



BRILL

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## De Bezige Bij

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### Abstract

The Resistance publishing house De Bezige Bij [The Busy Bee] was financed with money earned with broadside verse and other special publications. This was such a lucrative business that there was even enough money left over to pay for large numbers of Jewish children to go into hiding. During the occupation the company built up a reputation as a left-wing publisher – an image that needed to be maintained after the liberation, even though many of the works published by the post-war Bezige Bij were firmly in a different political camp.

### Keywords

publishing house, Second World War, resistance, politics, literature, illegal printing

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In 1976 De Bezige Bij [The Busy Bee], a publishing house born of the wartime Resistance, published a collection of autobiographical stories by Jan Gerhard Toonder entitled *De Spin in de Badkuip* [The Spider in the Bathtub] in which he relates how at the end of the Second World War he was prohibited from publishing by an edict of the *Ereraad voor Letterkunde* [Court of Honour for Literature]. There was nothing particularly unusual about this: it was a fate that he shared with some three hundred other authors who were prohibited from publishing for periods ranging from a few months to twenty years. Toonder got off lightly: the sentence was a year without publishing, for having applied for membership of the *Kultuurkamer* and thereafter continuing to publish his work. This included his novel *Schippers Naast God* [Skippers Next To God] published in 1944 by *De Nederlandsche Uitgeverij* and illustrated by his brother Marten.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Renders, *Gevaarlijk Drukwerk. Een vrije uitgeverij in oorlogstijd* (Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij, 2004), p. 11, Sjoerd van Faassen & Hans Renders, 'Een editoriale doorbraak? Het uitgeefklimaat in de jaren veertig en het ontstaan van De Bezige Bij', in: *Hoger Honing. 60 jaar De Bezige Bij* (Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij, 2004), pp. 58-81; Adriaan Venema, *Schrijvers*,

This purging of Dutch literature by a Court of Honour was the result of a royal decree passed by the Dutch government in exile in London. After the liberation its implementation was delegated to a separate section headed by Professor Nicolaas Donkersloot. 'He was a professor of linguistics, not law', commented Toonder cuttingly when, after unsuccessfully defending himself before the council, he announced the formation of the committee in which politically wronged artists united after the war: the *Vereeniging Actie Rechtsherstel der Nederlandsche Kunstenaars*.<sup>2</sup>

Jan Gerhard Toonder is an example of the political vagueness in the list of De Bezige Bij: not only did it publish *De Spin in de Badkuip*, Toonder was also the author of a broadside published by the underground Bij. At the same time he had joined the *Kultuurkamer* and his brother continued to draw a strip cartoon in the mass-circulation daily *De Telegraaf* until 1944. It must be remembered here that the Dutch government in exile had declared 'wrong', i.e. pro-German or traitorous, all newspapers that continued to appear legally after 1 January 1943.<sup>3</sup>

Besides looking at Toonder and other authors who are difficult to place in a political context, I shall describe the character and history of De Bezige Bij during and shortly after the occupation by examining, inter alia, De Bezige Bij's very first publication: *De Achttien Dooden* [The Eighteen Dead] by Jan Campert, the Anne Frank of the resistance poets.<sup>4</sup>

De Bezige Bij is the product of idealism. On 14 July 1942 a girl by the name of Ad Groenendijk, a geography student at Utrecht University, took a number of Jewish children to go into hiding in the home of the mother of her fellow student Jan Meulenbelt. The event is now seen as the birth of the *Utrechts Kindercomité*, one of the four resistance groups that set themselves the task of helping Jewish children survive the war.

Rutger ('Rut') Matthijsen was a chemistry student and member of the *Utrechtsch Studenten Corps* when in November 1942 he was asked if he would

*Uitgevers & hun collaboratie*, vol. 3A, *De Kleine Collaboratie* (Amsterdam, De Arbeiderspers, 1990), p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> 'Society for action for the rehabilitation of the rights of Dutch artists.' Venema, op. cit. (n. 1), pp. 224-36, and René Vos, *Niet voor publicatie. De legale Nederlandse pers tijdens de Duitse bezetting* (Amsterdam, Sijthoff, 1988), chapter 11.

<sup>3</sup> Vos, op. cit. (n. 2), chapter 10. According to Antoon Coolen, Marten Toonder too had applied for membership of the *Kultuurkamer*; see: 'Papierverknoeiing', in: *De Vrije Kunstenaar*, 28-7-1945.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Renders, *Wie weet slaag ik in de Dood. Biografie van Jan Campert* (Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij, 2004), p. 313.

allow his room to be used by the *Kindercomité*.<sup>5</sup> Matthijsen was liberal-minded and even before the war he was politically aware in the sense that he was irritated by the ‘verzuiling’, the ‘pillarization’ that characterized Dutch society. It was this irritation that had led him to join the *Nederlandse Unie* immediately after its foundation in 1940 – that, and the fact that new members received a handsome pin with a silver lion. He soon realized, however, that this accommodating club was doing far too little to distance itself from the philosophy of National Socialism, and after a few months he resigned his membership.<sup>6</sup>

The object of the *Kindercomité* is easily defined: it was to find places of safety for Jewish children. Those who were known not to mix with the Germans were asked for a financial contribution; they included the diocese and the Philips family in Eindhoven.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of 1942 the sixth-year student Geertjan Lubberhuizen was recruited to help with the fundraising. The *Corps* had sailed into anti-German waters not long before this when Lubberhuizen published an article in the student paper *Vox Studiosorum* protesting about the antisemitic film *Jud Süß*. He was also very active in ‘organizing’ and forging identity cards and passes, and as a chemistry student he knew how to erase names from paper. So that he could pursue his activities as a forger in peace, he took an attic floor on the Van Limburg Stirumstraat in Utrecht. By this time his enthusiasm meant that he was known to his friends by the English nickname ‘the Busy Bee’. In his forgery work he was helped by Rut Matthijsen, a member of the team whose usefulness was enhanced by his knowledge of chemistry. It was at about this time that at one of the regular meetings of the committee members Anne Maclaine Pont showed them a copy of Jan Campert’s poem *De Achttien Dooden* typed on a sheet of thin carbon-copy paper. She had probably been sent it by her uncle by marriage Harro Bouman in Zwolle. Although various post-war publications refer to clandestine circulation of *De Achttien*

<sup>5</sup> Renders, op. cit. (n. 1), pp. 12–19, see also: Richter Roegholt, *De Geschiedenis van De Bezige Bij 1942-1972* (Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij, 1972), pp. 319–21. Also in: Bert Jan Flim, *Omdat hun hart sprak. Geschiedenis van de georganiseerde hulp aan Joodse kinderen in Nederland, 1942-1945* (Kampen, Kok, 1996, 1997<sup>2</sup>), esp. chapters 3 and 5, and id., *Saving the Children. History of the Organized Effort to Rescue Jewish Children in the Netherlands 1942-1945* (cdl Press, Bethesda, Maryland, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Rut Matthijsen, 22-5-2003. See also Wichert ten Have, *De Nederlandse Unie: aanpassing, vernieuwing en confrontatie in bezettingstijd 1940-1941* (Amsterdam, Prometheus, 1999).

<sup>7</sup> Wim Wennekes, *Geert Lubberhuizen. Uitgever. Het mysterie van de Van Miereveldstraat* (Amsterdam, Bas Lubberhuizen & De Bezige Bij, 1994), pp. 39–42, Roegholt, op. cit. (n. 5), p. 24.

*Dooden* on carbon-copy paper in 1942, firm evidence to support this has yet to be found.<sup>8</sup>

What prompted Campert to write a poem about the execution of eighteen resistance fighters was his reading in the illegal daily *Het Parool* on 9 April 1941 about the death of fifteen members of the *Geuzen* group and three of the strikers of February 1941.<sup>9</sup> He was not personally acquainted with any of them, but the report left a deep impression on a poet of considerable powers of imagination. He could not have known that barely a year later he himself would be in a prison cell.

Apart from the fact that *De Achttien Dooden* was evidence of anti-German sentiment and a strong sense of solidarity with the members of the first resistance group, the poem also contained other political references. For example, in the ‘rat-catcher of Berlin’, who believed in the power of a soothing melody, Campert was probably referring to the *Nederlandse Unie* – the political movement which, not long after the start of the occupation, argued in favour of a degree of collaboration with the Nazis. It also contained a call for resistance:

Wat kan een man, oprecht en trouw,  
nog doen in zulk een tijd?  
Hij kust zijn kind, hij kust zijn vrouw  
En strijdt den ijdel strijd

[What can a man, upright and true,  
still do at such a time?  
He'll kiss his child, he'll kiss his wife  
And fight the vain fight]

The Utrecht printer of countless illegal papers Jan Hendriks looked after the printing, assisted by his daughter Ada. She even acted as compositor for *De Achttien Dooden*: ‘My father wasn’t all that mad about typesetting’, she recalled almost thirty years later when apologizing for the printing errors in Campert’s poem. ‘And my own training was as a child carer.’<sup>10</sup> Lubberhuizen contacted

8 The claim is made in T. Spaans-van der Bijl, *Utrecht in Verzet 1940-1945* (Utrecht, privately published, 1995), p. 223. I am grateful to the author for her kindness in providing me with an index that she had subsequently compiled of the names occurring in the book. Lubberhuizen himself gave a similar account in e.g. *De Bezige Bij. Een coöperatieve uitgeverij* (Amsterdam 1959), p. 3.

9 Renders, op. cit. (n. 1), pp. 19-22.

10 Roegholt, op. cit. (n. 5), p. 27, in which Meulenbelt wished to remain anonymous. See also the letter from R. Matthijsen to Nannie Beekman, 14-5-2003. Archief afd. Rechtvaardigen [Archive of the Righteous Among the Nations] Yad Vashem, Israel.

printer's son Fedde Weidema, who had studied graphic art and painting at art college, had made many bookplates, and was active on the periphery of Surrealism.<sup>11</sup>

There are several reasons why *De Achttien Dooden* took on such a symbolic function for the resistance movement. To start with, it is a magnificent piece of poetry. Second, the underlying story has a powerful resonance and is packed with drama. The *Geuzen* group was the first group to be caught by the Germans. And finally, thousands of copies of the broadside, plus thousands more reprints in all sorts of guises, all appeared with the poet's name printed openly at the bottom. This was highly unusual: it is one of the features of resistance poetry that the poet is hidden, anonymous. But there was no risk attached to printing this poet's name: Campert was already dead. The fact that he had become a victim of the Nazis so early in the war effectively also gave him plenty of time during the occupation to build up a reputation as a member, albeit a posthumous one, of the resistance.<sup>12</sup>

By September 1943 *De Achttien Dooden* – De Bezige Bij's first and at that time only edition – had already made 75,000 guilders. Even after deduction of Lubberhuizen's high costs he was now able to act as Santa Claus for the *Kindercomité*, and there was enough left over to render incidental assistance to artists and actors who had refused to join the *Kultuurkamer*. By degrees, De Bezige Bij became a haven for dissident authors.<sup>13</sup>

De Bezige Bij's list during the occupation is a highly variegated mix: from old Dutch aphorisms on beautiful hand-made paper to political verse on acid wartime utility stock, from beautifully bound cased books of no particular political pretension to politically satirical cartoons in the form of picture postcards, calendars decorated with a photograph of Queen Wilhelmina, and a publication that particularly incensed the Germans: *Moffenspiegel*. A book of satirical prints, due to a sad coincidence *Moffenspiegel* acquired an extra resistance overtone. During a raid on the Groningen printer Hendrik Nicolaas Werkman a copy of the book was found in his workshop. The Germans assumed that he was the printer: he was not, but it gave them a pretext for his execution by firing squad just three days before Groningen was liberated.

<sup>11</sup> Hans Renders, *Verijdelde Dromen. Een surrealistisch avontuur tussen De Stijl en Cobra* (Haarlem, Joh. Enschedé en Zonen, 1989), p. 29. Before the war both Lubberhuizen and van Blommestein had bought paintings from Weidema; Report by Weidema appended to a letter to Roegholt, 7-1-1971. Roegholt archives.

<sup>12</sup> See also Hans Renders, op. cit. (n. 4).

<sup>13</sup> Dimitri Frenkel Frank, 'Geertjan Lubberhuizen. Studentikoze uitgever en officiële propagandist voor het boek', in: *De Telegraaf*, 2-3-1961.

### Clandestine or illegal

The debate about whether De Bezige Bij's activities during the occupation were clandestine or illegal began even before the war ended. On the face of it the distinction, which is common to all publications about literature and the Second World War, is both clear and meaningful. Clandestine printing falls outside the statutory framework laid down by the occupying power, whereas illegal printing goes a step further in that it not only goes beyond the law but is also aimed at undermining the polity imposed by the occupying power. It was this distinction that during the occupation itself led to the condemnation by some in the resistance of 'all publications not directly connected with political and military resistance'. In other words: in this view, literary publications were dismissed as a waste of paper and effort. The illegal periodical *De Vrije Gedachte* [The Free Thought] ventilated this view in February 1945 after the journalist Henk van Randwijk, writing in the weekly *Vrij Nederland*, had called for an end to the 'elitist wasting of paper' that he considered the publishing of literature in time of war to be.

A reaction to the article in *De Vrije Gedachte* came in March 1945 in a brochure entitled *Cultureel Verzet in Nederland*, written by the poet Gerrit Kamphuis under his pseudonym G. Miles. In 1944 Kamphuis's poem *Amsterdam's Haven Verwoest* [The Port of Amsterdam Laid Waste] was published as a broadside by De Bezige Bij – anonymously, of course. More important, in the context, is that in December of that year De Bezige Bij had published Kamphuis's prospectus *Het Nieuwe Geuzenlied* [The New Beggars' Song]. It is clear from this brochure why Kamphuis reacted with such fury to the scornful complaint that writing and publishing poetry had nothing to do with politics. This was not the conviction embodied in *Het Nieuwe Geuzenlied*. 'For five years now our nation has lived under a tyranny which has increasingly taken on the character of a barbaric terror regime.' These were not the words of an egocentric poet demonstrating a complete lack of political engagement with the world about him. On the contrary, they were the opening lines of a brochure in which resistance against the Nazis was praised in terms that left no room for doubt and in which no less unambiguous reference was made to an earlier period in which the Low Countries had been enslaved by a foreign ruler: the Spanish occupation of the sixteenth century.

Contrary to what 'Miles' had intended, his argument was taken to mean that the distinction between clandestine and illegal publishing could no longer be maintained. Bringing out a love poem when you were not affiliated to the *Kultuurkamer* instituted by the occupying power was clandestine, and an

inflammatory protest against National Socialism was classified as illegal. How then should we see Lubberhuizen's breaking into a 'wrong' stationer's shop in Amsterdam's high street, the Kalverstraat, when we know that he was there in order to steal paper for a *Bezige Bij* edition that would sing the praises of nature?

Entirely according to the fashion of the day, old texts were published having a bearing on earlier periods in which the Netherlands had been subjected to oppression, so that the reader would automatically bring the sense up to date. The very first broadside brought out by *De Blauwe Schuit* [The Blue Boat], the illegal press that became so famous thanks to the involvement of Hendrik Nicolaas Werkman, was the poem *Het Jaar 1572* by the well-known poet Martinus Nijhoff. The poem's subject is the period of Spanish rule, not the German occupation, so this is not an illegal but a clandestine publication.<sup>14</sup>

A letter has survived from Lubberhuizen to one resistance group which had applied for food for printers. The letter's tone is one of irritation: 'I do not see why the printer of an illegal periodical should be better fed than the printer of the *Vrij Nederlandsch Liedboek*.'<sup>15</sup> Evidently the Germans too were a little hazy about the distinction, witness a report from the commander of the *Sicherheitspolizei* dated 16 June 1944. On the train from Amersfoort to Amsterdam this officer had encountered Hijlke Halbertsma, who was promptly arrested because he was sitting in the compartment reading *De Vliegvanger*, the Dutch edition of John Steinbeck's *The Moon Is Down*. The report refers to the book – published by *De Bezige Bij* – as 'anti-German', and it was confiscated on account of its subversive nature. Halbertsma was released purely on the strength of his claim that he had been given it by a complete stranger.<sup>16</sup>

### The resistance as a resource for post-war publishing

The first volume in the *Quousque Tandem* series (logo: QT) appeared in 1943. This was *De Zeven Hoofdzonden* [The Seven Cardinal Sins] by Hector Mantinga (pseudonym of the Jewish socialist Maurits Kok). The series title is in line with the common practice among publishers during the occupation of using

<sup>14</sup> *Schepelingen Van De Blauwe Schuit. Brieven van Bertus Aafes, K. Heeroma, M. Nijhoff, S. Vestdijk en Hendrik de Vries aan F.R.A. Henkels 1940-1946*, eds. Gillis Dorleijn, Sjoerd van Faassen & Ageeth Heising (Den Haag/Amsterdam, Letterkundig Museum/Bas Lubberhuizen, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Ruysch to Den Heer van Gelder, 10-3-1944. Copy in author's archives.

<sup>16</sup> DVK-Archief, sign. HSSPF, 61 AC, NIOD.

classical texts whose topical relevance would be apparent to the reader. In this case the reference was to ‘Quousque tandem, abutere Catilina patientia nostra’ [How long, Catilina, will you continue to abuse our patience?], the famous opening words of Cicero’s first oration against Catiline.

After the war De Bezige Bij carried on. Its mission, as stated in the *Plan voor de Coöperatieve Uitgeverij De Bezige Bij in Hoofddlijnen* [Outline Plan for the Cooperative Publishing House De Bezige Bij], issued in 1944, was ‘to serve the interests of authors’. In other words, deliberations about how the business should be continued in the post-war period began long before the occupation ended. Not only that: the occupation period was put to good use as moral capital for the times to come. In prospectuses and other Bezige Bij advertising material from just after the war a close eye was kept on the political image of the company and the works it published. Conflicts of interest occasionally arose between commerce and politics, and as a result there was sometimes a tendency to manipulate the truth. That is, books that were selling well but which politically failed to fit into the progressive image would simply be ignored. But there are also examples of the opposite effect, such as the never published *Jaarboek 1946 van de Nederlandse Letteren*, which was intended to assist in what was termed the post-war Cultural Recovery. After the liberation the series *Tandem Aliquando* was likewise linked with the occupation period in a prospectus: ‘Quousque Tandem, published by us in wartime – now followed by Tandem Aliquando (“at long last”)’.

With seventy-six editions produced during the occupation, De Bezige Bij was the largest resistance publisher, followed by Stols with sixty. One important work was *De Stilte Der Zee*. Like *De Achttien Dooden*, it is a work that is characteristic of De Bezige Bij’s publishing policy during the war but which was also given more prominence after it as the company’s figurehead publication. It already had quite a history. The original novel *Le Silence de la Mer* was the work of the French graphic artist and typographer Jean Bruller, who together with Pierre de Lescure founded the Minuit publishing house and published the novel in 1942 as its first edition, using the undercover name Vercors.<sup>17</sup> *Le Silence de la Mer* led to another debate about the point of pub-

<sup>17</sup> Anne Simonin, *Les Éditions de Minuit 1942-1955. Le devoir d’insoumission* (Paris, IMEC, 1994), p. 55. The French edition apparently published by A.A.M. Stols in 1942 actually dates from after the liberation, as becomes clear from the introduction by H.R. Boulan. The novel was published in an English translation by Cyril Connolly in 1944 under the title *Put Out the Light*; a dramatization entitled *The Silence of the Sea* was broadcast on the first evening of BBC television transmissions after the war, 7 June 1946.

lishing literature. Ilya Ehrenburg, for example, thought it was bad form to create such beautiful books when the people of Russia were starving.<sup>18</sup>

In a raid early in 1944 the galley proofs of the Dutch translation that De Bezige Bij had commissioned were seized by the Gestapo. Typographer J. Zuiderdorp and printers G.J. Willemse and W. Geuze were executed by firing squad the same day. In the Hunger Winter that began at the end of 1944 the second edition of *De Stilte Der Zee* appeared: a translation by 'A. Wijkmark' (Amelia van Marken). This edition was illegal on two counts: for a start, it was a narrative based on actual political events, and second, Vercors's rights had already been sold to the Manteau publishing house. It was only after some tough negotiation with owner and publisher Angèle Manteau after the liberation that *De Stilte Der Zee* – in the translation by Hubert Lampo that she had commissioned – could be published by De Bezige Bij in 1946 as No. 1 in the Bezige Bij series.<sup>19</sup>

Another work to appear during the occupation was *Zes Kaarsen voor Indië* [Six Candles for the (Dutch) East Indies], written by Leonhard Huizinga (son of the famous historian Johan Huizinga) under the pseudonym Laurens van Sint Laurens. Three impressions of the book had already come out in March and April 1945, 'printed and distributed by the underground paper *Ons Volk*'. For De Bezige Bij this was to become a political turning point. During the occupation it had refused to publish uncensored letters written by the Indonesian freedom fighter Sutan Sjahrir to his wife Maria Dûchateau at a time when he was imprisoned in Dutch colonial punishment camps and she was living in Santpoort. Sjahrir's letters were passed on to De Bezige Bij, which refused point-blank to publish them on the grounds that they contained passages that were critical of the Dutch royal family. It was only after the proclamation of the Republic of Indonesia that De Bezige Bij was prepared to publish them in uncensored form – in November 1945, according to the publishing details.

The preface announced that the letters were about the 'experiences and problems' of a 'leading member of a democratic people's party in Java'. Somewhat ambiguously, the publishing details also intimated that 'a start' had already been made with 'this first edition' during the occupation – surely a

<sup>18</sup> Adriaan Morriën, 'Vercors en de Editions de Minuit', in: *Uit de Korf*, 1 (1946), no. 1 (May), p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Wim Schouten, *Een Vak Vol Boeken; herinneringen aan veertig jaar leven in en om de uitgeverij* (Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij, 1988), p. 41. Picarta erroneously says all the translations were by Lampo.

highly cryptic way of saying that the book had not been published earlier due to censorship by a publisher motivated by the wish not to offend the royal family. It was an attitude that translated nicely into cash.

But first it was necessary to resolve or circumvent a whole series of problems of principle. By its clandestine editions, but more particularly by its help for Jewish children, forging of identity papers and publishing of certain texts, including some by Theun de Vries, De Bezige Bij had acquired the image of a left-wing organization. And not just for the outside world. At the end of 1944 and beginning of 1945 plans were made for a literary magazine to be published by De Bezige Bij when the war was over (it never appeared). This was to be the mouthpiece for political idealism, in particular left-wing idealism as expressed by such as the Groningen poets Sjoerd Leiker and Halbo Kool.

Max Nord, who was involved in the illegal *Het Parool*, had got to know Lubberhuizen during the occupation. Nord gave him one of the nine carbon copies of the daily *Paroolbulletin*. Each contact then undertook to produce a thousand stencilled copies and organize their distribution.<sup>20</sup> Nord had also translated André Gide's *Réflexions sur l'Allemagne* for De Bezige Bij and published a broadside, so it is understandable that in June 1945 he had some difficulty with a Bezige Bij publication that supported the government's colonial policy. In political terms, *Zes Kaarzen Voor Indië* was diametrically opposed to Sjahrir's *Indonesische Overpeinzingen*. *Zes Kaarzen Voor Indië* was part of what was called the public information campaign for 'the liberation of the Dutch East Indies' – a euphemism for 'the suppression of Indonesians who fought for the independence of their country'. The government itself made no secret of the fact that this was a propaganda exercise designed to recruit volunteers to fight in the colony. The print run was forty thousand copies, so it was a commercially interesting proposition. De Bezige Bij paid for its production and Max Nord, disappointed, decided not to join the cooperative venture that De Bezige Bij had decided on for its corporate structure.

In the autumn of 1945, amongst its catalogues and announcements of forthcoming editions, De Bezige Bij published a handsome brochure which went into the company's history and future in some detail. Whether by design or error, according to this list *Zes Kaarsen voor Indië* was never published. In the ambitious plans for the future there are three areas of the catalogue that are politically interesting. The first is the continuation of the series *Documents*

<sup>20</sup> Madelon de Keizer in *Het Parool 1940-1945. Verzetsblad in Oorlogstijd* (Amsterdam, Otto Cramwinckel Uitgever, 1991) mentions neither Lubberhuizen nor de Lange. Information here from Roegholt, op. cit. (n.5), p. 89.

*Humains* with the *Rede van H.M. Koningin Wilhelmina van 7 December 1942* and *Le Droit de l'Homme et du Citoyen*. The latter was in fact never published by De Bezige Bij, but the plan demonstrates an ambition to be a modern company that supported human rights and democracy.

In the 1945 prospectus, the first offering in the liberated Netherlands, there was a political section under the heading 'Current Affairs', listing all the titles that had anything to do with the aftermath of the war, e.g. memorials to the dead, photographic works etc. There was a separate section for the broadsides, including of course *De Achttien Dooden*, and a section for 'Culture and Politics'. There is nowhere any mention of Sjahrir's *Indonesische Overpeinzingen* [Indonesian Meditations], published in November 1945: not even in the forthcoming titles section.

The omissions in the wartime catalogue and the list of forthcoming titles lead to one clear conclusion: political and social engagement is a fine thing. But although democracy and culture might be wonderful, but as soon as an issue was raised that might give cause for debate there was an anxious silence. *Moffenspiegel*, as a national anti-fascist publication, was not only named but even reprinted. The expression 'political correctness' had yet to be coined, but this was certainly a matter of expediency. De Bezige Bij may have been politically engaged, but when their relationship with their readers was at stake the publishers adopted a strictly non-committal position. Of course, this was a publishing house that still had to prove itself in a climate of freedom, and this was difficult enough in the post-war years of austerity. It will come as no surprise that not a word was said about De Bezige Bij's publications for the *Rijksvoorlichtingsdienst* (RVD), the Government Information Service.

On the occasion of Queen Wilhelmina's legendary visit to De Bezige Bij on 20 January 1947, one of those presented to her was seventeen-year-old Remco Campert, son of Jan Campert, who had perished in the war. The queen addressed him thus: 'Well, young man, no doubt you intend to follow in your father's footsteps.' Remco thought: 'and die'. 'I'd rather not, your Majesty', he replied.<sup>21</sup>

A year later De Bezige Bij published the vastly successful book *Wilhelmina, een Levensgeschiedenis in Foto's* [Wilhelmina, her Life in Photographs]. The same year saw the publication of *Holland To-Day in 48 Pages*, commissioned

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<sup>21</sup> Remco Campert & Jan Mulder, *Familie-Album* (Boekenweekgeschenk) (Amsterdam, CPNB, 1999), p. 57.

by the *Rijksvoorlichtingsdienst*.<sup>22</sup> A second commission from the RVD led in 1948 to *Facts about Holland*. It was a year that had already started well with *Juliana, Koningin der Nederlanden. Nieuwjaarsboodschap van H.M.* And in September 1948 De Bezige Bij was granted exclusive publishing rights to the official portrait of Queen Juliana and Prince Bernhard, which was offered in a range of sizes; the largest was 75 × 100 cm and cost 115 guilders.<sup>23</sup>

In his study of De Bezige Bij Richter Roegholt rightly pointed out that the founders were scarcely aware of the expectations that choosing a cooperative structure would engender in the world at large. Left-wing intellectuals were attracted by the publisher's progressive 'leftist' reputation, whereas the former members of elitist student societies barely even realized that the publishing house they had created had such a reputation at all. On the other hand, it may have been something they simply chose to ignore.

Until now, all cooperatives had in one way or another fitted into the tradition of socialism. Paradoxically, immediately after the liberation Lubberhuizen's actions were those of a sole controller of Coöperatieve Vereniging De Bezige Bij.<sup>24</sup> What Roegholt failed to see was that, in terms of content, both during and after the war the catalogue was highly political in character. That is why the contradictions in it are so striking. Max Nord left De Bezige Bij because he was disappointed by the fact that the company could publish such diametrically opposed works as those of Sjahrir and Huizinga. One curious pair of titles in the list were two periodicals that have been passed over in the literature: *Ruim Baan* (roughly: All Clear Ahead) and *Hobbyclub*. *Ruim Baan* was launched in 1945 as a strongly leftist magazine for young people, and survived for thirty-four issues. According to De Bezige Bij managing director Wim Schouten, writing in his memoirs, it was 'progressive, or what passed for progressive at the time'. The magazine's foreign affairs columnist was the future socialist prime minister Joop den Uyl, and it was edited by writers with reputations for their left-wing and very definitely not religious views, such as Henriëtte van Eyck, Wim Hora Adema (later she was to co-found the feminist monthly *Opzij*) and the famous aviator A. Viruly. Yet with such as the Catholic bon viveur Anton van Duinkerken and the communist poet and essayist

<sup>22</sup> This work does not appear in Titia de Leur, *De Bezige Bij Bibliografie 1945-1971* (Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij, 1972, not published). It is, however, mentioned by Wim Wenekes, op. cit. (n. 7), p. 98.

<sup>23</sup> Documentatie De Bezige Bij, Bibliotheek KVB, Amsterdam, inv.no. PPA 114:2. In 1946 De Bezige Bij brought out *Walcheren Komt Boven Water* by A. den Doolaard, written on commission from the government.

<sup>24</sup> Wenekes, op. cit. (n. 7), p. 9.

Theun de Vries on its books, *Ruim Baan* gave every appearance of being a magazine that wanted to have nothing do with the now restored 'pillarized thinking' that had long compartmentalized practically every aspect of life in the Netherlands on the basis of religious and/or political leanings. *Hobbyclub* was based on an idea by Leonard de Vries, whose books on inventions through the ages and experiments for young people were to sell in vast numbers until at least four decades after the war (and not just in the Netherlands). In fact, of course, its title says it all.

The essayists ter Braak and du Perron posthumously represented the individualist liberal side of the catalogue, but other authors forced their way in who were quite a different kind of animal: there were communists or fellow travellers such as Jan Elburg, Gerrit Kouwenaar, Bert Schierbeek and Koos Schuur, there were writers who had been members of the *Kultuurkamer*, and there were communist-hunters like Arthur Koestler and the cynic Willem Frederik Hermans. Koestler even became a best-seller with *Nacht in den Middag*, a translation of *Thieves in the Night* done, ironically enough, by Schierbeek and Schuur.

Rut Matthijsen well recalls that after the liberation Lubberhuizen told him he was going to vote for the socialist *Partij van de Arbeid*. He himself voted liberal. This seemed contradictory, but they both detested strongly Protestant and strongly Catholic types 'and that is why De Bezige Bij's publication of *Zes Kaarzen voor Indië* was such an enormous political blunder'. De Bezige Bij was neither leftist nor progressive: it simply fitted into the disparate family of resistance organizations that had a cordial aversion to pillarization and hoped that now, with the liberation, it had finally met its demise. It was to prove a vain hope.

(Translation by Harry Lake, Bussum, Netherlands)

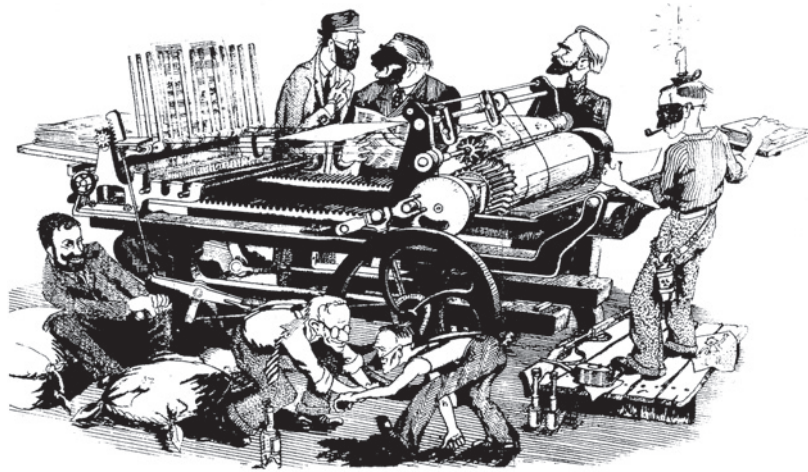


1



2

1. Willy van Rheenen and Geert Lubberhuizen. (Collection De Bezige Bij.)
2. Counterfeit identity card of Rut Matthijsen.



3



4

3. Cartoon of an illegal press in action. (Collection of the Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, NIOD, Amsterdam.)

4. Front cover of the anti-fascist *Moffenspiegel* [Mirror for krauts] (1944).



5. Front cover of David Alf, *It's for Oranje* (1944).

6. Poster stuck to the windows of at least five Amsterdam booksellers who had collaborated with the Nazi's. It proclaimed that 'as from today' the shop-window concerned would be used by the, until then, underground publishing company De Bezige Bij, adding that all Nazi reading would be thoroughly removed.  
(Collection De Bezige Bij.)

**De Bezige Bij – Publisher's List 1943-5\*****1943**

**Campert (Jan)**, *De Achttien Dooden*. [De Jong 138.]

**Kalender voor het jaar 1944**. [De Jong 441.]

**Mantinga (Hector)** [pen name of Maurits Mok], *De zeven hoofdzonden*. Quousque Tandem, no. 1. [De Jong 534.]

**1943**

**Alf (David)**, *It's for Oranje*. By Wing Commander David Alf, dedicated to the Dutch people; *Holland-Spring-1944*. [July 1944, De Jong 33.]

**Atlantic Charter**. The Busy Bee, Documents Humains, no. 3. [De Jong 49.]

**Bakx (Pieter)** [pen name of W.J.M.A. Asselbergs], *Priël in Troje*. *Balladen*. Quousque Tandem, no. 11. [De Jong 59.]

**Bracken Vloedt (Jan van den)** [pen name of Johannes Weiland], *Gevlekte sater*. [De Jong 112.]

**Bruyn Ouboter (R. de)**, *1894-7 Juli-1944. A l'heure où passe l'Aquilon* [by Joop Sjollema = Johan Sijbo]. [De Jong 125.]

**[Buskes Jr. (J.J.)]**, *In memoriam Joris de Heus*. [De Jong 413.]

**Cort (Martijn)** [pen name of Johan van der Woude], *Zeven brieven*. Quousque Tandem, no. 12. [De Jong 160.]

**Cort (Martijn)** [pen name of Johan van der Woude], *Zeven brieven* [2nd edn.; De Jong 161.]

**Doolaard (A. den)** [pen name of Cornelis J.G. Spoelstra], *Oranjehotel*. [November; De Jong 200.]

**Groot (J.H. de)**, *Gebed voor ons nieuwe leger*. [December; De Jong 285.]

**Groot (J.H. de)**, *De Poort*. [December; De Jong 670.]

**Haarsma (Menno van)** [pen name of Sjoerd Leiker], *Drie getuigen*. *Roman*. Quousque Tandem, no. 10. [De Jong 353.]

**Harlingen (R. van)** [pen name of Rein Blijstra], *Bij Nadere Kennismaking*. *Novelle*. Quousque Tandem, no. 6. [De Jong 357.]

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\* For a complete list of the 1940-5 publications, see Hans Renders, *Gevaarlijk Drukwerk. Een vrije uitgeverij in oorlogstijd* (Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij, 2004). See also: Dirk De Jong, *Het vrije boek in onvrije tijd; Bibliografie van illegale en clandestiene belletrise*, introd. H. de la Fontaine Verwey & Gerrit Kamphuis (Schiedam, Interbook International, 1978; photomechanical reprint of the 1st edn. by A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij, Leiden 1958).

- Hoog rijst het bolwerk** der menselijkheid. [First line of a poem without title by Anna de Waard; De Jong 399.]
- Hove (Jan Jacob ten)** [pen name of D.H. Hoek], *Het raadsel van Arend en Hendrik Goudt*. [De Jong 404.]
- In het web van den tijd**. [Renders 19, p. 227, anonymous; December.]
- Kamphuis (Gerrit)**, *Amsterdam's haven verwoest*. D.A.V.I.D.-reeks, no. 2. [December, De Jong 40.]
- Kamphuis (Gerrit)**, *Het nieuwe geuzenlied*. [December, De Jong 600.]
- Kool (Halbo C.)**, *Een nieuw welkomstlied*. [September, De Jong 599.]
- Kool (Halbo C.)**, *Nieuw welkomstlied*. [2nd edn., De Jong 598.]
- Langen (Ferdinand)** [pen name of Egbertus Pannekoek], *Achter slot en grendel*. *Novelle*. Quousque Tandem, no. 14. [De Jong 477.]
- Lems (Antonie)** [pen name of Nicolaas Verhaagen], *De laatste Adam*. [De Jong 498.]
- Mandau (Emile)** [pen name of Ferdinand Bordewijk], *Verbrande erven. Een plaatsbeschrijving*. Quousque Tandem, no. 15. [September, De Jong 532.]
- Mantinga (Hector)** [pen name of Maurits Mok], *De Vader spreekt. Gedicht*. Quousque Tandem, no. 3. [De Jong 533.]
- Maupassant (Guy de)**, *Le Horla. L'Abeille Laborante*. [De Jong 550.]
- Merwe (A. van der)** [pen name of Pieter Geyl], *Het wachtwoord. Sonnetten*. Quousque Tandem, no. 8. [De Jong 561.]
- Moffenspiegel**. *Een boekje over Adolf de Eerste (en de laatste) en zijn trawanten*. [De Jong 569.]
- Nagel (W.H.)**, *Terzinen van de Mei*. [October, De Jong 808.]
- Omar Khayyam**, *Kwatrijnen*. [Trans. 'Ponticus', pen name of H.W.J.M. Keuls.] Quousque Tandem, no. 4. [De Jong 618.]
- Plan voor de coöperatieve uitgeverij**, *De Bezige Bij in hoofdlijnen, 19 Augustus 1944*. [De Jong 662.]
- Poe (Edgar Allen)**, *The city in the sea and other poems*. The Busy Bee. [De Jong 665.]
- Prange (Jacobus Marie)**, *Mijnheer Moggedun*. [Lithography.] [December, De Jong 674.]
- Proclamatie 10 Mei 1940**. Koningin Wilhelmina. Documents Humains, no. 1. [August, De Jong 945.]
- Proclamatie 10 mei 1940**. Koningin Wilhelmina. [2nd edn., De Jong 946.]
- Proclamatie 21 November 1813**. Adam F.J.A. van der Duyn van Maasdam and Gijsbert K. van Hogendorp. Documents Humains, no. 2. [De Jong 215.]
- Roland Holst (A.)**, *Eigen achtergronden. Inleiding tot een voordracht uit eigen werk*. Quousque Tandem, no. 5. [De Jong 705.]
- Roland Holst (A.)**, *In memoriam Charles Edgar du Perron et Menno ter Braak*. 3rd edn. Quousque Tandem, no. 2. [De Jong 710.]
- Rondeel** [by Victor le Chaste, pen name of Hendrik Gerard Hoekstra]. [October, De Jong 714.]

- Ruyter (Michiel Adriaenssoon de)**. 2nd edn. [May, De Jong 729.]
- Schendel (Arthur van)**, *Sparsa*. Quousque Tandem, no. 7. [De Jong 741.]
- Schurer (Fedde)**, *Lied op den verrader Frans Vergonet*. [June, De Jong 508.]
- Schuur (Koos)**, *De zeemeermin*. [December, De Jong 971.]
- Steinbeck (John)**, *De vliegenvanger*. Trans. Tjebbo Hemelrijk [pen name of Ferdinand Sterneberg]. [June, De Jong 778.]
- Stilleven**. [Linocut by W.J. Rozendaal.] [October, De Jong 725.]
- Swaertreger (M.)** [pen name of Theun de Vries], *WA Man*. [De Jong 797.]
- Toonder (Jan Gerhard)**, *Het Vuur*. D.A.V.I.D.-reeks, no. 1. [November, De Jong 916.]
- Vercors** [pen name of Jean Bruller], *De stilte der zee*. Trans. A. Wijkmark [pen name of Amelia van Marken]. [December, De Jong 843.]
- Verhoeven (Bernard)**, *Pax Hominibus. Gedichten*. Quousque Tandem, no. 9. [June, De Jong 846.]
- Visser (Ab)**, *Bos-Idylle*. [October, De Jong 99.]
- Vries (Hendrik de)**, *Robijnen*. Quousque Tandem, no. 13. [July, De Jong 908.]
- Vrijheidskalender 1945*. [De Jong 915.]
- Vry Nederlandsch Liedboek (Het)*. [April / May, De Jong 914.]

## 1945

- Brandsma (Titus)**, *Gevangenislied*. [January, De Jong 114.]
- Egidius, waar bestu bleven?** [February, De Jong 235.]
- Foppema (Yge)**, *Ballade van de ter dood veroordeelden*. D.A.V.I.D.-reeks, no. 4. [April, De Jong 64.]
- Gay (John)**, *The fox at the point of death*. The Busy Bee. [March, De Jong 283.]
- Gedichten** [by H.W.J.M. Keuls et al.; anthology of poetry, submitted for the magazine *Voorpost*, to appear after the war.] [De Jong 294.]
- Gide (André)**, *Over Duitschland*. Trans. & introd. by 'P.' [pen name of Max Nord]. [De Jong 314.]
- Groot (J.H. de)**, *Grafschrift op een Paleontoloog*. [March, De Jong 326.]
- Harlingen (R. van)** [pen name of Rein Blijstra], *Haaien voor Nabatoo. Nouvelle*. [De Jong 358.]
- [**Hartz (S.)**, Copper engraving for Vercors, *De stilte der zee*. [February, De Jong 360.]
- Het is niet waar... Dat hebben we niet gewild!** [April, De Jong 383.]
- Miles (G.)** [pen name of Gerrit Kamphuis], *Cultureel verzet in Nederland*. [Between 19 February and 28 March, De Jong 567.]
- Morriën (Adriaan)**, *Luchtalarm*. [March, De Jong 520.]
- Nord (Max)**, *Ondergelopen land*. [February, De Jong 622.]
- Nijhoff (A.H.)**, *Geboorte*. [De Jong 610.]
- Pot (Evert J.)** [pen name of W.A.P. Smit], *Dagboek onder het kruis*. D.A.V.I.D.-reeks, no. 3. [De Jong 671.]
- Roland Holst (A.)**, *Een winterdageraad*. [De Jong 704.]

- Rijk (Maarten de)** [pen name of N.A. Donkersloot], *Orpheus en Eurydice*. [De Jong 733]  
**Schuld (De)** [Anonymous treatise on the post-war organisation of the Netherlands, *s.a.*]  
**Vos-Beierman (Riek)**, *Wachter, wat is er van den nacht* [April, De Jong 921.]  
**Vriamont (Joris)**, *Sabbat*. [March, De Jong 904.]  
**Zwanikken (Johannes J.)**, *Uit het diepst van mijn hart*. [April, De Jong 827.]