

# Survival and Resistance: Hidden Children of The Holocaust The Netherlands Under Nazi Occupation

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- ❑ To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to [CarolinaK12@unc.edu](mailto:CarolinaK12@unc.edu)
- ❑ The material from the PPT is also available in a reading attached to the lesson plan file, “Survival & Resistance: The Netherlands Under Nazi Occupation,” should teachers prefer to cover this material via an assigned reading rather than a PPT.

# The Holocaust in the Netherlands

- Between the time that Hitler seized power in Germany in 1933 until the end of World War II in 1945, over **six million Jews were killed by the Nazis**.
- Less well known is that **five million** other individuals lost their lives as a result of Nazi ideology including the physically and mentally disabled, Russians, Poles, dissidents, Roma, Sinti, political prisoners, homosexuals, and Jehovah's Witnesses.



- The Holocaust was an incredibly complex atrocity in human history. While we often think of it incorrectly as a single event occurring in Germany, each country with its diverse population experienced the Nazi assault uniquely.
- The Netherlands was no exception.

# The Netherlands During WWII

- The Netherlands had maintained a policy of **neutrality** during World War I and sought to do the same during World War II.
- This hope was bolstered by a promise of nonaggression made with Hitler and the Nazis.
  - Hitler and the Nazis did not want to alienate the Dutch people - a people they considered to be of "superior" Germanic breeding and almost 100 percent Aryan.
  - Hitler's ultimate goal was to make the Netherlands a part of Germany following the war. Through annexation of the Netherlands, Hitler hoped to further infuse the new Reich with the Aryan ideal.
- However, this assurance proved worthless. On **May 10, 1940**, the German army began its invasion of the Netherlands with the bombing of **Rotterdam (The Rotterdam Blitz)**.
- Despite valiant efforts made on the part of the Dutch military, the Netherlands fell to the Germans after only five days of fighting.

# The Netherlands Surrenders

- Those five days were characterized by shock and horror particularly for the Jews of Holland.
- Persecuted individuals who had initially fled to the Netherlands as a safe harbor were particularly horrified.
- For those five days, many attempted to flee the country. However, these frantic, desperate attempts were generally unsuccessful.



# An “Uneventful Transition”

- Germany’s invasion of other countries (such as Austria(1938) and Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1939) resulted in the immediate implementation of Nazi leadership and German laws, including all restrictive anti-Jewish legislation. However, the invasion of the Netherlands was different.
- While the royal family including Queen Wilhelmina fled into exile in Britain, civilian leaders were not replaced.
  - The Dutch civilian administration was subsumed by a civil German administration and Dutch law remained in effect.
  - Following the Nazi invasion, Dutch Jewry even continued to enjoy the benefit of equal citizenship under Dutch law.

# An “Uneventful Transition”

- Thus, while the Dutch people were shocked and demoralized by the unexpected loss, they relaxed a bit.
  - Many were deceived into believing that the Nazi occupation would not entail great hardship or the anticipated atrocities.
  - They hoped they only need to outlast the German occupation.
- Unfortunately, the Nazi occupation would end up lasting five years with devastating consequences for all of the Netherlands, including the **Hunger Winter of 1944-1945**.



German recruitment poster used in the Netherlands around 1943 encouraging the Dutch to join the fight against Bolshevism

# As Nazi oppression slowly took shape, so did Dutch resistance.

- Slowly but surely, despite the hope of Netherlands citizens, Nazi oppression took shape. But, so did Dutch resistance.
- Much of Dutch resistance can be characterized as either **passive resistance** or **non-violent active resistance**.
  - For example, immediately following the Nazi occupation, American and British films were banned from theaters replaced by German movies including German newsreels. Dutch patrons took to walking out or booing during the newsreels. When new laws were passed prohibiting such behavior, attendance at films dropped.
  - Radio broadcasts under Nazi control consisted principally of propaganda. Thus, while it was illegal to listen to British radio, many Dutch began to listen to the BBC and radio broadcasts from the Dutch government in exile. In 1943, over one million radio sets were confiscated by the Nazis in response to these acts of resistance.

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- Additionally, the Dutch resisted becoming assimilated into Nazi ideals and culture.
- They considered themselves Dutch and looked towards the day for renewed Dutch independence.



Queen Wilhelmina speaking on *Radio Oranje*

- Subtle acts of rebellion occurred that underscored this desire:
  - On Prince Bernard's birthday, many people wore orange carnations; orange was the symbol of the Dutch ruling family.
  - When mailing letters, stamps were affixed to the upper left hand corner as many believed the upper right hand corner was reserved solely for the stamp of Queen Wilhelmina.
  - Only 1 ½ percent of the Dutch population joined the Dutch Nazi party.
  - In 1943, when university students were required to sign an oath of loyalty to the occupying forces, over 85 percent refused; thousands rushed into hiding.
  - Many Dutch were active in speaking out or publishing against the Nazis, in spite of the great risk. (To be caught meant imprisonment or deportation, possibly to Mauthausen from where few returned.)
  - Underground newspapers flourished and were particularly invaluable after the confiscation of radio sets and the loss of electricity during the later years of the war.

# Things Worsen for Jews...

- While initially following the Nazi invasion, Dutch Jewry still had equal citizenship under Dutch law, oppressive Nazi measures were eventually taken and finally escalated.
- First, Jews were prohibited from serving as volunteer air-raid wardens.
- Later, German Jews were ordered to leave the Hague and other coastal towns and the process of registration began.



A sign reading “Jewish quarter” in German and “Jewish neighborhood” in Dutch.

# Things Worsen for Jews...

- In September of 1940, it was decreed that Jews could no longer be admitted into civil service, though not impacting those already in these positions.
- However, just two months later, all Jews were dismissed from civil service including the Chief Justice of the Dutch Supreme Court and forty-one university professors.
- The last decree of 1940 mandated the registration of all Jewish businesses. Maps were drawn up identifying the name, age, gender, marital status, and location of all Jews living in each city and town.

# Resistance in Response to Worsening Oppression

- In response to oppressive measures against the Jews, the **Dutch Communist Party** - a political party already deemed illegal by the Nazis but still operating within the Netherlands - organized the **February Strike**.
- On Tuesday, February 25, 1941, municipal workers of Amsterdam went on strike, shutting down public transportation. Over the course of the day, the strike intensified as metal and shipyard workers, white collar workers, and manual laborers joined.

# Resistance in Response to Worsening Oppression



The statue De Dokwerker in Amsterdam remembering the Feb

- The strike continued until Thursday, spreading across the country to other cities. An infuriated Nazi administration struck back hard, and even though the strike was squashed, it remains the only **anti-pogrom strike** to have occurred in Nazi-occupied Europe.
- In 1943 and 1944, more mass strikes broke out in response to deportations and conscription of Dutch labor into Germany.

# The Dutch Underground

- Finally, **underground resistance groups** were organized to serve a variety of functions including the rescue and sheltering of Jews and other persecuted individuals.
- Underground cells created false papers and transported secret documents to countries outside of the Netherlands to assist Allied war efforts.
- It is estimated that over 50-60 thousand individuals were directly involved in underground activities with hundreds of thousands more offering assistance.
- More than ten thousand lost their lives as a direct result of their courageous efforts.



# Extreme Loss of Life, Despite Resistance Efforts

- At the time of Holland's capitulation (surrender), approximately 140,000 Jews resided in the Netherlands.
- By the war's end, the Nazis had deported 107,000 Jews. Of these, only 5,000 survived to return home.
- 30,000 managed to survive in hiding or by other means.
- Ultimately, **over 75% of Holland's Jews perished at the hands of the Nazis.**

# Why was loss of life so high in the Netherlands?

- The Netherlands' unique **geographic features** made escape almost impossible. It provided no place to run and few places to hide.
  - Countries bordering the Netherlands were under German control. Thus, flight across the Dutch border only meant entrance into another Nazi controlled country.
  - Also, the west and north borders of the Netherlands consist of North Sea coastline – German controlled water.
  - The Netherlands in 1940 was densely populated. (The Netherlands is one and a half times the size of Massachusetts, but home to over nine million individuals.
  - The land was flat providing little forested, mountainous terrain suited for hiding.



# Why was loss of life so high in the Netherlands?

- Dutch **culture** also negatively impacted Jewish survival.
  - Dutch society was segregated by religion. Thus, close friendships between Jews and Christians were uncommon in war-time Holland.
  - This made it difficult for Jews to find a place of hiding within the homes of Gentile(non-Jewish) neighbors, since these were usually individuals that they did not know.
  - For those Jews with Christian friends, to accept shelter carried with it the knowledge that discovery placed their friend's lives into jeopardy.
  - Additionally, most Jews who went into hiding had to do so as individuals. Rarely, were entire families hidden (as in the case of the Anne Frank family.) Thus, to go into hiding not only endangered the well-being of those hiding you, but often meant abandoning your family.