliament became more amenable to military improvements and expenditure. Colijn's Military Law of 1912 ensured that the regular armed forces became more youthful by increasing the number of men conscripted annually, while decreasing the length of service.²⁷ Colijn also increased the four-month training period to eight and a half months, except for those unable to complete this, who were trained for six and a half months.²⁸ Specialists, such as cavalry troops and gun-layers, served and trained longer: fortress artillery and torpedo corps received 15 months instruction, while mounted troops were trained for two years.²⁹ Furthermore, by 1913, when parliament accepted Colijn's *Landstorm* law, the state could call up almost every male citizen under the age of 40 for some type of armed service, whether in the military, *landweer* (first reserve), or *landstorm* (second reserve).

But since the laws passed before 1914 were not retroactive, when soldiers mobilised in August 1914, they served under different regulations and had different levels of proficiency. Colijn's war laws had come too late. The four oldest contingents (in the *landweer*) had become military initiates under the 1861 Military Law, while most of the others were conscripted under the laws passed between 1901 and 1911.³⁰ In other words, the level of expertise enjoyed by soldiers during the 1914 mobilisation varied greatly. The improvements made in 1912 only applied to intakes conscripted from 1913 onwards. The 1914 contingent of infantry, as well as the 1913 and 1914 cavalry and mounted artillery troops, had not yet completed training by the outbreak of war. In effect, only the 1913 infantry intake fully benefited from Colijn's improvements.

Hence, these latest laws were unable to make a significant impact on the mobilised forces in August 1914. This, in turn, influenced the course of the mobilisation and meant that Colijn's laws would remain relatively ineffective during the course of the war, as new troops were made war-ready as quickly as possible, training for no more than four months at most.

Not True Reserves? Landweer and Landstorm Troops

Of the three military institutions – the army, navy and air branch – the army was the largest and most important for defence. In 1914, all but a very small proportion of conscripts served in the army, and of these, 60 per cent served in the regular forces, the first level of entry.³¹ The other 40 per cent served as *landweer* or *landstorm* soldiers. The 1901 *Landweer* law had created the reserve force, which replaced the old-fashioned and highly ineffective *schutterijen* (militia reserves).³² Effectively, *landweer* service was an extension of a soldier's regular conscription, extending his military service by seven more years, although revisions to the legislation in 1913 decreased this to five years.³³

Like the *schutterijen* before it, the *landweer* was organised at a regional level.³⁴ The eleven provinces were divided into 48 *landweer* districts, each serving as a base for resident conscripts. Localisation allowed troops to serve in the vicinity of their homes, cutting the cost of accommodation and travel as well as shortening mobilisation times. There were other logistical advantages. The provinces with the greatest defence needs also had the largest populations and supported the greatest numbers of *landweer* troops. Nearly one-half of the battalions lived within the walls of Fortress Holland. Not surprisingly, *landweer* troops in the provinces of North and South Holland manned its fortifications, with those in Amsterdam occupying the city's fortified positions. Outside Fortress Holland, the greatest concentrations of *landweer* were in North Brabant, Gelderland, and Limburg, areas where the field army would also be located once mobilised. *Landweer* here were used either in support of the field army or as border guards.

The General Staff provided further coherence to army structure in 1913 when it organised regular army units in relation to their place of residence. As a result, conscripts served with other locals in an army battalion and then transferred together into a corresponding *landweer* battalion. For example, in the city of Gouda there were four conscription districts. Upon entering the army, men in district 1 served in the II Company of 15 Regiment Infantry. After six years' service, these same men were transferred to the 29 *Landweer* Infantry Battalion.³⁵ Future conscripts from Gouda would be stationed in the same formations, allowing greater ease of replacement and administration. Unfortunately, this re-organisation, like Colijn's conscription laws, came too late and by August 1914 only applied to the very latest army and *landweer* sections, adding another level of administrative confusion.³⁶ There were also exceptions. Specialised troops, including fortified artillery sections, did not transfer locally but remained in their regular army formations to gain continuity in skills, training, and organisation. This plan was also not fully operational by August 1914, although it was implemented during the war.³⁷

Map 3: Number of *landweer* districts per province



Military commanders debated about what role the *landweer* should play in defence,³⁸ especially whether it should be a reserve force, a complement to the field army, or fulfil a more specialised function at the borders. Many believed that the force was incapable of anything other than reserve duty.³⁹ Nevertheless, in 1910, several sections trained specifically for border patrol. Others served under territorial commanders, in the fortified positions, and in the field army. By 1914, the *landweer* had become an integral part of the army with specialised tasks that were not delegated to other sections. Consequently, it was not a true reserve force. But still there were real anxieties concerning the readiness of the troops and whether or not their training – six days per year – was anywhere near enough for the important functions assigned to them.⁴⁰

Colijn's *Landstorm* law of 1913 created the reserve that was effectively non-existent after the *landweer* had become indispensable to army organisation. The *land-*

storm acted as a defensive safety net, as it enabled the military to call all men under the age of 40 to some form of military service, whether they had served previously or not.⁴¹ It was a comprehensive law, yet there were restrictions. Most importantly, *landstormers* could only be called up if the country was at war, threatened by war, or involved in some other extraordinary circumstance or crisis. They were to be used solely for emergencies, a reason why conscription in the *landstorm* was so difficult to evade.⁴² An important distinction existed regarding conscription as well. Men who had served in the military at some stage (either as conscripts or volunteers) were liable for 'armed' service. 'Unarmed' service applied to all others who had avoided conscription. They were registered as soon as they were freed from the conscription lottery.⁴³ Unlike their armed equivalents, it was not intended that unarmed *landstorm* troops would ever fight but would be used in support of front-line troops in supply, administration, and construction roles. During the mobilisation, the *landstorm* was not called up (because so few had become eligible for its service), yet the *landstorm* would prove a ready source of conscripts during the war.

Few and Far Between: The Voluntary Landstorm Corps

In 1867, King Willem III declared that rifle clubs and other voluntary associations relating to national defence could be established.⁴⁴ As long as they were registered, these clubs were allowed to participate in shooting and target practice.⁴⁵ The declaration had a dual purpose: to provide an unofficial army reserve and to encourage pride in military activities. By 1914, around 400 rifle clubs and similar societies existed with a total membership of 18,000.⁴⁶ The *Landstorm* decree of 1913 raised the possibility of these clubs forming voluntary *landstorm* sections – with members experienced in handling weapons – within the military structure.⁴⁷

On 4 August 1914, the government issued a decree allowing voluntary association within the *landstorm*.⁴⁸ Some groups enthusiastically responded to this call-to-arms. The *Ochtendblad* newspaper included several advertisements: One old 'Transvaal soldier calls up true fatherlanders for a volunteer corps', the Netherlands' Zionist Student Organisation urged its members to establish a similar unit, as did the Student Corps in Delft. The next day, the newspaper stated that 61 students at the university in Delft were prepared to serve their Queen in the voluntary *landstorm*, if she would have them.⁴⁹ Such eagerness was isolated. One contemporary commentator estimated that only six to seven per cent of rifle club members joined up.⁵⁰ By early 1915, the voluntary *landstorm* consisted of barely 2,000 men.⁵¹

Disdain for military service certainly limited the attraction of voluntary *landstorm* service among the general public. Volunteers were viewed as peculiar because they chose to join the army without pay. Another reason why the voluntary association was unpopular had to do with the implied insignificance of the volunteers within the established military hierarchy.⁵² Furthermore, joining the *landstorm* involved at least ten hours of military training a week, and if war was declared, full-time inclusion within the army. It also meant obeying army orders, following army regulations, and being disciplined according to army rules.⁵³ A possible contributing factor –

especially after stories reached the Netherlands of Belgian civilians executed as *franc-tireurs* by the Germans – was a fear that invaders would not accept their uniforms (which consisted of an orange armband with the emblem of the Netherlands) as a sign of their military allegiance.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, the volunteer associations had a unique character that distinguished them from regiments of conscripted troops. Some of the corps established proud traditions that lasted well into the 1920s.⁵⁵ They designed their own coat of arms, banners and flags, and proudly paraded them. After the war, many continued with sporadic training exercises and annual reunions.

Before 1914, few preparations had been made for the organisation, administration, and deployment of the volunteer *landstorm* within the army. They lacked weapons, experienced leaders, and instructors.⁵⁶ Although training was compulsory, disciplinary measures did not exist to ensure that troops turned up each week. According to one source, 70 per cent of voluntary *landstormers* were missing at training sessions.⁵⁷ Part of the problem was the lack of encouragement shown by the army itself. Officially, volunteer *landstorm* sections were responsible to the provincial Territorial Commander.⁵⁸ More often than not, there was little communication between them.⁵⁹ Once an Inspector of the *Landstorm* was appointed in February 1915, many of these communication, administration, and disciplinary problems were rectified.⁶⁰ The *landstorm* sections were now also able to form fully functioning corps.⁶¹

The numbers involved in the voluntary *landstorm* more than doubled during the war, although it still attracted only a small fraction of possible recruits. By November 1918, 194 officers, 1,375 non-commissioned officers and 5,207 other troops served as volunteer *landstormers*.⁶² During 1917, the organisation counted nine *landstorm* corps, four companies and 19 sections.⁶³ The true number of volunteers may have been much higher, since membership fluctuated as volunteers were conscripted into other military formations, including the *landstorm* proper. Such conscripts received no recognition for their previous volunteer associations. Officers were a little more fortunate. Early in 1917, the government ruled that they retained their voluntary *landstorm* rank on conscription because the army was in desperate need of officers.⁶⁴ However, by mid-1917 it became clear that many of the *landstorm* officers were not adequately trained.⁶⁵ The voluntary *landstorm* contributed little to the military or the neutrality of the Netherlands during the war, although it would have a key role to play as a citizen militia during the revolutionary atmosphere of 1918.

Field Army, Garrison and Territorial Troops

While the army was the most important armed force, the field army was its most important operational component. Consisting of nearly 90,000 troops, it was responsible for meeting and possibly defeating an invasion. In the case where the enemy was too strong, its role would change: it would hold out for as long as possible, biding time for other troops to ready the inundations, blow up bridges, and erect obstacles. The army would then retreat into Fortress Holland and reinforce the garrisons stationed there.⁶⁶ It had to be highly mobile and capable of advancing and retreating quickly and efficiently. It also had to be extremely flexible as it was uncertain where an invasion might occur.

Mobility and flexibility were enhanced by the partition of the army into self-sufficient divisions. Each of these was capable of fulfilling strategic directives without support from the others. The four divisions were organised in exactly the same way, although Division II had an additional two sections of mobile artillery attached.⁶⁷ The field army also contained the Cavalry Brigade, which came into being on 8 August 1914, a few days later than the infantry divisions.⁶⁸ It took longer to mobilise because of the large number of horses that had to be requisitioned and transported to a central location. The brigade constituted almost the entire cavalry strength of the army, consisting of four regiments of horse-riders and, as of 18 August 1914, four squadrons of cyclists.⁶⁹ This level of centralisation ensured a high degree of mobility. As the most mobile grouping, it made sense to keep it separate from the much slower infantry.

Table 1: The operational strength of the field army, August 1914

<i>Section</i>	<i>Troop Numbers</i>	<i>Total</i>
24 Infantry Regiments	each 3,300	79,200
4 Companies of Cyclists	each 160	640
4 Regiments Cavalry (Cavalry Brigade)	each 650	2,600
4 Regiments Field Artillery	each 1,300	5,200
1 Corps Mobile Artillery	450	450
4 Companies Pioneers	each 170	680
	Total:	88,770

Source: Munnekrede, 'De mobilisatie' p. 47.

The 1913 strategic directives specified a *verscherpte afwachtingsopstelling* ('intensified waiting position') for field army deployment: Division I mobilised on the western coast between IJmuiden and Hoek van Holland, Division II positioned itself from Nijmegen westwards along the IJssel and Rhine rivers, Division III bunked in North Brabant with detachments in Zeeland and along the Maas river in Limburg, and Division IV acted as a strategic reserve in the centre of the country around the city of Amersfoort.⁷⁰ Each of the brigades moved as closely to the *afwachtingsopstelling* as possible on 1 August 1914. The Cavalry Brigade mobilised in and around Eindhoven, where, in a rather ironic contrast to its intrinsically mobile function, it would be stationed for the entire war.⁷¹

Next to the field army, the most significant defences on land were the fortified positions. After 1900, strategic use of fortifications underwent a subtle change. While in the nineteenth century they had been very important – almost the entire army was stationed in them – the field army became pre-eminent after the turn of the century. Fortress Holland existed to cover the field army's flanks and to provide a strong retreat position.⁷² The types of troops mobilised into the fortifications reflect the shift from rigid to mobile defence. Where in 1914 the field army boasted 72 infantry battal-

Map 4: Field army *afwachtingsopstelling* ('waiting position'), August 1914



ions, the fortified positions operated on less than half this strength. In total, moreover, 23 of the 35 fortification battalions comprised of *landweeer*. In other words, the fortifications supported greater numbers of older soldiers. The younger regular conscripts were used in the field army, leaving the less physically demanding jobs for the *landweeer*.

Table 2: Number of battalions in the fortified positions, 1914

<i>Fortification</i>	<i>Number of battalions</i>
New Holland Waterline	21 battalions
Hellevoetsluis	3 battalions
Willemstad	2.75 battalions
Den Helder	3 battalions
Amsterdam	5 battalions
Neuzen (Terneuzen) and Ellewoutsdijk	0.25 battalion
Total number of battalions:	35 battalions <i>(including 23 landweeer battalions)</i>

Source: 'Afwachtingsopstelling van het leger 1 Augustus 1914' in IMG/DC 91A/3.

The New Holland Waterline was pivotal to defence plans and, as a result, it housed most of the fortification battalions. There were several reasons for this predominance: firstly, the Waterline was the principal retreat location for troops stationed outside it; it was also the first line of inundation; and, thirdly, if the line was breached, the troops holding it could retreat into fortifications further back, especially into the fortified position of Amsterdam, the final stronghold of defence. Amsterdam's five battalions were adequate to man the fortified positions in and around the city, but they needed the added strength of any retreating troops to withstand an attack.

In 1914, Fortress Holland had the reputation of being one of the best fortified positions in Europe, but it was incomplete and out-of-date. Much of the Waterline contained gun emplacements with extremely limited traverse and inferior range compared to the mobile batteries employed by potential enemies. Furthermore, most of the supposedly 'bomb-free' buildings could not withstand the firepower of modern howitzers and mortars.⁷³ Artillery in the New Holland Waterline consisted of 12 and 15 cm long-range cannons, 15 cm calibre guns and mortars, 10 cm and 7 cm flank-artillery, almost all old or out-dated, as well as smaller cannons for close-range bombardment, including a few modern 6 cm guns.⁷⁴ Many artillery pieces not only needed replacing but they were also permanently fastened on top of fortification walls, especially easy targets for attack.⁷⁵ A related concern arose over the effectiveness of the inundations once the range of mobile artillery extended into tens of kilometres. Flooding the countryside in front of the Waterline could not keep the fortifications outside the reach of heavy artillery bombardment.⁷⁶ Of course, inundation would make an infantry advance towards the Waterline extremely difficult,⁷⁷ and to a degree this offset some of its more marked deficiencies. The fortifications around Amsterdam were in much healthier shape, however, consisting of smaller, yet stronger, positions with a higher quality close- and long-range artillery than those of the Waterline.⁷⁸ But even the effectiveness of the Amsterdam fortifications was diminished by improvements in the range and firepower of mobile artillery before, and certainly during, the war.

While strategists hoped that Fortress Holland (and especially Amsterdam) would hold out against an attack for several months,⁷⁹ the relative ease with which German heavy artillery sacked similar fortifications in Belgium, at Liège in August and Antwerp in October 1914, demonstrated that this was highly unlikely. With these Belgian defeats in mind, Snijders would, in October 1918, describe the Netherlands' fortifications as 'undefensible'.⁸⁰ The declining strength of fortifications and artillery was an ongoing worry for High Command throughout the war and reinforced the importance of the field army's tasks in front of the fortified lines, one reason why garrison troops and certain artillery pieces were moved out of the fortifications into field army units or to the borders.

The nature of Dutch defence, based on a fortified centre supplemented by a concentrated mobile force, left much of the country without a ready military presence. The north and northeast of the Netherlands were especially vulnerable to attack. These areas were not completely bereft of soldiers. Local *landweer* (and later *landstorm*) troops were stationed there, although fewer in number than elsewhere. They

were responsible for protecting important strategic positions such as railway stations and bridges. More importantly, along the borders and coastlines they monitored who and what crossed into and out of the country. Specialist troops also mobilised into peripheral areas. For example, bridge-building sections (*pontoniers*) and other engineering troops ensured that river crossings and railway routes were destroyed once an invasion was underway. They also undertook the building of temporary crossings and pontoons over waterways.⁸¹

Table 3: Position of *landweeer* battalions outside Fortress Holland, 1914

<i>Provinces</i>	<i>Landweeer battalions stationed at</i>
Friesland-Drenthe-Groningen (TB in Friesland)	Sneek, Delfzijl and Assen
Overijssel-Gelderland (TB in Overijssel)	Zwolle, Deventer, Hengelo and Zutphen
North Brabant-Limburg-Gelderland (TB in North Brabant)	Nijmegen, Venlo, Roermond and Maastricht
Zeeland (TB in Zeeland)	Middelburg and Vlissingen

Source: 'Afwachtingsopstelling van het leger 1 Augustus 1914' in IMG/DC 91A/3.

Guns and Artillery

All European armies modernised their weaponry during the two decades before the outbreak of war. The Dutch did their utmost to keep up with these developments. With the increase in conscript numbers and the creation of the *landweeer* and *landstorm*, it was important not only to update available weaponry and improve supplies of rifles, machine-guns and artillery, but also to ensure stocks of ammunition and their safe storage, as well as facilities and parts to repair and maintain weapons on hand. With the shift of strategic focus to the field army, supplying its mobile artillery and machine-gun needs was paramount. The not inconsiderable increases in the military budget between 1900 and 1914⁸² helped augment stocks of weapons and ammunition, although, as we will see in the next chapter, only part of the material requirements of the mobilised army were met by August 1914.

On paper, the weaponry available to the Dutch army compared reasonably well with that used in the armies of the major European powers in 1914. There were enough rifles available for each mobilised soldier (234,000 *Männlicher* models in total), although revolvers were far from standard issue for every officer.⁸³ Ammunition stocks were initially low for both weapons, but this was one of the few areas in which the local armaments industry was able to keep up with demand.⁸⁴ In 1914, at least, the Netherlands matched the belligerents in machine-gun numbers (a total of 780 mainly *Schwarzlose* guns), although more than two-thirds of these were older

models permanently stationed in the fortified positions.⁸⁵ Only 32 machine-guns were mobile and deployed with the field army, equating to nearly two guns per battalion. While it may not seem like many, the potential of the machine-gun had not yet been fully realised, and this ratio was common across the combatant armies.⁸⁶

As many among the High Command realised, there was a discernable difference between the Netherlands and its neighbours in terms of artillery might.⁸⁷ In the fortified positions, especially in the New Holland Waterline, the quality of artillery was well below par. Although 2,000 pieces were made operational during the 1914 mobilisation, only 600 were new 6 cm quick-fire guns with limited range.⁸⁸ At least two-thirds of the new guns operated outside the fortifications. The field army deployed nearly 200 somewhat heavier 7.4 cm calibre field artillery pieces, but it only had access to ten howitzers and two heavy 10.5 cm calibre cannons.⁸⁹ In terms of size, strength, mobility, and quality, therefore, available artillery in the field army and the fortifications was grossly deficient. The situation would only get worse during the war: A paucity of shells could not be rectified, while the army was also unable to improve its stock of artillery pieces. Without outside help, the Dutch could not keep up with the technological advances of the large military powers.

Policing the Force

One distinct organisation within the Dutch armed forces, namely the *Koninklijke Marechaussee* (military police), warrants discussion because it played a pivotal role in the preservation of neutrality. On the eve of war, the *Marechaussee* fulfilled a dual function in society, as a police force within the military as well as an *élite* force responsible for national security. In peacetime, its civilian duties took precedence because only a handful of officers were needed to watch over the annual intake of conscript trainees. Therefore, most *Marechaussee* officers were stationed in towns and villages along the borders. They conducted regular checks of people and goods entering or leaving, acted as adjuncts to customs officers, and undertook more traditional constabulary work alongside local police. In wartime, their responsibilities increased substantially as the mobilised army and navy required a considerable *Marechaussee* presence for military law enforcement duties, guarding internment camps, surveillance of suspected spies, and intelligence collecting for the General Staff.⁹⁰

The military responsibilities of the *Marechaussee* took up time and resources, and held precedence over civilian duties. Once mobilised, several mayors complained bitterly that crime rates had increased in their towns because the *Marechaussee* were no longer stationed there.⁹¹ As early as 5 August 1914, one Attorney General requested the return of the officers to their pre-war postings in North Brabant and Limburg, due to an influx of Austrian and German refugees fleeing Belgium.⁹² During the refugee crisis in October 1914, the *Marechaussee* was stretched to its limit. Its border responsibilities further intensified when smuggling spun out of control through the course of 1915 and 1916.

The *Marechaussee's* wartime capabilities were certainly overextended.⁹³ In 1917, high-ranking members of the organisation discussed whether or not they should

relinquish some of their obligations and focus completely on either civilian or military duties.⁹⁴ In the end, despite their strong affiliation with the armed forces, they decided to focus on their civilian responsibilities. No doubt, part of the reasoning behind the decision centred on the amount of public respect attached to its civilian functions. Another consideration was the continuity afforded by such work, which did not exist in the military domain. It was highly likely that after the war, military police work would return to a bare minimum.

As a result, a *Korps Politie Troepen* (Police Troop Corps) was established in April 1918 to take over the military functions of the *Marechaussee*.⁹⁵ The corps maintained order and discipline among conscripted troops and court-martialled arrestees.⁹⁶ Its training was virtually identical to the *Marechaussee*, although it did not have the authority to arrest civilians.⁹⁷ While the use of police troops was supposed to be a short-term measure, after the 1918 mutinies and revolutionary scares, the High Command believed it best to keep the military police units in reserve in case of future crises.⁹⁸ They were also used for guarding buildings left empty after demobilisation.⁹⁹ Over time, the *Marechaussee* lost its military jurisdictions completely and became a purely civilian police force whose primary focus was on border security.¹⁰⁰

Whoever Said 'Navy' Meant 'Indies' ¹⁰¹

So far, most of the attention has been on the army, principally because it was by far the largest military force in the country during the war, and controlled both the navy and recently-established air branch. Yet, historically, the Netherlands had a strong naval tradition. At the height of its Golden Age, its fleet ruled the waves, and was a true match for the navies of other powers. The warships of the Dutch Republic protected the interests of a burgeoning merchant class, whose mariners crossed the seven seas and established trading posts from the sugar islands of the Caribbean to the spice islands of Indonesia. The link between navy and empire remained strong for centuries. Closer to home, Dutch ships achieved impressive victories over Spanish and British fleets in the 16th and 17th centuries. But French occupation during the Napoleonic wars brought the era of Dutch naval strength to a decisive end. Nonetheless, even after the French withdrew in 1813, its empire and merchant marine remained impressive, the Dutch navy, however, was much reduced in size, and could no longer match those of its old rivals.

The naval arms race between Great Britain and Germany after 1900 resulted in major advances in technology and warship size and strength. The Dutch recognised that they must keep up with such improvements in order not to render their fleet entirely obsolete. Hence, naval budgets increased significantly before 1914 and the fleet was modernised wherever possible.¹⁰² The Naval Staff even participated in their own version of the classic 'battleship versus torpedo-boat' debate: should they concentrate on a small torpedo and submarine force, or on larger heavier *Dreadnought*-type warships?¹⁰³ Given the Netherlands' geographic situation and lack of a large industrial base at home, the former made far more sense, while in the colonies the reverse was true. When added together, the coastlines of the East and West Indies

stretched further than the circumference of the entire globe. The navy leadership stressed the advantage of larger warships for patrolling these vast waters, although acknowledging the value of smaller vessels and submarines around the Netherlands itself.¹⁰⁴

Unlike the army, which operated as a separate entity from its colonial equivalent, the navy had real problems balancing the duality of its defence demands at home and abroad. Its position was further complicated by the auxiliary role it played to the army in the Netherlands.¹⁰⁵ While the field army had shifted its emphasis from static fortification-based defence to mobility in the early 1900s, the navy had not changed its strategy since the mid-nineteenth century. Effectively, its purpose was to prevent amphibious landings on Dutch soil, provide extra firepower for coastal fortifications, and patrol territorial waters. In its operational programme, there was no call for any offensive action and while it remained an independent force, it was almost entirely beholden to the army.¹⁰⁶

In almost every matter relating to defence at home, the navy lost ground to the army. This was well illustrated in 1910 when the government reneged on its Vlissingen fort propositions in favour of changes to the military laws (including the *Militiewet* of 1912). Parliament was reluctant to accept both a naval and army reorganisation. Consequently, cabinet ministers had little concern about conceding on the naval budget, as long as parliament passed the military legislation unchanged. In the end, the international debate surrounding the building of the Vlissingen fortification moved attention away from the *Militiewet*, which was approved without controversy, while the building of the coastal fortifications was continuously postponed.¹⁰⁷

The navy repeatedly emphasised its importance in colonial security matters. In 1912, extensive lobbying saw official recognition of the navy's primacy in the East and West Indies over the colonial army.¹⁰⁸ It meant that early in 1914, the government passed a Naval Bill authorising the expansion of the fleet for imperial duty to include four battleships of 21,000 tonnes (with another one in reserve) and six torpedo cruisers of 1,200 tonnes, along with a number of destroyers, submarines, torpedo-boats and two minelayers. Construction was to take nine years.¹⁰⁹ The outbreak of war interrupted the building programme and of the proposed improvements only two cruisers were completed in 1916: the *Java* and *Sumatra*.¹¹⁰ The battleships were never built.¹¹¹

In August 1914, the navy mobilised three cruisers, five submarines, four minelayers, and up to 30 torpedo-boats in and around the Netherlands, while four cruisers and several support vessels patrolled the seas around Indonesia and the Caribbean.¹¹² Most of the European vessels were deployed from the Den Helder naval base and took up patrol duties along the coast, especially in major ports and inlets.¹¹³ Compared to the 65 battleships and 78 cruisers of the British Royal Navy, and 41 battleships and 40 cruisers of the Germany Imperial Fleet, the Dutch navy was minute in size.¹¹⁴ Its cruisers did not even reach the 9,000 tonne weight of belligerents' vessels. Nevertheless, the navy was in reasonable shape to fulfil its assigned tasks, barring the worst-case scenario of a full assault by either Germany or Britain.¹¹⁵ It is not the intention of this study to analyse the role of the navy or army in the

colonies, but it is significant to note that in terms of defence in Europe, what the navy could achieve during the war was limited largely by its overseas obligations.

Orange Dots in the Sky

In 1914, aerial warfare was an undeveloped part of military operations. By the end of the war, aeroplanes were playing an integral part in the strategic plans of the belligerents. The Netherlands also saw a considerable development in its air power between 1914 and 1918. The army recognised early on, thanks in large measure to Snijders, that aeroplanes had potential.¹¹⁶ Six privately owned aircraft and two air balloons were used in training exercises in 1911 and 1913,¹¹⁷ after which, the air branch was established as part of the army.¹¹⁸ From these humble beginnings, its growth was haphazard and fraught with difficulties.

On 1 August 1914, the ten officers and 31 administrative and engineering troops of the air branch mobilised and prepared four Farman F20 and F22 biplanes for patrol duties.¹¹⁹ The military budgets of 1913 and 1914 had allocated up to ten aircraft, but only four had arrived from France.¹²⁰ Their role in the first few weeks consisted of flights close to the borders, mainly to check on the progress of the German and Belgian armies. To facilitate border flights, two aeroplanes moved from their headquarters at Soesterberg to a new hangar in Gilze-Rijen.¹²¹ The other two planes flew along the border near Arnhem and Vlissingen.¹²² At first, there was only one flight per day.¹²³ Within a month, this frequency decreased even further when a storm in Zeeland wrecked the aircraft stationed at Vlissingen along with its storage tent. The Commander-in-Chief quickly authorised the building of wooden hangars to prevent future weather damage.¹²⁴ Another potential problem identified early on was the need to distinguish Dutch planes from those bearing the British union jack (later roundel) or German cross. To make sure border troops did not fire at Dutch aircraft, orange circles were painted on the fuselage and wings.¹²⁵

The most pressing problem for the air branch was improving and increasing its size. As soon as mobilisation began, Henri Wijnmalen, the owner of the recently refurbished Trompenburg aeroplane factory, travelled to France by way of crisis-torn Belgium to ensure that the delivery of the six overdue aeroplanes was honoured.¹²⁶ The aircraft eventually arrived. As with other forms of military equipment, acquisition of complete aeroplanes and components during the war remained difficult. The Trompenburg facilities managed to build nine flyable Farman aircraft in 1915,¹²⁷ but this aeroplane was of no great use other than as a training vehicle. Later that year, the design had been superseded by the belligerents' air forces. By 1917, the engines of the 1914 Farmans had completely worn out and were no longer usable.¹²⁸ The branch desperately needed modern aircraft, for which the army tried to place orders outside the Netherlands. By the end of 1917, France, Sweden, and Germany had supplied 38 complete or partial aircraft, including ten Fokker D-11 fighters and several Thulin engines.¹²⁹ The most ready source, however, came from the aeroplanes that landed on Dutch territory during the war. As a neutral nation, the Netherlands interned foreign aircraft breaching their air space. Conveniently, the Dutch were able

to buy many of these stranded machines from the warring states. This meant that the air branch had access to some of the most up-to-date technology from both sides. Its engineers carefully analysed the machines and built replicas of Sopwith and Nieuport types when engines were available.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, there were considerable problems. The Dutch had to manage without the expertise or resources to maintain the planes, let alone pilots to fly them.¹³¹ Internment was far from ideal; it was random and meant little consistency in structure or organisation could be achieved. But it was better than nothing, and it enabled the Netherlands to keep some parity with technological advances elsewhere.

The air branch saw significant improvements during the war. By December 1918, it possessed approximately 150 planes of various sizes and capabilities.¹³² Its staff consisted of 45 officers (mostly pilots) and 461 lower ranks (mostly support staff).¹³³ From flying only an hour or so per day in 1914, nearly 300 hours of flying time were being clocked per month in 1918.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, compared to the belligerents, the Netherlands' dabbling in air power remained a small undertaking. Yet the war ensured that air power became a well-established part of its military services. In a little over four years, the air branch had its own commander, and its own medical staff and technical service. The war saw the establishment of three flying schools (at Soesterberg, Schiphol and Gilze-Rijen), a reconnaissance section, a radio service, and a weapons department.¹³⁵ The creation of a *marineluchtvaartdienst* (naval air service) in 1917 with six sea-planes bought from the United States and two flying schools, indicates the navy realised that air power had a significant role to play in sea operations as well.¹³⁶ By the end of 1918, the East Indies' army ordered six Fokker aircraft for service in the colonies.¹³⁷ In 1919, a new aeroplane fleet for the colonial and home fronts was designed and built with Fokker skill and supplied by a new factory in the Netherlands.¹³⁸

At the Top of the Chain of Command

Once mobilised, the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces was responsible for troops and their deployment in the army, navy, and air branch, as well as for defence strategy and neutrality measures.¹³⁹ The government appointed the Chief of the General Staff, C.J. Snijders, to this position on 31 July 1914, promoting him to the rank of full general.¹⁴⁰ He would hold the post until his resignation on 9 November 1918, when Lieutenant-General W.F. Pop (previously Deputy Chief of Staff) replaced him until demobilisation was completed in September 1919 and the office of Supreme Commander was eliminated. During the war, the Commander-in-Chief was accountable to the government and the queen. He liaised between the forces and the cabinet and informed and advised the Minister of War and Minister in Charge of the Navy.

C.J. Snijders' tenure at the top was not without substantial controversy, although he was an extremely effective leader who had an extraordinary capacity for involving himself in every military subject, however menial or seemingly trivial.¹⁴¹ His personality defined his function, and he took his work extremely personally. Perhaps this

Illustration 2: General C.J. Snijders



General C.J. Snijders held the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Dutch armed forces from July 1914 to November 1918, when he was replaced by Lieutenant-General W.F. Pop.

made the inevitable conflicts with cabinet ministers and parliamentarians more intense and explosive. It also ensured that everything that occurred during the mobilisation bore Snijders' stamp. He was the face of the mobilisation, and was readily recognised as such by the general populace, who encountered this 'small man'¹⁴² in newspapers, magazines, and on propaganda postcards.¹⁴³

Snijders' General Staff was housed within General Headquarters in The Hague. It was split into four departments each with specific responsibilities.¹⁴⁴ GS I (Department I) was responsible for strategic and operational orders for the field army, the territorial troops, border and coast guards, as well as the *landstorm*. It worked closely with GS III, which supervised intelligence activities.¹⁴⁵ There were two other General Staff departments: GS II, which supervised fortified positions and naval operations, and GS IV, which was established during the mobilisation to look after everything related to neutrality, including censorship, trade, smuggling, judiciary problems, and civilian rights.¹⁴⁶

The Commander of the Field Army – a post held by Lieutenant-General G.A. Buhlman until December 1915, followed by Major-General (*Generaal-Majoor*) W.H. van Terwisga – worked in close contact with Snijders.¹⁴⁷ Whereas Snijders stayed in his office in The Hague, both Buhlman and Van Terwisga moved along with the field army headquarters through the southern provinces. Their responsibilities varied but focussed principally on deploying the field army so that it could best meet strategic directives set by GS I.¹⁴⁸ Interestingly enough, unlike the Commander-in-Chief, the field army command position was a permanent one, existing both in peace and wartime, which was unique in Europe and reflected the importance of this mobile entity in Dutch defence strategy.¹⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, Buhlman and Van Terwisga were important advisors to Snijders but also enjoyed a large degree of autonomy.¹⁵⁰ Yet, during the war, the two commanders did not always exercise complete control over the field army's four infantry divisions and one cavalry brigade. Snijders assumed tactical leadership of Divisions I and II after 4 August 1914, when Germany invaded Belgium, an event that shifted the main focus of the army to the south. Although Buhlman continued to be responsible for the daily operations of the two divisions, he could not move them or change their operational goals without first consulting Snijders.¹⁵¹ Officially, there was no need for Snijders to involve himself so directly, as he already had the power to overrule orders given by Buhlman. This action, however, was symptomatic of Snijders' hands-on style. As Commander-in-Chief, he wanted to influence everything that happened in the military and he felt that the field army was too important to leave to even the most capable commander.¹⁵²

Snijders' concern for and direct involvement in the field army was none more apparent than when Buhlman fell ill in August of 1915. Rather than replace him, a new function was created – Commander of Division Group 'Brabant' – to which Van Terwisga was appointed. In this role, Van Terwisga held responsibility over Divisions III and IV stationed in North Brabant, Limburg, and south Gelderland (below the Waal river). Snijders took over direct command of Divisions I and II.¹⁵³ The situation only returned to normal when Buhlman came back in October 1915 whereupon Van Terwisga and Snijders relinquished control of their divisions, although the Division Group 'Brabant' remained in reserve.¹⁵⁴

Other commanders directly accountable to the Commander-in-Chief included those in the major fortified positions within Fortress Holland, and the *Territoriale Bevelhebbers* (Territorial Commanders, TB), who took charge of troops not in the field army or fortified positions. They mostly supervised *landweer* and *landstorm* activities, although they had other responsibilities as well. For example, the Territorial Commander of North Brabant looked after the Colonial Reserve stationed in the Netherlands,¹⁵⁵ and Overijssel's commander directed artillery emplacements in key cities in his province.¹⁵⁶ At times, the provincial commanders were placed under direct command of a higher military authority (including divisional commanders) although usually they retained their independence and were answerable only to Snijders.¹⁵⁷ In 1917, two new command posts were created, the Commander of Limburg and the Commander of Zeeland, responsible for the difficult defence of these specific provinces, and ranked immediately below the Commander-in-Chief. Snijders also

Map 5: Districts of the Territorial Commanders (TB)



oversaw the activities of the Commander of the Navy, the Director of the Dockyard at Willemsoord, and commanders of individual ships and naval vessels.¹⁵⁸

Warning Signs

Although the Dutch army, navy, and air branch were improved and modernised during the years leading up to the outbreak of the Great War, they faced serious problems, which would become only too apparent during the mobilisation in August 1914. Colijn's army reforms had arrived too late to be fully effective, many fortifications were incomplete and short of heavy artillery, the navy was too small to carry out its obligations both at home and abroad, and the air branch had a mere four aeroplanes to fly about in. On land, at sea, and in the air, the armed forces would come under extreme pressure during the war to fulfil an ever-increasing workload.

They could not possibly compete with the improvements and resources made available to the armed forces of the warring nations. Above all else, the political will and industrial capability to improve the military was lacking. Unlike the populations in warring states, whose survival in the conflict hinged on supplying and maintaining their armed forces so that they would not lose the war, the Dutch did not have the same sense of urgency. Their survival, so the general populace thought, was under no threat as long as neutrality could be upheld. However, few comprehended that the viability of neutrality rested to a large degree on the viability of the army, navy and air branch. Without strong armed forces, both neutrality and defence would suffer.

Chapter

3

Api Api: The Mobilisation: July-August 1914

The whole town gathered in the burning sun, in front of the white pillars of the town hall. The mayor stepped to the front onto the high steps, and started to read out the mobilisation declaration. Such a deadly silence hung around the packed-together crowd that one could hear the birds chirping in the gardens behind the houses. When it was announced that fifteen military intakes of conscripts would be called up, a breath of dismay, like a sudden wind surge, spread through the crowd. One woman fell unconscious. Other women started to cry silently, and buzzing and stumbling the crowd parted into the small streets, where their dull footsteps echoed from the walls of the houses, which absorbed an unrest never known before.

– P.H. Ritter¹

On 28 June 1914, the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated by a Serbian militant. Rumours of war breaking out between Austria-Hungary and Serbia were rife after the assassination, plunging the already unstable Balkan region into turmoil. However, on the other side of Europe, in the Netherlands, the death of Franz Ferdinand caused little dismay. The Balkans had survived crises of similar magnitude before without causing serious repercussions elsewhere. In what should be seen as a reflection of its lack of concern, the Dutch government gave Snijders three weeks' leave in July to holiday in Denmark and Norway.² The Queen Mother, Emma, was also able to visit her family in Germany as she usually did each summer. But all was not well in Europe. On 23 July, Austria-Hungary, emboldened by German guarantees of support, issued an ultimatum to Serbia demanding retribution for the murders and warranties against future terrorist activities. If the Serbs did not accept these terms, they would find themselves at war. Serbia was given 48 hours to respond.

The ultimatum stirred the continent into frenzy. Even before Serbia replied to Austria-Hungary, an anonymous telegram was sent from the Dutch-German Telegraph Company (*Deutsch Niederlandisch Telegrafengesellschaft*) in the German city of Köln (Cologne), addressed to a family home in The Hague.³ Late in the evening of 25 July 1914, a messenger arrived in the sea town of Scheveningen. He delivered the telegram to the residence of Lieutenant-Major M.D.A. Forbes Wels, the Dutch Deputy Chief of Staff. Upon arriving home, Forbes Wels' son opened the telegram expecting a congratulatory message for passing his exams; instead, he read two words: *api api* (Malay for 'fire'). He handed the message to his father who informed the Minister of War, Nicolaas Bosboom, of an impending threat of European war. By this

time, news of the Serbian rejection of the ultimatum and the mobilisation of its troops had also reached The Hague. The two warnings stirred the government into action and within hours it issued the first mobilisation telegram.

On 28 July, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. In response, Russia pre-mobilised to support its Slavic neighbour. The Dutch formally announced their neutrality two days later. Germany, interpreting the Russian moves as threatening, declared war on Russia on 1 August, the same day the Dutch issued a general mobilisation. Europe was now set for self-destruction, as the German declaration of war on Russia made it all but unavoidable that France would join the conflict. On 3 August, Germany declared war on France; its armies invaded Luxembourg and prepared to do the same to Belgium in accordance with its Schlieffen Plan. On this day, the Dutch field army was ready in its *afwachtingsopstelling* ('waiting position'), the fortifications were manned, and the inundations readied. Britain was on the verge of issuing its own ultimatum, insisting that Germany respect Belgian neutrality. German troops crossed the Belgian border and assaulted the fortifications at Liège (Luik) that night. The next day, Britain entered the conflict on the side of its *Entente* partners, Russia and France. The first great war of the twentieth century had begun.

Fire Fire

The 'api api' telegram and Serbia's rejection of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum were key signals to the Netherlands. Their timing was critical, enabling the government to prepare for mobilisation and neutrality if war did come. Yet the intended meaning of the telegram is steeped in mystery. Historians know very little about the context of the message. They do not even know how much importance the General Staff attached to it. The telegram itself might have been entirely lost in 1921 if Colonel G.U.H. Thoden van Velzen, an administrator of the General Staff, had not rescued it from a pile of papers due for destruction.⁴ Van Velzen requested information regarding its history from Forbes Wels' son, who explained the manner of delivery.⁵

What is known is that the director of the Dutch-German Telegraph Company, J.J. Le Roy, sent the message to Forbes Wels. Le Roy, a retired East Indies army officer, and Forbes Wels had an agreement that he would warn the commander when he anticipated a German mobilisation.⁶ Informal intelligence gathering was common practice among the General Staff and 'api api' was likely an arrangement between old friends.⁷ But the intended meaning of the telegram is not obvious: Van Velzen stated that 'api api' referred to the possibility of war; Nicolaas Bosboom alluded to the message as a signal of danger; Snijders suggested that the telegram was a warning to keep a careful watch on the situation in Germany; while the historian Hubert van Tuyl used another source to claim that 'api api' referred to an impending German mobilisation.⁸

It is unknown what triggered Le Roy to send the message so soon after the July crisis, hours before the Serbian reply was despatched, before any signs of German mobilisation were visible, and before Russia had declared its support for Serbia. Van Tuyl provided some conceivable scenarios, including the possibility that Le Roy wit-

nessed early signs of German pre-mobilisation, that he intercepted sensitive information sent via the telegraph station, or that he was notified by an informant.⁹ Whatever Le Roy discovered was pressing enough that regardless of Serbia's answer to Austria-Hungary, he believed there was a strong chance of it turning into a conflict that would involve Germany. Le Roy would not have sent the message unless he believed that the Netherlands was at risk. 'Api api' could not have referred to a localised Balkan conflict and would, almost certainly, have meant some form of German preparation for war because a conflict involving Austria-Hungary in the Balkans presented little danger to the Netherlands. The only continental power of serious concern to the Netherlands was its eastern neighbour. Of course, given that we do not know for sure, it is possible that Le Roy acted on a hunch, or received a vague but unsettling message.

The timing of the telegram is nevertheless remarkable given that the events that were pivotal to the outbreak of the Great War – namely Serbia's rejection of the ultimatum, Russia's support of Serbia, and Germany's responses to both these events – did not occur until after Le Roy wired 'api api' to Forbes Wels. Most likely, the telegram was intended to alert the Dutch that the situation in the Balkans was more dangerous than many initially assumed. Serbia's refusal to accept Austria-Hungary's demands further confirmed the likelihood of a European war. Yet the Dutch government did not leap headfirst into a full-scale mobilisation. It prepared for war cautiously, only calling up its first conscripts five days after the telegram had arrived. More definitive signs of conflict were needed before the Minister of War was willing to spend millions of guilders on mobilising the nation.¹⁰

Yet these five days were not wasted. Planning and timing were essential for an effective mobilisation. Dutch strategic plans were based on three broad defensive actions: stationing troops at border posts, railway connections, and bridges, for early warnings and demolition; assigning the field army to likely invasion locations; and occupying fortified positions and readying inundations to provide permanent lines of defence and enable flooding of territory. It was imperative that each of these requirements be completed before hostilities began, because an invading force (especially from the east) could capture the all-important railway routes running near the Dutch border and thereby hamper the movement of soldiers and equipment.¹¹ Raising water levels behind sluices, without which inundation could not occur, also took several days.

As an acknowledged neutral, the Dutch government had an advantage over its powerful European counterparts for it need not worry about the consequences of mobilising prematurely. Because of their avowed neutrality, Dutch military activities rarely sparked responses in other states, quite in contrast to the mobilisation plans of the great powers. It enabled the Netherlands to mobilise as early and as publicly as it wished.¹² A visual show of strength was, in fact, an advantage as it might make potential invaders hesitant and would show that the country was serious about protecting its neutrality. Therefore, not too much need be read into the 'api api' message since any serious warning would have prompted a decision to begin the mobilisation process in the Netherlands on 26 July. By that time, the dangers in the Balkan

crisis were clear. It looked likely that Serbia and Austria-Hungary were going to take up arms against each other. With Russia's expected involvement, the whole continent had enough reason to believe that a war started in the Balkans would spread into the European heartland.¹³

Preparing for War, 25-31 July

As soon as the Minister of War, Nicolaas Bosboom, was informed of 'api api' in the early hours of Sunday 26 July, he took it upon himself to issue Telegram A, which set the mobilisation process into motion.¹⁴ When Telegram A reached them, engineering troops began the occupation of bridge crossings, railway junctions, coastal defences, and inundations. Bosboom also sent an urgent message to Snijders to return home from his holiday as quickly as possible. Snijders left Denmark on 23 July, after hearing about Austria-Hungary's ultimatum, but he did not manage to get any further than Hamburg by the 26th of the month.¹⁵ Bosboom then informed Queen Wilhelmina, the Minister President, P.W.A. Cort van der Linden, and the entire cabinet of the gravity of the European situation. With this in mind, Queen Wilhelmina requested that her mother and husband, Prince Hendrik, who had left for a boat trip to the Baltic Sea, return home as well.¹⁶

On Monday 27 July, the day Snijders reached The Hague, Wilhelmina called the cabinet to an emergency meeting, the first of many such meetings held over the following days. They agreed to prepare the country for war. They expected that if the European situation deteriorated at a rapid pace – which seemed likely – that a full military mobilisation would begin on 1 August.¹⁷ The cabinet drafted a preliminary neutrality declaration and decided to keep out of the war for as long as possible.¹⁸ Immediate steps were taken by the government and military authorities to ensure the best possible defence. Men conscripted during the 1907 *landweeer* conscription had their service release orders, due to arrive any day, cancelled by Royal Decree, and the government further postponed the transfer of regular conscripts into the *landweeer*.¹⁹ Warnings were sent to the border and coast guards notifying them of a possible future mobilisation,²⁰ while the General Staff placed on-duty personnel on alert, halting conscript training exercises, so they could occupy military posts.²¹ The navy prepared for mobilisation as well, with sailors outfitting torpedo-boats, submarines, and mine-layers for war service.²²

On 28 July, after Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Snijders met with railway directors outlining the procedure for requisitioning rolling stock once mobilisation was underway.²³ The cabinet passed a law prohibiting conscripts from leaving the country, including those who went fishing outside Dutch territorial waters or who worked across the border in Germany and Belgium.²⁴ The navy's cruisers – *Gelderland*, *Noord Brabant*, and *Zeeland* – patrolled sea inlets, and submarines were manned and stationed at the ports of Vlissingen, Den Helder, and IJmuiden.²⁵ Meanwhile, officers in the three services had their leaves cancelled.²⁶

By this time, the Dutch public, like most Europeans, had become aware of the strains and stresses of the Balkan crisis. The economic situation within the country

slumped in response. Financial markets plummeted in the expectation of war, while merchant ships remained in port as uncertainty reigned regarding access to overseas markets and the safety of the seas. Stock values dropped steeply and even leading securities suffered huge plunges.²⁷ By Tuesday night (28 July), business had slowed nation-wide. Drastic intervention was needed, although the Minister of Finance, M.W.F. Treub, rejected calls for a moratorium. To ensure that the financial market did not collapse completely, he did agree to close the Amsterdam and Rotterdam stock exchanges on Wednesday until stability returned.²⁸ At the same time, Amsterdam bankers formed a guarantee syndicate.²⁹ These were to be the first of a series of emergency measures taken by government and financial leaders to protect the domestic economy.

By Wednesday 28 July, national newspapers were full of stories about the increasing international tension, adding to the prevailing mood of confusion and fear. The Dutch were worried, while their governmental representatives discussed escalating military readiness. Snijders and Bosboom were in minor disagreement over what should be done next. Snijders was adamant that they should call up the border and coast guards as quickly as possible.³⁰ Bosboom agreed in principle, although he did not see the need to mobilise all 105 detachments at once (around 10,000 troops).³¹ Snijders eventually persuaded him that it was impossible to partially mobilise the guards, as no plans existed for that scenario.³² Bosboom took Snijders' advice to the cabinet meeting on 30 July. At 4 p.m. that Thursday, the government mobilised the guards along with the *Koninklijke Marechaussee*.³³ By late evening, 44 *landweer* detachments had occupied their predetermined positions; by 5 a.m. the following morning, 78 detachments were ready; and by the end of Friday, 92 per cent of the guards had turned up for duty.³⁴ Other precautionary measures were taken as well: the Inspector of Pilotage at Vlissingen prepared for the removal of beacons and buoys on the western mouth of the Schelde, in case foreign naval ships attempted to use the river.³⁵ The navy also established replacement war buoyage for river mouths and dismantled key lighthouses.³⁶

On 29 July, the Dutch government expressed alarm at a possible war between Germany and France. It is likely that the General Staff had some, albeit limited, knowledge of the details of the original Schlieffen Plan, and had taken into consideration a German advance through the province of Limburg.³⁷ Neither the Dutch nor Belgian authorities knew that the Schlieffen plan had been altered in 1908.³⁸ The invasion route that Germany would use in August 1914 was an alternative that neither neutral had envisaged.³⁹ Both expected that if war broke out either France or Germany would violate their neutrality.⁴⁰ At this point (29 July), the situation looked so grim that the Dutch Foreign Minister, John Loudon, decided to secretly approach the Belgian Minister in The Hague, offering to share military information and combine their defences if Germany attacked.⁴¹ Presumably the Belgian government did not wish to jeopardise its chances as long as war had not yet been declared, and so it did not respond immediately. By 2 August, it was too late because Germany publicly guaranteed Dutch neutrality, without extending the same to its other western neighbour.⁴² Loudon turned down all subsequent Belgian requests for military co-operation.⁴³

On Thursday 30 July, in response to Russia's mobilisation, the Dutch government stepped up its preparations for war. The cabinet's first decision was to declare its neutrality in the war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia.⁴⁴ It also declared a 'war alert' for the entire nation, which set a series of emergency laws into motion that authorised municipalities to requisition food and accommodations for billeted troops; placed telephone and telegraph communications under military control; allowed for the military use of inundations; and, once mobilisation was declared, empowered the army with the right to take over railway lines and traffic.⁴⁵ The government issued a temporary warning to armed personnel regarding the possibility of war, and closed Dutch territorial waters to foreign warships.⁴⁶ To enhance security, Bosboom requested that military commanders refrain from imparting details of defence preparations to strangers.⁴⁷ The press was given a list of topics on which it could not comment in print, which consisted mainly of mobilisation details, while telegraph transmitters were manned round the clock for surveillance purposes.⁴⁸

After Germany posted an ultimatum to Russia on Friday 31 July, the Dutch government took decisive action. It was now certain that Germany would go to war with France. The perceived danger for the Netherlands became acute. At 1:30 p.m. Queen Wilhelmina declared a general mobilisation of all conscripts effective the following morning. She also appointed General Snijders as Commander-in-Chief of the mobilised forces.⁴⁹ The appointment, however, caused immediate concerns among cabinet ministers, a precursor of future crises involving Snijders and the government. Snijders only accepted the post of Commander-in-Chief on condition that he would be responsible to the entire cabinet, and not just to the Minister of War. This stipulation contravened the wishes of most cabinet ministers and earlier instructions on the matter.⁵⁰ Snijders followed the precedent of Hendrik Colijn (Minister of War 1911-1913), who stipulated that military authority derived from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which was embodied in the monarch and all her advisors.⁵¹ The independence needed to execute defence objectives could not, according to Snijders and Colijn, be subordinated. Placing the supreme commander directly under the supervision of a single cabinet minister would shift responsibility to the minister, and would, therefore, have made Snijders' position untenable.⁵² Although Cort van Linden's administration agreed and changed Snijders' instructions to incorporate this fundamental point,⁵³ the issue would return four years later under a new government. It would provide a major source of conflict between Snijders and one of Bosboom's successors, G.A.A. Alting van Geusau.

All Soldiers Mobilise with Due Haste

The country was alerted to Wilhelmina's mobilisation orders by public announcements. Posters on buildings, shop walls, and billboards declared, by order of the Minister of War, that 'all conscripts mobilise with due haste'.⁵⁴ Church bells rang, trumpets sounded, messengers on the streets hailed the news, and mayors arranged public meetings.⁵⁵ The everyday routines of a Friday afternoon came to an abrupt halt. People stopped work and emptied out onto the streets to read the posters or

listen to the declarations. They gathered with friends and neighbours to discuss the likelihood of war. Some were astonished by the declaration. They had expected Russia to back down after the German ultimatum.⁵⁶ Others feared the worst and heeded the announcement with trepidation.

An atmosphere of concern hung over the crowds. P.H. Ritter described the apprehension in his book *De Donkere Poort (The Dark Gate)*:

Still, the first moment was ominous and fearful. A panic, as had never been known before, captured the masses.... In front of every shop window with bulletins pasted to it, fearful, silent crowds formed, and yet even in this utterly despairing moment, people tried to affect a courageous stance.... Everybody was lifted from their normal routines, and saw the fruits of their life's labours disappear as expectations for the future collapsed... the majority of the population was plunged into dismay.⁵⁷

Around the country, attendance at church services and special prayer services increased. In Maastricht, for instance, 5,000 Limburgers packed into a local church to pray for peace.⁵⁸

A number of people living outside the fortified positions fled to railway stations demanding that trains take them to the safety of the New Holland Waterline.⁵⁹ In areas close to inundations, residents realised that if war broke out water levels would rise all around them and flood their homes, farms, and businesses. They prepared themselves for this contingency by storing their valuables, stacking furniture, taking down curtains, and storing food, hay, and fodder in their attics.⁶⁰ People on holiday cut short their vacations.⁶¹ Popular tourist spots were soon deserted. Train stations and ferry terminals were crowded with impatient sightseers wishing to get home. Train travel, however, was limited as military transports had priority. On 1 August, all civilian train service ceased.⁶² Entertainment events were also cancelled. The fair in the town of Zwolle pulled down its tents and packed up its acts, setting an appropriate tone of sobriety.⁶³

Public fear and anxiety on 31 July only increased in the coming days as the mobilisation gathered momentum. Reassurances of public safety often fell on deaf ears. The mayor of Hoek, a village in the south, printed and distributed posters on 6 August urging citizens to stop worrying about the war. He explained that there was no reason whatsoever to be anxious; rumours of war and an impending invasion were not to be trusted, and if a serious threat were to arise, he would personally inform them. He urged everybody to remain calm and return to work. He also implored non-mobilised men to work twice as hard to ensure that the harvest was completed and that business continued as normal.⁶⁴

Upon hearing about the mobilisation, the men affected by the call-up – nine intakes of regular conscripts and seven intakes of *landweer*⁶⁵ – left work early on 31 July, returned home, pulled out their uniforms, and set off for their pre-arranged military destinations. Some left immediately, others waited until morning, taking full advantage of a last night at home with their families. That the uncertainty evident on Friday had not subsided by Saturday morning was reflected in the sombre mood

of the soldiers' farewells. There was no elation or euphoria at the thought of going to war; there were no cheering crowds waving at the marching troops.⁶⁶

A general sense of panic permeated through towns and villages in the days leading up to the mobilisation, which only increased after 31 July. People stockpiled food and hoarded silver coinage. Lengthy queues formed outside banks and shops. Essential goods disappeared quickly from store shelves. In some places, police officers had to prevent scuffles among customers as they grabbed for dwindling supplies.⁶⁷ Many shopkeepers increased their prices to preposterous levels. The government hoped to counter profiteering and stockpiling by extending the powers of the *Onteigeningswet* (requisitioning law). The law already allowed municipal councils to requisition food, supplies, and accommodations for the armed forces; its amendments, as of 3 August, enabled them to appropriate essential goods, which were then made available to the public at reasonable prices.⁶⁸

Table 4: Withdrawals made from the *Rijkspostspaarbank* (State Post Savings Bank), July-August 1914

<i>Date</i>	<i>Number of withdrawals</i>	<i>Total amount withdrawn</i>
Wednesday 29 July	1,408	f362,000
Thursday 30 July	2,871	f1,035,000
Friday 31 July	6,874	f2,585,000
Saturday 1 August	13,771	f4,821,000
Monday 3 August	11,228	f3,718,000
Tuesday 4 August	1,607	f515,000
Wednesday 5 August	1,777	f518,000
Thursday 6 August	1,289	f336,000
Friday 7 August	696	f176,000

NB: on average 800 withdrawals worth around f200,000 were made daily before 29 July 1914. – Source: Treub, *Oorlogstijd* pp. 203-204; Treub, 'De economische toestand' p. 146.

At banks throughout the country, customers emptied their accounts and demanded payment in hard currency only.⁶⁹ The Netherlands Reserve Bank's stocks of silver and copper coins were reduced by more than half within a few days.⁷⁰ Gold was also in demand and to allay fears of shortages and to avoid credit problems, the government imposed an export ban on the precious metal. It also managed to obtain a shipment of silver from France.⁷¹ While businesses worried about gold and credit, it was silver that concerned most ordinary people. Banks learnt quickly to place limits on how much silver could be issued to a customer per visit.⁷² The coin shortages caused immediate problems because retailers and restaurateurs could not change large denominations. In one hotel, beer was purchased with f10 notes – an exorbitant amount even in today's terms – because there was no change for thirsty patrons.⁷³

The government and municipal councils had to act and printed emergency paper

money in small denominations of *f*1, *f*2.50, and *f*5.⁷⁴ The notes replaced silver coins and recipients had to accept them as legal tender. This *ersatz* money remained in circulation throughout the war.⁷⁵ The government also passed an emergency decree allowing the Reserve Bank to lower its stocks of coins and coin materials to one-fifth of all money and credit issued.⁷⁶ On 3 August, it further authorised the State Post Bank to impose a time delay of a fortnight for withdrawals of over *f*25. By 7 August, as the immediate threat of invasion faded, bank transactions and withdrawals returned to normal and banks rarely had to use their emergency powers again.⁷⁷

Soldiers, Soldiers Everywhere, 1-3 August

When Bosboom issued Telegram A on 26 July, he set a highly detailed programme into motion culminating in the mobilisation of the entire military and *landweer* on 1 August, which was phase two of three outlined in the 1913 strategic directives. The third phase would be the transfer of the field army from its *afwachtingsopstelling* to its war position. Once a general mobilisation was declared, it was intended that troops, their horses, equipment, and food supplies would be ready for war within three days, within which time garrison troops were also supposed to prepare fortresses and inundations. Speed was essential. The entire process needed to be quick, flexible, and efficient.⁷⁸

By sunrise of the first mobilisation day, Saturday 1 August, the deployments were well under way. Men, dressed in uniforms retrieved from drawers, attics and moth cupboards, made their way to local depots or train stations. Soldiers seemed to be everywhere.⁷⁹ Although several *landweer* troops mobilised locally, most of the soldiers had to travel by train to get to their depots or *afwachtingsopstelling*. On 30 July, responsibility for the rail network had transferred from the railway companies to the (military) Director of Supplies and Traffic, although the individual companies remained responsible for the daily operation of the locomotives, carriages, and tracks.⁸⁰ In 1912, within the General Staff, an Office for Extraordinary Transport had been created to ease the transition from civilian to military control of the railways.⁸¹ The bureau moved military troops, their goods, and their horses during mobilisation and fulfilled an important liaison role between the military and the railway companies.⁸² As a result, an additional 144 trains became operational on 1 August, and 241 normal trains were lengthened.⁸³ That day, some 97,000 soldiers and officers boarded trains to reach their destinations along with nearly 2,000 horses, 21 gun and ammunition wagons, and six vehicles. On the following day, another 72,000 men were transported, accompanied by nearly 4,500 horses, 85 gun and ammunition wagons, and 293 vehicles.⁸⁴ By the morning of 4 August, the railways had transported some 177,500 military personnel, 6,600 horses and 472 vehicles.⁸⁵

Most of the troops were able to travel to their destinations without any problems and within good time. There were, of course, some unavoidable delays.⁸⁶ Some journeys were arduously slow, which were relieved only by gifts from locals and refreshments provided by various scouting groups.⁸⁷ The movement of field army divisions caused more serious difficulties when large numbers of troops, goods, and horses

were all expected at the same destination. In many places, there were not enough trains or tracks to handle this in an efficient manner.⁸⁸ Civilian travel was also hampered by the mobilisation and would continue to be so for the rest of the war. Even when normal train schedules resumed on 4 August 1914, services were based on military needs with the armed forces having priority over seats.⁸⁹

By comparison to the orderly manner by which soldiers travelled and were organised at railway stations – facilitated in many places by alcohol bans⁹⁰ – once they arrived at their depots, an efficient system was often lacking. Depots were responsible for issuing weapons, ammunition, rations, blankets, and other equipment to the troops as well as co-ordinating soldiers into brigades and finding lodgings for them. The first and most visually obvious problem for depot staff was the abysmal state of soldiers' uniforms. Rather than stockpiling clothing, the military allowed conscripts to take their military uniforms home after their initial training periods. Unsurprisingly, given that most of the men never again wore their uniforms, the state of their dress left much to be desired.⁹¹ Many, especially the older men, had outgrown the uniforms that had been tailored for them when they were conscripted at age 20. Some uniforms had missing items, while other articles were totally worn out (this was especially true of the boots).⁹² Not all of the soldiers had the camouflage grey uniform that had been introduced in 1911. Many were still wearing the old dark blue raiment.⁹³ Furthermore, the state of soldiers' undergarments posed a health risk. Military leaders assumed that conscripts would bring their own socks and underwear with them but this was not the case. Many men wore no undergarments whatsoever and others brought only what they were already wearing. They assumed that the army would provide these items.⁹⁴

Military planners either lacked the foresight or were financially hindered from warehousing the proper amount of uniforms for a fully mobilised force. Clothing reserves, enough to outfit an army during peacetime (approximately 23,000 troops) for three months, disappeared within hours of mobilisation.⁹⁵ As a result, most soldiers remained under-dressed, some wore civilian dress until September, and others wore the blue uniforms for many more months.⁹⁶ To outfit their regiments, military commanders purchased hundreds of pairs of shoes, thousands of vests, and many more pairs of socks from local stores, usually at inflated prices.⁹⁷ But these supplies soon ran out. Thankfully, the mobilisation occurred at the height of summer and the weather was still relatively good. The Ministry of War urged civilians via newspaper advertisements to send old undergarments to the army. It also urged women's groups to knit and sew for their men. As incentives, it offered free delivery of underwear parcels and paid contributors for their 'gifts'.⁹⁸ The response was sufficient and offered temporary relief to the military's clothing needs, but the problems of properly outfitting the army would occur time and again during the course of the war.

Clothing the troops was not the only difficulty encountered at the depots. The shortages of essential equipment and ammunition were even more serious. According to Bosboom, only 80 to 85 million cartridges had been stockpiled, 40 million short of the estimated minimum requirements.⁹⁹ Stocks of rifle ammunition and

artillery munitions were so low that shooting exercises were limited.¹⁰⁰ Each artillery battery had 700 rounds per gun, well below the specified minimum of 1,000.¹⁰¹ Other equipment in high demand and short supply included spades, telegraph wire, and bridge-building materials.¹⁰² Again, the General Staff had underestimated the needs of an operational army. Unlike clothing, however, it could not turn to ready sources because the Netherlands had neither a large arms industry nor the raw materials to produce them.

Part of the supply problem was administrative. According to one *landweeer* commander, munitions for his company were delayed not because they were unavailable, but because no one knew the location of the warehouse.¹⁰³ Others reported packing problems, staff shortages, and even the ineffective labelling and issuance of receipts.¹⁰⁴ A contributing factor to the mayhem was the army restructuring plan that began in 1913, which had not yet been fully implemented and warehouses had not yet received the revised regimental compositions.¹⁰⁵ The administrative problem, however, was not only one of supply for it affected even the simple yet basic task of registering who turned up for duty and who did not. One especially pessimistic report noted that among cavalry regiments:

Whole detachments reported to the depots without the necessary administrative documentation, even without a name list; surplus goods arrived, with a few exceptions, without inventory or without labels on the boxes; while the [identification] marks on the necks of many horses or on horseshoes were illegible.¹⁰⁶

Another reason given for the chaos at depots was the lack of capable officers among the administrative ranks.¹⁰⁷ This was not an isolated problem. Officer shortages affected all levels of the military and would remain one of the principal stumbling blocks to achieving a well-trained and disciplined armed force.

Bedding, blankets, and food were also in short supply. Many civilian bakeries and butcheries were unable to fulfil the contracts they had signed years earlier with the military, some because they could not, others because higher prices could be had by selling their products privately. Some suppliers, who had claimed they could deliver 35,000 rations daily, ended up supplying only 1,000.¹⁰⁸ To make matters worse, emergency rations were incomplete or failed to arrive from some warehouses during those first few days.¹⁰⁹ In an alleged incident in Den Briel on 2 August, soldiers from a particularly hungry regiment looted a local bakery for breakfast.¹¹⁰ In order to rectify the food situation, a central supply depot for the field army was established in Rotterdam, where food was either produced or stockpiled for distribution to regiments in the southern part of the country.¹¹¹ Elsewhere, local bakeries, fishmongers, and butchers supplied food under revised contracts, or civilians were paid to house and feed billeted soldiers. Luckily, the food problems were short-lived. As early as 3 August, enough resources were available for the whole army.¹¹²

In a 3 August mobilisation update, Buhlman notified Snijders that administrative staff were missing from the field army's headquarters, that there were not enough weapons for his *landweeer* troops, and that some regiments had no field kitchens.¹¹³

However, in general, garrison troops faced greater transport and supply problems than their field army equivalents. Garrison soldiers had no trains available for transport to and from their positions. Instead, they had to requisition carts, vehicles, and automobiles from local citizens.¹¹⁴ Few depots were allocated to them and many were dispatched immediately to various fortifications. This caused some serious concerns, as most of the fortified positions had no available space to store food, bedding, weapons, or equipment.¹¹⁵

Some of the supply problems were minor compared to potentially fatal flaws that affected the fighting abilities of soldiers. The training received by many soldiers was gravely inadequate. Some men were so unfit they were unable to complete the shortest of marches, others had forgotten how to load and shoot their weapons, some cavalry troops could not ride horses, and the artillery batteries were short of well-trained gun layers.¹¹⁶ Compared with French and German troops, the average Dutch soldier was critically under-skilled.¹¹⁷ Major-General Van Terwisga, the commander of the field army's Third Division in 1914, described their inexperience as follows:

What one meets everywhere is illusory training; the proficiency, if one can call it that, is entirely superficial, and it is even spread so thinly that the lack of training is often clearly visible through [the veneer].¹¹⁸

The situation was not entirely hopeless, however. One brigade commander wryly noted in his diary on 8 August: 'if I'm given a few more days, then I shall dare to appear with my brigade'.¹¹⁹ It was fortunate for the Netherlands that it was not invaded and that most of its soldiers had plenty of time in the ensuing months to gain some necessary military skills.

Another common criticism of the mobilisation process was the severe shortage of able officers to fill leadership, training, and administrative roles. One report noted that there were too many 'most inadequate, yes, highly defective' officers.¹²⁰ Many were young and inexperienced and had problems asserting their authority and earning the respect of their subordinates. This hampered deployment as well as troop morale and discipline. The lack of capable officers was not a new issue; it had plagued the Dutch armed forces for years.¹²¹ Yet very little was done to eradicate the problem because successive governments avoided conscripting soldiers into higher ranks and because the financial costs involved were substantial.¹²² At any rate, there were few short-term solutions available and during the war the officer shortage would only be exacerbated.

By 3 August, a force of 196,657 soldiers (including 9,000 naval conscripts) had been mobilised and these men were deemed deployable.¹²³ It was not a negligible number. When counted, absenteeism was also low. On 3 August, it stood at 7.2 per cent, which included soldiers absent for medical reasons and those residing outside the country.¹²⁴ Only a very few had actually deserted.¹²⁵ Variations in absentee rates did exist. One regiment reported that a mere one-quarter per cent of its men had failed to show up, while another had an absenteeism rate of more than 10 per cent.¹²⁶ To ensure that all eligible men mobilised, the government declared an amnesty effec-

tive until 1 November.¹²⁷ It paid for soldiers living abroad to return home, and made plans to increase the number of future conscripts.¹²⁸ Officers who had served in the East or West Indies came out of retirement and doctors and medical students were asked to enlist to ease the shortage of medics.¹²⁹

Horses, Dogs, and Houses

Despite its many problems, the army had succeeded in its primary goal: a speedy mobilisation. Yet, further problems dogged the mobilisation process. For example, the military had not stockpiled all that would be necessary. Much of the necessary supplies had to be obtained from civilians. This is why the *Ontheigeningswet* was so important. It entitled commanders to take whatever they needed from locals, who were often far from pleased at being forced to hand over their possessions, even when they received generous prices for them.¹³⁰ The mayor of Utrecht must have confronted sufficient resistance to warrant the printing of a declaration on 3 August outlining the legal rights of the armed forces to commandeer whatever they wished, using force if necessary.¹³¹

The army's most pressing need was for horses for the cavalry and transportation duties. Collecting horses from 81 requisitioning districts was an integral part of the mobilisation timetable. On 31 July, the High Command warned municipalities that horse owners had to make their livestock available for inspection and possible purchase the next day. The military requisitioned a total of 12,178 horses at a cost to the state of *f*6,756,211.75,¹³² but it still remained some 2,000 horses short of its requirements.¹³³ Another requisition was organised in six centres over the next fortnight, which provided an extra 902 horses, which was still not enough.¹³⁴ There were other concerns as well. Most of the soldiers did not know how to handle horses properly, plus there were not enough stables to house them.¹³⁵ The horse shortage had two important consequences: firstly, many depots did not receive adequate numbers of horses for supply duties, and, secondly, some artillery sections could not mobilise as quickly as they should have because too few draught animals were available.¹³⁶ The horse shortage also inspired the creation of bicycle sections to replace cavalry units. Three cyclist squadrons, each 150-strong, were established on 18 August and joined the Cavalry Brigade in Eindhoven.¹³⁷

The army also experimented with other animals for transport duties, including large farm dogs. While horses pulled mobile artillery, dogs could pull machine-guns. Before the mobilisation, the army only owned some dozen dogs, but estimated its needs at 900.¹³⁸ A requisition system similar to that applied to horses was implemented during August 1914, resulting in the acquisition of 240 dogs at a cost of *f*45 each. Requisitioning continued into November.¹³⁹ Early in 1918, dogs were still used for machine-gun duties, and each infantry regiment had a machine-gun platoon which included 38 dogs.¹⁴⁰ The dog experiment was not a great success, however, since many dogs could not be adequately trained to pull heavy machinery. Their services eventually became redundant late in 1918.¹⁴¹

Like dogs and horses, the army also requisitioned vehicles, carts, and automo-

biles. The seizure of vehicles had been organised years earlier, when cart, carriage, cycle, and barrow owners signed contracts with the army for the use of their vehicles in times of need.¹⁴² Many people, however, did not honour these contracts on 1 August, causing considerable chaos.¹⁴³ Although automobiles were in use throughout the Netherlands by 1914, they did not feature heavily in the mobilisation plans. Nevertheless, during August, more than 500 automobiles, ten trucks, and a few motorcycles were commandeered.¹⁴⁴ From October 1914 onwards, all remaining civilian cars and trucks were registered at local municipal offices for potential future military use.¹⁴⁵ The results of the registration process showed that 200 trucks were available in August 1914 for requisitioning.¹⁴⁶ Two volunteer corps – the Voluntary Military Automobile Corps and Voluntary Military Motorcycle Corps – profited most from this requisitioning process. Both corps were expanded in August 1914 thus allowing civilians with a passion for motorised transport to join the ranks. They spent much of the war chauffeuring military personnel and delivering goods and messages.¹⁴⁷ By 1918, the two corps had become professional enough to include experienced mechanics and technicians. The corps eventually acquired new vehicles, mainly from outside the country, including some 369 trucks, 62 trailers, and 107 cars.¹⁴⁸

In August 1914, much was still needed to be done to make the Netherlands defensible. Troops dug trenches, readied fortifications, and maximised strategic positions. They chopped down trees, emptied (and, at times, destroyed) houses, took over fields as training grounds, and blocked roads. They removed families from their homes,¹⁴⁹ forced farmers to hand over valuable land, restricted access to towns and villages along main arteries.¹⁵⁰ The government compensated civilians for many of these inconveniences. In 1916, one farmer even received money when his cows went into early labour because of the incessant noise from the artillery exercises in an adjacent field.¹⁵¹ Mayors also forced the unemployed to work for the military by digging trenches, moving goods, and performing other menial tasks.

An Undivided Positive Impression

By the third day of the mobilisation, authorities deemed it a success. Almost all of the available troops were now in position, the field army was ready, there was a low absentee rate, the number of horses was nearly adequate, the inundation procedures were prepared, and the earlier food problems had been resolved. The major requirements had been met and, on the surface at least, the mobilisation had proceeded remarkably well. In general, the speed and scale of the mobilisation impressed contemporaries at home and abroad, especially when the numbers were exaggerated to 300,000.¹⁵² Commentators like the Minister of Finance, M.W.F. Treub, described the process overly optimistically as being ‘in one word faultless’;¹⁵³ while a brigade commander applauded it, remarking that if ‘one did not focus on trivialities, one way or another, one must call [it] brilliant’;¹⁵⁴ even the otherwise critical parliamentary report of 1918 praised the mobilisation, which offered ‘reason for satisfaction’.¹⁵⁵

Such positive impressions were not isolated and have been repeated by historians. Especially when they compare the mobilisations of 1870, 1914, and 1939, they

have ended up lauding the organisation and efficiency of the 1914 undertaking.¹⁵⁶ The 1870 mobilisation is renowned for its dismal defence failures and its abominable lack of military preparedness.¹⁵⁷ By comparison, 1914 was indeed splendid. R.H.E. Gooren introduced his study on Dutch military-political affairs between 1866 and 1914 with the following comparison:

The mobilisation of 1870 made painfully clear the serious deficiencies of the army in terms of strength, weapons, organisation and war preparation and had shown that the armed forces could barely be described as ready to successfully defend national territory against an enemy force. In 1914, this situation had substantially improved. A well-prepared mobilisation brought the whole army to total war strength in a matter of a couple of days. In terms of European standards, a relatively modern armed force of approximately 200,000 trained soldiers... was on the whole ready to take part in military operations in the open field.¹⁵⁸

In contrast to 1914, the poor mobilisation in 1939 contributed to the Netherlands utter defeat at the hands of the Germans in May 1940 and thus has received its share of criticism. The historian J.C.H. Blom mentioned, for example, how much more the Dutch government spent on the military prior to the Great War than prior to the Second World War. He believed that in this respect alone the 1914 mobilisation was superior.¹⁵⁹

The actions taken to increase the size of the military, modernise its equipment, and streamline its organisation had a positive impact on the mobilisation in 1914. In many respects, the Netherlands was better prepared for war than Belgium was. It spent 100 per cent more on defence in the immediate years prior to the war,¹⁶⁰ had legislated personal conscription much earlier (Belgium only implemented this in 1913), and while both countries had armies of relatively equal size, the Netherlands mobilised one of every 30 men while Belgium managed only one of every 40 men.¹⁶¹

Yet, ultimately, these kinds of comparisons are misleading. That the state of military affairs was more miserable in 1939 or 1870 cannot distract us from the inadequacies of the 1914 mobilisation. Too many fundamental problems were made apparent. Ammunition stockpiles were woefully inadequate, soldiers' fighting standards were below par, and the officer shortage that went largely unaddressed for years became blatantly obvious. Material shortages, although not crippling, would take months to fill, and the lack of heavy artillery could have proved ominous. The historian, A.M.P. Kleijngeld, was not wrong when he described the 'predominant impression given by the Dutch army in 1914 as one of considerable poverty'.¹⁶² These kinds of problems seriously affected the army's effectiveness. Several military reports commissioned between 1914 and 1919 pointed out that the war years did not manage to alleviate any of these shortcomings, in fact, others were added to the list, including the inability to replace obsolete weaponry and obtain new equipment such as gas masks and steel helmets.¹⁶³

The 1914 mobilisation needs to be analysed within the context of other mobilisations at the time.¹⁶⁴ Many of the combatant nations experienced similar concerns.¹⁶⁵

The Russian armies, for example, were acutely short of officers, munitions, boots, clothing, and underwear.¹⁶⁶ The Dutch did not have to go to war in 1914, which makes it very difficult to discern whether or not their military preparations would have been sufficient had they been invaded. What is relevant, however, is that by the end of the war, the comparative value of its military forces (their size, technological capability, and deterrence capacity) had diminished significantly. At the start of the war, some degree of optimism about the mobilisation was still in order; but by the war's conclusion, pessimism had gained the upper hand. The Dutch could not compete with military developments abroad, and their attempts to do so often ended in dismal failure.

On 3 August 1914, the army and navy were as good as ready to face an invasion that eventually did not come. From this point onwards, however, their primary objective became the preservation of neutrality in its many facets. The government was charged with the same purpose: to undertake everything necessary to prevent the Netherlands from entering the war. To this end, it needed the support of parliament. For the first time in many years, parliamentarians, including the usually anti-military socialist bloc, united in their support for the government and its war measures. The *Godsvrede* (literally 'God's peace', which referred to the relaxing of religious and ideological differences among the political parties) would not last very long, but was strong enough in 1914 to help pass the emergency laws quickly.¹⁶⁷ The country's political representatives were united under a common desire to defend and protect. As the war dragged into 1915 and 1916, however, any support the military may have enjoyed in the opening months slowly began to erode.

Chapter

4

Calm Amidst the Raging Waves:¹ Defending Territorial Neutrality

There are several ways in which states can declare their neutrality during wartime. In 1914, the Dutch government chose the most formal, it issued a declaration of neutrality for every pronouncement of war, to which were attached binding rules and conditions. Each declaration outlined the Netherlands' neutrality obligations.² But the regulations were not all-encompassing. They focussed almost exclusively on external violations that could threaten national security and defence. Other, less pressing, neutrality concerns, such as censorship and contraband, received scant mention in the regulations. Of course, internal and economic neutrality violations were harder to safeguard and more ambiguous by definition; they would not necessarily force an international incident that could bring the nation to the brink of war, whereas an external military breach almost certainly would.

In the preamble to its neutrality declarations, the Dutch government pledged that it would 'observe strict neutrality in the war which has broken out'.³ Strict neutrality meant acting in accordance with international laws. Especially important were Conventions V and XIII of the 1907 Hague Conference relating to a neutral's obligations on land and at sea.⁴ The Dutch government ratified these in 1909.⁵ The neutrality declarations of 1914 reiterated international law, although certain conditions were more rigidly applied. For example, article 9 of both The Hague Conventions stated that a neutral nation could enact its own legislation to ensure the sustainability of its neutrality, as long as it applied the laws impartially.⁶ Hence, on 30 July 1914, the Dutch closed off their territorial waters to foreign warships, going further than Convention XIII, which allowed belligerent warships to use neutral waters for thoroughfares (but not for naval operations).⁷ Of all the neutral nations, the Netherlands was the first to deny such access to foreign warships.⁸ The Dutch tried to enforce their neutrality more stringently than was necessary by law, perhaps to ensure that claims of prejudice could not be levelled against them.

Alongside the neutrality declarations, the Dutch government notified belligerents of other security measures operating within their territorial boundaries. It issued an announcement regarding the integrity of Dutch territorial airspace on 3 August 1914, and, five days later, another forbidding foreign wireless telegraph stations.⁹ While the latter declaration had a strong basis in international law,¹⁰ the aerial regulation was more controversial because it stipulated that foreign aeroplanes or airships that entered Dutch airspace would be fired upon and interned. This ruling was not based on any established legal principles, although in 1913, Germany and France entered into an agreement that respected each other's airspace.¹¹ In May 1914, Nicolaas Bos-

boom expressed his desire to design a similar agreement for the Netherlands and the following July (on the eve of war), Dutch diplomats broached the subject with their German counterparts.¹² While nothing was formalised before the war broke out, most belligerents accepted that the Netherlands could close off its territorial airspace since access to it would have allowed aerial reconnaissance of Dutch military preparations. At any rate, as foreign aircraft faced internment upon landing in the Netherlands, it was more practical to close off the skies completely.¹³

The regulations relating to neutrality were especially useful since they signalled to the world what behaviour the Netherlands would and would not accept from its neighbours. It also obliged the neutral to police and enforce its regulations. To this end, the armed forces fulfilled a pivotal role. The military had two traditional objectives: namely, defence of territory and preservation of neutrality.¹⁴ In the words of General C.J. Snijders, 'maintenance of our neutrality and defence against every breach of our territory... is the first and foremost goal and reason for the existence of our mobilisation'.¹⁵ Defence involved expanding the armed forces to an appropriate size and deploying them in such a manner that they could meet, and possibly defeat, an invasion. Preserving neutrality entailed the implementation of appropriate security measures to protect the country's neutrality obligations, which were expressed in international law, in its own regulations, and in the expectations placed on the Netherlands by the warring parties. The military also had a third responsibility: to deter invaders and neutrality violators. In other words, it was as much a police force as a defence force, which was in charge of implementing neutrality requirements and countering possible security threats.

Neutrality or Defence?

Within days of mobilising into their *afwachtingsopstelling* (waiting position) in August 1914, the High Command moved the four field army divisions to meet perceived threats to security and neutrality (see Maps 6-8). After the German invasion of Belgium on 4 August, there was a general shift southward. Field Army headquarters moved from The Hague to 's Hertogenbosch, and Division IV, situated in the middle of the country, also moved to the southern province of North Brabant near the city of Tilburg.¹⁶ The fighting in Belgium led the High Command to seriously consider an attack from that direction or an accidental crossing of the border by foreign troops. When the Cavalry Brigade assembled on 8 August, three of its regiments moved southward as well, joining Division III near Eindhoven.¹⁷ At this time, Snijders officially assigned responsibility for neutrality matters along the Dutch-Belgian border to Buhlman, the Commander of the Field Army.¹⁸ Two months later, Snijders and Buhlman reacted to the German siege of Antwerp by shifting much of the field army further to the southwest. The headquarters relocated to Oosterhout. More troops were diverted to Zeeland. One of Division I's brigades (Brigade X) also moved further inland, from Haarlem to Alkmaar.¹⁹ This weakened the division's strength on the coast by one-third, and made the country more vulnerable to an attack from the sea. Diverting the brigade saw the first fragmentation of the field army's divisional layout into smaller, less centralised, units.²⁰

By early 1918, the strategic placement of the field army had not changed dramatically since October 1914; it remained dispersed along the three frontiers (east, south, and west).²¹ Nevertheless, the divisions were spread over even wider areas and often had a number of units deployed in other parts of the country. While the principal focus of defence remained in the south, a conspicuous degree of fragmentation across the country was noticeable. For example, Division III occupied western areas in North Brabant with its headquarters at Oudenbosch. It was not as strong as it had been in 1914: one company of cyclists and a section of field artillery were stationed in Zeeland, and the Commander in Limburg had two companies of infantry temporarily assigned to him. Division IV was more cohesive being situated in the middle of North Brabant with a divisional headquarters at 's Hertogenbosch. The Cavalry Brigade remained in central North Brabant as well, with its headquarters in Boxtel. Division I was still positioned near the coast between IJmuiden and Hoek van Holland, but it was missing a number of battalions that were used as support troops elsewhere: two battalions in Amsterdam, three more further east (in Bussum and Laren), with a section of mobile field artillery located in Soest. Division II was also split with an infantry battalion, a machine-gun platoon, and a section of mobile field artillery billeted in Deventer, another section of mobile artillery situated in Leiden, while the rest of the division was deployed in Gelderland (with its headquarters in Arnhem).²²

Like the army, the navy also dispersed its available strength so that it could protect neutrality throughout Dutch territorial waters. This made even a limited concentration of naval might impossible. Nevertheless, in September 1914, the High Command recognised that the mouths of the Schelde needed extra attention. It could not

Map 6: Field army position, 4 August 1914



Map 7: Field army position, October 1914



Map 8: Field army position, early 1918



rule out use of the river by British naval vessels, especially prior to the siege of Antwerp in October 1914. Hence, it created a special 'Coastal Division' with a headquarters in Vlissingen, consisting of three cruisers and six groups of torpedo boats. Within two months, however, the Coastal Division was disbanded because it lacked operational flexibility and its task – defence against possible naval assault – was far too ambitious for its meagre size.²³

There was a fundamental problem in mobilising the army in so many directions and dispersing the country's naval capacity. It splintered the armed forces and made it impossible to mount an effective and concentrated defence. Snijders wrote to the Minister President, P.W.A. Cort van der Linden, addressing these concerns in February 1915:

In comparison to the armed masses of the warring parties and even in comparison to their reserves, our armed forces are so limited that it is of considerable interest to us to unify as great a portion of them in the most strategically significant and favourable direction.²⁴

Snijders further rued the lack of defence options, and, on several occasions, criticised the logic of facing several fronts, where, of course, the forces could easily be isolated and bombarded by enemy artillery fire. In a note to the cabinet in August 1915, he exclaimed:

if only our armed forces were not so sadly small in relation to the extensiveness of the fronts that are to be defended, and [in comparison to] the possible military power we might be facing.²⁵

Snijders was well aware of the need to uphold neutrality, but worried incessantly about the consequences for defence, declaring in the same note that 'dispersion [of the field army] is a *disadvantage*; but not a *fault*, because it is necessary and unavoidable'.²⁶ In trying to balance defence needs and neutrality requirements, he realised that neutrality had to come first.

Nevertheless, his insistence on upholding as much defensive credibility as possible caused some strife with the government. At times, the civilian leadership feared that Snijders was too concerned about defence. Nicolaas Bosboom, in February 1917, asked him:

Does the Commander-in-Chief not lose sight of the only goal for which we called our armed forces together, maintenance of our neutrality, and if necessary defence of our territory? We do not aim for war.²⁷

Requests from parliament to partially demobilise the army aggravated the situation, as did governmental acquiescence in lengthening the amount of leave granted to soldiers, with the result that while military responsibilities continued to increase, the number of troops available to complete these tasks actually decreased. Not surpris-

ingly, by 1918, Snijders had become very pessimistic about the chances of withstanding an invasion.

There was another critical contributing factor to these defence and neutrality difficulties. Because it remained unclear precisely which powers might breach Dutch neutrality or in what circumstances a violation might occur, Snijders had to plan for the prospect of having to fight two or more foreign armies simultaneously. It was conceivable, for example, that both Germany and Britain might enter the Netherlands at the same time. There was no clause in Dutch neutrality regulations that stipulated that if one country invaded, the Dutch would then automatically side with the enemies of that belligerent. Accordingly, they could be faced with two conflicts on two fronts against two powers that were themselves at war with each other. Given that both the *Entente* and Central Powers wanted to stop the other from using the Netherlands, this nightmare scenario was not inconceivable. If it did happen, Snijders was expecting dire consequences:

I do not have to re-emphasise the impossible demand of a conflict on two fronts involving our very limited armed forces and, in comparison, the masses with which the opposition shall overrun us. Without operational room, a 'concentric' retreat into a well-defended fortified position shall in practice be a dream scenario for our small, shallow country. We will be scattered within the shortest possible time when attacked by superior strength from two sides; there will be no possibility of retreat, at best [we face] a complete capitulation jammed as our armed forces will be between two super powers.²⁸

The possibility of a two-front war was an on-going subject of intense debate between Snijders and the government. Snijders questioned the feasibility of governmental guidelines on armed neutrality on several occasions. He advocated a neutrality policy in line with Switzerland's that allowed alliances once its territory was invaded.²⁹ Once Germany controlled much of Belgium, Snijders' defence scenarios became even more worrying, since the country could now be threatened by a German assault from both the east and south. Early in 1915, Snijders urged the cabinet to make contingency plans and organise a means of contacting Britain and France for aid if, and when, Germany attacked.³⁰ In January of 1917, he made a similar request. This time, he wanted to know the government's viewpoint on requesting aid from a belligerent if its enemies went to war with the Netherlands. He wanted some certainty with regard to where he could turn to if an invasion came.³¹

As the war progressed and the country's defence position became direr in Snijders' viewpoint, his communications with the government became more heated as well, reaching a climax in April 1918. That month, the Netherlands faced its most serious war danger to date when Germany threatened to invade, and Snijders exacerbated the situation by warning the cabinet that the army would not be able to protect the Netherlands against a German invasion. He feared that, given the prevailing circumstances, any aid provided by the Allies would either not be forthcoming or would come too late. He had no doubt that a Dutch-German conflict would leave much of the country in German hands.³² Not long thereafter, he explained to

the Minister of War, B.C. de Jonge, that in a similar scenario where Britain attacked the Netherlands, it 'would be advisable... to accept the aid of the German forces and to arrange a possible conference with them'.³³ On neither occasion did he advocate that the country should renege on its neutrality policies and join one of the warring parties, as he has sometimes been misrepresented by historians. However, Snijders held that if war became unavoidable, the country needed alternative plans, and he hoped the government would agree to join either the Allied or Central Power camp. Otherwise, a war on two fronts 'would have the unavoidable consequence of the loss of our country and destruction of our independent existence'.³⁴ Cabinet members took Snijders' warnings and advice as defeatism – an entirely inappropriate standpoint for a Commander-in-Chief – and the argument ruined Snijders' already strained relationship with his civilian superiors.

In April 1918, as on each previous occasion, the cabinet's response to Snijders' suggestions was the same: remain neutral and repel every breach of territory with all available military means, regardless of the circumstances.³⁵ James Porter has ably outlined why the government steadfastly maintained this policy of strict neutrality.³⁶ After the fall of Antwerp, in October 1914, there was a discussion among cabinet ministers about what the country should do now that Germany controlled both the eastern and southern borders. Some members, including Bosboom and J.J. Rambonet, the Minister in Charge of the Navy, believed that the country should improve its relationship with Britain to counter the threat posed by Germany. Other ministers were more inclined to negotiate with Germany. Only a few chose to remain completely impartial, arguing for strict neutrality to avoid antagonising either power. They could not manage to reach a consensus. Because the Commander-in-Chief had to act according to the will of the entire cabinet, he had to adhere to a policy of strict neutrality.³⁷

The government never deviated from this position of strict neutrality. In March 1917, Cort van der Linden replied to one of Snijders' requests:

The position of the government remains unchanged that against every one of the belligerents who try to breach our territory... the full might of our armed forces will be mobilised. A consideration of other interests apart from the interest to immediately repel [an attack] is not an option.³⁸

Snijders grew immensely frustrated with this position as it left him with few feasible alternatives.³⁹ In the margins of one of Cort van den Linden's letters, he wrote: 'What can I do? The government now knows that I refuse to fight against both sides!'⁴⁰ A month earlier he had already warned the ministers that:

I must earnestly declare that I see this decision [to remain mobilised on all fronts] as being so completely incompatible with the demands of a proper strategy and also believe it to be so completely futile for attaining a favourable outcome, that I cannot accept this order.⁴¹

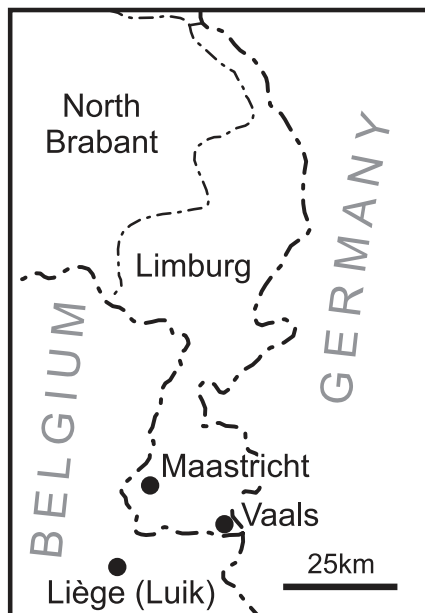
In the end, the Commander-in-Chief abided by the government's guidelines but only in part. In instructions to his commanders in January 1918, Snijders declared that if the Netherlands were attacked by one of the major powers (namely Britain or Germany), it should accept the help of the other belligerent if it came in the form of artillery fire, air cover, or naval intervention, even if the invasion was unannounced or unwanted. Despite the fact that his instructions contravened Dutch neutrality (and governmental directives), Snijders felt that he had to be pragmatic, a key sign of his stubborn character. He was more cautious, however, about accepting support from foreign armies without first consulting with the cabinet. Nevertheless, if it arrived unannounced, he asked his commanders not to oppose it unless they received specific instructions to do so.⁴² Snijders trod on thin ice blatantly ignoring the cabinet's instructions, although it provides an able example of how he preferred to act according to his own criteria and expectations. His strong belief that he was right and, that as the highest military authority, he should have free rein when it came to defence matters caused considerable friction with successive Ministers of War. It should, however, be pointed out that intense differences of opinion between the commander and the cabinet existed well before they came to a head in 1918.

Limburg: Protecting Territorial Integrity on Land

The armed forces were responsible for preventing neutrality violations on land and at sea. Protecting the integrity of the nation's territorial sovereignty was a pivotal element of the neutral's wartime obligations. Obviously, without territorial integrity nothing prevented foreign powers from using the Netherlands for their own war ends and making a mockery of neutrality. In recognition of the significance of the frontier, border guards were the first to mobilise (on 31 July) and the field army moved toward the southern borders as the German armies pushed through Belgium. Although the frontier was marked with posts and flags, the lack of natural features differentiating the Netherlands from Germany and Belgium made careful adherence to national boundaries difficult.⁴³ While troops and ships patrolled the frontier and sea 24 hours a day, there simply were not enough of them to isolate the 900-kilometre border.⁴⁴ Infringements were inevitable.

The first serious border incident occurred even before Britain had officially entered the war. With the invasion of Belgium came the possibility that German troops would end up on roads in the far south of Limburg, especially near the town of Vaals, where the German, Dutch, and Belgian borders meet. Because Germany had moved a large number of troops round the 'pan-handle' (as Limburg was sometimes described) during the early days of the invasion, a frontier violation was very likely. Yet the German leadership was genuine in its desire to respect Dutch neutrality; its High Command explicitly ordered German troops to avoid Dutch territory.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, on 5 August reports from Belgium and France asserted that German troops had indeed crossed into Limburg near Vaals during their advance towards Liège. Belgian and French newspapers not only claimed that the Germans had purposely used Dutch roads but also that the Dutch had allowed them do so. Two French newspa-

Map 9: Limburg



pers, *Le Matin* and *Illustration* even published maps marking the supposed route taken by the Germans.⁴⁶ These were serious allegations that could potentially jeopardise Dutch neutrality, especially since France and Great Britain had still not recognised Dutch neutrality (they would do so on 6 August). As a result, even if it did happen, the Dutch had little choice but to deny it, for fear that the Allies would use it as a reason to invade. Even an acknowledgement that a few German soldiers had accidentally crossed into Limburg could endanger the image of the Netherlands as a nation capable of protecting its territorial boundaries.

Instead, the Dutch government did everything in its power to not only refute the claims but also prove that their accusers were wrong. Many Dutch newspapers printed articles contesting the initial version of events, although some had previously published eyewitness reports on 5 August.⁴⁷ Within and outside the Netherlands, many remained unconvinced, while some officials acknowledged that German troops may have used the road, even if the Dutch had not welcomed them.⁴⁸ To many Belgians, the Limburg explanation provided a compelling and convincing explanation as to why the Germans were able to advance so rapidly through their country. Few believed that the Belgian town of Liège (near the Limburg border) could have otherwise succumbed to the Germans so quickly; Limburg offered a useful scapegoat.

Whether the incident actually happened remains the subject of historical debate. Paul Moeyes maintains that 'there can be no doubt' that a German cavalry patrol did, indeed, march across a small section of Limburg on 4 August.⁴⁹ If it did occur, the violation was very likely unintentional, and almost certainly the Dutch had no

foreknowledge of it. At the very least, the uproar it caused for the Dutch emphasised how important patrolling one's borders was. It is significant, however, that even after the Limburg incident, border guards continued to give individual foreign soldiers the benefit of the doubt if they accidentally stepped onto Dutch soil. Officially, foreign military personnel had to be interned. It was a clear indication that strict neutrality sometimes gave way to day-to-day practicalities.

The Vaals incident refused to disappear and continued to trouble Dutch diplomats, especially when the French claimed, later in 1914, that they had proof of this specific violation of Dutch neutrality. The notebook of a captured German cavalry officer detailed the German route of 4 August, including the Dutch road near Vaals. The Dutch government continued to profess innocence, calling upon the Commander-in-Chief to investigate the matter further. An officer in GS III led the inquiry, interviewing border guards, locals, customs officers, and the mayor of Vaals. His report, sent to the various Allied governments, asserted that no one had witnessed the event, that the geography of the area did not lend itself to troops (especially the cavalry) just passing through, and, further, he could not understand why, if Germany was so intent on respecting Dutch neutrality elsewhere, it would have breached it here.⁵⁰

The report seemed to satisfy Allied officials, at least for the duration of the war. Yet the question continued to be debated and caused significant problems for the Dutch diplomatic corps. In June 1915, for example, the Dutch Minister in Berlin, W.A.F. Gevers, called in favours of his German counterparts to prevent the circulation of a colourful map of German troop movements in the early stages of the war including their crossing through Limburg. Extant copies were removed from shop shelves and the second edition of the map showed a careful adherence to Dutch territorial boundaries.⁵¹ It is unclear whether or not the Allies had discovered the blunder. Nevertheless, after the war, the French official history of the war had no qualms about asserting that the Germans had indeed marched through Vaals.⁵² Likewise, the daily newspaper, *De Telegraaf*, had plans to publish sections of Winston Churchill's war memoirs in 1930, in which he claimed much the same thing.⁵³ The government was forced to address the issue time and again, especially in 1932, when the military journal *Militaire Spectator* published an article by a German officer, asserting that some German troops from the First Army had indeed marched through Dutch territory in the early phases of the war.⁵⁴ This and other reports convinced the French *Comité Internationale des Sciences Historiques* to investigate the incident.⁵⁵ Obviously, border inviolability remained a key indicator of a neutral's status.

The Schelde and Eems: Protecting Territorial Integrity on Water

While Limburg posed a potential threat to the upholding of territorial integrity on land, the Schelde river posed a similar concern for maintaining Dutch neutrality at sea. Historically, the river was the centre of international controversy.⁵⁶ In 1585, a fleet of 'Sea Beggars' based in Vlissingen cut off the western entrance to the Schelde, which led to the transfer of trade from Antwerp – one of the foremost seaports in

the world – to Amsterdam.⁵⁷ Since then, the maintenance of Amsterdam and Rotterdam trade has remained a chief aim of Dutch foreign policy, and was a principal reason why they again blockaded the mouth of the West Schelde in 1648. The Schelde remained a contentious issue between the northern and southern Low Countries until 1795, when the Dutch declared the river free for all trade.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, in 1914, Belgians worried that the Dutch could cut off Antwerp's trade again. While the Netherlands maintained sovereignty over the mouths of the river, the Belgians continued to suspect their neighbour's intentions for doing so. It is not surprising that Belgium coveted the river. At the same time, the Dutch feared that Britain would use the Schelde to support the Belgian war effort by sending troops and naval support up the river. As a result, troops and sailors carefully supervised river activities throughout the Great War.

Of all the waterways, the Schelde was the most closely monitored, especially after the Netherlands denied entry to foreign ships on 30 July 1914. In the only deviation from this declaration, the Dutch government decided that if Belgium was invaded, it would allow river access to Antwerp for warships of signatories to the decree of Belgian neutrality in 1839. There were conditions placed on the right of entry, however. Firstly, a nation that used it could not be at war itself, nor could it carry any military materials on board its vessels.⁵⁹ Above all, Belgium had to request the aid. This opportunity only existed until the Netherlands placed war buoyage along the river's mouth (5 August 1914).⁶⁰ Britain was the only signatory that could have come to Belgium's rescue on 3 or 4 August but forfeited the opportunity when it declared war on Germany.⁶¹ As of 5 August, the Dutch closed the river to all but trade ships, and then only during daylight hours. Belgian lightships were not allowed to operate on the waterway, and ships entered and left accompanied by Dutch pilot boats.⁶²

The navy monitored ship movements on the Schelde, checking all cargo and permits.⁶³ There were restrictions on right of passage, even for merchant vessels. Based on Article 10 of the Dutch neutrality declaration, prizes (merchant ships captured by an enemy) could not use neutral waters.⁶⁴ When in September 1914, Belgium requested that the 50 Austro-Hungarian and German ships it had seized in Antwerp be allowed to leave the city, the Dutch refused to let them through. After the seizure of Antwerp in October, Germany requisitioned these vessels and also requested that they be allowed to exit Belgium via the Schelde. Again, the Netherlands denied this request.⁶⁵ Subsequent attempts by the Germans to smuggle some of the ships out via the mouth of the Schelde were unsuccessful. The Dutch caught these ships and interned them until the end of the war.⁶⁶ The government argued that even though the ships had returned to their original owners, they were still prizes of war, since they were sequestered by military means. Likewise, a number of Belgian armed vessels tried to flee Antwerp before the German siege in October 1914. Upon reaching Dutch territory in the Schelde, the Dutch military authorities also interned and disarmed these ships.⁶⁷

The Dutch maintained a strict policy with regard to the Schelde's neutrality, because foreign interest in the river mouth remained high. One historian, Amry Vandenbosch, exaggerated the river's importance somewhat when he declared that the

Schelde presented one of the major controversies of the Great War because some of the belligerents believed that whoever controlled the river controlled the war's outcome.⁶⁸ The Allies certainly wanted river access to Antwerp (and the Western Front), while Germany could have used the Schelde to launch its U-boats into the English Channel.⁶⁹ Winston Churchill noted the importance of the river for Britain in a war involving Germany as early as 1911,

[Britain] should be prepared at the proper moment to put extreme pressure on the Dutch to keep the Scheldt [sic] open for all purposes. If the Dutch close the Scheldt, we should retaliate by a blockade of the Rhine.⁷⁰

This was the primary reason why Churchill, with the support of others in the British Admiralty, pushed for an Allied assault on the river in early 1915 (as an alternative to the Gallipoli campaign).⁷¹ In the end, however, the possibility that Allied forces might be unsuccessful in their efforts to occupy the Netherlands after a concerted German counter-offensive, and the perceived advantages of a campaign in the Dardanelles, eventually shifted Allied attention away from the Schelde.⁷² In this case, being situated between the 'devil' and the 'deep blue sea' had a distinct advantage for the Dutch.

The river Eems, which marks the northern border between the Netherlands and Germany, did not attract the same amount of international controversy as the Schelde, although it remained a perpetual problem for Dutch-German relations. The Netherlands and Germany both claimed sovereignty over the river, but effectively, the Dutch were unable to exercise any control over their part of it. The neighbours had disputed rights to the Eems for years.⁷³ Rather than antagonise Germany on the issue, however, the Dutch government decided to let Germany have free use of the river. As Cort van der Linden pointed out to Snijders, there was no point in going to war over the Eems.⁷⁴ Cabinet members feared that Germany needed the river so desperately – for moving its ships into the North Sea – that it was willing to risk declaring war if the Netherlands challenged this right.⁷⁵ Since the Dutch did not exercise sovereignty over both sides of the waterway, the Eems presented a less obvious neutrality dilemma than the Schelde. Germany mined the entrance, and, later in the war, refused to allow access to the river mouth for Dutch merchant vessels.⁷⁶ That the Allies did not question Dutch behaviour regarding the Eems may reflect an acknowledgement that Germany had a justified claim to the river. At any rate, militarily and economically, the Eems was far less important to their cause than the Schelde.

The cases of the Eems and Schelde illustrate how the perceptions of the belligerents affected Dutch neutrality. Clearly, they applied to the Netherlands' other territorial waters as well. Because of the relative weakness of the Royal Dutch Navy, it had trouble ensuring that belligerent warships did not enter the country's three-mile zone.⁷⁷ Belligerent warships and armed vessels breached the neutral sea border on several occasions. Usually, the Dutch navy warned the contravening ships, which would head back towards international waters. But there was not much the navy

could do to actually deter violations especially when an altercation between the neutral and belligerent might result in an exchange of torpedoes, the sinking of ships, and, ultimately, a declaration of war. Not surprisingly, naval commanders were ordered not to shoot except when absolutely necessary.

There were some potentially serious transgressions.⁷⁸ For example, in July 1917, British warships fired at German merchant ships travelling through Dutch waters. The Dutch despatched several warships to remove the British from the scene. If this failed, they would have to fight the offenders, which was in effect a declaration of war. Eventually, the Allied warships ceased their bombardments and returned to international waters, without any Dutch interventions.⁷⁹ The Netherlands was able to avoid an international incident and at the same time maintained its neutrality even if that neutrality had been violently breached by military means. If they had followed The Hague Conventions faithfully, the Dutch should have gone to war with Britain for engaging in a military manoeuvre inside their borders. Germany could have forced the issue as they witnessed the inability of the Dutch to thwart the British. That neither Britain nor Germany declared war against the Netherlands reflected their lack of desire to see this neutral become a belligerent at this particular time over this specific issue. Furthermore, it illustrated that while the Dutch strictly and impartially followed the letter of the law whenever possible, when the law became unworkable their only other option was to negotiate with their warring neighbours. If the major powers wanted to keep the Netherlands neutral they would do so. But it came at a great cost to the neutral. A balance had to be reached between what was acceptable to the combatants (especially Britain and Germany) and what was feasible for the Dutch. In this naval encounter, Britain had no desire to antagonise the Netherlands and ultimately apologised for its 'navigational error'. The Dutch and the Germans accepted the apology.

With regards to the Schelde, such compromises among the belligerents were harder to guarantee. Both powers had too great a stake in the status of the river to allow any leeway on its neutrality or security. Undoubtedly, Germany and Britain would have gone to war over the river if the other had used it for military ends. Therefore, the Dutch had to be particularly vigilant. As early as August 1914, Snijders ordered the commanding officer in Zeeland to meet all violations of neutrality on the Schelde with immediate military opposition.⁸⁰ This contrasts sharply with his instructions to the military commander in Delfzijl concerning foreign warship movements on the Eems:

You must order [them] not to shoot at passing foreign warships.... My intention is to act forcefully only against deliberate landings by foreign soldiers with hostile intentions and [to ensure] that entry into the harbour [of Delfzijl] is prevented.⁸¹

In other respects pertaining to potential neutrality violations at sea, whenever it was warranted and possible, the government acted within the established international regulations. For example, foreign armed merchant ships were denied entry into Dutch waters on the grounds that they were considered warships, because the guns on

board were used to defend against attack, and because military personnel often manned them.⁸² The British were decidedly annoyed by this decision, especially because other neutral countries, like Norway and Sweden, did not place similar restrictions on armed merchant vessels in their territorial waters.⁸³ The British argued that the guns were for defensive purposes only (to protect against German U-boat attacks) and could not be used offensively. The Dutch responded by declaring that a gun remained a weapon of war, and was banned, by definition of its neutrality regulations. The rule was rigorously applied. In March 1917, at the height of Germany's unrestricted U-boat campaign, a British armed merchant ship, the *Princess Melita*, was refused entry into the Netherlands twice: The first time because of its mounted guns, the second time because the guns remained on board after the captain had ordered their dismantling (he was, however, allowed to drop off sick passengers). Only when the crew threw the gun overboard could the *Princess Melita* come into port.⁸⁴ When Britain organised convoys of merchant ships, those equipped with armaments had to remain outside Dutch territorial waters. The French government was so disgruntled with this policy that it ordered its merchants to refrain from trading with the Netherlands.⁸⁵ Yet the Dutch were willing to raise the ire of the belligerents when it came to seemingly non-essential issues. They recognised that as long as they vigorously upheld those regulations which would not cause too much international controversy (like the notion of an armed merchantman being a warship), it would help to mask those times when neutrality had to be negotiated for the sake of staying out of the war. If the Dutch were lax on too many neutrality regulations, the value of neutrality itself would decline.

Bombs Away! Protecting Territorial Integrity in the Air

Protecting territorial integrity in the air was exceedingly difficult given that the notion of territorial airspace was a relative new one and, more to the point, the fact that the Dutch did not have an air force to speak of when the war broke out. The decision to close off Dutch territorial airspace to belligerent aeroplanes placed pressure on the armed forces to keep unwanted aircraft out of the skies. As the aeroplane became an integral part of military operations, it would prove an impossible task. Hundreds of aeroplanes and dozens of airships managed to invade Dutch airspace during the war. Britain was most the prolific in its transgressions, often flying across the south of the country to Belgium or Germany, although German airships had little compunction in ignoring Dutch aerial sovereignty on their way to bombing British cities either. If discovered, it was all too easy to claim that the transgression was accidental, since from the air it was hard to distinguish Dutch territorial borders – despite the fact that flags flew from steeples and rooftops of border towns⁸⁶ – and at sea it proved even more demanding. It was often difficult enough just keeping Dutch aeroplanes within national airspace, let alone accusing others of their transgressions.⁸⁷

The Dutch did not have enough anti-aircraft guns or the proper equipment to accurately gauge the distances of contravening planes and eventually shoot them down.⁸⁸ Dutch soldiers interned the planes along with their crews that did land, but

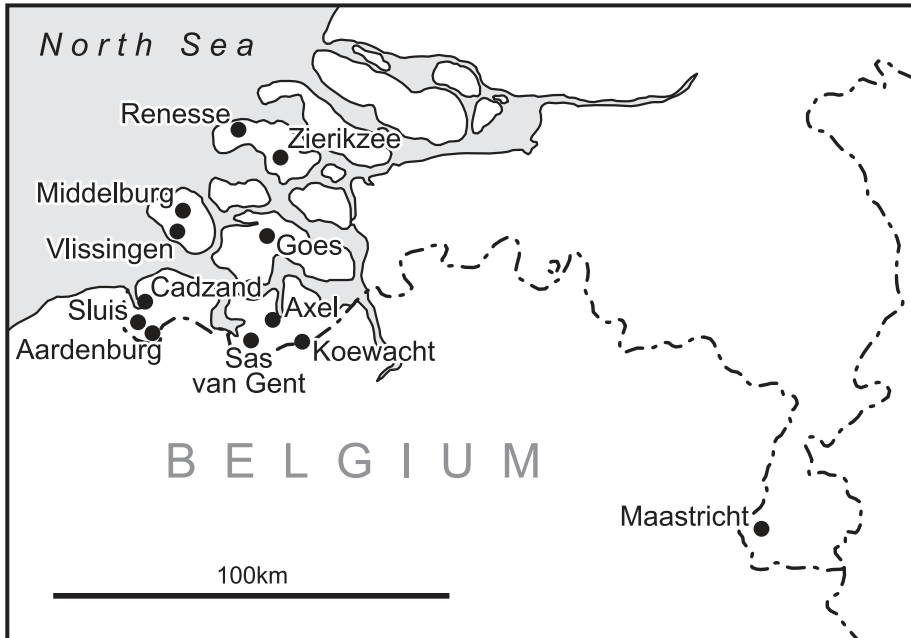
in most cases, they noted the aircraft's nationality and then the government would protest the neutrality violation at their respective embassy. Despite training in aircraft detection, it remained difficult for border guards to distinguish the nationality of most aeroplanes. For example, in July 1918, Snijders reported that, during the previous month, his troops had sighted 52 breaches of Dutch territorial airspace. Of these, three were by Allied aircraft, five were German, and the nationality of the other 44 went undetected, although they were most likely British.⁸⁹ This made credible complaints against the belligerents problematic and the maintenance of neutrality in the air unfeasible. Without proper anti-aircraft equipment (a still very new and far from perfected invention at that time) or a decent air force, the task of intercepting aeroplanes and forcing them to land remained a near impossibility. Airspace integrity proved to be an entirely unsatisfactory element of neutrality maintenance.

Unsatisfactory as it was, upholding the integrity of Dutch airspace had another far more pressing motive, namely to avoid belligerent pilots releasing bombs onto Dutch soil. Despite their neutrality, the Dutch were not spared the deadly aspects of the war. Not only did fishermen drown at sea after their ships hit mines or were sunk by torpedoes, stray mines regularly stranded on beaches, killing unsuspecting locals. With equally disastrous consequences, belligerent aeroplanes crossed into Dutch airspace on numerous occasions and dropped bombs on Dutch cities and towns, causing damage, injuries, and loss of life.⁹⁰

The first bombing of the Netherlands occurred early on 22 September 1914, when a British plane flew over the city of Maastricht in Limburg and dropped two bombs, damaging a house and its garden.⁹¹ Luckily, no one was injured or killed. The pilot must have mistaken Maastricht for a Belgian or German town – he would not be the only one to do so. The province of Zeeland was especially prone to bombings – two strikes in 1915, and another nine in 1917.⁹² Some places near the Belgian border were targeted repeatedly. For example, Sas van Gent was bombed four times within seven months (between November 1917 and June 1918), with no reported casualties.⁹³ A couple and their son in Zierikzee were not as fortunate, when on 30 April 1917, two British planes dropped six bombs on the seaside town, killing all three and demolishing their home.⁹⁴ The Dutch government issued fervent protests regarding this particular violation, with the British initially denying any responsibility. When bomb fragments indicated that it had indeed been British bombs, Britain apologised profusely for the 'deplorable mistake' and agreed to compensate for damage and loss of life.⁹⁵

German planes also released a number of bombs over the Netherlands, although not as frequently as the Allies. On 26 October 1918, for example, a German aircraft dropped three bombs over Aardenburg. During 1918 and well into 1919, the Dutch continued to agitate for compensation for the destruction and injuries caused.⁹⁶ A year earlier, 14 British and German aeroplanes encountered each other over the coastal village of Renesse. In the ensuing fight, a German aircraft dropped three bombs.⁹⁷ Germany and Britain both apologised and promised to be more careful in the future. Only seven days later, however, five bombs (of unknown origin) fell on Cadzand, a popular beach resort that had been the victim of a similar attack in 1915.⁹⁸

Map 10: Bomb drops by foreign aircraft, 1914-1918



The increasing number of aerial bombings made living in the southern provinces quite dangerous. Zeeland was an especially frequent, if unintentional, target for belligerent bombardments. Furthermore, the province witnessed repeated, if accidental, shelling from military engagements in Belgium alongside an occasional grenade explosion or shot fired across the border.⁹⁹ In October 1917, Snijders warned that he could not guarantee Queen Wilhelmina's safety if she decided to tour the area.¹⁰⁰ Wilhelmina took little notice of the warnings and visited anyway, notably taking time out to visit one of her subjects injured by artillery shrapnel.¹⁰¹ Like a bomb drop from the air, the grenades, rifle shots, and artillery shells that crossed the Dutch border all breached the country's territorial integrity and, hence, its neutrality.

Beached sea mines were another lethal means by which the belligerents unintentionally violated Dutch neutrality. The first mines washed up on beaches in September 1914.¹⁰² More than 6,000 others followed in the course of the war.¹⁰³ Nine naval personnel lost their lives when the mine they were attempting to defuse exploded in the small town of West Kapelle on 16 November 1914.¹⁰⁴ The minelayer *Triton* and the minesweeper *Zeemeeuw* fell victim to mines as well.¹⁰⁵ Most of the mines that found their way onto Dutch territory were British, washed ashore out from the North Sea. There were far too many of them to protest each occurrence. As a result, the government limited their diplomatic protests to occasions when a mine caused damage or killed people.¹⁰⁶ Both Germany and Great Britain sometimes compensated for the damage caused by one of their mines.¹⁰⁷ In general, however, they did

Illustration 3: The bombing of Zierikzee, April 1917



Soldiers and locals pose for a photo after a British aircraft dropped six bombs on the sea-side town of Zierikzee in Zeeland, which destroyed this family home and killed its three occupants.

very little about the mines, although Britain did once suggest that it could send two professional mine destroyers to the Netherlands (which was never acted upon).¹⁰⁸ The combatants, however, were not prepared to stop laying mines in the North Sea and countries with a North Sea coastline had to learn to live with the treacherous consequences. The Dutch, in effect, were presented with a *fait accompli*. They could not prevent these deadly consequences of war, which also contravened their neutrality, but neither could they afford for these violations to become decisive and force them into the war.

The Dangers of Defending Territorial Integrity

International laws relating to territorial neutrality were clearly defined and generally accepted. While the Netherlands imposed even harsher regulations than were officially necessary, careful adherence to them was not always possible or practical. Being in such close proximity to the front in Belgium, the war and its nasty consequences could not be avoided. The Netherlands had to be prepared to bend the rules slightly to avoid entering the war unnecessarily, while the belligerents had to be willing to accept certain infringements of neutrality as inevitable. But there were clear limits, and on some particular issues, such as the Schelde case, there was absolutely no room for manoeuvring. Despite this, in many respects, territorial neutrality remained the easiest of neutrality obligations to uphold because the belligerents recognised

that neutral states had certain fundamental sovereign rights, which included the right to determine what happened within their own territorial boundaries. As we shall see in a later chapter, respect for the sovereignty of neutral nations was most evident in the belligerents' acceptance of the Dutch government's internment policies. On the other hand, they also expected that the Netherlands would do its utmost to protect its territorial integrity, a reason why the Dutch armed forces prioritised frontier duty and moved soldiers as close to the borders in the south of the country as much as possible. This had the inevitable consequence that the other pillar of Dutch military strategy, namely readiness to counter an invasion, suffered. Without a workable defence strategy in place, the value of Dutch neutrality diminished. Of course, as long as the combatants appreciated the neutral, the loss of defensive strength was less a matter of concern. Still, the potential for disaster loomed ominously.

Chapter

5

Fugitives of War: Refugees and Internees

Neutral countries offer attractive destinations for victims of war and conflict. The Netherlands during the Great War was no exception; it witnessed a major refugee crisis when, during the German siege of Antwerp in October 1914, around one million Belgians fled northwards across the Dutch frontier, increasing the population of the Netherlands by one-sixth virtually overnight. Alongside these civilian refugees, military personnel from various foreign armies, from various directions, and for various reasons also sought sanctuary in the Netherlands during the war. These soldiers, sailors, and airmen presented a potential threat to the territorial integrity and neutrality obligations of the country. According to articles 1 and 2 of the Dutch neutrality declaration, belligerents could not make military use of neutral territory, not even accidentally.¹ The Dutch were responsible for policing any contraventions. Interning the tens of thousands of foreign military personnel in the country presented one of the least controversial and most obvious means by which the country could protect its neutrality. Nevertheless, in combination with the civilian refugee crisis, the tens of thousands of interned soldiers presented a logistical nightmare for the Dutch authorities. It made the war all too visible and real.

The armed forces had assumed responsibility for the internment of foreign soldiers ever since the Netherlands ratified The Hague Conventions.² With the outbreak of war, troops mobilised at the borders were responsible for apprehending any strangers. The High Command was gravely concerned about a number of border-crossing incidents in Limburg in the first weeks of the war. On 4 August 1914, a German cavalry section was said to have used a Dutch road near Vaals. A few days later, two German officers in their car took a wrong turn and ended up in Maastricht (in the Netherlands) instead of Aachen (in Germany).³ In response to these two events, Snijders introduced stricter regulations for border personnel and assigned greater responsibility for neutrality and internment along the southern borders to the field army.⁴ As a result, field army troops shifted closer to the frontier in North Brabant, and Division III reinforced those *landweer* sections already patrolling the Belgian border.⁵ As many French- and German-speaking Dutch soldiers as possible were also relocated to the frontier, to explain the internment process to prospective internees.⁶

Yet no one envisaged the scale of the eventual internment crisis. Alongside associated tasks, such as seizing, stockpiling, and registering foreign military equipment, weaponry, vehicles, ships, and horses, internment would prove the most time-consuming of the armed forces' neutrality duties. In time, it would warrant a staff of

2,000 allocated to the specially-created Internment Bureau in the General Staff,⁷ hundreds of soldiers involved in guarding the camps, *Marechaussee* officers assuming responsibility for detecting and apprehending escapees, and border guards interning border violators and preventing internees from leaving the country. Their responsibilities were stretched even further when the government agreed to let Great Britain and Germany exchange prisoners of war (POWs) across Dutch territory. Thousands of POWs who escaped from German POW camps also found their way to the neutral border, and had to be dealt with appropriately by the Dutch authorities, while many thousands more German deserters fled to the Netherlands to escape court-martials and possible execution for going AWOL (absent without leave) in Germany. Monitoring the comings and goings of the refugees, internees, and other foreign military personnel placed an immense strain on the capacities of the Dutch armed forces to uphold their many other neutrality and defence responsibilities.

An Evacuation Without Precedent

As the German armies advanced into Belgium on 4 August 1914, fearful residents fled from the onslaught. In the first few weeks, around 100,000 Belgians sought refuge in the Netherlands, crossing into the provinces of Limburg and North Brabant.⁸ As the war front moved westwards, most of the refugees returned home. In these same weeks, another group of displaced foreigners found their way to the Dutch border zone, namely German and Austro-Hungarian expatriates forced out of Belgium by the authorities there. Their stay was also short; most travelled on to Germany and Austria-Hungary as soon as possible.⁹ The refugees brought the reality of war home to the Dutch. They also initiated the first large-scale humanitarian responses. However, nothing prepared the Dutch for the mass migration of refugees that fled Antwerp after 7 October, an exodus described by one historian as ‘an evacuation without precedent in the recent history of western Europe’.¹⁰

The armed forces had no official obligations to civilian refugees, regarding them as more of a nuisance than anything else. But since border guards were usually the first Dutch authorities the refugees encountered, it was almost inevitable that army personnel became involved in their care. Nevertheless, the guards discharged this responsibility as quickly as possible to local municipalities and charitable organisations. During the Antwerp exodus in October 1914, however, they had no choice but to offer direct assistance to the approximately one million destitute Antwerpers who fled their beleaguered city and headed north, carting as much of their property with them as possible, and clogging every road, river, and railway line into Zeeland and North Brabant.¹¹ On their own, the civilians posed an emergency situation of staggering proportions, but combined with the arrival of tens of thousands of Belgian soldiers, the situation at the Dutch border threatened to become calamitous. In fact, the Dutch government did not hold itself accountable for Belgian refugees either, at least not until it was made to do so by the sheer scale of the crisis.¹² Even during October, at the height of the crisis, central government aid to foreigners was measured and *ad hoc*, administered only when, and if, support was desperately needed.¹³

Provincial and local government councils had a similar attitude. They did their utmost to help the newcomers, but did not see it as an inherent responsibility.¹⁴ This was left to charitable organisations and individual initiatives.

Once in the Netherlands, however, the sheer numbers of evacuees posed a logistical and humanitarian nightmare. The fortunate ones managed to find shelter in homes, farms, school buildings, churches, and railway carriages; thousands more slept in the open air.¹⁵ Between 8 and 10 October, 16,000 Bergen op Zoom residents took 50,000 strangers into their homes. Nearby, in Roosendaal, 50,000 Belgians crammed into the homes of 17,000 locals. Throughout the south, the populations of towns doubled or tripled overnight.¹⁶ The military, with its well-established supply network and personnel, was indispensable in providing primary care to the refugees. Troops organised food supplies, cooked meals, provided medical care, and set up temporary shelters.¹⁷ When they were not needed to guard internees, *Marechaussee* officers travelled to Zeeland and North Brabant to protect public order in the overflowing border towns.¹⁸ Eventually, the military took over the responsibility of transporting and dispersing the refugees throughout the country, requisitioning trains, automobiles, and horse-drawn carriages to move the Belgians to cities throughout the country,¹⁹ where mayors sent the refugees to outlying communities.²⁰ Within a few days, 719,100 Belgians had found accommodations in 831 municipalities (out of a national total of 1,110).²¹

Moving, feeding, and housing the refugees proved to be a massive undertaking, requiring co-operation and co-ordination between the municipalities, the armed forces, and the government. On 8 October 1914, Charles J.M. Ruys de Beerenbrouck (Provincial Governor of North Brabant and Zeeland, and future Minister President, 1918-1925) was assigned to the post of Commissar for the Refugees in Zeeland and North Brabant. The Commissar liaised between those needing aid, such as mayors and municipal councils, and those providing help, including charitable organisations and the army.²² Officially, requests for food, blankets, medicine, and other supplies had to be approved by the Commissar. But it was a far from efficient system, not only because the emergency was so enormous, but also because delays ensued when mayors sidestepped the system by requesting aid from military commanders directly.²³

Beyond Zeeland and North Brabant, other provincial governors were responsible for the refugees.²⁴ Like Ruys de Beerenbrouck, they acted as intermediaries between agencies requiring help and those who were able to assist. However, unlike North Brabant and Zeeland, military aid was offered on a much smaller scale in other areas. In the south, troops were involved in all aspects of refugee assistance. Further north, this responsibility was almost entirely left up to town and city councils.²⁵ Outside the crisis centre in the south, municipal authorities and charitable trusts were better able to deal better with the refugees because they had had sufficient warning and received manageable numbers.

The High Command was extremely reluctant to have the armed forces get involved in the refugee problem at all. As early as 9 October, after the first Belgian soldiers arrived at the border requiring internment, Snijders decided to limit the military

commitment to civilian refugees, which he outlined in a telegram sent to the Commander of Division III, stating that (unlike internees) civilian refugees were not a priority, and to direct all requests for military assistance to the Ministry of Internal Affairs or the provincial governors.²⁶ That same day, the Commander of the Field Army ordered that troops would only accompany very large transports of refugees northwards, the rest would have to make their own way.²⁷ But the scale of the humanitarian situation made it impossible to implement such harsh military pragmatism. It took another ten days for Snijders to order his troops to not guard and cook for the Belgians. The army could transport food supplies, but nothing more. He insisted it was time that civilian organisations took over the duties of primary care, and, that refugees should be able to help themselves.²⁸ Snijders' apparent lack of compassion had practical strategic justifications. Firstly, the refugees posed a security threat because they clogged transport routes, thereby hindering troop movements and making it extremely difficult to evacuate southern areas in the event of an invasion. Secondly, assigning soldiers to the refugees took them away from their more important duties such as manning borders and fortifications. Thirdly, Snijders had to consider the practicalities of feeding so many extra mouths. It placed an added burden on the very supplies that were needed if the country suddenly came under attack. Serious problems were inevitable if the Netherlands were to have to evacuate Belgian exiles as well as Dutch civilians into Fortress Holland.²⁹

Snijders considered the refugees a hindrance that he hoped could be quickly eliminated. He also feared that the refugees posed a threat to public order. Reports from around the country reached him about the various difficulties caused by the refugees. For example, the Group Commander in Gorinchem wrote that the 700 Belgians billeted in his area were proving to be an irritation. According to the commander, the refugees made it difficult to adequately defend the military position that formed part of the New Holland Waterline, although he did not specify why.³⁰ He also feared that female refugees were compromising his troops as some of the desperately poor Belgian women earned their money through prostitution. Snijders ordered his commanders to prevent their men from seeking out prostitutes.³¹ Eventually, the Minister of Internal Affairs urged mayors to send suspected prostitutes to isolation barracks at the Nunspeet refugee camp.³²

Both Snijders and the government hoped the refugees would not stay for very long. The costs involved in caring for them made every attempt to send them back attractive and an agreement with the German occupiers of northern Belgium was quickly sought.³³ An opportunity appeared as early as 10 October 1914, when a correspondent for the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* newspaper notified the government that the German commander in Antwerp had made a public announcement urging residents to return.³⁴ On 12 October, Snijders sent a military envoy to Antwerp to co-ordinate the homecoming. The following day, Dutch newspapers published the German proclamation, which guaranteed the safety of the Antwerpers.³⁵ In subsequent weeks, Dutch officers along with the German authorities facilitated the return of Antwerp's residents. Furthermore, the Dutch government agreed to pay for their transport.³⁶ But the Belgians were exceedingly reluctant to go home. The authorities

first enticed and then coerced them. Rumours about Germans indiscriminately rounding up young Belgian men were put to rest in the newspapers, as were claims that the Germans were burning villages to the ground.³⁷ As of 18 October, civic representatives from Antwerp met with refugees in Breda, Roosendaal, Bergen op Zoom, and Hoogerheide to reassure them that Antwerp was indeed safe.³⁸ They also gave refugees the opportunity to travel on to Britain, after the British government offered to accept them.³⁹ The government, not long thereafter, requested that mayors use *zachte drang* (mild pressure) to repatriate the remaining foreigners.⁴⁰ Although officially the Netherlands did not force refugees to leave, unofficially mayors exercised 'mild pressure' in a variety of ways such as giving refugees an ultimatum, requesting them to leave, and refusing to feed them if they stayed.⁴¹

Refugees began returning to Belgium in large numbers after 16 October. Those who remained in the Netherlands fit into three categories: relatively wealthy individuals who could pay their own way; 'well-deserving' middle-class people who had lost everything in the war; and poverty-stricken Belgians.⁴² The Dutch government gave the *pauvre honteux* (well-deserving) a small allowance, enough to enable them to stay in the country and live like Dutch citizens. However, it absolved itself of any responsibility for the penniless refugees. Government policy declared that dependents were not 'free' and should not enjoy the freedoms of self-sufficient individuals.⁴³ These 'undeserving' refugees were given the option of residing in a refugee camp or returning home. The prospect of living in a dreary camp with little freedom was enough for many of them to try their luck back in Belgium.⁴⁴ In spite of a government declaration of hospitality in September 1914,⁴⁵ the precedent for forcing refugees out of the country was set around that time. On 4 September 1914, Buhlman had already explained to Snijders that any refugees who refused to go to a camp 'can...be returned across the border'.⁴⁶

Although thousands of refugees returned to Belgium, new refugees continued to enter the Netherlands as well. Between 20 October and 27 December 1914, nearly 250,000 refugees in North Brabant returned home. During this same period, an additional 30,000 entered the province.⁴⁷ The new refugees were often not fleeing battle zones, but saw greater opportunities in the Netherlands. In subsequent years, more Belgians continued to seek entry into the Netherlands. Most of these refugees did so for different reasons than had caused their neighbours to flee to the Netherlands in 1914. Some wanted to join the Allied armies in Britain; others fled, fearing expatriation to forced labour camps in Germany; many hoped for a better life in the Netherlands; and some 6,500 wanted to live near interned family members.⁴⁸

By January 1915, approximately 100,000 Belgians were living in refugee camps at Uden, Ede, Nunspeet, Gouda, and Veenhuizen.⁴⁹ Their numbers remained steady throughout the war. From this time on, the military commitment to the refugees was to become minimal. The *Koninklijke Marechaussee* guarded camps, often helped by half a dozen regular troops.⁵⁰ At the Nunspeet and Roosendaal camps, soldiers guarded the quarantine rooms (for diseased refugees) as well as the quarters for prostitutes.⁵¹ At first, the military police and guards were responsible to the local military commander, but this responsibility was soon transferred to the Minister of Inter-

Map 11: Refugee camps and *grensconcentratieplaatsen* (border clearing sites)



nal Affairs, who was accountable for the camps.⁵² The only real obligation the military still had to refugees was along the borders. Snijders, in fact, raised the issue with cabinet members in November 1914, asking them if he could close the borders temporarily to prevent Belgians, whom he refused to classify as true refugees, from entering.⁵³ The government rejected his request. But Belgian crossings into the Netherlands were greatly hindered when Germany closed the Dutch-Belgian border that same month. The crossing became even more perilous after the Germans built an electric fence along the frontier in 1915.⁵⁴ These German measures eased many of Snijders' concerns.

Early in 1918, the General Staff prepared a plan of action in the case that a new war situation forced yet another refugee exodus upon the Netherlands. This time, in sharp contrast to 1914, the Dutch would not have adequate supplies of food, blankets, medicine, or fuel to transport and look after the refugees. In the course of planning, Snijders toyed with the idea of moving them straight to Vlissingen where ships could take them to the Allied side of the western front.⁵⁵ Ultimately, he authorised the establishment of *grensconcentratieplaatsen* (literally 'border concentration sites') to process the foreigners. Refugees were sent to one of the *grensconcentratieplaatsen* for a Red Cross medical check and registration by military personnel before they travelled on to municipalities that were able to feed and house them.⁵⁶ Snijders also made plans to use empty internment camps for refugees, although he reiterated that his troops would not be responsible for looking after them for more than ten days.⁵⁷

It was not until the last few months of the war that the Netherlands was burdened with another refugee problem. During September 1918, some 40,000 French and Belgian civilians fled the war front in Northern France and Belgium as the Allied armies forced a German retreat.⁵⁸ The refugees came in small enough numbers to be manageable. Although the army ran the *grensconcentratieplaatsen* and regulated refugee transports, the relief committees and the government provided food and supplies.⁵⁹ Once the refugees reached their billets – they could not be sent to the cities because food shortages in 1918 were severe⁶⁰ – the military involvement ceased and civilians took over. Nevertheless, some of the refugees did end up in unused internment camps.⁶¹

The refugee relief effort came at a considerable cost to the Dutch taxpayer. On 9 October 1914, the government made f100,000 available to pay for any expenses incurred by the municipalities in caring for the refugees. This was supposed to act as a supplement to money donated by charities. On 28 October, the sum was raised to f3 million.⁶² By the end of the war, the refugees had cost the state f42 million.⁶³ The costs involved were simply too high for private institutions to cover. Unlike France, which charged the Belgian government a phenomenal 400 million francs for the care of its refugees, the Dutch never requested compensation, at least not from Belgium.⁶⁴ They did intend to bill France for the costs of caring for its citizens though.⁶⁵

From a Trickle to a Flood

In contrast to their hesitancy in assisting the refugees, the government entrusted the military authorities with the task of handling military internees. Aside from the crisis days in October 1914, the military commitment to foreign soldiers was far greater and far more onerous than managing the refugee situation. As part of its neutrality obligations, the military created an internment camp in Alkmaar on 1 August 1914. Its first residents were Belgian and German soldiers crossing the Dutch border in and around Limburg.⁶⁶ The High Command quickly realised that it was inappropriate for enemies to live together, and so it transferred the Belgians to another site in Gaasterland.⁶⁷ Not much later, the Alkmaar camp was closed down and the Germans were moved to a new camp in Bergen.⁶⁸ Alkmaar was not considered large enough to house the anticipated hundreds of new internees, although no one was prepared for the thousands that eventually arrived.⁶⁹

By 1 October 1914, the Netherlands accommodated 129 German and Belgian soldiers, many of whom were seriously injured.⁷⁰ As soon as hostilities began on 4 August, Dutch Red Cross medics travelled to Belgium to tend to injured civilians and troops. They brought many of the wounded back with them for hospital treatment.⁷¹ Despite the obvious altruism of the medics' actions, Snijders put a stop to their Belgian excursions after only a few days due to a legal quandary: the medics breached Dutch neutrality by moving belligerent troops into neutral territory without first requesting permission from the individual soldier and from the injured combatant's govern-

ment, who might object to a neutral forcibly removing troops from the field of battle.⁷² Nevertheless, on 10 August 1914, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands granted the Red Cross access to Belgium for an hour at a time to retrieve casualties.⁷³ German and Belgian troops facilitated the compromise by moving their wounded closer to the border.⁷⁴ After treatment, the Netherlands interned the injured soldiers.⁷⁵ At the same time, any wounded who had not given their permission to be moved to the Netherlands were released from internment and returned to their home country.⁷⁶

Until early October 1914, the Dutch were able to manage the internee situation. Once the German armies lay siege upon Antwerp, however, they faced an exceptional crisis. On 9 October, 32,067 Belgian soldiers (nearly one-sixth of the Belgian army) and another 1,568 British troops found themselves stranded on the wrong side of Antwerp during a German advance.⁷⁷ The troops preferred incarceration in the Netherlands to becoming German prisoners of war. They reached the borders of Zeeland and North Brabant battle-weary and exhausted, surrounded by hundreds of thousands equally weary Belgian civilians. The pandemonium along the southern border is best illustrated by telegrams sent to General Headquarters from the province of Zeeland between 9 and 11 October. The Territorial Commander in Zeeland notified Snijders on 9 October that his troops had interned 600 foreign soldiers in the border town of Axel, had housed another 100 in nearby Hulst, while nearly 2,000 others were reported to be marching towards the town. He hoped they could be diverted to Neuzen (Terneuzen) as soon as possible but there were not enough available trains or other forms of transportation.⁷⁸ Between 9 and 11 October, in fact, the small population of Neuzen witnessed some 26,000 internees passing through their streets and onto trains.⁷⁹ On 10 October, Snijders received a telegram from Vlissingen: 800 Belgian soldiers had arrived overnight by train from Middelburg; there were 1,000 British and 2,000 Belgian soldiers in the port awaiting their departure, and an unknown number (at least several thousand) still roaming around the foot of the province. The Vlissingen commander was eagerly awaiting the arrival of HMS *Friso* to ease the transfer of internees northwards.⁸⁰

In these early days, no one knew precisely how many internees there were or how many more were coming, and with so many civilian refugees to cope with as well, the situation threatened to spiral out of control. No neutral nation had ever handled so many internees, let alone all at once. The only precedent was that of Switzerland, which had interned several hundred French and German soldiers during the Franco-Prussian War.⁸¹ Somehow, the Dutch army had to find a way to house, feed, and guard the internees and prevent them from escaping, with no recognizable infrastructure in place. It seemed an impossible task within an impossible situation. Human traffic clogged all of the roads into and out of Zeeland and North Brabant. The military requisitioned railway carriages, boats, ships, horse-drawn transport, automobiles, and trucks to move the internees.

One way or another, the internees were moved out of the chaos in the southern provinces and were accommodated in military barracks, hastily erected tent sites, public buildings, castles, ships, and barges throughout the country.⁸² The army made urgent nation-wide appeals for appropriate housing.⁸³ Unlike normal refugees, the Dutch were

responsible for ensuring that the internees were well guarded. Remarkably, they managed to concentrate particular nationalities in specific areas: the Britons were sent to Friesland, the Germans remained in Bergen, and the Belgians were scattered in large numbers around the centre of the country. But overcrowding was inevitable. In Assen, 2,500 internees slept under canvas tarps stretched across open courtyards. The Territorial Commander in Friesland told Snijders that this situation was untenable in the long-term, and that there was no space for any more internees in the short-term.⁸⁴ In Amersfoort, 15,000 men were crammed into an area designed for 4,000.⁸⁵

Hundreds, if not thousands, of Dutch soldiers were involved in the initial internment process. They were distracted from their usual tasks of manning borders and fortifications, and it deprived southern areas of their much-needed troop concentrations. For this reason, the Territorial Commander in Zeeland ordered his forces to accompany internees no further than Dordrecht. Zeeland needed all the available hands to deal with the internees who remained behind, as well as to man the defensive garrisons.⁸⁶ Eventually, out of chaos came order. By the middle of 1915, contractors had built several permanent internment camps. Within the General Headquarters, Major-General M. Onnen administered the Internment Bureau, which was created in the aftermath of the October crisis.⁸⁷ He approached his Swiss counterparts for advice on dealing with the internees, as foreign troops had also arrived in Switzerland.⁸⁸ Onnen's department worked in close co-operation with the Red Cross, which had set up an Information Bureau as an intermediary between the Dutch government, the military, internees, and their respective governments.⁸⁹ Through the course of 1915, the Information Bureau filed identification cards for internees and tracked their whereabouts around the country. The question now was: What to do with tens of thousands of men cooped up in prison camps?

All But a Prisoner of War

Military internees were not prisoners of war, although the Dutch treatment of internees, especially at the start of the war, did not differ appreciably from how belligerents treated their POWs. Snijders explained the difference to his subordinates as follows:

The Netherlands finds itself, as a neutral power, on an entirely friendly footing with all the warring powers. Therefore, it can never be our intention to act with hostility towards anyone belonging to the warring armies. Taking prisoners of war is incompatible with the concept of neutrality: we can only speak of 'internment'. That the treatment of internees in internment camps corresponds with the treatment of prisoners of war in camps of the warring parties does not take anything away from this principle.⁹⁰

This approach followed The Hague Conventions, which allowed neutrals to place interned troops in camps and do whatever else they thought necessary to keep them from leaving neutral territory.⁹¹ Yet there were some fundamental differences between POWs and internees. Internees tended to be treated more humanely; they were, after

all, not 'the enemy', and they were more likely to receive greater privileges. In time, interned officers enjoyed the opportunity of living with little supervision outside of the camps, while ordinary soldiers were afforded the chance to work for a wage and live with their families in specially built sites. Neutrals were also required to treat internees on a par with their own soldiers in terms of allowances and rations.⁹²

Despite the deceptively simple regulations, dealing with internees was not as easy as these regulations would suggest. Guarding, feeding, housing, and clothing the interned soldiers stretched the commitment and resources of the Dutch army considerably, while escapees presented an urgent neutrality concern. Escape attempts were most numerous in the first few months, a time when neither detailed records nor well-guarded camps existed. In October 1914, only 60 Dutch troops were guarding 1,200 internees in Leeuwarden and a similarly sized contingent looked after 2,200 internees in Gaasterland.⁹³ By July 1915, an estimated 1,600 internees had escaped.⁹⁴ Some camps were easier to break out of than others. For example, 804 internees managed to escape from Amersfoort during the first twelve months. Hardewijk was another large camp with a high internee escape rate (of 557), with most of the escapes occurring at the beginning of the war. The highest escape rate, however, was in Oldebroek with 66.2 per thousand in 1914 and 1915. Other sites were more difficult to escape from: Gaasterland had 31 breakouts before December 1915, Kampen 34 (all in November 1914) and Leeuwarden only 19.⁹⁵

Housed in guarded camps, often in dismal conditions, interned troops had every incentive to want to escape. The camp in Zeist provides a good example. In November 1914, the camp housed about 12,000 Belgians, but conditions there were bleak, especially with the onset of winter.⁹⁶ It was badly insulated, damp, and full of rats; internees had little to do, and they complained about the profiteering by the canteen manager.⁹⁷ On 3 December 1914 a riot broke out, during which internees smashed windows and threw stones.⁹⁸ The camp commander ordered his guards to shoot at the rioting prisoners. In the ensuing violence, eight Belgian soldiers died and another 18 were seriously wounded.⁹⁹ The Zeist riot brought international attention to the plight of the internees. The government and military investigated the riots and subsequently made several improvements to the gloomy situation there. The rebellion led to the internees receiving more privileges in all of the camps. Local and international charities contributed to the improvement of their daily routines as well, by organising concert evenings, craft classes, sports' days, and other forms of entertainment. However, as we will see, Dutch soldiers did not experience ideal living conditions either and the authorities could not favour internees over their own troops.

As supervision of the camps improved, as their administration became more thorough, and as the standard of living for internees became more acceptable, fewer managed or even wanted to escape. Officials also got better at catching the escapees, which further contributed to the decline in escape attempts. Throughout the course of 1915, the police (including the *Marechaussee*) ensured that internees were fingerprinted and photographed.¹⁰⁰ The government placed municipalities near internment camps in a *staat van beleg* (state of siege), legalising the virtually unlimited power to search homes at random.¹⁰¹ More guards patrolled camp perimeters and kept their

charges under intensified surveillance. In Gaasterland, for example, internees were initially permitted to move about freely through the township. This stopped after seven internees went missing on 23 October 1914; from then on, there was a daily roll call, internees could not own bicycles, and Gaasterland locals were forbidden to help the fleeing soldiers. Troops blocked the bridges around the town as well.¹⁰² It remained impossible, however, to isolate the township, and the 365 military guards eventually assigned to the 2,200 Gaasterland internees could not prevent the more determined escapees.¹⁰³

By November 1918, the overall number of Belgian escapees totalled 2,830, not much more than the total for December 1915.¹⁰⁴ But the desire to flee remained strong among some of them. In a fictional account based on his time as an internee, a British officer, Charles Morgan, described his imprisonment at Wierickerschans (Wieringerschans) castle. He stressed the demoralisation of being a prisoner, even after he and other officers were offered opportunities to live outside the camp if they signed a 'word-of-honour' document:¹⁰⁵

Here we are – shut up... We've [sic] given parole; we can't escape; we can't help in any way, even as civilians in England can help. We are as much out of the world as if we are dead. What we do or don't do makes no difference to a living soul. As long as we live, we shall never again be responsible to ourselves alone. And we don't know how long it will last – years perhaps; or Holland [sic] may come into the war next week and we find ourselves in the trenches the week after. It gives me a feeling, as far as the war is concerned, of absolute fatalism.¹⁰⁶

Some officers fled the country as soon as they had the chance, even if they had given their word of honour, but Belgium, Britain, and Germany effectively sealed this corridor off by agreeing to return any escaped officers back to the Netherlands.¹⁰⁷ The system worked so well that the Dutch subsequently allowed some officers to return home for funerals, visit sick relatives, and even take their leave allocations outside the Netherlands.¹⁰⁸ France was the only warring nation that did not allow its officers to sign word-of-honour agreements. As a result, the Dutch moved the few French officers held in captivity to a rather bleak camp on the small island of Urk in the middle of the Zuiderzee. Officers from other Allied countries who refused to give their 'word of honour' joined their French counterparts on the island.¹⁰⁹

By late 1915, when the prospect of a speedy end to the war seemed very unlikely, new solutions had to be found for the internees. It was not appropriate or healthy to keep thousands of bored and listless men locked up in camps. In 1916, the Dutch agreed to let the internees go to school – some 6,000 Flemish soldiers learned to read and write, while others attended universities in Delft, Wageningen, and Utrecht.¹¹⁰ Other internees worked for normal wages, although there were some limitations on their employment: Municipalities often only allowed internees to do work for which there were no Dutch employees available and they definitely could not work in any war-related industry (for fear of violating the neutrality regulations).¹¹¹

Table 5: Numbers of internees, 1914-1918

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Number</i>
Belgian	33,105 (405 officers)
British (normal)	1,751 (139 officers)
British (POW exchange)	6,000
German (normal)	1,461 (66 officers and 2 ensigns)
German (POW exchange)	4,500
French	8 (incl. 5 officers)
American	4 (all officers)
Total:	46,829

Source: based on figures in: Tuinen, 'De militaire handhaving' p. 68; Lier, 'Internering' p. 53; Vries, 'Nederland' Appendix V, p. 125; Wielinga, 'Military'.

Internees mostly took jobs as coal miners, factory workers, and farm hands.¹¹² They could live outside the main camps, although they remained under guard. For example, the owners of a zinc factory in Dorplein built a mini-internment camp, which housed anywhere between 50 and 100 internees at a time.¹¹³ In Eindhoven, approximately 350 Belgian internees who worked in the city stayed in barracks near the rail yards in the township of Woensel. The internees had to pay for the privilege of lodging in the barracks, but this was compensated for by the fact that they earned a regular income. By September 1918, 11,432 internees (nearly 35 per cent of all interned Belgians) worked in small groups outside the main camps and another 3,012 (9 per cent) were employed individually, with the result that some camps were closed down completely, including Gaasterland and Oldebroek.¹¹⁴ By November 1918, only Hardewijk remained fully operational.¹¹⁵

Even with the closing and scaling down of many internment camps, the military commitment to internees remained high. Before 1916, local troops (whether in the *landstorm* or *landweer*) tended to guard the camps, which were deliberately built at a distance from key strategic points, ensuring that few soldiers in front-line positions or in the field army were forced into guard duty.¹¹⁶ Retired officers usually supervised the camps, again with the hope of lessening the burden on the regular officer corps. Nevertheless, looking after 46,500 troops drained the army's resources. Hardewijk camp alone, with a capacity of some 8,000 internees, had nearly 1,000 guards and a number of *Marechaussee*.¹¹⁷ The employment of internees throughout the country meant that guards had to move around with them. At least one guard was assigned to every group of five to ten internees.¹¹⁸ Although it was unlikely that internees would escape, daily checks remained necessary.

Rules and Regulations

Alongside guarding, housing, feeding, clothing, and entertaining nearly 50,000 interned soldiers, identifying and interning soldiers at the border proved cumbersome as well. The rules of identification, namely who was to be interned and who was to be let free, complicated matters. Important gradations existed as to how a neutral should treat foreign soldiers, depending on the circumstances of entry and what rank or position they held. There were five types of armed personnel that entered the Netherlands during the war: regular soldiers, sailors, exchange POWs, escaped POWs, and deserters. The Dutch applied different responsibilities to each group. Foot soldiers were by far the most common; they regularly, and often accidentally, crossed the Dutch border, either individually or in small groups. In most cases, border guards gave soldiers who had accidentally stepped across the border the benefit of the doubt and allowed them to return to the other side. However, if they traversed the frontier in a group or in the company of a commanding officer, officials were left with no choice; the guards were obligated to apprehend the entire group, disarm them, and escort them to an internment camp.¹¹⁹

Identifying a soldier as he crossed the border was not necessarily a straightforward matter. On 6 August 1914, the Minister of Justice, B. Ort, pointed out that a soldier was classified as someone who was in the presence of a commanding officer, wore a military uniform, openly carried arms, or could prove to be enlisted in the armed forces.¹²⁰ The last of these four categories created certain problems. During the refugee crisis in October 1914, a substantial number of Belgian troops – some historians estimate the number at approximately 7,000 – traversed the Dutch border out of uniform and unarmed, having exchanged their uniforms for civilian clothes.¹²¹ After the Dutch authorities actively encouraged refugees to return to Belgium, a number of the men feared that the German occupation forces would capture them as prisoners of war. They asked to be interned in the Netherlands instead, basing their eligibility on service in the Belgian army. Snijders disagreed with the government on how these asylum seekers should be treated.¹²² Many cabinet ministers were of the opinion that foreign soldiers should be interned, regardless of how they made their way into the Netherlands. Snijders believed that, according to international law, a neutral should intern only those persons who entered neutral territory armed or in uniform.¹²³ Dismissing the remainder as merely seeking charity, he stressed ‘an internment camp is not a philanthropic institution’.¹²⁴ In the end, Snijders’ opinion prevailed. To avoid future difficulties, the Commander-in-Chief asked border guards to consult with him personally if they were unsure about the status of any foreigners they encountered.¹²⁵

Border guards also showed a particular interest in certain refugees, namely Belgian men travelling through the Netherlands to get to Britain. Neutral territory could neither be used as a base for recruiting belligerent troops nor to transport such troops.¹²⁶ German diplomats raised this issue with the Dutch government on numerous occasions, claiming that Belgian consulates in the Netherlands targeted male refugees and paid for their passage to Britain. Newspapers reported similar transgressions.¹²⁷ It was difficult for the Dutch to police this breach of neutrality howev-

Illustration 4: Dutch and German soldiers fraternise at the border, 1914



Dutch and German soldiers, Red Cross workers and locals pose on the Dutch side of the Belgian border near Maastricht, 9 August 1914, in the process breaching the neutrality of the Netherlands. Snijders severely reprimanded the officer in charge for failing to intern the German troops.

er. In October 1914, refugees boarded ships to Britain completely unhindered and few controls existed in the ports to ensure that everybody departing the country was eligible to do so.¹²⁸ In November, the government asked municipal councils to keep an eye out for groups of men leaving the country.¹²⁹ Two months later, Snijders ordered his subordinates to investigate male refugees and foreigners leaving for Britain. This was done in co-operation with the civilian authorities (mainly customs officers).¹³⁰ But it proved hard to demonstrate that particular Belgian men were Allied recruits and not genuine refugees.¹³¹ As a result, most movements by Belgians to Britain went ahead unhindered, to the chagrin of the Germans.¹³²

Snijders' flexible interpretation of the regulations meant that foreign soldiers could visit the Netherlands freely, as long as they were unarmed, in civilian dress, and their visit did not have a belligerent purpose. In fact, several German soldiers spent their leave in the country between 1914 and 1918: They shopped in border towns, stayed overnight, and travelled to holiday resorts.¹³³ Although Allied soldiers could legally have done the same, access to the Netherlands was relatively easier from Germany. However, the Dutch government did impose some time limits on German visits with the aim of preventing espionage: They had to report to a local military commander when staying overnight; they could not remain in the southern provinces for more than three days; and could not enter fortifications and other military areas.¹³⁴

The status of naval crews and their eligibility for internment was far more com-

plicated than that of foot soldiers. If a belligerent warship entered Dutch territorial waters, the navy was obligated to intern both the ship and its occupants. Sailors rescued in international waters were a different matter altogether. They were classified as 'soldiers' only if their entry into the Netherlands occurred in a military capacity. The type of vessel used to transport the sailors into the country was instrumental in distinguishing 'soldiers' from 'non-soldiers'.¹³⁵ Hence, the Dutch did not intern sailors picked up by merchant ships but did intern those rescued by naval vessels (once aboard a warship, the foreigners acquired military status, whereas on a merchant ship they were classified as civilians).¹³⁶ Hence, when the Dutch steamship *Titan* rescued 114 men from the torpedoed British cruisers *Aboukir*, *Hogue*, and *Cressy* on 22 September 1914, the sailors received treatment in Dutch hospitals and were returned to Great Britain.¹³⁷ The rules were even more complicated if a merchant ship encountered an enemy warship *en route* to a Dutch port. In this scenario, the status of any foreign military personnel on board the merchant ship changed. Upon reaching a neutral port, the sailors were interned, because the warship could have made them its prisoners of war and the merchant ship its prize.¹³⁸

The Dutch also did not intern military medical staff, since the Geneva Conventions of 1864 and 1906 gave medics immunity from being treated as POWs and internees. The nature of their professions meant they were classified not as military personnel but as individuals on a humanitarian mission. Therefore, upon entering the Netherlands, they could leave at will. In the end, a number of Belgian medics stayed in the Netherlands to assist sick and wounded Belgian internees.¹³⁹

Prisoners of War and the Advantages of Neutrality

In 1915, a new group of foreign soldiers found themselves residing in the Netherlands, namely British and German prisoners of war (POWs). In February, Germany and Britain agreed to exchange sick and wounded POWs via the Netherlands. The first POW exchanges began almost immediately: German servicemen wounded in Allied hands arrived in the ports of Vlissingen and Hoek van Holland, where they were transferred onto trains to Germany. At the same time, wounded Allied soldiers replaced the Germans on the ships, which then returned to Great Britain.¹⁴⁰ In July 1917, Germany and Britain signed an official agreement for the continuation of the POW exchanges, an increasingly hazardous task since the declaration of unrestricted U-boat warfare by Germany a few months earlier. In total, 7,800 wounded German POWs in Britain were returned to Germany across Dutch territory between December 1915 and the end of the war, in exchange for 4,700 British soldiers.¹⁴¹ These exchanges took place under Dutch military supervision, and were paid for by the Dutch government, in contrast to internment costs, which were to be reimbursed by the belligerent governments at the end of the war.¹⁴²

The Anglo-German agreement of July 1917 also allowed up to 16,000 POWs to be interned by the neutral.¹⁴³ The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs signed the agreement, confirming his government's co-operation in the exchanges and commitment to the internment process.¹⁴⁴ He also permitted civilians imprisoned as aliens in

Germany and Britain to move to the Netherlands. The military did not intern them and most lived like other refugees.¹⁴⁵ In turn, the Dutch treated the POWs somewhat differently than other internees because their entry into the country was not based on a breach of neutrality and many of them were seriously injured. They were usually housed in private lodgings, hotels, or special barracks, rather than the larger impersonal internment facilities, although the military continued to supervise their comings and goings and limited their movements to particular cities. The British POWs were located in and around Scheveningen, Leeuwarden, and Nijmegen, while the Germans lodged in Rotterdam, Dieren, Wolfheze, Hattem, Arnhem, and Noordwijk.¹⁴⁶

The substantial commitment involved in supervising the internees begs the question of why the Netherlands accepted POW exchanges between Germany and Britain, and further, why they encouraged the internment of thousands of German and British POWs. Perhaps, as Evelyn de Roodt has suggested, the government committed itself to internment because this gave it bargaining power when requesting supplies from Germany and Britain.¹⁴⁷ While de Roodt dismissed altruism as a likely reason, one cannot dismiss that the Dutch appreciated the 'good press' POW internment gave them. As Bent Blüdnikow and Carsten Due-Nielsen successfully argued with regard to Denmark, warring states saw neutrals reaping the benefits from the war without contributing to the war effort or suffering any of its horrific consequences. By looking after POWs, Denmark, Switzerland, Norway, and the Netherlands could make themselves look humanitarian and useful.¹⁴⁸ To a certain degree, it justified their neutrality. In other words, the POW exchanges helped to make Dutch neutrality more attractive to the belligerents. Since the Netherlands relied heavily on maintaining good will on both sides, it must have featured prominently in their reasons for facilitating the exchanges in the first place.

In all, the Dutch interned approximately 4,500 German and 6,000 British POWs.¹⁴⁹ This was well below the 16,000 set at the British-German conference.¹⁵⁰ One reason why the target was not reached had to do with the perils of sea travel, which precluded regular hospital ship crossings.¹⁵¹ More importantly, the war at sea and belligerent blockades had a profound impact on food supplies in the Netherlands. Although both Germany and Britain promised to feed their internees, food shipments had trouble getting across the Channel and Germany had barely enough stocks to supply its own citizens at home. The Dutch faced similar problems in maintaining adequate food supplies, especially during the winter of 1917-1918 when rationing was particularly harsh for civilians. As a result, the authorities did not feel they could guarantee the standard of nourishment for internees required by international law, and therefore felt it was unwarranted to take in more mouths to feed. The government eventually decided to ration internees at the same rate as its own civilians, including a bread allocation that was cut in April 1918 from 250 to 200 grams per day.¹⁵² The British authorities voiced their concerns and argued that their soldiers (unlike Dutch citizens) had great trouble supplementing their diet because they had little discretionary money. They hoped to settle the situation by sending more grain, which arrived but not in adequate quantities.¹⁵³ The Dutch public felt

entirely unenthusiastic towards the foreigners because of the burden they placed on resources, and, for this reason alone, the government felt obligated to keep the internees' ration on a par with its civilians rather than its soldiers.¹⁵⁴ Internees in Hardewijk rioted later that year because of the lack of food.¹⁵⁵ Interestingly, the precursors for this riot did not differ much from those of Dutch soldiers at the Harskamp barracks who rioted in October 1918, and who, incidentally, had much larger food rations apportioned to them than civilians and internees.

Another Kettle of Fish Entirely: Escaped POWs and German Deserters

Other prisoners of war also found their way to the Netherlands during the war. Many Allied soldiers escaped from POW camps in Germany and managed to reach the Dutch border. While the Dutch could have refused them entry, according to international law, they rarely did so for obvious humanitarian reasons.¹⁵⁶ Letting the POWs into the country meant they were then obliged to assist them in their travels home.¹⁵⁷ If the escapees were unable to leave the Netherlands or chose to stay, then the neutral could assign lodgings and, like interned POWs, limit their movements within certain municipalities.¹⁵⁸ These same rules applied to a number of German POWs returning home from imprisonment in Britain, who fled from the exchange trains while travelling through the Netherlands.¹⁵⁹ They did not wish to return home to face, by 1917 at least, severe food shortages and the possibility of serving at the front again.

Most of the escapees, however, were British and Belgian. Around 4,000 Russians also found their way to the Dutch border.¹⁶⁰ Generally, the British soldiers travelled home, as did most of the Belgians. Dealing with the Russians was not as easy. Despite attempts to persuade them to leave, many Russians had no desire to do so, especially after the revolutions of 1917, nor did they wish to reside in Great Britain.¹⁶¹ The authorities reluctantly assigned them to municipalities, where locals were far from welcoming to the fugitives whom they saw as placing too great a strain on scarce accommodations, jobs, and food. For this reason, from 1917 onwards, many of the ex-POWs were accommodated in empty internment barracks. The Russians lived at Gaasterland and Oldebroek, while a pocket remained in Rotterdam, much to the annoyance of their neighbours there.¹⁶² Other escaped POWs unwilling or unable to return home were also assigned to empty internment barracks: Serbs to Milligen; Portuguese, Polish, and French to Amersfoort; and other Allied soldiers to Hardewijk, Nijmegen, and Vlasakkers.¹⁶³ In the camps, they were treated like civilian refugees, although military personnel helped with the preparation of food, as well as with general supervision.¹⁶⁴

While the escaped POWs were burdensome, deserters from the German armies were much more troublesome. Tens of thousands of German soldiers defected and made their way to the Netherlands between 1916 and 1918.¹⁶⁵ Unlike escaped POWs, the Dutch had no obligations toward deserters, but they could not force them to return home, nor could they intern them because they were no longer classified as soldiers and because Germany would not pay for their internment. Dealing with

deserters was also more difficult than handling civilian refugees since they could not be coerced or persuaded to leave, but neither could they be allowed to roam the Netherlands freely. The deserters' military knowledge and training also posed a considerable security risk. The belligerents (especially the British) often targeted the Germans, whom they were eager to recruit as spies.

The military dealt with foreign deserters in a similar manner as escaped POWs. They were allocated to municipalities, although they had to pay their own way. Not surprisingly, the government was unwilling to pay the costs incurred in dealing with deserters because it had not asked them to come and only let them stay out of humanitarian concerns.¹⁶⁶ While recognising some responsibility to the deserters, it would not allow their family members into the Netherlands.¹⁶⁷ Still, the military learnt a vast amount about the German armies from deserters and in this respect they were an invaluable source of information.¹⁶⁸ The defectors often sold information to the Allies as well. To limit their potential as spies and smugglers, the military authorities restricted the areas in which deserters could reside.¹⁶⁹ By mid-1917, the foreigners posed such a problem that the government set up a special camp for them in Bergen.¹⁷⁰ But the camp filled up so quickly that many had no choice but to live elsewhere.¹⁷¹ Because they received next to no help from the state or charitable organisations, some deserters lived in atrocious conditions. Van Terwisga uncovered a case of 14 impoverished deserters in Eindhoven in February 1917, who did not even own a change of clothes.¹⁷² Aside from the establishment of a camp at Bergen, however, the Dutch did very little for the foreigners. They were met with contempt rather than compassion. In Limburg, the province most affected by deserters, there was the concern that public safety would be compromised if large groups of unemployed strangers speaking German were allowed to roam the streets.¹⁷³ Locals also feared that many deserters had no option but to turn to smuggling as a way to feed themselves.

What worried the Dutch authorities the most was the threat of another influx of asylum seekers if the stalemate on the western front was broken. During the major advances on the western front in 1918, the Dutch were expecting another refugee and internee crisis. To prepare for this, alongside the *grensconcentratieplaatsen* for civilian refugees, they prepared two quarantine and processing stations at Venlo and Sittard for foreign military personnel, including deserters and escaped POWs.¹⁷⁴ Border crossers who ended up here faced procedures that included registration, health checks, quarantine (if necessary), and eventual internment or transport to elsewhere in the Netherlands.¹⁷⁵ The huge increases in the number of deserters that crossed Limburg's borders meant that Venlo's quarantine station eventually became solely responsible for German and Austria-Hungarian deserters.¹⁷⁶ Not until after the armistice of November 1918, however, did the Dutch face another potential internee dilemma, when Germany asked permission to let tens of thousands of its soldiers through Limburg back to Germany. As we shall see in a later chapter, the Dutch managed to avoid having to intern these troops, although it caused some major diplomatic tensions with the Allies.

Map 12: Internment camps and clearing stations



Interned Goods

Military equipment belonging to a warring party required internment when it reached neutral territory.¹⁷⁷ This was based on the legal principle that a neutral state could not be used to supply a belligerent with war materials, which meant that alongside interning soldiers, the Dutch armed forces also captured accompanying weaponry and equipment. Likewise, any war materials that somehow found their way into the Netherlands, including warships, aeroplanes, stranded mines, and even combatants' horses, were liable to be interned.¹⁷⁸ Everything had to be catalogued, carefully stored, and, in the case of horses, fed, housed, exercised, and watered. The items were stockpiled in warehouses in Geertruidenberg and Delft.¹⁷⁹ The horses were a little harder to accommodate. Troops looked after most of the animals in large stables in Utrecht and Breda.¹⁸⁰ At the end of the war, the Netherlands was obliged to return the equipment and animals to the nation of origin, although not before the belligerents paid for the upkeep of the horses.¹⁸¹ Troops had to carefully guard the goods, especially the aeroplanes, to prevent espionage. Germany believed, correctly as it turned out, that the Allies would learn about its aircraft designs by spying on interned aeroplanes.¹⁸² Although they proved cumbersome to guard, the captured aircraft did pro-

vide a unique opportunity for the fledgling air branch. Over a hundred foreign aeroplanes, including bombers and seaplanes landed in Dutch territory during the war,¹⁸³ enabling the Dutch to learn something about advances in aeroplane construction, aerial warfare, and bombing techniques.

Another advantage of internment was that the military managed to buy some of the interned goods and animals.¹⁸⁴ The costs of the purchases were mostly credited to the belligerents, who then used the credit to pay for the upkeep of their soldiers in internment camps.¹⁸⁵ Since the average interned aircraft sold for f2,000, it was a profitable exchange for all concerned.¹⁸⁶ In fact, the purchase of belligerent equipment was in contravention to international law, as a neutral could not lend or give money to warring states. Buying equipment that the combatants could no longer use was interpreted as issuing a monetary loan.¹⁸⁷ Presumably because the major powers agreed to the sale, and because the Dutch bought from both sides and no money actually changed hands, no one objected to the breach of neutrality. In fact, France even offered an interned aeroplane as a gift to the Dutch in 1915, which they steadfastly refused on grounds of neutrality.¹⁸⁸ Another advantage of interning goods was that the Dutch could retain the items until the combatants settled their outstanding internment accounts.¹⁸⁹ In 1924, Germany sold most of its interned weapons, ships, and aeroplanes and with this revenue paid for the internment of its soldiers.¹⁹⁰ Belgium took much longer to pay its internment accounts, which is no wonder considering the tens of thousands of soldiers it had to pay for. Its final payment reached Dutch coffers in 1936.¹⁹¹

The internment of soldiers and goods did not in general cause any problems with the belligerent governments. They tended to be fully supportive of the neutral's right to intern goods. Occasionally, matters were not so straightforward. The Dutch interned four German U-boats during the war.¹⁹² In 1917, the Germans fiercely contested the capture of two of the submarines because their entry into Dutch territorial waters was accidental.¹⁹³ One U-boat lost its way in the mist, while *UB-30* stranded on a beach near Domburg. When the authorities refused to release the vessels, the Germans threatened to extend their war zone into Dutch territorial waters. The High Command believed the *impasse* was serious enough to warrant cancelling all leave for its soldiers. They only refrained for fear of antagonising Germany. Eventually, an international committee solved the U-boat incident and decided that one of the two vessels should be returned to Germany, while the other should remain in the Netherlands until the end of the war. The two neighbours acquiesced and another neutrality crisis was averted, albeit not without tension.¹⁹⁴

Neutrality Maintenance and the Military's Responsibility for Foreigners

In part because it expected the war to be over quickly, the Dutch armed forces underestimated how time-consuming protecting its neutrality obligations would be. The human and material resources involved in successfully implementing neutrality regulations, especially with regard to internment, placed a great strain on their capabilities. Combined with ongoing responsibilities for non-military matters, such as civil-

ian refugees and smuggling, the High Command struggled to keep enough soldiers mobilised for strategic ends. Yet the government kept assigning greater responsibility to the armed forces for maintaining both internal and external neutrality as well as public order. The tenuous balance between defence and neutrality, in the end, tilted overwhelmingly in favour of the latter. Of all its neutrality responsibilities, however, the internment of foreign soldiers and their equipment was the most successfully fulfilled. While internment involved a huge commitment, its results were favourable. This is quite in contrast to almost all of the country's other neutrality measures because the warring states rarely challenged the right of the Dutch to intern foreign troops or equipment. It was one aspect of neutrality that was universally respected. In other words, internment proved to be one of the most rewarding neutrality tasks. The same cannot be said for their economic neutrality responsibilities, to which we shall now turn.

Chapter

6

Shifting Sand and Gravel: Military and Economic Neutrality

According to the historian Nils Ørvik, the ‘essence of the neutral problem can in fact be compressed into one gross oversimplification’, namely the complicated matter of trade.¹ A major reason why European states adopted neutrality in the nineteenth century was the commercial benefits it provided in wartime. The Declaration of Paris in 1856 was one of the first international laws that recognised the immunity of goods aboard neutral ships.² It also legalised the principle of contraband, and, thereby, restricted neutral trade only in terms of ‘articles destined for a belligerent state which are useful for the conduct of war and which an opposing belligerent has declared shall not be carried to that belligerent’.³ But a serious deficiency of the Paris Declaration was that it did not specify items that fell under the label ‘contraband’.⁴ During deliberations in London between 1908 and 1909, representatives of the major powers (Britain, France, Germany, the United States, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Russia) attempted to rectify this shortcoming by creating a list of goods defined as ‘absolute’ and ‘conditional’ contraband.⁵ Although most of the nations present in London signed the agreement, many of their respective governments subsequently did not ratify it, which had inevitable consequences for the sanctity of neutral commerce during the Great War.⁶

While neutrals wished to maintain peaceful trade relations with warring and non-belligerent states alike, belligerents were primarily concerned with isolating their enemies in every way possible, even if that came at the expense of international law. British and German economic aspirations, for example, usually clashed with those of their non-warring neighbours, including the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. Although neutrals could (and did) turn to international law when their economic neutrality was threatened, the economic rights and obligations embedded in neutrality were only inconsequentially defined and easily ignored. As a result, neutrals had to work much harder at marking out and defending the boundaries of their economic sovereignty. The Hague Conventions guaranteed that they could use whatever means necessary to ensure their neutral position,⁷ which allowed them considerable latitude, but meant that the belligerents could exert pressure on them as well. As they tended to be weaker states, neutrals often had few options available other than to abide by the demands made by stronger states, even if the consequences were detrimental to their neutrality, prosperity, and security.

During the Great War, the belligerent nations took economic warfare to new heights, grossly compromising the rights of neutrals in the process. In the first year of war, however, the impact of the economic warfare was little more than a nuisance.

Britain's 'business as usual' policy ensured that blockade measures were gradual and *ad hoc*, while Germany took every opportunity to trade as freely with neutral states as possible.⁸ However, in subsequent years, neutral countries almost completely lost all control over their own trade. By November 1918, both sets of warring parties had disregarded even the vague contraband definitions established by the Paris Declaration of 1856, let alone the amendments made to it in London a half century later. Instead, they declared all merchant traffic to and from enemy territory illegal and liable to seizure. Neutrals lost their entitlement to the open seas, 'continuous journey', and free markets. The relative weakness of neutral countries often impaired their ability to prevent abuses of their economic neutrality since they lacked the commercial and financial resources to place corresponding pressure on the warring parties. This was especially true of the Netherlands, although there were exceptions. For example, Sweden was a neutral with considerable economic power during the war, at least until the outbreak of the Russian revolutions in 1917. Apart from being one of Europe's major suppliers of iron ore and coal, its territory presented the only overland trade route for the Allies to Russia (since Turkey had closed off the Dardanelles). Consequently, Sweden could guarantee its valuable iron ore trade with Germany as long as the Allies required its territory to transit goods to Russia.⁹ When the Allies curbed Swedish trade with the Central Powers, Sweden refused to let Allied wares through. Of course, once Russia left the war, the Swedes lost much of their negotiating power, the Allies stopped being so accommodating, and, as a result, Swedish exports to Germany decreased significantly.

A warring state could place great economic pressure on a neutral before its enemy retaliated with military force. To a certain degree, however, the Netherlands could negotiate and compromise its commercial relationships and had its own bargaining levers. It could embargo exports from its colonies to Germany, the United States, and Great Britain, or put a stop to Belgium's relief efforts.¹⁰ Both the Allies and Central Powers relied on imports of tin, rice, rubber, and quinine from the Dutch East Indies. Britain also depended on margarine imports from the Netherlands itself, presenting another negotiating tool for the Dutch.¹¹ However, on the whole, the Dutch were limited in their trade negotiations because they relied heavily on raw materials supplied by Germany (mainly coal, steel, timber, and iron) and from overseas (foodstuffs, fertilizers, and grain).¹² Any reductions in the supply of these essentials endangered the economic health, agricultural productivity, and industrial capacity of the country. Of course, a declaration of war remained a possible outcome whenever trade negotiations broke down. The Dutch could never be sure that their neutrality was safe if they argued too vigorously for their rights. When mixed with other controversies, it could be the final ingredient that transformed a manageable diplomatic situation into a dangerous cocktail, bringing the Netherlands to the brink of war. Hence, the government had little choice but to monitor and protect the commercial activities of its citizens and to safeguard what entered and left across its territorial boundaries.¹³

*Endeavouring to Starve Germany:*¹⁴
The Netherlands and the Allied Blockade

The Netherlands signed and ratified the London Declaration in 1909, and, on the eve of war, imposed limits on 'conditional' and 'absolute' contraband trade that left and entered the country. The neutrality declarations of August 1914 expressly warned merchants that the state would accept no responsibility for their activities if they did not heed these contraband regulations.¹⁵ Within a year, however, the Allies and Central Powers had interfered with Dutch trade and shipping above and beyond the conditions of the Declaration of London, and skippers were in peril of losing much more than their cargo if they breached the new rules.

The British Royal Navy and its French counterpart blockaded Germany and Austria-Hungary from afar, patrolling the entrances to the North Sea, the Channel, and the Mediterranean, intercepting and searching all vessels for contraband, and preventing those carrying goods destined for the Central Powers from passing through. To this end, a British Order in Council provisionally accepted the London Declaration on 20 August 1914, although it added a number of new items to the contraband list.¹⁶ The following month, on 29 October, another Order in Council required neutral ships to carry appropriate documentation for their cargo, including declarations about the ultimate destination for the goods. In doing so, the Allies transferred the burden of proof from the blockading nation, as established by international law, to the merchant.¹⁷ If merchants failed to satisfactorily account for their goods, Britain and France would hold their cargo indefinitely. At the same time, the two nations extended the list of what they considered contraband well beyond the intentions of the London Declaration.¹⁸ In March 1915, Britain further tightened its control over neutral sea-borne trade when it assumed ships had an enemy destination, unless captains could prove otherwise.¹⁹ Merchants from neutral countries now had to provide guarantees that their goods were for domestic consumption only. Initially products from the East and West Indies destined for the Netherlands were exempted. Very quickly, however, the quantity of colonial imports was restricted to pre-war levels in an attempt to prevent surpluses from ending up in Germany.²⁰ For the same reason the Allies set quotas, in September 1915, on how much neutrals could import from each other.²¹ In the summer of 1916, Britain and France withdrew their recognition of the London Declaration completely, abandoning Europe's neutrals to their fate.²²

The Dutch government protested against each of the Allies' blockade measures on the grounds that they interfered with the rights of neutral citizens to unhindered trade. Needless to say, the protests achieved very little. Instead, the Dutch adjusted their trading practices to meet British and French demands. As early as September 1914, Dutch industry and trade representatives formed a Commission for Trade, with the aim of regulating international shipping and avoiding the adverse effects of the blockade restrictions. In November 1914, this body developed into the *Nederlandsche Overzee Trustmaatschappij* (Netherlands' Overseas Trust Company, or NOT).²³ The NOT was a private company that hoped to negotiate shipping agreements with the belligerents. It had no official links with the government although it enjoyed the cab-

inet's tacit approval. Ministers did not want to involve themselves in lengthy and potentially damaging economic negotiations with either warring party, but hid behind the façade of complete economic impartiality.²⁴ As a result, and at least until the end of 1916, they left almost all international trade dialogues in the hands of the NOT. The only product that the government imported on behalf of its citizens, and hence left outside the realm of the NOT's negotiations, was grain.²⁵

Thanks, in part, to the efforts of the British economic delegation in The Hague, headed by Sir Francis Oppenheimer, the NOT managed to gain the confidence of the British and French governments. Late in December 1914, both Allied powers recognised the NOT's guarantees of domestic consumption. In return, the Trust ensured that it administered all sea-borne imports into the Netherlands.²⁶ The relationship was mutually beneficial: the Dutch received goods from their colonies, the United States, and other neutrals, while the Allies prevented these imports from reaching the Central Powers.²⁷ The NOT's consignee system was so successful that most European neutrals, including Norway, Denmark, and Switzerland, subsequently set up similar companies.²⁸

The NOT directors were on such good terms with the Allies, especially Great Britain, that Germany accused the company of being Britain's puppet on several occasions.²⁹ Few of the Trust's decisions favoured the Central Powers, while almost all of them complied with Allied requests. When the Allies compiled 'blacklists' of neutral merchants known to trade with their enemies, the NOT prevented these traders from attaining consignment guarantees. The trustees even notified the High Command of companies and individuals on the lists, in an attempt to ensure compliance with the NOT's regulations at the borders.³⁰ By mid-1916, when the NOT was at the height of its power, the Dutch government was hardly represented at the international trade negotiation tables. The NOT acted almost as a 'state within the state', with a staff of several thousand people, both in its relationship with the belligerents and its control over merchants.³¹ As a private company, it did not have to comply with the government's neutrality standards. It was thus able to accept Allied demands with much greater ease than the government could have done. Nevertheless, because the NOT was accountable for the nation's imports, the government was effectively bound by its agreements.³²

Not surprisingly, the German authorities had mixed feelings about the NOT. While irritated that the Allies had considerable influence over Dutch imports and, therefore, over what the Dutch could trade with Germany, they also recognised that because of the NOT, the Netherlands could import foodstuffs from abroad, which would free up local produce for export to Germany.³³ Dutch exports to Germany were far greater than they had been before the war, at least until the United States entered the war in April 1917.³⁴ The NOT had no control over exports (except to ensure that imported goods were not re-exported) and the Dutch sold vast amounts of locally produced goods and pre-war stocks to its eastern neighbour. Prices in Germany were so high that exporting and smuggling were immensely profitable. Economic historians have argued that the Dutch economy thrived in 1915 and 1916 because of the unending demand for produce and goods in Germany.³⁵ Until the summer of 1916, the Netherlands was the

most important foreign supplier of foodstuffs to Germany. Dutch exports of cheese, butter, eggs, potatoes, and meat tripled between 1913 and 1915.³⁶ The NOT also gave the same guarantees of domestic consumption for goods imported from Germany or Austria-Hungary as it did for Allied goods. The Central Powers did profit by maintaining a good relationship with the NOT. Still, Britain and France were able to place considerably more pressure on Dutch importers and enforce a much stricter blockade of Germany via the Netherlands than Germany was able to impose in return.

Smuggling and the Policing of Economic Neutrality

Although no official (or, for that matter, consistent) figures are available, the estimates of illicit export goods between 1914 and 1918 are staggering. Anton Smidt calculated that during a two-month period (June-July 1915) in the small border communities of Putte and Ossendrecht alone, 175,000 kilograms of flour and 223,000 kilograms of rice crossed the border unlawfully.³⁷ He also noted that on a single night in 1915, border guards arrested 150 smugglers trying to reach Belgium.³⁸ Another historian, Marc Frey, who studied the goods entering Germany, estimated that after July 1916, 80 per cent of butter exports to Germany was smuggled in.³⁹ In the eyes of the British, smuggling across the Dutch frontier posed a real risk to the maintenance of its blockade of Germany, especially when the NOT estimated that the authorities only intercepted about ten per cent of the total amount of smuggled goods.⁴⁰ Subsequent historians have suggested that the NOT's estimates were too high, and that the true figure was somewhere between one and five per cent.⁴¹ Given that thousands of kilograms of products were seized at the border, even the higher NOT estimation indicates that smuggling was out of control.⁴²

A growing concern for the Netherlands was the impact smuggling had on the international credibility of its economic neutrality and the viability of the NOT's guarantees. Through the course of 1915 and 1916, the British authorities broached the subject with Trust directors and the Dutch government.⁴³ The directors of the company also asked the government to help ensure that consigned goods stayed in the country.⁴⁴ In turn, the government introduced export prohibitions,⁴⁵ ostensibly to prevent shortages on the domestic market. Not surprisingly, Germany doubted the Dutch government's justification for enforcing the proscriptions and charged that the Dutch were yielding too easily to the Allies.⁴⁶ This became all too apparent in August 1915, when the cabinet decreed that customs officials could investigate the origin of exports.⁴⁷ As a result, NOT contract breakers were pursued and apprehended at the borders by military patrols and civilian customs officials.⁴⁸

Both the government and the NOT were concerned about how their trade regulations and export prohibitions could be supervised effectively.⁴⁹ For the sake of neutrality, everything entering and leaving the country had to be checked. This task was too immense for the relatively small number of civil servants in the Ministry of Finance, even with help from the *Koninklijke Marechaussee*. As early as November 1914, Snijders recognised the potential value of using troops to prevent violations of the country's economic neutrality, and explained how the government could best

utilise them.⁵⁰ Troops stationed at the border and naval ships patrolling waterways were obvious choices to support customs officers in inspecting the flow of goods.⁵¹ Very quickly, the military's supervisory role intensified as the list of prohibited goods grew longer and as smuggling became more prolific. While ultimate responsibility for all goods' inspections remained with the Minister of Finance, the border guards' initial responsibility for directing cargo to inspection posts soon expanded to include general policing duties, like apprehending suspected smugglers, and any suspicious individuals crossing the frontier.

Regardless of the increased military involvement in anti-smuggling duties, smuggling continued unabated through 1915 and 1916. Part of the problem was that there were not enough troops available to constantly patrol the entire length of the Dutch border.⁵² At any rate, many military guards earned a substantial income from accepting bribes or from their own smuggling efforts.⁵³ Buhlman estimated that they could earn anything from between *f*50 to *f*100 for letting a horse pass across the border unnoticed,⁵⁴ a huge sum given that the average conscript earned less than *f*2 a day.⁵⁵ Hundreds of troops, in fact, received court-martials summons for smuggling.⁵⁶ Most of them ended up at two military prisons set up at Fort Crèvecoeur and Fort Ellewoutsdijk specifically to deal with smuggling cases.⁵⁷ Because *landweer* troops tended to guard the borders of the province in which they lived, it was also generally believed that they smuggled more than the other troops.⁵⁸ Anton Smidt's research has uncovered, however, that field army troops were as likely to get involved in illicit activities as their *landweer* equivalents, and that the *landweer* troops tended to be better at stopping smugglers because of their knowledge of the area and people. In fact, of the 127 soldiers prosecuted as smugglers in 1915, only 21 were caught in their area of residence.⁵⁹ Of course, this could indicate that local soldiers were less likely to be caught and the replacement of an entire regiment at the border certainly decreased the amount of smuggling in the short-term.⁶⁰

In an attempt to offset smuggling incentives among troops, the High Command urged the government to reward guards who caught smugglers with a monetary bonus. It was considered too much to demand that soldiers be vigilant because of a sense of duty.⁶¹ The Minister of Finance agreed and in March 1915 instituted a premium.⁶² Every three months, soldiers would receive *f*5 if they showed diligence in the apprehension of offenders.⁶³ Requests to increase the amount and its frequency were common, and on one occasion, Buhlman suggested to Sniijders that instead of a premium, soldiers should receive five per cent of the profits of the sale of confiscated goods.⁶⁴ Sniijders disagreed with Buhlman. He thought that this would create a situation where soldiers would negotiate higher payments from smuggling gangs, rather than apprehend them. He argued that the state could not compete with the criminal underworld, and that smuggling would become an even more profitable business than it already was for some border guards.⁶⁵

That the state was using military personnel to protect its borders from smugglers received increasing criticism around the country. Many newspaper readers believed that it was the military that was the root cause of smuggling, rather than the solution to it. The profile of smuggling in the national press was raised after the anglophile

newspaper, *De Telegraaf*, published a series of articles in August 1915.⁶⁶ A major shareholder in *De Telegraaf*, H.M.C. Holdert, set up an 'anti-smuggling bureau',⁶⁷ which reported on notorious smuggling incidents. Naturally, this caused concern among some cabinet ministers and the High Command, who feared that Holdert's actions would raise the profile of illegal trade among the Allies (and perhaps that was its ultimate aim). One of the major aspects *De Telegraaf* focussed on was that military border guards, rather than local residents, were the worst offenders in most smuggling cases. In response, the High Command authorised investigations into each of *De Telegraaf*'s claims, which reported back that, although some border guards certainly did smuggle, the newspaper reports greatly exaggerated matters.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the British seized on the points made by *De Telegraaf* and in October 1915, threatened the Dutch government with an ultimatum that if it did not become more vigilant in apprehending smugglers, they would not accept further NOT import guarantees and would blockade the Netherlands as rigorously as it did Germany and Austria-Hungary.⁶⁹ In effect, Britain threatened to treat the Netherlands as an enemy, at least when it came to its commercial dealings with the neutral state.

While the High Command was willing in principle to help the Ministry of Finance in patrolling borders and checking shipping and railway cargo, as anti-smuggling duties became increasingly more burdensome for border guards, there was also a distinct desire amongst the military leadership to wash their hands of this specific neutrality responsibility. As early as November 1914, Buhlman explained to Snijders that too many troops were tied up at the borders looking out for smugglers while they should be concentrating on defence.⁷⁰ But the government could not afford to end military involvement in its anti-smuggling campaign; the troops were absolutely essential as customs officials, even if there were problems in liaising with their civilian equivalents. Although officially their spheres of control were quite separate, military and civilian border personnel worked closely together and often did the same jobs.⁷¹ Early in 1916, after Van Terwisga replaced Buhlman as the Commander of the Field Army, he investigated the relationship between military border guards and customs officials.⁷² He discovered that the troops often did not appreciate the importance of the customs officials' role. Because most soldiers were conscripts, received little pay, and lacked enthusiasm for their job, they had few incentives to meet the standards expected of them. The lack of clarity as to who was in charge at the borders aggravated such tensions. Van Terwisga suggested that a select group of border guards be specifically trained as temporary customs officials directly responsible to the Minister of Finance, leaving the rest to patrol the borders, direct traffic to customs posts, and detain suspected smugglers. It would be the first of many steps to separate the two jurisdictions and return their spheres of autonomy. It was an important move in the government's general strategy to take on more responsibility for dealing with smuggling, which it had already signalled in a law passed on 31 December 1915, which offered more authority at the borders to Ministry of Finance officials and removed some of the jurisdictions of 'state of siege' military commanders there.⁷³ To aid the Ministry, 2,000 military border guards were trained as temporary customs officers during 1916. By the summer of 1918, their numbers reached 6,000.⁷⁴

As of 1 April 1916, direct military involvement in customs and smuggling matters declined further, when the government created the so-called 'first line' (*eerste linie* – the area directly across the border) where customs officials held sole responsibility for goods traffic.⁷⁵ The law gave customs officers the power to limit the movement of wares and prevent stockpiling.⁷⁶ In theory, at least, military personnel could now focus on their other neutrality and defence responsibilities. While military guards were no longer responsible for policing smuggling, it was immediately clear that their involvement would still be required, since the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance was not wide-ranging enough. Within weeks of the *eerste linie* decision, the government established a *tweede linie* ('second line', the area directly behind the *eerste linie*), in which military authority in the 'state of siege' remained accountable for the movement and storage of goods. The *tweede linie* illustrates how intricately the armed forces were involved in upholding economic neutrality. At the specific request of the Minister of Finance, anti-smuggling measures taken by the armed forces in 1914 and 1915 remained in place in the 'second line'.⁷⁷ Even within the 'first line', many 'state of siege' military regulations still applied, because customs officers did not have the jurisdiction to impose similar measures, nor did they have the personnel to police them.⁷⁸ In fact, troops still apprehended suspicious individuals,⁷⁹ and continued to be heavily involved in counteracting smuggling. It was justified by the government in relation to neutrality threats: since smuggling had become an issue of international controversy, which could force the Netherlands into the war, using the armed forces to monitor and prevent smuggling offences was deemed sensible.⁸⁰ In recognition of this, the Minister of Finance continued to notify customs officers and border guards of any changes in policy.⁸¹ It was not until the High Court ruled in April 1918 that the use of a 'state of siege' jurisdiction for national matters (which included smuggling) was illegal, that the government was forced to properly overhaul its smuggling regulations. These did not come into effect until February 1919, by which time the war had ended.

The Allies Increase Their Stranglehold, 1917

By 1917, the Allies regulated neutral commerce so closely that attaining an export surplus, let alone a surplus to smuggle, was difficult. The situation became even more serious after the United States entered the war in April. Because the United States would not deal with private companies (like the NOT), the Dutch government had to take more responsibility for trade matters.⁸² Its involvement in counteracting smuggling in 1916 had signalled this necessity as well. In August 1917, cabinet members authorised the creation of a special import supervisory body (*Commissie voor Scheepvaart*, Commission for Shipping), which replaced the NOT in its dealings with the belligerents, except for Britain.⁸³ Although the NOT continued to exist, its power diminished considerably. A month later, the ministers took another important step towards centralising control over trade, by creating an export supervisory body. The *Nederlandsche Uitvoer Maatschappij* (Netherlands' Export Company, NUM) operated much like the NOT except that it had full governmental involvement alongside representatives of industry, trade, and agriculture.⁸⁴

NUM's most important responsibility was supervising the agricultural contracts negotiated with Britain and Germany late in 1916. Britain insisted that the Netherlands offered a set quota of local produce to the Allies, rather than selling it to Germany. This forced the Dutch government to accept an Agricultural Agreement in June 1916.⁸⁵ When Dutch exporters failed to abide by the arrangement – because prices in Germany were much higher and because shipping goods to Britain was unsafe – Britain threatened the Netherlands with a total blockade.⁸⁶ Unless the Dutch consented to an even more demanding contract, Britain refused to recognise the NOT's import guarantees. The Dutch signed the second Agricultural Agreement in November 1916.⁸⁷ A month later, they entered into a similar settlement with Germany.⁸⁸ Germany conceded to the agreements because it needed all the food it could obtain.⁸⁹ As a result, the year 1917 saw the first major decline in Dutch exports to Germany, despite continued German pressure to maintain the status quo.⁹⁰

By late 1917, the warring powers regulated and dominated the Dutch export market. In effect, exporters of agricultural produce could no longer determine with whom they traded, but had their goods arbitrarily divided to meet the quota requirements of Great Britain and Germany. But, the NUM did not work effectively in its supervisory role. It had to meet each of the quota limits and regulate and supervise dwindling supplies, two seemingly contradictory ambitions. Furthermore, cabinet ministers were totally reluctant to involve themselves in the NUM, and left much of the administration to industry representatives, with the result that the company emphasised external trade above domestic consumption.⁹¹ Major disagreements ensued between the pro-Allied Minister of Finance, M.W.F. Treub, who was responsible for exports, and the Minister of Agriculture, Trade and Industry, F.E. Posthuma, who was in charge of domestic consumption and tended to support Germany.⁹² They could not agree on appropriate levels of external trade; they differed with each other on where to send foodstuffs; nor did they see eye-to-eye on appropriate levels of surpluses. These quarrels increased NUM's inefficiency and adversely affected the viability of Dutch agricultural trade.⁹³

War Calls for Drastic Means: Germany's U-Boat Campaigns

The Central Powers had different aims than the Allies in their trade negotiations with the Netherlands. Germany was hoping to be the recipient of as much smuggling and legitimate trade as possible. It did not have the same opportunities to blockade its enemies as Britain and its allies. However, this did not stop the Germans from doing their utmost to respond to each Allied economic measure with a corresponding action. They searched ships going into and out of the Baltic Sea and enforced strict contraband controls on German goods traded by the neutrals. When the Allies increased their lists of contraband or placed limits on neutral merchants, so did the Germans.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the German navy did not rule the waves and thus it could not isolate Britain, let alone France, by conventional methods. Instead, Germany chose to waive the rules. It took drastic steps to ensure that it remained competitive on the economic front by unleashing its U-boats to attack merchant ship-

ping in and around the British Isles, Mediterranean, and (after April 1917) the North American coastline.⁹⁵

In November 1914, Britain declared much of the North Sea a military zone.⁹⁶ The declaration meant in effect that the North Sea was no longer safe even for neutral vessels. Ships now ran the risk of hitting a mine or attracting the attention of warships. In February 1915, Germany followed suit, declaring that the waters surrounding Britain and Ireland had become a German 'war zone'.⁹⁷ Germany assumed ships sailing in this designated area were hostile and would thus sink them.⁹⁸ The German leadership authorised its submarine crews to indiscriminately torpedo any vessel they encountered, forgoing the internationally accepted principle that attacking vessels must first identify their targets as enemies before opening fire.

In its first year of operations, Germany commanded a paltry three to seven subsmeribles in any one month, and yet they were able to inflict a loss of four per cent of British merchant shipping.⁹⁹ In the end, pressure placed on Germany by the world's most powerful neutral, the United States, helped limit German U-boat activities. Importantly, the German leadership also feared that if Europe's neutrals, including the Netherlands and Denmark, saw any reason to join the Allies in the wake of this U-boat campaign, it would indeed face a perilous situation, since it did not have the resources to fight on any more fronts.¹⁰⁰ After the liners *Lusitania* and *Arabic* were sunk in May and August 1915, Germany agreed that it would stop targeting passenger liners and neutral ships.¹⁰¹ This did not mean that neutral merchants were no longer at risk, as evidenced by the sinking of the Dutch passenger liner *Tubantia* by a German torpedo on 16 March 1916.¹⁰² It was in the wake of the *Tubantia* and the *Sussex* sinkings in the same month that the United States brought stern diplomatic pressure to bear on Germany and Germany officially reverted to the traditional practice of boarding and searching vessels before sinking them.¹⁰³ On 1 February 1917, however, Germany resumed its unrestricted U-boat campaign.¹⁰⁴ Having built up its fleet over the previous year, it could now deploy 111 subsmeribles.¹⁰⁵ Military leaders in Germany believed that they could win the war by ruining the British economy and hampering the shipment of supplies and soldiers to the western front. The goal was very nearly achieved as the U-boats sank 500 British ships between May and December 1917, bringing Britain to the verge of economic collapse.¹⁰⁶ However, the United States saw the U-boat campaign as an unbearable breach of its neutral right to traverse international waters unhindered. It declared war on Germany in April 1917, and, as a result, put a damper on Germany's victory hopes. American construction capacity was able to replace Allied ships as soon as they were sunk, while improved methods of detection, the use of armed merchantmen, and, most importantly, the employment of convoys, enabled the Allies to curtail shipping losses even further.¹⁰⁷ By the end of 1917, Germany's deadly weapon was incapable of fulfilling its grand design.

Germany's U-boat warfare severely strained its relationship with the Netherlands as well. Events such as the sinking of the *Tubantia*, the freighter *Medea* in the Channel on 25 March 1915,¹⁰⁸ and the merchant vessel *Katwijk* a month later, turned public opinion sharply against Germany.¹⁰⁹ Diplomatically, Germany compensated the

Dutch for lives lost and damage caused and, as a result, avoided exacerbating a potentially volatile international incident.¹¹⁰ But, the U-boat campaigns, the existence of mines, and the British blockade made any sea-bound journey into and out of the Netherlands potentially life threatening. As the Allies and Central Powers declared more international waters as war zones, the only available safe haven for Dutch ships was a *vaargeul* (sea-lane) that reached from Dutch territorial waters northwards across Dogger Bank towards the Norwegian coast. Both Germany and Britain guaranteed that this lane would not be mined nor would submarines operate in this small stretch of sea. The Dutch navy patrolled the lane up to the northern reaches of Dogger Bank. It manned four light ships, operated a rescue vessel, and swept the *vaargeul* for mines.¹¹¹ Naval ships also escorted merchant ships through the lane. Nevertheless, many ships still succumbed to the war at sea, as even territorial waters proved to be unsafe: Between 1914 and 1918, stray mines killed 19 sailors in the waters around the Netherlands.¹¹² Overall, from 1915 until the end of the war, the *Vereeniging Zee Risico* (the ‘Association for Sea Risk’, responsible for shipping assurance) noted 321 incidents at sea involving merchant and fishing vessels. A total of 1,189 Dutch sailors and fishermen lost their lives as a result, leaving 666 widows and 1,911 fatherless children behind. In peacetime, the average number of deaths at sea was 31 sailors per year.¹¹³

The dangers at sea led the Dutch government in February 1917 to warn skippers that international waters were far too perilous to sail in. It banned merchants from leaving the Netherlands without first obtaining government approval, and imposed a similar restriction on fishing vessels two months later.¹¹⁴ The increasingly stifling demands placed on ships trying to pass through the Allied blockade also contributed to this decision. From mid-1916, Britain refused passage to neutral ships stoked with German coal, while forcing those wanting to bunker in Britain to allocate 30 per cent of their tonnage to Allied goods.¹¹⁵ In April 1917, the Dutch cabinet passed another law, allowing it to commandeer ships at will to pick up necessary goods from abroad.¹¹⁶ The responsibility for the cargo was transferred to the government.¹¹⁷

Table 6: Ships and tonnage entering Dutch ports, 1912-1920

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Vessels</i>	<i>Net Tonnage Cleared</i>
1912	17,000	17,335,901
1913	16,996	18,197,783
1914	12,454	13,540,051
1915	6,351	6,621,478
1916	5,114	4,681,117
1917	2,184	1,858,951
1918	1,779	1,663,093
1919	7,082	7,097,716
1920	11,114	11,350,436

Source: Monchy, ‘Commerce’ p. 143.

By mid-1917, Dutch shipping and trade sectors had declined almost to zero. While there was a 74 per cent reduction in tonnage cleared in Dutch ports between 1913 and 1916, this dropped to a massive 90 per cent by the end of 1918. Between 1914 and 1918, U-boats and mines sunk 124 out of a fleet of 500 merchant ships, with a total hauling capacity of 314,463 tonnes, not to mention 96 fishing vessels.¹¹⁸ Only the Scandinavian neutrals suffered greater losses (Norway lost 793 vessels, Denmark 241, and Sweden 185).¹¹⁹ As a result, Dutch foreign trade experienced huge declines, with imports dropping by 78 per cent and exports by 85 per cent between 1914 and 1918. The trade and shipping problems caused by mines, U-boats, and blockades in 1917 and 1918 severely hampered the Netherlands' international bargaining position. Because few overseas imports reached the Netherlands, the Dutch needed their domestically produced goods for themselves and had fewer surpluses to sell. The Agricultural Agreements signed in 1916 also forced the Dutch to trade more equitably with both sets of belligerents. This diminished trade with Germany and placed grave strains on the Dutch-German diplomatic relationship.

Table 7: The Netherlands' foreign trade, 1914-1918

<i>Year</i>	<i>Imports (in f million)</i>	<i>Exports (in f million)</i>
1914	2,827	2,494
1915	1,875	1,739
1916	1,715	1,344
1917	965	819
1918	608	381

Source: Vissering et al., 'The Effect' p. 22.

The principal reason for Germany's reluctance to go to war with the Netherlands before 1917, as previously discussed, was the economic benefits provided by the neutral. Initially, Germany hoped to use Dutch rivers and ports to receive goods from overseas. When Britain closed the German *Luftrohre* ('breathing space') by blockading the country from afar and halting transport goods from reaching neutrals,¹²⁰ Germany continued to rely heavily on the Netherlands for domestic food supplies, raw materials from its colonies, and smuggled goods. Britain was well aware that the bulk of German imports came from the Netherlands. In April 1915, for example, the Allies reported that Rotterdam was the origin of five times more cargo headed for Germany than for Scandinavian ports.¹²¹ In fact, according to the German Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, if it had not been for Dutch supplies, the German economy would have collapsed in 1916.¹²² The German Minister in The Hague, R. von Kühlmann, further reiterated this point when he exclaimed in July 1916 that it was imperative for the Netherlands to supply as much food as possible to German industrial areas.¹²³ It was no wonder then, that the British were so determined to limit the supply of goods to the Netherlands. Germany, in turn, did every-

Illustration 5: Oppressed!



'Holland: the warring sirs do not leave me much room for my shopping'
This Albert Hahn cartoon sees the Netherlands crushed between the two belligerent powers of Germany and Great Britain.

thing it could to attract Dutch trade. At the outbreak of war, the German government even removed its custom duties.¹²⁴ There is some evidence to suggest that it actively encouraged smuggling and made contact with the more organised smuggling groups as well.¹²⁵

By 1917, however, it no longer seemed inconceivable that Germany might declare war on the Dutch if they did not comply with its economic demands. The historian, Marc Frey, has argued that part of the reason why Germany reverted to an unrestricted U-boat campaign in 1917 was because it no longer received enough advantage from neutral trade.¹²⁶ The export quotas imposed by the Allies on neutrals ensured that the economic privileges of 1915 and 1916 had disappeared, and the growing submersible fleet gave Germany a real opportunity to retaliate against Britain. At any rate, it was of minor concern whether or not the U-boat campaigns affected

neutral trade, since most of these goods would not reach Germany anyway.

One of the reasons why Germany waited until February 1917 before resuming its unrestricted U-boat campaign was the fear that both the Netherlands and Denmark would declare war on Germany. After the *Lusitania* sinking, Bethmann Hollweg declared that he did not believe Germany would be able to withstand a military attack from the Netherlands.¹²⁷ In August 1916, the German leadership postponed a proposed U-boat campaign because there were no extra troops available to protect the nation because its campaign in Romania had diverted its military reserves.¹²⁸ With Romania's defeat in December 1916, Germany was able to transfer troops westwards, and erected defences on the Dutch border.¹²⁹ Far from under-estimating the potential threat of Dutch aggression, Germany took this threat into account and amassed a large force in early 1917, most prominently in the fortified position of the *Hollandstelling* near Zeeland.¹³⁰ When the German leadership eventually realised the Dutch had no intention of declaring war, it reduced the size of the military contingent, which was much better used for actual combat.

After February 1917, however, German pressure placed on the Dutch to supply Germany's economic needs became much greater. While the Allies urged them to comply with the Agricultural Agreements, the Germans forced them to continue exporting foodstuffs and ensured compliance by holding up essential supplies to the Dutch. For every tonne of German coal, steel, and timber sold to the Netherlands, the Dutch had to supply one tonne of food.¹³¹ It became a question of priorities: food or coal. Both were absolute essentials, and there were not enough local sources of coal or other fuels to meet Dutch consumption needs. Therefore, the Dutch had little choice but to continue supplying Germany with food, although its exports (and hence its coal imports) were kept to a minimum. What was even more worrisome, was that for every shipment of food sent to Germany a corresponding percentage had to be offered to Britain. Food stocks dwindled; the population grumbled, and then rioted. There was little the Dutch government could do. If it exported exclusively to Germany, Britain would refuse to allow much-needed fertilizers, fodder, and grain through its blockade. If it refused to trade with Germany, the Germans would halt crucial coal supplies. If insufficient amounts of food remained behind in the country, the population would complain of starvation.

German Transit Trade and Military Neutrality

In terms of economic neutrality, Germany's relationship with the Netherlands was further complicated by the neutral's requirement to prevent the transit of foreign military materials. The Netherlands' position on trade, however, was affected by the Rhine Conventions signed in the nineteenth century, which guaranteed access along the length of the river for merchant vessels of countries through which it flowed, regardless of whether it was a time of war. The Conventions also opened the waterways connecting the Schelde and Rhine rivers to foreign merchants.¹³² This meant that during the war, the Dutch could not restrict German trade to and from occupied Belgium, as long as it was of a mercantile nature. However, according to

Article 2 of their neutrality declaration, the Dutch were obliged to ensure that the warring parties did not use neutral territory for the transport of military materials. Therefore, German transport trade had to be checked for contraband. This was a specific neutrality responsibility of the Dutch armed forces.

Once Germany occupied the territory along the Dutch-Belgian border, it became even more imperative for the Dutch to supervise German trade.¹³³ Special rail and river posts were set up along the Belgian and Germany borders.¹³⁴ Initially, the supervisory role was relatively simple: inspect goods and prevent any obvious contraband from getting through.¹³⁵ The task became more difficult when the government decided trade should be documented in the case of future international scrutiny. Cargo also required documentation guaranteeing that the goods would not be used by the German military.¹³⁶ Lists of goods (military or otherwise) that passed through transit posts informed the government and military leadership of the type of goods being transported into and out of occupied Belgium,¹³⁷ a useful method of identifying potentially controversial items. For example, in June 1918, troops stopped German food supplies from passing through to Belgium because the supplies fed German soldiers, rather than Belgian civilians.¹³⁸ They also enforced quotas on goods that had a dual civilian and military purpose (such as construction materials).¹³⁹

While the army checked overland transit trade, the navy helped with customs duties at ports, river inlets, and waterways, checking for contraband and smuggled items.¹⁴⁰ In 1914, Snijders had instructed naval personnel not to hold up merchants unnecessarily.¹⁴¹ At this time, sailors tended to search only vessels without appropriate permits.¹⁴² The instruction changed when illegal trade became a pressing neutrality problem. By March 1915, ships were required to have their muster roll (inventory of goods and people on board) signed by the local military authority before it could leave the port.¹⁴³ As the lists of the NOT's regulations and export prohibitions lengthened, the naval inspections became more intrusive and time-consuming, to the extent that military commanders even instructed naval patrols to check the smallest fishing vessels leaving or entering the Schelde.¹⁴⁴

In effect, the navy undertook the same tasks at sea as military guards and customs officials did on land, but the navy's involvement in checking the movement of cargo was greater because it had the means, namely ships and personnel, to implement the checks. This did not mean, however, that the navy exercised greater responsibility for maintaining economic neutrality than the army. Ultimately, the Ministry of Finance remained in charge of economic neutrality, but naval vessels and crews were useful for the detection of any transgressions of that neutrality. However, like the military personnel stationed at transit posts, the navy was accountable for any contraband found on board. By combining both tasks (policing export prohibitions and checking for military goods), they could kill two birds with one stone. In many respects, the Netherlands operated a 'neutrality blockade' during the war by placing embargoes on goods that threatened Dutch neutrality. Because thousands of troops were posted at the borders and along the coastline, the army and navy became inextricably involved in managing the 'blockade'. The government depended on their help. It was one of many tasks that drained military resources and shifted the focus

from defence to the more immediate concern of preserving neutrality in its multifarious forms.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Law of Angary

But even the most comprehensive neutrality blockades could not compete with the demands of the belligerents. In early 1917, the Dutch faced an uncertain economic future, which became even more precarious with the entry of the United States into the war that April. With American co-operation, the Allied blockade was virtually impregnable,¹⁴⁵ and proved especially burdensome to the Netherlands, which relied on American grain, fertilizers, and fodder. Like Britain and France, the United States was very reluctant to trade with neutrals unless it received some advantage in return, namely that the Netherlands decrease its food exports to Germany.¹⁴⁶

In July 1917, the United States made its first major blockade declaration, limiting the export of foodstuffs, fuels, iron, steel, fertilizers, fodder, and munitions to neutrals.¹⁴⁷ In late August 1917, it took more decisive action, blockading the neutrals bordering Germany as if they were belligerents. This blockade remained intact until November 1918.¹⁴⁸ It also offered its associated powers any surpluses before neutrals became eligible for them.¹⁴⁹ The United States further inhibited Dutch trade by refusing to release ships detained in its harbours unless the Dutch released ships of a similar size back to the United States. A major problem with this demand was that once offered to the United States, the vessels could be used to transport American goods including military materials and troops, in the process breaching Dutch neutrality. Just as the Dutch were strict on German transit trade, they had to be as exacting when it came the use of their ships on the open seas.¹⁵⁰ Germany warned the Dutch that it would not tolerate any compliance with the American request.¹⁵¹ In November 1917, British officials suggested to their American counterparts that they could use the law of angary to requisition Dutch ships stationed in their harbours instead of forcing the neutral to give up tonnage.¹⁵² Angary was a virtually obsolete rule of law that allowed warring states to requisition whatever they needed within the borders of their country, regardless of the nationality of the goods. The Dutch had used a similar argument in August 1914, when they seized German grain in transit at Rotterdam.¹⁵³

In January 1918, the Netherlands presented a compromise *modus vivendi*: it allowed the United States to take over 500,000 dead weight tonnes of its shipping, as long as the vessels did not carry military materials or travel through German 'war zones'.¹⁵⁴ In return, the United States released a shipment of food to the Netherlands. As part of the contract, the United States also demanded a re-negotiation of the Agricultural Agreements, but this Germany was entirely unwilling to do.¹⁵⁵ The Germans responded to the *modus vivendi* by threatening to sink Dutch ships leaving their territorial waters, effectively preventing the Dutch from fulfilling their part of the settlement.¹⁵⁶ In response, the Americans again ordered the Dutch to release ships for American supplies. The Dutch could not do so because of German opposition. As a result, on 20 and 21 March 1918, the Allied authorities, using the law of angary

Illustration 6: American strangulation



'Monkey love'

This Jordaan cartoon captioned 'Because I love you' appeared in December 1917, probably in the Notenkraaker magazine. Jordaan none too diplomatically depicts how many Netherlanders viewed the formerly neutral United States after its entry into the war and the introduction of stifling economic measures against the European neutrals.

as justification, seized 137 Dutch ships anchored in American and British ports.¹⁵⁷ In the words of one historian, it was the 'most spectacular single act of force employed by the United States against a neutral' in its history.¹⁵⁸ However, it was not the first time Britain had taken extreme action against Dutch ships. In June 1916, its Royal Navy forced the entire Dutch fishing fleet, consisting of 150 vessels stationed in the North Sea, into British harbours. They refused to release the ships, the crews, or the catch until the Netherlands agreed to supply Britain with the fish instead of Germany. German expectations prevented the Dutch from doing so. Unlike the United States in 1918, however, Britain in 1916 had negotiated a quota that was equally acceptable to Germany.¹⁵⁹

The Dutch were incensed at the requisitioning of one-third of their merchant fleet in March 1918 and vigorously protested against this breach of its sovereignty.¹⁶⁰ The Germans were furious as well. They argued that the Allies had caused a major neutrality violation and that Germany could not sit idly by and let the Netherlands be abused in this manner. Germany threatened to declare war on the neutral if the Dutch did not offer them a similar advantage. It demanded transit rights across Dutch territory for military materials and troops. The demands placed the Dutch in an extremely difficult position. In the end, as will be discussed in greater detail below, only a compromise between the belligerent parties preserved Dutch neutrality. In an attempt to temper Dutch anger regarding the requisitioning, the Allies allowed more food to be shipped to the Netherlands and they became more lenient in their blockade.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, the neutral's vulnerability had been exposed. This became even more evident in March 1918, when Germany declared that it would no longer recognise the neutrality of Dutch ships, because there was no guarantee that they were carrying neutral goods.¹⁶² German submarines sank neutral vessels indiscriminately inside and outside of the 'war zone'. The fate of the Dutch was left open to the whim of the warring states on this matter as in many others.

An Unusual Response: A Neutral Convoy

Within the strained atmosphere of March 1918, Queen Wilhelmina saw an opportunity to reclaim some dignity for her country and assert its capacity for independent action. In April 1918, the Minister in Charge of the Navy, J.J. Rambonnet, announced that the Queen endorsed a plan to send a convoy of ships to the Dutch East Indies.¹⁶³ The convoy would consist of merchant vessels carrying government goods, post, and passengers; it would be accompanied by warships.¹⁶⁴ No commercial cargo would be allowed on board, to ensure that none of the belligerents had reason to inspect the vessels.¹⁶⁵ The proposal posed several difficulties. Not only would the convoy traverse dangerous stretches of international seas, it also had to pass through the Allied blockade. The Dutch had to obtain an agreement from all of the involved belligerents as well as countries whose waters the convoy wished to cross.¹⁶⁶ A major question was whether sending a convoy compromised Dutch neutrality. The warships would protect merchant vessels from attack, and if a foreign vessel were to fire upon the convoy, it was effectively declaring war on the Netherlands. If the navy engaged in any questionable actions during its journey to the Indies, it could effectively draw the Netherlands into the war. Furthermore, Britain was adamant that neutrals could not send convoys since, by definition, 'convoy' applied only to combatant states.¹⁶⁷

The ambiguities involved in the convoy plan made many in the Dutch government wary of the idea, especially as it would strain already tense Anglo-Dutch relations. While Germany and the United States agreed to let the convoy sail, Britain was reluctant. For their part, the Dutch were unwilling to give Britain the right to detain their ships. Britain saw the convoy as a 'deliberate attempt to break the blockade', which, if allowed, would set a precedent for other nations.¹⁶⁸ It believed it could

not give up a right of 'search and visit', which it had upheld for centuries, and, therefore, the departure date was repeatedly postponed.¹⁶⁹ It was not until the Dutch agreed to accept a British veto over the list of goods and passengers that it could sail on 4 July.¹⁷⁰ The whole affair left many in the Netherlands doubting the worthiness of the undertaking. If the intention was to assert autonomy, Britain's veto power would quickly render it a dismal failure. The impact of the crisis was greatest on Rambonnet. He resigned his cabinet post in June 1918, after voicing his disgust at his colleagues' acceptance of the British demands.¹⁷¹

Yet, despite its problematic nature, there was a pressing reason for sending the convoy. The war had severely affected the East Indies. Like its 'mother country', the archipelago had experienced economic distress during the period 1917-1918. The war at sea had hampered East Indies trade with Europe, and although new markets had opened up in America and Japan, it was not enough to offset the European losses.¹⁷² More importantly, communication links with the Netherlands had been almost entirely severed. At the very least, the arrival of the convoy showed the colonies that the government remained concerned about them. It also allowed a large back-log of mail to get through and brought shipping tonnage to the colonies to move the millions of tonnes of raw materials left in their ports.¹⁷³

*The Notorious Question of Sand and Gravel*¹⁷⁴

Of all the many neutrality concerns that affected the Dutch between 1914 and 1918, it was the German transport of sand and gravel that brought the Netherlands closest to war. In November 1915, Sniijders informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Loudon, that his troops had been monitoring the transport of sand and gravel from Germany across the Netherlands into Belgium.¹⁷⁵ He was concerned that the German armed forces in Belgium might be using the materials to build fortifications and strengthen trench lines. If this was the case, it constituted a breach of Dutch neutrality. Sniijders requested that Loudon alert his German counterpart. He also stated that troops at transit checkpoints would stop future shipments and hold the cargo indefinitely, unless they received appropriate documentation guaranteeing the civilian use of the building materials.

Germany obliged,¹⁷⁶ but even with the guarantee, the sand and gravel question continued to vex the Netherlands. Since the start of the war, the amounts of sand and gravel that had been transported into occupied Belgium had quadrupled. Britain, France, and Belgium argued that this was far too much for peaceful purposes, and believed that most of the materials were ending up on the front lines, in pill-boxes, (concrete bunkers) and trench reinforcements. They asked the Dutch to investigate the destination of the trade before permitting any further shipments. Having its own doubts, the Dutch government approached Germany, suggesting a maximum transport of 75,000 tonnes per month. Germany tersely replied that the suggested limit was not nearly enough to meet the needs for rebuilding Belgian towns, bridges, and roads demolished by the war. After a lengthy discussion, the Dutch relented, allowing a maximum of 420,000 tonnes of sand, grit, or gravel to be transported, as long

as Germany guaranteed its non-military purposes.¹⁷⁷ In a concession to the Allies, two Dutch engineers went to Belgium to check whether the occupation administration was using the materials appropriately.¹⁷⁸ The engineers reported that the German army had used some of the sand and gravel in the trenches previously, but that this was no longer the case.

The Allies remained suspicious.¹⁷⁹ Samples taken by them from captured pill-boxes on the western front in 1917 suggested that much of the concrete originated from the Rhine quarries. It was highly likely that it passed through the Netherlands on its way to Belgium. The Allies again requested the Netherlands to halt German transports of sand and grit. Dutch border troops had also calculated that Germany was moving more cargo through the Netherlands than the agreement permitted. In August 1917, the Dutch embargoed German traffic until March 1918,¹⁸⁰ but Germany placed intense pressure on the Dutch to let another 370,000 tonnes through in September 1917. The Allies were furious and threatened to close off Dutch telegraph cable access, the major communication network linking the Netherlands to the rest of the world.¹⁸¹

The Dutch faced a difficult choice: either refuse the agreed-upon quota with Germany (and the possible consequences thereof) or face isolation. In the end, the government decided to allow 370,000 tonnes of German sand and gravel through, and then closed its borders until March 1918.¹⁸² It asked Germany twice if it could check the destination of the materials, but Germany either ignored or rejected the requests.¹⁸³ True to its word, Britain closed its telegraph lines to the Netherlands, disrupting commercial dealings, diplomatic communications, and contact with the East and West Indian colonies. Britain re-opened the telegraph network on 7 February 1918, in an attempt to resolve the situation and establish a workable agreement between the Netherlands, Germany, and itself.¹⁸⁴ A day after Britain lifted the restrictions on telegraph use, the Dutch threatened Germany with an indefinite suspension of sand and gravel transports, unless it allowed experts into Belgium to investigate the ultimate destination of the cargo.¹⁸⁵ Again Germany refused.¹⁸⁶ As we have already discussed, on 20 March, Great Britain and the United States exacerbated an already tense situation by requisitioning Dutch ships in their ports. Germany seized the opportunity to take advantage of the vulnerable position in which the Allied angary had placed its neutral neighbour. Germany's compensatory demands included: unhindered transit to Belgium for military materials and troops;¹⁸⁷ opening up the Schelde to the 36 German merchant ships in Antwerp that Germany had requisitioned in October 1914; an increase in agricultural and cattle exports; and eased credit arrangements between the two countries.¹⁸⁸ It seemed that Germany was on the verge of declaring war on the Netherlands if it did not submit to these demands.

But the Dutch could not agree without first consulting the Allies. The Netherlands was willing to negotiate with Germany, as long as Germany did not declare war, and as long as the Allies promised not to retaliate. The ensuing negotiations between the three parties revolved around the issue of sand and gravel transports. On 19 April 1918, Germany tempered its demands: no weaponry would be transported although shoes, clothes, and food for the German armies in Belgium must

not be stopped. In addition, and this was the most contentious of its demands, Germany wanted the unconditional transport of 200,000 tonnes of grit and sand, and also, Antwerp's ships were to be released.¹⁸⁹ It signalled progress but it took many more days for the sand and gravel problem to be resolved. The Netherlands could not compromise on the integrity of the Schelde either.¹⁹⁰

Ultimately, Germany did not wish to go to war with the Netherlands, although it seems fairly certain that if the Dutch had not been willing to compromise, it would have done so. General Ludendorff, certainly, had no compunction about threatening the neutral with war.¹⁹¹ The Dutch took the threat very seriously. On 26 April, one military commander even suggested that the army should be prepared to blow up railway bridges if the Germans tried to force its trains through.¹⁹² Sniijders was somewhat more circumspect about the military threat Germany posed at that particular time. The Germans had recently launched a massive offensive on the western front, which absorbed all of their military resources. As he explained to the other military commanders on 23 April, there was no evidence that Germany was building up any forces on the eastern or southern border of the Netherlands and that the numbers of German troops stationed there had decreased significantly since early 1917. He did, however, ask them to restrict military leave for border troops as much as possible and to prepare for possible remobilisation.¹⁹³

The civilian authorities were not as convinced as Sniijders was, and there is reason to suggest that they were not even aware of Sniijders' opinion, which, in any case, changed when Germany subsequently moved two army divisions closer to the Dutch border near Ghent. This gave the government enough impetus to cancel extraordinary leave for soldiers on 25 April, and troops who were owed indefinite leave were kept in service a few weeks longer.¹⁹⁴ Germany again increased its pressure on the neutral by vowing to cancel coal exports.¹⁹⁵ As it coerced the Netherlands into submission, Germany nevertheless also reduced the severity of its demands. Trade would be limited to mercantile cargo only, no military materials would be transported through the country, and sand and grit transports would be accompanied by a guarantee of civilian use. But, in turn, the Netherlands had to export 250,000 tonnes of sand and gravel to Germany every month.¹⁹⁶ If the Netherlands agreed to this export condition, then Germany would leave the merchant ships in Antwerp. It gave the Dutch ample opportunity to sign a credible compromise agreement. The Dutch government eagerly accepted this latest offer. Britain, France and the United States were not pleased with the stipulation regarding sand and gravel exports but they also had no desire to get involved in another area of conflict. They could not afford to fight on another front, especially after Germany's spectacular recent advances on the western front.¹⁹⁷ The British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, declared on 20 April 1918:

if they [the Dutch] really cannot prolong resistance without going to war with Germany, we should not be disposed to regard as unneutral their submission in such circumstances to German demands.¹⁹⁸

Consequently, on 26 April 1918, the Allies agreed to allow the Dutch to make conciliatory gestures to Germany, even if these gestures compromised Dutch neutrality. The next day, the Netherlands accepted Germany's offer.¹⁹⁹ As of May 1918, the transport of sand and gravel from Germany to Belgium resumed unhindered. Dutch border troops were instructed to allow the transports through unchecked, up to a maximum of 1.6 million tonnes a year.²⁰⁰

In the end, the most ambiguous of neutrality dilemmas, namely economic neutrality, brought the Netherlands to the brink of war. After the sand and gravel crisis of 1918, the Netherlands lost any economic bargaining power it may have had, remaining vulnerable and exposed to its powerful neighbours. But the events of early 1918 also highlighted two very important elements of Dutch neutrality: firstly, that neither Great Britain nor Germany wanted the Netherlands to enter the war on the other side; and secondly, that the ability of the armed forces to credibly uphold neutrality (where that was possible) was absolutely essential. While diplomats and governments could quibble about whether or not to go to war or how many neutrality concessions to permit, without the means to enforce any settlements, a neutral could not survive. The Dutch army and navy, by upholding the terms of the Agricultural Agreements, facilitating the convoy to the East Indies, safely conducting ships through the perilous *vaargeul*, policing smuggling, and monitoring transit trade proved both their importance and worth. In the extraordinary circumstances of the Great War, safeguarding economic neutrality was an essential part of Dutch military operations.

Chapter

7

Somewhere Between War and Peace: The States of War and Siege

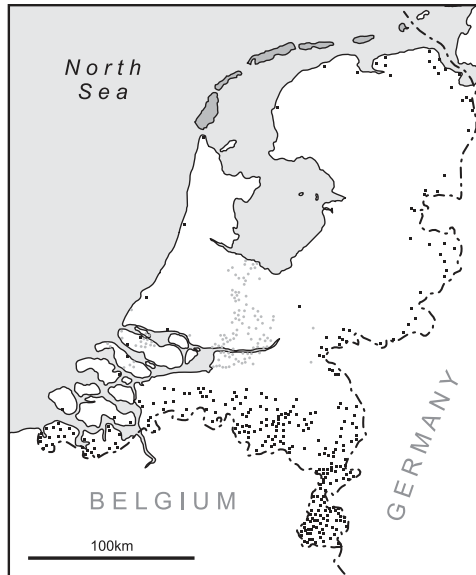
[The states of war and siege are] symptomatic of the simple truth, that in times when the country must be defended against internal or external enemies, such defence can best be entrusted to those who are assigned to that profession in the first place.

– Henri van Wageningen, 1916¹

The *Oorlogswet* (War Law) of 1899 provided that in time of war, or when war threatened, the government could declare that parts of the country were in a *staat van oorlog* (state of war) or *staat van beleg* (state of siege).² In both the ‘state of war’ and ‘state of siege’, military authority overruled local civil authority, with the powers granted in the ‘state of siege’ decidedly more comprehensive than those of the ‘state of war’. The extraordinary emergency powers assigned to the armed forces enabled them to take almost any action required to safeguard the security of the nation and its people. The jurisdiction could negate a number of constitutionally recognised civil rights, and attributed undefined powers to military commanders who exercised it. The aim, of course, was to prepare the Netherlands for all manner of contingencies, crises, and calamities. The first opportunity the country had to assess and experience the impact of the *Oorlogswet* came with the outbreak of the Great War.

On 5 August 1914, the government imposed a ‘state of war’ along the New Holland Waterline (including the city of Utrecht) and in other fortified positions, to give the garrisons there added authority to improve defences and to ensure residents cooperated fully.³ By 1 October 1918, the government had declared 814 communities (out of a total of 1,110) to be in a ‘state of war’ or ‘state of siege’.⁴ This figure included the entire southern provinces of Limburg, North Brabant, and Zeeland, and every settlement within five kilometres of the border. In other words, nearly 75 per cent of towns, villages, and cities came under military jurisdiction during the war. One commentator at the time asserted that these declarations created ‘profoundly radical changes’ in the running of municipalities and in the general administration of domestic affairs.⁵ While this was certainly an exaggeration, taking into account the fact that more than 80 per cent of the 814 affected communities endured the harsher ‘state of siege’,⁶ the armed forces exercised a substantial degree of control over local government and the daily life of civilians.

Map 13a: The 'state of war' and 'state of siege', 1914



All municipalities declared in a 'state of war' (light grey) and 'state of siege' (dark grey) in 1914, including the Frisian islands.

Map 13b: The 'state of war' and 'state of siege', 1915



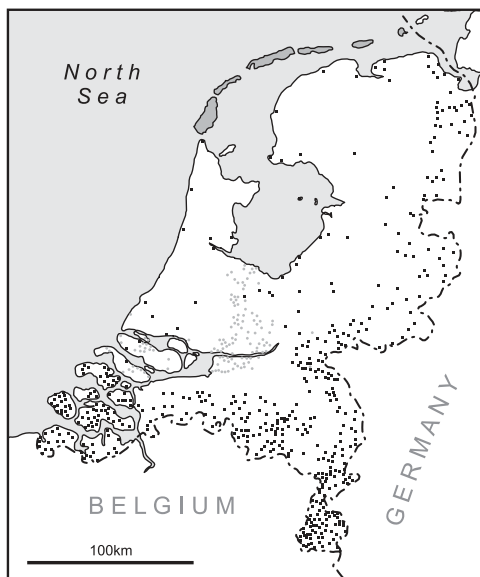
All municipalities declared in a 'state of war' (light grey) and 'state of siege' (dark grey) in 1915, including the Frisian islands.

Map 13c: The 'state of war' and 'state of siege', 1916



All municipalities declared in a 'state of war' (light grey) and 'state of siege' (dark grey) in 1916, including the Frisian islands.

Map 13d: The 'state of war' and 'state of siege', 1917



All municipalities declared in a 'state of war' (light grey) and 'state of siege' (dark grey) in 1917, including the Frisian islands.

Inevitably, subordinating municipal councils and local bodies to the authority of the military, an institution without any expertise in, or understanding of, local government, caused concerns with almost all involved. The War Law had only ever been intended as a temporary measure, to handle short-term crises swiftly and to restore normal order as quickly as possible. For this reason, it was an extremely useful tool in July and August 1914 for readying the nation for war. In time, however, 'state of siege' commanders put in place all manner of regulations: ranging from the control of smuggling to the supervision of spies; from hunting restrictions to the closure of bars; from the imposition of curfews to the supervision of public meetings; from the censorship of newspapers to the removal of persons 'disturbing the peace'. Ultimately, the legislation could not survive the strains and stresses of more than four years of active wartime neutrality. While the War Law was a hotly debated subject in parliament and among the general public, its uses and abuses came under increasing scrutiny from the judiciary, who, from May 1915 onwards, refined and restricted the powers of commanders in the 'state of siege' considerably.⁷ By late 1918, the application of the War Law had changed drastically, so much so, that the original intention of the law, namely the principle that *nood breekt wet* ('need breaks law'), rarely applied.

The War Law of 1899

Article 187 in the Constitution of 1887 legislated for the use of the *staat van oorlog* or *staat van beleg*, giving the armed forces extraordinary prerogatives to deal with internal and external threats. However, article 187 did not explain what constituted military authority in a 'state of war' or 'state of siege' any further than that the constitutional powers of civil authority, in relation to public order and the police, are completely or partially transferred to military authority; and that civil governments are subordinated to the military.⁸ Subsequently, it took successive governments twelve years to draft the War Law, explaining article 187 in a manner acceptable to both houses of parliament and defining the scope and limitations of the *staat van oorlog* and *staat van beleg*.⁹ The law came into effect on 1 May 1901.

The War Law made clear distinctions between a 'state of war' and a 'state of siege'. In the former, military authorities were required to consult with local bodies (the mayor, municipal or provincial councils, as well as water and peat boards), whereas in a 'state of siege', they did not. Moreover, civil authorities were to obey military orders unquestioningly during a 'state of siege'. The 'state of siege' also gave the armed forces substantially more powers to suspend a number of civil rights. Commanders could impose censorship conditions on the press, restrict the movement of people and goods, and remove persons deemed a danger to public safety out of the region or detain them under their control. They had jurisdiction to cancel meetings and gatherings, except for religious congregations. In a 'state of war', commanders had fewer powers. They could not ban meetings or limit the movement of goods, nor could they expel people or censor publications, except in extraordinary circumstances. In other words, the power of action in a 'state of war' was limited. It enabled

military preparations or preventative action without unduly hampering normal administrative processes.¹⁰ In contrast, a 'state of siege' existed for circumstances of exceptional urgency, when necessity dictated that ordinary governmental and administrative regulations had to be overruled.

Despite such clear distinctions between a 'state of war' and 'state of siege', many problems of definition remained concerning the War Law. The most obvious point was who would exercise War Law jurisdiction once it was introduced. In January 1904, Abraham Kuyper's cabinet issued two instructions clarifying the matter.¹¹ The first instruction took existing defence considerations into account. It identified differences between military authorities within and outside fortified positions, and recognised that the War Law needed to work within the established military hierarchy.¹² When a 'state of war' or 'state of siege' was declared in an area that formed part of a fortification or fortified position – such as the New Holland Waterline – the fortification commander would automatically exercise authority there in terms of the War Law. For areas outside the fortified positions, cabinet ministers retained the right to appoint whomever they wished, an indication that ultimate responsibility remained with the central government and not with the armed forces. In the second instruction of 1904, the government drew a distinction between a time of foreign invasion or war (actual or threatened) and internal disorder.¹³ During a domestic upheaval, the cabinet could appoint 'state of war' and 'state of siege' authorities, regardless of pre-existing military appointments, since defence concerns did not play a role.

The *Oorlogswet* received another important amendment in November 1912, when the Minister of War, Hendrik Colijn, decreed that territorial commanders should be held responsible for military authority in *staat van oorlog* or *staat van beleg* regions, reflecting the military organisation already in place in most provinces.¹⁴ The decree also assigned specific commanders to such areas. For example, in the provinces of Friesland, Groningen, and Drenthe, the retired Lieutenant-Colonel H. Meyboom, resident of Amsterdam, would be accountable. Likewise, for Overijssel, Utrecht, and Gelderland (in the area above the Lower Rhine), Colonel G.A. van der Bruggen would assume this responsibility.¹⁵ However, they would not have any jurisdiction over those parts of their provinces that were part of a fortified position or fortification, to avoid any conflict with the 1904 instruction. If, on the other hand, the entire country was declared in a 'state of war' or 'siege', whoever was Commander-in-Chief or Chief of Staff at the time would be accountable in terms of the War Law, forsaking all these other instructions.

The 'State of War' and 'State of Siege' in August 1914

As the likelihood of war increased late in July 1914, the government issued a series of emergency laws. Of these, Queen Wilhelmina's declaration of 'war danger' on 30 July was one of the most important,¹⁶ since it allowed for the imposition of the *staat van oorlog* or *staat van beleg* when and where necessary. As early as 2 August, the recently appointed Commander-in-Chief urged cabinet ministers to place the entire country in a 'state of war' to provide the armed forces with maximum authority to

prepare defences.¹⁷ He also asked that the country's fortified positions – namely the New Holland Waterline, Den Helder, and the mouths of the Maas River – be placed in a 'state of siege', to prevent newspapers from publishing sensitive military information and to ensure that troops received help from locals for the improvement of the fortifications.¹⁸ However, the government was reluctant to place the entire country under military decree until it had a more justifiable reason to feel threatened.¹⁹ The Minister of War, Nicolaas Bosboom, argued that there were enough emergency powers already in place for the armed forces to meet their mobilisation requirements.²⁰

When Germany invaded Belgium and avoided Dutch territory on 4 August, the immediate need for proclaiming a 'state of war' throughout the Netherlands passed. Nevertheless, ministers recognised the value of well-prepared fortified positions, and for that reason declared municipalities in or near the Waterline, Den Helder, the mouths of the Maas river and Haringvliet, the lone standing fortifications of Westervoort (Arnhem), Hoofddam and Ellewoutsdijk, and the coastal battery at Neuzen (Terneuzen) in a 'state of war' on 5 August.²¹ As the German army progressed into Belgium, the possibility of a border violation in the south by Belgian or German troops became more likely as well, and, as a result, the field army moved closer to the border on 4 August. Five days later, Snijders urged cabinet ministers to place the southern provinces in a 'state of war', so that the army could take steps to prepare for an invasion or a major breach of neutrality there.²² In response, on 10 August, the government declared Zeeland, Limburg, North Brabant, and Gelderland (below the Waal river) in a 'state of war' following the German capture of the Liège fortifications in Belgium.²³

Military security motivated the 'state of war' declarations of 5 and 10 August. Commanders responsible for the 'state of war' could now improve the general safety and security of their allotted area. In the small town of Neuzen, for example, the commander of the coastal battery, Captain D. Putman Cramer, made some important decisions,²⁴ which included restricting access to certain areas for civilians, requisitioning buildings, demolishing particular bridges, and getting unemployed locals to help out. Likewise, in Utrecht, the 'state of war' let troops requisition goods and buildings, including a public waiting room, a motorboat, and equipment to cut down trees.²⁵ They informed residents living within a kilometre eastwards of the Waterline to prepare for possible evacuation in case of an invasion, which would see the region inundated with water.²⁶ The military also emptied several homes near the town of Naarden and then destroyed them.²⁷

While the 'state of war' declarations in August 1914 had clear strategic aims, the reasons for announcing a 'state of siege' on 29 August 1914 were more ambiguous.²⁸ On the 26th, the Commander of the Field Army, Buhlman, had complained to Snijders that the 'state of war' gave him insufficient jurisdiction to deal with neutrality transgressions along the Belgian border.²⁹ He cited reports from German officials that Belgian civilians were crossing into the Netherlands after shooting at German soldiers.³⁰ If the reports were true, these actions breached Dutch neutrality.³¹ Of greater concern for Buhlman was the possibility that German soldiers might pur-

sue the Belgian *franc-tireurs* into the Netherlands and cause an even more serious neutrality violation. What also worried the commander was that the vast array of hunting guns owned by locals might find their way into Belgian hands. The 'state of war' did not give him jurisdiction to take action against the rumoured crossings, nor to confiscate weapons from residents. Imposing a 'state of siege' in the region, however, would allow him to achieve both these aims. Buhlman also identified other potential neutrality concerns better addressed by a 'state of siege'. For example, the border cut the town of Putte in half. He requested that the street marking the frontier be patrolled around the clock and access to it be limited to residents.³² He was especially anxious about a row of houses actually built on top of the frontier line, where the front door opened into the Netherlands and the back door into Belgium.³³

Snijders passed the commander's suggestions to the cabinet, and requested that ministers upgrade the southern frontier from a 'state of war' to a 'state of siege'.³⁴ The government agreed, placing municipalities on or near the Belgian border in a *staat van beleg* on 29 August.³⁵ Neutrality, rather than defence, provided adequate justification. Military authorities in the south now had decisive powers to regulate the movement of people, as well as to monitor any 'unneutral' activity. In Putte, the military commander introduced specific rules, limiting access to the road marking the boundary between the Dutch and Belgian parts of the town; and closing and locking doors, windows, and shutters facing southwards along the road at night. Above all, no objects could be thrown across the street. Soldiers, police and customs officers patrolled the streets around-the-clock.³⁶

For many troops and civilians, the 'state of war' and 'state of siege' declarations were confusing. They added to prevailing apprehension about the war, and indicated that although Germany had not invaded, the threat of attack still remained. Many people were unsure of how the War Law applied to them. After the decrees of 5 and 10 August 1914, one newspaper assured its readers that they need not worry, that the 'state of war' applied only to municipalities in fortified positions and the southern provinces, not, as many believed, to the entire country.³⁷ This general uncertainty also reflected widespread ignorance of the War Law's content. To help clarify the legislation and to inform citizens of their obligations, every municipality in a 'state of war' or 'siege' pasted posters in prominent places, outlining the legal requirements. As the military authorities issued ordinances under the law, locals were kept informed by yet more posters.³⁸ On 1 September 1914, for example, the Garrison Commander in Maastricht informed Buhlman (who was responsible for all military authority in the south of the country) of the measures he had taken to secure neutrality and public order in Limburg's capital.³⁹ He circulated posters around the city, informing locals that: a 'state of siege' applied; civilian weapons had to be handed over to the authorities; refugees must be registered; 'unnecessary' groupings of people were forbidden; and cafés must be closed by 10 p.m. As an example of some bizarre bureaucratic logic, no ordinance decrees could be pasted on or near shop windows, as this would create precisely the 'unnecessary' grouping of people that the garrison commander explicitly outlawed.

To make certain that troops understood their tasks in the 'state of war' and 'state

of siege', the High Command explained the conditions of the legislation in the military newspaper.⁴⁰ The *Soldatencourant* stated on 1 September 1914 that the 'state of siege' had nothing to do with an actual siege, and that the country did not have to be at war for the government to make use of the legislation. Rather, the emergency decree

merely indicates a legal situation, in which [local] government is placed principally in the hands of the military administration, while that administration is given an exceptional power of authority.⁴¹

Nothing changed greatly in the daily routine of soldiers situated in a 'state of war' or 'state of siege', except that they could receive orders to enforce regulations imposed on residents by their commanders. It made the army a police force of sorts, rather than solely a defence force.

The Convenience of the 'State of Siege'

The 'state of siege' declaration of 29 August 1914 indicates that the government was committed to providing the armed forces with extraordinary powers to prevent potential neutrality violations. The War Law would be invoked for many other reasons, ranging from neutrality, security, or trade to smuggling. On 8 September 1914, for example, the cabinet placed municipalities on major waterways and ports in a 'state of siege'.⁴² After the declaration, the navy could monitor ships leaving the country more efficiently, checking cargo, and upholding its responsibility to prevent people from supplying military materials to foreign warships.⁴³ The 'state of siege' gave patrols in the Schelde greater jurisdiction to restrict the movement of vessels into and out of the waterway, and by mid-November 1914, the Territorial Commander in Zeeland used this authority to forbid ships from sailing on the river between sunset and sunrise.⁴⁴ In effect, the primary function of the decree of 8 September was to supervise trade and combat smuggling. Many subsequent 'state of siege' declarations were made for exactly the same reason. During the first month of war, and despite several export prohibitions on essential military items (including horses, clothing, and footwear for the army),⁴⁵ the Ministry of Trade and customs officials proved highly ineffective in preventing an exodus of these goods into Germany. The High Command believed that its border guards might provide a better solution and hence, on 25 September, every municipality on or near the Dutch-German border came under 'state of siege' jurisdiction.⁴⁶ It set a precedent for applying the War Law to non-urgent situations, for the sake of convenience.

Using 'state of siege' jurisdiction to counter smuggling had, at this early stage in the war, very little to do with either military security or neutrality. Although the Allied blockade of the Central Powers had begun, the Netherlands' Overseas Trust (NOT) had not yet been established, nor did the Dutch have any trade agreements in place with either Britain or Germany. Consequently, there were few external pressures to monitor and restrict smuggling in September 1914. In fact, Germany, as the major

benefactor of illegal trade, was only too pleased for it to continue. As we have seen in the previous chapter, in stark contrast to the situation in September 1914, by late 1915, smuggling was a much-discussed topic between the Netherlands and the belligerents, and, as a consequence, became a crucial facet of neutrality and security.⁴⁷ In the context of 1915, therefore, using the War Law to monitor illegal trade was justified. In his war memoirs, Nicolaas Bosboom, explained the application of the 'state of siege' in exactly this light – it was necessary to check that the NOT's goods stayed in the country and that no contraband crossed the frontier.⁴⁸ However, in the context of September 1914, the threat smuggling posed to neutrality was less obvious, although government ministers recognised that if smuggling became unmanageable, the belligerents might accuse the Netherlands of acting unscrupulously. The Minister President, P.W.A. Cort van der Linden, explained to Snijders that smuggling brought the country closer to war.⁴⁹ But what was of far greater concern to both men in September 1914 was the impact of smuggling on stores of food and raw materials. Snijders was particularly anxious to meet the needs of the armed forces, and to arrest horse smugglers. Using military personnel to achieve this seemed a logical step to take since they already patrolled the borders. Yet Snijders hoped that it would only be a temporary measure. He did not want troops to involve themselves too closely in smuggling matters – they had enough trouble safeguarding the borders as it was – and the 'state of siege' would present an unwelcome burden on commanders and soldiers alike.

Nevertheless, the 'state of siege' proved to be extremely useful in policing other neutrality violations as well. The need to monitor the movement of foreigners, for example, provided a good reason for its implementation. Espionage was a matter of obvious concern to the High Command. Foreigners could violate the country's neutrality by exploiting the Netherlands to spy on their enemies and as a base to relay information to their governments. Of specific concern were regions from which foreign military movements could be observed, particularly along the border with Belgium, the Limburg region, the banks of the Eems, the river used by the German navy to access the North Sea, and the Frisian islands, from where naval operations in the North Sea could be surveyed. As a result, on 10 November 1914, the 'state of siege' was imposed on the area around the Eems as well as the Frisian islands, with the explicit purpose of apprehending any suspicious persons found there.⁵⁰ Obviously, in all 'state of siege' regions, a wary eye was kept on foreigners and suspicious activities as well, especially after the Belgian refugee crisis in 1914. For the Dutch, every refugee and internee was a potential spy, providing sufficient justification for the military to register refugees, and to remove foreigners who could not produce a passport or other legitimate identification documentation from 'state of siege' areas.⁵¹ Escapees presented a neutrality threat as well, since it was the duty of a neutral to keep internees from returning to the field of battle. Snijders convinced the cabinet that police and *Koninklijke Marechaussee* had a greater chance of catching escapees if communities with internment camps were placed in a 'state of siege'.⁵² As of 19 January 1915, military ordinances in and around the camps forbade local residents from sheltering or aiding escaping internees, and allowed random police searches of homes.⁵³

During the rest of 1915, however, the number of 'state of siege' declarations increased dramatically, in almost every case to counter smuggling. The 'state of siege' proved an expedient means for dealing with the numerous challenges smugglers posed. Military authorities could take care of smuggling incidents much faster and seemingly more efficiently than the time-consuming and convoluted processes at the municipal and central government level. The convenience of the 'state of siege', in fact, encouraged the government to use the War Law for other, less obviously threatening, crises as well. For example, when workers at the Delft Construction Works went on strike late in August 1916, the government placed the construction sites in a 'state of siege', so that the local commander could force the employees back to work, troops could police any violent consequences of the strikes, and, if necessary, find replacement workers. Cabinet ministers justified the decision because the Construction Works were an essential war industry. To lose even one day of production was considered detrimental to defence.⁵⁴

Occasionally, the military used the 'state of siege' to control employment conditions, although always in consultation with relevant government authorities. Article 12 of the War Law let the military amend the *Arbeidswet* (Work Law), *Veiligheidswet* (Safety Law) and *Hinderwet* (Nuisance Law, regulating institutions and industries that could cause harm or nuisance), while article 28 enabled commanders to shut down factories or warehouses at will.⁵⁵ In peacetime, these employment laws guaranteed workers' rights and ensured safe storage and operating codes. In wartime, such strict regulations could hinder war production, a reason why 'state of siege' commanders extended working hours for factories producing war materials, and why the powers of the *Veiligheidswet* and *Hinderwet* could be suspended to store weapons or munitions in empty warehouses.⁵⁶ Cabinet ministers loathed interference with the three laws,⁵⁷ but the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Trade sanctioned suspending the *Arbeidswet* in certain instances, to let factories operate 24 hours a day, because it provided employment and kept workers from smuggling at night, or going to work in Germany.⁵⁸

The government always consulted the High Command before it decided to impose the 'state of war' or 'siege'. Suggestions for the use of the War Law often came from the military. The decision to use the law was never taken lightly by either body. There were also certain areas where the government was extremely reluctant to use the War Law at all. For example, it refused to place the larger cities – Amsterdam, Rotterdam, or The Hague – in a 'state of siege', even when there was considerable justification for doing so.⁵⁹ Not only would their city councils have balked at the interference – municipalities had considerable autonomy and the larger ones exercised a significant amount of political influence⁶⁰ – but the impracticalities involved in enforcing military rule were also considerable. Nevertheless, in November 1915, the government declared the waterways of Amsterdam in a 'state of siege', so that troops could supervise the movement of goods out of the port.⁶¹ Earlier, in January 1915, Snijders had hoped that Rotterdam's many ports would receive similar restrictions.⁶² He argued that internees and Belgian refugees exploited the lack of military supervision there to escape to Great Britain unnoticed. He also stressed that it would make

more sense to monitor ships as they loaded their cargo, rather than stopping and searching them at Hoek van Holland before they left for open seas. While the cabinet was willing to impose the War Law on the port of Amsterdam (although not on the city itself), because there were no other places nearby where departing ships could be inspected, Rotterdam's trade could be checked elsewhere, so the request was unequivocally denied.⁶³

Who Has the Jurisdiction to Do What?

While the reasons for imposing a 'state of siege' varied considerably, the actual powers assigned to the armed forces in a 'state of war' and, especially, a 'state of siege' were sweeping and remained largely undefined. Because the War Law existed to deal with every possible contingency, it did not explain how the 'state of war' or 'siege' should be administered or used. In its indeterminate nature lay the roots of substantial concerns, since the legislation failed to address any practical consequences that inevitably arose. The law did not define where civilian authority stopped and military authority started, or even if in a 'state of siege' the local government continued to exist or operate at all.⁶⁴ How the two authorities were to consult each other in the 'state of war' was not addressed, let alone what happened when they disagreed.⁶⁵ It was impossible, if not ludicrous, to suspend the normal workings of local government and administration in the 'state of war' and 'state of siege', yet how municipal bodies should interact with the military authorities remained entirely mysterious.⁶⁶ Of course, in the first months of war, the authorities could easily ignore any problems with the War Law. Many believed the war would be over by Christmas, and thus a temporary suspension of normality was largely expected. By late 1914, however, they could no longer neglect the excesses and contradictions of the legislation. Given the stalemate on the western front, the war had no foreseeable end and, hence, the Netherlands would have to safeguard its neutrality indefinitely. Yet the reasons for the 'state of war' and 'state of siege' declarations still existed, and, during 1915, other neutrality concerns arose that made the use of the 'state of siege' even more appropriate. It was imperative, therefore, that the inherent contradictions in the War Law be resolved, and that, above all, the respective powers of military and civilian authority be clearly delineated.

Throughout 1915 and 1916, the judiciary and government attempted to regulate military jurisdiction to remove some of the excesses and return the administration of municipalities to local councils. The High Command, in turn, hoped that the regulations would decrease its paperwork and prevent commanders from meddling in local affairs, without restricting their power of interference when and where that proved necessary. It was especially concerned that the justification for the War Law, namely that in an emergency there should be no limit as to what could be done to safeguard the interests of the nation, was not undermined.⁶⁷ Yet it also understood that in a period of protracted crisis, where, in fact, emergencies were the norm rather than the exception, it was entirely unfeasible to replace regular administrative processes with new *ad hoc* military ones.

While the government had the option of entirely redesigning the War Law, or at the very least of issuing instructions regarding how it should be interpreted, both courses of action proved time-consuming. Both Bosboom and De Jonge, in their capacity as Minister of War, tried to comprehensively revamp the legislation. In October 1915, Bosboom appointed a commission of inquiry to this end.⁶⁸ Its recommendations helped him to make some practical changes to how the armed forces exercised their 'state of war' and 'state of siege' authority and how they administered the areas under their control. The recommendations did not, however, clarify the relationship between the armed forces and local governments. De Jonge tabled a change of the law in parliament in April 1918 and took these matters into account, but the elections a few months later and the armistice in November removed its urgency and the change was never implemented. In fact, in 1929, the revised *Oorlogswet* was removed permanently from the parliamentary agenda without debate in either legislative house.⁶⁹

Because they did not have a set of clear instructions to follow, the relationship between military and civic authorities in the 'state of war' and 'state of siege' tended to be fluid and often confusing. To unravel some of the complexities, the Ministry of War set up a special telephone line to advise callers about the law's technicalities.⁷⁰ Commanders often consulted lawyers or troops with legal training as well.⁷¹ In most communities, in fact, the mayor and municipal councils continued to govern as they had in peacetime with only minimal involvement from the local commander. Even in the 'state of siege', the daily functioning of municipalities was barely affected by the existence of a military command.⁷² In Utrecht, which existed in a 'state of war', the municipal council established a 'legal committee' (*rechtskundige comité*) as an intermediary between itself and the Commander of the New Holland Waterline so they could fulfil the legal requirement of consultation.⁷³ Provincial Governors also functioned as important points of contact between the armed forces and civilian authorities.⁷⁴ Conflicts between the military and municipal bodies were inevitable, however, as were misinterpretations of the law. In his memoirs, B.C. de Jonge described how 'military authority was not always exercised with tact and modesty'.⁷⁵ This was not surprising given that commanders had no training in civic administration. Since the 'state of siege' officially gave commanders enormous power, many believed that civilian authorities should do as they were told, with little respect for the subtleties of local politics or powers. This is well illustrated by a soldier's outburst to a police officer in Tilburg who tried to stop him from throwing snowballs at passersby: 'You [the police] have no say. Tilburg is in a state of siege and the soldiers are in charge.'⁷⁶

In an attempt to alleviate some of these misgivings, Bosboom released a directive in March 1915, which clarified the situation but increased the workload of 'state of siege' commanders. He stated that military authorities were responsible for public ordinances, even when the ordinance originated from within the municipality.⁷⁷ He reiterated, however, that commanders could not introduce any regulations if there was no proven military need to do so. In other words, municipal councils, mayors, and other local bodies continued to play a central part in local administration. Bos-

boom's edict did acknowledge that municipalities retained the powers of prosecution (*strafrechtelijke bevoegdheid*), except where they explicitly interfered with military regulations.⁷⁸ Snijders questioned the validity of the directive and suggested that municipalities should continue to govern themselves normally as long as they did not interfere with any military decisions. He raised this with Bosboom, who did not disagree, but urged the Commander-in-Chief to comply with his instruction anyway.⁷⁹ As a result, the armed forces became more involved in the running of municipalities, since they rubber-stamped every civil decision. This was exactly what the Minister President had wanted to avoid in September 1914, when he asked Snijders to make sure that 'state of siege' commanders abstained from involving themselves in local government, except where necessary for smuggling reasons.⁸⁰ Confusion was replacing convenience as the primary impact of the War Law.

However, the government did restrict the nature of the 'state of siege' in one particular way, by removing the right to establish *krijgsraden* (military courts).⁸¹ As long as the nation was not at war, military courts could not be established, and the normal judicial system remained intact. Upholding the distinction between a time of war and peace had two important consequences. Firstly, it ensured that peacetime protocols applied to military court-martials. As a result, the sentences imposed on deserters were not as severe as they would have been if the country had been at war.⁸² Secondly, residents arrested for breaking the 'state of war' and 'state of siege' regulations were tried in regular courts by a civilian judiciary rather than a military panel. As a result, when the arrestees went on trial, the courts had the chance to define and interpret the War Law. The High Court made several important rulings during the war, which had an impact on the jurisdiction of 'state of siege' authorities. The first significant 'state of siege' case in front of High Court judges in May 1915 came after a Military District Commander (*kantonnementscommandant*) told police, in a manner similar to the snowball-throwing soldier, that they could not arrest soldiers for civilian crimes without his prior consent. This was a clear abuse of the boundaries of the War Law, since common law was not suspended during a 'state of siege'. Consequently, the High Court ruled against the *kantonnementscommandant*.⁸³

In January 1916, the High Court declared that commanders in 'state of war' regions must consult with whomever normally dealt with the regulation they wanted to enforce. Hence, for municipal matters, they should approach the mayor or local council, and for provincial concerns, the Provincial Governor.⁸⁴ On 6 March 1916, the court further dictated how commanders should apply the law. A case brought by the town of Vlijmen against a baker who refused to abide by a municipal regulation had been thrown out by a District Court judge months earlier on the basis that Vlijmen was in a 'state of siege', and that, therefore, the armed forces ran the municipality. This ruling concurred entirely with the Minister of War's directive of March 1915. However, on appeal, the High Court overturned the ruling in favour of the municipality. Despite the fact that military authorities created and enforced regulations, the judges decided that civic authorities could also continue to do so, as long as they did not interfere with military decrees.⁸⁵ The ruling had several significant

results. Bosboom had to retract his directive and municipal councils retained their peacetime responsibilities.⁸⁶ After the ruling, Snijders issued instructions that commanders should avoid mixing in municipal affairs except when matters of military necessity or public order and safety arose.⁸⁷ Less than three months later, the High Court curbed military jurisdiction even further. On 9 June 1916, it declared that the 'state of siege' did not give commanders unlimited powers. When they regulated civilian life, they could only act within the jurisdiction normally accorded to the civilian authorities. They had to keep to the boundaries of the *Gemeentewet* (Municipal Law) and *Provinciale wet* (Provincial Law).⁸⁸

In November 1916, the government tempered the powers of the 'state of siege' as well, by amending the jurisdiction of commanders to act during emergencies only.⁸⁹ After the November decree, municipal bodies were held responsible for all local affairs, and any decisions made by commanders that did not deal specifically with defence or neutrality had to be discussed with the municipal authorities first. In effect, the government moved the conditions of the 'state of siege' much closer to those of the 'state of war', where consultation was already mandatory.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, for matters concerning defence and neutrality, the powers of the military remained all encompassing. Ironically, it was not until after the armistice was signed, that the new reading of the War Law came into effect.⁹¹ It would not be tested until the next crisis of neutrality in September 1939.

The 'state of war' and 'state of siege' faced further challenges from High Court judges throughout 1918. On 5 April, for instance, they ruled that the military could not determine what shopkeepers did with their goods, as smuggling and trade policies were the responsibility of the central government, not of the municipal authorities. Because a 'state of siege' was not in force throughout the whole of the country, the armed forces had no authority over national concerns. As a result, the government had to compensate merchants affected by any and all 'state of siege' smuggling regulations up to that date.⁹² The ruling came two years after new smuggling legislation had gone into effect that had specifically removed responsibility for trade matters from the armed forces as well. However, as detailed in the previous chapter, the law of April 1916 did not give customs officials adequate powers to fight smuggling, so the government had kept a 'state of siege' in place for this very purpose. The High Court decision in April 1918 clearly signalled that this was inappropriate. A little over two months later, the court also decided that the Commander of the Fortified Position of the Mouths of the Maas River could not improve his fortifications using War Law jurisdiction, because the law only gave him powers over local, and not national, concerns.⁹³ The court re-emphasised an important point: that commanders could not make decisions beyond those normally assigned to local governments, except during an emergency. As a result, the extraordinary powers the military had enjoyed were severely stifled, even when it came to defence issues.

The High Court rulings in 1918 brought the legality of the government's decision to use the War Law for non-military matters into serious doubt. In fact, the two 1918 rulings caused considerable upheaval, since most smuggling controls depended on 'state of siege' declarations. As an intermediary measure, while the cabinet

worked on more comprehensive anti-smuggling laws, which would allow the 'state of siege' to be revoked, it declared that 'state of siege' regulations that dealt with trade matters would remain in place. Parliament accepted the revised anti-smuggling laws in February 1919, after the war had drawn to a close and the 'states of war' and 'siege' had lost their urgency.⁹⁴

Due to judicial rulings and government decrees, military commanders were more certain about what they could and could not do during a 'state of war' or a 'state of siege', but the powers that they may have wanted and needed were seriously undermined. By November 1918, the purpose of the War Law – namely that 'need breaks law' – had largely disappeared.⁹⁵ The *Oorlogswet* had gone full circle, from being implemented in 1914 to enhance the Netherlands' neutrality and defence, clearly matters of national importance, to being useful for municipal concerns, which was something that many in parliament and in the armed forces had wanted to avoid as much as possible. Of course, if the Netherlands had been invaded, then the entire country would have been placed in a 'state of siege' and the Commander-in-Chief would have obtained ultimate control over national as well as regional affairs, subject only to the approval of the central government. But that situation did not arise between 1914 and 1918. Instead, commanders and municipal authorities bumbled along.

Causing Havoc in the Chain of Command

While the War Law gave the armed forces extraordinary powers, the government in 1899 had not considered how it would operate within the existing military organisation. Like all armed forces, the Dutch army and navy operated within a strict chain of command, where rank determined authority. Neither the War Law nor its amendments in 1904 and 1912 recognised that the 'state of war' and 'siege' interfered with the military hierarchy in a fundamental way, namely by creating an additional 'civilian' jurisdiction for commanders charged with 'state of war' or 'state of siege' authority. In itself, assigning specific responsibilities to particular commanders was not a problem, were it not for the fact that 'civilian' authority was not derived from the chain of command but directly from the government. This meant that commanders in the 'state of war' and 'state of siege' could order their subordinates in terms of both 'civilian' and 'military' jurisdiction, but higher-ranked officers, who had no 'civilian' authority, could not overrule or make any changes to the 'state of war' or 'state of siege'. This applied even if the higher-ranked commander was in charge of defence matters in the region.

During the war, it was not uncommon for a 'state of siege' commander to hold a lower rank than another officer posted in the same region.⁹⁶ In Overijssel, the Commander of Division II, Major-General J. Burger, outranked the Territorial Commander, Colonel G.A. van der Bruggen, who held 'state of siege' authority. While the Divisional Commander retained control over troops in the province, the Territorial Commander could commandeer them for 'state of siege' matters.⁹⁷ Burger could not question Van der Bruggen's actions, or refuse to provide him with troops, causing problems when the two issued contradictory orders.⁹⁸ The prospect of two com-

manders exercising 'state of siege' jurisdiction in the same area existed as well. For example, in Zeeland, the Territorial Commander officially controlled 'state of siege' matters, except in the fortified positions, where the local fortification commander exercised control.⁹⁹ Again, this was problematic when they issued conflicting commands.¹⁰⁰ Because the Ministers of War and the Navy appointed 'state of war' and 'state of siege' authorities,¹⁰¹ even Snijders, as Commander-in-Chief, had no say over what happened during a 'state of war' or a 'state of siege', except in cases where the government assigned him as the ultimate authority. In other words, Snijders could order commanders to do as he pleased for defence reasons, but could not interfere with their War Law authority. According to Snijders, this contradicted the instructions he was given upon his appointment in August 1914, which clearly stated that the Commander-in-Chief was personally in charge of maintaining neutrality and defence, the two rationales behind introducing a 'state of war' or a 'state of siege'.¹⁰² It was also inconsistent with the expectation that if the government declared the whole country to be in a 'state of siege', then Snijders was automatically responsible for exercising that authority.¹⁰³

An associated concern was that commanders could not delegate their powers. This made Buhlman's, and subsequently, Van Terwisga's, job as Commander of the Field Army extremely taxing, since the commander was in charge of the 'state of siege' in the southern provinces. In September 1914, Buhlman assigned some of this authority to his divisional commanders, to ease his workload and speed up the implementation of regulations.¹⁰⁴ At the time, Snijders warned him that delegating authority might be illegal, and that he must make his subordinates aware that the ultimate responsibility for any of their regulations lay with him.¹⁰⁵ After the government appointed Snijders to be in charge of the 'state of siege' in and around internment camps in January 1915, he entrusted many of these powers to camp commanders as well.¹⁰⁶ However, on 26 June 1916, the High Court declared that the War Law did not allow for delegation, and that, as a result, proclamations made by officers not authorised to do so were invalid.¹⁰⁷ The ruling potentially undermined the High Command's plans and operations, as commanders could not be shifted away from their 'state of war' and 'state of siege' areas either, nor could they be replaced, unless the government appointed their replacements immediately.¹⁰⁸

In May 1916, the cabinet tabled an amendment to the law to clarify these matters. Members of parliament avidly scrutinised and criticised the proposed changes, before finally accepting them the following November.¹⁰⁹ The first decree that month fixed the problems of delegation and Snijders' position.¹¹⁰ From this time on, Snijders was responsible for military authority alongside the local commander in a 'state of war' or a 'state of siege'. The instructions accompanying the decree also detailed that if two or more military authorities exercised control in one territory, then the highest ranking officer had the final say.¹¹¹ In other words, in the province of North Brabant, where both the Territorial Commander and Van Terwisga (as head of the field army) were responsible for military authority, Van Terwisga could overrule any decisions made by the Territorial Commander.¹¹² The decree did not, however, outline what happened when the operational commander (without 'civilian' jurisdiction)

out-ranked the local 'state of siege' authority, a matter that was never satisfactorily addressed, and was left to the discretion of the commanders concerned.

Article 4 of the new instructions also reinstated the right of delegation in all but name.¹¹³ Consequently, Snijders took charge of 'state of war' and 'state of siege' matters after November 1916. On the 10th, he declared that internment camp commanders could make military decisions for their locality and that Van Terwisga could appoint subordinates to administer his vast area of control.¹¹⁴ Not only could authority be delegated, but uniformity could also be imposed across the various 'state of siege' regions.¹¹⁵ This had immediate results for the anti-smuggling campaign when Snijders banned known smugglers from 'state of siege' regions nation-wide, rather than from one specific locality at a time. The instructions enabled local military commanders to take on far more responsibility for the day-to-day running of the 'state of war' and 'siege' in their area.¹¹⁶ Of course, as the High Court restricted the actual powers enjoyed in the 'state of war' and 'state of siege', these responsibilities diminished accordingly.

The 'State of War' and 'State of Siege' in Perspective

The High Court rulings on the 'state of war' and 'state of siege' reflected general public opinion. Many Dutch people believed that the *staat van beleg* offered too many inappropriate powers to the armed forces. They were also highly critical of the government for using the armed forces to take charge of trade and smuggling offences in the first place.¹¹⁷ Few could accept that military intervention in economic concerns was entirely necessary, even if it came in the name of protecting neutrality. Yet the impact of military rule on the running of towns and villages was often next to negligible. After Bosboom's directive in March 1915, military power seemed much greater than it actually was because commanders' names appeared at the bottom of each municipal ordinance. From a rudimentary analysis of published municipal council records in Dordrecht (placed in a 'state of war' in August 1914) and Zwolle (placed in a 'state of siege' in December 1916),¹¹⁸ for example, very little military interference is noticeable.¹¹⁹ Of course, by late 1918, the only official power left to the military in the 'state of war' or 'state of siege' pertained to emergencies; all other authority had reverted back to the locals. In fact, by 1918, the High Court had rejected many of the objectives for the 'state of siege' identified by Snijders in 1915, namely to control smuggling; support the government and its neutrality measures; ensure the civilian population was well-fed and healthy; protect public order and safety; and regulate export prohibitions in harbours and ports.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, that the government felt compelled to use the extraordinary powers of the War Law is indicative of the unique circumstances facing the Netherlands during the Great War. The country had to deal with the consequences of its neutrality at a time of great uncertainty. Breaches of neutrality moved away from matters of defence, deterrence, and border integrity to a variety of internal concerns. The armed forces were ideally positioned to do this, having been mobilised throughout the country, even if they contributed to many of the administrative and judicial concerns outlined above. Using

troops to manage civilian matters at a time when the country was not at war was controversial, but the mere fact that a neutrality violation could result in a serious threat to the security of the nation made military involvement in such matters almost inevitable.

Chapter

8

Ash-Grey with Neutrality: Safeguarding Neutrality in the State of Siege

The 'state of siege' existed to protect the country's neutrality. As a consequence, much of what the military did within 'state of siege' areas was justified in terms of neutrality and national security. Neutrality had as much to do with protecting the country from external threats as it did with presenting an appropriately 'neutral' face to the world. In this respect, how the Dutch behaved as a people and as individuals influenced how strongly the government could proclaim the country's neutrality. The government was unable to prevent its citizens from participating in 'unneutral' activities, like smuggling, and this was significant. As described in a previous chapter, the Netherlands' anti-smuggling measures proved controversial, both internationally and domestically. Confusion on the topic arose because there were few precedents in international law that defined the responsibilities of neutral citizens, apart from the expectation that they should treat belligerents with complete impartiality.¹ The Dutch government's own neutrality regulations also did not explain how domestic neutrality should be protected, except to forbid the supply of military materials to any warring forces.² Due to this lack of clarity, there were many opportunities for misunderstandings to arise. Yet the uncertain nature of what was understood by upholding 'internal neutrality' meant that warring states were less likely to use a neutrality violation from within the Netherlands as a reason to go to war, unless, of course, the advantage for their enemy or the disadvantage for themselves was deemed too great.

Unlike most other forms of neutrality preservation, internal neutrality depended almost entirely upon the neutral government's ability to keep its own population in check. It was a domestic matter, which explains why its requirements were far more controversial amongst the Dutch than upholding external neutrality. The population was easily alienated when the government, or the military for that matter, curbed civic freedoms. Since the link between neutrality regulations, such as censorship of newspapers, and an actual threat to national security was difficult to establish, enforcing standards of 'neutral' behaviour on Dutch citizens was, at best, challenging and, at worst, impossible. While 'state of siege' jurisdiction gave the armed forces more powers to impose limits on freedoms of speech, congregation, and movement, the use of these extraordinary powers was met with considerable resistance. Furthermore, the army was generally unprepared for its role as the police force of internal neutrality, and its leadership reluctantly accepted the responsibility. However, in the end, external and internal neutrality functions could not be separated. Snijders' instructions to the Commander of the Field Army, Buhlman, on 10 August 1914

illustrate this well: Buhlman's primary obligation was to external neutrality, by interning foreign soldiers and patrolling the borders. His second duty was to maintain peace and public order among civilians, and prevent any breaches of neutrality from inside the country. Ensuring the field army could meet an invasion ranked only third among his immediate concerns.³ Already at this early stage of the conflict, it was clear that both external and internal neutrality had priority over defence.

The War on Goods

In terms of controlling smuggling, commanders in charge of the 'state of siege' restricted the movement of goods, their sale, storage, and consumption.⁴ Before the institution of the *eerste* and *tweede linie*, they prohibited unauthorised access to within 500 metres of the border and in some places increased this distance to 1 kilometre.⁵ Military patrols were under order to shoot anyone found in the restricted zone on sight, especially at night. They were even told to refrain from sounding warning shots because this gave smugglers time to head for safety across the frontier.⁶ Banning gun ownership in 'state of siege' regions helped to prevent smugglers from shooting back, although many smugglers did not heed the decree, which often made the border region a particularly dangerous place to be in.⁷ By the end of 1915, 62 people had been shot along the borders.⁸ During 1916, a local newspaper in Limburg noted that 300 suspected smugglers had been killed in the province since the beginning of the war.⁹ 'State of siege' authorities also initiated other anti-smuggling measures, including barbed wire fences erected along the frontier, prohibitions on people walking their dogs after 10 p.m., and other night-time curfews. They banned markets and fairs, and proscribed the hawking of goods, all with the aim of reducing the number of opportunities for smugglers to obtain and sell their wares.¹⁰

By mid-1915, 'state of siege' authorities were attempting to prevent smuggling further by monitoring the stockpiling of foodstuffs and other goods in frontier towns. The government helped this process by declaring a 'state of siege' in more and more municipalities to keep smugglers from establishing their base of operations further inland. As a result, cargo entering and leaving all 'state of siege' municipalities had to be accompanied by documentation citing the origin, destination, and mode of transportation for the goods.¹¹ It was the responsibility of the armed forces to ensure that these measures were policed: troops patrolled roads, canals, and train stations, and seized undocumented freight. Occasionally, they closed down factories suspected of supplying smuggling rings.¹² The measures were far from perfect, principally because they were hard to police, and, furthermore, due to difficulties in determining how much was too much for a stockpile. As mayors were held responsible for ascertaining what their municipalities needed in terms bread, potatoes, and petroleum, they had a lot of trouble figuring out exactly what were necessary stockpiles or deciding that a person (or shop) had stored too much.¹³

In terms of the types of items smuggled, the High Command and the government were especially concerned about the number of horses that managed to cross into Germany from the Netherlands. The government imposed an export prohibi-

tion on horses on 3 August 1914, principally because the Cavalry Brigade did not have enough, and also because horses were officially classed as contraband.¹⁴ In January 1915, 'state of siege' commanders around the country ordered mayors to register their resident horses.¹⁵ But such regulations achieved little. In June 1915, Buhlman wrote to Snijders that the number of horses being smuggled out of the country remained extremely high. He cited the example of Sittard, a border town, where, in the space of three days, all manner of 'suspicious' persons bought a total of 132 horses from locals. Before the war, real estate agents, bakers, and mineworkers did not need a horse; now they were suddenly intent on buying one. According to the commander, most of the 132 animals would 'mysteriously disappear' or be 'stolen' in the following weeks. Buhlman also recounted the case of another border town, Brunssum, which before 1914 was home to around 60 horses, but now had registered 329 animals: most of which he expected would end up in Germany.¹⁶ Buhlman further explained that it was very difficult for the authorities to prove that horses were being systematically moved across the border, unless smugglers were caught in the act. He did not believe it was possible to do anything to stop the practice either, although he hoped that horse movements would be monitored even more closely.¹⁷ In a similar vein, the Commander of the Second Division of *Koninklijke Marechaussee* complained to Snijders that many mayors helped smugglers by not taking the horse-registration process seriously.¹⁸ He figured out that in the Heerlen area alone at least 500 horses were supposedly 'stolen' within a space of six months. He also believed that removing horses away from the border provinces might help.¹⁹ Subsequently, Buhlman made the transport of horses into his 'state of siege' areas illegal; elsewhere, another commander prohibited farmers from grazing their animals within two kilometres of German territory.²⁰

Other items that the Dutch were concerned about being moved out of the country were staple foodstuffs, especially bread and grain. In 1914 and 1915, their main concern was the sale of bread to Belgians. The German occupation authorities in Belgium did not accept any responsibility for feeding Belgian residents, which they believed was the responsibility of the Allies as long as Belgium remained an official belligerent.²¹ As a result, the Committee for the Relief of Belgium, an American organisation that received support from other neutral countries, shipped food to the Netherlands, and the Dutch transported it to Belgium. Nevertheless, the supplies were barely sufficient to meet all of Belgium's needs. Consequently, bread shortages were common and Belgians readily paid twice as much for a loaf of bread as Dutch citizens did.²² As a result, exporting bread into Belgium was a profitable enterprise. From October 1914 onwards, the levels of bread 'smuggling' were so high that bakers in Dutch border towns had trouble keeping enough stock on hand for their Dutch customers. Yet, despite numerous requests from municipal councils and commanders, the government was unwilling to impose a general export ban on cereals since bread shortages were limited only to the southern regions.²³ Instead, in some 'state of siege' towns, commanders imposed their own export prohibitions on bread and grain.²⁴ According to article 11 of the War Law, 'state of siege' authorities could manage the health of the local population and regulate its food supply.²⁵ An exception

to the prohibition was, nevertheless, made for bread destined for Belgian towns situated on the border itself, after the government came to an agreement with the Commission for the Regulation of Living Needs of the Belgian Border Municipalities (*Commissie tot regeling der voorziening van noodzakelijke levensbehoeften in Belgische grensgemeenten*).²⁶ As long as enough loaves remained behind in Dutch bakeries, excess stock could be sold in Belgium, at least in the short term.²⁷

Long before the government rationed bread in the Netherlands, 'state of siege' commanders restricted the production and consumption of white bread. For example, in October 1914, during a protracted period of flour shortages in Zeeland, the Territorial Commander ordered that bakers could only bake bread containing 20 per cent white flour.²⁸ He also instructed that farmers growing rye for cattle feed had to sell it to bakeries first.²⁹ The baking and storage regulations were usually temporary, lasting only until regular grain supplies returned to normal levels. That the 'state of siege' extended to such banalities as how much and what type of bread could be baked and sold, clearly reflects how the 'state of siege' could be used to deal with all manner of 'non-threatening' crises. Bread certainly did not undermine the country's neutrality or its national security, but the military authorities felt entirely within their rights to monitor the bread trade because it affected the welfare of residents. This highlights the fact that the 'state of siege' was a useful and convenient tool for all manner of things, at least until the summer of 1916, when the government replaced all *ad hoc* food regulations with a comprehensive nation-wide Distribution Law. Once the Distribution Law came into effect and the powers of the 'state of siege' were circumscribed by the High Court, the use of 'state of siege' authority to regulate consumption disappeared almost entirely.

Bread was not the only product given special attention by 'state of siege' commanders before 1916. In February 1915, Buhlman declared an export restriction on copper coins, the smallest denominations of Dutch money. He responded to rumours that locals were exchanging Dutch guilders for German marks and Belgian francs, making full use of favourable exchange rates in Belgium and Germany. As copper was a prohibited export commodity, Buhlman believed it appropriate to restrict the movement of copper specie as well.³⁰ His decision resulted from difficulties experienced in late 1914, after a marked increase in the circulation of German currency in Limburg, most probably caused by the sale of smuggled goods and the exchange of Dutch guilders into German marks; some Limburg employers even paid their staff in German currency.³¹ For reasons that remain unclear, the government was unwilling to declare the import or export of money illegal. Buhlman had no such compunction, however, prohibiting the movement of copper coins. Similarly, the Territorial Commander in Friesland attempted to dissuade smugglers by forbidding payments in foreign currency in his 'state of siege' communities.³²

Despite every effort to make them work, the many anti-smuggling measures imposed during the 'state of siege' actually did very little to decrease the instances of the illegal trade. As the regulations became more repressive, smugglers became more cunning. When widespread shortages in 1916 made smuggling an issue of national welfare, as smugglers were undermining the availability of food and fuels,

some military authorities even requested that priests preach against the ‘sin’ of smuggling.³³ If such a call to conscience was ever made in Groesbeek, a mostly Catholic village of notorious smugglers, it went unheeded. In February 1916, the local military commander there took the radical step of placing electric streetlights throughout the community so that it was easier to spot people leaving their houses at night.³⁴ If nothing else, the First World War ensured that Groesbeek and many other towns and villages along the border modernised their streets through such innovations.

Table 8: Numbers of convicted smugglers, 1914-1917

1914	29
1915 (incl. those convicted under ‘state of siege’ regulations)	6,313
1916	10,960
1917	9,758
Total (1914-1917):	27,060

Source: Riedel, ‘De smokkelarij’ p. 209.

The smuggling epidemic placed a great burden on the judicial system as well. In 1915, 37,000 suspected smugglers were arrested nation-wide.³⁵ By 1917, the city of Arnhem alone nearly matched this figure, with 25,602 smuggling cases coming before the local magistrates, a figure replicated in towns all along the border.³⁶ The courts could not handle the huge increases in caseloads. It often took months for a case to come to trial, and many smugglers never faced a judge.³⁷ Still, the number of convicted smugglers rose considerably. There was little space available in the prisons to house the new criminals, which explains why judges preferred to fine rather than imprison smugglers. Not surprisingly, the offenders took advantage of the system; they paid off laughably small fines and continued smuggling undeterred. One way in which the authorities hoped to deal with the over-burdened court system and prevent smugglers from re-offending was to remove known and suspected smugglers out of ‘state of siege’ districts.³⁸ After July 1915, commanders began using article 33 of the War Law, which authorised the removal of any person deemed to be a danger to public order, to banish individuals for up to three months at a time.³⁹ The period of expulsion doubled if a smuggler re-offended. Alongside banishment, the smuggler could also be convicted in civil court.⁴⁰ By November 1918, the military had expelled thousands of individuals from the ‘state of siege’ as suspected smugglers.⁴¹ But the measure was not always effective since it was difficult to supervise. Although local police, the *Koninklijke Marechaussee*, and troops monitoring goods traffic into and out of municipalities had lists of names, descriptions, and sometimes photographs, it was easy for people to avoid the authorities, especially if friends and neighbours co-operated in hiding them.⁴² Likewise, a smuggler removed from one area could operate in a neighbouring one, at least until this loophole was closed in April 1917.

The use of children in smuggling also raised considerable alarm among the authorities. Smugglers sometimes used their children as carriers since youngsters were not punished as severely as adults. Because it was illegal by national law to remove dependents from their parents, children were exempted from 'state of siege' banishment, at least until 1917.⁴³ Instead, the courts dealt more promptly with juvenile offenders and imposed age-appropriate punishments, including disciplinary school.⁴⁴ In 1917, however, 'state of siege' commanders took the drastic step of expelling entire families if one of their offspring was caught smuggling on two or more occasions. Many of these families ended up in one of the Belgian refugee camps for the length of the period of expulsion.⁴⁵

During 1917, the government introduced other regulations to deter smuggling. In February, it increased prison sentences for smugglers from one to four years and established special correction centres to ease overcrowding in regular prisons and to ensure that small-time smugglers did not associate with serious criminals.⁴⁶ The military and government also improved the uniformity of regulations and controls in the civilian-controlled *eerste linie* and military-controlled *tweede linie*, while local commanders met with customs officials to streamline their activities.⁴⁷ As of April 1917, Snijders issued trade regulations that applied to all 'state of siege' municipalities, and removed suspects out of the entire 'state of siege', rather than specific localities.⁴⁸ Prohibited goods were stamped or labelled 'for use within the Netherlands only' with the aim of preventing their sale abroad.⁴⁹

By the end of the war, the regulation of smuggling was much improved, yet the High Command did not believe that smuggling had decreased significantly.⁵⁰ Because of widespread shortages in Germany and Belgium, the danger now came from Germans and Belgians sneaking into the Netherlands to buy food and other essentials.⁵¹ While the Allied blockade and war at sea ensured that the Netherlands was receiving only a fraction of the supplies it had received in the first two years of war, guaranteeing imported goods were consumed within the Netherlands, plenty of local produce still found its way into Germany and Belgium. Sir Francis Oppenheimer, the British commercial attaché in The Hague, described the state of smuggling in February 1917 as follows: 'Not much needs to be said concerning the advantages which the Germans have derived from smuggling. They are great locally, but are of comparative little importance if viewed properly focused.'⁵² He believed that the Allied blockade of the Netherlands had successfully limited what could be smuggled to the Central Powers. As a result, their pressure on the Dutch to prevent illegal exports decreased somewhat in 1917 and 1918, although it never disappeared entirely.

Undercover for the Kaiser: Espionage

While the military authorities worried about Dutch citizens crossing the frontier with prohibited goods, they were even more concerned about foreigners doing the same, especially since there was a chance that they might forward valuable information to their respective governments. Commanders asked mayors to keep an eye out for suspicious individuals and restricted access to particular regions, while foreign newspa-

per correspondents could not enter those parts of the country declared to be in a 'state of siege'.⁵³ After October 1914, foreigners wanting to reside in a 'state of siege' municipality had to obtain permission from the local commander.⁵⁴ The Territorial Commander in Friesland closed the territory bordering the mouth of the Eems, in case any Allies used it to survey the comings and goings of German warships.⁵⁵ Likewise, the Commander of the Fortified Position of Den Helder declared the Frisian islands off limits, to keep the curious from monitoring naval manoeuvres in the North Sea.⁵⁶ His counterparts in the south prohibited sketching or photographing near the border.⁵⁷ They also tightened border security: no one without proper identification could enter the country except in cases of obvious humanitarian need (as applied to deserters, refugees, and escaped POWs).⁵⁸ When caught, suspicious individuals found in or near these restricted areas were often sent back across the border (into Germany) or faced prosecution and imprisonment.⁵⁹ One historian has even claimed that during one month in 1917 alone, 3,000 German smugglers were caught and expelled from the country.⁶⁰ Overall, there were enough infringements especially by foreigners to warrant the creation of emergency prisons in Nijmegen, Venlo, Roermond, and Maastricht.⁶¹

Preventing intelligence agents from operating in the Netherlands, let alone catching them, was far more difficult than catching smugglers.⁶² Nevertheless, the Dutch military intelligence network grew during the war and did its best to prevent espionage or, at the very least, to spy on the spies, by listening in on the telephone conversations of visiting diplomats,⁶³ as well as intercepting their telegraph communications. GS III officers tracked suspected spies, learning a great deal about the warring parties in the process, while GS IV officers decoded British and German telegraph messages.⁶⁴ They also tried to stop Dutch citizens from selling information to the belligerents.⁶⁵ Another role of the military was to uncover leaks of militarily sensitive information. Early on in the July crisis of 1914, newspapers were forbidden to publish stories on the movements and locations of Dutch troops.⁶⁶ Private telegraph and radio transmitters were also declared illegal, and the armed forces forcibly shut them down or took them over to ensure that none of the combatants used the transmitters, thereby avoiding violations of the requirement that a neutral not let warring parties use its territory for military ends.⁶⁷ For the same reason, the armed forces forbade telegraph operators from sending or receiving coded messages.⁶⁸

Despite these precautions, the belligerents made ample use of the Netherlands' convenient geographic situation to obtain information about their enemies. According to one prolific rumour, every café waiter in The Hague was an undercover agent for the Kaiser.⁶⁹ From interviewing deserters, GS III learned that British and French agents had infiltrated the camps for German deserters.⁷⁰ The Allies also noted the movement of German trains through and near the Netherlands and acquired technical details of German equipment interned by the Dutch.⁷¹ One of the most important sources of information for the Allies were couriers who smuggled information, letters, and people into and out of occupied Belgium. A number of towns on the Belgian side of the border were renowned as Allied espionage posts.⁷²

It is quite possible that the use of the Netherlands for intelligence purposes helped

to persuade both sets of belligerents that its neutrality was important.⁷³ The historian Diana Sanders suggested that

Disorganized and even unreliable as the British and Allied intelligence services in Holland [sic] were, the fact remains that without them considerable quantities of information covering a wide range of enemy activities would have been lost to the Allies. Holland, neutral, was of major value to the intelligence network in a way that Holland as a belligerent – on whichever side – could not be.⁷⁴

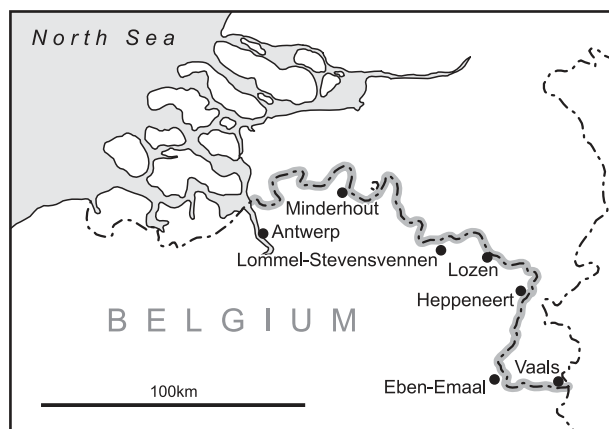
Another historian, Christopher Andrew, has described how the Netherlands provided the main base from which the British Intelligence Service and its French equivalent operated during the war, and how it was vital for their understanding of what happened on the German side of the western front.⁷⁵ The Germans also benefited from Dutch neutrality by posting intelligence officers in port cities and monitoring the movement of goods and people.⁷⁶ The German military attaché in The Hague, Von Schweinitz, believed that the country was one of the most important sources of information for the German military.⁷⁷

Wire of Death: The Electric Fence

Germany stood to lose the most from the intelligence-gathering opportunities offered by the proximity of the Netherlands to itself and Belgium. As soon as it fully controlled the Belgian-Dutch frontier, German troops patrolled it around-the-clock.⁷⁸ Like their Dutch counterparts, the German patrols shot smugglers and suspected spies on sight. It certainly made Dutch border security much easier to maintain. The Germans had several motivations for carefully monitoring the frontier. Above all, they wanted to stop information from being smuggled out of Belgium to the Allies, but they also hoped to prevent Belgian men from escaping through the Netherlands to Great Britain and joining Belgian forces there. They also intended to keep letters, newspapers, and magazines from entering Belgium, in a vain hope to dampen *l'esprit de résistance* of the population.⁷⁹ However, as the Dutch authorities well knew and the Germans soon discovered, the border between the two Low Countries proved easy to cross and difficult to patrol. As a result, in April 1915, the German leadership decided to erect a 300-kilometre fence along the frontier, charged with a lethal current, in an attempt to isolate Belgium from the Netherlands. Unfortunately, extant German sources on the fence are difficult to find.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the tremendous effort and huge cost involved in building this structure indicates how harmful Germany believed unauthorised use of the frontier was for its war effort. The existence of the fence also explains a great deal about the value Germany placed on Dutch neutrality, while preventing its enemies from enjoying the advantages of that neutrality.

The Belgian electric fence had a predecessor. Early in 1915, Germany constructed a barrier between thirteen villages in the province of Alsace and the border with Switzerland.⁸¹ This structure consisted of metal wires charged with an electric cur-

Map 14: The electric fence from Vaals to the Schelde.



rent strong enough to kill any person or animal that touched it. A German officer, D. Schütte, assistant to an intelligence agent in Belgium, believed that it was possible to build a similar but much longer structure along the Belgian-Dutch frontier.⁸² The Governor-General of Belgium agreed, and in April 1915, German *Landsturm* troops, aided by paid local workers and forced labour from Russian POW camps, worked on the fence at several locations.⁸³ By August, it stretched from where Dutch Limburg met German and Belgian territory (near Vaals) to where the Schelde river cut the Dutch-Belgian border in Zeeland. Once completed, the fence presented a formidable barrier and made Belgium, according to Sophie de Schaepdrijver, ‘even more of a large prison’.⁸⁴ The structure consisted of six major sections: the first followed the southern Limburg border closely between Vaals and the Belgian town of Eben-Emael; the second reached northward, meandering along the Maas from Eben-Emael to Heppeneert. From Heppeneert, the third section stretched roughly westward until it reached Lozen; the fourth worked its way further west to Lommel-Stevensvennen; and the fifth traversed the countryside up to Minderhout. Finally, the fence followed the border until it reached the Schelde.⁸⁵ It was impossible to build the fence across the river, and, for reasons left unexplained in the sources, the southern-most area of the province of Zeeland remained free of the fence.

The fence usually reached a height of two metres, and consisted of a series of copper wires (between five and ten in total). In most places, on either side of the main fence, a shorter barbed-wire barrier stopped people and animals from accidentally walking into it. The fence was built in straight lines, at times crossing over the tops of houses, over canals, and, occasionally, underground as well.⁸⁶ In some places, it cut towns in half; at others, it dissected gardens or farms. Electricity came from generators placed in huts, which were themselves supplied with power from nearby factories. Every 50 metres, a high pole distributed current to the fence, enabling guards to shut off specific sections for maintenance and the removal of electrocuted victims and animals.⁸⁷ The exact voltage of the fence is unknown, although his-

Illustration 7: The electric fence



A staged photo from 1917 to illustrate the lethal nature of the electric fence on the Dutch-Belgian border. The sign reads: *Hochspannung Lebensgefahr* ('High voltage, Danger' with connotations of 'life threatening'). Note the presence of German and Dutch border guards on either side of the fence.

torians have cited anything between 2,000 and 50,000 volts.⁸⁸ It seems fairly certain that 50,000 volts is too high, given the relatively primitive nature of generators at the time. A more realistic figure would be anything from 2,000 to 6,000 volts,⁸⁹ which is enough to kill a person, but low enough to enable a properly insulated individual to touch the wires without fear of electrocution.⁹⁰

The first official notification delivered to the Netherlands regarding the fence came on 6 June 1915, more than a month after work on it had begun. The German Minister in The Hague informed the Dutch government that the fence had been nearly completed along parts of the border and that it would be charged for the first time the following week. He promised that that the structure would be clearly marked and he hoped the authorities would warn locals about the risk the fence posed.⁹¹ Upon receiving news of the *communiqué*, Sniijders asked Buhlman – who was responsible for the security of the southern border – to investigate and put in place the necessary precautions.⁹² The Commander of the Field Army, in turn, advised border troops about the possible dangers and requested they keep an eye out for any signs of construction. They were also informed of what to do if they found someone electrocuted.⁹³ Posters circulated in border towns close to where the fence stood and large signs placed on or near the actual structure explained the hazard in Dutch, French, and German.⁹⁴ The idea that a wire with an electric current running through it could be lethal was unbelievable for many people. In the days following the appear-

Illustration 8: The electric fence



The electric fence separated the Netherlands from Belgium. It is pictured here with barbed wire barrier fences erected on either side to prevent people and animals from accidentally electrocuting themselves.

ance of a new section of fence, curious locals would often visit the border.⁹⁵ The novelty quickly wore off and amazement turned to distaste as the fence prevented them from visiting relatives, going to markets, and smuggling in Belgium.⁹⁶ Soon enough, as reports filtered through of the accidental electrocution of people and animals, they began to view the fence with dread.⁹⁷ The exact number of deaths caused by the fence is unknown, principally because the German records have not been found, but estimates go as high as 3,000 people.⁹⁸ The deadly nature of the fence led it to be given a number of portentous soubriquets, such as ‘the doomed wire’ (*de verdoemde draad*), ‘border of death’ (*dood-grens*), and ‘the devil’s wire’ (*de Duivelsdraad*).⁹⁹

Obviously, safety measures were far from effective. One journalist, Jan Feith, toured the Dutch side of the electric fence early in November 1915 and wrote about it in a series of articles. He explained that little had been done to prevent accidental contact with the deadly wires: hardly any warning posters existed, and in many places no barbed-wire safety barrier existed to keep passers-by from accidentally touching the fence.¹⁰⁰ He also commented on residents’ ignorance of the actual dangers of electricity, and on the many animals – cattle, horses, cats, dogs, chickens, and rodents – that were killed.¹⁰¹

Surviving documents do not allude to any complaints made by the Dutch government to the Germans about the fence. This is not surprising, given that the Germans did the Dutch a favour by erecting a barrier along the Belgian border, effec-

tively helping to keep illegal traffic from crossing into and out of the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the fence was far from foolproof as smugglers, spies, and *passeurs* (guides that helped people and goods cross the border) found ways of circumventing the structure: some dug underneath it, others crawled through by placing a rubber 'window' or rubber-lined barrel between the wires.¹⁰² It was even rumoured that some people pole-vaulted over the fence, or jumped over it from rooftop to rooftop.¹⁰³ Goods could be thrown over and collected on the other side. Electrical shortages often forced all but one of the copper wires to be shut off, diminishing the chances of electrocution considerably.¹⁰⁴ When rivers and canals rose close to their high-water marks, some fence sections had to be switched off as well.¹⁰⁵ Short-circuiting the wires was another option open to those considering climbing through. In other words, the fence made crossing the Dutch-Belgian border more difficult, but not unduly so. After 1915, at least 32,000 Belgians escaped the occupation zone through the Netherlands and travelled on to either France or Great Britain.¹⁰⁶ No doubt, thousands more smuggled themselves, goods, and information through the wires on a regular basis. The effect of the barrier as a preventative measure against smuggling and spying was further undermined when the German authorities allowed local residents to cross the border on market days, on Sundays to attend church, or during harvest time.¹⁰⁷ Because the fence did not follow the border exactly, it also remained difficult for border officials on either side to stop smuggling completely. Because the Germans built the structure some metres from the border there was often a substantial stretch of Belgian territory on the Dutch side of the fence.

To improve the fence, the German authorities erected searchlights on their side so that potential escapees could be more easily captured.¹⁰⁸ In 1916, they also increased the height of the structure at several locations (especially along the Limburg border), placed a number of electric wires underground, and moved sections of the fence closer to the Netherlands.¹⁰⁹ The occupation administrators registered Belgian men between the age of 17 and 55, who had to report each month to their municipal council, so that the Germans could monitor the number of men leaving the country.¹¹⁰ By 1917, one grave concern involved the many thousands of German deserters who tried to escape to neutral territory. At one stage, the authorities suggested moving the fence 100 metres inland to catch deserters well before they were anywhere near the Netherlands,¹¹¹ a suggestion that proved too costly and time consuming to implement, but one that caused unease among military officials in the Netherlands¹¹² because it would have meant increasing the number of Dutch troops on guard duty along the southern frontier.

The fence allowed German authorities to monitor border traffic between the Netherlands and Belgium more easily. Nevertheless, it was a costly enterprise, with mixed results at best: while it deterred some, determined individuals continued to make unabashed use of the border. Yet the fence remained fully operational until the signing of the armistice, except for a few weeks in October 1918, when tens of thousands of refugees from northern France and southern Belgium entered the Netherlands with the approval of the German government.¹¹³ The Germans did not want refugees clogging roads in Belgium and preferred that they reach neutral soil

instead.¹¹⁴ The fence also offered many advantages for the maintenance of Dutch neutrality. Despite the hazards involved, it made prevention of smuggling in the south easier and kept spies from crossing the border as often as they might have otherwise. In other words, the electric fence was a neutral-friendly structure, albeit a highly lethal one.

Censorship and Public Opinion in the 'State of Siege'

Nations during the Great War sustained popular support for the war effort by policing the information that reached the people and censoring any damaging news or opinions. By controlling information in newspapers and magazines, it was hoped that public perceptions of the war could be altered or maintained and popular support for the war fostered.¹¹⁵ In the combatant nations, censorship was often severe, although, as Niall Ferguson has pointed out, the institutions that did the actual censoring were often inefficient.¹¹⁶ In the Netherlands, censorship did occur, but it involved completely different criteria. Whereas in warring countries, information about the relative strength and positions of armies, details of warfare, accounts of battles, and even reports on food shortages could be purged or altered, Dutch censorship existed to preserve neutrality. Newspapers could easily provide accounts of the operations of foreign armies, but could not pass judgement on the merits of each belligerent's war cause, or profess favour or disgust with the actions of one side or the other. They had to remain impartial. This was true of other neutral states as well. For example, the Swiss government felt obliged to suspend publication of some newspapers during the war and warned the public to refrain from proclaiming one's favour towards one or the other side.¹¹⁷

Early in August 1914, Queen Wilhelmina urged her subjects to remain entirely impartial in the war, a plea reiterated in posters circulated around the country.¹¹⁸ One 'state of siege' commander went so far as to demand that residents, including a number of Belgian refugees, not wear or display anything, from a humble tie pin to a large national flag, that might indicate allegiance to a belligerent.¹¹⁹ But enforcing impartiality was far from simple: all Dutch people had an opinion on the war and many chose sides.¹²⁰ The majority of Amsterdammers, for example, supported the Allies, while Rotterdammers had more sympathy for Germany.¹²¹ This had a lot to do with the focus of their trade: Amsterdam dealt mostly with exports destined for overseas markets (including Britain and its empire), while Rotterdam profited from Rhine traffic to and from Germany.¹²² As each set of the belligerents won or lost battles, breached Dutch neutrality, or committed supposed war crimes, the opinions of the population would fluctuate.

Newspaper editorials were an easy medium through which outsiders could gauge the opinions of a broad section of society and pounce on overtly 'unneutral' exclamations. The government was well aware that it had to prevent criticism of the warring sides from appearing in the press. In turn, the belligerents tried to harness the press and sway the Dutch to their cause.¹²³ Not only did the combatant governments actively influence publications, they also published their own magazines, pamphlets,

and posters propounding their views on the conflict, and circulated them widely.¹²⁴ Britain even established a propaganda bureau in the Netherlands in 1918, which the Germans suspected was used to get an *Entente*-friendly government elected.¹²⁵ Whether these propaganda campaigns had any lasting effect on changing public perceptions is highly questionable.¹²⁶ The Dutch government must have thought such campaigns had merit, however, because in 1918 it embarked on its own propaganda drive in the United States, distributing copies of Gustave Jaespers, *The Belgians in Holland* to sway opinion there in favour of its neutrality.¹²⁷

The Dutch press was censored, but not universally and never consistently. In August 1914, the government requested that editors of major newspapers refrain from endangering neutrality by praising or condemning any of the belligerents.¹²⁸ As a result, one Belgian author described the tone of the major Dutch newspapers as 'ash-grey with so-called neutrality'.¹²⁹ Yet the government could not, and did not, interfere heavily with the constitutionally recognised right to freedom of the press.¹³⁰ Only a 'state of siege' could overrule this jurisdiction. Nevertheless, the government occasionally took some action to curb overly anti-neutral opinions, especially in the anglophile *De Telegraaf*.¹³¹ The *Telegraaf's* editor-in-chief, J.D. Schröder, was arrested in November 1915 for writing an editorial that allegedly endangered neutrality, in which he portrayed Germans as 'unscrupulous villains' who had caused the war, and commended the Allies for protecting Europe and the Netherlands from the German threat.¹³² The courts acquitted Schröder, but he was arrested again less than a month later for another editorial in which he demonised the government for selling goods to the Germans with which the Central Powers prolonged their 'wrongful' war.¹³³ After another outpouring of public indignation, the courts again set Schröder free.¹³⁴ Throughout the war, the *Telegraaf* tended to be one of a handful of newspapers that were openly critical of the government and its neutrality policies.¹³⁵ For this reason, the military monitored the dealings of *Telegraaf* staff closely and found enough evidence to suggest strong links between its correspondents and French diplomatic circles.¹³⁶ While the government and the High Command kept a close eye on the *Telegraaf*, however, they did not take legal action against its editors again.¹³⁷

Occasionally, belligerents complained about overt bias in the Dutch press, and the government had to reproach certain publishers. For example, in February 1917, the 'state of siege' authorities ensured that the *Limburgsche Koerier* did not print any more advertisements for smuggled goods, after the French legation in The Hague complained that this was potentially a violation of Dutch neutrality.¹³⁸ Germany, in turn, was very concerned about Dutch artist, Louis Raemaekers' anti-German drawings, paintings, and cartoons. The *Telegraaf* published a number of Raemaekers' prints, and Raemaeker himself published many others independently.¹³⁹ The prints were readily available throughout the Netherlands and Allied countries.¹⁴⁰ On several occasions, the German Minister in The Hague urged the Dutch Foreign Minister, John Loudon, to censor Raemaekers' work.¹⁴¹ Loudon responded by requesting that Raemaekers and the editors of the *Telegraaf* temper the content of their cartoons – a request they ignored. Loudon also informed his German colleague that there was little the government could do, even had it wanted to, as the large degree of free-

Illustration 9: Louis Raemaekers, 'Ain't I a loveable fellow?'



One of Raemaekers' many prints that incensed the German authorities, this one depicting Germany as a brutal soldier holding poor, defenceless, yet resolute, Belgium hostage.

dom enjoyed by the press was constitutionally sanctioned. He did reassure this diplomat that the Minister of Justice had investigated Raemaekers and was absolutely certain that the Allies had not funded his work.¹⁴² Nevertheless, German pressure had some effect. In September 1915, the municipal council of The Hague ordered that books and prints published by Raemaekers and other cartoonists critical of the war could not appear in shop windows, nor be advertised publicly, if representatives of warring states might construe them as offensive.¹⁴³ This was a clear concession to the many foreign diplomats and embassies in the Dutch administrative capital. For a similar reason, namely to avoid alienating Belgian officials, Bosboom requested that Snijders instruct officers not to praise Germany in public: apparently some Belgian refugees overheard such praise and had complained.¹⁴⁴

During the 'state of siege', military commanders could directly censor printed matter.¹⁴⁵ As a result, it was much easier for them to forbid the publication, sale, and circulation of dubious publications than it was for the government.¹⁴⁶ They duly

took action against Raemaekers.¹⁴⁷ One commander even refused to let the cartoonist visit his district, citing him as a ‘threat to security’.¹⁴⁸ In reality, commanders rarely used this power to remove objectionable publications from the marketplace. They were more likely to warn publishers that certain articles were unacceptable and request rectification, threatening a possible ban if publishers did not comply.¹⁴⁹ Sometimes commanders punished newspapers more severely. For example, Van Terwisga banned the *Eindhovensche Dagblad* for a week in August 1917, because it condemned Germany for its U-boat offensives.¹⁵⁰ Around the country, people were incensed at Van Terwisga’s action, and after four days of correspondence with Snijders and the Minister of War, the commander removed the publication ban.¹⁵¹ The *Eindhovensche Dagblad* incident highlights the lack of consistency in the censorship efforts, as individual commanders censored according to their own standards. A particular article that was refused publication in one ‘state of siege’ municipality might be printed in another.¹⁵² It also demonstrates how public opinion could affect change. Publishers soon learned that civilian authorities censored publications infrequently (because they had little authority to do so), and that the ‘state of siege’ could be easily circumvented. Nevertheless, commanders did prevent a number of Belgian newspapers and pamphlets presenting strong anti-German opinions from circulating in the southern border regions and inside the refugee and internment camps.¹⁵³

The censorship inconsistencies in the Netherlands generated anxieties among the High Command. At one stage in 1915, Snijder suggested implementing more universally applicable censorship standards. Cabinet ministers felt this was unnecessary, however, at least until the country also joined the war, since there was little chance that the belligerents would interpret an ‘unneutral’ newspaper article as truly threatening.¹⁵⁴ In fact, because the Netherlands maintained a relatively ‘free’ press it offered combatants the opportunity to glean as much information about their enemies as possible simply by reading Dutch newspapers. The Dutch themselves were also very well informed about what was happening, perhaps much more so than their warring counterparts, since in the warring states censorship was far more restrictive.¹⁵⁵ The contrast between access to information for citizens of warring versus neutral countries is clearly evident from the fact that Dutch newspapers were heavily edited before being circulated in Britain, France, and Germany.¹⁵⁶ Germany, for example, carefully censored Dutch newspapers, including the generally pro-German *Vaderland*, before they were sold in Belgium. When the Germans were doing badly in the war, they removed Dutch newspapers from sale altogether.¹⁵⁷ Even before Germany occupied most of Belgium, the Belgian government explained to the Dutch government that it had to censor certain newspapers, such as the *Nieuw Rotterdamsche Courant*, because a number of its articles describing German victories angered its citizens. The Belgians even suggested that Dutch publishers should remove objectionable articles from newspapers sold abroad.¹⁵⁸

In ‘state of siege’ districts, the military exercised another form of censorship as well, over the telephone, telegraph, and via written communications.¹⁵⁹ Officers stationed at telegraph and telephone stations, local post offices, and in the main postal centres of Roosendaal and Vlissingen checked mail leaving and entering the coun-

try.¹⁶⁰ They had the right to listen to or open any communication that passed through their hands and looked explicitly for anti-neutral or treasonous information. Despite the fact that very few letters were censored, the public objected strongly to the idea that ordinary soldiers could read their private correspondence. As a result, Snijders told his subordinates in November 1914 not to open any mail sent within the Netherlands, and the following January instructed them to only open suspicious letters and to be sure to stamp censored communications.¹⁶¹ In December 1916, Snijders reiterated that censorship of mail should only happen with post entering or leaving the country, or if it seemed highly suspicious. In order to avoid agitating public opinion, internal mail was left alone.¹⁶² At any rate, the volume of post entering and leaving the country was far too great to be dealt with effectively. As a result, in June 1917, the Roosendaal and Vlissingen offices had their operations curtailed. Vlissingen closed down completely, while Roosendaal operated with a smaller staff.¹⁶³ Van Terwisga decided that officers would instead travel around to the various towns and villages in the south and do random mail checks. He did not mention limiting censorship to foreign mail only, which seems to imply that by mid-1917, censorship was extended to letters sent within the Netherlands as well, perhaps to monitor potential smuggling. At the same time, the commander decided that troops would be assigned to postal trains, they could open mail while the trains travelled through a 'state of siege' area, another indication that postal censorship had actually increased.¹⁶⁴

In direct contrast to mail censorship, military control over telegram and telephone communications did not cause undue public concern, probably because few people owned a telephone or sent telegrams. In the end, telephone censorship affected businesses more than individuals. Like the issue of mail censorship, officers who listened to telephone conversations had to do so with extreme discretion, and without divulging any details to others. Surveillance of telephone communications became a useful way for the armed forces to monitor would-be smugglers and suspected spies.¹⁶⁵ The right to monitor telephone conversations also enabled the military to supervise the movements and actions of journalists. For example, in March 1918, a *De Telegraaf* correspondent in Amsterdam had his home telephone conversations monitored as well as those he made from a local café.¹⁶⁶ By this stage, the potential damage rendered by *De Telegraaf* journalists, given their reputed links to the Allies, was widely appreciated. In March 1918, at a time when the country was on the verge of war due to German pressure over the sand and gravel issue, the government believed it was essential to know what *De Telegraaf* was intending to publish and, if possible, persuade it in time to temper its anti-German comments.

Public Order and Control

Alongside defence, anti-smuggling measures, censorship, and tracing the movement of foreigners or spies, military authorities also used their wide-ranging 'state of siege' powers to manage public order. Articles 25 and 28 of the War Law gave the armed forces jurisdiction to regulate opening hours for bars and cafés, authorise agendas

for public meetings, and decide whether or not public festivities, such as fairs and carnivals, would be held.¹⁶⁷ If the link between 'state of siege' and smuggling controls existed on tenuous grounds, the connection between public order and the imposition of the 'state of siege' was even less obvious to residents. Few people could comprehend why the armed forces should have the right to interfere in their lives, when this interference seemed to have very little to do with defence, neutrality or, for that matter, smuggling. More often than not, this type of 'state of siege' regulation was introduced after lengthy consultation with the municipal authorities. At any rate, there were numerous compelling reasons for military control over public safety. For example, limitations on the sale of liquor helped keep soldiers sober. Early closing times for public establishments also ensured that potential smugglers had no excuse to be outdoors. This was also true during the refugee crisis in October 1914, when it was important to keep foreigners sober and avoid clashes with locals, especially in over-crowded towns. After October 1914, commanders found other reasons for closing taverns early, usually with an eye to avoiding brawls and disturbances.¹⁶⁸

In August 1914, municipal authorities throughout the country cancelled fairs and carnivals, a ban that remained in place almost nation-wide throughout 1915 by order of 'state of siege' authorities. The Commander in Den Helder forbade the annual fair in March 1915, on the grounds that it might lead to possible tensions between soldiers and sailors.¹⁶⁹ During 1917, many fairs and carnivals resumed, except within five kilometres of the border or in places where troops resided.¹⁷⁰ In the 'state of siege' along the border, Van Terwisga actually forbade locals from wearing fancy costumes or masks during carnival days.¹⁷¹ During the course of 1918, by which stage the military authorities had no say in the matter, municipal councils continued to cancel certain festivities. For example, early in April 1918, in the midst of the sand and gravel crisis, the Dordrecht city council decided to not hold a fair that spring because the possibility of war loomed large.¹⁷²

In most 'state of siege' communities, every congregation had to also be authorised by the military authorities except when it came to religious services. Commanders even decided the fate of birthday parties, concerts, cinema screenings, and theatre productions.¹⁷³ On the whole, they only prevented public assemblies when speakers threatened to broach topics relating to defence, the monarchy, neutrality, anti-militarism, or if they intended to take strong anarchic or revolutionary stands. Hence, in July 1916, a women's suffrage meeting went ahead unhindered in Alkmaar (although the local commander had prohibited similar meetings earlier).¹⁷⁴ Two months later, the same commander rejected a proposed parade of the Socialist Democratic Party (*Sociaal-Democratische Partij*, SDP) in Groningen, on the grounds that the SDP was renowned for its extremist and anti-militaristic opinions.¹⁷⁵

On several occasions, commanders prohibited entry into a 'state of siege' by particular individuals with a reputation for anti-military opinions. One preacher, R. de Jong, travelled round North Brabant in August and September 1914 to meet soldiers and advocate non-violence. The Commander of Field Army Division III prohibited his presence in 'state of siege' regions where troops were billeted, for fear he would

infect their minds with pacifist thoughts.¹⁷⁶ In 1915, another preacher in Schoterland was removed from his 'state of siege' parish because he preached on the evils of war and militarism. The military authorities eventually let him return on the condition that he not address these topics again.¹⁷⁷ More dramatically, the Commander of Division Group 'Brabant', removed Neerpelt's mayor from the 'state of siege' in August 1915, because he had supposedly endangered neutrality by spreading false rumours to foreign diplomats about the interaction of Dutch and German soldiers patrolling the border.¹⁷⁸ Parliamentarians were duly concerned about the amount of power the armed forces had to stop speeches and political meetings from taking place during a 'state of siege'.¹⁷⁹ In 1914 and early 1915, political party members complained to the Minister of War that they were not allowed to address their constituents because commanders refused to approve their meetings.¹⁸⁰ Bosboom asked Snijders to insist that his subordinates showed more leniency.¹⁸¹ By 1918, commanders only banned meetings organised by the more radical socialist parties and the trade unions. Nevertheless, freedom of speech and the right to congregate became contentious again in the lead-up to the general elections in 1918. To woo voters, political hopefuls believed it was absolutely necessary to have unlimited access to them. In the end, after considerable discussion with the government, Snijders asked his commanders to allow political meetings to go on unhindered during the campaign, except for those that were clearly offensive to the country, its neutrality, or the queen.¹⁸²

The Success of the 'State of Siege'

The 'state of siege' provided a useful means to exact appropriate behaviour from citizens and, furthermore, presented an image of strict neutrality to the outside world. Stijn Streuvels' description 'ash-grey with so-called neutrality'¹⁸³ was exactly the stereotype that the neutral government hoped its citizens would assume. But in reality, the government was unable to totally prevent its subjects from endangering internal neutrality. Smuggling continued unabated for most of the war; censorship was haphazard and inconsistent; and the country was used for all manner of clandestine information-gathering activities. Attempts at tightening controls over internal neutrality through the 'state of siege' were difficult, not only because of the dubious legality of some of the military regulations, but also because the public did not appreciate military interference in their lives. Because the Netherlands was officially 'at peace', reconciling neutrality with extraordinary military jurisdiction did not sit well with civilians, which offers one of the most convincing arguments for why the 'state of war' and 'state of siege' had such varied history of success. The Dutch would accept certain actions begrudgingly from the military authorities and the government, while others they simply would not. Yet, given that 75 per cent of the country experienced some form of military intervention during the war, the impact of the 'state of war' and 'state of siege' was far from negligible. In fact, especially through the implementation of the 'state of siege' civilians were more restricted in their activities than at any previous peacetime juncture. To varying degrees, the military authorities limited their freedom of speech, movement, and assembly. Even when the High Court

restricted 'state of siege' jurisdictions in the latter stages of the war, commanders exercised an extraordinary amount of control over the running of municipalities and the day-to-day affairs of individuals.

Chapter

9

The War for Bread and Guns: Supply and the Fate of a Small Nation

What use are the best fortifications, what use are the most beautiful defences, when the army that stands behind them is short of everything?

– Anonymous (1918)¹

The duty of any armed force is to prepare itself for a military invasion. The complicating factor in the Dutch strategic directives of 1911 and 1913 was that the armed forces were to protect the country's neutrality alongside maintaining the best defences. Obviously, in 1914, they mobilised with both ends in mind.² However, the war would prove that armed defence and armed neutrality were incompatible strategies. Rather than maximising the security of the nation, the needs of neutrality overshadowed the equally pressing demands of defence and, ultimately, witnessed the decline of the country's defence capabilities. By the close of war in November 1918, the armed forces were comparatively worse off, in relation to their warring counterparts, than they had been in August 1914. This is not to suggest that pre-war mobilisation strategies were faulty, nor to argue that the Dutch army, navy, and air branch were well prepared for war in 1914; to the contrary. But the soldiers, sailors, and pilots that demobilised in 1919 were part of a military that had not modernised or developed as ably as its neighbours. The country's non-participation in the war sealed its fate as a small country with limited military resources.

During the Great War, while the belligerents directed all available funds toward the production of war goods, developing technological advances, and supplying their troops, neutral countries like the Netherlands were placed in an unenviable position. How were they going to emulate the improvements made in the quality of combatants' war materials and size of their armies? Most of the European neutrals did not have the industrial capacity, raw materials, or revenue to keep up with developments in the warring states. At the same time, the war hampered supplies reaching them from abroad. The war found the Netherlands severely disadvantaged. Its neutrality depended on its ability to remain a non-belligerent, but without joining in the conflict, its armed forces had great difficulty obtaining weaponry of adequate quality and quantity. The country's neutrality became less viable as the means employed to enhance its defence became obsolete and the supplies needed to ensure its security dwindled. As Amry Vandenbosch described the predicament:

A small state... is unable to contend in war with the great powers on anything like equal terms. Unfortunately for the small states, their relative military strength has progressively declined during the past century, and very sharply since World War I, as only large industrial countries can afford the new types of armaments. Their military weakness made them diplomatically weak.³

Military Supply

As a small nation with a small army and an even smaller navy, which were no match for the military might of Great Britain, France, or Germany, Dutch military strategy revolved around maximising its nuisance value. Already in 1914, if it came to a concerted attack by one of its powerful neighbours, the Dutch armed forces had little chance of survival – they simply were not large or strong enough. Instead, the High Command relied on the expectation that a campaign in the Netherlands would be peripheral, and in that case, hoped that improving and enlarging its armed forces would increase their deterrence value, thereby discouraging potential invaders. To this end, the High Command maximised one major advantage of the war as it unfolded: the combatants fought on many fronts and could not concentrate their might in one direction. In the words of one Dutch historian,

the importance of the Dutch armed forces was such in 1914 that, if we had been involved in the conflict, they [the troops] would have accounted for more than the *difference in strength* [krachtsverschil] between the warring great powers.⁴

However, upholding the *krachtsverschil* between the two warring sides proved to be a futile objective. By 1918, the comparative strength of the Dutch army and navy in relation to that of the belligerents had fallen well below the 1914 standard.

The quality and quantity of two vital weapons employed on the western front, namely the machine-gun and artillery piece, illustrate how rapidly the defensive capabilities of the Dutch army declined. Of the 780 machine-guns in the Netherlands in August 1914, only 156 met the requirements of a modern land force.⁵ Yet, at the outbreak of war, the army was operating similar numbers per soldier as the belligerents: for example, the one gun to 256 Dutch troops (1:256) ratio was much better than the 1:625 ratio in the French army, although nothing like the 1:100 allocation in the British Expeditionary Force.⁶ By 1918, Britain was operating four times as many machine-guns per battalion as it had in 1914, while Germany increased its numbers from 24 to 358 per division. France had the most staggering expansion of all, rising from a mere 2,158 in front-line service in September 1914 to 66,000 by the end of the war.⁷ By comparison, in 1918, the Netherlands' owned 1,101 machine-guns, including the outdated 1914 models, to outfit an army that had doubled in size.⁸ If all of its troops were recalled from leave (around 400,000 men), it would be operating fewer guns per soldier than it had at the outbreak of the conflict, namely one for every 363 men.

The state of the artillery proved even more abysmal. At the start of the war, much

of the available artillery already needed replacing, it being severely limited in range and mobility. The sacking of Liège and Antwerp by the German armies that year further highlighted the importance of improving fortification artillery. While the belligerents constantly developed the calibre and mobility of their artillery and increased their numbers significantly,⁹ the Dutch only managed to add sixteen 12 cm howitzers, two 15 cm howitzers, and a couple of anti-aircraft guns to their armoury, barely enough to add two light guns to each field army howitzer section.¹⁰ By 1918, most Dutch artillery was completely outclassed. The High Command did its best, however, by transporting all but the oldest or immovable pieces out of fixed positions, transforming some into mobile weapons, and stationing others beside or in front of the fortifications. This process left many forts functioning as infantry positions only.¹¹ France did something very similar late in 1914. Expecting a highly mobile war, it had few heavy artillery guns; instead, it moved appropriate artillery out of fortifications and into the trenches on the western front.¹²

It was not through lack of trying that the Netherlands was unable to modernise and expand its technological capacity at the rate of its warring neighbours. To facilitate improvements to guns, increase their numbers, as well as maintain ammunition supplies, a Munitions Bureau was created early in 1915 with the aim of increasing production and importing weapons and munitions. While some improvements were evident, the Munitions Bureau could not alleviate the basic problems in supply. Before the war, most weaponry and the shells, bullets, and projectiles fired from them came from abroad. The German Krupps factories supplied most of the artillery and shells, while the army's preferred machine-guns (*Schwarzlose*) were made in Austria-Hungary.¹³ Other materials came regularly from Schneider suppliers in France, Skoda factories in Austria-Hungary, and the Armstrong industrial works in Britain.¹⁴ During the war, the Munitions Bureau consistently tried to order artillery and machine-guns from these suppliers, but with only limited success.¹⁵ Occasionally orders were filled, including a few howitzers from Germany, two anti-aircraft guns from Britain, and several machine-guns from Austria-Hungary.¹⁶ As an alternative, the Bureau looked to other neutral countries for help, setting up a satellite office in New York in February 1915, as well as making regular contact with munitions factories in Denmark and Sweden.¹⁷ It was handicapped in its pursuit of armaments contracts by the relatively small size of its orders.¹⁸ Even when orders were filled, it became increasingly difficult to transport them to the Netherlands as the belligerents seized armaments as contraband.¹⁹ U-boat action in and around the North Sea made deliveries of supplies perilous, with the result that a significant amount of useful materials lay idle in foreign ports.²⁰ Nevertheless, Sweden and Denmark were helpful, providing the Netherlands with 12 cm howitzers, aeroplane engines, steel, and other metals.²¹

The Netherlands did not support a large armaments industry, nor did it have the raw materials that could form the basis of one. The military production facility at Hembrug (near Amsterdam) did make rifles, bullets, cartridges, and other equipment. Hembrug's productivity increased during the war, its facilities were extended, and the number of workers grew.²² The Hembrug factories manufactured a steady

supply of rifles to meet the needs of new conscripts and *landstorm* recruits, producing a total of 155,000 rifles by August 1917, a welcome addition to the 1914 stock of 234,000.²³ Nevertheless, continual shortages forced manufacturing processes to change. For example, by 1917, many of the rifles' rubber components were made from old bicycle tyres, while its wooden frames were hewn from local walnut trees. Unused railway tracks were converted into steel for gun production as well.²⁴ Although Hembrug maintained a reasonable production capacity of 40 million rifle and machine-gun cartridges per year, it was not quite enough to meet the estimated minimum requirement of 50,000 rounds per machine-gun and 400 rounds per rifle, in addition to 20 to 25 million bullets expended annually in training exercises.²⁵ Even a small increase in machine-gun numbers demanded a much higher production of suitable ammunition, an extremely difficult task when copper and nickel stocks dwindled in 1917 and 1918.²⁶ The lack of raw materials, problems in maintaining and increasing supplies of artillery shells, and the impact of sea mines and torpedoes on the shipment of vital goods plagued the munitions industry throughout the war.²⁷

Fabrication of the larger weapons – machine-guns, artillery, and anti-aircraft guns – was a real problem for the Hembrug facilities and associated Artillery Works (*Artillerie Inrichtingen*) in Delft. Hembrug built a total of eight 12 cm howitzers by 1918 but, in general, its engineers had neither the expertise nor the machinery available to build them from scratch.²⁸ This situation highlights how disadvantaged the Dutch armed forces were. Late in 1917, the factory began manufacturing machine-guns, but had only produced 50 by March 1918.²⁹ While the Delft works had little trouble manufacturing 29,973 bayonets and 261,557 hand grenades during 1917, it built only one grenade thrower and 22 machine-guns in this same period.³⁰ In 1918, the Delft works accepted an order for 150 replicas of a Lewis machine-gun attached to one of the British aeroplanes interned in the country, but did not have any in working condition by the war's end.³¹ The major impediments to increasing production were thus not only a ready supply of raw materials, but also basic manufacturing components and the fuels necessary to power factory machinery.

Another pressing concern for the High Command was the quality of fortifications. Many, in fact, were converted to infantry positions due to the lack of artillery to protect them and funding to upgrade them. The immediate threat of war passed in August 1914, and so too did the urgency to improve the fortified positions. It took months (instead of days or weeks) to clear necessary houses and trees in inundation areas.³² Transferring *landweer* troops from the fortifications to the borders, a practice started in Amsterdam on 4 August 1914 and continued throughout the war,³³ weakened the strength of the fortifications further. By 1918, a government Commission of Inquiry questioned whether or not, given the many problems with the fortifications and especially the shortage of heavy artillery, they had any useful role (apart from functioning as inundation lines) to play in modern warfare at all.³⁴

The Chiefs of Naval Staff, like their army colleagues, also recognised that there was an urgent need to maintain technological parity with the belligerent navies, but wartime funding was never sufficient. As early as May 1915, Rambonnet and his colleague the Minister of Colonies, Th.B. Pleyte, warned their cabinet colleagues that

if the navy was not improved it would soon become obsolete.³⁵ While the ship building capabilities of the nation were considerable, the lack of raw materials and shortage of naval armaments ensured that few advances were made in this field. Dockyards managed to assemble four torpedo boats for service within Dutch waters, and two cruisers, which sailed for the Indies in 1915.³⁶ Two of the three cruisers stationed in the Netherlands at the start of the war transferred to colonial ports in 1916 and 1917 as well.³⁷ Several submersibles, including five new vessels, also relocated to the Indies.³⁸ As a result, the purchase of two interned submersibles, one British, the other German, was extremely significant.³⁹ Nevertheless, by 1918, the majority of the navy's most important ships were based in or were *en route* to the East and West Indies. At home, the service had become too antiquated for almost every serious defensive role except the laying and sweeping of mines, reconnaissance patrols, and the search and visit of ships.⁴⁰

For the belligerents, the Great War proved a catalyst for innovation. Trench warfare led to the creation of new weapons, including gas shells and tanks; new ways of using and improving existing weaponry, including heavy artillery, machine-guns and hand grenades; and new methods of minimising the impact of enemy weaponry. Apart from replacing, improving, and adding to existing stockpiles, the Dutch tried to develop these new weapons of warfare and frame countermeasures to combat them as well. For example, the trenches made grenades an essential part of a soldier's fighting outfit. In 1914, the Netherlands had a small number of hand grenades in stock (around 195,000, equivalent to about one grenade per soldier).⁴¹ Yet, it was almost three years later that the High Command deemed it feasible for local industry to manufacture grenades. Production began in October 1917 and within twelve months the military possessed 620,000 grenades while awaiting another million from orders placed with foreign suppliers.⁴² Nevertheless, when fully mobilised, the army could only allocate two grenades per soldier and production levels within the country could not sustain widespread usage.

Steel helmets, another necessity for trench-line fighting, caused further problems for Dutch military planners due to a marked shortage of steel. By April 1918, only one steel helmet was available for every 40 soldiers.⁴³ The Delft factories had managed to produce a paltry 6,000 helmets in twelve months.⁴⁴ The advent of chemical warfare in 1915 made the issuing of gas masks to frontline soldiers urgent. The Dutch had enough difficulties obtaining masks, let alone replacing existing ones, to counter the effects of new gasses.⁴⁵ By April 1918, eighty soldiers were sharing one mask,⁴⁶ although by November of that year, the total available amounted to 50,000 old-style and 200,000 new masks. This was enough for troops in the field at the time, but far from sufficient to outfit every soldier if it came to a full mobilisation.⁴⁷ The army also lacked numerous other items required by a modern fighting force including telegraph wire, communications equipment, engineering tools, and spades.⁴⁸

Snijders avidly encouraged military designers to experiment with and create their own versions of the latest technology on deadly show at the western front.⁴⁹ The government made *f*400,000 available in May 1916 for the chemical industry to carry

out tests for effective military uses of toxic gas.⁵⁰ By late 1918, it had produced 380 tonnes of asphyxiating gasses, and owned 21 receptacles to distribute the deadly poison.⁵¹ In this area, perhaps more than any other, the Dutch could have found a useful deterrent to attack, if only it could have produced enough masks to protect its own soldiers from the poison. Engineers carefully studied interned equipment, weapons and aeroplanes, and, where possible, replicated them. In keeping with advances in aerial warfare, the air branch even tested and manufactured aeroplane bombs, although it did not produce enough to be of use in a wartime situation.⁵² Military designers invented special camouflage tents to reduce the visibility of troop concentrations from the air.⁵³ However, the Dutch simply did not have the industrial capacity or resources to build tanks, nor were they able to increase the calibre and range of their artillery significantly.

The army bore the brunt of many jokes for its supply inadequacies. Gas mask and steel helmet shortages proved particularly easy targets. Nonetheless, the comedy highlighted a fundamentally serious message: the Netherlands, like so many small nations without a strong industrial capacity, could not keep up with the military productivity of the big powers. As a result, its defence capabilities eroded and the feasibility of its neutrality plummeted in tandem. It warranted a serious warning from Snijders to cabinet ministers in December 1916:

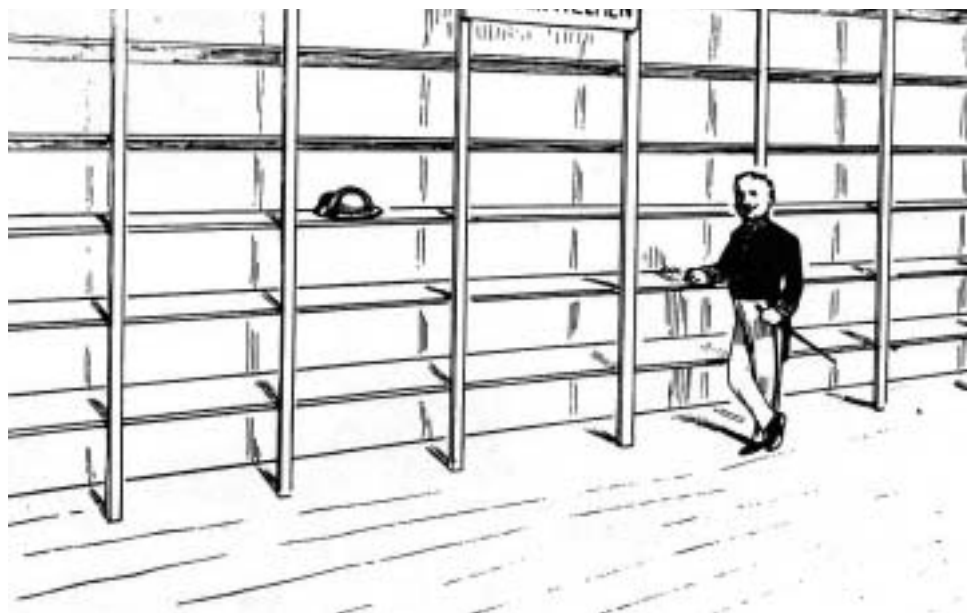
The supply of our army with war material is at present, 29 months after the mobilisation, still largely unsatisfactory and will, if the Netherlands is pulled into the war, lead to great disappointment, yes, almost certainly, to disasters.⁵⁴

By staying out of the war, the armed forces had lost any chance of staying competitive, which would be disastrous if they were ever dragged into the conflict.

Notwithstanding many difficulties and inadequacies, the High Command did its utmost to keep the military properly supplied and equipped.⁵⁵ Snijders even asked the government to centralise the supervision of military production, including the Munitions Bureau, Hembrug and Delft factories, and testing facilities, in a new cabinet portfolio: the Ministry of War Materials.⁵⁶ The Ministry could, so Snijders hoped, liaise with private and state-owned industry to ensure military requirements were met and orders filled. One serious failing identified by both Snijders and a cabinet enquiry in 1918 was that little co-operation existed between the various bureaucracies, industries, and the armed forces to ensure a direct link between supply and demand.⁵⁷ This made an extremely difficult situation even more problematic. The Ministry of War Materials was never created, for reasons left unclear by the sources.

The High Command did adapt field tactics to developments on the war fronts and modernised the army's structure and organisation. Throughout the war, small delegations of high-ranking Dutch officers visited the western front. In 1915, Germany invited a delegation for such a visit.⁵⁸ In December 1916, France and Britain followed suit, and in January 1917, Belgium issued a similar invitation.⁵⁹ In June 1916, for the first time, the government appointed military attachés to the major European capitals, including Bern.⁶⁰ Information gathered during these trips inspired

Illustration 10: The stock of steel helmets



This cartoon, which appeared in *De Roskam* in June 1916, jests with Minister of War Nicolaas Bosboom's statement that 'the stock of steel helmets is not quite satisfactory'.

Snijders to experiment with different military formations, including specialist 'storm troops' (*stormtroepen*), who undertook small-scale operations in dangerous conditions.⁶¹ The value of properly supported trenches became a priority as well, resulting in greater emphasis on pioneer troops, imitating German trenches, and experimenting with concrete bunkers in and around Utrecht.⁶² Developments in aerial warfare also inspired the creation of a *luchtafweerafdeling* (air defence section), which made maximum use of the few anti-aircraft guns available.⁶³ Likewise, in 1916, the use of new infantry mortar bombs by the combatants, resulted in the High Command implementing plans for improving fortification and trench defences against such a threat.⁶⁴

Reluctant Funding

Part of the supply problem was financial. While the government's monetary commitment to the mobilisation was high, it was not infinite. It could not allocate the same resources to its military as the belligerents did with their unlimited budgets, even though it meant they had to borrow heavily. While the Netherlands was not at war, its parliament would prove recalcitrant in allocating anywhere near the same funding to the country's military commitments, since it implied potential financial bankruptcy.⁶⁵ At any rate, the annual budget was stretched as it was, especially in

1917 and 1918, when the domestic economy slowed down and external trade came to a virtual standstill. The government recognised the armed forces as a funding priority but not the only priority, it ranked alongside many other extraordinary wartime costs, such as paying for distribution and rationing measures or supporting refugees and internees. In fact, government deficits rose substantially during the war, so much so that by 1918 the national deficit accounted for 13.5 per cent of GDP, where in 1913 it had stood at 0.1 per cent of GDP.⁶⁶ Even with the introduction of extraordinary taxes, state expenditures exceeded revenue by a f150 million in 1917 and a phenomenal one billion guilders in 1918.⁶⁷ The state borrowed heavily from the public and from foreign lenders, acquiring a contracted debt of more than one billion guilders by war's end.⁶⁸ More than half of this crisis expenditure went towards the costs of mobilisation, while the rest was spent on trade and distribution measures.⁶⁹ P.H. Ritter estimated that keeping the armed forces mobilised cost (by 1917) f25 million a month.⁷⁰ The cost of soldiers' wages alone accounted for f150 million over the four war years.⁷¹ But it was not only a case of extraordinary costs spiralling out of control, ordinary spending also caused problems for the government. In March 1916, the Minister of Finance, E.J. Bertling, warned the cabinet that aside from the extraordinary costs of the war, the country was f20 million short of its normal budget.⁷²

Hence, the High Command's requests for more funding to improve defences were only partially met. On 14 June 1917, for example, the Minister in Charge of the Navy, J.J. Rambonnet, and Minister of War, B.C. de Jonge, asked Snijders to begin work on improving Fortress Holland to the standard of fortifications in the north of France. Snijders responded with an estimation of the costs involved, which he conservatively set at f250 million. The government could not afford anywhere near this sum: it authorised f9 million immediately for reinforcement work, and budgeted another f33 million for completion of the project. From the start, the project had a shortfall of f208 million. Yet even the improvements that were supposed to be made on Fortress Holland were hindered by a lack of raw materials and, more importantly, were of little use without modern artillery to defend them.⁷³ In other words, funding alone did not solve the Netherlands defence concerns. Without appropriate sources of supplies, the armed forces could not improve their defensive value by much.

Neutrality and Deterrence

The most striking impact of the lack of funding and military supply was on the deterrence value of the armed forces. Deterrence was a negative neutrality policy.⁷⁴ Neutrals used deterrence to dissuade warring states from invading on the grounds that the associated costs, whether military, economic, or diplomatic, would be too great. It can be contrasted to positive neutrality strategies that emphasised the advantages of respecting neutrality, rather than the disadvantages of rejecting it. The benefit of armed deterrence was that it could be implemented in peacetime, as an 'anticipatory effect of neutrality',⁷⁵ and was based on outsiders' perceptions of a neutral's military strength and potential. Prior to 1914, deterrence played a key role in the Nether-

lands' neutrality policy. Its mobilisation in August of that year, for example, clearly advertised the country as militarily strong and prepared for war. Of course, the challenge was to maintain that image, which required a dedicated commitment to defence and military supply. Without capable and properly equipped troops as well as appropriately defended fortified positions, the deterrence value of Dutch neutrality would disappear.

The importance of deterrence for the preservation of Dutch non-belligerency is best illustrated by Helmuth von Moltke's *volte face* in 1909, when he decided that in a future conflict involving Germany and France, German armies would respect the independence and sovereignty of the Netherlands. In the 1920s, Snijders wrote about the *afschrikkend* (deterrence) value of mobilising early in drafts of his commentaries on the war. He asserted that Germany did not cross through Limburg in August 1914 because it would have tied up too many German troops in the Netherlands, thereby taking them away from the main thrust through Belgium towards France.⁷⁶ Nicolaas Bosboom echoed this thought in his memoirs as well:

The possibility of being suspected or accused of having war aims could not stop us [from mobilising]. The power that thought about breaching our territory [Germany] should know and be actually convinced that with any attempt to that end it would find our army on or in its way, that as an almost inevitable consequence it would remove a part of its army from its main strategic goal and would cause delays in its advance.⁷⁷

Both Snijders and Bosboom correctly interpreted a part of Germany's motivation for avoiding Limburg. Von Moltke had given two reasons to alter the Schlieffen Plan: to allow a larger military thrust through Belgium and to use the Netherlands as a supply route for German industry and trade. The neutral Netherlands was to provide the *Luftrohre* (breathing space) for the German economy when an enemy (most probably Britain) blockaded German ports.⁷⁸

In August 1914, the German General Staff, headed by Von Moltke, deployed its armies according to the revised Schlieffen Plan and avoided Limburg. But once most of Belgium was conquered and the combatant armies became bogged down in the trenches of the western front during the winter of 1914-1915, economic reasons played a greater role in persuading Germany to respect Dutch neutrality than the Dutch armed forces. The Netherlands, as a source of supplies, was so important to break the Allied blockade that it outweighed any strategic advantages of capturing Dutch territory. It is important to note that once the economic benefits offered by Dutch neutrality declined (in 1917 and 1918), Germany had fewer qualms about pressuring the Netherlands and threatening it with military intervention.

Nevertheless, both Germany and Great Britain accommodated Dutch deterrence measures when and where it helped to discourage its respective enemy from invading or capturing the neutral. As we have seen, the ability of the Dutch armed forces to withstand an attack had decreased significantly, and by 1917, it was patently obvious that they could not keep up with the technological advances made by the warring armies. The military was becoming more out-dated by the month. As a conse-

quence, it would have been easier for Britain or Germany to invade the Netherlands in 1917 than in 1914, even though the 1914 mobilisation was far from perfect and in 1917 twice as many Dutch troops could be deployed.⁷⁹ Britain and Germany were also well aware of the declining effectiveness of the Dutch defences. Although, as Hubert van Tuyl rightly pointed out, the size of the army, at least on paper, increased from 200,000 to over 400,000 troops by 1918, giving an impression of strength,⁸⁰ neither belligerent was under any illusions about the capability of Dutch equipment, ammunition, or weaponry to withstand a concerted onslaught. That the Allied and Central Powers both supplied military equipment to the Netherlands during 1917 and 1918, which they had been loathe to do in the previous war years, shows that they hoped to increase the chances of the country resisting attack.

Occasionally, the belligerents supplied the Dutch for more pressing reasons. For example, Germany offered the Netherlands a few anti-aircraft guns in the summer of 1918, after having expressed its disgust at the lack of action taken against British transgressions of Dutch airspace. At one stage during the negotiations, German diplomats suggested that Dutch border troops co-ordinate attempts to shoot down the Allied planes with their German counterparts on the other side of the border.⁸¹ Snijders graciously accepted the guns, although he refused any cross-frontier collaboration if it meant his men could not shoot at German aircraft as well. British officials also believed that it was desirable to supply the Netherlands with anti-aircraft guns, in an effort to encourage the Dutch to shoot down German Zeppelins *en route* for Britain. In February 1917, they considered sending a shipment of six guns.⁸² Like the German offer a year later, the guns were vital for their given role (preventing belligerent aircraft from crossing the Netherlands to bomb enemy territory), since the Dutch army was desperately short of anti-aircraft weaponry and ammunition.

Britain's interest in strengthening the Netherlands' armed forces became more of a concern in 1918. The Northern Neutrals' Committee, a high-level group responsible for dealing with the Scandinavian neutrals and the Netherlands, considered a request from the Dutch government in late December 1917 for artillery, ammunition, gas shells, machine-guns, box respirators, searchlights, and hand grenades.⁸³ These supplies formed part of Scheme 'S', a British plan to send reinforcements to the Netherlands in case Germany invaded the Schelde area. In January 1918, the Committee authorised the creation of a brigade stationed permanently in Britain until it was needed for the implementation of Scheme 'S'.⁸⁴ The following May, British military attachés arrived in The Hague for a secret meeting with Dutch military representatives.⁸⁵ This was not a diplomatic meeting but a military one, and it is possible that except for the High Command and the Minister of War, the rest of the government was unaware that it occurred.⁸⁶ Cabinet ministers would not allow any official negotiations with belligerents for fear of jeopardising neutrality. In fact, Snijders and the cabinet had rejected calls for similar meetings with German military authorities in 1915, 1916, and 1917.⁸⁷ However, in 1918, Snijders believed a contingency plan was required and welcomed the discussions with the Allies, all the more so because Germany was making considerable progress on the western front and had threatened the Dutch with war in April 1918.

Negotiations with a warring state did not amount to an official violation of neutrality – neutrals could discuss with others what might happen if their neutrality was breached⁸⁸ – but Germany could have perceived such negotiations in a dubious light. In order to avoid giving Germany any reason whatsoever to mistrust Dutch intentions, neither party planned any further meetings. Instead, Snijders drew up a strategic directive for his Allied counterparts, which they could implement after Germany had crossed the Dutch frontier.⁸⁹ He also sent a request to the Northern Neutrals Committee for supplies and suggested in the autumn of 1918 to scrap Scheme ‘S’ and have the Allies send troops to help defend the New Holland Waterline instead.⁹⁰ At this stage, the Committee agreed to supply barbed wire, guns, ammunition, gas masks, and 6-inch howitzers, items that were shipped across the Channel between June and September 1918.⁹¹

The belligerents were understandably wary of selling their military goods to the Dutch. Not only did they need them for their own war effort, but it was also all too conceivable that the Netherlands might deploy its purchases against the country of origin (as undoubtedly happened with anti-aircraft guns). Nevertheless, the Dutch did manage to sign a few artillery contracts with the German Krupps firm, obtained some machine-guns from Austria-Hungary, and successfully ordered aeroplanes and engines from France and Germany.⁹² These purchases reflect some ambition on the part of both sets of combatants to avoid antiquating the Dutch armed forces, if only to prevent the neutral from entering the war at an inopportune time. Yet the level of external supply was never large enough to warrant a truly significant contribution to improving the Dutch armed forces. Despite its best efforts, the Netherlands was helpless in keeping up with developments elsewhere. The country did not have the resources, finances, or levels of expertise available to the warring states. In this respect, especially, it was stuck between the devil and the deep blue sea. The equipment it did receive from the belligerents, especially from Great Britain in 1918, did not appreciably close the widening gap between the neutral’s armed forces and those of the nations they could conceivably be forced to fight.

Food, Fuels, and Rationing

The supply crisis was as much a civilian problem as a military one, especially when it came to such necessities as foodstuffs and fuels. Despite a strong agricultural base, the Netherlands was not self-sufficient and relied on imports of many essentials, including grain and coal. The country was always going to have problems obtaining these necessities from the warring states. Yet, at the outbreak of war, and much like Britain’s ‘business as usual’ policy,⁹³ the government did not wish to interfere unduly in the economy.⁹⁴ It had never regulated the economy before, and saw no urgent need to do so in wartime.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, it felt compelled to take some emergency measures to protect consumers and financial markets alike and alleviate some of the most obvious supply concerns.

In August 1914, recognising the likelihood of grain shortages, the government imported grain, and sold it at a peacetime price to bakers, who were required to sell

their goods at normal prices.⁹⁶ Establishing maximum prices for essential goods became standard government practice.⁹⁷ Likewise, the Minister of Agriculture, Trade and Industry, M.W.F. Treub, imposed export prohibitions on goods that were in short supply and legislated powers to municipalities to requisition foodstuffs if necessary.⁹⁸ The state also requisitioned stocks of certain materials needed by the military, including steel, iron, wool, and cotton. Alongside municipal councils, 'state of siege' commanders used their authority to apportion certain goods, issue ration cards to residents, and supervise what shopkeepers bought and sold on a weekly basis.⁹⁹

Until mid-1916, the government left supply issues largely to private organisations, including the *Koninklijk Nationaal Steuncomité* (Royal National Support Committee).¹⁰⁰ The Queen established the Support Committee with help from the Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Trade on 10 August 1914, to aid any individual or company adversely affected by the war crisis.¹⁰¹ The Committee quickly developed into a massive organisation with affiliations around the country. Initially, most of its financial support came from donations (for example, the Netherlands Overseas' Trust (NOT) profits were paid out to the charity),¹⁰² but its responsibilities became so widespread that it came to rely heavily on state funding, and by 1918 was entirely dependent on government subsidies.¹⁰³ The Committee assigned itself a number of responsibilities ranging from assisting families, to keeping firms in business, from providing employment assistance to ensuring a regular distribution of foodstuffs.¹⁰⁴ Its tasks were as diverse as giving money to households whose primary wage-earners were mobilised, guaranteeing incomes to unemployed workers, buying up flower bulbs so that hundreds of employees in the tulip industry kept their jobs, to providing extraordinary credit to factories when they ran out of raw materials or were not paid for their overseas deliveries.¹⁰⁵ In January 1915, the Committee divided into two separate institutions, to better respond to the different problems faced by manufacturers and consumers alike: the Committee for Feeding People and Animals (*Comité voor de Voeding van Mensch en Dier*, CVMD) and the Industry Commission (*Nijverheids Commissie*).¹⁰⁶ Both institutions remained active well after the armistice was signed in November 1918.

In 1914, shortages of specific items arose sporadically, but, by late 1915, they became more significant, especially in grain and coal. Slowly but surely, the shortages impacted on consumption habits. Trains ran less regularly, and bakers produced 'war bread' (*noodbrood*, literally 'emergency bread'), made partly from wheatmeal and potato flour.¹⁰⁷ When meat shortages loomed, *eenheidsworst* (literally, 'uniform sausage' with the connotation of 'boring sausage', made out of a mixture of pork, beef, and spices) became staple fare.¹⁰⁸ On the whole, the Netherlands was able to cope with the shortages until late 1916. Some historians have even argued that until that time, the country thrived economically because it exported (and smuggled) all manner of goods to the combatant nations, especially Germany.¹⁰⁹ Yet underneath the semblance of wealth and abundance, there were clear signs that the economic boom would not last. By the start of 1917, the country was running out of basics, with the result that the Dutch could not adequately feed themselves, heat their homes, or run their factories. Grain imports fell to one-third of peacetime supply in 1917,

and during 1918, almost no foreign grain reached the Netherlands at all.¹¹⁰ The war at sea and the blockades made it difficult for shipments of colonial goods, including foodstuffs such as rice, sugar, coffee, and tea, and raw materials such as oil, quinine, rubber, kapok, and cotton to get through.¹¹¹ By 1918, the amount of colonial products cleared in Dutch ports had slumped to well below 10 per cent of pre-war figures.¹¹² At the same time, farmers had to sell locally grown food intended for export, although many skirted the issue by supplying black marketeers and smugglers.¹¹³ The supply crisis was exacerbated by demands from the Allied and Central Powers to export set quotas of food to them.

The government realised it needed to take a more systematic approach to the Netherlands' supply woes in early 1916. It designed the Distribution Law (*Distributiewet*), which came into effect on 19 August.¹¹⁴ Special government bureaux took charge of monitoring stocks of goods, distributing raw materials to industry and manufacturers, and keeping account of domestic consumption needs. They informed merchants and wholesalers what they could and could not export, the maximum price at which their goods could be sold, and whether or not the government would requisition them.¹¹⁵ For the first time, the state became heavily involved in regulating the economy.¹¹⁶ A huge bureaucracy sprang up in the wake of the Distribution Law.¹¹⁷ Both the Industry Commission and CVMD provided invaluable information and advice to the numerous crisis departments.¹¹⁸ A centralised supervisory body, the Central Administration Office for the Distribution of Provisions (*Centraal Administratiekantoor voor Levensmiddelen*), later known as the State Distribution Bureau (*Rijksdistributiekantoor*), ensured consistency in policy and distribution.¹¹⁹ It worked closely with the Royal Support Committee's two branches, the Netherlands Export Company, and the NOT.

The Distribution Law created a systematic, nationwide rationing regime, although there were some differences in quotas for rural and urban areas. Initially the government only rationed bread, but soon printed rationing cards for milk, butter, and meat as well. Other goods followed in quick succession, including soap, coffee, vegetables, potatoes, and cheese. By mid-1918, one had to hand over a ration card for almost everything.¹²⁰ The Ministry of Agriculture, Trade and Industry consistently cut the size and quantity of rations. While in February 1917, adults received 400 grams of bread per day and whatever meat, milk, and potatoes were available, by the last weeks of the war, food rations had decreased to four kilograms of potatoes and two pounds of meat per week (mainly *eenheidsworst*), and 200 grams of bread and 100 millilitres of milk per day.¹²¹ The bread ration was lower than that of British and French citizens although somewhat higher than in Germany.¹²² Dutch tea consumption declined from nearly a kilogram per person a year in 1914 and 1915 to less than 70 grams in 1918.¹²³

A considerable backlash to government interference in the wartime economy evolved, which helped to boost a black market, often organised by the same people who supplied smugglers.¹²⁴ Farmers faced the most restrictive controls. Government departments regulated their prices and, from the autumn of 1916 onwards, ordered them to grow certain crops, till land previously used for pasture, and limit stockpil-

ing.¹²⁵ After July 1915, the state commandeered harvests at fixed prices as well.¹²⁶ Farmers reacted with hostility rather than compliance: some doused produce in petrol or used it as fodder; some sold vast quantities on the black market; others simply continued to grow their traditional crops.¹²⁷ Officials travelled around the countryside (often accompanied by a small contingent of soldiers) checking that farmers abided by the regulations.¹²⁸ They searched farms, barns, and warehouses for illegal foods. Hefty fines and prison sentences were imposed on offenders.¹²⁹ Partially due to widespread non-compliance, but also owing to severe shortages of fertilizers, agricultural production did not improve significantly in 1917 or 1918.¹³⁰ Only a slight rise in harvests was noticeable by late 1918, while there was no significant increase in those crops and cereals the government had specifically pushed farmers to grow.¹³¹

The government also tried to increase domestic supplies of another vital commodity: coal.¹³² Before the war, 70 per cent of Dutch coal supplies came from Germany (20 per cent from Britain and Belgium, 10 per cent from local mines). For this reason above all, Germany's influence over the Netherlands was very strong.¹³³ Although Germany continued to supply the Dutch with coal, between 1914 and 1918, shipments were less frequent, could be withheld at will, and because the Germans needed coal themselves,¹³⁴ there was not nearly enough to supply the Netherlands' needs. Some coal was mined in Limburg, but it was of an inferior quality to German black coal. Nevertheless, improving the output of mines became a primary goal of the newly established Coal Commission in January 1915, re-organised as the state-run Coal Bureau in February 1916.¹³⁵ Coal production almost doubled during the war and several new pits opened.¹³⁶ Unfortunately, productivity was never high enough to make up for the major decrease in foreign supplies, although it did ensure an employment boom in Limburg, one of the few sectors that bucked the trend of rising unemployment.¹³⁷ In fact, coal shortages became so severe in 1918 that the government forced all available skilled mineworkers into the Limburg coalmines, including already mobilised soldiers, and foreign internees.¹³⁸

Table 9: Coal supplies in tonnes, 1913-1918

<i>Year</i>	<i>Imports</i>	<i>Local production</i>	<i>Total available</i>
1913	8,117,410	1,902,414	10,019,824
1914	7,341,890	1,982,702	9,324,592
1915	7,322,357	2,332,244	9,654,601
1916	6,270,694	2,656,087	8,926,781
1917	2,881,423	3,126,012	6,007,435
1918	1,326,298	3,548,447	4,874,745

Source: Kamp, 'De kolenvoorziening' p. 110.

Coal was drastically rationed from the winter of 1916 onwards.¹³⁹ At this stage, households received coal based on the number of fireplaces they maintained, but, by the

following winter, filling the allotted rations became difficult.¹⁴⁰ Peat, a natural fuel substance found in relative abundance and a common fuel fifty years earlier, became a desirable alternative, only to be rationed as well.¹⁴¹ The coal and petroleum shortage meant that electricity, an expensive pre-war luxury, now became an attractive option for families who could afford it. In many respects, the war accelerated the modernisation of home life in the Netherlands because it increased electricity use.¹⁴² Several towns and cities had their street lighting switched from gas (derived from coal) to electricity,¹⁴³ but since many electricity plants ran on coal, power shortages were inevitable.¹⁴⁴ Streetlights often failed, while shops, businesses, and schools closed during the coldest weeks of the winter.¹⁴⁵ Factories and industrial plants had to compete for any surplus not distributed among households, to the military, the railways, and essential industry. Most had to cut back on production and on staff, many closing down completely.¹⁴⁶ Rising unemployment and economic instability were inevitable consequences in 1917 and 1918.¹⁴⁷

Shortages of raw materials other than coal soon affected employment levels in manufacturing industries as well. Certain non-military industries prospered: For example, the Philips factory in Eindhoven capitalised on the increase in electricity use and lack of international competitors to increase its sales and develop its own low-voltage light bulbs.¹⁴⁸ But it still ended up cutting staff numbers in 1918.¹⁴⁹ Almost all of the other manufacturing industries, including the metallurgical factories on which the armed forces relied for their weapons, suffered in the last two years of war.¹⁵⁰ Ironically enough, during the 'boom years' of 1915 and 1916, when the war had not yet wreaked havoc with supply, a major impediment to increasing production for factories filling military orders was finding enough adequately trained staff. The government used 'state of siege' jurisdiction at the borders to force men with certain skills to remain in the country. As of 18 October 1915, qualified miners, engineers, construction workers, smithies, car mechanics, bicycle repairers, saddlers, bank-tellers, toolmakers, metal workers, shipbuilders, and industrial machinists could not receive passports or leave the Netherlands.¹⁵¹ It also helped to keep workers in the country who might otherwise depart for well-paid work in the German war industries. This became enough of a neutrality concern for the government that it asked the Central Employment Bureau to refuse exit permits to workers who could be involved in manufacturing military materials in Germany or Belgium. Military border patrols were responsible for apprehending any escapees.¹⁵²

By the winter of 1917-1918, the food and fuel situation in the Netherlands had become serious. The economy ground slowly down almost to a halt in the last twelve months of the war. Although not starving, most people were hungry and cold.¹⁵³ Families turned their gardens into vegetable plots and learned to cook with little or no fat on fires made from *brikken* (bricks of pulped combustible materials) instead of wood or coal.¹⁵⁴ Some city councils allocated small plots of land for the purpose of growing vegetables.¹⁵⁵ Farmers looked for alternative sources of fertiliser, including 'sea manure' (made from seaweed and mussels), while the population was urged to adopt vegetarianism and to eat nuts, because they grew in abundance in city parks every autumn.¹⁵⁶ Alternatives to traditional foods and fuels became common, although

they were of a questionable quality.¹⁵⁷ Even the wealthier classes were affected by the shortages: many chose to stay in hotels because it was cheaper than heating their own homes; others avoided rationing by eating in restaurants; most turned to the black market to supplement their staple diet of *noodbrood*, a little milk, and *eenheidsworst*.¹⁵⁸ Theft-related crime rose rapidly during the last two years of the war, as some people became more desperate to survive.¹⁵⁹

For the armed forces, food and fuel shortages did not become matters of major concern until the start of 1917. Until this time, the government had given priority to military supplies, and the armed forces could forcibly requisition whatever they needed from civilians and municipal councils.¹⁶⁰ With the implementation of the Distribution Law, however, the armed forces (like everybody else) became part of the central government's distribution regime.¹⁶¹ The government still prioritised military needs, but exercised far greater care in balancing them with civilian demands.

During the initial mobilisation, the armed forces created an intricate system of production and supply, and built their own military bakeries and abattoirs.¹⁶² But key supplies soon dwindled. As early as July 1915, a scarcity of rubber tyres placed limitations on automobile use,¹⁶³ affecting the recently established Voluntary Military Automobile and associated Motorcycle Corps. After March 1917, petrol shortages began forcing military cars off the roads, and led to a return to horse-powered transport, when extra fodder, another rare commodity, became available.¹⁶⁴ Soldiers suffered as well: Their barracks were heated and lighted less frequently and for shorter periods of time. As of September 1917, unless they went on leave for more than three days, soldiers could not travel by train.¹⁶⁵ The military authorities also granted longer but less frequent periods of leave to ease pressure on the rail network.

During 1917, soldiers' food rations were systematically cut, although not to the same extent as civilians', principally because, as the old adage went, an army, whether fighting or not, marches on its stomach. The High Command was well aware of the link between supplies and morale, and impressed upon the government the need to keep soldiers' rations ample. Nevertheless, in January 1917, the military bread ration decreased from 650 to 600 grams a day. It did not drop any further, although by September 1917, military bread consisted of 30 per cent potato meal.¹⁶⁶ For almost all other food items, soldiers received more than civilians, so much so that, at least until February 1918, troops continued to drink tea and coffee, if in smaller quantities than before, while there was next to none available to civilians. Chocolate supplies were frequent enough that the NOT complained to the High Command that much of the chocolate supplied to mess halls ended up being smuggled across the border. Snijders took the matter seriously enough to issue specific instructions to commanders that canteens could not sell more than two or three chocolate bars at a time, and that other supplies with export prohibitions should be distributed in small quantities.¹⁶⁷

But, during 1918, even soldiers suffered. Their diet revolved increasingly around such staples as *eenheidsworst* and *noodbrood* without butter, little cheese, and hardly any other toppings.¹⁶⁸ By the summer, troops ate four and half kilograms fewer potatoes per week than they had in 1915 (from 12 kilograms to 7.5 kilograms) and the

High Command considered cutting the ration even further.¹⁶⁹ By this stage, they also stopped receiving tea and coffee regularly, and had to make do with undrinkable substitutes.¹⁷⁰ Although the quality and quantity of foodstuffs was better than it was for most citizens, there is no doubt that the cuts in food allocations contributed to the widespread lack of discipline and declining morale during 1918, helping to fuel discontent. An especially critical soldier described his fellow troops in July of 1918 as a group of '*underfed, worn-out men*'.¹⁷¹

The High Command did its utmost to find alternatives for essential foods, experimenting especially with yeast-free bread.¹⁷² Keeping soldiers and their uniforms and dishes clean became a serious hygienic concern, especially when trials to replace soap with a potential washing powder proved unsuccessful.¹⁷³ However, the greatest fear was that shortages would hamper military readiness. For example, in March 1917, Snijders had to postpone and cancel some training exercises due to a lack of petrol, fodder, and coal.¹⁷⁴ One of the most alarming aspects of the shortages was the effect it had on the navy. During 1917, warships patrolled the seas less frequently and for shorter distances at a time, directly compromising neutrality and security.¹⁷⁵ Emergency stockpiles, especially coal and food, had to be created and maintained in case the country was invaded, but, of course, this was much easier said than done. Snijders did put in place procedures so that if the Netherlands did enter the war, it could quickly receive additional supplies of fuels (especially coal) from potential allies.¹⁷⁶

The outfitting of troops was also far from ideal. During the mobilisation of August 1914, many not only lacked proper uniforms, their shoes and underwear were also in various stages of disrepair. Unprepared for the clothing needs of a fully mobilised force, available stocks of army uniforms quickly disappeared, and there were not enough blankets or straw mattresses to go around.¹⁷⁷ The arrival of more than 30,000 Belgian and British internees in October 1914 placed even greater demands on military stores. Even if local and foreign troops could be properly outfitted, maintaining adequate reserves for new recruits and replacing those damaged by wear and tear, or lost or stolen, became a significant problem for the Military Supply Service.¹⁷⁸ Unlike the manufacture of weapons and ammunition, however, it proved a lot easier to obtain many of these particular items.

One way the military augmented its supplies was by marshalling charity organisations into knitting socks, jerseys, gloves, scarves, and woollen hats.¹⁷⁹ Because of the chronic underwear shortage, it also undertook a nation-wide advertising campaign urging citizens to send any spare undergarments to supply depots, where they would receive payment for each item. The underwear campaign was short-lived, but throughout the war, women's organisations knitted and darned for the military, the Royal Support Committee paid unemployed women to do the same, while inmates in many of the Netherlands' prisons were ordered to sew underwear as well.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, there continued to be a substantial scarcity of outdoor garments, underwear, and shoe soles.¹⁸¹ Cobblers and tailors experimented with alternative materials, including wooden soles, to remedy some of the shortages.¹⁸² Civilians also had real problems clothing themselves in the last two war years. The government rationed

clothing in 1917, and, by late 1918, had designed a swapping scheme so that for every item of clothing bought, the customer had to return a similar item, albeit it worn out, to the shop.¹⁸³ These could then be repaired and passed on to others. Rubber, wood, and canvas replaced leather in shoes.¹⁸⁴

One inevitable result of the economic crisis was profiteering. This was as true in belligerent nations as it was in neutral countries. The textile barons situated in and around the city of Tilburg did very well during the war. The seven major Tilburg factories doubled peacetime production and, even with severe shortages in raw materials and dyes, managed to keep manufacturing the grey cloth used for army uniforms throughout 1917 and 1918.¹⁸⁵ Yet the fabric for uniforms was of such low quality (due not only to the scarcity of cotton but also because cotton and wool ratios were kept as low as possible) that it wore out quickly and had to be replaced within a few months, ensuring a steady profit for factory owners and an unpleasant garment to wear for soldiers.¹⁸⁶

In all, between August 1914 and August 1915, 350 farmers, industrialists and entrepreneurs joined the list of Dutch millionaires, a list that had barely risen above 659 members since 1839. By 1920, this number had increased by another 210 people.¹⁸⁷ The 'war profiteer' (*oorlogwinstmaker*, or *OW-er*) became as despised an individual among the Dutch as he or she would have been in any of the warring states.¹⁸⁸ Whether belligerent or neutral, many felt it was immoral that an unscrupulous few were profiting from the misery of the majority. The chief distinction between the Dutch and warring populations' views on profiteers was that the latter cast the profiteers in a moral light comparing their actions to the sacrifices made by front-line soldiers,¹⁸⁹ while the Dutch viewed *OW-ers* not so much with moral distaste as plain dislike, because their money was easy money obtained by making others pay more. In fact, the popular backlash to *OW-ers* was considerable as they became the focus of severe criticism, demeaned in books, and demonised in cartoons.¹⁹⁰ In many respects, profiteers provided a useful outlet for popular despair and anger. Perhaps as a means of harnessing these feelings, but also as a way of benefiting from the profiteers' good fortune, the government introduced a 'war profit tax' (*oorlogswinstbelasting*) in 1916.¹⁹¹ This meant that incomes and company profits above the average profit and income in the years 1911, 1912, and 1913 were taxed at a higher percentage.¹⁹² In all, the government raised f780 million in 'war profit taxes', which offset some of the considerable costs of the bureaucracy and mobilisation crisis.¹⁹³

Somewhere to Lay One's Head

Of all of the military needs, the most demanding and most controversial was the housing of soldiers. Because the military never had more than a few thousand troops training at any one time during peacetime, it lacked the necessary barracks or billets to accommodate hundreds of thousands of men. During the initial weeks of mobilisation, this did not prove to be too much of a problem because troops stayed with civilians, in public buildings, and in tent camps (it was summer after all). However, the onset of winter made many of the temporary shelters highly unsuitable.

Around this time, municipal councils requested the return of some of their buildings (especially the schools), and civilians became less enamoured of the strangers they had hosted for a number of weeks already.¹⁹⁴ With the pending deadlock on the western front, the field army would remain in the south, overburdening the hospitality of residents there. At the same time, Belgian refugees and interned soldiers had to also be accommodated.¹⁹⁵ The existing housing shortage in the Netherlands only aggravated the problem.¹⁹⁶

The government offered ample compensation to anyone accommodating troops: from 20 cents a day for a soldier to *f*1 for officers (who required their own rooms and access to heating and light).¹⁹⁷ Yet even compensation did not entice civilians to volunteer their homes for billets. The financial rewards involved mainly attracted poorer families or those who could make a substantial profit. Either way, it did not ensure ideal living conditions. Because there were never enough volunteers, many towns and villages in the south had soldiers forced upon them for months and even years at a time, much to their disgust.¹⁹⁸ The government also worried about the long-term financial drain posed by housing 200,000 men at the set reimbursement rate. In some places, the government paid homeowners ten times the amount they would have normally received for renting out a room. In one case, the state paid *f*1,440 for a four-bedroom house, which tenants paid *f*150 for a year earlier.¹⁹⁹ Owners of large warehouses, factories, as well as empty barges and ships, made huge profits from cramming as many troops into them as possible, receiving the same rate of pay per soldier as a family did for the two or three soldiers it billeted. The warehouses and ships usually lacked even the most basic water and ablution facilities, and often posed severe health risks owing to a dearth of light, overwhelming dampness, vermin, and overcrowding. Some owners made troops pay for showers, while others set up canteens with overpriced goods.²⁰⁰ While the authorities curbed exploitation by enforcing stricter health standards in 1915,²⁰¹ hygiene problems continuously plagued billeting facilities.

Although public buildings were a cheaper alternative, this practice was not tenable in the long-term for a number of reasons. Firstly, hygiene was difficult to maintain because municipal buildings often lacked adequate amenities. This meant the government paid for soldiers to take a weekly dip in public baths, and even leased swimming pools from local councils.²⁰² Secondly, most civic buildings had a peacetime purpose that could not be suspended indefinitely. Schools posed a particular problem. After September 1914, with the start of the new school year, mayors, locals, and members of parliament called for soldiers to move out of schools, citing the needs of education above those of neutrality.²⁰³ Given the accommodation shortages, it was often impossible to remove troops from schools completely.²⁰⁴ The situation remained far from ideal, and even as late as 1918, complaints reached Snijders' desk about the supposed misuse of the country's educational institutions.²⁰⁵

Housing soldiers in camps seemed the most practical solution, not only improving accommodation standards, but also keeping military discipline high (as soldiers' movements could be constantly monitored). Initially, tent camps appeared ideal, although they lacked convenient cooking and cleaning facilities.²⁰⁶ With the onset

of winter, tents became extremely impractical. It proved an absolute necessity, therefore, to erect permanent barracks. However, the High Command's priority was to build internment camps and the government's decision to erect refugee camps also took up vital building materials. Several new military barracks did go up during the war, but not as many as desired due to timber shortages. The quality of barracks built in 1915 was generally shoddy, mainly because no one wanted to spend money on buildings that might only be in use for the short term.²⁰⁷ Hence, tent camps remained in use throughout the war, and soldiers suffered in them.²⁰⁸

Even existing barracks and lodgings within fortified positions left much to be desired. They often lacked adequate ventilation, were infested with rats, and were extremely difficult to heat.²⁰⁹ Only minor improvements were made, such as a rat removal service.²¹⁰ As a result, many troops remained in inadequate accommodations throughout their mobilisation. On numerous occasions, parliamentarians brought the abysmal state of soldiers' accommodations to national attention claiming that even the poorest man and woman in the country lived in better conditions than most troops.²¹¹ There is no doubt that these inadequacies contributed to decreasing morale and discipline and may have helped to spread the Spanish influenza pandemic, which almost brought the army to a standstill in the summer and autumn of 1918.

One unseen result of billeting soldiers among civilians was that it changed, even if only for the war years, the way the Dutch worked and interacted with each other. They had to deal not only with sharing their houses, schools, and public amenities with strangers, but also with the inevitable effects of mobilisation: alcohol consumption, prostitution, and problems with maintaining public order. Another matter of great concern to residents in the southern provinces was that many of the billeted troops were not Catholic, but Protestant. How were they to treat persons of a rival faith? The practicalities of the Protestant influx in the Catholic south also worried the military leadership and Protestant authorities. They feared moral degradation and loss of discipline if troops lost contact with their religion, especially because there were few Protestant churches, let alone chaplains or vicars, in the south. As a result, the High Command sanctioned the ordaining of military chaplains and priests from the major religions, who subsequently travelled throughout the countryside visiting soldiers.²¹² Dutch society in 1914 was highly stratified, not only according to class but, perhaps more importantly, according to religious and political beliefs. It was rare for Catholics to mingle with Protestants, even in day-to-day affairs. Likewise, it was equally uncommon for Protestants or Catholics to mingle with Socialists. The very nature of Dutch society meant that until 1914, socialist movements were concentrated almost exclusively in the big cities. The mobilisation not only forced men with varying backgrounds to live together but also to share (or argue about) their ideas and beliefs. There is no doubt that socialist-inspired concepts spread through the army during the war – the many soldiers' mobilisation clubs attest to that. They would also have affected and challenged the ideas held in even the most fervent of Catholic villages in Limburg, North Brabant, and Zeeland.

The Fate of a Small Nation

The ongoing shortages and economic crises had several significant consequences for the armed forces during the Great War. Most importantly, the war highlighted an inability to keep up with the technological advances of the belligerents. The comparative material strength of the Netherlands fell sharply during the course of the war, especially after 1916, reducing the viability of its armed forces to act as a deterrent against invasion and hence, the value of its neutrality was reduced as well. Throughout the war, members of parliament questioned successive Ministers of War about what was being done to modernise the armed forces.²¹³ This line of questioning came to a head late in October 1918, when the leader of the Socialist Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP), P.J. Troelstra, criticised the government for not having acquired enough machine-guns and other materials to prepare for war. While this was a somewhat questionable tactic given the SDAP's consistent lack of support for military funding, it nevertheless indicated a burgeoning understanding that, unlike popular perceptions in August 1914, the country was in dire trouble if one of the major powers were to invade. Snijders replied to Troelstra's criticisms by insisting that military factories were doing their utmost to keep the country's technology on a level footing with the belligerents. In addition, Snijders assured this member of parliament that several orders for machine-guns, anti-aircraft guns, and field artillery had been placed in Germany and Sweden, which were due for delivery in November 1918.²¹⁴ Little did either man know that the war would end before these weapons arrived.

Although Snijders did not agree with Troelstra's damning critique of the government's military policies, he knew Troelstra was right when he asserted that the military was unprepared for war in 1918.²¹⁵ It must be said, however, that the nature of the war emergency made it almost impossible to ensure uniformity in production or regularity in the importation of war materials. Despite the restrictions, the High Command did its best to ensure production levels remained high. Military factories were exempted from eight-hour days, received priority in coal supplies, and had strikes quashed. The munitions factories in Delft and Hembrug even had 2,000 troops assigned, organised into a special 'workers' company' (*werkliedencompagnie*).²¹⁶ But, since the nation was in crisis, it was impossible for military production not to be in crisis as well. More could have been done to streamline production and supply processes, but, essentially, the problem had more to do with a lack of resources than deficiencies in organisation. Hence, maintaining technological parity with the warring states became an unattainable goal, even if the Netherlands had been the most organised of countries.

Amry Vandenbosch's claim that small states have been decidedly disadvantaged by developments in modern technology and industrial growth ever since the start of the Great War certainly rings true for the Netherlands.²¹⁷ It could not afford new armaments, not because it did not have the financial means to acquire them, but because it did not have the industrial capacity to build, supply, support, and develop them. Without industrially powerful allies, a small neutral state could not progress on equal terms with the military might of the major powers. Before 1914, the Dutch

army was comparable to its French, German, and British equivalents in composition and weaponry (although on a much smaller scale); however, by 1918, it was out-classed by all of them in strength, size, and technological capacity.

Chapter

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No More War! The Furore over Leave and Demobilisation

If only they would see that the Dutch army, like the armies of the other small neutral-minded states, guards as the police officer who attempts to prevent the crime, that it is as prepared as the dyke, which may at any time have to withstand the battering of the storm tide. Who would out of repugnance for crime fight the police, who would out of aversion for floods lower or weaken the dykes, or even undermine them?

– C.C. Gelder (1918)¹

During the first few months of war, the Dutch feared an invasion and were willing to do almost anything to protect their country: supporting the mobilisation, billeting soldiers in their homes, and accepting emergency military budgets in parliament without objection. However, once the western front became deadlocked late in 1914, the threat of invasion seemed to pass, and many believed it unnecessary to remain fully mobilised. Despite widespread interest in the war, the population did not on the whole understand the intricacies and hazards of neutrality politics, nor did many comprehend why it was necessary to keep soldiers, sailors, and airmen in service if the country was apparently not at risk of an attack. Van Terwisga explained this civilian state of mind to the Minister of War, G.A.A. Alting von Geusau, in a mobilisation report of October 1919, exclaiming that ‘the Dutch army is only popular as long as the Dutch people are afraid! Otherwise it is vilified’.² During the war, members of parliament urged the government to minimise the costs of the mobilisation, to provide soldiers with more leave, and at times, to demobilise completely. These requests reflected widespread public opinion. In contrast, the High Command wished to increase, rather than reduce, the mobilisation commitment in order to keep up (at least proportionately) with the growth in the belligerent armies,³ to offset the leave requirements of existing troops, and to handle the mushrooming neutrality and defence responsibilities undertaken by the armed forces. Already in February 1915, Snijders warned that the 200,000 soldiers available to him were stretched to meet their multifarious duties, and that the army would face grave difficulties in withstanding an invasion if it came soon.⁴ The need for troops only increased as the responsibilities associated with neutrality became more comprehensive; the maintenance of the ‘state of war’ and ‘state of siege’ became more complicated; and short-term leave entitlements reduced the number of troops actually in service at any one time. Cabinet ministers faced the unenviable task of balancing the seemingly incompatible demands made by the armed forces for more men and resources, and by the public for fewer soldiers and less military funding. The contradictory demands

reflected the growing gap between what the High Command believed to be the absolute minimum necessities for neutrality and security, and what parliament and the population would accept as maximum military involvement in their lives. Attempts at resolution and conciliation only left both sides of the divide dissatisfied.

Too Many Indians, Not Enough Chiefs

One extremely disturbing aspect of the nation's mobilisation was the scarcity of professional and non-commissioned officers to lead the army. Officer shortages had existed for decades prior to 1914. While they had never been adequately addressed, they were particularly irksome during the war. Almost all military functions were affected by a lack of skilled and able officers, from the running of depots to the leadership of troops, from the training of conscripts to the management and distribution of supplies. As a result, one of the High Command's chief priorities was to remedy this deficiency. They urged retired officers to come back, called up the Dutch East Indies Army reserves, and used the 1913 *Landstormwet* to oblige ex-officers to return to service.⁵ These measures ensured that some progress had been made by the middle of 1915, although the army was still operating with 280 fewer officers than desired.⁶ With the mobilisation of new *landstorm* sections from late 1915 onwards, as well as the induction of new conscripts, the demand for competent officers began to rise dramatically. Not surprisingly, much of the army's 1916 investigation into the mobilisation focussed on the officer corps (the rest of the investigation concentrated on clothing and equipment shortages).⁷ The report highlighted what was blatantly obvious to most observers; not only were there insufficient officers, of those available, many were too young, inexperienced, and lacking in adequate training to lead troops into combat.⁸ In other words, the bulk of the officers were unprepared for a wartime role. Another fundamental problem existed, namely: how does one entice able people to pursue a military career? Professional soldier was not considered a desirable vocation by most Dutch men. This meant that the army and navy traditionally had problems attracting potential officers in sufficient quantity, let alone quality.⁹

According to the 1916 report, the officer shortfall was especially evident in field army infantry units.¹⁰ There were numerous areas of concern, but the report was particularly scathing about the instability fostered in the leadership of infantry sections. Because of their small numbers and heavy workload, available officers often had little time to develop an appropriate relationship with their troops. They were moved about too often and reassigned to a variety of units at irregular intervals. As a result, troops often exhibited little respect for their commanders, many of whom did not stay on long enough to learn their names. Given that the seasoned officers invariably accompanied border patrols, their inexperienced colleagues and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) were left to deal with the tasks of maintaining order and discipline in depots, billets, and camps.¹¹ What the report found most disturbing, however, were the clear deficiencies in the training of officers.¹² In general, officer

recruits were poorly prepared for their duties. Their teachers were often unsatisfactorily trained themselves, which was not surprising since the best officers received command (rather than instructional) appointments. This left many new officers, those usually assigned to work closely with troops, without the necessary experience or background to maintain discipline, let alone enhance morale. Another significant problem was that many of these officers were younger than the men they commanded, which at times undermined the development of mutual respect.

The more specialised military units, including mobile artillery and cavalry, although not without their own troubles, did not face the same grave difficulties with their officer corps as the field army infantry, perhaps because their units were smaller, better centralised, and better trained. They certainly enjoyed more continuity in leadership.¹³ Older *landweer* sections also had fewer problems, at least while they were able to hold on to their own NCOs. Nevertheless, as existing officers were granted leave through the course of 1916, 1917, and 1918, even the specialised units experienced a considerable drop in the quality of their commanders.¹⁴ Like their colleagues in the infantry, they had to make do with replacements, who were often hurriedly trained and usually far too young and inexperienced to fulfil the function adequately. A mobilisation report published in 1918 further highlighted that leave provisions, the transfer of capable officers to the customs departments (to curb smuggling), and to guard refugee and internee camps further reduced their numbers. This was as true for the professional officer corps as it was for its non-commissioned support. By February 1917, there was only one lieutenant available to act as adjutant to each of the 80 infantry battalion commanders.¹⁵ Even more disquieting was the shortage of captains responsible for leading tactical units within a battalion. The field army required 320 in all, but in 1917 had only 231 available. The Commander of the Field Army estimated that with many of the officers going on short-term leave, the actual number of captains still needed was 261.¹⁶ As older conscripts in the *landweer* and their experienced non-commissioned officers were sent on long-term leave, many battalions operated without adequate numbers of NCOs.¹⁷

There were few short-term solutions available to rectify the shortfalls. Officer training schools, closed down during the mobilisation in August 1914, were reopened in June 1915 to instruct new candidates.¹⁸ The recruitment of officers became a priority; young men were enticed with better pay and conditions, while promotion through the ranks came quicker than before the war.¹⁹ The Minister of War used provisions in the 1912 *Militiewet* to compel conscripts into non-commissioned ranks, by training those with secondary school qualifications as sergeants and corporals.²⁰ He also managed in May 1917 to enact another law allowing the High Command to select soldiers for officer training in the commissioned and non-commissioned ranks.²¹ Although the two laws improved the potential pool from which officers were chosen, the quick promotion of NCOs actually weakened command at the lower levels.²² The High Command also forced many newly-conscripted men into officer training, often against their will, which had the disturbing consequence of creating reluctant officers, not willing to do the job justice.²³ Not surprisingly, these policies rarely added quality to the army's leadership. Yet the officer corps doubled in size during

the war: there were 3,967 commissioned and 30,177 NCOs mobilised in August 1914; these numbers rose to 8,538 and 63,180 respectively by the end of 1917.²⁴ The increases were absolutely necessary because the total size of the armed forces also more than doubled – from around 200,000 men in August 1914 to a little over 400,000 by the end 1917.²⁵ Most of the new officers, however, replaced existing officers, who went on leave along with their troops, to be called up when their units were remobilised.²⁶ Instead of augmenting numbers and fixing the inadequacies that existed before the mobilisation, the replacement officers only exacerbated the deficiencies as they generally lacked the necessary skills for effective command. At no stage during the war, therefore, did supply meet demand.

Conscription and Recruitment

One reason why the officer shortage was so widespread was because the High Command focussed its attentions on increasing the size of the armed forces and ensuring adequate provisions for leave existed for troops. Since the *landstorm* law of 1913 had not yet ensured the creation of a significant reserve force, other solutions to replacing soldiers on leave had to be found. In belligerent societies, if legal obligations did not compel men into the services, moral and social pressures placed upon them by their peers and families did. But the Dutch army and navy faced a much tougher task in persuading citizens to sign up for military service than their counterparts in Britain, Belgium, France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary. A relatively innocuous method for obtaining more soldiers was to alter the conscription criteria. From 1915 onwards, all eligible men aged 20 were conscripted, as long as they were medically fit. In other words, the conscription lottery was abolished, ensuring that another 5,000 men were called up annually, and raising the yearly conscript intake to 28,000.²⁷ Effectively, it inflicted general conscription on all but a few 20-year-old men. There were some problems: the wartime conscripts were only trained for four months before moving into infantry units, although soldiers in the specialised units received somewhat more training. Hence, insufficient training affected the latest officer recruits as well as the conscripts they commanded. As a result, many of the military reforms introduced by Colijn in 1912 and 1913 to improve the quality of troops had little impact after the mobilisation, because conscripts had to be made ‘war ready’ as quickly as possible.

Another way of increasing conscript numbers involved lengthening the period of service in the military and *landweer*. But this did not always go smoothly. For example, in July 1914, Bosboom ensured that the oldest *landweer* intakes (intake year 1907), who were due for release from the army that month, stayed in service until the end of the year, thereby postponing the transfer of these 35 and 36-year-old men into the *landstorm*.²⁸ In mid-December 1914, he requested that parliament extend their service to 31 March 1915. Most MPs were reluctant to accept the extension because they did not believe there was any need to keep so many men fully mobilised as the security position of the Netherlands seemed to have changed since the uncertain circumstances of July and August 1914.²⁹ They argued that the western front was dead-

locked and the belligerents were far too preoccupied to be concerned about the neutral nations. As a result of their opposition, Bosboom asked them to allow the *landweer* to stay on only for another month.³⁰ During parliamentary discussions later in January 1915, he suggested lengthening the service of the *landweermannen* by another six months. Bosboom's motion met with an outburst of protests, especially from the SDAP benches, but this time, after explanations about continued security threats and the military's many neutrality responsibilities, parliament passed the law by 61 votes to 15.³¹ Eventually, the 1907 *landweer* intake went on indefinite leave in May 1915.³²

Aside from making them serve in the armed forces, the High Command also tried to induce the Dutch to volunteer for military service, an entirely unsuccessful venture. Not only did most men decline to join the voluntary *landstorm*; they also found the prospect of paid employment within the officer corps far from enticing. This widespread lack of enthusiasm can largely be attributed to the general unpopularity of the armed forces. Furthermore, the country's neutrality would also have played a prominent role. Since the Netherlands was neutral, the Dutch did not believe the danger of war dire enough to bear arms. However noble the Dutch deemed the cause of neutrality, it was never noble enough to induce them to volunteer. Armed service had never been popular and the Great War did not change this. Avoidance of conscription itself became such a problem by 1917 that the government and military leadership imposed strict regulations in the 'state of siege', refusing exit permits out of the country for men between the ages of 19 and 41.³³

One of the most controversial ways in which the Minister of War expanded the size of the army was by obliging men who had avoided conscription when they were 20 years old to serve in the *landstorm*. During the August 1914 mobilisation, there was no perceived need to call up the *landstorm*, if only because there were not enough men who had, as yet, become eligible for this service. The law had only been operational for little over one year. Officers in the *landstorm* were called to service, however, on 13 August.³⁴ Through the course of 1915, the Minister of War and High Command explored the potential of expanding the *landstorm* regulations. They suggested amendments to the law on two separate occasions in June and July 1915.³⁵ The more controversial of the two proposals saw men under the age of forty, who had not served in the armed forces before, become eligible for conscription into the *landstorm*. Not only could they be conscripted, the distinction that had been made in the original legislation between 'armed' and 'unarmed' conscripts was abolished, so that all new conscripts would now receive military training.³⁶ The amendments caused heated debate in parliament, especially after a group of business leaders presented a petition supporting the proposed changes.³⁷ They claimed that the country's safety depended on its military readiness and that all national interests should be subordinated to national security. It was an important signal of support from the business community for the proposed legislation.

In the end, the *landstorm* law amendments were passed, albeit not in the form in which they were proposed. When Bosboom had originally suggested revising the *Landstormwet*, he hoped to obtain extra troops in addition to those already mobilised.³⁸ Despite passing the amendments, however, parliament would only allow new *land-*

Illustration 11: Conscription



'Here, we would know much better what conscription meant, than them there...'
This cartoon from 1915 criticised parliamentarians for losing sight of the real impact of conscription, namely on mobilised soldiers, like these two stationed at the border.

storm conscripts to replace soldiers going on leave. The conscription was further limited to men under the age of 30, who would replace older conscripts going on leave.³⁹ In other words, between its proposal and acceptance into law, the purpose of the *landstorm* amendments underwent a fundamental change. Where the military saw the *landstorm* changes as an opportunity to increase the size of the army, many MPs saw the laws as superfluous, except if they could guarantee better leave provisions for the mobilised soldiers who had been in service for nearly a year. The government, stuck between two diverging demands, compromised: while more men could be conscripted into the *landstorm*, this could only occur if the oldest intakes of mobilised *landweer* went on indefinite leave. The new conscripts would act as replacements for, rather than additions to, present troop concentrations.

The compromise created many more problems than it solved. Firstly, although the laws gave parliamentarians something that they wanted, it came at the cost of alienating many citizens. Men between the age of 20 and 30, who had happily avoided military service, were now far from pleased at the prospect of conscription. Excep-

tions for brother service or *kostwinnaarschap* ('breadwinner's status') were not made in the *landstorm* and after June 1918 the armed forces could recall individuals for military health inspections whenever they wished.⁴⁰ By 1918, it became more likely that all men over 20 would be required to serve. Secondly, having given in to demands for leave for *landweer* troops, the government came under even more pressure to do the same for the oldest military intakes. This was done in July 1916, much to the disgust of Snijders, who feared a further diminution of the army's fighting quality.⁴¹ The demand that younger men serve before older men remained so intense that in May 1917 Bosboom resigned after a *debacle* in parliament concerning the conscription of the 1908 *landstorm* intake (those born in 1888) ahead of the 1918 *landstorm* and military intakes, who were ten years younger (born in 1898). The Second Chamber narrowly accepted a motion brought by one of the SDAP's more vocal representatives, M.P. Marchant, requiring the 1918 intakes to be conscripted first.⁴² Bosboom stubbornly declared he would ignore the motion, resulting in another vote against the minister. Twice defeated, Bosboom resigned. Bosboom's temporary replacement, J.J. Rambonnet (who also held the post of Minister in Charge of the Navy), presented a *fait accompli* to parliament in May 1917, and managed to get the earlier *landstorm* intake legislated. The event clearly illustrates how difficult obtaining parliamentary support for military matters actually was.

For the High Command, the *landstorm* amendments of 1915 were also problematic. Snijders had warned Bosboom from the beginning that replacing well-trained men with inadequately trained *landstormers* weakened the army. Not only did it decrease its fighting quality and placed undue strain on a young and inexperienced officer corps, it also made a second mobilisation, if the Netherlands was invaded, an absolute necessity. Snijders wished to avoid a large-scale remobilisation at all costs, because the chances of it going awry were far too great. He had no choice, however, when the government forced his hand by sending thousands of mobilised soldiers on leave. It created the rather absurd situation where the country's reserve force (made up of soldiers on leave) was far more capable of withstanding an invasion than those actually manning the borders and serving in the fortifications.⁴³ It would take years to bring the *landstorm* up to the same standard as the rest of the army. Snijders did not presume that the country had these years to spare. Another consequence of the *landstorm* decisions was that instead of keeping fortifications fully operational, when *landweer* troops went on leave in 1915 and 1916, the High Command placed a skeleton *landstorm* staff in most of the fortified positions, with the most important ones serving along the New Holland Waterline. Even along the Waterline, garrison numbers were cut because the focus had to be on the field army and the borders. If a second mobilisation occurred, soldiers would return to the fortifications. In the meantime, the defences were left virtually unprotected, a reflection also of the lack of modern heavy artillery stationed there. During periods of crisis more troops occupied the fortified positions, but never enough to make them secure.⁴⁴

There was another major problem with replacing soldiers going on leave with younger *landstorm* conscripts, namely if the war lasted long enough, there would be no younger replacements available. By the end of 1917, in fact, *landstorm* substitutes

were older than the troops going on leave. Military intake year 1909 (men born in 1889), for example, went on leave in November 1916.⁴⁵ Four months later, the first intake of 27-year old *landstormers* (LS 1909) began their military training. When the 1908 *landstorm* intake was called up later in 1917, its soldiers were older (29 years old) than the four military intakes that went on leave that year (23-26 years old). The 30-year threshold for *landstorm* duty had nearly been reached as well. If the High Command was to allow more troops to go on leave, other reserves had to be found. Instead of calling up older *landstorm* conscripts, the government throughout 1918 recalled men freed in the first *landstorm* call-up.⁴⁶ Snijders also suggested calling to service the military intake year 1919 six months early (in the middle of 1918); as a result, the first half of the 1919 intake took up posts in training barracks in August of that year.⁴⁷ He floated the idea to recall intake year 1914 from indefinite leave as well.⁴⁸

Leave for One and All

Although, on paper, the *landstorm* reforms increased the total strength of the military to around 400,000 men, its actual strength was far from impressive. Long-term leave granted to entire conscript intakes meant that at any one time fewer than 200,000 men were actually on duty. Among mobilised troops, short-term and extraordinary leave provisions meant that more were actually absent than present in their military units. In a letter to the Minister of War in October 1916, Snijders complained that 61 per cent of mobilised soldiers were unavailable for active duty because they were on some form of short-term leave, an abysmal figure for an armed force supposedly on high military alert.⁴⁹ He also warned that of the 39 per cent of troops that were available on any given day, most were inadequately prepared for war. He feared that it was virtually impossible to mount an effective defence if it became necessary.

There were a number of contributing factors as to why so many men could go on indefinite leave. One of the most plausible in the popular mind was the idea that older men had more responsibilities to their families, homes, and to the economy than they did to idling away in barracks awaiting a military confrontation that might never occur. Supporters of granting indefinite leave to older conscripts used moral and economic reasoning to sway public opinion in their favour. The *landstorm* laws were popular in this respect because they ensured that the oldest soldiers could go home, while younger men, supposedly with fewer family or economic commitments, and without 'important' jobs, assumed the mundane life of the barracks instead. Of course, among the new *landstormers* and their families, the move was far from appreciated. Another important factor involved in granting leave was the perception that the *landstorm* laws increased the size of the army significantly, without increasing pressure on military expenditure. Troops on indefinite leave did not cost the government anything; instead, it could pay *landstormers* to perform the same duties. It was a very cheap way of doubling the available fighting force. Of course, if the country was invaded, all troops (including those on leave) would be recalled to arms. This

would present an expensive undertaking, but in the face of national danger, fiscal responsibility could be abandoned (as it had been in July and August 1914) until the emergency passed. In May 1916, Bosboom assured Snijders on this point: that although there were no funds put aside for a second mobilisation, that should not hinder Snijders from taking whatever steps necessary to protect the country when remobilisation took place, and the costs would be recovered later.⁵⁰ In the meantime, while the country was still neutral, Bosboom asked the Commander-in-Chief to remain frugal.

All mobilised soldiers were entitled to 'normal leave', which in August 1914 amounted to one day's leave for every ten days' service (while *landweer* in the fortifications received a day off every week). Leave often accrued so that soldiers could take several days in a row every so many weeks.⁵¹ In August 1916, normal leave was extended to one day every week for troops, as well as an additional day each month.⁵² Soldiers were also entitled to 'extraordinary leave' in special circumstances, usually due to family illness, death, or an important occasion. At Easter or Christmas, more troops received a few days off, as did Jewish troops at Hanukkah and New Year.⁵³ Furthermore, the Minister of War granted extraordinary leave to troops for occupational reasons. If they held important positions in industry, agriculture or trade, they could receive leave of anywhere between a week and three months.⁵⁴ The Ministry of War's Conscription Department and the High Command's equivalent had the combined responsibility of administering extraordinary leave.⁵⁵ Chaos must have reigned in the two departments, as they received thousands of requests on a weekly basis for extraordinary leave from soldiers, their employers, trade boards, and community organisations.⁵⁶ In 1916, in an attempt to set some precedents and curb abuses, High Command set quotas. Thirty per cent of a unit could be on extraordinary leave at any one time, and 25 per cent of its professional officer corps. The NCO quota was set at 20 per cent.⁵⁷ The two departments gave priority to soldiers who requested leave for economic reasons. Hence, agricultural workers received preference at harvest time, as did mineworkers after April 1918.⁵⁸ However, as the government often granted extraordinary leave to entire categories of soldiers (such as customs officers in May 1915, mayors in February 1917, and teachers in September 1917),⁵⁹ the quota was often exceeded.

A key consideration for the government in granting extraordinary leave was to protect the national economy. Never before in the history of the Netherlands had it interfered so completely in economic matters as it did during the Great War. Cabinet ministers recognised that in times of crisis, it was unwise to have too many individuals unable to fulfil vital jobs. Without skilled managers, workers, and administrators, the economy could falter. Not surprisingly, soldiers with the greatest economic worth were most likely to be granted leave. Perhaps because so many soldiers were able to go on extraordinary leave during the war and because few industries (save coal mining) experienced severe worker shortages, fewer women were employed to fill the gaps left by the mobilised men.⁶⁰ Reducing military expenditure, where possible, was another priority of the cabinet. In simple terms, every soldier on leave meant less money was spent feeding, housing, bathing, and clothing him. In fact,

the Conscription Department often granted applications for extraordinary leave only if the soldier did not require any monetary assistance for the time they were out of service.⁶¹

By late 1916, 21 per cent of mobilised troops were unavailable for active service on any one day as they were taking their allocation of normal leave. Taken together with the 30 per cent (at least) of others enjoying extraordinary leave, the 61 per cent absentee rate quoted by Snijders in October of that year was not an exaggeration. When extraordinary leave was mismanaged, as it inevitably was, the figure escalated. Of the 200,000 soldiers supposedly mobilised at any one time, some 80,000 were left to fulfil the many neutrality and defence roles described in the previous chapters. Not surprisingly, Snijders worried that the armed forces were going to waste.

The Easter Scare of 1916

One reason why the High Command favoured granting leave was because it improved troop morale. Maintaining high morale was imperative during long mobilisations when soldiers experienced little variation in their daily routines. In the case of the Dutch army, morale and discipline proved problematic right from the start. As early as September 1914, the Commander-in-Chief told officers to take decisive action against soldiers who were purposely disrupting train schedules by sitting in first class, smoking in non-smoking carriages, causing unrest at railway stations, and refusing to pay for tickets.⁶² High incidences of theft, falsification of leave papers, destruction of goods, smuggling, public drunkenness, faking illness, and refusals to abide by military conventions, such as saluting, indicated undercurrents of discontent.⁶³ The number of cases for misdemeanours before the military courts increased significantly during the war and extra military prisons had to be built to meet the demand of those caught and punished.⁶⁴ At times, there were not enough arrest rooms and prison cells available to house the miscreants.⁶⁵ It must be noted that a considerable discrepancy existed between the navy and army here. Naval court cases were comparable to pre-war numbers, principally because it was a much smaller force made up of mostly experienced professionals with no more than 9,000 conscripts attached at any one time.⁶⁶ In the army, the number of cases not only increased with the mobilisation, which was to be expected, but also rose percentage-wise by more than 400 per cent between 1914 and 1918.⁶⁷

During 1915, dissatisfaction among conscripts heightened. In the spring, troops in Utrecht (the principal position in the New Holland Waterline) were involved in a series of violent incidents and riots.⁶⁸ On 2 March, some 100 soldiers revolted after a much-disliked officer arrested one of their comrades. Further disquiet erupted eleven days later, when troops freed the detainee by brandishing their rifles at the officer in charge. On Sunday the 21st, further trouble spread into the centre of Utrecht, after altercations between officers and 400 to 500 troops at the railway station, when a considerable number of them had gone AWOL (absent without leave) for the day. On Saturday nights during the previous winter, soldiers managed to

sneak out and catch the last train out of town, returning just in time for the Sunday afternoon roll call. This particular Saturday, however, their plan was foiled.⁶⁹ That night, one of the AWOL soldiers was imprisoned, causing riots in the city. During the evening of 23 March, soldiers gathered in the centre of Utrecht, disgruntled and on edge. A large crowd of locals rallied around the troops. For the first time, the police and *Koninklijke Marechaussee* joined with military officers to disperse the crowd. After some serious altercations, most of the soldiers returned to their barracks, although the civilians continued to cause mayhem well into the next day. This time, High Command took serious steps to stop any more riots. It moved the entire 34 *Landweeer* Infantry Brigade (LWI) and 36 LWI stationed in Utrecht to barrack camps at Harskamp and Milligen, in the middle of the Veluwe heaths.⁷⁰ Intended as a temporary punishment, it became a permanent residence for the *landweeer* men, until they were sent on long-term leave several months later. Back in Utrecht, the Commander of the Waterline ordered that troops could not be seen in public in groups of more than five, nor could they mingle with locals.⁷¹

Restoring discipline swiftly and decisively was an important element of the authorities' response to the Utrecht disturbances, as was punishing the offenders. The High Command also launched a thorough investigation, which found that soldiers were unhappy with their leave provisions and the unfair distribution of days off (soldiers who lived far away received half a day more leave as a travel allowance).⁷² They were also unhappy with the state of their barracks, especially with rats, unhygienic mattresses, and the inferior quality of the food. The High Command attempted to rectify some of these concerns: it increased the bread ration, found ways to eradicate some of the vermin, and cleaned the mattresses. Yet it placed far greater emphasis on the inadequacies of Utrecht's military leadership than it did on the fundamental concerns of the rioting soldiers. The investigation report believed the shortage of officers, their youth, and inexperience all contributed to the lack of discipline and morale among Utrecht's soldiers. It also asserted that the general *tuchteloosheid* (lack of discipline) in the Dutch national character was partially to blame, something which was hard to fix, although officers would have to do their best to install military pride among their men.⁷³ A non-military national character was often cited in military reports as an explanation of the various problems in the army,⁷⁴ a convenient way of assigning blame without having to look for useful solutions.

Nevertheless, when troops in Apeldoorn, Arnhem, Boskoop, Tilburg, and Vlissingen also rioted in the four months following the Utrecht disturbances, citing leave and living conditions as reasons for their frustration, their concerns could not be as easily disregarded as Utrecht's soldiers had been.⁷⁵ Combined with growing parliamentary pressure to partially demobilise, the riots around the country contributed to the *landstorm* law amendments and helped to inspire improvements to short and long-term leave entitlements. The High Command also improved the living conditions of troops. For example, in Tilburg, it moved soldiers out of any large warehouses that were unhygienic.⁷⁶ When this was not possible, it forced warehouse owners to improve their facilities, providing running water, heating, and adequate ventilation. There was also a concerted effort to spread soldiers more widely, billeting

them throughout the southern provinces, in an attempt to avoid crowding too many men into one city or town.

Despite these concessions, Snijders was reluctant to ease leave restrictions or agree to a partial demobilisation. However, as the war on the western front sank further into stalemate, his position became much more difficult to defend in public. By late 1915, Bosboom had considerable problems persuading parliament that maintaining a high military alert was a necessity. In the eyes of many parliamentarians, the risk of invasion had disappeared.⁷⁷ The danger seemed to weaken even more when the first major offensive of the new year – around Verdun in February 1916 – did not create a major breakthrough for the Germans, instead degenerating into a protracted period of slaughter that neither side could bring to a decisive end. Many commentators argued that if the Netherlands was not being threatened, why should parliament accept a mobilisation that was both expensive and unpopular?

On 30 March 1916, German officials in Berlin informed a Dutch diplomat that they had reliable information regarding a pending British attack on German-occupied Belgium after an amphibious landing on the banks of the Schelde river. Germany demanded that the Netherlands take necessary military action to prevent an invasion of the province of Zeeland.⁷⁸ When this news reached the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and War, they faced a difficult decision. Neither believed the German report was accurate – Britain had shown no indication of going to war with the Netherlands – and both agreed that Germany intended to test the bounds of Dutch neutrality, especially in the wake of the *Tubantia* sinking a fortnight earlier.⁷⁹ If the German claim was true, however (which was remotely possible given that the Dutch knew about a plan for a full-scale attack on the German lines that had been recently discussed at an inter-Allied conference in Paris), the country would be in dire straits.⁸⁰ After consulting with Snijders and the rest of the cabinet, Bosboom told Snijders to cancel all military leave as of 31 March until the crisis simmered down or the report proved to be false.⁸¹ The Commander-in-Chief also delayed the sailing of the recently built cruiser *Noord Brabant* to the East Indies until further notice.⁸²

The cancellation of leave caused great excitement. At first, wild rumours filled the newspapers, followed within days by stories denouncing the High Command for the cancellation of leave. The press cast the General Staff as villains using a ruse to stir the population into a frenzy, with the ulterior motive of justifying the mobilisation. Journalists also criticised the government for not explaining the nature of the supposed threat that had caused the recall of leave in the first place.⁸³ In response to the uproar, cabinet ministers issued a statement on 4 April, proclaiming, without going into specifics, that the cancellation of leave was essential for the neutrality and safety of the country.⁸⁴ The statement only increased public distrust. The ministers had dug themselves a political hole that was likely to bury them, since it now proved difficult to reinstate leave without explaining why the country was no longer in danger. Hence, when Bosboom and Snijders urged the government to reinstate leave over Easter weekend, from 21 to 24 April, it chose to ignore the request and denied leave for a few more weeks.⁸⁵

Chaos ensued. Nearly 5,000 soldiers, already disgruntled at having been deprived

of their normal days off during the previous three weeks,⁸⁶ and facing the prospect of an Easter away from their families, simply left their depots and billets and returned home over the weekend.⁸⁷ Technically speaking, these troops committed a serious military crime for which they would receive a court-martial summons and punishment (including prison sentences and on-going leave restrictions).⁸⁸ Yet if troops had been properly appraised of the necessity of their presence over Easter, most would not have taken such drastic action. During the crises in March and April 1918, for example, when the Allies requisitioned Dutch ships and the Germans demanded free transit for sand and gravel, or during the influenza pandemic in 1918, when healthy troops had to be available around-the-clock, there was little disobedience to leave restrictions.⁸⁹ But in April 1916, without adequate explanations, no entreaties from their commanding officers could satisfy the mobilised men.⁹⁰ In response to the Easter fiasco, one soldier wrote a resolute warning to the government:

We soldiers wish to view the maintenance of the frequency and length of our allocated leave by the higher authorities as a household pet gauges the volume of its allotted portion of food. And you may be able to withhold the food bowl from your dog three or four times as it merely growls threateningly... a time will come when it will bite you viciously.⁹¹

Another soldier stated: 'You have to be a soldier to realise what it means at such moments to learn that you are not allowed to [go on] leave.'⁹² The two exclamations illustrate how fragile morale had become by 1916 and allude to an atmosphere of growing disobedience. Troops resented their forced conscription, did not wish to be mobilised for months at a time, and were thoroughly bored. Their discipline and morale suffered accordingly.

The public, like many troops, blamed the General Staff for the Easter scare, and saw it as a desperate attempt to reinforce mobilisation. Many felt the High Command was not only uncaring but paranoid, and had bullied the government into acquiescence. They saw the whole scenario as an exercise in military persuasion. It was, in fact, more a crisis of political expediency gone wrong, than one stemming from military pressure, but this could not be explained publicly. For fear of alienating Germany, the government could not, as Bosboom detailed in his memoirs, clarify that the leave situation stemmed from a serious diplomatic incident.⁹³ At any rate, it had no convincing answer as to why leave was cancelled for so long. Throughout the Easter fiasco, the government barely managed to save face. It had done what was necessary to avoid an international problem – to persuade Germany that it was serious about its neutrality commitments – but it had also made some glaring mistakes. There was no real need to keep soldiers available over Easter, three weeks after the release of the German report. As early as 2 April, Germany told the Dutch government that it was happy with the precautionary measures taken and that the report had been false.⁹⁴ Nor was there any need to stay on alert because of France or Britain. Both countries had sent several letters explaining that they had no intentions of breaching Dutch neutrality.⁹⁵

It took until 1 June 1916 for leave to be fully reinstated. On this day, troops in *landweer* intake year 1913 should have gone on indefinite leave; instead they were kept in service (if only for another month).⁹⁶ The two dates deliberately coincided, providing the government with an adequate excuse for why leave could be reinstated (since the *landweer* would cover the short-fall). Whether or not the Easter leave situation evolved out of a conscious need to show the public that the country could, at any time, be in danger of invasion, and that, therefore, full mobilisation was not only desirable but also essential, is debatable. No doubt, many people at the time, and many historians subsequently, believed this to be the case.⁹⁷ The length of the leave crisis and the government's silence on the issue lends weight to this explanation. In the end, however, the outcome was the same. After June, the government became far more careful about alienating itself from popular opinion, and far more open to demands for increased leave. Within months, it granted additional leave to *landweer* troops, allowed military intakes to be replaced by *landstormers*, and extended extraordinary leave provisions substantially. At the same time, the link between leave and morale became paramount, and Snijders was persuaded to improve normal leave allowances. The measures seemed to work. No major disturbances plagued the armed forces again until May 1918, when a group of 200 soldiers in the Kromhout barracks in Utrecht rioted, threw stones, and injured several officers. This time their main complaint was a lack of food.⁹⁸ It was the first signal of deep-seated discontent regarding inadequate provisions. But this time, there was very little the military authorities could do to alleviate the situation; the supply crisis was largely out of military or government control.

The Demobilisation Debate

After the Easter scare was resolved in June 1916, it became even harder for the High Command to persuade the government to maintain a full mobilisation, and in September 1916, the Minister President told Snijders that a systematic reduction in the military commitment was to take place over the next few months.⁹⁹ The government was now listening more closely to its critics and agreed that the country was no longer in any serious danger of invasion, a conclusion seemingly backed up by events on the western front. Like the battles around Verdun, the Allied Somme offensive, begun in July 1916, failed to achieve a decisive result by year's end, apart from tens of thousands more casualties. The deadlock seemed indefinite. Yet, unbeknown to the Dutch, the war situation was about to change dramatically. Snijders warned Bosboom, during their discussions in September 1916, that downsizing the army would complicate the nation's neutrality. Bosboom replied that the strains due to mobilisation on state expenditures, economy, and family life, made a partial demobilisation unavoidable.¹⁰⁰ He realised the potentially hazardous impact this would have on military security, but these domestic pressures forced his hand. He also felt that neither the Allied nor Central Powers were in any position to consider attacking the Netherlands at this stage.

The demobilisation lobby, which had pestered the government for a substantial

decrease in military commitment since October 1914, now enjoyed the upper hand, citing reasons of economic necessity and social good.¹⁰¹ Shortages of foodstuffs, fuels, and war materials made the demobilisation debate all the more prominent and prolific. The population resoundingly criticised the army for overburdening society and called for a partial demobilisation to ease the drain on provisions.¹⁰² It was not uncommon, for example, to have newspaper editorials ask soldiers to refrain from travelling by train while on leave.¹⁰³ One important reason the Dutch were far less willing than the citizens of the warring nations to feed their soldiers better, enjoy warmer accommodations, and consume coffee and tea, was because the Dutch were not at war. Neutral populations did not attach the same idealism to military service as warring populations because their country's security was not threatened in the same way. This meant that they were far less willing to forfeit their own well-being (food, warmth, luxuries) for the sake of the military mobilisation. Warring nations saw the needs of soldiers as paramount.¹⁰⁴ The supply situations in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, London, and Amsterdam may have seemed similar, with one important distinction: Parisians, Berliners, and Londoners were far more willing to sacrifice, as long as they knew their troops were receiving enough. Amsterdammers, on the other hand, would undoubtedly have been more tolerant of shortages if they knew Dutch soldiers were actually involved in defending their country. This is not to say that the Dutch had no concept of the need to sacrifice, because most Dutch people understood the necessity of government intervention in the economy. Nevertheless, they were unwilling to accept a supposedly unfair distribution of goods between themselves and soldiers.

The demobilisation lobbyists in parliament also used examples of other neutral nations to argue that the government's stand on continued mobilisation was extraordinary and inappropriate. Both Switzerland and Denmark, two neutral countries who shared borders with Germany, had cut their mobilisation commitment after the first few months of the war. Of the 350,000 Swiss troops placed on alert in August 1914, only 150,000 remained mobilised by the end of that year.¹⁰⁵ Many parliamentarians asked the question that if it was possible for these two neutrals to scale down, then why could the Netherlands not do the same?¹⁰⁶ The Minister of War's response highlighted the differences in the security position of these two nations and the Netherlands.¹⁰⁷ Neither Denmark nor Switzerland was situated as closely to the western front. Although it was conceivable that Switzerland might be invaded, its mountainous terrain, made it far less likely than an invasion of the Netherlands. Dutch territory was also far more likely to be crossed during a German retreat (especially through Limburg), for it possessed no geographical barriers to discourage it. More significantly, however, Bosboom argued that the Netherlands acted as a buffer zone between the two major belligerents, Germany and Britain. The Schelde alone was of such strategic significance that the warring parties schemed to keep the other out of the waterway. Neither Denmark nor Switzerland had anywhere near the same strategic value for Germany, Britain, or France. Apparently, the Swiss and Danish military organisations were also much more amenable to partial demobilisation than that of the Netherlands, which relied on a strong field army to thwart potential dangers.

Still, while Dutch security obligations remained unchanged, by September 1916, public opinion had shifted increasingly in favour of partial demobilisation.¹⁰⁸ Yet few people, except for the more radical socialist political parties, advocated a complete demobilisation; there was a general recognition that a token military presence was needed at the borders at least, to maintain the façade of military preparedness. Most believed that if the country was truly in danger, the military could always re-mobilise. Few comprehended the possible impact reducing the country's military strength might have. Snijders, on the other hand, was very concerned. The government's proposed cutbacks had the immediate result of decreasing the number of troops in the field far below the 200,000 mark with which the armed forces started in August 1914. In December 1915, the army was already 3,800 infantry troops short (compared to the number mobilised in August 1914), due to the fact that the *landstorm* intakes tended to be smaller than the *landweer* intakes they were replacing. This shortage doubled to 7,200 in October 1916, when *landweer* troops went on leave without an intake of *landstormers* being conscripted to take their place.¹⁰⁹ Infantry units were especially affected by the shortages, which caused anxiety for Snijders as it exhausted troop numbers available for border duties.¹¹⁰ More than a year earlier, the Territorial Commander in Friesland had warned Snijders that his troops were over-worked, with each one of them spending a full six months on active duty along the borders. There were not enough soldiers available to sustain this level of alertness long-term.¹¹¹ A similar, if not more pressing, situation faced commanders in the southern provinces. Thus, Snijders warned Bosboom in September 1916 that granting too much leave too quickly would seriously compromise the safety of certain areas, especially Zeeland and Limburg, leaving those areas vulnerable to attack and neutrality violations.¹¹² He also felt that he should not be held responsible if the viability of neutrality and defence diminished as a result of these government decisions.¹¹³

Snijders' pessimism about the Netherlands' security position proved to be well founded. Within three months, the government halted the proposed military cutbacks. In December 1916, Germany was on the verge of declaring the resumption of unrestricted U-boat warfare, which the Germans feared would bring not only the United States but also other neutrals including the Netherlands and Denmark into the war.¹¹⁴ The Germans began building up their defences around the Dutch border, especially around Zeeland.¹¹⁵ Some interpreted this as a signal of possible future hostilities, although Snijders saw it more realistically as a sign that Germany feared an attack from or through the Netherlands.¹¹⁶ He urged the government to put an end to

further systematic weakening of our available [armed] force and to the developing dilution of its standards that have for some time reduced the fighting quality of the mobilised army below the mark that would present acceptable guarantees for the security of the nation.¹¹⁷

The threats to neutrality that seemed to wane in 1915 and 1916 were revived, to become even stronger, during 1917 and 1918.¹¹⁸ The entry of the United States into

the war in April 1917, the Russian revolutions, and Russia's subsequent peace treaty with the Central Powers in March 1918, ensured that the western front was now the primary focus for the belligerents. As a consequence, the possible threats to Dutch security increased markedly. Furthermore, economic pressures on the Netherlands intensified during 1917 and 1918, as the Allies and Central Powers tightened their blockades, and became less willing to compromise with the Netherlands on economic matters. The pendulum that had swung public favour towards demobilisation in 1915 and 1916 now drifted slowly back to supporting some form of military preparation. Although mobilisation was never embraced with gusto and remained enormously controversial,¹¹⁹ the government had fewer problems in obtaining public acceptance of cancelling military leave during crises in 1917 and 1918. Nevertheless, many Dutch citizens remained suspicious of the High Command's influence and power. The mobilisation was eagerly opposed by rank-and-file conscripts as well. Eventually, when leave was cancelled in October 1918 because a German retreat through the Netherlands appeared likely, it helped spark the worst case of military rioting of the war.¹²⁰

A Second Mobilisation

Regardless of the fact that the military cutbacks proposed in September 1916 were never fully implemented, the amount of leave granted to troops guaranteed that if the Netherlands had been invaded in 1917 or 1918, a second mobilisation would be necessary. The hopes of the government and the Dutch population were pinned on this remobilisation. Since the mobilisation of August 1914 seemed to have gone well, they believed that a repeat exercise would not pose too many problems. Except for the General Staff, few people understood the potential hazards of a second mobilisation. As soon as the first *landweer* intakes went on leave in May 1915, the High Command began planning for a remobilisation. As more troops went on indefinite leave in 1915 and 1916, these plans became more complicated, and by late 1916, a second mobilisation was as involved a process as the initial mobilisation had been. It required not only the movement of thousands of troops into a newly determined *afwachtingsopstelling* (waiting position), but also the distribution of weapons, equipment, and transportation, in the matter of a few days. The whole undertaking would involve the requisitioning of more automobiles, horses, and dogs; the closing of training establishments and the movement of military depots; as well as the transfer of internment camps away from possible invasion sites (in case the internees decided to join the invaders).¹²¹ It would also require finding adequate lodgings, food supplies, and bedding for the recently remobilised men.

Snijders and many other high-ranking officers had reservations about the success of a second mobilisation, since it would only occur if the country actually faced a direct threat of invasion. For this reason, a remobilisation differed significantly from the original mobilisation, when no real threats seemed imminent and the armed forces had time on their side. Unlike the mobilisation of 1914, a remobilisation would have to happen much faster since an attacking force would not wait for the Nether-

lands to prepare itself. What worried Snijders most was that a second mobilisation would take at least four to five days to complete, enough time for the enemy to capture the all-important eastern railway lines, arresting the remobilisation in its tracks, and thus ensuring a rapid defeat.¹²²

That the country was suffering from a serious shortage of food, fuels, and other essential supplies made remobilisation a much more difficult enterprise in 1917 and 1918 than it had been in 1914. Coal and fuel shortages had forced trains to run less frequently, removed automobiles from the roads, kept aeroplanes grounded, and stopped naval vessels from patrolling the seas as frequently as they had before. A dearth of fodder made it difficult to sustain strong and healthy horses. These ever-present concerns regarding the existing military situation would only be intensified during a second mobilisation. For the High Command, the many potential delays and problems of a second mobilisation made it imperative to keep a close eye on possible threats. Neutrality breaches became far more significant in 1917 and 1918, because each event could signal a fundamental change in a belligerent's position toward the neutral. The High Command was mindful that the value of its armed forces had diminished and that the likelihood of a failed second mobilisation meant that the Netherlands' chances of withstanding an invasion were next to none.

The Demise of the Armed Forces

Without adequate weaponry, technological advancements, resources, or troop numbers, the Dutch armed forces began facing major problems in early 1917; problems which only worsened in subsequent months. Its soldiers were inadequately trained, poorly equipped, and suffering from low morale. One of the ironies of the Great War for the Netherlands, therefore, was that the country was more ready for war in 1914, even given its many shortfalls and inefficiencies, than it was in 1917 despite – or possibly because of – three years of preparation. To a large degree this was inevitable, in that it reflects the fate of an industrially weak neutral nation during a modern war. However, it is undeniable that if the Dutch had wanted to support the strongest possible army, navy, and air branch they could have done so.

The historian, Hubert van Tuyll, has argued that the warring sides, especially Germany, saw the size of the Dutch army as a clear deterrent to invasion, helping to preserve its neutrality.¹²³ While this certainly was the case for the first two years of conflict, during a time when Germany in particular was stretched to meet its many military commitments, it mattered less in 1917 and 1918. In the last two years of the war, even with an increase in the size of the armed forces (at least on paper) from 200,000 to over 400,000, the scarcity of heavy artillery, and modern weaponry had gravely reduced the army's defensive capabilities. The defeat of Romania in late 1916, and Russia's pulling out of the war in early 1918, freed up German troops in the east, who could, if necessary, have been used to invade the Netherlands. That the German military leadership had little compunction about threatening the Dutch with war in April 1918 illustrates this point well. By this stage, all of the belligerents must have been aware of Dutch military weaknesses. That is, after all, why in 1918

the Netherlands sent urgent pleas for equipment to Great Britain.

While it may have looked impressive on paper, the vast increases in the size of the Dutch armed forces, in fact were deceptive. At any one time, after 1916, the official number of mobilised men stood at around the same level as that of August 1914 (about 200,000 troops); the rest were on indefinite leave. Of these 200,000 mobilised troops, more than half were on some form of short-term leave. That left some 80,000 troops, spread along the borders, coastlines, and countryside, in numbers far from enough to worry either Germany or Great Britain. The Netherlands needed a comprehensive second mobilisation if it was to have any chance of surviving an invasion from either belligerent. The dilemma for the Dutch military was that if one of its neighbours attacked, it would most likely not have time for a successful remobilisation. Of course, any discussion about the actual quality of the Netherlands' army compared with its belligerent counterparts remains entirely speculative, since the Dutch armed forces were not tested in a combat situation in the period 1914-1918.

Yet even though the Dutch did not fight during the Great War, the war significantly altered the quality and worth of their fighting forces. The 200,000 troops mobilised in 1914 were, despite many inadequacies, comparatively much stronger than the force of 400,000 soldiers available for battle in November 1918.¹²⁴ The difference was due to many factors beyond Dutch control – industrial weakness and the inability to obtain supplies. But the inherent technological disadvantage was exacerbated as a result of the forced dispersal of the field army, the growing obsolescence of fortifications, the large number of troops allowed to go on leave, and the lack of political support for military improvements. Part of the problem was that not enough had been done before 1914 to ensure that the necessary processes were in place to improve and augment the armed forces.¹²⁵ A certain amount of responsibility, therefore, must lie with those who had outfitted and supported the military. But even if the structures and support mechanisms had been in place, the Dutch could not have competed with the warring states. Such was the fate of a small neutral nation in time of modern war.

Chapter

II

This Dreary War: Expressions of Popular Frustration

A strong longing for peace is visible everywhere, among the soldiers too. Three years from home, situated far from their place of residence, remarkably bad clothing and food, it has also taken too long for civilians.

– J. Erkens (1917)¹

By 1917, war weariness had set in; most Europeans were thoroughly tired of the conflict, a sentiment that contributed to the onset of the Russian revolutions; numerous protests, riots, and strikes in Germany; and a burgeoning international peace movement. The Dutch were similarly frustrated, a clear indication of how ubiquitous the war experience had become, affecting neutrals and belligerents alike. The supply situation was dire in the Netherlands during the last two years of the war. This certainly contributed to a sense of impending social crisis. There were several outbursts of public anger and dismay in 1917 and 1918. In the words of one historian who experienced them:

Due to the long period of rationing, an army of workers, with hunger in their eyes and with faces grey like potato peelings, protested, with pent up bitterness, against a government that... was deficient in its measures to provide the material needs of its people.²

Pent Up Bitterness

While the country faced several international crises in the first months of 1918, the Dutch had to cope with a particularly harsh winter and the impact of prolonged food and fuel shortages. It is only natural that social tension increases when shortages and price rises affect the quality of life, regardless of whether a society is at war or not.³ Not surprisingly, protest marches, which sometimes turned into riots, were common in towns and cities throughout the Netherlands in the period 1916-1918. In stark contrast to the societies of the warring nations, there were few social constraints on people to prevent these demonstrations. Citizens of the warring states seemed more willing to accept scarcity and thus controlled their public behaviour in the interest of the nation at war, albeit only to a certain point. Once the food shortages in Germany became too pronounced, the people began to react with violence. More than 50 food-related riots erupted in Germany in 1916, which only increased in intensity and frequency through 1917 and 1918, and helped fuel a revolutionary atmosphere.⁴ The Dutch were worried that their social unrest masked similar revolutionary tendencies.

The protests in the Netherlands were at first limited to political marches organised by special interest groups, such as local women's organisations, radical socialist parties, and trade unions. While most of these actions tended to be small-scale, they caused enough concern for municipal councils in the provinces of North and South Holland to request a military presence in their towns.⁵ The rallies had the potential to threaten public order and none of the mayors was willing to take any chances. For example, in June 1916, the Revolutionary Socialist Women's Organisation (*Revolutionaire Socialistische Vrouwencomité*) called for a nation-wide campaign against the government's distribution policies and the rise in inflation. Between 4 and 19 June, several marches were held in Amsterdam, The Hague, and Dordrecht, attracting considerable crowds.⁶ On 5 February 1917, after a winter with little coal and a potato shortage, the populations in the larger cities, especially in the working-class districts, took to the streets. Again, the impetus for the protest lay with the socialist organisations. This time, 20,000 Amsterdammers participated. A group of women among them plundered a coal barge with more looting taking place in a nearby shopping district. In the ensuing altercations with the police, two protestors were seriously wounded. The unrest did not die down for several days and spread to Rotterdam, The Hague, Haarlem, Zandvoort, Hengelo, and Eindhoven.⁷ Mayors requested help from the army and in March, a permanent troop of 100 soldiers was posted in The Hague.⁸ While stocks of potatoes remained low between March and May,⁹ public unrest simmered, eventually spreading to smaller towns as well, including Weesp, Kampen, Zaandam, Hilversum, and Hengelo.¹⁰

In June, an ample harvest of new potatoes became available. The Minister of Agriculture, Industry, and Trade, F.E. Posthuma, made a terrible mistake at this juncture: Instead of monitoring the distribution of potatoes by increasing rations, he allowed them to be sold on the free market. This meant cities received potatoes unevenly and without price or quantity guarantees, causing major problems in larger cities like Amsterdam. Irregular supplies meant that not everybody was able to buy potatoes at the same time, which inevitably increased public tension. On 28 June, a group of men and women stormed and plundered a barge filled with potatoes docked in one of Amsterdam's canals.¹¹ Five days later, a large, angry crowd gathered in the city centre and looted shops and ships laden with potatoes (some of which were to be exported to Great Britain in accordance with the Agricultural Agreements). For four days, rebellious mobs caused havoc in the city centre. Police and armed troops tried to maintain order but with limited success.¹² On 5 July, troops shot at the protesters, killing five of them and wounding many more.¹³ Stray bullets had already killed three others earlier in the week when warning shots ricocheted off the buildings in Amsterdam's narrow streets. The loss of so many lives stunned the nation, and the riots ended on 6 July, but not without first sparking a series of strikes throughout the region, including workers in Hembrug's artillery factories.¹⁴ Outbursts of violence and rioting also spread to Rotterdam, Enschede, Hengelo, Amelo, Velsen, Utrecht, Arnhem, The Hague, and Zutphen during July; where they were all less confrontational or lethal.¹⁵

The deaths and violence during the potato riots made international headlines.¹⁶

The government received severe criticism for mismanaging the distribution of the potato harvest. Posthuma was roundly ridiculed and came under tremendous public attack. His unpopularity reached a peak as evidenced by this popular, if cruel, ditty of the time: 'Posthuma's wife is dead, she choked on two pounds of bread'.¹⁷ The importance of a strong military presence in the major cities became obvious. More than 2,000 troops (two entire field army battalions) were sent to Amsterdam during the riots.¹⁸ If the soldiers were not fending off the mobs or trying to disperse them, they were guarding shops, warehouses, ships, and important areas, such as the vegetable market.¹⁹ They also accompanied bakers on their delivery rounds, and protected food movements.²⁰ The government asked Snijders for troops to stand guard at warehouses and bottling factories throughout the country in late 1915. After the July 1917 riots, such guard duties became more marked, especially in the major centres.²¹

There were few major disturbances until the winter of 1917-1918, when coal and potatoes were again in very short supply. In the meantime, municipal authorities of towns and cities alike requested that troops be stationed nearby. The mayor of Amsterdam was especially insistent on keeping two battalions on hand. Quite naturally, neither the Commander of the Fortified Position of Amsterdam nor Snijders thought this was appropriate because it was a drain on the number of troops available for neutrality and defence measures and only dispersed the field army even further. But, according to the *Gemeentewet* (Municipal Law), mayors could request military assistance in times of civil disorder and had some say over deployment.²² The law, however, made no provision for civil disorder in a time of mobilisation. So, Amsterdam's mayor informed the High Command that he was keeping the two battalions in the city well after the riots had ended, while both the fortification commander and Snijders tried to reduce the number of troops. The argument soon involved the Minister of War, B.C. de Jonge, and after some angry correspondence between them, they reached a compromise, although it took until October to do so.²³ A contingent of troops would remain in Amsterdam permanently – it was more than the two commanders wanted and less than the mayor expected.

Other cities also requested a permanent military presence. The mayor of The Hague, for example, asked for an extra 100 troops, because the 100 soldiers stationed in the suburb of Voorburg since March 1917 were also responsible for maintaining order in Rotterdam and this was, he feared, far from adequate. During the protests in the city in July 1917, 600 infantry and 100 cavalry were needed to maintain order in his city alone.²⁴ While this request was acceded to, some of the other mayors' demands were not.²⁵ When refusing a particular request for aid, Snijders often used the argument that when there was no visible sign of disorder, municipalities were not permitted to have a say over troop deployments.²⁶ Of course, during a 'state of siege', the ultimate responsibility for public order already lay with the military authorities, which could move troops at will.²⁷

In January 1918, the effect of the war on available supplies of coal, grain, and potatoes began to have a serious impact on all forms of consumption. The number of meetings organised by disgruntled interest groups increased. In Groningen, munic-

ipal workers organised a strike, whilst in Amsterdam the concrete workers' union did the same in order to express their outrage at the abysmal working and living conditions. On 4 February, many of the socialist trade unions in Amsterdam, The Hague, Haarlem, and Rotterdam called for a general strike to protest against the government's rationing measures. But the strike did not receive universal support; several unions told their members not to involve themselves for fear of military reprisals and further deaths.²⁸

With the reduction of the bread ration to 200 grams per person per day, public tolerance reached breaking point.²⁹ On 5 April 1918, large crowds amassed in Amsterdam's streets, some of whom forced bakers to sell them bread while refusing to hand in their ration cards, while others simply took bread without paying for it. Looting and plundering broke out in several areas. But this time the troops and police were more careful in their handling of the rioters. As a result, no one was shot. The population was not as lucky in the country's administrative capital, however. Residents in The Hague also took to the streets, rioted, and plundered shops. Soldiers here set up barricades and tried to break up the crowds. Eventually, they opened fire, and, although the available records give conflicting information, it seems that two people died during the riots.³⁰ Public protests erupted in other cities as well, fortunately without the same tragic results. For the first time, even the country's farming centres voiced their united disgust at the rationing regulations.³¹ Those who had profited significantly from the supply crisis until this stage, namely farmers, smugglers, and shopkeepers, were no longer immune from its effects.

The April 1918 riots occurred at the most inopportune time for the government, coinciding with the Allied requisitioning of Dutch ships and German demands for retribution. The international situation certainly heightened the sense of nation-wide unrest. Yet within days, the disturbances were quelled through a mix of military intervention and the promise of more food. The re-instatement of food shipments by the Allies in no small way helped to ease many people's fears, although the government did not increase the bread ration until after the signing of the armistice in November. The government also placed an export prohibition on potatoes, even though it risked alienating Germany. There were still some outbursts of public frustration between May and November 1918, but they never reached the intensity of the July 1917 and April 1918 incidents.

The Plague of the Spanish Lady

The lack of public protests after April 1918 can, in part, be attributed to the outbreak of influenza. Like the rest of the world, the Netherlands could not escape the clutches of the worst pandemic in human history. Spanish influenza would kill more people around the globe than the Black Death had done in the Middle Ages. It spread in three nasty waves from July 1918 to early 1919. From the Arctic to the Sahara, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, no population was left untouched by the deadly disease. It is estimated that two billion people suffered from the virus, and anywhere between two and four million subsequently died.³² The first wave of the Spanish Flu

hit the Netherlands in July 1918 and reached its peak the next month. The second wave struck the following October and was at its deadliest in the last week of that month and the first two weeks of November. Meanwhile, the third wave developed in the aftermath of the armistice as thousands of soldiers returned home from the battlefields in Europe.³³ Few people died in the Netherlands during the first visit of the 'Spanish Lady', but the flu debilitated hundreds of thousands of people, kept them from working, and out of general circulation. It placed severe strains on the economy, on hospitals, on medical supplies, and health workers.

For the armed forces, outbreaks of influenza among the troops had several serious consequences. What was most disturbing about the virus was that it principally affected young men and women, especially those between the ages of 20 and 45.³⁴ In other words, men in the armed forces were more susceptible because they had the right physiological build and lived in conditions amenable to the spread of disease. Despite precautions, Spanish Influenza took its toll.³⁵ Through the end of August, 22,424 field army troops (out of a total strength of 90,000) contracted the illness. In the space of a little over two months, nearly one-quarter of the field army was unavailable for any type of service between three and five days, and after recovering most troops could not undertake any strenuous tasks for another week or so. In this same period, 53 soldiers died from related diseases, especially pneumonia.³⁶ Figures for the rest of the armed forces are hard to find, but are likely to have been similar. Not only did the flu sap the strength of soldiers, it also endangered the smooth supply of foodstuffs and other necessities, because many men in the Supply Service had contracted the flu. Extra soldiers had to be transferred to the Supply Service, and leave was cancelled for members of the Automobile Corps to ensure that everyone was available to make food deliveries.³⁷ For healthy troops, the flu outbreak provided an unexpected holiday from the dreary monotony of marching and exercises. With the cancellation of non-essential activities, there was nothing much left to do, unless they were on border patrol, worked in the Supply Service, or held an administrative function. In fact, the military slowed down to a halt over the summer. The High Command even postponed the arrival of the latest intake of conscripts (year 1919) for a month (from July to August) because their barracks could not be disinfected in time.³⁸

In October 1918, the second wave of the influenza struck. The virus had by now mutated into its most deadly form. Although figures are incomplete, the official records state that nation-wide during 1918, 17,734 people died from the flu and another 27,423 from pneumonia-related diseases.³⁹ Most of these deaths occurred during the second wave. It is very likely that a more realistic representation of actual deaths would double the official figures, since many deaths went unreported or were attributed to factors unrelated to the flu.⁴⁰ At any rate, even if the figures were correct, they were four times higher than the number of deaths related to respiratory illnesses in the Netherlands in the previous years.⁴¹ Again, sources are scarce, but the military was as severely affected by the second outbreak. Using the above estimate of general deaths in the population, which stood roughly at 0.5 per cent, it can be estimated that approximately 1,000 soldiers and naval personnel lost their lives to influen-

za in 1918.⁴² Undoubtedly, the numbers were high because, despite what many thought at the time, those who had suffered from the first strain were not immune to the second, and succumbed as readily, if not more so, as those people who had avoided infection in the summer months. It also meant that troops became virtual prisoners in their barracks and camps, for fear of spreading the disease. Except for entirely necessary tasks, all other activities were put on hold, which meant that most of the mobilised men had very little to do from July through November 1918.

In fact, the timing of the flu could not have been worse as troop morale was already at an all-time low, due mostly to mobilisation lethargy but also to the lack of proper food and heating. That the worst influenza weeks coincided with the mutiny at Harskamp and with the turbulent days before the signing of the armistice is coincidental. While the flu cannot be held even remotely responsible for either event, the pandemic marked the mood in the Netherlands at the end of the Great War. The lack of enthusiasm and generally poor morale in both the civilian and military populations must be seen within the light of this public health disaster. Everybody knew someone who had succumbed to the wiles of the Spanish Lady and most blamed the effects of four long years of war for its highly contagious and lethal nature. Whether this was true or not, there is little doubt that under-nourishment caused by the lack of foodstuffs aggravated the effects of the virus.⁴³ Poignantly, while the Dutch were utterly sick of the war, it seemed that the war in turn had made them ill.

No More War!

After years of conflict, shortages, and difficulties, the Dutch were tired of the war. A universal desire for peace enveloped the population by 1918. Of course, it was only natural for a neutral country to promote peace, and many Dutch people had been ardent supporters of peace movements well before the outbreak of war.⁴⁴ In fact, most Netherlanders saw it as their duty as neutral citizens to foster international peace. After all, their country had hosted the two Peace Conferences (in 1899 and 1907) and was home to the Peace Palace in The Hague. During the war and unlike many belligerent societies, there were no social restrictions inhibiting the Dutch from calling for an end to the hostilities. In fact, one of the few topics about which Dutch newspapers were relatively consistent was encouraging international peace.⁴⁵ It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the government tried to initiate peace negotiations between the warring states on several occasions, albeit each time unsuccessfully.⁴⁶ Such efforts had very practical neutrality aims. Most immediately, an end to the conflict would end threats to its neutrality and herald a return to economic stability. More subtly, if a neutral could facilitate some form of negotiation between the warring parties, then it was more likely that its neutrality would receive greater recognition. It would provide the neutral with an international voice, which many neutrals feared would be lost to them in a post-war world dominated by the interests of the victors. For these reasons, the Netherlands was not the only neutral state that

tried its hand at liaising between the warring sides. The Scandinavian neutrals, Switzerland, and even the Vatican tried, although all with little success.⁴⁷

Among the general population, the desire for peace found a variety of expressions, which were closely associated with underlying assumptions about neutrality, the Netherlands' position in the world, and the value of the military and its ability to mobilise. After August 1914, the most obvious expression of the 'peace cause' came in the form of peace movements, which either already existed or were created in response to the outbreak of war. Membership in these movements increased significantly between 1914 and 1918 and they played a prominent role in supporting and furthering public opinion. It is not the intention here to study the development of the country's peace movements,⁴⁸ but rather to analyse the role these movements played in heightening anti-military attitudes among civilians and conscripts alike.

There were two distinct types of peace movement. Some, like the *Internationale Vrouwenbond voor den Duurzamen Vrede* (International Women's Bond for Long-term Peace, IVDV), the *Vrede door Recht* (Peace through Law) association, and the *Nederlandsche Anti-Oorlog Raad* (Dutch Anti-War Council, NAOR, a conglomeration of several smaller peace movements), were concerned first and foremost with a cessation of hostilities and creating the conditions for a permanent international peace.⁴⁹ They received widespread support: between 1915 and 1918, for example, membership of the NAOR and its affiliates rose from 8,500 to nearly 39,000.⁵⁰ The council used this support as a mandate to petition the government to promote peace and to urge foreign governments to start arbitration, while the IVDV (along with the International Women's Organisation) held an international congress for women in The Hague in 1915 with similar aims.⁵¹ Few of these organisations had any real political motivation besides peace, although there were some politically inspired attempts at brokering peace. For example, the SDAP leader, P.J. Troelstra, in 1917 organised a meeting of Scandinavian and Dutch socialists with this purpose in mind.⁵²

At the other end of the spectrum, organisations such as the International Anti-Militarism Association (*Internationale Anti-Militaristische Vereeniging*, IAMV) sought not only an end to the war but also an end to the use of military power by governments.⁵³ These groups were often highly politicised and used overt and pro-active forms of lobbying. The IAMV was a member of the *Samenwerkende Arbeidersverenigingen* (Associations of Organised Workers, SAV).⁵⁴ The SAV was established in August 1914 to organise the various radical socialist and anarchist unions and political parties, including the SDP (*Sociaal-Democratische Partij*), under one umbrella with the motto 'war against the war!'⁵⁵ Established in 1904 with a radical socialist agenda, the IAMV had always been active in decrying militarism as the scourge of both capitalist and imperialist regimes. What concerned the Dutch military authorities was that during the war the organisation urged soldiers to lay down their arms and refuse to serve. The IAMV also spread anti-military propaganda and advocated that soldiers renege on their duties whenever possible.

While the civilian and military authorities tended not to have any problems with peace movements as such, they were concerned about the possible ramifications of the anti-militaristic tones of organisations like the IAMV and SAV. The government

worried that public support would translate into political support for the revolutionary parties, which was, of course, one of the SAV's primary *raison d'être*. Meanwhile, the High Command feared that support among conscripts might lead to widespread military dissension. Any movement that expressed opposition to the mobilisation was, in their eyes, not only undesirable but dangerous as well. As a result, the High Command did everything possible to quell these movements. It denied entry into 'state of siege' areas by anarchist and revolutionary speakers and banned the distribution of their newspapers and pamphlets among soldiers. Intelligence agents even took note of the comings and goings of prominent 'revolutionaries' and tapped their telephone conversations.⁵⁶

Such fears were not completely unfounded. Initially, the radical nature of the IAMV and like-minded groups did not have a significant impact. In fact, if the war had not broken out it is conceivable that the IAMV would have disappeared altogether. Support for their cause was so low in 1912 and 1913 that its annual congress had to be cancelled.⁵⁷ However, its popularity grew in response to general dissatisfaction with the war and some highly successful publicity campaigns.⁵⁸ Membership of the IAMV reached a peak of 3,200 in 1918, compared to only a few hundred in 1913. Meanwhile, circulation of its monthly magazine *De Wapens Neder (Down With Your Weapons)* grew from 70,000 copies in 1913 to 290,000 at the time of the armistice.⁵⁹ As we shall see, conscientious objection began to rise after 1915, partially in response to the publicity generated by anti-military groups; while mobilisation clubs with radical agendas seemed to be sprouting up like noxious fungi throughout the armed forces.⁶⁰

*Like the People, So the Army*⁶¹

By 1918, soldiers were wholeheartedly tired of the war. In fact, low morale and general sluggishness among troops had set in quite quickly after the initial excitement of mobilisation subsided in 1914. By April 1915, commanders already had real problems convincing their men of the necessity of continued mobilisation. While troops understood that neutrality required some form of military preparation, they, like many civilians, did not feel it required a full-scale mobilisation. Requests for more leave and better living conditions became the rallying cries of disgruntled soldiers. The Easter leave debacle in 1916, as we saw in chapter 10, highlights how fragile morale actually was, and defined clear limits of soldier co-operation with the military authorities.

One of the most pressing issues for the High Command was improving conditions for soldiers to such a degree that their universal dislike of the mobilisation was not intensified beyond manageable levels and did not interfere with their willingness to follow orders. Better leave provisions in 1916 did a great deal to alleviate many of the complaints. A number of charitable and military organisations also improved the quality of soldiers' free time. They arranged entertainment for the troops, set up places for relaxation outside barracks and camps, co-ordinated lesson plans for furthering education, and provided opportunities for interested soldiers to learn new skills and participate in handicraft activities.⁶² The High Command used

incentives such as sports days and craft shows to entice soldiers into extracurricular activities.⁶³ It also published a newspaper, the *Soldaten Courant*, with the two-fold purpose of keeping soldiers informed and to provide a means of disseminating ideas and propaganda.⁶⁴ Aside from this, the High Command did as much as possible to keep soldiers' grievances at bay. It deliberately kept food rations ample for as long as possible, and luxury items, such as tea, coffee, and sugar, remained part of the military diet long after these goods had disappeared from civilian larders and cupboards. But with the passage of the war years, the dreary tasks, widespread boredom, unsatisfactory and often unhygienic living conditions, and reductions in military rations seriously affected morale. The year 1918 tested the resolve of conscripts more than any other, especially as the standard of the food declined rapidly. Their families also suffered. Considerable price rises and inflation through the course of 1917 and 1918 surpassed soldiers' allowances, making it very difficult for troops to live off their income let alone support a family.⁶⁵ This was one more reason, among many, why they disliked conscription so intensely.

One of the most worrying side effects of low morale for military commanders was a corresponding decline in soldiers' discipline.⁶⁶ Dutch officers often quoted Von Moltke, the ex-German Chief of Staff, on this point: 'An army without discipline is a costly, in time of war useless, and in time of peace dangerous institution'.⁶⁷ Quite realistically the High Command feared that with a decline in discipline the fighting quality of its troops would also deteriorate and that, more immediately, soldiers would refuse to police public disorders in towns and cities. How could it compel soldiers to act decisively against a hostile crowd if most of them were sympathetic to the cause of the protesters? How could it take the civilian out of the conscript? Although there were meetings where soldiers urged their comrades to refuse to shoot civilians,⁶⁸ there was only ever one reported case of supposed insubordination when, during the July 1917 potato riots, a small band of troops refused to use their rifles on a group of demonstrators. Subsequent investigations, however, revealed that it had not been a case of defiance but of inadequate authority and the panic that arose from a highly chaotic situation.⁶⁹ In fact, even though morale was low, in general, conscripts carried out assigned tasks and duties unfailingly, albeit begrudgingly. Nevertheless, the High Command's concern that soldiers were no longer trustworthy because of declining morale was so real that the Commander of the Fortified Position of Amsterdam suggested replacing troops stationed in the city with soldiers who had not witnessed the July riots.⁷⁰ The strength of this fear must be kept in mind when considering the official reaction to the establishment of socialist mobilisation clubs, the distribution of anti-military and pacifist literature, and the Harskamp mutiny.

Army leaders also feared that if news spread about particular instances of disobedience, it would inspire other soldiers to follow suit. As a result, the High Command stifled reports about soldiers rioting. Not surprisingly, the *Soldaten Courant* did not comment on any of the 1915 soldier disturbances or the 1916 Easter leave fiasco, although it did report the Harskamp mutiny in October 1918.⁷¹ The High Command asked newspapers to refrain from reporting on these events as well, a request

that was often, but not always, heeded.⁷² It ensured that very little accurate information about military disturbances reached the public, which guaranteed when a story did get published, it was often highly exaggerated or outlandish. For example, many in The Hague seriously believed that 70 people had died as a result of the Tilburg riots in August 1915, when in fact no one had.⁷³ Preventing accurate reports from appearing in the newspapers only made the rumours more believable, and may have promoted misconceptions about the actual state of the soldiers' morale and dependability.

Rumours and stories provided ready fuel for anti-military and revolutionary propaganda. The military leadership was concerned about the infiltration of socialist ideas among soldiers, which was not surprising since the socialists opposed most forms of militarism. When socialist groups, much like denominational and charity organisations,⁷⁴ began organising clubs for troops to go in their free time, the High Command took immediate action, banning soldiers from affiliating with the more extreme of the organisations. There was, for instance, a huge difference between the activities of the SDAP affiliations and those of organisations such as the SDP. Although the SDAP occasionally welcomed speakers on topics such as pacifism and anti-militarism, it did not seek an end to the mobilisation and did not incite its members to military disobedience. The SDAP leadership was quick to point this out to the military and government.⁷⁵ Consequently, the military authorities, although they remained cautious and prevented them from spreading propaganda literature,⁷⁶ were more lenient toward SDAP soldiers and their clubs than they were with the SDP and IAMV.⁷⁷ In 1917, the Minister in Charge of the Navy, J.J. Rambonnet, even allowed sailors to join an SDAP organisation that he had banned before the war.⁷⁸ There was, in fact, little love lost between the two socialist camps and the SDAP discouraged its members from associating with the SDP.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, concern about radical 'mobilisation clubs' spread quickly among commanders early in 1915. By April, the High Command had received reports of such organisations throughout the country in places like Leiden, Tilburg, Aalsmeer, Beverwijk, Den Helder, Roosendaal, Zaandijk, Utrecht, Zaltbommel, Bergen op Zoom, Naarden, Durgerdam, The Hague, Breda, Abcoude, Eindhoven, Delft, Schiedam, Amsterdam, and Woerden.⁸⁰ Although a far from negligible presence, most of the clubs were very small with a core membership that rarely exceeded 20 members (both civilian and military), although one club in Tilburg boasted 60 associates.⁸¹ It was not the size of the clubs that worried the authorities but the impact of their activities on the mind-set of other conscripts.⁸² To this end, most of the clubs disseminated a variety of socialist and anti-military propaganda, invited well-known socialists and anarchists to speak to conscripts, including F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, B. Lansink Senior, and D. Wijnkoop.⁸³ However, these clubs did not differ greatly from Catholic and Protestant organisations and SDAP affiliations, in that they provided a support network for soldiers and helped relieve boredom. The main difference was that their messages were more controversial and the potential for harm, in the eyes of the authorities at least, was greater.

The military hierarchy did everything in its power to put an end to the radical

Illustration 12: Snijders' cure for anti-militarism



'Snijders: Those drinks are undermining his constitution, let me doctor him, then he will roar again.' This drawing by J. van Breen appeared in the *Nieuwe Amsterdammer* in 1918. It shows the Commander-in-Chief attempting to administer anti-venom to an ailing lion (the Dutch armed forces) for the anti-military potions he has been swallowing (the bottles on the table with names of known anti-military publications like *Het Wapen Neder* and *De Tribune*).

mobilisation clubs, by declaring the possession and distribution of anti-military, revolutionary, and anarchist newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and other forms of propaganda illegal;⁸⁴ by banning meetings; by forcing speakers out of 'state of siege' areas; and by breaking up clubs by moving committee members into different regiments.⁸⁵ Officers attended club meetings undercover⁸⁶ and identified leaders, who were subsequently arrested for undermining *krijgstucht* (military discipline).⁸⁷ One commander even suggested extending the 'state of siege' throughout the country so that the military could deal with anti-military propaganda more decisively.⁸⁸ What perturbed Snijders and his colleagues the most was that the appearance of these radical mobilisation clubs contributed to the outbreaks of general disorder. It seemed

too much of a coincidence, for example, that the emergence of the clubs coincided with the military riots in 1915. The organisations may have been involved in the disturbances in one or two instances, but there is no evidence to suggest that their activities were a root cause of the riots. In fact, in most of the cases, there was no evidence of involvement found.⁸⁹ What is more likely, however, is that, rather than being the catalyst for agitation and unrest, the mobilisation clubs were just another symptom and signal of widespread frustration among the troops.

The actions that the authorities took against the clubs were relatively unsuccessful. While ensuring the temporary disintegration of certain groups, socialist mobilisation clubs continued to exist in one form or another right up to the end of the war. Their activities grew more clandestine and they became shrewder in how they propagated their information. They also became better organised. In 1916, the SDAP clubs in the provinces of North and South Holland, Utrecht, and Gelderland merged to form the *Vereeniging van Sociaal-Democratische Mobilisatieclubs* (Association of Social-Democratic Mobilisation Clubs), to be joined in 1917 by similar organisations in the southern provinces.⁹⁰ It was only in 1918 that the radical clubs reappeared in the documents of the High Command. This time, a distinct split can be discerned within the radical movement between those who supported the SDP, the *Soldaten-Raden* (Soldier Councils, SR), and the even more secretive *Raden van Arbeiders en Soldaten* (Councils of Workers and Soldiers, SAR).⁹¹ The SR and SAR operated independently of each other, although they had common goals, namely revolution and the overthrow of the constitution by undermining the military as an instrument of the state. The difference between the two was defined by their proposed means to a revolutionary end: the SR wanted to work together with the SDP and trade unions and refused to use violence, while the SAR urged its members to arm themselves and force a revolution by whatever means necessary. The SAR was a dramatic departure from the anti-military activities organised and supported in 1915, and harked back to the military councils (*sovjets*) in the Russian armed forces at the time. It illustrates how the clubs had become far more radical, and had distanced themselves even further from the SDAP's moderate programme. Not surprisingly, the SR and SAR caused grave concern among military and civil authorities, which made concerted efforts to suppress them.⁹²

In the end, few troops were involved in the radical mobilisation clubs, even in their most revolutionary forms. Their impact on the majority of their comrades, although not non-existent, may not have warranted the amount of effort expended by the authorities to suppress them. At no stage did the clubs enjoy widespread support. While many conscripts may have sympathised with particular aspects of the anti-military message, they were not inspired *en masse* to become revolutionaries. Significantly enough, there is no evidence to suggest that the extremely revolutionary Dutch *sovjets* involved themselves in the aborted revolution of November 1918.⁹³

Yet there was an undeniable link between the propaganda drives of anti-military organisations, such as the IAMV and the mobilisation clubs, and the strength of the demobilisation debate within the country. The most successful of their campaigns was the *dienstweigeringsmanifesto* (literally, 'refusal to serve' or conscientious-objection

manifesto) signed in May 1915 by a group of revolutionary anarchists and Christian socialists, including the *Revolutionair Socialistisch Verbond* (Revolutionary Socialist League) headed by Henriëtte Roland Holst, in denunciation of militarism and the mobilisation.⁹⁴ The manifesto came in response to a petition from 22 prominent businessmen to the government in April in support of the mobilisation and *landstorm* laws.⁹⁵ Nearly 180 people signed the first *dienstweigering* manifesto, which was published and circulated in large numbers around the country in September.⁹⁶ By the summer of 1916, some 1,000 people had signed it.⁹⁷ The strength of the petition was not in the number of signatures, which remained a definite minority, but in the fact that tens of thousands of copies were printed and distributed and encouraged widespread discussion. It also inspired similar movements in other countries.⁹⁸ The general populace knew of its existence and this pushed the principle of conscientious objection into public debate. The military authorities took decisive action against any soldiers who signed the manifesto and hunted down copies during the 'state of siege'. The petition worried the civilian authorities as well, which used the law against *opruiming* (rioting, causing public disturbances) to arrest most of the original signatories, many of whom were gaoled or fined.⁹⁹ The government warned any civil servant whose name appeared on the manifesto that they would lose their jobs if they did not retract their support for the campaign. This resulted in the withdrawal of 183 signatures in December 1915.¹⁰⁰ Even the peace-seeking SDAP stood by the government in their condemnation of the petition.¹⁰¹

There are a number of different meanings associated with the Dutch word *dienstweigering* (refusal to serve). It can mean conscientious objection, where for personal, religious, or political reasons a person cannot be placed in a position where he might kill another human. It can also have more extreme ideological associations with anti-militarism, where the entire concept of the armed forces is deemed immoral or politically problematic. But, *dienstweigering* is also used in more particular cases to describe soldiers who refuse to follow particular orders. The different meanings make it difficult to interpret available statistics concerning *dienstweigering* during the Great War. In official sources, soldiers who refused to serve were classified together. Discovering how many acted out of anti-militarist or pacifist ideals has proven very difficult to calculate. What is significant, however, is that after the publication of the first conscientious objection manifesto in September 1915, the reported cases of *dienstweigering* increased considerably: In the first five months of the war, the number of cases before the army's three military courts stood at 47; in the whole year 1915, 213 cases were heard there; followed by 191 cases in the first six months of 1916.¹⁰² It was one of the most common offences handled by the courts, after desertion, theft, and insubordination. In fact, 12 per cent of cases before one of the three military courts during 1916 dealt with *dienstweigering*, while 28 per cent were related to desertion. The desertion figures were skewed somewhat as a result of the Easter leave crisis; nevertheless, of the 488 desertion cases, more than 60 per cent involved re-offenders.¹⁰³

There is no doubt that there was a close correlation between conscientious objection and desertion. The Easter fiasco alone reveals that desertion was a common way

for soldiers to vent their frustration, perhaps in a far more decisive way than rioting or violence.¹⁰⁴ One infantry regiment in The Hague must have thought this as well, when two weeks before the Easter leave fiasco, soldiers in two sections refused to follow orders all day, many deserted, while others faked illness.¹⁰⁵ It was a spontaneous protest against the burden of military service and lack of leave and occurred only among conscripts in one building. Eventually, some 50 soldiers were arrested and court-martialled on grounds of *dienstweigering*.

According to the IAMV, 460 soldiers were inspired to *dienstweigering* because of ideological motives. Of these, 238 received monetary aid and moral support from organisations such as the IAMV and the pacifist Christian-Socialist groups, who turned the objectors into martyrs for their respective causes.¹⁰⁶ They tried to inspire other soldiers to do the same and widely publicised the fact that after a maximum of 12 months in gaol for *dienstweigering*, troops were discharged from military service.¹⁰⁷ This was in sharp contrast to the drastic punishments – often death – for desertion in the combatants' armies. Since the Netherlands was not at war, neither desertion nor refusal to serve was punishable by death.¹⁰⁸

Conscientious objection caused considerable logistical problems for the military authorities. They were not prepared for the numbers of objectors and did not have enough cells to house them all.¹⁰⁹ In the end, they turned one of the fortifications around Amsterdam, Fort Spijkerboor, into a special prison for conscientious objectors, to separate them from other military prisoners, and to prevent the spread of pacifist propaganda.¹¹⁰ Prison wardens kept the dates and times of prisoner transfers secret and even isolated them in separate railway carriages, so that the IAMV could not organise rallies and publicity drives.¹¹¹ But there were also attempts to address individual soldiers' objections. Late in 1917, the Minister of War, B.C. de Jonge, gave conscientious objectors the option of bringing their cases to his attention.¹¹² He reached an agreement with Snijders in 1918 to allow soldiers with serious ideological concerns to volunteer for non-combatative roles, such as medics, administrative personnel, and telegraph and telephone operators.¹¹³ The number who accepted these opportunities is unknown; in any case, troops inspired by anti-militarism would probably not have done so. This regulation brought some form of acceptance to the ideological objection within the armed forces and moved the country one step closer to making it national law.¹¹⁴ The conscientious objection and pacifist campaigns should also not be seen outside the sphere of the demobilisation debate. The socialist motto 'no man and no money for the mobilisation', which was much bandied about during the war, is itself an indication of this.¹¹⁵ The campaigns were also very much part of the general anti-militaristic attitude of the Dutch. It is worth noting, therefore, that the conscientious objection manifesto appeared at the height of the demobilisation, leave, and *landstorm* debates in 1915 and 1916.

To Salute or Not?

The manner in which the military handled itself continued to be a prominent point of public discussion throughout the war as well. This is best illustrated by the debate

surrounding the appropriateness of saluting in the armed forces. Right from the start of the mobilisation, conscripts openly questioned the use of saluting everyone of a higher rank. As early as October 1914, the Commander-in-Chief instructed officers to enforce saluting among troops as the practice had become so infrequent and little punished as to require drastic change.¹¹⁶ For troops, saluting was not only a nuisance but seemed pointless, a vestige of an outdated military era.¹¹⁷ For the High Command, on the other hand, saluting formed an essential part of the way discipline and respect was maintained. In fact, during the riots in 1915, officers looked at the frequency of saluting as a way of gauging morale, recognising that a refusal to salute was one of the simplest forms of disobedience and most common forms of *dienstweigering*.¹¹⁸

It is not entirely clear how conscripts' distaste for saluting turned into a public debate, but, throughout 1917, pamphlets, articles, and newspapers devoted a considerable amount of attention to the issue. Ranging from serious discussions by those for and against the practice to mirthful comments and quasi-farcical cartoons, saluting was either promoted as an extremely necessary part of the military institution or as the inane enforcement of respect by a power-hungry military hierarchy.¹¹⁹ Socialist newspapers proclaimed that saluting was anti-democratic and reinforced class differences, while supporters of saluting stressed its use for maintaining order, discipline, and camaraderie.¹²⁰ The controversy reached parliament in May 1917 when one member, J.E.W. Duys, tabled a motion to do away with saluting altogether. The motion did not come to order at that time due to the fiasco surrounding the Minister of War, Nicolaas Bosboom. Bosboom's resignation took precedence. The motion was re-issued in February 1918, but was voted down by a 41 to 31 majority.¹²¹ In November, the governmental enquiry into the Harskamp mutiny also investigated whether saluting had become superfluous or not.¹²² That something seemingly so fundamental to military order could be the subject of parliamentary debate and a ministerial investigation clearly indicates the widening chasm of misunderstanding between civilians and the military. It is unlikely that in the militarised societies of France, Germany, or Great Britain, a similar public debate could have occurred, especially during a war.

A vital qualifier must be added at this point. It would be completely erroneous to assume that in 1918, Dutch conscripts were close to widespread insubordination. The average soldier, despite his low morale, dissatisfaction, and ready criticism of military authority, continued to do his duty. He served at the borders, participated in exercises, trained, followed orders, and even saluted (when necessary). The riots in 1915 and 1918, even the Harskamp uprising, involved a minority of troops in clearly defined areas who were disgruntled with particular aspects of their military service. There was no revolutionary spirit in the armed forces, and at no point were they at the point of internal collapse. Yet there was an underlying culture that was increasingly antagonistic towards military service. This negativity found expression in a variety of ways and was heightened by boredom and apathy. One popular verse in the war years exclaimed:

Illustration 13: The salute stays!



'Je Maintiendrai'

This newspaper cartoon appeared in 1918, after parliament rejected a motion to end saluting in the armed forces. It depicts the national coat of arms and motto in a farcical light – many Netherlanders found the practice of saluting all too absurd.

Piet spends months at the border,
has nothing to do, sees no one;
Piet stands still there and vegetates
They say: Piet is mobilised!¹²³

Another soldier described his experiences somewhat more eloquently:

If only there was blood to purge for Fatherland and Monarch, that would be fairer than chocolate, cabbage and sausage. If only there were dangers in the game other than fleas, or sighing in a stuffy cell... Then I would shout cheerfully and would sharpen my bayonet on the purest grindstone... Unfortunately, fighting does not apply [here], instead [we] march in step in a stupid cap and a grey jacket...¹²⁴

Such cynicism found expression in a variety of ways and gave the impression of an atmosphere of widespread dissension, which was exaggerated by bad press and prolific rumours. When news of the Harskamp rioting and disorders elsewhere spread

in late October 1918, many Dutch people saw it as a signal of the armed forces' descent into disorder and revolution. Trust in the military had reached a wartime low.

Chapter

12

All Hell Has Broken Loose: The Year 1918

The first eleven months of 1918 marked the pinnacle of wartime crises for the Netherlands and witnessed the culmination of its neutrality compromises. Between January and May of that year, the Netherlands came closer to becoming a belligerent than at any time previously or subsequently in the conflict. The requisitioning of Dutch ships by American and British authorities in March, followed by Germany's threatening stand on the transport of sand and gravel demonstrated that the danger of war was all too real. The exclamation by H.T. Colenbrander in February 1917 rang even more ominously a year later: 'all hell has broken loose; none of the devils can protect us against the others, and there we lie'.¹ The tense international situation agitated the already strained relationship between the Commander-in-Chief and the government, and brought the majority of cabinet ministers to the point of resigning in May. In combination with existing dissension within the government over sending an armed convoy to the East Indies, civil disorder of any kind was the last thing the country desired in this *veelbewogen* (very stirring) time.

Instability at the top and widespread public criticism about the way individual cabinet ministers handled these national challenges, especially the economic ones, reduced their chances of re-election in July 1918.² Furthermore, in January, the Bolshevik government in Russia annulled its foreign debts, causing financial turmoil throughout the western world, including the Netherlands, which had many investments both small and large in Russian industry and property as well as creditors to the old-tsarist state.³ Combine this with the harmful effects of the Spanish Influenza pandemic and you have a civilian population that was far from content by the autumn of 1918. Dutch soldiers were also restless. After years of mobilisation, commanders had immense difficulty in upholding a reasonable standard of discipline among the troops, who grew increasingly disillusioned with the mobilisation in general and their living circumstances in particular.

Harskamp

By September 1918, the situation on the western front had changed so dramatically that a German victory now seemed highly unlikely, if not entirely improbable. The Allied forces, now supported by American troops, made a series of important breakthroughs, forcing a German retreat through Belgium towards Germany. General Ludendorff, one of Germany's two Commanders-in-Chief, admitted the likelihood of defeat on 28 September, when he told Kaiser Wilhelm II that the country should call

for an armistice.⁴ As a result, Germany took steps towards accepting an accord based on American President Woodrow Wilson's 14 points of peace.⁵ In the Netherlands, the military and civilian authorities acknowledged the changing war situation. They deemed that the chances of the Netherlands entering the war had diminished significantly. Interestingly enough, and unbeknownst to the Dutch, Great Britain now threatened to involve the neutral in the conflict more so than at any time previously. Some British military leaders, during a meeting of the Northern Neutrals Committee in October, claimed that Germany was unable to prevent an Allied invasion of the Netherlands, because it was in retreat from the western front. In other words, for the first time, the Allies could reap the strategic advantages of invading the neutral without worrying about Germany's response. These advantages were not negligible: easy water access to Belgium and Germany via the Maas, Schelde, and Rhine rivers; ready bases for aerial patrols over German territory; and an additional 200 miles of largely undefended frontline, would allow the Allies to overrun the German *Reich* quickly.⁶ In the end, the dissenting voices in the Royal Navy, who did not wish to patrol more coastlines and did not see any particular navy benefit, prevented the proposal from being pursued any further.⁷

At first, the Dutch authorities saw the possibility of German defeat in a positive light. The country's neutrality would be assured with the signing of an armistice. Yet the German retreat from Belgium brought renewed neutrality anxieties. The country might still end up entering the conflict due to the mismanagement of its own security measures. The possibility of another internee crisis loomed large. It was all too likely that the Germans would enter Dutch Limburg in their retreat to their home soil, since the Belgian-German border was not long enough to handle a large-scale retreat. The Dutch would, of course, have to intern any transgressors. Another key concern was the growing likelihood that the Allies would pursue the Germans into Limburg.⁸ Given that throughout October, tens of thousands of French and Belgian refugees had entered the Netherlands, the army was always going to be stretched to its maximum capacity. The possible recapture of Antwerp by the Allies posed potential problems as well, especially if the Allies started shipping war materials up the Schelde.⁹

Vigilance along the borders and in the ports had to be raised at this critical time. On 8 October, the High Command told troops in Zeeland that their leave was suspended due to the proximity of fighting on the western front. For the same reason, within a fortnight, Snijders cancelled leave for all soldiers in Limburg and North Brabant. On 23 October, the government decided to cancel leave for all military personnel nation-wide. The day before, Snijders told Van Terwisga that field army involvement in helping refugees – officially a civilian responsibility – had to be kept to a minimum since a second mobilisation could be necessary.¹⁰ The decision to cancel leave went one step too far for some conscripts. Ever since soldiers had rioted in Utrecht in May 1918 on the grounds of inadequate rations, other food-related complaints and instances of unrest had erupted in barracks throughout the country. It would be no exaggeration to say that conscripts were entirely fed up with the war, the mobilisation, and their living conditions. Their frustrations combined to create

an explosive mix after the announcement that all leave had been cancelled. On 24 October, in separate and unrelated incidents in Zwolle, 's Hertogenbosch and Middelburg, soldiers complained to their superiors. Most of the complaints were made peaceably, and the officers in charge dealt with them sensibly. On all three occasions, order was restored relatively easily and quickly.¹¹

However, for one regiment stuck in Harskamp's isolated barracks, the largest of its kind in the country, a combination of factors, among which foodstuffs and leave featured prominently, resulted in a violent outburst on Friday 25 October.¹² Around dinnertime, a group of soldiers began singing boisterously, throwing stones, and threatening their superiors. Officers called the troops to order, with little success. One officer fired his revolver in the air resulting in further uproar. Within a few hours, the disquiet settled. While the camp commander posted extra guards that evening, he did not take any further action to either punish or arrest offenders, nor did he investigate the origins of the fracas. The next morning, he told his superiors that he did not need any extra guards since the crisis had passed. Yet, that afternoon, the barely noticeable unrest that had bubbled for half a day boiled over again. Officers also did very little to stop the rioting this time. During a crisis meeting, they decided to avoid repressive measures for as long as possible. Soon enough, troops looted the alcohol supplies and set their mess hall ablaze. Fire quickly spread to other parts of the camp, causing many to flee the scene. As the fire raged through buildings, ammunition stores exploded, and the camp's electricity supply was cut off. In the darkness, officers emptied the remaining buildings, threatening force, and using their pistols where necessary.

Extra guards, officers, and soldiers closed in on Harskamp later that night to isolate the camp. By this stage, hundreds of troops had fled into the surrounding countryside. The local authorities eventually picked them up, returning them to Harskamp over the following two days.¹³ While the fire had destroyed part of the camp, on the whole it remained habitable. By the first week of November, troops were subdued.¹⁴ Some of the men involved were arrested, while the rest, although far from fight-worthy, were no longer rebelling either. They did, however, present a petition to Snijders on 1 November raising several questions about their situation: Why were soldiers isolated in camps located in the heaths of the Veluwe? Why is another regiment unable to temporarily replace the soldiers as some have been in Harskamp for over two years?¹⁵

The Harskamp riots presented a serious case of widespread insubordination and violence to the bemused authorities. No doubt the situation was worsened by the fire and by the lack of action by the camp's officers. It was a mutiny of sorts and one that the military took very seriously, but it looked far worse to outsiders than it actually was. Newspapers grabbed hold of the story, exaggerated it with tales of gunfights and deaths, and drew a picture of an army in disarray.¹⁶ The potential impact of events only increased as news of the Kiel mutiny (29 October-3 November) and other revolutionary incidents in Germany reached the Netherlands. Harskamp could, as many Dutch people thought, cause similar chaos in their country.

A general military revolt was seen as distinctly probable given the spate of protests

Map 15: Military riots and disturbances, 25-31 October 1918



that erupted in other barracks and military positions throughout the country after 26 October. As news of the Harskamp mutiny filtered through the network of gossip and rumour, other troops protested as well. On 28 October, soldiers in Vlissingen and in nearby Sousburg demanded better food. A march through the town by 400 soldiers attracted ample attention, but the local *Koninklijke Marechaussee* easily dispersed the protesters.¹⁷ In Zwolle, that same day, a group of drunken soldiers incited a rebellion among troops and civilians.¹⁸ On 29 October, in Zaltbommel, officers had problems keeping their men in check as they were loading an artillery munitions train. Order was again quickly imposed.¹⁹ In Vlasakkers, near Amersfoort, 50 conscripts threatened desertion if leave was not reinstated. The authorities acted without delay and arrested most of the men.²⁰ On 30 October, a riot broke out in the Geertruidenberg barracks,²¹ while further complaints about food were heard in The Hague, Waalwijk, and Deventer.²² Besides a spontaneous outburst of violence in Hellevoetsluis on 31 October when officers refused to let an anarchist socialist speak to troops,²³ minor complaints and unrest also occurred before the end of the month in Haarlem, Hardewijk, Laren, Milligen, Oldebroek, Utrecht, Waalsdorp, and Willem-

stad.²⁴ On each occasion, decisive intervention by military leaders prevented the protests from getting out of hand.

To civilians, seeing these events through a haze of inaccurate and unclear reporting, it seemed that Harskamp had ignited a series of mutinies, that the army was no longer trustworthy, and that perhaps the armed forces had been infiltrated by revolutionary ideas. In reality, except for the incident in Hellevoetsluis, itself more a backlash to the actions of officers than an all-out revolt, none of the incidents described above involved revolutionary intentions. Soldiers everywhere were dissatisfied with the mobilisation, tired of inadequate provisioning, and annoyed by the further impingement of their freedoms. As A.M. de Jong, a conscript who published a controversial newspaper column about his mobilisation experiences, explained:

All bottled-up suffering, all un-communicated grievances, all indignities, all humiliation broke loose all of a sudden in places where they had flourished... Those who did not know any better believed that the Dutch army stood at the point of immediate revolution. This was not the case, but the military authorities were nonetheless left pale from shock by this unexpected, mass resistance.²⁵

The entire army was not at the point of chaos and disarray as most of the incidents were isolated and unrelated, and many thousands of conscripts did not revolt, mutiny, or even complain.

In many respects, what happened at Harskamp in 1918 can be likened to the Utrecht riots in 1915. On both occasions, troops used violence as a means of demonstrating their displeasure. They had reached the end of their tether. In the end, the High Command dealt with the two incidents similarly. Like 34 and 36 LWI, which were moved out of Utrecht (poignantly enough to Harskamp) in 1915, 1 Regiment Infantry (RI), stationed in Harskamp and responsible for most of the disturbances on 25 and 26 October 1918, swapped housing facilities with 9 RI in Ede.²⁶ Ede was situated close to the border, where troop morale was generally better. Perhaps the patrols that apprehended smugglers and guarded against neutrality infringements heightened their sense of duty and self-worth.²⁷ At any rate, the High Command hoped the move would ease some of the problems in 1 RI, especially since they had requested a transfer in the first place.

Even the grievances of the 1915 and 1918 incidents were similar. However, the problems were easier to rectify during the first outbursts than the second. The major complaint in 1918 – lack of provisions – was difficult to remedy, since little could be done until supplies of foodstuffs were delivered, an unlikely prospect during the war. Nevertheless, the High Command increased rations and the quality of food wherever possible.²⁸ De Jonge described what happened in his battalion in the aftermath of Harskamp:

the commanding major came to check the spuds himself... he spent a whole day in the kitchen leering at everything... we never had such a fine meal as that day.²⁹

He also described how the 'new course' was faring in the armed forces, based on consultation rather than blind orders, everything in fact to avoid further problems with discipline and morale.³⁰ At the same time, while leave conditions could be improved in 1915 through the *landstorm* laws and extraordinary leave provisions, this was not as easy in October 1918. Nevertheless, the government was keen to reinstate ordinary leave as soon as possible, although Snijders was far more reluctant to do so.

While soldiers' grievances may have been similar in 1915 and 1918, the atmosphere in which they were aired differed entirely. In 1915, people feared neither social anarchy nor all-out revolt. The war had not yet impacted greatly on the country. In fact, the riots, when they were reported, seemed to reinforce general public opinion about the inappropriateness of a full-scale mobilisation. The military was seen as a burdensome evil. By 1918, not only had Russia succumbed to a violent revolution – the news of Tsar Nicholas' assassination reached the world in July³¹ – but other bastions of military power and monarchical rule were on the verge of crumbling to similar pressures. In this context, the rebellions in the Dutch army took on entirely new meanings and were too readily seen as signals of revolution. The military now was deemed not only a burdensome evil but a potentially dangerous one at that.

Therefore, it is not surprising that both the High Command and government were desperate to uncover the causes of the riots and ways to avoid further outbreaks of violence. The drive for explanations and solutions resulted in two instances of rising tension and conflict between the cabinet and Snijders. The first related to the issue of leave. Snijders was not keen on reinstating normal leave so quickly after having just cancelled it on 23 October. He thought conscripts would interpret it as giving in to their demands, thereby legitimising future riots. Yet on 31 October, he conceded, granting leave to regiments except for those involved in any of the riotous outbreaks, and rationalising the move in terms of the likelihood of an armistice being signed before too long.³² Politicians, especially from the SDAP benches, widely criticised his decision to deny leave to regiments involved in the riots. Snijders was forced to capitulate again on 5 November, after continued pressure from the government to punish only the instigators of the troublesome events.³³

The second area of conflict involved the investigations into the riots. On 27 October, Snijders sent investigators to Harskamp,³⁴ who reported back six days later.³⁵ The government was not content to leave the matter to the armed forces and established its own commission of inquiry, principally to discover if 'our troops are sufficiently trustworthy and in the control of their commanders, ... [and able] ... to cooperate in the defence of our territory and the maintenance of neutrality'.³⁶ Snijders was not unduly concerned about this inquiry, but he was annoyed to find out about it via the newspapers. He became decidedly livid about the appointment of former Minister of War, B.C. De Jonge, as the chief commissioner.³⁷ There was little love lost between the two men. Snijders felt that the government had little respect for his position, let alone for his public persona, if it was willing to attract attention to his strained relationship with De Jonge. In the end, the urgency of the government's report was undermined by the armistice.³⁸ What the reinstatement of leave and the

De Jonge discussions did do was raise the level of mistrust between cabinet ministers and Snijders at a time when amicable relations were essential.

Ultimately, both military and civilian reports on Harskamp highlighted similar reasons for the mutiny: namely, that conscripts were sick of their living conditions, their isolation in the heaths of the Veluwe, the declining quality of their food, profiteering by the canteen manager, and the cancellation of leave.³⁹ There was also a sense that they were being punished for the misconduct of previous battalions. Both the Utrecht and Apeldoorn rioters had been sent to Harskamp in 1915, and one report claimed that the camp had the reputation and 'character of a penal colony' to which the High Command sent troublesome conscripts and officers.⁴⁰ The majority of soldiers, therefore, resented being sent to Harskamp when they had done nothing wrong. Both reports were of the opinion that there was no ideological inspiration behind the Harskamp mutiny or any of the others, although the commissioners of the government report qualified this by saying that they 'nonetheless considered the infection of Bolshevik ideas in the army as a true danger'.⁴¹ The reports also seriously questioned the manner in which Harskamp's officers handled the situation, including the camp's commander and his deputy. If they had been decisive and taken united action early on, events might not have escalated beyond their control. Officers' lack of training and inexperience were stressed as important contributing factors. The government report further uncovered highly inadequate and, at times, extremely unhygienic living arrangements in barrack camps throughout the country and recommended drastic improvements.⁴²

The Harskamp mutiny started for seemingly innocuous reasons, but its consequences went far beyond the wildest imaginations of the troops involved. It contributed to the resignation of the Commander-in-Chief on 9 November; intensified the possibility of an outright revolution; raised the hopes for such a revolution in the eyes of even moderate socialists like SDAP leader, P.J. Troelstra; and reinforced the fear of internal anarchy among the most stalwart members of the Dutch conservative ruling elite. Events in Germany and throughout Europe undoubtedly added to this trepidation, as the likelihood of revolution was seen as a serious possibility. The fact that soldiers in other neutral armies had rebelled after long years of mobilisation may have been lost on the majority of Dutch,⁴³ and even if they had noticed, it probably would only have deepened their sense of impending doom.

Snijders' Resignation

The relationship between the Commander-in-Chief and the government had been uneasy throughout the war. Some unflatteringly described Snijders as the Dutch Ludendorff, the German general renowned for his hard-line decisions.⁴⁴ In dealing with defence and neutrality matters, Snijders was extremely able, knowledgeable, and authoritative. No problem was too insignificant for him. He would involve himself whenever and wherever possible, whether his opinion was requested or not. No aspect of military operations escaped his attention. But he had neither the time nor the patience for politicians, nor did he have any qualms about vehemently criticising

government policies, especially when he felt they would result in military suicide. He did not appreciate governmental interference in military matters and seemed, at times, to forget that the cabinet, rather than he, decided defence policy. His realism and uncompromising approach irked successive Ministers of War, but none more so than B.C. de Jonge in April 1918.

On 22 April, in the midst of the 'sand and gravel' crisis and with the threat of a German declaration of war looming, cabinet ministers met to discuss what approach they should take with regard to Germany.⁴⁵ They requested Snijders' presence to explain the military implications of a possible German declaration of war. At the meeting, Snijders told the ministers in no uncertain terms that going to war with their neighbour would be disastrous. He explained that the country would be defeated within a few days because a second mobilisation could not be implemented quickly enough; that Allied help would take too long to arrive; and that the sheer weight of troop numbers and modern equipment were on the side of the Germans. Snijders' pessimism worried some of the ministers, although others viewed his outburst with sympathy given that the general's wife had recently passed away.⁴⁶ The cabinet subsequently decided not to accept Germany's demands in the form they had been presented. True to character, Snijders was far less strident when he discussed the issue with his military commanders later that day. Here he declared that it was highly unlikely that Germany would invade given that there were no signs of troop build-ups along the border.⁴⁷ This situation quickly changed, however, when Germany moved two army divisions in Ghent closer to the Dutch frontier within 48 hours.

On 26 April, the government had received word from the Allies that they would agree to a Dutch compromise with Germany. But before the Netherlands communicated this fact to Germany, De Jonge requested Snijders' presence to discuss precautionary measures in the case of a German reprisal. During this meeting, the discussion became heated and the Commander-in-Chief told De Jonge that it would be *doelloos* (pointless) to mount any resistance against a German invasion, as the Dutch army would not be able to hold out for long. De Jonge left the meeting stunned, shocked, and angry. He attributed Snijders' outburst to defeatism, and feared that Snijders' known pro-German preference had influenced his analysis. The Minister decided he could not work with the Commander-in-Chief if they continued to disagree so dramatically about the value and necessity of defence. The next day, the so-called 'sand and gravel crisis' was resolved when Germany accepted the Netherlands' compromise. De Jonge did not let Snijders' comments rest, however, and he discussed the issue with other high-ranking military officials.⁴⁸ He subsequently presented a report to his colleagues on 8 May, explaining why he had lost confidence in Snijders. On 13 May, seven of the eight cabinet members supported De Jonge and declared that Snijders had to go or else they would resign. Only the Minister President, Cort van der Linden, dissented. That most of the ministers rallied behind De Jonge was not surprising given the problems Snijders had had with the government in the past. Cort van der Linden asked his colleagues to reconsider their position as both the dismissal of the Commander-in-Chief and their own resignations were politically untenable with less than two months until the elections.

The Minister President soon after discussed the matter with the Queen. Wilhelmina made it clear that she stood behind Snijders, in whom she saw an able military leader who did what was necessary rather than what was expected, and she refused to accept his dismissal or resignation. If this meant that seven cabinet members had to resign, so be it. Never one to mince words and using a favourite Dutch expression, she gleefully declared that ‘journeying men should not be held up’ (*men reizende heeren niet moest ophouden*).⁴⁹ Wilhelmina had become very frustrated with the lacklustre performance of her ministers and was especially critical of their response to the Allied requisitioning of Dutch ships and the lack of progress on the convoy issue. She repeated her position on Snijders to De Jonge personally two days later. This placed the cabinet in an awkward position as Wilhelmina’s unconstitutional stance could lead to the resignation of seven ministers. In the end, they decided to first request a report from Snijders himself.

It took until 29 May for Snijders to respond to De Jonge’s claims, and only then after a polite reminder from Cort van der Linden.⁵⁰ Snijders’ 32-page report was thorough.⁵¹ He explained that he used the word *doelloos* not in the sense that there was no point in defying a German attack, but rather that *doelloos* had to be understood in the sense of *vruchteloos* (fruitless): ‘In no case can I have meant that the institution of our national defence was “pointless”’.⁵² He again stressed that resistance would be ineffectual in the long term for purely logistical reasons: the Netherlands did not have the troop numbers to counter German forces; it was neither well-equipped nor could it cope with a possible invasion from the east and south. Its dilemma was one of a small nation facing the might of a large and ever-modernising military state. To have any chance of success, it would need serious material assistance from the Allies, and Snijders believed it extremely unlikely that this would arrive in time. Interestingly enough, as the historian Paul Moeyes has pointed out, accepting foreign help as part of its defence strategy actually deviated from official government policy at the time.⁵³ In this sense, Snijders advocated something that was highly controversial. It was not, however, unlike Snijders, who had previously instructed his commanders in January 1918 that if outsiders offered help in a conflict involving the Dutch, then it was to be accepted unless he ordered otherwise.⁵⁴ Officially, of course, any military transgressions by foreigners were to be forcefully rejected. While a noble neutrality ideal, fighting without material support from other states would result in certain defeat.

Snijders’ report of 29 May also argued that, unlike a war with Germany, entering into a conflict against the Allies would not be suicidal.⁵⁵ The Allies could only invade from one side and that was the sea at that. They would have serious difficulties in maintaining their supplies, while the Netherlands could receive aid much more quickly overland from Germany. Snijders reiterated that while entering a war against the Allies was militarily-speaking more advantageous, this did not mean that he wanted his government to join Germany, to prevent the country from joining the Allies, or even to dissuade the government from entering into a war against Germany. His duty was not to influence government decisions of that nature. Instead, he explained that his role was to make sure the government understood the possi-

ble military ramifications of its decisions, be they positive or negative. He had to be realistic and give them the full picture. This is what he had attempted to do during the cabinet meeting on 22 April and the subsequent meeting with the Minister of War four days later. Snijders further qualified his opinion with statements of support from Lieutenant-Generals Pop and Van Terwisga, two of the high-ranking military officers with whom De Jonge had conferred. He also quoted documents from the Dutch military attaché in Berlin, who thought Germany would defeat the Netherlands quickly, and that the Allies would be unable to send help.⁵⁶ While many in The Hague assumed the attaché had developed pro-German sympathies, the latter stressed this was not the case and that he too was only trying to warn them of the likely scenarios. It was a rebuke to claims, which were making the rounds, that Snijders had forsaken neutrality for support of the Germans.

A little over a week after Snijders' report, De Jonge sent another note to his cabinet colleagues, explaining that while he appreciated Snijders' explanations, it did not change his position on the Commander-in-Chief, nor did it convince him that Snijders' position in April had been anything other than defeatist. Nevertheless, given the difficult political circumstances, De Jonge refused to resign as Minister of War even though it would be difficult to deal with a commander who saw defence as pointless.⁵⁷ Snijders now offered his own resignation, which Wilhelmina personally asked the Commander-in-Chief to retract. De Jonge and Snijders worked together, albeit begrudgingly and with only outward cordiality, until a new cabinet and Minister of War were sworn into office on 9 September.

What happened during the meeting of 26 April must be seen within the context of the highly tense situation of the country at the time and as part of the series of war crises in the preceding years.⁵⁸ The threat of war was real as both Snijders and De Jonge knew. Snijders' outburst that day was forceful, overwhelming, and mostly in disagreement with the official position of the military, namely to maintain neutrality and defend it against violations until the last soldier was left standing. It would have been the last thing De Jonge would have wanted to hear. De Jonge and other ministers believed Snijders was adopting a pro-German stance, so much so, in fact, that the new Minister of War, G.A.A. Alting von Geusau, mentioned this possibility in a later analysis of the situation.⁵⁹ De Jonge probably also feared that Snijders' pessimism would force a change in the official Dutch neutrality position.⁶⁰ Whatever the reasons, De Jonge latched onto the word *doelloos* and used it to attempt to remove the Commander-in-Chief. He publicly exclaimed that he was perplexed because Snijders had not given him any previous indication of his gloomy outlook.⁶¹ Yet Snijders never made a secret of the fact that the armed forces were not ready to win a war or even to adequately resist if the country had been invaded. As early as June 1915, he told Bosboom: 'Nobody will dispute that our army is too weak for a powerful and long-lasting defence against a serious attack'.⁶² Even in a note to De Jonge in March 1918, a little over a month before the meeting in question, Snijders had warned that 'in the present circumstances, our armed forces are unable to offer resistance to an attack of any significance' and that 'with an unexpected serious incident, through which our neutrality is actually breached, I will not be able... to generate sufficient strength.'⁶³

Snijders was not a defeatist, but he was a realist. At no stage did he ever abandon defence or neutrality, duties he took very seriously. The mere fact that Snijders was so outspoken about the problems of the army and navy highlights how aware he was of inadequacies and how urgently they needed rectification. That De Jonge and other ministers overlooked this says more about their strained relationship with Snijders than anything else. They had genuine problems with him: He did not always follow instructions, acted as autonomously as possible, and was blunt and resolute in expressing his opinions. Nevertheless, during the exchange with De Jonge on 26 April, Snijders did not impart new information.

It must not be forgotten that everything in March, April, and early May pointed to a German victory on the western front,⁶⁴ and this would have been very much on Snijders' mind. Because the Allies had to focus their resources in Belgium merely underscored Snijders' assertion that they would take that much longer to come to the Netherlands aid if that proved necessary. It was also true that any support could only come from overseas, which would be an arduous, difficult, and time-consuming process. Yet Snijders' analysis had one major flaw: Like the Allies, Germany was also over-stretched in its military commitments. Despite Snijders' assertions that Germany could easily spare between 20 to 25 divisions for a campaign along the Dutch border, this simply was not the case.⁶⁵ If Germany had been able to invade the Netherlands, it would have moved more than two divisions towards the Dutch border, as it did in late April. With the benefit of hindsight, historians can now see that the spring offensives were Germany's last gasp.⁶⁶ It had sent everything it had to the front in Belgium and Northern France. Germany did not have adequate resources to divert elsewhere and, in the end, what it had was far from enough to ensure a decisive breakthrough. But this was not evident to Snijders; all he saw was that if Germany went to war with the Netherlands and freed up enough resources, which in theory it could do, then the Dutch would lose. In this context, there is much to be said for Hubert van Tuyl's interpretation of Snijders' outbursts in 1918:

What did apparently over-stress him [Snijders] by 1918 was the realization that his job was impossible. He had a weak army and could form no alliances, yet had to be ready to wage war against a great power.⁶⁷

Even after a new cabinet was formed in September 1918, the legacy of the conflict between De Jonge and Snijders festered. De Jonge left a full report of his lack of confidence in the Commander-in-Chief for his successor, Alting von Geusau.⁶⁸ While Alting von Geusau was more judicious in his opinions of Snijders, he was not supportive of him either. After Snijders read De Jonge's report, he was enraged. He approached Alting von Geusau on the matter early in October 1918, expressing contempt at the devious manner in which De Jonge handled the matter.⁶⁹ He also emphasised that the former Minister of War never discussed any of his accusations with him personally, and that many were based on distorted truths. He systematically addressed each allegation, offered his opinion, and hoped that Alting von Geusau and the rest of the cabinet would make up their own minds about the affair. The

high level of indignation Snijders expressed after the appointment of De Jonge as head of the commission of enquiry into the Harskamp mutiny is, therefore, not surprising and contributed to his own resignation.

The circumstances surrounding Snijders' resignation are, however, sketchy. What is known is that on 5 November, Troelstra, in his speech to parliament, demanded that the Commander-in-Chief be dismissed in the wake of the Harskamp crisis, since he had obviously lost the trust of his troops and his country.⁷⁰ In his reply to Troelstra, however, Alting von Geusau wholeheartedly supported Snijders. The next day, the Minister of War apparently changed his mind and declared that the government did not believe Snijders was the right person to lead the armed forces on its 'new course', a term he left undefined.⁷¹ It seemed that the concerns raised by Troelstra, mixed with the fear of heightened unrest among troops, convinced the Minister of War that Snijders was a liability. Later, Troelstra would claim that his parliamentary speech had been the final blow for Snijders.⁷² It is more likely that Alting von Geusau's many conflicts with the Commander-in-Chief, especially over how to handle the Harskamp situation, had a more decisive effect. He felt safe in making his declaration on 6 November since Snijders had already offered to resign earlier that day during a heated altercation about De Jonge's appointment as commissioner in the Harskamp mutiny.⁷³ But Alting von Geusau had not yet conferred with the rest of the cabinet. In fact, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.A. van Karnebeek, criticised the Minister of War when the issue finally came up for discussion on 8 November. He disapproved of the lack of consultation and believed the decision was not even binding, since only the full cabinet, not the Minister, could demote the commander. In the end, nothing could be done. Alting von Geusau had forced the government's hand by announcing Snijders' departure publicly in parliament.

Faced with Snijders' resignation for the second time that year, the Queen accepted it, however unwillingly.⁷⁴ After a request from Alting von Geusau, Lieutenant-General Van Terwisga, the Commander of the Field Army, also handed in his resignation, which went into effect on 16 December 1918.⁷⁵ On 11 November, as the belligerent powers signed the armistice bringing the Great War to a close, the cabinet appointed Lieutenant-General W.F. Pop as acting Commander-in-Chief.⁷⁶ Ironically enough, Pop had been as critical of his country's chances of withstanding a German invasion as Snijders, but this was of little concern now that this particular neutrality threat had passed.

While Snijders was a hugely controversial figure, he was also one of the most able military leaders in modern Dutch history. He played a pivotal role in creating the Netherlands' first military air service in 1913 and in modernising the army. He continued to be actively involved in military affairs after his resignation. The nation's newspapers paid a considerable amount of attention to his death in May 1939, and the Queen laid a wreath at the monument in Scheveningen acknowledging Snijders for his wartime work.⁷⁷ Snijders' post-war career was also tainted by controversy. His involvement in far-right nationalist politics in the 1930s raised many eyebrows and further reinforced his pro-German reputation in historical accounts of the Great War. His own historical writings on the origins of the war, written during the interbel-

lum years, definitely supported Germany's case.⁷⁸ Yet there is very little evidence to suggest that a pro-German bias affected Snijders' work as Commander-in-Chief between 1914 and 1918. He respected German military traditions, spent much time in Germany before the war, and is known to have met with a German military attaché in 1915, at which time he expressed his admiration for Germany's position. The attaché described Snijders as follows:

He showed me again how German-friendly at heart this man is, in spite of all the reserve that he, as a good Dutch person in such a priority position, initially creates.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, as this quote also suggests, Snijders was nothing but professional in discharging his role as head of the armed forces. In considering neutrality, he was not predisposed towards any one side. He was extremely realistic in his assessment of the possible threats to the country and did everything within his power to ensure that the armed forces were ready to face an invasion, whether it came from the east, the west, or the south.

Kaiser Wilhelm Seeks a New Home

On 9 November, the same day that Snijders departed as the 'all-highest' military commander in the Netherlands, the advisors to Germany's 'All Highest', Kaiser Wilhelm II, persuaded him to abdicate and flee to the relative safety of neutral territory. Although entirely reluctant to take this advice, which he had been receiving for several weeks, the Kaiser had little choice; he faced a hopeless situation. His people were in uproar. After the Kiel mutiny he could no longer rely on the loyalty of his naval personnel, and the army, which was still fighting the Allies in Belgium, was at the point of internal collapse.⁸⁰ Travelling by train from the Belgian town of Spa, where the royal entourage had stationed themselves, Wilhelm II headed towards the Dutch border post of Eijsden in the early hours of 10 November. At around 7 o'clock in the morning, the royal convoy arrived in Eijsden where a bemused border guard refused them entry, phoned his superior in Maastricht, and awaited further instructions. The Commander of Maastricht allowed the Kaiser to enter the station – and the Netherlands.

News of the Kaiser's arrival created havoc in The Hague. Historians are divided about whether or not some high-ranking individuals, such as the Queen and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Van Karnebeek, knew of the Kaiser's imminent arrival well before he reached the border.⁸¹ The reasons behind a visit by one of Wilhelmina's adjutants, J.B. Heutsz, to Spa on 8 and 9 November, for example, have never been adequately explained, although the visit had been planned several months earlier and the *aide-de camp* involved claimed complete innocence afterwards. Likewise, Van Heutsz's call on the Dutch Minister in Brussels, M.W.R. van Vollenhoven, early on 9 November is also suggestive of some high-level foreknowledge of the event. Later that night, upon receiving official word of the Kaiser's decision to seek sanctuary in the Netherlands from the German delegation, Van Vollenhoven contacted

The Hague and military authorities in Eijsden,⁸² instructing the latter to let the German visitors in. All three messages arrived after the Kaiser had reached the border, but what remains in question is whether Van Vollenhoven could have told the Eijsden authorities to let the Kaiser through without authorisation from The Hague. Whether or not the government, or at the very least, the Minister of Foreign Affairs expected the Kaiser is questionable. No documentation exists to verify this interpretation of events and some historians, quite rightly, have pointed out many reasons why neither Van Karnebeek nor Wilhelmina could have known. For one, the Kaiser himself did not make his final decision until late in the afternoon of 9 November, so whatever plans could have been made in the Netherlands could never have been definite.⁸³ Secondly, as Cees Fasseur suggested, the Queen saw the duty of monarchs as to stand and fall beside their people and viewed abdication with abhorrence; Wilhelm II's flight was not something she could have wished for, prepared for, or wanted.⁸⁴

At any rate, whether or not Wilhelmina or Van Karnebeek knew in advance was irrelevant once the Kaiser crossed the border. Minister President, Ruys de Beerenbrouck, and most of the cabinet ministers certainly had no foreknowledge of his arrival, and they were the ones responsible for deciding what to do with their important guest. There were no established precedents to guide them. In the end, the Kaiser was admitted as a private citizen with the same rights as a refugee.⁸⁵ The government found him lodgings in Amerongen with a family of noble blood that had links with both Germany and Great Britain. The Crown Prince of Prussia, however, was not as fortunate as his father when he arrived in the Netherlands two days later. As a military commander, Dutch neutrality regulations stipulated he be interned.⁸⁶ Ultimately, he remained under military guard on the almost deserted island of Wielingen for five years. Yet it seems incongruous to intern one member of the imperial family but not the other. After all, Wilhelm II had only abdicated as Kaiser of the German realm. He steadfastly kept his title as King of Prussia (until 28 November when he reneged any claims to that throne as well) and remained, at least officially, the Supreme Commander of Germany's armed forces.

Troelstra did not exaggerate matters when he recalled in his memoirs that: 'No other event made such a huge impact in our country' as the arrival of the Kaiser.⁸⁷ Thousands of people lined the railway route from Eijsden to Amerongen on 12 November as the imperial train passed. Throughout the south, the Kaiser was booed and jeered and many in Amerongen were not pleased with his presence.⁸⁸ On the whole, the population had little sympathy for the man they held responsible for the horrors of the war in nearby Belgium. Elsewhere in the country, the abdication was seen with ominous overtones, signalling the end of monarchical rule in Germany and the success of socialist revolution there. Many feared, while others hoped, that the Netherlands would soon follow a similar path. The Kaiser brought the storms of revolt that had been thundering in eastern and central Europe uncomfortably close.

For the Dutch government, the Kaiser's presence created numerous problems. Now that the war was all but over, it had to take into account the wishes of the victors. The Allies repeatedly demanded the Netherlands hand over Wilhelm II to face

trial for his role in the outbreak of the war and for alleged crimes against humanity committed in his name by German troops. The Dutch government steadfastly refused.⁸⁹ However, it genuinely feared Allied retribution for refusing, which made its negotiation position extremely difficult at Versailles when the question of the transfer of two Dutch provinces (Zeeland and Limburg) to Belgium arose.⁹⁰ On several occasions between November 1918 and February 1920, the government requested that the Kaiser find an alternative home and his retinue made elaborate plans to escape overseas or back to Germany. In the end, the pressure from the Allies subsided, to some degree because of Dutch refusals to free him but also because of more pressing questions stemming from the Treaty of Versailles. Wilhelm II lived out his days in the Netherlands, rarely left the house he bought in 1919 in Doorn, and died there in 1941.⁹¹

A Misguided Attempt at Revolution

Amongst all of the tension and strife created by the Harskamp uprising, Snijders' resignation, the Kaiser's arrival and rumours of a revolution, the armistice agreement that was signed on 11 November 1918 came none too soon for the Netherlands. Because of the emotional nature of these other events, however, the armistice lost much of its impact. On the whole, the Dutch did not greet the news with much elation or celebration. Times were too uncertain, although muted festivities were held that afternoon in Groningen, Deventer, Zutphen, Maastricht, Gouda, and The Hague.⁹² People were definitely pleased the war had come to an end, but they also believed that the cessation of hostilities had come too late. They feared that Europe and, more importantly, the Netherlands would be ineradicably changed by the internal strife caused by the various wartime problems. Many of their anxieties, at least for the future of the nation, would prove unfounded. The population was not at the point of revolution as Troelstra expected; in fact, the 'revolutionary days' could be better described as a victory for the anti-revolutionary forces. But this must not detract from the pandemonium that reigned during November 1918, and the general expectation (in and outside of the Netherlands) of the imminent overthrow of established order.

On Tuesday 12 November, Troelstra made a damning hour-long speech in parliament.⁹³ He argued that it was clear that the time had come for the Netherlands to do away with the old vestiges of monarchy, capitalism, and hierarchical rule; that the working class should seize control, if need be, by violent means; that the Netherlands was ready to follow the path of Germany and Russia; that revolution was nigh. The leader of the SDAP had good reason to seize this opportunity. To him the signs of revolution were clear: The army had mutinied, like those in Kiel and Petrograd that presaged the German and Russian revolutions;⁹⁴ the people were dissatisfied; Snijders had resigned after Troelstra's criticism of him; the Kaiser had fled; and Europe was in disarray. Equally important, was the fact that Troelstra was not alone in thinking the Netherlands was going to fall victim to the revolutionary spirit. The mayor of Rotterdam, A.R. Zimmermann, offered the keys to the city to Troelstra's

supporters on 9 November. Shortly after, the SDAP and its affiliates articulated their demands in a manifesto of 15 points, which called for, among other things, complete demobilisation, universal women's suffrage, removal of the Upper House of parliament, an end to the housing shortage, state control over the distribution of goods, state pensions, unemployment benefits, eight-hour working days, and increased wages.⁹⁵

Although the timing of Troelstra's revolutionary declaration on 12 November came as a surprise to many, his message did not. In fact, as early as 8 November, the government decided to transfer one-half of its stockpiled military supplies for distribution among the civilians, increasing the bread ration from 200 to 280 grams, which was higher than it had been for over a year.⁹⁶ It also announced the partial demobilisation of several regiments.⁹⁷ Both decisions were possible because an armistice was imminent, but they were also deemed necessary to placate the troops and civilians alike. After Troelstra's speech, the government also requested aid from Great Britain, which promised to send food to the Netherlands, on the condition that it remain a stable state. If radical groups succeeded in overthrowing the government, it would extend its blockade of the Netherlands.⁹⁸ This was Britain's way of averting revolution. The Dutch cabinet published a proclamation on 13 November, pleading for stability and understanding, and requesting support from all its citizens. The proclamation also explained the measures imposed to relieve some of the stresses on the economy.⁹⁹

On 8 November, several anti-revolutionary groups began preparing for what they saw as an inevitable confrontation with the revolutionary forces. The regular political parties urged their followers to form guard groups and protect their communities when the revolution arrived. From these humble beginnings, the *Bijzondere Vrijwillige Landstorm* (Extraordinary Voluntary Landstorm, BV) was established on 13 November.¹⁰⁰ Its membership rose quickly into the tens of thousands by the end of the month.¹⁰¹ The military supplied the BV with guns and other weaponry. Army officers were moved from their regular duties to help prepare and train the BV units, which set themselves up in civic buildings, including post offices, telegraph exchanges, and city halls, and urged others to join them. Other anti-revolutionaries wrote and distributed propaganda supporting the monarchy and calling for stability.¹⁰²

The High Command took action as well. Most of the population had little faith in the armed forces, which meant that some troops were kept in their barracks and were disarmed on 12 November. Much of the weaponry on the naval ships anchored in Den Helder was also removed,¹⁰³ with the hope that it would avert a mutiny. Despite a widespread lack of confidence in soldiers, sources do not indicate that conscripts were actually inspired to join the socialist revolution. No doubt there was some support for an uprising but it was a definite minority. The historian, Jan Erik Burger, claimed that 200 soldiers turned up to a revolutionary meeting in Amsterdam on 13 November and marched with a red flag into the centre of the city.¹⁰⁴ That evening 400 soldiers turned up at another meeting elsewhere in the city and called for a demonstration in a nearby barracks. In the ensuing encounter with police, four people were wounded, one fatally.¹⁰⁵ In what seems to have been an isolated inci-

Illustration 14: Revolution scare



This Jordaan cartoon, which appeared in Het Leven Geillustreerd on 26 November 1918, illustrates how Dutch fears of a revolution far outweighed the social and political realities.

dent, a red flag was also hoisted up on a warship on 14 November, but the ship's officers quickly took the flag down and arrested the lone sailor responsible.¹⁰⁶ Other rumours about insurrections and plans to capture important military sites by rebellious soldiers were rife, but none was proven.¹⁰⁷

On the whole, support for the monarchy was much higher than for the revolutionaries among soldiers, although as Louis de Jong has pointed out, the majority of troops were ambivalent, caring neither whether the revolution succeeded or was suppressed, hoping only for an end to their own mobilisation miseries.¹⁰⁸ Yet there were several contingents of soldiers who offered their loyalty to the crown, most of whom were moved to the major cities to subdue unrest there.¹⁰⁹ They joined other so-called 'trustworthy' troops sent by the High Command to potential trouble spots.¹¹⁰ The *vrijwillige landstorm* that had been in existence since August 1914 was also called up on 12 November to do their duty in protecting communities and, for the first

time, they were placed under the command of the Commander-in-Chief.¹¹¹ Troops on leave were given the opportunity to serve in the *landstorm* on a voluntary basis for as long as the revolution crisis continued (until 19 November). They were paid extra for this service.¹¹² The sources are unclear about how many took up this option, although according to one source, the 'revolution' finally made the voluntary *landstorm* popular.¹¹³

The revolution was, in fact, a dismal failure. After Troelstra's inflammatory parliamentary speech on 12 November, unrest and riots did break out in many places and many workers throughout the country went on strike, but nowhere did the uprisings or strikes involve a majority of residents. In fact, among the various socialist groups, even within the SDAP, there was little consensus about the appropriateness of revolution.¹¹⁴ Many correctly recognised that the Netherlands was not ripe for an uprising. Regard for the monarchy remained high among the general populace. This was illustrated most poignantly on 18 November when thousands turned out for a rally in The Hague as a sign of respect for Queen Wilhelmina. The Queen, her husband Hendrik, and daughter Juliana met with thunderous cheers and shouts of approval in the fields of Malieveld. As early as 14 November, two days after his call to revolution, Troelstra basically admitted he had made a mistake.¹¹⁵ He withdrew from the political scene after collapsing on 15 November from stress and illness,¹¹⁶ and left his supporters to deal with the consequences of their failed attempt. Yet Troelstra's 'mistake' did have some effect: The cabinet decided on 13 November to give women the franchise sooner than planned and changes to labour laws were accelerated as well.¹¹⁷

That the Netherlands was not at the brink of a socialist overthrow must not diminish the fear of revolution that existed at the time. The size and strength of the anti-revolutionary response illustrates this well. In fact, the BV would remain in existence for many years and its membership would increase during the early 1920s.¹¹⁸ Communism and all that was associated with it would remain a dreaded and hated enemy for many Dutch citizens throughout the interbellum years, the Second World War, and beyond. The attempted revolution, however misguided it may have been, only reinforced this apprehension.

Demobilisation

The attempted revolution and armistice spurred the government into hastening its demobilisation plans. The cessation of hostilities diminished the possible threats to security and neutrality substantially, while the revolution indicated the potential dangers of keeping disgruntled men in service for no good reason. Three days before the armistice, the government signalled its intentions by announcing that a little more than 13 per cent of troops would be sent on long-term leave as soon as possible. At the time, it caused serious concerns among military commanders, especially at the borders, where guards were struggling to meet the demands of incoming refugees and internees, and in the major cities, where troops kept an eye out for public unrest.¹¹⁹ After 11 November, however, many hoped for an urgent return to peaceful conditions.

The 'revolution' complicated the demobilisation process, but also intensified it so that military intakes from 1916 and before (including *landstorm* and *landweeer* intakes from that year and before) went on indefinite leave between 14 and 19 November, leaving behind a skeleton staff.¹²⁰ Extensive plans existed for a carefully organised demobilisation process,¹²¹ but in the chaos many regulations were not implemented. Much of the early demobilisation was haphazard: Many troops demobilised, others were sent to the cities for counter-revolutionary tasks, while the rest remained at the borders and in administrative posts.¹²² In early December, the return of troops, their equipment and the dismantling of camp sites could begin in earnest, although it continued to cause problems as the initial administrative steps had been neglected.¹²³

The armed forces, however, could not demobilise completely: The armistice may have signalled the end of the war, but it was not a peace treaty. Hostilities could resume at any time, and between November 1918 and June 1919, when Germany finally signed the Treaty of Versailles, an armed presence was necessary in the cases of unexpected neutrality breaches or military threats. Nevertheless, neutrality violations were scaled down in importance. For example, rather than shooting at foreign aeroplanes entering Dutch air space, troops raised warning flags instead.¹²⁴ Anything and everything was done to avoid a messy international incident. To ease the course of the demobilisation without interrupting necessary military responsibilities, Pop assigned specific tasks to each of the field army divisions: Division I became responsible for maintaining public order in the cities; Division II guarded the borders in Drenthe, Groningen, Overijssel, and Gelderland; while the other two divisions took charge of the borders in Limburg, North Brabant, and Zeeland.¹²⁵ After demobilising troops between 14 and 19 November 1918, the High Command sent the rest of the *landstorm*, *landweeer* and military conscripts on indefinite leave at regular intervals. The next major leave came in February 1919 when the entire military and *landstorm* intake for 1917 went on leave, followed by the intakes for 1918 two months later.¹²⁶ By late May 1919, only the conscripts in training and any volunteers remained in service. Within the space of seven months, the entire armed forces had shifted from a war to a peace mode.

The demobilisation process involved a huge organisational and administrative effort.¹²⁷ Soldiers going on leave took their clothing, bedding, weaponry, and other equipment to peace garrisons from where certain items, such as clothing and bedding, were distributed to pre-assigned military warehouses and the rest, including weapons, lighting equipment, and automobiles, found their way to so-called 'demobilisation parks' (*demobilisatieparken*).¹²⁸ Horses owned by the state ended up at one of three depots in Utrecht, Groningen, and Venlo.¹²⁹ Eventually, any requisitioned items and animals were returned to their owners or sold on, while remaining equipment was catalogued and stored in warehouses. Fortifications, inundation points, barracks, and garrisons around the country gradually closed. Water levels along the New Holland Waterline returned to normal. The High Command moved troops out of private accommodations, schools, and other public buildings in an attempt both to avoid unnecessary costs and to limit fraternisation between the civilian and military populations.¹³⁰

While it sent as many troops on indefinite leave as possible, the High Command

needed to keep some behind to organise the demobilisation and to guard the borders; hence, it gave conscripts the option to volunteer, successfully enticing a small number of them with more pay. Troops in the 13th Regiment Infantry, due to go on long-term leave on 7 December 1918, presented a typical example of volunteering: 22 NCOs and 24 ordinary soldiers (a little over one per cent) took up a multitude of demobilisation duties.¹³¹ However, even with fewer soldiers on hand, some major problems with morale remained. Much of it revolved around the terrible quality of the barracks.¹³² For example, in Assen, on the night of 16 January 1919, 70 soldiers boisterously complained about profiteering in their mess hall. The military police were sent in to settle the situation, resulting in a fracas that ended when one conscript was shot in the shoulder.¹³³

Between November 1918 and June 1919, the government continued to fear an Allied invasion or some other manner of punishing the Netherlands. Its neutral image had been tarnished by the Kaiser's arrival in November 1918. Its position was also not helped when the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Van Karnebeek, allowed 70,300 German troops stuck in northern Belgium to cross through Limburg into Germany on 13 November.¹³⁴ Only a day earlier, Van Karnebeek had denied requests for passage, except for the wounded.¹³⁵ Why he changed his mind remains unclear, although if he had not done so, the Netherlands could have faced an internee crisis even more debilitating than the one of October 1914. The Allies met the news of German passage through Limburg with indignation. The situation was not helped by the fact that a Belgian newspaper, the *Miroir*, published photos implying that the Germans had not even been disarmed. While reporters had photographed armed troops entering Limburg, the newspaper made a mistake by identifying the location of the soldiers.¹³⁶ The Dutch army, in fact, had a huge task on its hands disarming the foreigners when they crossed the border near Maeseyk – extra troops travelled to the province expressly for this purpose.¹³⁷ Of course, convincing the international press became more difficult after Van Karnebeek's false claims that he had received permission from the Allies to let the Germans through.¹³⁸

The Allies complained that the free passage was a major breach of neutrality since officially the German soldiers should have been interned. They did not agree with the Dutch argument that there was no point in interning them since the repatriation of existing internees had already begun.¹³⁹ The Allies responded that since they had not yet released German POWs, the German soldiers in Belgium remained an Allied war responsibility. The Netherlands, in other words, was interfering with their military operations. The situation was complicated even further on 14 November, when in another departure from its neutrality declaration, the Netherlands agreed that German U-boats could pass through Dutch territorial waters unopposed.¹⁴⁰ Although it granted the same right to the Allies, it was a German request that led the Dutch to accede. In all, it made the Netherlands look decidedly pro-German. This was a perception which caused major problems at the Treaty of Versailles negotiations and would complicate Dutch-Belgian relations well into the 1920s.¹⁴¹ The Netherlands, of course, had to consider future trade options with Germany. It also had to face the practicalities of interning so many foreign troops. More than twice the num-

Illustration 15: Disarming German troops near Maesyck, 13 November 1918



This photo showed the world that despite claims to the contrary in the international press, German soldiers were disarmed before leaving Belgium and crossing the Dutch province of Limburg at its thinnest point, near the town of Maesyck.

ber of German soldiers were awaiting internment in November 1918 than the number of Belgians and British troops who arrived during the siege of Antwerp in October 1914. It was a task far beyond the capabilities of the Dutch armed forces. It would have delayed the demobilisation by several weeks, created immense administrative and resource problems, and, given that it occurred at the height of the 'revolution', it could not have come at a worse time. Disarming, cataloguing, and storing the equipment, horses and weaponry that the German troops brought along was in itself a massive undertaking.¹⁴²

In the aftermath of the Limburg affair, as a way of placating the Allies, and because there was little Germany could do in retaliation, the Dutch government compromised on other neutrality matters to the advantage of Great Britain and the United States. It allowed American ships to travel along the Rhine and Schelde with military materials, as long as they travelled under the guise of being merchant ships.¹⁴³ This was something expressly denied the Germans in November 1918, when they had made a similar request.¹⁴⁴ The official reason given was that it would facilitate continental peace, and allow the Allies necessary access to German territory. The Dutch also allowed British POWs (and later demobilised soldiers) in Germany to cross the Netherlands on their way home, and cared for them in camps at Vlasakkers and Oldebroek while they awaited ships to take them across the Channel.¹⁴⁵ It did not, however, do the same for the French, Italian, or Belgian soldiers, who were told

to travel across the German-Belgian border instead, with the exception for those who arrived at the Limburg border; they, like the German soldiers on 13 November, were given the right of passage.¹⁴⁶

In November and December 1918, the scale of human traffic across both the southern and eastern border was massive. Not only did tens of thousands of POWs set free in Germany and Austria-Hungary make their way home via the Netherlands, but also thousands of German deserters and refugees of many nationalities streamed through the country.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, refugees and internees who had resided in the Netherlands during the war began returning to their countries of origin.¹⁴⁸ A military presence to supervise this flow of border traffic was absolutely essential, if only to keep any undesirables out. Explicit orders existed to prevent Russian POWs and 'communist elements' from entering and to persuade those already in the Netherlands to leave.¹⁴⁹ On 7 December 1918, the Commander-in-Chief even reminded the Commander of the Field Army that his troops should be extra vigilant on the borders as there were rumours that Lenin and Trotsky might escape from Russia (if Allied troops were successful in their military campaigns against the Bolsheviks).¹⁵⁰ Both exiles were to be denied entry. There were already far too many influential 'refugees' in the Netherlands.

Smuggling and illegal trade across the borders remained a security concern as well. Since the Allied blockade continued to be in force until the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, the Dutch government had to prevent its own citizens from turning to smuggling. Again, this ensured that many of the extraordinary customs officers appointed from the military ranks during the war remained on the borders for a few extra months. While the government had managed to renegotiate its trade agreements with several belligerents in the weeks preceding the armistice,¹⁵¹ and obtained greater leniency in importing goods, its trading situation remained precarious. Although the government intended to dispense with the 'state of war' and 'state of siege' as soon as possible,¹⁵² the practicalities surrounding the issues of smuggling, refugees, internees, and other neutrality matters after November 1918 made this rather difficult to implement. The *staat van oorlog* and *staat van beleg*, therefore, remained in place for several more months, although regulations were eased.¹⁵³ Now that the threat of war had all but passed, military authority no longer held sway. During 1919, more municipalities returned to normal civil law and on 1 May 1920, the government revoked the last 'state of siege' and 'state of war' declarations.¹⁵⁴ A period of extraordinary municipal administration had come to an end.

It was around this time as well that rations were increased and the economy showed signs of improvement, although the situation was far from rosy. It took time for world trade to return to anything like its pre-war levels. The most immediate effect for the Dutch was that the government-imposed bread rations were not abolished until May 1920.¹⁵⁵ The economy, in fact, could not recover properly as long as Germany remained in its economic doldrums.¹⁵⁶ With the influx of thousands of recently demobilised men into the workforce, unemployment remained a pressing problem as well. Special aid organisations were established to provide work and financial support for ex-conscripts and their families.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the economic situ-

ation looked more promising than it had in 1917 and 1918, so much so that many government crisis institutions and other war organisations, including the Netherlands' Overseas Trust, Netherlands' Export Bureau, and Royal Support Committee, were dismantled in 1919.¹⁵⁸ The flow of goods, information, and people between the East and West Indies and the Netherlands also resumed, as shipping routes and sea lanes were cleared of mines and the Allied blockade was reduced.

The anti-war movements that had been so vocal, including the NAOR and IAMV, declined in membership and became less militant during the immediate post-war years.¹⁵⁹ Yet the cry '*Nooit meer oorlog!*' ('Never war again!') resounded throughout the country as it did in a multitude of different tongues throughout Europe's many nations, both new and old. In the interbellum period of demilitarisation, the League of Nations, and collective security, these calls helped to further devalue the armed forces in the national consciousness of the Dutch, ensuring that it would be poorly prepared for many more years to come.

In May 1919, the last of the mobilised conscripts were sent on long-term leave. The only conscripts still occupying any military barracks were the last intake of trainees from 1919. The government dismissed Pop as Commander-in-Chief on 15 November 1919, once the demobilisation was complete.¹⁶⁰ Volunteers were also released from service at this time. The navy, unlike the army, did not officially demobilise although its conscripts were sent home along with their army equivalents. It dismantled gun emplacements on the coast early in 1919, cleared mines from harbour entrances, removed war buoyage, and reconverted those salvage ships that had been turned into minelayers during the war.¹⁶¹ Even the electric fence, the wire of death that had separated Belgium from the Netherlands for more than three years, disappeared within the space of a few months. Its wires could now be seen fencing in paddocks and farmyards on both sides of the border.¹⁶² The country slowly returned to normal and counted its blessings.

In a world that was to never be the same again, the Netherlands had escaped relatively unscathed. It entered the post-war years without the damage and despair of the nations that fought the war or experienced invasion, yet it was far from certain about its future. The end of the war signalled that, like the rest of the world, the Netherlands had to reassess its position, find security, and re-organise its international relationships. Most importantly, it had to find a place for its neutrality. While neutrality had been attractive as a foreign policy option for the Netherlands in the century that preceded the outbreak of the Great War, by the end of this conflict, its foundations were severely undermined. After 1919, the Dutch faced an unenviable prospect: to give up neutrality and build its security on some other basis within or outside the League of Nations, or revive neutrality and hope that it would survive any future storms and tempests. Neither choice seemed to greatly enhance security or independence. How they dealt with these choices is a chapter of Dutch history left for others to write. Needless to say, they affected how the Netherlands fared in a subsequent world conflict, one that would, in the end, shake and dramatically break the last vestiges of neutrality's allure.

Conclusion

Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: The Paradox of Neutrality

The desire for neutrality cannot be superior to the interests of the nation.

– Oliveira Salazar (1942)¹

Between 1914 and 1918, the Netherlands remained neutral. But it could not escape unscathed from the war waged on its doorstep. The Great War challenged and impeded upon many of the concerns which neutrality was supposed to safeguard for the Dutch, including their economic stability, sovereignty, defence, and security. In the period 1917-1918, the domestic economy slowed down, trade slumped, links with the colonies were cut, and the population dealt with severe shortages of essential goods. In these last two years of the war, the government came under considerable pressure from both belligerent sides to give in to their demands, which encroached increasingly upon the neutral's international rights and ability to assert its independence. Neutrality stopped being the vibrant and attractive foreign policy it seemed to be before the outbreak of war.

The Allied seizure of Dutch ships in March 1918 followed by Germany's insistence on unlimited transport trade in April of that year brought the Netherlands to the verge of war. If Germany had invaded in 1918, there was little the neutral could have done. It did not have the armed might to withstand a concerted attack by its neighbour. The Allies were also in no shape to come to the Netherlands' rescue. In fact, it was the express Allied desire to not have Germany controlling the Netherlands that enabled them to reach a credible compromise. Yet, at the same time, it clearly indicated how much the warring sides had interfered with the supposed inviolability of Dutch neutrality and sovereignty. After April 1918, the Netherlands lost the ability to affect major changes in its relationships with the belligerents. Alongside its capacity to steer a middle course between their conflicting demands, the goodwill of its neighbours remained essential if it was to remain a non-belligerent.

One major asset of the Netherlands that did not diminish in value during the war was its geo-strategic position. Its location between Germany, Belgium, the Channel, and the North Sea, as well as its sovereignty over the mouths of the Rhine, Maas, and Schelde rivers, ensured that both the Allies and Central Powers had to think twice before they invaded. This remained the belligerents' only consistent reason for respecting Dutch neutrality during the war. In August 1914, the 200,000 troops in the Dutch army were important deterrents for Germany. It could not afford to attack an army of this size if it was to hastily conquer France as well. Furthermore, the trade and credit Germany received from the Netherlands played a major

role in its support of Dutch neutrality, especially in 1915 and 1916. By 1917, however, these economic advantages had disappeared. Consequently, Germany had fewer qualms about demanding greater concessions from its neutral neighbour, even when they blatantly interfered with neutrality obligations. The two restraining influences on Germany were the fear that the Allies might open another military front in and around the Schelde and the knowledge that it could not divert more resources to another area of conflict.

In the opening months of the war, Great Britain could not violate Dutch neutrality since it had entered the war to protect neutral Belgium. Above all, however, the Allies did not believe it was possible to defeat the Dutch and occupy the territory before their enemies intervened. A German invasion of the Netherlands had to be prevented if at all possible. But recognising the importance of Dutch non-belligerency did not keep the Allies from exacting as many advantages as possible out of that neutrality. When these demands reached a zenith with the requisitioning of Dutch ships in 1918 and the resulting 'sand and gravel' crisis, the Allies had to make concessions to the Central Powers, to keep the Netherlands out of the war.

Because the stakes in the conflict were so high, the warring sides had few reservations about interfering with the rights of neutrals. Both the Allied and Central Powers rejected international laws and other legal recourses open to neutrals when and where it suited them. Here, the Great War set a dangerous precedent for future abuse of the principles of neutrality, which became even more blatant during the Second World War when Hitler rejected international law completely and exacted entirely 'unneutral' behaviour from supposedly neutral states. Nils Ørvik's claims that the Great War spelled the end of neutrality as a credible foreign policy became all too evident for the Netherlands. In his words:

By using all their economic and military bargaining power, the neutrals might have succeeded in staying out of war [World War One], but in doing so they had to submit to severe limitations of their sovereignty. On the other hand, the belligerents had to modify their demands to the minimum which was necessary to keep the neutral from joining the enemy.²

The belligerents' general disregard for the sanctity of international laws that govern neutrality meant that the Netherlands sought out other means to protect its neutral status. Its ability to negotiate and compromise with the warring parties was one of the most important. As the belligerents' pressure placed on the country increased, Dutch diplomatic skills became paramount. In this respect, the importance of individuals such as Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Loudon, cannot be underestimated, as the historian Hubert van Tuyll pointed out.³ However, aside from diplomatic skill, it was essential that the Dutch collectively acted in a strictly neutral manner, displaying a determination to remain out of the war and retain as much sovereignty as possible. By adhering as closely as possible to international legal standards, the Netherlands hoped to force any mistakes and violations of its neutrality onto others, and hoped thereby to be beyond reproach.

To this end, the Dutch carefully discharged key neutrality responsibilities, including interning foreign troops and military materials and refusing entry to armed merchants. With the exception of aerial integrity, they could enforce the compliance of the combatants regarding most territorial matters. When violations were unavoidable, as they inevitably were, the skill was to chart a middle course by means of compromise and negotiation, even when it interfered with strict neutrality or sovereignty. As Werner Rings stated:

To ensure the cherished peace and its survival, the small state has no other option but to make concessions. It cannot afford to, indeed must not overstep the mark. The highest principle of its foreign policy must be to avoid, to defuse, and to get rid of conflicts in as generous a manner as possible.⁴

The neutral's ultimate purpose was to stay out of the war. In the end, the loss of sovereignty, independence, and economic security – three things that the Dutch had hoped to achieve by staying neutral – were the price paid for fulfilment of the general aim. Nevertheless, neutrality could be made or broken in the enforcement of the international laws and agreements. Without the credible means of ensuring that the Dutch government kept its promises, the country's neutrality would be deemed worthless. The armed forces, therefore, played an essential role, acting as the 'police force' that protected neutrality and prevented violations from occurring inside and outside the nation's borders. By patrolling territorial waters and borders, administering the 'state of war' and 'state of siege', checking cargo leaving and entering the country, interning foreigners and their war materials, and shooting at foreign aeroplanes, the military upheld the credibility of neutrality.

Undoubtedly, the High Command underestimated the time-consuming and resource-draining nature of the armed forces' neutrality responsibilities. In fact, the armed forces were overwhelmed by the many neutrality tasks assigned to them, so much so that within months of mobilising, their capability to resist a possible invasion had decreased significantly. Their manifold neutrality duties, ultimately, took priority over defence. As a result, between August 1914 and November 1918, the field army scattered, the fortifications emptied out, and the navy dispersed. The objectives of successful defence identified by the General Staff before 1914, namely the concentration of the field army and strongly fortified positions, could not be preserved during the war. This situation reflected the fundamental contradiction that existed between trying to use one institution to achieve two ends, namely to defend the country against a possible attack and to prevent that attack in the first place. Of course, the armed forces' defence needs had to lose out to their neutrality requirements because if neutrality worked, then there would be no need for a defence. Without the proper defence measures being put in place, however, not only did the deterrence value of the country's neutrality disappear, if neutrality had failed, the nation would be left to the whims of more powerful armies. Fortunately for the Netherlands, its neutrality strategy did not fail during the Great War.

Furthermore, when a neutral country was situated as closely to the western front

as the Netherlands was between 1914 and 1918, then its ability to mount a credible defence was imperative. But the war proved, above all, that a small state with a limited industrial capacity could not keep up. The Netherlands did not have the human and material resources to match the military improvements of the belligerent armies. While the size of its army increased significantly, at least on paper, the weaponry, ammunition, and other material requirements of a modern fighting force did not exist and could not be produced. Even maintaining the *krachtsverschil* (difference in strength) between the warring sides, which represented a key principle of Dutch military deterrence in 1914, became too difficult. The irony of the Netherlands' position was that, if it had fought in the war, its allies would have provided the equipment it needed and hence the army would not have become obsolete. As a neutral, however, the country could not obtain the necessary equipment from the major industrial powers. In other words, by virtue of remaining neutral, the quality of its neutrality declined.

Moreover, although the urgency behind improving the armed forces existed among the High Command, it did not permeate through to Dutch society in general. When Germany did not invade in August 1914, many Dutch people believed they were safe from future harm and that the belligerents were too preoccupied to be a threat. Neutrality acted as a security blanket for the population, creating a false sense of safety. As a result, the government had a considerable amount of trouble persuading parliament to pass any extraordinary military expenditures, let alone unlimited funding for the improvement of outdated fortifications. Its one attempt to remove public complacency, namely by cancelling leave during the Easter break in April 1916, turned into a disaster. Thus, while the government increased its funding of military projects, which was much greater than it had been in the years before the outbreak of war, it did not wish to and, in many respects, could not justify a large wartime deficit. In this aspect, the neutral differed greatly from its belligerent counterparts, which did everything within their powers to improve their armed forces, regardless of the costs.

In a similar vein, the country's neutrality affected the willingness of the population to accept the continuous mobilisation of its conscripts, let alone a situation of high military alert. Because the country was not at war, few Dutch people could comprehend the necessity of keeping hundreds of thousands of men mobilised. The push for demobilisation was strongest in 1915 and 1916 when external threats to the Netherlands and its neutrality seemed negligible. Even after February 1917, when the possibility of war became more evident, the resolve to stay fully mobilised did not. As a result, the government and the High Command came under pressure from parliament to partially demobilise the armed forces or send more troops on long-term leave. In the end, they consented to more leave for the soldiers. As a result, during the last two years of the war, only approximately 80,000 troops were ever on duty at any one time, despite the fact that the official size of the army had doubled to more than 400,000, and their responsibilities had increased many times over. Of all the military issues that were debated publicly, that of military leave best illustrates the clear difference between what the High Command believed were the absolute

minimum military requirements for the protection of the country and what the nation was willing to accept.

It was largely due to the amount of leave granted to soldiers as well as the dispersion of troops around the country that a second mobilisation became a necessity in early 1917 if the country was to have any chance of withstanding an invasion. Snijders and the rest of the High Command, however, were well aware that it was highly unlikely that there would be enough time for a successful second mobilisation. It would take four to five days for soldiers to be remobilised, inundations readied, and units organised. In that time, an invading force could have easily seized the all-important railway system and put the fortified centre of the country under siege. Given the serious deficiencies in artillery strength and machine-gun concentration, but also shortages of ammunition, hand-grenades, gas masks, and steel helmets, the Dutch were at a serious disadvantage. Whether the political leadership wanted to hear it or not, Snijders' exclamations in April 1918, that going to war with Germany would be catastrophic for the Netherlands, seems ominously realistic. The disadvantages facing the armed forces during the war were only heightened by the impact of the war at sea and the blockade policies of the belligerents. The Netherlands could not obtain sufficient essential goods in 1917 and 1918, and much of what they could obtain was smuggled out again. The army experienced serious shortages of petrol for its vehicles and aeroplanes; coal for the trains and warships; fodder for the horses; food for its soldiers; and soap. The absence of these daily essentials not only undermined troop morale, and, as a result, their fighting ability, but also made a speedy and successful second mobilisation highly unlikely.

Neutrality theoretically means a time of peace. In reality, however, the Netherlands during the Great War can be likened to a nation at war, but one that did not actually participate in combat. It had to meet many of the same standards of military preparedness as the belligerents, in case neutrality failed, but lacked the urgency that being at war fostered in the populations and governments of the warring states. A belligerent had no choice but to do its utmost to defend and protect itself since its existence was at stake. A neutral, on the other hand, could hide behind its neutrality and put off preparing for war, since war was only a possibility. To a certain degree, this is what happened in the Netherlands. The government used the extensive powers of the War Law and imposed military control over three-quarters of all of its municipalities, which clearly demonstrates that it was only too well aware that extraordinary times required extraordinary measures, and that the country's best chance of remaining a non-combatant was to protect its neutrality exhaustively.

The government ostensibly imposed the 'state of siege' to protect neutrality, stretched its purpose to handle smuggling matters, and ended up committing military commanders to a variety of municipal concerns. Because the War Law was vague and largely undefined, its application was limited (it pertained neither to the entire nation nor to a war situation), and because it was used for many years and for many different purposes, it was almost inevitable that judicial concerns would arise. From May 1915 onwards, the High Court made several rulings that changed the use of the 'state of war' and 'state of siege'. The judiciary consistently diluted the principle that

nood breekt wet ('need breaks law'), so that in 1918, commanders had few more powers than those normally allocated to municipal authorities. All the reasons for imposing the 'state of war' or 'state of siege' in the first place, namely to protect neutrality, police smuggling, and improve defences, were undermined by the judges' decisions. The restrictions placed on the War Law signalled the ultimate paradox of neutrality: A neutral had a much greater chance of maintaining its status if it operated out of the urgency of a nation at war. If the Netherlands had been at war, military authorities would not have faced as many limitations, the question of national urgency would not have been open to judicial debate, and the Commander-in-Chief would have received unlimited powers to defend the nation along the guidelines created by the central government. In the 'state of siege' imposed during the Great War, however, which was based on local jurisdiction rather than national concerns, such prerogatives did not exist.

The inability to reconcile the fact that the nation was not at war with the need for extraordinary military involvement in domestic affairs hampered the government's ability to exact necessary standards of neutral behaviour from its citizenry. Widespread opposition to the powers of the armed forces during the 'state of siege' contributed to the failure of commanders to properly enforce strict neutrality standards in the printed press. 'State of siege' authorities only ever imposed censorship restrictions haphazardly. Likewise, even though the government declared the 'state of siege' solely for the purpose of combating smuggling, smuggling continued virtually unabated during the war. No doubt, most Dutch citizens were aware that smuggling had an impact on their country's neutrality and economic well-being, since the Allies made no secret of denouncing it and threatened to impede the supply of goods to the Netherlands if it continued. Yet this knowledge did not dissuade many from selling their wares in Germany and Belgium.

Non-belligerency tempered not only the willingness of the Dutch to accept emergency measures, but also affected how much they were prepared to sacrifice personally for the sake of national welfare. Even populations of warring states had their limits to what they would accept as reasonable levels of rationing and food supply, which is clearly illustrated by the rioting that helped to fuel the revolutionary movement in Germany in 1918. But that threshold of acceptance was lower in the Netherlands. Again, this is reflected by the fact that Dutch national security was not immediately threatened, and people simply could not accept unequal distribution of available goods, especially when it favoured soldiers who were, after all, not fighting. Combined with war lethargy, these feelings contributed to widespread unrest during 1917 and 1918. By October 1918, most troops had reached the end of their tether. Four years of mobilisation had taken their toll and when the High Command cancelled all leave at the end of the month, many showed their dissent by rioting. The Harskamp disturbances worried the nation and many feared, in the end needlessly, that they were heading down the same path to revolution as Germany, Russia, and some central European states were.

The armistice did not come a moment too soon for the Netherlands. During 1918, the Dutch reached the limits of their tolerance: they were sick of the war, the mobil-

isation, and shortages of many kinds. They faced the severest test of their neutrality during this year, which brought them to the brink of entering the war. Their armed forces could not withstand a concerted attack if it had come. But the belligerents were also war weary, underfed, ravaged by the Spanish influenza pandemic, and ultimately unwilling to drag the neutral into the conflict at such a late stage, even though it was on the agenda for both sides (for Germany in April and Great Britain in October). In the end, neither the 'devil' nor the rulers of the 'deep blue sea' wished to take on each other on Dutch soil. The military capabilities of the neutral, so prominent in the opening months of the war, now featured much less as a factor in their calculations. Instead, the neutral maintained a precarious equilibrium between the demands of both sides. The Netherlands kept itself out of the war, for which its citizens were grateful, but in the process it lost most of the reasons which had attracted the country to neutrality at the outset. The Netherlands perfected the art of staying neutral much like a juggler who successfully traverses a tightrope but who drops all his balls and teeters dangerously on the brink at numerous points along the way.

Appendix

I

Important Military Laws, 1827-1922

Year	Law	Detail	Nature of Service
1827	<i>Schutterijwet</i>	<i>actieve schutterij</i> (active militia) for communities with 2,500 people or more, and <i>rustende schutterij</i> (resting militia) for the rest	<i>actieve schutters</i> served for 5 years, then 5 years in reserves, <i>rustende schutters</i> existed only on paper
1861	<i>Militiewet</i>	11,000 soldiers conscripted per year (600 to Navy)	conscripted for 5 years, infantry: 1 year training, cavalry/artillery: 1.5 years training
1898	<i>Militiewet</i>	legislated personal service for all conscripts	conscripts could not pay someone to do their service for them
1901	<i>Militiewet</i>	yearly conscript intake raised to 17,500	conscripts enlisted for 8 years (12,300 fully trained, 5,200 received 4 months)
1901	<i>Landweeerwet</i>	reserve army of 80,000, abolition of <i>schutterijen</i> , stationed in municipality where resided (48 districts)	after 8 years as military conscripts soldiers transferred to the <i>landweeer</i> for 7 more years (including 2 weeks' retraining)
1908	<i>Tweeploegen-stelsel</i> [Two-squad-system]		split military conscript intake into two squads, 2 months active service for each (additional to their training)
1912	<i>Militiewet</i>	increased yearly conscript intake to 23,000	decreased length of military service, longer training for specialised units
1913	<i>Landweeerwet</i>	maximum strength 84,000 <i>landweeer</i> conscripts	decreased length of <i>landweeer</i> service from 7 to 5 years, fewer training sessions
1913	<i>Landstormwet</i>	creation of <i>landstorm</i> (militia, second reserves), maximum strength 160,000	included volunteers, all those freed from service, all those not picked by the lottery, and those who had served in the military

Year	Law	Detail	Nature of Service
1915	<i>Landstormwet</i>		at some stage (until the age of 40), only called-up in case of war men freed from conscription and under the age of 30 (in 1916) liable for <i>landstorm</i> service, also men who had served in the military and left between 1911 and 1913 automatically transferred to the <i>landstorm</i> (until age 40)
1922	<i>Militiewet</i>	<i>landweeer</i> abolished, reserve force created, yearly conscript intake reduced from 23,000 to 19,500	

Appendix

2

The Field Army, August 1914¹

Organisation	Components (<i>additions made during the war in italics</i>)
Headquarters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commander of the Field Army and staff
Four Divisions (I, II, III, IV) each with	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Divisional Commander and staff• Three infantry brigades of two regiments infantry each (a regiment had three battalions, a battalion had four companies) and one machine-gun platoon (six guns)• One company of cyclists (<i>one company added</i>)• One squadron of cavalry• One regiment field artillery with three sections (a section had four batteries with three guns each) (<i>additional section added</i>)• One company pioneers (<i>one company added</i>)• Two light howitzer sections• One divisional train (munitions, supply, telegraph, medical staff and bridge-builders) (<i>lighting section added</i>)• One of the four divisions had two batteries of mobile artillery
Cavalry Brigade	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brigade Commander and staff• Four regiments cavalry (each consisting of three squadrons cavalry and one machine-gun section)• Two batteries of mobile artillery (three pieces each)• <i>Four squadrons of cyclists</i>• Separate cavalry munitions and artillery munitions trains
Supply and Inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inspector of the Field Army and staff

Appendix

3

Overview of the Netherlands' Neutrality Declaration, 1914¹

- Article 1 No hostilities may occur in the Netherlands nor can the country be used as a base from which hostilities are conducted.
- Article 2 Belligerent military forces cannot occupy any part of the Netherlands, nor use it for the transit of troops or military goods, nor may warships cross through Dutch territorial waters.
- Article 3 All belligerent troops entering Dutch territory will be disarmed and interned until the end of war. Warships will not be allowed to leave the Netherlands until the end of war.
- Article 4 Warships cannot access Dutch territorial waters.
- Article 5 Article 4 does not apply to ships that are damaged, need fuel or food, or have a religious, scientific or humanitarian mission.
- Article 6 Repairs to warships may only be made to make them seaworthy.
- Article 7 Warships in the Netherlands at the time of this declaration must leave within 24 hours.
- Article 8 If two enemy warships are in the same port, they must leave 24 hours after each other.
- Article 9 Warships can only be provisioned with enough food and fuel to last them to the nearest friendly port.
- Article 10 A prize (ship seized by one's enemy) may only enter the Netherlands if it is in distress or short of fuel or foodstuffs.
- Article 11 It is forbidden to form a group of combatants or recruit combatants in the Netherlands.
- Article 12 It is forbidden to take service on board belligerent warships in the Netherlands.
- Article 13 One cannot arm, equip or man belligerent vessels to improve their military capabilities.
- Article 14 One cannot supply arms or ammunition to any belligerent vessels.
- Article 15 One must seek authorisation before repairing or supplying any belligerent warship.
- Article 16 One cannot dismantle or repair prizes, except to make them seaworthy. One cannot buy or trade prizes in the Netherlands.
- Article 17 State territory includes coastal waters up to three nautical miles from Dutch land.
- Article 18 Commanding officers, owners and charterers of ships are asked to take note of belligerent blockades and contraband regulations.
Any person guilty of breaching articles 1 - 17 will not be able to obtain any protection from the Netherlands' government.
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Appendix

4

Internment Camps in the Netherlands, 1914-1918¹

Location	Date	Max. Number	Nationality
Alkmaar	Aug 1914		Germans and Belgians
Amersfoort and Zeist	Oct 1914 to Sept 1918	13,500	Belgians
Assen	Oct 1914 to Feb 1915	2,500	Belgians
Bergen	Aug 1914-Nov 1918		Germans
Gaasterland	Aug 1914 to Dec 1916	2,200	Belgians
Groningen	Oct 1914 to Nov 1918		British
Hardewijk	Oct 1914 to Dec 1918	11,500	Belgians
Heerlen	Aug 1915 to Dec 1918		Belgian and British (mineworkers)
Kampen	Oct 1914 to Jan 1915	1,800	Belgians
Leeuwarden	Oct 1914 to Feb 1915	1,200	British (one week) then Belgians
Loosduinen	Oct 1914 to Dec 1918	1,500	Belgians
Nunspeet	Feb to Apr 1915		Belgian officers
Oldebroek	Feb 1915 to Aug 1916	3,500	Belgians
Urk	Dec 1914 to Mar 1917	3,500	Allied officers
Vlissingen	Apr 1915 to Dec 1918		Belgian and British (penal facility)
Wierickerschans	Jan 1915 to May 1917		British and French officers (until Jan 1916) then German officers
Zwolle	Oct 1914 to Jan 1915	250	Belgians
Zwolle	Oct 1914 to Dec 1918	up to 50	Belgian officers

Appendix

5

Overview of the Oorlogswet (War Law) 1899¹

Article Regulation

- Article 1 • Any area of the Netherlands can be declared in a *staat van oorlog* (state of war) or *staat van beleg* (state of siege) when the country is in danger of war, or internal disorder threatens the internal or external security of the country.
- Article 2 • If, through war or internal disorder, parts of the country are separated from the central government, the highest military authority in the cut-off area can declare a 'state of siege'.
- Article 3 • The government is responsible for declaring and removing the 'state of war' and 'state of siege' by Royal Decree (*Koninklijk Besluit*), except in the case of article 2.
- Article 5 • Except during a foreign invasion, parliament determines whether to allow the continuation of the 'state of war' or 'state of siege'.
- Article 7 • The cabinet or Minister of War appoints military commanders to exercise military authority in the 'state of war' or 'state of siege'.

In the Staat van Oorlog (State of War):

- Article 9 • Councils and staff who work in the service of provinces, municipalities, *waterschappen* (district water boards), *veenschappen* (district peat boards) and *veenpolders* (peat polders) must provide information requested of them by the military authority.
- Article 10 • After consultation with the civil authorities [in article 9], the military authority can issue new police regulations and regulations regarding peat and water board.
- Article 11 • After consultation with the civil authorities, the military authority can issue regulations for the upkeep of residents and troops.
- The military authority can, without prior approval from the owner, enter any private establishment, as long as a written mandate is shown to the owner. A report must be filed for all searches of private property.
- Article 12 • After consultation with the civil authorities, the military authority can force civilians to help with preparing defences.
- The military authority can suspend particular regulations of the *Arbeidswet* (Work Law), *Veiligheidswet* (Safety Law) and *Hinderwet* (Nuisance Law).
- Article 13 • After consultation with the civil authorities, the military authority can regulate the police and fire service, and can appoint secret police to monitor suspicious activities.
- Article 15 • The military authority can remove objects or buildings that hinder proper military defence.

- Article 16 • The military can occupy any building, and requisition any goods necessary for defence.
- Article 18 • The military can forbid the publication (or dissemination in other ways) of reports regarding military matters.

In the Staat van Beleg (State of Siege):

- Article 19 • Articles 9 to 18 also apply, except if stated differently below.
 - Article 21 • The civilian authorities [in article 9] must obey the orders of the military authority.
 - Article 22 • The military authority can establish new police regulations and regulations for water and peat boards.
 - Article 23 • The military authority can regulate movements into and out of the ‘state of siege’ area.
 - Article 25 • Except for religious congregation, no meetings, gatherings or marches (in public or private) may be held without written approval of the military authority.
 - Article 28 • The military authority can, in the interest of public safety, close theatres, societies, cafés, bars, and other rooms used for entertainment, as well as factories and work places.
 - Article 29 • The military authority can regulate the ownership and use of weapons by civilians.
 - Article 30 • The military authority can regulate the manner in which corpses are buried.
 - Article 31 • The military authority can determine how births and deaths are registered.
 - Article 32 • In ‘state of siege’ areas with no access to central government, wills can be approved by a civil servant or military officer above the rank of lieutenant.
 - Article 33 • The military authority can remove any persons from the ‘state of siege’ area who endanger public order and safety, or, if removal is not practical, imprison them.
 - Article 34 • The military authority can refuse entry for civilians to any defensive or military area.
 - Article 35 • The military authority can forbid any person from leaving the ‘state of siege’ area, whose skills are useful for defence, likewise it can forbid the removal of any animals or goods.
 - Article 36 • In the interest of defence, the military authority can force any non-military persons to join the armed forces and help with preparing defences.
 - Article 37 • The military authority can limit or prevent completely the publication and circulation of any written or printed materials.
 - Article 38 • The military authority can exercise censorship on post and telegraph communications.
 - Article 40 • The military authority can set up temporary *krijgsraden* (war courts). In wartime, civilians can be sentenced by the war court.
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Appendix

6

State of War and State of Siege Declarations, 1914-1917¹

Date	State of War	State of Siege
5 Aug 1914	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New Holland Waterline• Fortification of Den Helder• Fortifications on the mouths of the Maas river and Haringvliet	
10 Aug 1914	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• North Brabant, Limburg, Zeeland and Gelderland (below the Waal river)	
29 Aug 1914		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• border municipalities in Zeeland, North Brabant and Limburg
8 Sep 1914		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• municipalities along rivers and waterways in North Brabant, Gelderland, South Holland, Zeeland, Friesland, Groningen, and Limburg• Fortification of Den Helder
25 Sep 1914		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• municipalities bordering Germany in Gelderland, Overijssel, Groningen, Drenthe, and Limburg• municipalities in Friesland including the island of Schiermonnikoog
10 Nov 1914		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• municipalities along the Eems River and the Frisian islands
19 Jan 1915		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• municipalities containing internment camps• municipalities in North Brabant, Gelderland, and South Holland
11 Feb 1915	Fortification Hollandsch Diep and 't Volkerak	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bergen (internment camp)
8 Jul 1915		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the province of Zeeland• municipalities in Gelderland, Groningen, and Drenthe
20 Aug 1915		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• port of Amsterdam
13 Sep 1915		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• municipalities in North Brabant
23 Oct 1915		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• municipalities in Drenthe
11 Nov 1915		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delft Construction Works

Date	State of War	State of Siege
16 Nov 1915		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amsterdam harbour and waterways
3 Dec 1915		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • municipalities in Gelderland, Overijssel, Groningen, and Drenthe
22 Jan 1916		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • municipalities in North Brabant, Gelderland, and Overijssel • Arnhem railway station
13 Dec 1916		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • municipalities in Overijssel • all territorial waters
26 Feb 1917		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • municipalities in Gelderland
22 Mar 1917		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fort Nieuw Andries, Geertruidenberg, and Crèvecoeur • municipalities in North Brabant and Gelderland
30 May 1917		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • municipalities in Groningen and Drenthe

Appendix

7

Mobilisation and Leave for Military, Landweer and Landstorm Troops¹

NB: *month mobilised in italics, month sent on leave in bold*

Intake year	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
LW 1908 (born 1879)	<i>August</i>	May			
LW 1909 (born 1880)	<i>August</i>	November			
LW 1910 (born 1881)	<i>August</i>	December			
LW 1911 (born 1882)	<i>August</i>		January (part) March (rest)		
LW 1912 (born 1883)	<i>August</i>		March		
LW 1913 (born 1885)	<i>August</i>		July		
Mil 1906 (born 1886)	<i>August</i>		transfer to LW 1916a (Jan) August		
Mil 1907 (born 1887)	<i>August</i>		transfer to LW 1916b (Jan) September		
Mil 1908 (born 1888)	<i>August</i>		transfer to LW 1916c (Aug) October		
Mil 1909 (born 1889)	<i>August</i>		transfer to LW 1916d (Aug) November		
Mil 1910 (born 1890)	<i>August</i>		December		
Mil 1911 (born 1891)	<i>August</i>			May	
Mil 1912 (born 1892)	<i>August</i>			June	
Mil 1913 (born 1893)	<i>August</i>			July	
Mil 1914 (born 1894)	<i>August</i>			August	
Mil 1915 (born 1895)	<i>December</i> <i>(part)</i>	<i>February</i> <i>(part),</i> <i>April (rest)</i>			June (part) July (rest)
LS 1915 (born 1895)		<i>September</i>			October (part)
LS 1914 (born 1894)		<i>October</i>			

Intake year	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
LS 1913 (born 1893)		November			
Mil 1916 (born 1896)		December (part)	May (part), October (rest)		
LS 1912 (born 1892)			February (part), March (rest)		
LS 1911 (born 1891)			June (part), July (part), November (rest)		
LS 1916 (born 1896)			August (part), November (rest)		
LS 1910 (born 1890)			August (part), October (part), November (rest)		
Mil 1917 (born 1897)				January (part), February (part), March (rest)	
LS 1917 (born 1897)				February	
LS 1909 (born 1889)				March (part), April (rest)	
Mil 1918 (born 1898)				Autumn	
LS 1908 (born 1888)				Summer/ Autumn	
Mil 1919 (born 1899)					August (part)
LS 1918 (born 1898)					Autumn

Illustrations Credits

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Chapter 2

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- 158 'Instructie voor den Opperbevelhebber' in Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* Appendix C., p. 393.

Chapter 3

- 1 Ritter, *De Donkere Poort*, vol. 1, p. 81.
- 2 C.J. Sniijders, 'Mobilisatie-Herinneringen 1914-1918 no. 16' 6 May 1931, in IMG/DC 91A/3. Note: Sniijders wrote several drafts, numbered individually.
- 3 Much of the following information regarding the *api api* telegram is based on extensive research by Hubert P. van Tuyll: 'Inside Knowledge: API-API and the Netherlands' Mobilization' World War One Document Archive website <<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/>> [Path: via Home Page to 'Special Topics and Commentary Articles' to <http://raven.cc.ukans.edu/~kansite/ww_one/comment/tuyll2.htm/>] 1997 (accessed November 1998), np; 'The Dutch Mobilization' pp. 733-735; *The Netherlands* pp. 58-70. A. Wolting, 'De eerste jaren van de Militaire Inlichtingendienst (GS III. 1914-1917)' *Militaire Spectator*. 134, 1965, pp. 566-571; Engelen, *De Militaire Inlichtingen Dienst* pp. 21-22.
- 4 G.U.H. Thoden van Velzen, 'Toelichting op telegram "Api Api"' in IMG/DC 91A/3. For a photo of the telegram: Wolting, 'De eerste jaren' p. 567; Tuyll, *The Netherlands* p. 62.
- 5 Velzen, 'Toelichting'.
- 6 Tuyll, *The Netherlands* p. 60.
- 7 Fabius, 'De inlichtingendienst' pp. 196-212; Wolting, 'De eerste jaren'; Tuyll, 'The Dutch Mobilization' pp. 712, 717; Tuyll, *The Netherlands* p. 60.
- 8 Velzen, 'Toelichting'; Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 4; Sniijders, 'Mobilisatie-Herinneringen 1914-1918 no. 16' and 'Twee mobilisatiën' p. 14; Tuyll, 'Inside Knowledge' np, fn 17.
- 9 Tuyll, 'Inside Knowledge' and *The Netherlands* pp. 65, 67, 69.
- 10 Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 6.
- 11 Schulten, 'Van neutralisme' pp. 6-7.
- 12 Tuyll, 'Inside Knowledge' np, section 5.

- 13 Hew Strachan, *The First World War: Volume 1: To Arms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 85.
- 14 Sniijders, 'Mobilisatie Herinneringen 1914-1918 nr. 16'; Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 2.
- 15 Sniijders, 'Mobilisatie-Herinneringen 1914-1918 nr. 17' in IMG/DC 91A/3; Berg, *Cornelis Jacobus Sniijders* p. 75. Van Tuyll has suggested that it was peculiar that it took Sniijders four days to return to the Netherlands from Denmark (Tuyll, *The Netherlands* pp. 350-351). Given uncertain train connections and the fact that 25 and 26 July were weekend days, his movements may have been limited by rail timetables in Germany. Sniijders was, of course, not the only high-ranking European official on holiday at the start of these days of crisis.
- 16 Fasseur, *Wilhelmina* p. 495; Gos de Voogt, 'In ons land' in W.A.T. de Meester (ed.), *Gedenkboek van den Europeeschen Oorlog in 1914*. Leiden: A.W. Sythoff, 1914, p. 16.
- 17 'Notulen van de Buitengewone Ministerraad' 27 July 1914, in Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden. Derde Periode. Vierde Deel* p. 2.
- 18 Porter, 'Dutch Neutrality' p. 109.
- 19 *Staatsblad* no. 329-330, 27 July 1914; Telegram from Detachment Commander Kooiman to Mayor of Dordrecht, 28 July 1914, in SAD 6, 5472.
- 20 Sniijders to J.J. [Rambonnet, Minister in Charge of the Navy?] 27 July 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 127.
- 21 Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* p. 5; Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 3.
- 22 Hengel, 'De mobilisatie' pp. 49-50; Bles, 'De Koninklijke Marine' p. 77.
- 23 Klinkert, 'De Nederlandse mobilisatie' p. 25.
- 24 Provincial Governor to all mayors in the province of South Holland, 28 July 1914, in SAD 6, 5472.
- 25 Bles, 'De Koninklijke Marine' p. 77.
- 26 Voogt, 'In ons land' p. 17.
- 27 S. de Meester, 'Overzicht van den economischen toestand van Nederland voor en in het begin van den Europeeschen oorlog' in Meester (ed.), *Gedenkboek (1914)* p. 37; G. Vissering, J. Westerman Holstijn, 'The Effect of the War upon Banking and Industry' in Greven (ed.), *The Netherlands* vol. IV, p. 5.
- 28 Vissering et al., 'The Effect' p. 5; Ritter, *De Donkere Poort* vol. 1, p. 23.
- 29 Koninklijke Bibliotheek, *Documenten voor de Economische Crisis van Nederland in Oorlogsgevaar. Uitgegeven door de Afdeling Documentatie der Koninklijke Bibliotheek met Medewerking van het Nederlandsch Registratueurbureau*. vol. 1, The Hague: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1914, p. 257.
- 30 Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 5.
- 31 Uijterschout, *Beknopt Overzicht* p. 442.
- 32 Sniijders, 'Mobilisatie-Herinneringen 1914-1918 no. 16'.
- 33 *Staatblad* 30 July 1914, no. 331; Mobilisation questionnaires in NA 2.13.70, 46.
- 34 Sniijders, 'De Nederlandse landmacht' p. 218; Klinkert, *Het Vaderland* p. 396.
- 35 Watson, 'Britain's Dutch Policy' p. 24.
- 36 Hengel, 'De mobilisatie' p. 50; Bles, 'De Koninklijke Marine' p. 77.
- 37 Wim Klinkert, 'Met de pen of met het zwaard. Militaire middelen en de verdediging van de neutraliteit 1910-1914' in Hans Binneveld et al. (eds.), *Leven naast de catastrofe. Nederland tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog*. Hilversum: Verloren, 2001, pp. 21-22.
- 38 Sniijders, 'Mobilisatie-Herinneringen 1914-1918 no. 17'.
- 39 Klinkert, *Het Vaderland* p. 427.
- 40 Sniijders, 'Mobilisatie-Herinneringen 1914-1918 no. 17'.
- 41 Smit, *Nederland. Tweede deel* p. 5; Hendrik Pruntel, *Bereiken wat mogelijk is: besluitvorming in de Brits-Nederlandse betrekkingen, 1914-1916*. PhD dissertation, Enschede: Twente University of Technology, 1994, p. 182; Rob van Vuurde, 'Laveren en schipperen achter een

- façade van legalisme' in Duco Hellema et al. (eds.), *De Nederlandse ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken in de twintigste eeuw. Vijfde jaarboek voor de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek in de twintigste eeuw*. The Hague: Sdu, 1999, pp. 72-73.
- 42 Smit, *Nederland. Tweede deel* p. 5; Porter, 'Dutch Neutrality' p. 110.
- 43 Koch, 'Nederland' pp. 98-99.
- 44 Vandenbosch, *The Neutrality* p. 6.
- 45 Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* pp. 6-8; M.W.F. Treub, *Oorlogstijd: Herinneringen en Indrukken*. Second Edition. Haarlem and Amsterdam: H.D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon and Scheltema & Holkema Boekhandel, p. 11.
- 46 *Staatsblad*. no. 334(a), 31 July 1914; Sniijders, 'Mobilisatie-Herinneringen 1914-1918 no. 16'; Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 6; Pruntel, *Bereiken* p. 182.
- 47 Minister of War to Chief of General Staff, C.J. Sniijders, 30 July 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 144.
- 48 Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 7; Munnekrede, 'De mobilisatie' pp. 3-4.
- 49 *Koninklijk Besluit* 31 July 1914, no. 100, in *Buitengewone Nederlandse Staatscourant*, 1914, no. 178. The 'Instructie voor den Opperbevelhebber' can be found in Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* Appendix C, pp. 393-395.
- 50 Sniijders to the cabinet, 31 July 1914, in IMG/DC 397/S (also in NA 2.13.67, 328); Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* pp. 203-204.
- 51 Sniijders, 'Mobilisatie-Herinneringen 1914-1918 no. 17'; 'De ministerieele verantwoordelijkheid en het opperbevel' *Indische Gids* 60, no. 2, 1938, pp. 1092-1105 and 'Het opperbevel'.
- 52 Sniijders to the cabinet, 31 July 1914, in IMG/DC 397/S.
- 53 Article 6, 'Instructie voor Opperbevelhebber' in Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* Appendix C, p. 394.
- 54 Mobilisation poster, 31 August 1914, examples of which can be found in IMG/DC 131/7; and in H.P. Geerke, G.A. Brandts, *De Oorlog. Geïllustreerde Geschiedenis van den Wereldoorlog*. Volume 1, Amsterdam: Meulenhoff & Co., 1915, between pp. 106-107 and between pp. 112-113.
- 55 H.J. Verkouw, *Herinneringen van een Zwolse jongen*. Zwolle: Uitgeverij Waanders, 1985, p. 54; Zegers, 'Een levendige geschiedenis' p. 7; Miep de Zaaier, diary entry, 31 July 1914, in Haags gemeentemuseum, *Den Haag* p. 5.
- 56 Miep de Zaaier, diary entry, 31 July 1914, in Haags gemeentemuseum, *Den Haag* p. 5.
- 57 Ritter, *De Donkere Poort* vol. 1, pp. 32-33.
- 58 *Ibid.* p. 63; Telegram to the *Nieuwe Koerier*, 6 August 1914, in NIOD 618, 3.
- 59 Zegers, 'Een levendige geschiedenis' p. 8.
- 60 J.J. Streefkerk, 'Aantekeningen uit de oorlogsjaren 1914-1918' *Historisch Kring Loosdrecht*. 8, 1981, p. 84.
- 61 Voogt, 'In ons land' p. 17.
- 62 Ritter, *De Donkere Poort* vol. 1, p. 45.
- 63 Thom.J. de Vries, *Geschiedenis van Zwolle. Deel II. Van de invoering der Reformatie tot het jaar 1940*. Zwolle: Koninklijke Uitgeverij van de Erven J.J. Tijl, 1961, p. 327; Zegers, 'Een levendige geschiedenis' p. 7.
- 64 Poster, 'Aan de Burgerij van Hoek' signed by the mayor, A. Wolfert, 6 August 1914, in Commander of Coastal Battery at Neuzen, D. Putman Cramer, 'Dagboek van 5 Augustus 1914 t/m 31 December 1914 omtrent de uitoefening van het Militair Gezag te Neuzen Hoek en Zaamslag' in NA 2.13.70, 98.
- 65 Chart of the different yearly intakes mobilised between 1914 and 1917 in Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* Appendix A; Appendix 7.
- 66 Ritter, *De Donkere Poort* vol. 1, p. 31; A.F. van Goelst Meijer, 'Nederlandse Huzaren op 7 oktober 1914 onder vuur (1)', *Mars et Historia*. 23, no. 1, 1989, p. 23; Klinkert, 'De Nederlandse mobilisatie' p. 26.
- 67 Streefkerk, 'Aantekeningen' p. 86.

- 68 *Staatsblad* no. 351, 3 August 1914.
- 69 Paul Moeyes, *Buiten Schot. Nederland tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog 1914-1918*. Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 2001, pp. 165-168.
- 70 Treub, *Oorlogstijd* p. 196.
- 71 'Overzicht van de voornaamste gebeurtenissen in Nederland vanaf 30 Juli 1914. dl I' p. 1, in IMG/DC 143; Koninklijke Bibliotheek, *Documenten* p. 259.
- 72 Zegers, 'Een levendige geschiedenis' p. 8.
- 73 Miep de Zaaijer, diary entry, 1 August 1914, in Haags gemeentemuseum, *Den Haag* p. 5. In today's terms, f10 is worth approximately 4.50 Euro.
- 74 Treub, *Oorlogstijd* pp. 197-200; M.W.F. Treub, 'De economische toestand van Nederland gedurende den oorlog' in Brugmans (ed.), *Nederland* pp. 136, 137, 139; Meester, 'Overzicht' p. 41.
- 75 Treub, 'De economische toestand' p. 136.
- 76 *Staatblad* 31 July 1914, no. 334. On 25 July 1914, cover of credit by coinage and coin material issued by the *Nederlandse Bank* was 54 per cent, by 2 August this had decreased to 37 per cent (Meester, 'Overzicht' p. 36).
- 77 Vissering et al., 'The Effect' p. 9.
- 78 Uijterschout, *Beknopt Overzicht* p. 441; Schulten, 'Van neutralisme' p. 3; Klinkert, *Het Vaderland* p. 399.
- 79 Tom Schilpevoort, *Uit Kazerne en Kamp. Tijdens de Mobilisatie 1914*. Amsterdam and The Hague: Venn. Erven Martin G. Cohen, 1914, np.
- 80 Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* p. 6.
- 81 Klinkert, *Het Vaderland* p. 399.
- 82 A.P. Seyffardt, 'Ons spoorwegbedrijf en de mobilisatie' in Kooiman (ed.), *De Nederlandse Strijdmacht* p. 475.
- 83 'Schets voor het, door het Departement van Oorlog openbaar te maken Mobilisatie-rapport' in IMG/DC 91A/3, np, section 'Hoofdstuk II. De mobilisatie. B. Buitengewoon militair vervoer'.
- 84 *Ibid.*
- 85 Snijders, 'Twee mobilisatiën' p. 18.
- 86 'Schets' section 'Het op voet van oorlog brengen van de landweerbataljons'; Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* p. 7.
- 87 J. Burger, 'Fragmenten uit het dagboek van een brigadecommandant' *Militaire Spectator*. 1922, p. 350.
- 88 Namely at Woerden, Geertruidenberg, Wierickerschans (Wieringerschans), and Delft ('Schets' section 'Bijzondere opmerkingen. 7. Veldpioniers').
- 89 Koninklijke Bibliotheek, *Documenten* p. 257; Seyffardt, 'Ons spoorwegbedrijf' p. 476.
- 90 Haags gemeentemuseum, *Den Haag* p. 6; diary entry, 6 October 1914, in IMG/DC 397/F.
- 91 NA 2.13.70, 42, 48, 50, 54, 231; 'Schets'; Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen*; Munnekrede, 'De mobilisatie' pp. 11-12; Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* pp. 34-35, 162-163.
- 92 Commander of 6 Batt. LWI to OLZ, 14 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 50.
- 93 Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* p. 30; Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 163.
- 94 Munnekrede, 'De mobilisatie' p. 12.
- 95 'Schets' section 'G. Het op voet van oorlog brengen van het veldleger'.
- 96 Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* p. 63.
- 97 *Ibid.* p. 64.
- 98 Advertisement from Ministry of War in *Ochtendblad*. 23 August 1914, in 'Overzicht van de voornaamste gebeurtenissen in Nederland vanaf 30 Juli 1914. dl I'.
- 99 Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 33.
- 100 Inspector of Infantry, Major-General Beijze, to all commanders of infantry regiments, 7 August 1914, NA 2.13.52, 515.

- 101 Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* p. 39; Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 34.
- 102 *Ibid.* p. 31.
- 103 Mobilisation questionnaire filled in by Commander 4 Comp. 1 Batt. 3 RLWI, no date [March 1915], in NA 2.13.70, 42.
- 104 'Schets' sections 'Bijzondere opmerkingen. 6. Bereden Artillerie' and 'G. Het op voet van oorlog brengen van het veldleger'; Colonel in Charge of Supplies (*Kolonel-Intendance*) for the Fortified Position of Amsterdam to OLZ, 16 November 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 48.
- 105 'Schets' section 'Het op voet van oorlog brengen van de bezettingstroepen'.
- 106 'Schets' section 'Bijzondere Opmerkingen. 5. Cavalerie'.
- 107 TB in Friesland to OLZ, 31 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 50.
- 108 'Schets' section 'G. Het op voet van oorlog brengen van het veldleger'.
- 109 Commander 6 Battalion. LWI to OLZ, 14 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 50; *Kolonel-Intendance* for the Fortified Position of Amsterdam to OLZ, 16 November 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 48; 'Schets' section 'G. Het op voet van oorlog brengen van het veldleger'.
- 110 Altes, *De grote oorlog* p. 38.
- 111 Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 160.
- 112 'Schets' p. 28.
- 113 Commander Field Army to OLZ, 3 August 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 1.
- 114 'Schets' section 'Het op voet van oorlog brengen van de bezettingstroepen'.
- 115 *Kolonel-Intendance* for the Fortified Position of Amsterdam to OLZ, 16 November 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 48.
- 116 'Schets' section 'Bijzondere opmerkingen. 7. Veldpioniers'; Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* pp. 29, 38-39, 62.
- 117 Klinkert, 'De Nederlandse mobilisatie' p. 27.
- 118 As quoted in *Ibid.* p. 28.
- 119 Burger, 'Fragmenten' p. 348.
- 120 'Schets' section 'Bijzondere opmerkingen. 7. Veldpioniers'.
- 121 Klinkert, *Het Vaderland* pp. 339-342.
- 122 Isselt, 'De wijziging' pp. 202-203, 215-218; Klinkert, *Het Vaderland* p. 339.
- 123 This figure is from a note by the Head of Department II of the Ministry of War to the Administrator, Head of Department VII of the Ministry of War, 30 May 1916 (in IMG/DC 91A/3) in response to wrongfully quoted absentee figures in 'Schets voor het, door het Departement van Oorlog openbaar te maken Mobilisatie-rapport' (in IMG/DC, 91A/3). The numbers cited remain problematic as regiments took counts at various times and the accuracy in some depots was lacking (Commander of Field Army to OLZ, 30 August 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 128). It is possible that the number mobilised during the first weeks of August was closer to the 203,657 mark mentioned by the Minister of War, Nicolaas Bosboom ('Nota omtrent hetgeen sedert den aanvang der mobilisatie van het leger is gedaan om de gevechtswaarde en de uitrusting hiervan te verhoogen' 16 January 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 705) although, in his 1933 memoirs, Bosboom believed that the number was much lower at an estimated 180,000 (Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 30). The 203,657 figure was also published in the Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* (p. 85). F. Snapper used this figure ('Enige Sterktecijfers Betreffende de Nederlandse Landmacht in de Periode 1840-1940' *Mededelingen van de Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis*. 4, 1981, p. 87), and it may have been the source for the 204,000 Snijders mentioned in two of his articles ('Nederland's militaire positie' p. 541; 'De Nederlandsche landmacht' p. 218). Most other secondary sources circle the 200,000 mark: Schulten accounted for 197,500 ('The Netherlands' p. 76), while Wim Klinkert for 204,000 ('Verdediging van de zuidgrens, 1914-1918' *Militaire Spectator* 156, 1987, p. 214).
- 124 While the 'Schets voor het, door het Departement van Oorlog openbaar te maken Mobilisatie-rapport' (in IMG/DC 91A/3, p. 3) mentioned a 2 per cent absentee rate for soldiers with lawful reasons and 3.5 per cent for those with other reasons (total 5.5 per cent), the

- Head of Department II in the Ministry of War corrected this to 15,202 not mobilised (nearly 7.2 per cent of the 196,657 mobilised on 3 August) in a note to the Administrator, the Head of Department VII in the Ministry of War, in IMG/DC 91A/3. Snijders backed this with an 8 per cent absentee rate (Snijders, 'De Nederlandsche landmacht' p. 218).
- 125 'Opgaven van niet opgekomen en van verlofgangers die niet op 1 Augustus 1914, doch eerst later zijn aangekomen (#20 M. V. Instructie of #30 Landweer Vergoedings-Instructie)' in SAD 6, 5472.
- 126 42 LWI regiment in the II Infantry Battalion had a turnout of 99.75 per cent (Table of Field Army Division III (no. M231), 25 August 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 128), while 1 Regiment Infantry of the II Field Army Division had a 10.32 per cent absentee rate (Commander Division II to CV, 12 August 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 128).
- 127 *Staatsblad* no. 376, 6 August 1914.
- 128 *Staatsblad* no. 479, 10 October 1914.
- 129 'Schets' section 'Het op voet van oorlog brengen van de landweerbataljons'; Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* pp. 48-49.
- 130 Minister of War to OLZ, 11 November 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 33.
- 131 'Kennismaking. Leverantiën' poster, 3 August 1914, in *Utrecht en de Oorlogstoestand. Overzicht van de Gevolgen der Mobilisatie en de Voornaamste Maatregelen, Door of Vanwege het Gemeente-Bestuur Genomen*. Utrecht: publisher unknown, 1914, pp. 19-20.
- 132 Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* p. 13.
- 133 Director of *Remontewezen* (horse supply) to OLZ, 4 August 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 36; Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* p. 12.
- 134 In Leiden and The Hague on 4 August, Middeharnis on 7 August, Nijmegen and Haarlemmermeer on 12 August, and in Amsterdam on 18 August (Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* p. 12).
- 135 'Schets' section 'Bijzondere opmerkingen'; Burger, 'Fragmenten' p. 346.
- 136 Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* p. 12; Munnekrede, 'De mobilisatie' p. 27.
- 137 Uijterschout, *Beknopt Overzicht* p. 442.
- 138 Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 31.
- 139 Inspector of the Infantry to Commander-in-Chief, 5 November 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 36; Inspector of the Infantry (on behalf of the OLZ) to Mayor of Dordrecht, 4 November 1914 in SAD 6, 5472; 'Schets' section 'F. Hondenvordering'; Munnekrede, 'De mobilisatie' p. 19.
- 140 Minister of War, B.C. de Jonge, 'Nota omtrent hetgeen sedert den aanvang der mobilisatie van het leger is gedaan om de gevechtswaarde en de uitrusting hiervan te verhoogen' 16 January 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 705.
- 141 OLZ, 'Leidraad bij antwoording van de vragen, door het Lid der Tweede Kamer van de Staten-Generaal Mr. P. Troelstra tot de Regeering te richten' October 1918, p. 9, in NA 2.13.70, 705; Munnekrede, 'De mobilisatie' p. 20.
- 142 Munnekrede, 'De mobilisatie' pp. 12-13.
- 143 *Ibid.* pp. 13-16; 'Schets' section 'G. Het op voet van oorlog brengen van het veldleger'.
- 144 Munnekrede, 'De mobilisatie' p. 21.
- 145 'Opgave omtrent motorrijtuigen, andere dan motorrijwielen en electromobielen aanwezig in de Gemeente Dordrecht' 22 October 1914, in SAD 6, 5472; *Utrecht* p. 18.
- 146 Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* p. 19.
- 147 *Ibid.* p. 15; Munnekrede, 'De mobilisatie' pp. 20, 22; Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 31.
- 148 Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 143.
- 149 In a communal letter from the Provincial Governor in South Holland to mayors in his province, 8 August 1914, he requested that mayors do everything in their power to ease the distress and problems caused by families that had to move out of their homes (in

- SAD 6, 38/8 Kabinet); Geerke et al., *De Oorlog* vol. 1, between pp. 139-140; NA 2.13.70, 78; *Het Leven Geïllustreerd* 9, no. 32, Tuesday 11 August 1914.
- 150 NA 2.13.70, 122.
- 151 Inspector of Mounted Artillery to CV, 4 July 1916, in NA 2.13.16, 202.
- 152 Smit, *Nederland. Tweede deel* p. 22.
- 153 Treub, *Oorlogstijd* p. 12.
- 154 Burger, 'Fragmenten' p. 345.
- 155 Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* p. 6.
- 156 Snapper, 'De gevechtswaarde' pp. 16-54; Klinkert et al. (eds.), *Mobilisatie*; Schulten, 'Van neutralisme' pp. 3-16; B. Schoenmaker, 'Clio at arms: military history in the Netherlands' *Mededelingen van de Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis* 14, 1991, pp. 82-104.
- 157 Anne Doedens, 'Nederland en de Frans-Duitse oorlog. Enige aspecten van de buitenlandse politiek en de binnenlandse verhoudingen van ons land omstreeks het jaar 1870' Proefschrift dissertatie, Vrije Universiteit te Amsterdam, 1973, pp. 39-43, 108-111.
- 158 R.H. Gooren, 'Krijgsdienst en Krijgsmacht in de Nederlandse politiek 1866-1914' *Utrechtse Historische Cahiers* 8, no. 1, 1987, pp. 1-2.
- 159 Blom, 'A necessary evil' pp. 96-97.
- 160 Ferguson, *The Pity* p. 101.
- 161 A. Vanneste, *Kroniek van een Dorp in Oorlog. Neerpelt 1914-1918. Het dagelijks leven, de spionage en de elektrische draadversperring aan de Belgisch-Nederlandse grens tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog* vol 1. Deurne: Uitgeverij Universitas, 1998, p. 23.
- 162 A.M.P. Kleijngeld, *Gemobiliseerde militairen in Tilburg tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog*. Tilburg: Stichting Zuidelijk Historisch Contact, 1983, p. 9.
- 163 'Schets'; Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen*; NA 2.13.70, 231.
- 164 Tuyll, 'On the Edge' section 'The Pace Quickens'.
- 165 John Terraine, *The Great War*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1997 (1965), pp. 13-19.
- 166 Brian Bond, *War and Society in Europe 1870-1970*. Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1998 (1984), p. 103. For shortages in France: Haythornthwaite (ed.), *The World War One Source Book* p. 173.
- 167 B.B. van Dongen, 'Troelstra en de natie' in Schuursma (ed.), 14-18 vol. 2, pp. 363-364.

Chapter 4

- 1 Inscription on Jan van Oort's painting given to Queen Wilhelmina's only child, Juliana, on her birthday in 1918. The watercolour depicted a kingfisher (emblem of the House of Orange) attempting to save a vase that was bobbing perilously in breaking waves on a beach (Fasseur, *Wilhelmina* pp. 502-503).
- 2 Appendix 3.
- 3 'Declaration of neutrality of the Netherlands in the European war. August 5, 1914' in Vandenbosch, *The Neutrality* Appendix I, p. 318.
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- 100 OLZ to the cabinet, 10 October 1917, in NA 2.13.70, 4.
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- 102 'Overzicht van de voornaamste gebeurtenissen in Nederland vanaf 30 Juli 1914. dl I' in IMG/DC 143.
- 103 Bles, 'De Koninklijke Marine' p. 78.
- 104 'EXTRACT uit het rapport van Hms. 'Triton' dd. 16 November 1914' in NA 2.13.70, 39; A. Uithol, 'Zij, die vielen...' in A.C. de Neeve et al. (eds.), *Nationale Bond 'Het Mobilisatiekruis' Herinneringsboek 1914-1918*. publisher unknown, 1939, pp. 188-189; Album no. 7 in LMD Q193-40, p. 17.
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- 106 Oranjeboek: *Mededeelingen van den Minister van Buitenlandsche Zaken aan de Staten-Generaal December 1916* p. 18; Watson, 'Britain's Dutch Policy' p. 82.
- 107 NA 2.13.70, 633.
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Chapter 5

- 1 Appendix 3.
- 2 *Staatsblad* no. 73, 1910.
- 3 Susanne Wolf, 'International Law and Internment in the Netherlands, August to December 1914' Unpublished paper presented at NIOD WOI workgroup, 6 April 2001, Amsterdam, p. 2. With thanks to Susanne Wolf for letting me have a copy of her paper.
- 4 'Instructie aan Commandanten van onderdeelen van het Veldleger in het Zuiden des lands' in Vries, 'Nederland' Appendix III, p. 121; OLZ, 'Bijzonder Instructie voor den Commandant van het Veldleger geldende van 10 Augustus 1914 tot nadere kennisgeving' 10 August 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 1.
- 5 OLZ to Commander of Division III, 8 August 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 75.
- 6 'Instructie aan Commandanten van onderdeelen van het Veldleger in het Zuiden des lands' in Vries, 'Nederland' Appendix III, p. 121.

- 7 *Ibid.* p. 93.
- 8 J.J.G. Wintermans, *Belgische vluchtelingen in Eindhoven 1914-1919*. Tilburg: Mollerinstituut en M.O. Geschiedenis, 1985, p. 11.
- 9 *Utrecht* p. 130; Yvonne Bos-Rops, 'De Commissaris en de vluchtelingen' *Brabants Heem. Driemaandelijks tijdschrift voor archeologie, geschiedenis en volkskunde* 49, no. 3, 1998, p. 105; Susanne Wolf estimated the number of German refugees entering the Netherlands in the first few weeks of the war at 8,000 (private correspondence, June 1998); J.H. Zanten puts the number of German refugees escaping Belgium at around 60,000 to 80,000 of which many, but by no means all, travelled through the Netherlands ('De zorg voor vluchtelingen uit het buitenland tijdens den oorlog' in Brugmans (ed.), *Nederland* p. 325); Evelyn de Roodt has used Zanten's figures (*Oorlogsgasten. Vluchtelingen en krijgsgevangenen in Nederland tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog*. Zaltbommel: Europese Bibliotheek, 2000. p. 138).
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- 12 Heuvel-Strasser 'Vluchtelingenzorg of vreemdelingenbeleid' pp. 184-204.
- 13 Evelyn de Roodt, 'Reacties van Nederlanders op vluchtelingen tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog' in Binneveld et al. (eds.), *Leven* p. 51.
- 14 Bos-Rops, 'De Commissaris en de vluchtelingen' p. 108.
- 15 Telegram from OLZ to Provincial Governor in 's Hertogenbosch, 10 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 74.
- 16 E.A. van den Heuvel-Strasser, 'Vluchtelingenzorg of vreemdelingenbeleid. De Nederlandse overheid en de Belgische vluchtelingen, 1914-1915' *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*. 99, no. 2, 1986, p. 190.
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- 19 Minister of Internal Affairs, P.W.A. Cort van der Linden, to OLZ, 19 October 1914, in NA 2.04.26.02, 690.
- 20 Ritter, *De Donkere Poort* vol. 1, pp. 138-140.
- 21 Zanten, 'De zorg' pp. 331-332. There were 1,121 recognised municipalities in 1909, this number was reduced to 1,110 in 1920, probably through the amalgamation of townships (Petrus Wilhelmus Marie Hasselton, 'De wisseling van het opperbevel in februari 1940 getoetst aan de praktijk van de Oorlogswet in de periode 1887-1940' Ph.D. dissertation, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1995, p. 34).

- 22 Bos-Rops, 'De Commissaris' p. 107.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 Minister of Internal Affairs to all Provincial Governors, 10 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 74.
- 25 TB in Overijssel to OLZ, 11 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 74.
- 26 Telegram from OLZ to Commander of Division III, 9 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 74.
- 27 CV to all commanders under his authority, 9 October 1914, in NA 2.13.16, 151.
- 28 OLZ to Provincial Governor in South Holland, 19 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 74.
- 29 *Utrecht* p. 133.
- 30 Group Commander Gorinchem to OLZ, 14 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 1.
- 31 OLZ, 'Order aan alle troepencommandanten van land- en zeemacht' 15 October 1914, in NA 2.13.16, 372; Commander of the New Holland Waterline to OLZ, 15 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 1; *Utrecht* p. 133.
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- 33 Minister of Internal Affairs to OLZ, 13 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 74.
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- 36 Chief of Division III Staff, 'Rapport aan den Divisiecommandant' 15 October 1914, in NA 2.13.16, 151.
- 37 OLZ to Commander Division III, 12 October 1914; Chief of Division III Staff, 'Rapport aan den Divisiecommandant' 15 October 1914; Commander Division III to CV, 25 October 1914, all in NA 2.13.16, 151.
- 38 Timetable for the return of refugees, 1914, in NA 2.13.16, 151.
- 39 Cahalan, *Belgian Refugee Relief* pp. 119-120, 123; Wintermans, *Belgische vluchtelingen* p. 21; Tallier, 'De Belgische vluchtelingen' p. 24.
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- 47 Series of daily telegrams from Commander Division III to CV, 20 October to 27 December 1914, with numbers of refugees entering and leaving the country, in NA 2.13.16, 151.
- 48 P. Charpentier, 'De leniging van de nood der Belgische vluchtelingen tijdens Wereldoorlog I in de regio Maastricht-Eijsden' Kandidaatsscriptie, Koninklijke Universiteit Nijmegen, 1984, pp. 9-11; Nagelhout, 'De toelating' p. 23; C.J.M. Kramers, 'Internering in Nederland 1914-1918' *Mars et Historia* 28, no. 3, July-September 1994, p. 26.
- 49 Bos-Rops, 'De Commissaris' p. 105.
- 50 E. van Schaverbeke, 'Vluchtoord Nunspeet en de Marechaussee' *Mars et Historia* 32, no. 4, October-December 1998, p. 3.

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- 52 Treub, *Oorlogstijd* p. 151.
- 53 OLZ to Minister President, 13 November 1914, in NA 2.02.05.02, 146.
- 54 Telegram Divisional Commander of *Koninklijke Marechaussee* in 's Hertogenbosch to OLZ, 8 November 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 74; Zanten, 'De zorg' p. 348.
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- 59 CV to OLZ, 18 October 1918, in NA 2.13.16, 372.
- 60 CV to Commanders of Division III, IV and Cavalry Brigade, Commander in Limburg, 16 October 1918, in NA 2.13.16, 372.
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- 62 Provincial Governor to all mayors in South Holland, 23 October 1914, in SAD 144, 1; Koninklijke Bibliotheek, *Documenten* (1914), p. 261.
- 63 Heuvel-Strasser, 'Vluchtelingen zorg' p. 203.
- 64 Kramers, 'Internering' p. 23. This is in sharp contrast to Tallier who asserts that France did not ask for compensation from Belgium ('De Belgische vluchtelingen' p. 30).
- 65 Provincial Governor to all mayors in South Holland, 18 December 1918, in SAD 144, 2.
- 66 Telegram to *Nieuwe Koerier*, 9 August 1914, in NIOD 618, 3.
- 67 Commander of Internment Depot Alkmaar to OLZ, 18 August 1914; Minister of War to OLZ, 13 August 1914, both in NA 2.13.70, 75; Lier, 'Internering van vreemde militairen' p. 52.
- 68 'Overzicht van de voornaamste gebeurtenissen in Nederland vanaf 30 Juli 1914. dl I' in IMG/DC 143; Lier, 'Internering van vreemde militairen' p. 52.
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- 74 Telegram to the *Nieuwe Koerier*, 6 August 1914, in NIOD 618, 3.
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- 84 Telegram from TB in Friesland to OLZ, 11 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 75.
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Chapter 6

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Chapter 7

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- 77 Minister of War, 'Toepassing van de artikelen 10 en 22 der Wet van den 23sten Mei 1899 (*Staatsblad* no. 128), houdende bepalingen ter uitvoering van artikel 187 der Grondwet' *Militair Rechtelijk Tijdschrift*. 10, 1915, p. 427; Clarenbeek, 'De Oorlogswet' Chapter 3.
- 78 Minister of War to OLZ, 10 June 1915; CV to OLZ, 1 October 1915, both in NA 2.13.70, 179.
- 79 Minister of War to OLZ, 17 August 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 174.
- 80 Minister President to OLZ, 26 September 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 95.
- 81 *Staatsblad* no. 490, 16 October 1914.
- 82 F.H.A. Sabron, 'De militaire rechtspraak tijdens de mobilisatie' *Militair-Rechtelijk Tijdschrift*. 11, 1915/1916, pp. 39-52.
- 83 Eigeman, 'De practijk' p. 363.
- 84 High Court report, sitting 3 January 1916, in *Militair-Rechtelijke Tijdschrift*. 12, 1916, pp. 171-177.
- 85 High Court report, sitting 6 March 1916, in *Militair-Rechtelijke Tijdschrift*. 11, 1915/1916, pp. 544-549; Tuinen et al., 'Het militair gezag' p. 273; Eigeman, 'De practijk' p. 365; Hasselton, 'De wisseling' pp. 40-41.
- 86 Eigeman, 'De practijk' p. 365; Clarenbeek, 'De Oorlogswet' fn 18.
- 87 OLZ to TB in Overijssel, 18 March 1916, in NA 2.13.70, 436.
- 88 High Court sentence, sitting 9 June 1916, in *Militair-Rechtelijke Tijdschrift*. 12, 1916, pp. 141-145.
- 89 Commander Fortified Position of the Mouths of the Maas River and the Schelde to OLZ, 31 August 1916, in NA 2.13.70, 436; CV, 'Ervaring opgedaan bij de praktische toepassing van de wet van 23 Mei 1899 (*Staatsblad* no. 128)' date unknown [late 1915], in NA 2.13.16, 179.
- 90 Article 7, 'Instructie voor de Autoriteiten, overeenkomstig artikel 7 van de, sedert gewijzigde, wet van 23 Mei 1899 (*Staatsblad* no. 128), aangewezen voor de uitoefening van het militair gezag' *Staatsblad* no. 488, 2 November 1916.
- 91 *Staatsblad* no. 604, 22 November 1918.
- 92 Commander Division IV, 'Verslag ingevolge art. 6 van de Wet van 23 Mei 1899 (*Staatsblad* no. 128 betreffende de uitoefening van het Militair Gezag in de provinciën Noord-Brabant, Limburg en Gelderland bezuiden van den Boven-Rijn (voor een deel ook wel 'Bijlandsche Kanaal' geheeten) en de Waal, buiten het gebied der Stellingen en afzonderlijke Forten, alsmede in de Gemeenten Standdaarbuiten en Zevenbergen en in het gedeelte van de Gemeente Rilland-Bath, gelegen op den Noord-Brabantschen wal van de Ooster- en Wester-Schelde' 5 May 1920, p. 9, in NA 2.13.70, 708.
- 93 J.G. Steneker, 'Een onwelkome Wetswijziging' *Militair-Rechtelijk Tijdschrift*. 14, 1918, pp. 202-207.
- 94 Commander Division IV, 'Verslag' p. 10.
- 95 Commander Fortified Position of Den Helder to OLZ, 14 October and 10 December 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 215; Eigeman, 'De bevoegdheid' p. 89; Hasselton, 'De wisseling' p. 40.
- 96 TB in North Brabant to CV, 13 September 1914, in NA 2.13.16, 264.
- 97 OLZ to Commander Division II, 4 March 1916; OLZ to Commander Division II and TB in Overijssel, 6 March 1916, both in NA 2.13.70, 436; OLZ to Commander Division II, 9 March 1916, in NA 2.13.16, 194.
- 98 OLZ to Commander Division II, 16 March 1916, in 2.13.70, 436.
- 99 Commander Coastal Battery at Neuzen, 'Dagboek' p. 2.

- 100 Also: the conflict between the TB in North Brabant and the Commander of the Fortified Position of Hollandsch Diep and Volkerak, August 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 96.
- 101 According to Article 7 of the War Law, Appendix 5.
- 102 Article 7, 'Instructie voor den Opperbevelhebber' August 1914, in Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* Appendix C, p. 392.
- 103 Article 3, 'Instructie voor den Opperbevelhebber'.
- 104 CV to OLZ, 16 September 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 1.
- 105 OLZ to CV, 19 September 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 1 (also in NA 2.13.16, 148).
- 106 Minister of War to OLZ, 18 January 1915, and reply, 19 January 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 215.
- 107 Hasselton, 'De wisseling' p. 42
- 108 *Ibid.* p. 43.
- 109 *Ibid.* pp. 48-50.
- 110 *Staatsblad* no. 488, 2 November 1916.
- 111 'Instructie voor de Autoriteiten, overeenkomstig artikel 7 van de, sedert gewijzigde, wet van 23 Mei 1899 (*Staatsblad* no. 128), aangewezen voor de uitoefening van het militair gezag' *Staatsblad* no. 488, 2 November 1916.
- 112 Eigeman, 'De practijk' p. 367.
- 113 Article 4, 'Instructie voor de Autoriteiten, overeenkomstig artikel 7 van de, sedert gewijzigde, wet van 23 Mei 1899 (*Staatsblad* no. 128), aangewezen voor de uitoefening van het militair gezag' *Staatsblad* no. 488, 2 November 1916.
- 114 OLZ, 'Regeling voor de uitoefening van het militair gezag, opgemaakt naar aanleiding van het bepaalde in artikel 3 van de Instructie, vastgesteld bij Koninklijk Besluit van den 2den November 1916 (*Staatsblad* no. 488), en in de tweede alinea van artikel 12 van de "Oorlogsinstructie Stellingcommandanten", zooals dit artikel gewijzigd is bij Koninklijk Besluit van den 2den November 1916 (*Staatsblad* no. 489)' 10 November 1916, in NA 2.13.16, 209.
- 115 General Staff, 'Verslag nopens de verrichtingen van het militair gezag, voor zoover dit werd uitgeoefend door den Opperbevelhebber van Land- en Zeemacht; opgemaakt ingevolge het bepaalde in art. 6 der wet van 23 Mei 1899 (*Staatsblad* no. 128)' p. 15, in NA 2.13.70, 710.
- 116 OLZ, 'Regeling voor de uitoefening van het militair gezag' Article 2.
- 117 *Handelingen der Staten-Generaal. Bijlagen 1915-1916. Tweede Kamer* no. 99, 1-2; *Handelingen der Staten-Generaal. Eerste en Tweede Kamers 1915-1916* pp. 1133-1136.
- 118 General Headquarters, 'Lijst van alle gemeenten der provinciën, met aanduiding, welke gemeenten, of onderdeelen daarvan, in staat van oorlog of in staat van beleg zijn verklaard en met vermelding van de gezagsgebieden, waartoe zij behooren, alsmede van de Koninklijke besluiten, waarbij het in staat van oorlog of in staat van beleg verklaren plaats vond.' 1 September 1917, in IMG/DC 93/1.
- 119 *Verslag van den Toestand der Gemeente Zwolle over het jaar 1914-1918, Door Burgemeester en Wethouders aan den Raad der Gemeente Uitgebracht.* Zwolle: De Erven J.J. Tijl, 1915-1919; *Handelingen van den Raad der Gemeente Zwolle met Alphabetisch Register, 1915-1918.* Zwolle: M. Tijl en Zoon H. Tijl, 1915-1918; *Verslag van den Toestand der Gemeente Dordrecht over het jaar 1914-1918*; SAD 6. It is highly unlikely that lack of source material on the Great War in municipalities, as R. van Hasselt theorised, was caused by the military taking over the administration of the municipality ('Belgische vluchtelingen' pp. 101-102).
- 120 OLZ to Director of the Central Bureau of Statistics (*Centraal Bureau Statistiek*), 22 February 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 202.

Chapter 8

- 1 Efraim Karsh stressed the importance of distinguishing between internal and external neutrality (*Neutrality* pp. 22-24).

- 2 Appendix 3.
- 3 OLZ, 'Bijzonder Instructie voor den Commandant van het Veldleger, geldende van 10 Augustus 1914 tot nadere kennisgeving' 10 August 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 1.
- 4 Military decrees and posters can be found in: IMG/DC 93/1; NA 2.13.70, 33, 34, 97, 202, 203, 205; NA 2.04.53.14, 7, 10; NA 2.13.16, 179; Koninklijke Bibliotheek, *Documenten* vols. 1-4.
- 5 CV, 'Militair gezag' poster, 21 February 1916, in IMG/DC 93/1.
- 6 Commander of the 48 LI Batallion, order, 27 June 1917, in NA 2.13.70, 1484.
- 7 Commander of Division II to OLZ, 21 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 158.
- 8 Smidt, 'De Regulering van de Nederlandse Uitvoer' p. 86; Tuyll, *The Netherlands* p. 137.
- 9 *Het Leven*. 21 November 1916, as cited in Moeyes, *Buiten Schot* p. 131.
- 10 TB in Friesland, 'Verslag ingevolge artikel 6 van de wet op den staat van oorlog en van beleg. (wet van 23 Mei 1899, *Staatsblad* no. 128) van 1 Augustus 1914 tot den datum van opheffing van den staat van beleg' 28 May 1920, p. 4, in NA 2.13.70, 708.
- 11 CV, 'Militair Gezag' poster, 15 June 1916, in IMG/DC 93/1; Smidt, 'De bestrijding' p. 56; *Staatsblad*. no. 532, 3 August 1915.
- 12 OLZ to Minister of Finance, 7 February 1917, in NA 2.13.70, 667.
- 13 Mayor of Ossendrecht to Commander of Division III, 7 August 1915, in NA 2.13.16, 183.
- 14 Director of *Remontewezen* (horse supply) to OLZ, 9 November 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 34.
- 15 Commander of the Second Division *Koninklijke Marechaussee* to CV, 16 July 1915, in NA 2.13.16, 183; Koninklijke Bibliotheek, *Documenten* Volume 2, pp. 121-122.
- 16 CV to OLZ, 19 June 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 170.
- 17 *Ibid*.
- 18 Commander of the Second Division *Koninklijke Marechaussee* to CV, 16 July 1915, in NA 2.13.16, 183.
- 19 *Ibid*.
- 20 CV, 'Militair Gezag' poster, 15 June 1916, in IMG/DC 93/1; TB in Overijssel, 'Algemeene Bekendmaking no. 34 voor de Gemeente Gendringen en Herwen en Aerd' 19 December 1915, in NA 2.04.53.14, 7.
- 21 Schaepdrijver, *De Grootte Oorlog* pp. 107-116.
- 22 *Staatsblad* no.351, 3 August 1914.
- 23 Commander III Battalion 16 RI to Commander 'Division Group Brabant', 18 August 1915; 'Staat houdende opgaaf der uitgevoerde hoeveelheid wittebrood langs het grenskantoor GOIRLE gedurende de maanden Januari tot en met Juli – en van de eersten tot en met zeventiende Augustus 1915' both in NA 2.13.70, 168.
- 24 OLZ to TB in Overijssel, 20 October 1914, in NA 2.13.16, 150; CV to Head Librarian of the Royal Library (*Koninklijke Bibliotheek*) in The Hague, 25 April 1915, in NA 2.04.53.14, 10; Koninklijke Bibliotheek, *Documenten* vol. 2, pp. 117-118.
- 25 Appendix 5.
- 26 Commission for the Regulation of Living Needs of Belgian Border Municipalities (*Commissie tot regeling der voorziening van noodzakelijke levensbehoeften in Belgische grensgemeenten*) to Royal Library (*Koninklijke Bibliotheek*) Department of Documentation, 11 May 1915, in NA 2.04.53.14, 10.
- 27 OLZ to all military authorities, 4 January 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 167; TB in Zeeland, 'Overzicht van de maatregelen der militaire overheid t.o.v levensmiddelen in de provincie Zeeland' May 1915, in NA 2.04.53.14, 10; OLZ to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 27 August 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 178.
- 28 TB in Zeeland, 'Overzicht van de maatregelen der militaire overheid t.o.v levensmiddelen in de provincie Zeeland' May 1915, in NA 2.04.53.14, 10; Koninklijke Bibliotheek, *Documenten* vol. 2 pp. 125-128.
- 29 Koninklijke Bibliotheek, *Documenten* Volume 2 p. 130.
- 30 CV to OLZ, 26 February 1915, NA 2.13.70, 167.

- 31 CV to OLZ, 14 November 1914; OLZ to Minister of Finance, 18 November 1914, both in NA 2.13.70, 96.
- 32 TB in Friesland to military commanders, 10 February 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 202.
- 33 Ritter, *De Donkere Poort* vol. 2, p. 195; Kleijngeld, *Gemobiliseerde militairen* p. 152.
- 34 CV to OLZ, 20 February 1916, in NA 2.13.16, 293.
- 35 Smidt, 'De bestrijding' p. 50; Smidt, 'De Regulering van de Nederlandse Uitvoer' p. 81.
- 36 W.R. Emmen Riedel, 'De smokkelarij. Een terugblik' *Vragen des Tijds*. 2, 1919, p. 209.
- 37 Minister of Justice, B. Ort, to OLZ, 18 September 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 174.
- 38 IMG/DC 93/1.
- 39 Appendix 5.
- 40 Minister of War to Commander 'Division Group Brabant', 21 September 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 174.
- 41 According to Hasselton, the decision to remove individuals from the 'state of siege' was rarely used (Hasselton, 'De wisseling' p. 56). In fact, hundreds of people were removed out of 'state of siege' areas. For lists of people and the reasons for their removal: NA 2.13.70, 174, 202; NA 2.13.16, 290; NA 2.04.53.14, 7, 10; Commander in Zeeland, 'Mobilisatieverslag 1917', in NA 2.13.70, 696.
- 42 CV to OLZ, 2 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 95.
- 43 Smidt, 'De bestrijding' p. 62.
- 44 Minister of Justice to OLZ, 18 September 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 174.
- 45 Commander Division IV, 'Verslag ingevolge art. 6 van de Wet van 23 Mei 1899 (*Staatsblad* no.128 betreffende de uitoefening van het Militair Gezag in de provinciën Noord-Brabant, Limburg en Gelderland bezuiden van den Boven-Rijn (voor een deel ook wel 'Bijlandsche Kanaal' geheeten) en de Waal, buiten het gebied der Stellingen en afzonderlijke Forten, alsmede in de Gemeenten Standdaardbuiten en Zevenbergen en in het gedeelte van de Gemeente Rilland-Bath, gelegen op den Noord-Brabantschen wal van de Ooster- en Wester-Schelde' 5 May 1920, p. 7, in NA 2.13.70, 708.
- 46 Riedel, 'De smokkelarij' p. 217.
- 47 Commander Division IV, 'Verslag ingevolge art. 6' p. 6.
- 48 CV, 'Opstelling en beweging van het Veldleger over het tijdvak 1 Januari '17-1 January '18' July 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 696.
- 49 Section K of scrapbook with miscellaneous articles in alphabetical order, in IMG/DC 143.
- 50 'Mobilisatieverslag 1917' p. XLIX, in NA 2.13.70, 696; General Staff, 'Verslag nopens de verrichtingen van het militair gezag, voor zoover dit werd uitgeoefend door den Opperbevelhebber van Land- en Zeemacht; opgemaakt ingevolge het bepaalde in art. 6 der wet van 23 Mei 1899 (*Staatsblad* no. 128)' 6 January 1919 [1920] p. 16, in NA 2.13.70, 710 (also in 912).
- 51 Frey, *Der Erste Weltkrieg* p. 199.
- 52 Sir Francis Oppenheimer, February 1917, in Baer, 'The Anglo-German antagonism' p. 179.
- 53 OLZ to CV, 20 August 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 37; CV to all mayors in the 'state of siege' area under his command, 26 March 1917, in IMG/DC 93/1.
- 54 TB in Friesland to OLZ, 18 November 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 95; Commander of Coastal Battery in Neuzen, 'Bekendmaking' poster, 13 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 98.
- 55 TB in Friesland to OLZ, 27 December 1914, and reply, 30 December 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 74; TB in Friesland to OLZ, 18 February 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 202.
- 56 Commander of the Fortified Position of Den Helder, 'Kennissegeving' poster, 12 July 1916, in NA 2.13.70, 210; NA 2.13.70, 127.
- 57 Commander of Coastal Battery near Neuzen, 'Politieverordening' poster, 2 November 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 98.
- 58 OLZ to CV, 20 August 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 37; OLZ, 'Voorschrift, houdende bepalingen op de toelating en het verblijf van vreemdelingen in het staat van beleg verklaarde gebied' 28 December 1916, in IMG/DC 93/1.

- 59 TB in Friesland, 'Verslag ingevolge artikel 6' p. 11; Commander of 'Division Group Brabant' to Minister of War, 30 September 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 174; NA 2.13.16, 184; Smidt, 'De bestrijding' p. 61; NA 2.13.16, 184.
- 60 Ritter, *De Donkere Poort* vol. 2, pp. 198-199.
- 61 Commander Division IV, 'Verslag ingevolge art. 6' p. 7.
- 62 NA 2.13.70, 202; NA 2.12.18, 184.
- 63 OLZ to Minister President, 18 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 1.
- 64 Dutch diplomat in Brussels to Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 30 October 1916, in NA 2.05.18, 239; Engelen, *De Militaire Inlichtingen Dienst* p. 28; Tuyll, *The Netherlands* p. 164.
- 65 Ritter, *De Donkere Poort* vol. 2, pp. 212-214.
- 66 Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 7.
- 67 Commander of the Coastal Battery in Neuzen to OLZ, 2 August 1914; TB in Zeeland to OLZ, 7 August 1914, both in NA 2.13.70, 89.
- 68 OLZ to CV, 26 September 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 89.
- 69 Duncan Grinnell-Milne, *An Escaper's Log*. London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1926, p. 302; Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 288.
- 70 Engelen, *De Militaire Inlichtingen Dienst* pp. 24, 27.
- 71 Sanders, 'The Netherlands' p. 119.
- 72 Vanneste, *Kroniek* two volumes.
- 73 Smit, *Tien studiën* p. 11.
- 74 Sanders, 'The Netherlands' p. 124.
- 75 Christopher Andrew, 'How Dutch resistance was organized' in M.R.D. Foot (ed.), *Holland at War Against Hitler: Anglo-Dutch relations 1940-1945*. London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1990, p. 93.
- 76 C.T. de Jong, 'De Nederlandse neutraliteit tijdens de eerste Wereldoorlog' *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*. 65, 1952, p. 259.
- 77 Smit, *Tien studiën* p. 11.
- 78 Smidt, 'Dutch and Danish' p. 144.
- 79 Vanneste, *Kroniek* vol. 1, pp. 236-242. For stories of Belgian men leaving the Netherlands and letter smuggling: Gaston Durnez, *Zeg mij waar de bloemen zijn. Beelden uit de Eerste Wereldoorlog in Vlaanderen*. Leuven: Davidfonds, 1988, pp. 31, 99-100, 103; Streuvels, *In Oorlogstijd* p. 248.
- 80 Vanneste surmises that the Prussian archives on the electric fence were destroyed during the Second World War (*Kroniek* vol. 1, p. 260). I have also been unable to find many sources in the Dutch archives.
- 81 Vanneste, *Kroniek* vol. 1, p. 244.
- 82 *Ibid.*
- 83 Bauwens et al., *In Staat van Beleg*, pp. 82-84; Vanneste, *Kroniek* vol. 1, pp. 259, 313; H. Jaspers, 'De Grensversperring in de Eerste Wereldoorlog' *De Aa Kroniek*. 4, no. 2, July 1985, p. 27.
- 84 Schaepdrijver, *De Grootte Oorlog* p. 239.
- 85 Vanneste, *Kroniek* vol. 1, p. 249.
- 86 Commander in Zeeland to OLZ, 26 June 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 170.
- 87 The historical society *De Goede Stede Hamont* has erected information boards at the reconstructed section of the fence near the town of Hamont (Belgium). With grateful thanks to Rob de Soete for providing information and photos of the reconstructed section of the fence. For a translation of the information boards: Rob de Soete, Index of /~otis/fence <<http://home-2.worldonline.nl/~otis/fence>> [Path: from Index to Fence.doc] (accessed January 2001). For photos: Rob de Soete, Index of /~otis/fence <<http://home-2.worldonline.nl/~otis/fence>> [Path: from Index to draad1.JPG, draad2.JPG, draad3.JPG, draad4.JPG, draad5.JPG] (accessed January 2001); Bauwens et al., *In Staat van Beleg*, p. 82.
- 88 Kramers, 'Internering' p. 27; Rob Ruggenberg, 'Huiver over "den Draad" in Heritage of

- the Great War <<http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Gallery/8054>> (accessed November 1998), np (reprinted in *De Groot Oorlog*. 4, no. 2, October 1998, pp. 21-23); Schaepdrijver, *De Groot Oorlog* p. 123; Vanneste, *Kroniek* vol. 1, p. 258; Moeyes, *Buiten Schot* p. 127.
- 89 Vanneste, *Kroniek* vol. 1, p. 258.
- 90 With grateful thanks to Professor Pat Bodger of the Electrical Engineering Department at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, for explaining the intricacies of electric currents.
- 91 German Minister in The Hague to Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 6 June 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 170.
- 92 Telephone message, OLZ to CV, 6 June 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 170.
- 93 'Eerste hulp by ongelukken door electriciteit' undated [June 1915] and unsigned, in NA 2.13.70, 170.
- 94 Copies of warning signs can be found in 'Van alles wat! (op militair gebied)' scrapbook, in IMG/DC 143C.
- 95 L.W. Bree (1979) in Vries, 'Nederland' p. 86.
- 96 Erkens, *Tusschen oorlog* pp. 74-75.
- 97 'Twee Nederlandsche soldaten gedood' *Soldatencourant*. no. 179, 8 October 1915, p. 3; Commander in Zeeland to OLZ, 15 October 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 170; Commander in Zeeland to OLZ, 1 November 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 177; Moeyes, *Buiten Schot* pp. 127-128.
- 98 Vanneste, *Kroniek* vol. 1, p. 315. Although a report was filed with the occupation authorities for each death (*Ibid.* p. 276), these documents have not yet been discovered.
- 99 Jan Feith, 'Langs de elektrische draadversperring' *Soldatencourant*. no. 192, 7 November 1915, front page.
- 100 Jan Feith, 'Langs de elektrische draadversperring (fragmenten)' *Soldatencourant*. no. 193, 10 November 1915, p. 2.
- 101 Feith, 'Langs de elektrische draadversperring'.
- 102 L. van de Sijpe, *Lespakket. Draadversperring WO I Hamont-Achel*. Hamont: De Geschied- en Heemkundige Kring 'De Goede Stede Hamont', 2000, p. 26.
- 103 Jan Feith, 'Langs de elektrische draadversperring (fragmenten)' *Soldatencourant*. no. 194, 12 November 1915, front page.
- 104 Bauwens et al., *In Staat van Beleg*. p. 92.
- 105 Vanneste, *Kroniek* vol. 1, p. 265.
- 106 E.H. Kossmann, *De Lage Landen* p. 12; Schaepdrijver, *De Groot Oorlog* p. 123; Mark Derez, 'The experience of occupation: Belgium' in Liddle et al. (eds.), *The Great World War* vol. 1, p. 513.
- 107 Commander in Zeeland to OLZ, 14 July 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 170; Feith, 'Langs de elektrische draadversperring (fragmenten)'; Erkens, *Tusschen oorlog* p. 81.
- 108 Bauwens et al., *In Staat van Beleg*. p. 85; Vanneste, *Kroniek* vol. 1, p. 260.
- 109 Vanneste, *Kroniek* vol. 2, pp. 456, 480.
- 110 Schaepdrijver, *De Groot Oorlog* p. 239.
- 111 OLZ to CV, 10 July 1917, in NA 2.13.16, 229.
- 112 *Ibid.*
- 113 Bauwens et al., *In Staat van Beleg*. p. 92.
- 114 Roodt, *Oorlogsgasten* p. 343.
- 115 J.M. Winter, 'Propaganda and the Mobilization of Consent' in Strachan (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History* p. 216.
- 116 Ferguson, *The Pity* p. 215.
- 117 *The Times History of the War*. vol. 13, p. 223.
- 118 Minister President and the Minister of War to all Provincial Governors, 11 August 1914, in IMG/DC 91A/3.
- 119 TB in Zeeland to Commander in Neuzen, 4 October 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 98.

- 120 Moeyes, *Buiten Schot* pp. 208-210.
- 121 C.K. Elout, 'De Nederlandsche oorlogspsyche' in Brugman (ed.), *Nederland* pp. 353-369; P.R.A. van Iddekinge, 'Tussen Telegraaf en Toekomst. De stemming in het neutrale Nederland' in Schuurmsma (ed.), 14-18 vol. 4, pp. 762-765; P. Bentein, 'Het dagblad 'De Vlaamse Stem' en het ontstaan van het aktivisme in Nederland. I' *Wetenschappelijke Tijdingen*. 45, 1986, pp. 213-215; P.G.G.M. Schulten, 'De Nederlandse pers over de Belgische mobilisaties' in Klinkert et al. (eds.), *Mobilisatie* pp. 67-73; T.H.J. Stoelinga, 'Enkele reacties op de Oktober-revolutie in de Nederlandse pers' *Internationale Spectator*. 21, 1967, pp. 1494-1511.
- 122 Vandenbosch, *Dutch Foreign Policy* p. 114.
- 123 Watson, 'Britain's Dutch Policy' p. 75; Ferguson, *The Pity* p. 215.
- 124 For example, the *Oorlogskroniek* was a monthly magazine published in Dutch with obvious German leanings between February 1917 and July 1918 (Legermuseum in Delft). The folder 'Documenten uit den 1ste Wereldoorlog' Q194-40 (Legermuseum, Delft) is filled with examples of anti-British and anti-German propaganda published in Dutch. Ritter, *De Donkere Poort* vol. 1, p. 282; Watson, 'Britain's Dutch Policy' pp. 75-76; Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, 'Spain and the First World War: The Structural Crisis of the Liberal Monarchy' *European History Quarterly*. 25, no. 4, 1995, pp. 36-37; Ferguson, *The Pity* p. 223.
- 125 Dutch Minister in Berlin to Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 13 March 1918, in NA 2.05.18, 239.
- 126 Ferguson, *The Pity* pp. 236-237.
- 127 Minister of Foreign Affairs to Dutch Minister in Washington, 29 July 1918, in NA 2.05.04, 841; Gustave Jaspars, *The Belgians in Holland 1914-1917*. Amsterdam: Jacob van Campen, 1917.
- 128 Iddekinge, 'Tussen Telegraaf' p. 763.
- 129 Stijn Streuvels, diary entry, 19 September 1914, in *In Oorlogstijd* p. 145.
- 130 Minister of Justice to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 25 August 1914, in NA 2.05.03, 191.
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- 132 *De Telegraaf*. 16 June 1915, p. 8, as quoted in Iddekinge, 'Tussen Telegraaf' pp. 764-765; H.Ch.J.G. van der Mandere, 'Nederland en de Nederlanders in dagen van crisis en jaren van oorlog' in Meester (ed.), *Gedenkboek* pp. 133-143.
- 133 Iddekinge, 'Tussen Telegraaf' p. 765.
- 134 *Ibid.*; Smit, *Nederland. Tweede deel*. pp. 41-42. There is some suggestion that the government let the issue slide after the Italian and French legation in The Hague asked them to (Ritter, *De Donkere Poort* vol. 1, pp. 263-273, vol. 2, pp. 209-211). I have been unable to verify this assertion independently.
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- 142 Minister of Foreign Affairs to German Diplomat in The Hague, 1 March 1915, in Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden. Derde Periode. Vierde Deel* pp. 312-314.
- 143 German Minister in The Hague to Chief of Cabinet of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7 August 1915, in *Ibid.* p. 407; Newspaper clipping, 10 September 1915, in scrapbook 'Van alles wat.' (Op militair gebied. Waarin gegevens tot de samenstelling eener 'Militaire Encyclopedie' no. 1' in IMG/DC 143C.
- 144 Minister of War to OLZ, 13 March 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 178.
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- 146 NA 2.13.70, 90, 228.
- 147 TB in Zeeland to OLZ, 6 May 1915, and reply 10 May 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 228; TB in Zeeland to CV, 12 May 1915, in NA 2.13.16, 184.
- 148 NA 2.13.70, 90.
- 149 Commander of Division IV to CV, 3 July 1915, in NA 2.13.16, 184; District Commander First Division *Koninklijke Marechaussee* to Commander of the Cavalry Brigade, 22 April 1916; CV to Editor of *Bredasche Courant*, 27 April 1916, both in NA 2.13.16, 293.
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- 167 Appendix 5.
- 168 Commander Division IV to CV, 28 October 1914, in NA 2.13.16, 148.
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Chapter 9

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- 83 Sanders, 'The Netherlands' pp. 213-219.
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Chapter 10

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- 65 CV to OLZ, 15 May 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 310.

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Chapter 11

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- 87 OLZ to commanding officers, 19 March 1915 and 13 April 1915, in NA 2.13.70, 2.
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- 93 Kleijngeld, *Gemobiliseerde militairen* p. 146.
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- 105 Commander 4th IB to Commander Division I (subsequently sent to CV), 11 April 1916, in NA 2.13.16, 297.
- 106 Commander Disciplinary Classes to Inspector of Infantry, 18 September 1917, in NA 2.13.70, 677; J. Raas, 'Dienstweigerers en sociale opvoeding in dienst' *Militair-Rechtelijk Tijdschrift.* 14, 1918, pp. 316-31; Heijmans et al., *De I.A.M.V.* p. 105.
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- 111 OLZ to CV, 15 April 1918; OLZ to military authorities, 24 April 1918; OLZ to CV, 7 June 1918, all in NA 2.13.16, 352.

- 112 Minister of War decision, 9 November 1917, in *Militair-Rechtelijk Tijdschrift*. 13, 1917, pp. 13-14.
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- 115 Stoke, *Van Aardappelmes* p. 27.
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- 117 Moeyes, *Buiten Schot* pp. 147-148.
- 118 'Bevoegdheid der politie tot aanhouding van militairen wegens het plegen van een militair delict' *Militair-Rechtelijk Tijdschrift*. 14, 1918, p. 99.
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- 121 Wal (ed.), *Herinneringen* p. 38.
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- 123 Popular poem, published in *Het Leven* magazine, 9 November 1915, as quoted in: Haags gemeentemuseum, *Den Haag* p. 13.
- 124 Stoke, *Van Aardappelmes* 9.

Chapter 12

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- 2 Ritter, *De Donkere Poort* vol. 2, pp. 349-352. NB: Dutch cabinets consisted of extra-parliamentary members.
- 3 *Ibid.* p. 294; Verseput, 'Gevolgen' p. 231; Stoelinga, *Russische revolutie* p. 187; Stoelinga, 'Enkele reacties' pp. 1500-1501; Smit, *Tien Studiën* pp. 132-133; Bordewijk, 'War Finances' p. 211.
- 4 Alan Palmer, *The Kaiser: Warlord of the Second Reich*. London: Phoenix Giant, 1978, p. 206.
- 5 Hendrik Jan Scheffer, *November 1918. Journaal van een revolutie die niet doorging*. Utrecht: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1984, p. 18.
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- 8 Tuyll, *The Netherlands* pp. 243, 246-247.
- 9 'Nota van de eerste afdeling van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken voor Zijne Excellentie' 25 October 1918, in Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden. Derde Periode. Vijfde Deel. Tweede Stuk* pp. 694-695.
- 10 OLZ to CV, 22 October 1918, in NA 2.13.16, 372.
- 11 IMG/DC 91A/-, pp. 9-12; TB in Overijssel to OLZ, 30 October 1918; Commander of the Fortified Position of the Mouths of the Maas River and the Schelde, 6 November 1918, both in NA 2.13.70, 784.
- 12 The following details of the Harskamp mutiny are based on: 'Rapport van de Commissie tot onderzoek van de ongeregeldeheden in de Legerplaats bij Harskamp, ingesteld ingevolge aanschrijving van den Opperbevelhebber van Land- en Zeemacht van 27 October 1918, Afd. G.S. no. 20827 Geheim' 2 November 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 5; IMG/DC 91A/-; correspondence in NA 2.13.70, 784; Kleijngeld, *Gemobiliseerde militairen* p. 144.
- 13 Inspector of Transport in Apeldoorn to Garrison Commander in Amersfoort, 26 October

- 1918; TB in Overijssel to OLZ, 28 October 1918, both in NA 2.13.70, 784.
- 14 'Rapport van de Commissie' p. 12.
- 15 Petition by several soldiers in Harskamp to his Excellency the General [OLZ], 1 November 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 784.
- 16 Kleijngeld, *Gemobiliseerde militairen* p. 144; Fasseur, *Wilhelmina* p. 543.
- 17 IMG/DC 91A/-, p. 12; Commander of the Fortified Position of the Mouths of the Maas River and the Schelde, 6 November 1918; Commander 7-3 Regiment Field Artillery, 'Rapport' 31 October, 7 November 1918, all in NA 2.13.70, 784.
- 18 IMG/DC 91A/-, pp. 9-10; TB in Overijssel to OLZ, 30 October 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 784.
- 19 IMG/DC 91A/-, p. 12.
- 20 *Ibid.* p. 10; Garrison Commander Amersfoort to Commander of the New Holland Waterline, the OLZ, and Minister of War, 30 October 1918; Garrison Commander Amersfoort to OLZ, 31 October 1918, both in NA 2.13.70, 784; Commander II-5 RI to Commander 5 RI, 31 October 1918, in NA 2.13.16, 351.
- 21 IMG/DC 91A/-, p. 11; Commander II-5 RI to OLZ, 1 November 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 784.
- 22 IMG/DC 91A/-, pp. 11-12; Commander Regiment Field Artillery, 'Rapport' 31 October 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 784; Commander VII IB to Commander Division IV, 1 November 1918, in NA 2.13.16, 351.
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- 24 *Ibid.* p. 12.
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- 26 OLZ to CV, 27 October 1918; CV to Commanders of Divisions II and III, 30 October 1918, both in NA 2.13.70, 784; Berg, *Cornelis* p. 112.
- 27 Commander III Division *Koninklijke Marechaussee* to Commander II Division, 17 September 1914, in NA 2.13.70, 127.
- 28 'Rapport van de Commissie' p. 18; W.H. van Terwisga, 'Grepes uit mobilisatie-herinneringen' in Neeve et al. (eds.), *Nationale Bond* p. 37.
- 29 De Jong, *Notities* p. 268.
- 30 *Ibid.* pp. 278, 300-301.
- 31 Palmer, *The Kaiser* p. 204.
- 32 OLZ to Minister of War, 30 October 1918, OLZ to all army and navy authorities, 31 October 1918, both in NA 2.13.70, 698.
- 33 OLZ to all army authorities, 5 November 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 698; Berg, *Cornelis* pp. 112-114.
- 34 OLZ to CV, 27 October 1918, in NA 2.13.16, 325.
- 35 'Rapport van de Commissie'.
- 36 Minister of War, 4 November 1918, in IMG/DC 91A/-, p. 2.
- 37 OLZ to Minister of War, 4 November 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 5.
- 38 IMG/DC 91A/-, p. 4.
- 39 'Rapport van de Commissie'; IMG/DC 91A/-.
- 40 IMG/DC 91A/-, p. 18.
- 41 *Ibid.* p. 29.
- 42 *Ibid.* Appendices 1-10, pp. 45-61.
- 43 Stephen C. MacDonald, 'Crisis, War, and Revolution in Europe, 1917-23' in Hans A. Schmitt (ed.), *Neutral Europe between War and Revolution 1917-1923*. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1988, p. 246.
- 44 'Kort Verslag van de Handelingen der Vergaderingen van de Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal-Zitting 1918-1919' 7 November 1918, p. 189, in IMG/DC SJ-SIJ, 397/SII.
- 45 OLZ, 'Nota over den militairen toestand van Nederland' 29 May 1918, in IMG/DC 91A/3 (also in NA 2.13.67, 328); 'Overzicht van het gebeurde in zake de crisis in het defensiebeleid April-Juli 1918' in NA 2.13.67, 328 (also in NA 2.02.05.02, 906); NA 2.21.095, 47; Smit, *Nederland. Derde deel* pp. 18-21; Wal (ed.), *Herinneringen* pp. 40-48.

- 46 'Overzicht van het gebeurde in zake de crisis in het defensiebeleid April–Juli 1918' in NA 2.13.67, 328; Tuyll, *The Netherlands* pp. 225-241.
- 47 OLZ to military authorities, 23 April 1918, in Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden. Derde Periode. Vijfde Deel. Eerste Stuk* pp. 466-467.
- 48 Including the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Pop, Second Chief of Staff, General-Major Burger, Commander of the New Holland Waterline, Colonel Van der Voort Maarschalk, Commander of the Naarden Group, Colonel Fabius, and the Commander of the Field Army, Lieutenant-General Van Terwisga.
- 49 According to B.C. de Jonge, in Wal (ed.), *Herinneringen* p. 44.
- 50 P.W.A. Cort van der Linden to OLZ, 28 May 1918, in IMG/DC 91A/3 (also in NA 2.13.67, 328).
- 51 OLZ, 'Nota over den militairen toestand van Nederland', 29 May 1918, in IMG/DC 91A/3.
- 52 *Ibid.* p. 19.
- 53 Moeyes, *Buiten Schot* p. 321.
- 54 OLZ, 'Bijzondere instructie voor den Commandant der Stelling van de Monden der Maas en der Schelde, voor zooveel het Commando Zeeland betreft' 9 January 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 5.
- 55 OLZ, 'Nota over den militairen toestand van Nederland', 29 May 1918, in IMG/DC 91A/3.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 Minister of War, 'Nota aan den Ministerraad' 8 June 1918, in NA 2.13.67, 328 (also in IMG/DC SJ-SIJ, 397/SII).
- 58 Fasseur, *Wilhelmina* p. 525.
- 59 'Beschouwingen van den Minister van Oorlog Jhr Alting von Geusau aan den Opperbevelhebber van Land- en Zeemacht ter hand gesteld op 26 September 1918' in IMG/DC 91A/3.
- 60 Tuyll, *The Netherlands* p. 232.
- 61 'Nota, door den Minister van Oorlog Jhr de Jonge achtergelaten bij zijn aftreden' 11 July 1918, in IMG/DC 91A/3 (also in NA 2.13.67, 328, and in NA 2.13.70, 5).
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- 63 OLZ, 'Nota betreffende den tegenwoordigen militairen toestand' 18 March 1918 in Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden. Derde Periode. Vijfde Deel. Eerste Stuk* p. 431.
- 64 Brock Millman, 'A counsel of despair: British strategy and war aims, 1917-1918' *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 2, pp. 241-270.
- 65 OLZ, 'Nota over den militairen toestand van Nederland', 29 May 1918, p. 10, fn 1, in IMG/DC 91A/3.
- 66 John Keegan, *The First World War*. London: Pimlico, 1998, p. 422.
- 67 Tuyll, *The Netherlands and World War I* p. 114.
- 68 'Nota, door den Minister van Oorlog Jhr de Jonge achtergelaten bij zijn aftreden' 11 July 1918, in IMG/DC 91A/3.
- 69 'Beschouwingen van den Minister van Oorlog Jhr Alting van Geusau aan den Opperbevelhebber van Land- en Zeemacht ter hand gesteld op 26 September 1918'; OLZ, 'Nota ter beantwoording van de Nota dd. 11 Juli 1918, door den toenmaligen Minister van Oorlog Jhr. de Jonge gericht aan den Raad van Ministers' 3 October 1918, both in IMG/DC 91A/3. Snijders thought de Jonge had addressed his note to the cabinet; in fact, it was addressed only to the new Minister of War (Minister of War to OLZ, 21 October 1918, in IMG/DC 91A/3).
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- 71 *Ibid.* pp. 128-129.
- 72 Troelstra, *Gedenkschriften. Vierde Deel. Storm* p. 177.
- 73 OLZ to Queen Wilhelmina, 6 November 1918, in IMG/DC SJ-SIJ, 397/SII; Scheffer, *November 1918* p. 22.
- 74 Royal Decree, no. 10, 9 November 1918, in IMG/DC SJ-SIJ, 397/SII.

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- 80 Keegan, *The First World War* pp. 446-447.
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- 82 Minister Resident in Brussels, M.W.R. van Vollenhoven, to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 9 November 1918, in Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden. Derde Periode. Vijfde Deel. Tweede Stuk* pp. 728-729.
- 83 Marks, 'My Name' pp. 123-124.
- 84 Fasseur, *Wilhelmina* pp. 553-554.
- 85 'Notulen van de Buitengewone Ministerraad' 11 November 1918, in Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden. Derde Periode. Vijfde Deel. Tweede Stuk* p. 729.
- 86 'Notulen van de Ministerraad' 13 November 1918, in Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden. Derde Periode. Vijfde Deel. Tweede Stuk* p. 737; Marks, 'My Name' p. 128; Roodt, *Oorlogsgasten* pp. 363-366.
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- 89 Vandenbosch, *The Neutrality* pp. 184-185.
- 90 Bossenbroek et al., *Vluchten* p. 71.
- 91 Palmer, *The Kaiser* p. 226.
- 92 Scheffer, *November 1918* p. 88.
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- 100 Not to be mistaken with the *vrijwillige landstorm* (voluntary *landstorm*); Oosterhoff, *Dagverhaal* pp. 13-14; Scheffer, *November 1918* p. ix.
- 101 Tuyl (The Netherlands pp. 252-253) and Porter ('Dutch Neutrality' p. 165) quoted a figure of 46,000 BV volunteers by the end of November 1918. K. van Lennep estimated the number of volunteers as high as 110,000 ('De vrijwillige burgerwacht' in Bas (ed.), *Gedenkboek* p. 268). H. Tomas (*De Bijzondere Vrijwillige Landstorm*. Liemer: Bestuur Liemers Museum, 1991) claimed that the numbers of volunteers did not reach 40,000 until January 1920. It stood at 16,181 in March 1919 (p. 20). Tomas is probably the most reliable source.
- 102 As, *November-alarm* pp. 105-126.
- 103 A.B. Roosjen et al. (eds.), *Als 't Moet. November 1918 en de Bijzondere Vrijwillige Landstorm*. The Hague: Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 1959, p. 98; Bles, 'Modernisering' p. 84.
- 104 Burger, *Linkse frontvorming* p. 117.
- 105 *Ibid.*; De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel 1* p. 50.
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- 107 Commander New Holland Waterline to OLZ, 14 November 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 813.
- 108 De Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel 1* p. 49.
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- 112 *Ibid.* pp. 23-24.
- 113 *Ibid.* p. 24.
- 114 Dongen, 'De SDAP' p. 351; Burger, *Linkse frontvorming* pp. 113-115.
- 115 Colenbrander, *Studiën* p. 326.
- 116 Scheffer, *November 1918* p. x.
- 117 *Ibid.* pp. ix, 279.
- 118 Tomas, *De Bijzondere Vrijwillige Landstorm* p. 20.
- 119 OLZ to CV, 9 November 1918; Commander Fortified Position of Amsterdam to OLZ, 9 November 1918, both in NA 2.13.70, 808.
- 120 CV to military authorities, 12 November 1918; Commander Cavalry Brigade, 'Verslag van de demobilisatie van de Cavalerie-Brigade' no date, both in NA 2.13.16, 312; Uijterschout, *Beknopt Overzicht* p. 450.
- 121 OLZ, *Regeling van de Demobilisatie*. The Hague: Algemeene Landsdrukkerij, 1918; Isselt, 'De geest' p. 153.
- 122 Commander Division III, 'Verslag van de demobilisatie bedoeld in no. 43 'Regeling van

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- 123 Commander 13 RI to Commander II-IB, 25 November 1919, in NA 2.13.16, 312.
- 124 OLZ, Lieutenant-General W.F. Pop, to military authorities, 14 November 1918, in NA 2.13.16, 323.
- 125 OLZ to field army commanders, 11 December 1918, in NA 2.13.16, 312.
- 126 OLZ to Minister of War, 29 January 1919, in NA 2.13.16, 312; OLZ to Minister of War, 18 March 1919, in NA 2.13.52, 454 (also in NA 2.13.16, 312).
- 127 NA 2.13.16, 312.
- 128 'Voorstellen voor het inrichten van een Algemeen Demobilisatiepark' no date, in NA 2.13.70, 700.
- 129 OLZ, *Regeling van de Demobilisatie* pp. 28-29.
- 130 Commander Division II to CV, 10 January 1919, in NA 2.13.16, 312.
- 131 NA 2.13.52, 493.
- 132 Commander Division IV, 'Report naar aanleiding van een door Wd Opperbevelhebber gestelde vraag omtrent den geest bij de te Amsterdam gelegerde bataljons van VII I.B.' 22 January 1919, in NA 2.13.16, 329.
- 133 Commander Division II to OLZ, 17 January 1919, in NA 2.13.70, 784; Commander Division II to CV, 21 January 1919, in NA 2.13.16, 329.
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- 135 'Nota van het Departement van Buitenlandse Zaken aan het Duitse Gezantschap' 12 November 1918, in Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden. Derde Periode. Vijfde Deel. Tweede Stuk* p. 737.
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- 137 Chief of Staff Division IV to OLZ, 12 December 1918, in NA 2.13.16, 312.
- 138 Minister of Foreign Affairs to Dutch Minister in Paris, 21 November 1918 in Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden. Derde Periode. Vijfde Deel. Tweede Stuk* p. 749.
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- 141 Dutch Minister in Paris to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 20 Nov 1918, in Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden. Derde Periode. Vijfde Deel. Tweede Stuk* pp. 748-749; Dutch Minister in London to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 29 November 1918, in NA 2.05.04, 837; Tuyl, *The Netherlands* pp. 270-271.
- 142 Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, 'Réponses des Ministres aux questions écrites' in *Journal Official* 15 April 1920, in NA 2.05.04, 837; *De Doormarsch* p. 10.
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- 145 OLZ to CV, 14 November 1918, in NA 2.13.16, 322; OLZ to CV, 15 February 1919, in NA 2.13.16, 350; correspondence between Minister of Foreign Affairs and British Representative in The Hague, January-February 1919, in Oranjeboek: *Mededeelingen van den Minister van Buitenlandsche Zaken aan de Staten-Generaal April 1918-Juni 1919* pp. 18-19.
- 146 'Notulen van de Ministerraad' 13 November 1918, in Smit (ed.), *Bescheiden. Derde Periode. Vijfde Deel. Tweede Stuk* p. 737.

- 147 Borselen claimed that 120,000 POWs in Germany and Austria-Hungary used the Netherlands to get home, including British, French, American, Italian, Portuguese, Belgian and Serbian troops (*Aanslag* p. 46); NA 2.13.16, 322.
- 148 Nagelhout, 'De toelating' p. 57.
- 149 OLZ to CV, 14 November 1918, in NA 2.13.16, 322.
- 150 OLZ to CV, 7 December 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 1484.
- 151 Frey, 'Trade, Ships' p. 561.
- 152 Minister of War to OLZ, 20 November 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 708.
- 153 OLZ, 'Regeling betreffende de uitoefening van het militair gezag in verband met uitgebroken of dreigende binnelandse onlusten' 26 March 1919, in NA 2.13.70, 912; Commander Division IV, 'Verslag ingevolge art. 6 van de Wet van 23 Mei 1899 (staatsblad No 128 betreffende de uitoefening van het Militair Gezag in de provinciën Noord-Brabant, Limburg en Gelderland bezuiden van den Boven-Rijn (voor een deel ook wel 'Bijlandsche Kanaal' geheeten) en de Waal, buiten het gebied der Stellingen en afzonderlijke Forten, alsmede in de Gemeenten Standdaarbuiten en Zevenbergen en in het gedeelte van de Gemeente Rilland-Bath, gelegen op den Noord-Brabantschen wal van de Ooster- en Westerschelde' 5 May 1920, pp. 10-11, in NA 2.13.70, 708.
- 154 Hasselton, 'De wisseling' p. 66.
- 155 M.G. Emeis, '1914-1918: minder brood op de plank' *Ons Amsterdam*. 31, 1979, p. 138.
- 156 Frey, 'Trade, Ships' p. 562.
- 157 H.J. Elhorst, 'De Koninklijke Nationale Vereeniging tot Steun aan Miliciens' in Bas (ed.), *Gedenkboek* pp. 1114-1116.
- 158 Rooy, *Werklozenzorg* p. 27.
- 159 Membership of the IAMV dropped to 1,200 by 1922 (Heijmans et al., *De I.A.M.V.* p. 111).
- 160 General Staff, 'Verslag nopens de verrichtingen van het militair gezag, voor zoover dit werd uitgeoefend door den Opperbevelhebber van Land- en Zeemacht; opgemaakt ingevolge het bepaalde in art. 6 der wet van 23 Mei 1899 (St.bl.No.128)' 6 January 1919 [1920] p. 21, in NA 2.13.70, inventory no. 710 (also in no. 912).
- 161 Hengel, 'De mobilisatie' p. 60.
- 162 Vanneste, *Kroniek* vol. 2, pp. 620-623.

Conclusions

- 1 Oliveira Salazar, 25 June 1942, as quoted in Leitz, *Nazi Germany* p. 189.
- 2 Ørvik, *The Decline* p. 39.
- 3 Tuyll, *The Netherlands* p. 354.
- 4 Werner Rings, 1997, as quoted in Leitz, *Nazi Germany* p. 16

Appendix 2

- 1 Munnekrede, 'De mobilisatie' pp. 46-47.

Appendix 3

- 1 Based on 'Declaration of neutrality of the Netherlands in the European war. August 5, 1914' in Vandenbosch, *The Neutrality* Appendix I, pp. 318-321.

Appendix 4

- 1 Based on Nagelhout, 'De toelating' Appendix 12, pp. 140-142; Bossenbroek et al. (eds.), *Vluchten* p. 32; Wintermans, *Belgische vluchtelingen* p.15; Zegers, 'Een levendig geschiedenis' p. 31; Erkens, *Tusschen oorlog* p. 33; Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* p. 342; M. P. Wielinga, 'Camp Oldebroek' The First World War and Refugees in the Netherlands. Website <<http://www.mecom.nl/~k7/english/camp%2ooldebroek/oldenbroek.htm>>. Link via Home Page <<http://www.mecom.nl/~k7/mpw/english/index.htm>> (accessed March 1999).

Appendix 5

- 1 *Staatsblad*. no. 128, 23 May 1899.

Appendix 6

- 1 *Staatsblad*. no. 375, 5 August 1914; no. 406, 10 August 1914; no. 435, 29 August 1914; no. 448, 8 September 1914; no. 463, 25 September 1914; no. 527, 10 November 1914; no. 18, 19 January 1915; no. 81, 11 February 1915; no. 308, 8 July 1915; no. 375, 20 August 1915; no. 393, 13 September 1915; no. 437, 23 October 1915; no. 473, 16 November 1915; no. 487, 3 December 1915; no. 56, 22 January 1916; no. 527, 13 December 1916; no. 228, 26 February 1917; no. 242, 22 March 1917; no. 448, 30 May 1917; General Headquarters, 'Lijst van alle gemeenten der provinciën, met aanduiding, welke gemeenten, of onderdeelen daarvan, in staat van oorlog of in staat van beleg zijn verklaard en met vermelding van de gezagsgebieden, waartoe zij behooren, alsmede van de Koninklijke besluiten, waarbij het in staat van oorlog of in staat van beleg verklaren plaats vond.' 1 September 1917, in IMG/DC 93/1.

Appendix 7

- 1 Based on a similar diagram in Bosboom, *In Moeilijke Omstandigheden* Appendix A, between pp. 390-391; OLZ to Minister of War, 11 October 1916, in NA 2.13.70, 411; OLZ to all military authorities, 16 April 1918, in NA 2.13.16, 325; Minister of War, 'Nota omtrent hetgeen sedert den aanvang der mobilisatie van het leger is gedaan om de gevechtswaarde en de uitrusting hiervan te verhoogen' 16 January 1918, in NA 2.13.70, 705; Staatscommissie, *Waarnemingen* Appendix V, p. 127. This chart does not take into account troops in specialist units, who may have been mobilised for different lengths of time.

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