

## Book Production and Its Regulation during the German Occupation of the Netherlands

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### Abstract

During the occupation of the Netherlands in the Second World War, the country's book industry was subjected to control by a number of official bodies, both German and Dutch, in addition to which the German *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) was also prone to interfering with the production and distribution of printed matter. In contrast to the sanctions imposed on the journalistic press, book production was censored preventively by a specially established reading panel called the *Lectoraat*. In reality, however, at least as effective an instrument of censorship was the government department responsible for allocating paper supplies. The article presents an overview of the legislation and regulations to which booksellers, writers and publishers had to adhere in the successive phases of the occupation.

### Keywords

book production legislation 1941-5, censorship, *Lectoraat* 1942-5, *Kultuurkamer* 1942-5

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On 26 November 1940 the pre-war *Departement van Onderwijs, Kunsten en Wetenschappen* [Department of Education, Arts and Sciences] in The Hague was replaced by two new government departments or ministries: the *Departement voor Opvoeding, Wetenschap en Cultuurbescherming* (DOWC, Department of Education, Science and Culture) under Jan van Dam, and the *Departement van Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten* [Department of Public Information and the Arts]. This latter institution, known as the DVK, and to some as the *Departement van Volksoverlichting en Kulkamer* [Department of Public Swindling and Chamber of Codswallop], had an all-encompassing influence on book production in the Netherlands in the Second World War. Led by secretary-general Tobie Goedewaagen, a member of Holland's National Socialist party the *Nationaal Socialistische Beweging* (NSB), the DVK set out to reshape the arts in general to fit the National Socialist model 'in a manner

that strengthens national awareness and upholds the character of the people'.<sup>1</sup> One of the tools available to Goedewaagen in this endeavour was the *Afdeeling Boekwezen* [Book Trade Section], headed by Jo van Ham. In addition to the two government departments already mentioned, the *Departement van Handel, Nijverheid en Scheepvaart* [Department of Trade, Industry and Shipping] was important for the book trade. Of particular importance was the Department's *Rijksbureau voor Papier, Papierverwerkende en Grafische Industrie* [Government Bureau for the Paper, Paper Processing and Printing Industry] which was responsible for allocating paper supplies to publishers.

To keep book production under the control of the DVK, the Book Trade Section was given the job of implementing the paper allocation rules imposed by the *Departement van Handel, Nijverheid en Scheepvaart*. As part of the drive to economize on paper, from 1 October 1941 the publishers had to fill in, for each publication planned, a detailed questionnaire from the *Afdeeling Boekwezen*. On the basis of these forms the Division then assessed whether the book concerned could be printed. Its recommendation then had to be passed on to the *Rijksbureau voor Papier, Papierverwerkende en Grafische Industrie*, which proceeded to notify the publishers of the outcome. Only when permission had been granted was it possible to go ahead and print. This tortuous path also applied to reprints. When publishing house De Jeugdboekery applied for permission to print its proposed twenty-third impression of an adventure story for boys, *De zoon van Dik Trom* by Cornelis Johannes Kieviet, a publication dating back to 1907, it was turned down. For a start, according to an advertisement in the *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel* Kieviet's heirs had bought back the rights from their publishers Valkhoff & Co., and then the new publishers were saddled with a ban<sup>2</sup> because in a passage about snowball fights between Dutch and German boys Kieviet had used 'seditious' language such as 'Down with the Germans' and 'Long live the Queen'.<sup>3</sup>

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1 'op een wijze die het volksche bewustzijn versterkt en den volksaard in stand houdt', 'T. Goedewaagen over zijn taak', in: *De Telegraaf*, 28 November 1940.

2 Valkhof's advertisement appeared in the *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*, 23 April 1941, p. 364. On 27 November of the same year the *Nieuwsblad* printed the list of books proscribed between 1 October and 24 November 1941; it included *De zoon van Dik Trom*.

3 The first edition was published by Valkhoff & Co, Amsterdam, 1907. The 23rd impression did appear, but it is not listed in Brinkman's cumulative catalogue. The K number was 799, in Picarta.pica.nl erroneously explained as 'Kultuurkamernummer 799'. For K numbers, see the article by Gerrold van der Stroom and René Kruis elsewhere in this issue. From 1 December 2009 a cluster of eighteen books providing a bibliographical account of book production in the Neth-

Even if the *Afdeeling Boekwezen* could see no reason to put obstacles in the way of a publication, however, there were always helpful citizens who would contact the DVK with unsolicited information regarding the ‘pernicious’ or ‘Jewish’ character of this or that publication. Van Ham could count on the collaboration of innumerable zealous citizens who sent letters of denunciation to The Hague, witness the DKV archive, thirty-eight metres long, in the basement of the Department’s magnificent building. There is only one case in which van Ham is known to have ignored such a warning from the reading public. This was a letter from W. Visser of *Drogisterij en Fotohandel Hefo* (a chemist’s shop) in which the correspondent was so kind as to point out that Uitgeverij Querido in Amsterdam, ‘which I believe is a Jewish publisher’, was planning to bring out a book by Hendrik Marsman, despite the fact that the brochure *Sluipend gif* [Pernicious Poison], by an author calling himself Wutse, specifically warned against this particularly well-known poet. (Marsman died in 1940 when the ship on which he was escaping to England was torpedoed.)<sup>4</sup> Writing on behalf of the DVK, van Ham informed his correspondent that Querido had been ‘aryanized’, and that Marsman, despite the criticism in *Sluipend gif*, was regarded as a great poet, besides which the planned publication was not new work but an edition of Marsman’s collected works.<sup>5</sup> So the publication went ahead as planned.

There are also examples of educational or academic publishers making editorial changes in order to obtain permission to publish a particular book following an initial refusal. Uitgeversmaatschappij C.A.J. van Dishoeck in Bussum had their request turned down when they wanted to reissue an illustrated atlas compiled by the Jewish Annie Nicolette Zadoks-Josephus Jitta. The refusal came despite the fact that in previous editions the introduction had been written by the prominent and fiercely anti-Semitic Professor Geerto Snijder. When Van Dishoeck agreed to remove Dr Zadoks’s name from the title page, permission was granted to publish the new impression.<sup>6</sup>

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erlands during the war, plus the volumes of the *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel* for 1940-5 (a total of almost 16,000 pages) is available at <http://biografieinstituut.ub.rug.nl/root/Brinkman/>.

4 Adriaan Venema, *Schrijvers, uitgevers & hun collaboratie. Het systeem* (Amsterdam, De Arbeiderspers, 1988), pp. 51-2.

5 Letter from W.C.E. Visser to the DVK, 19 September 1941. Quoted after Gerard Groeneveld, *Zwaard van de geest. Het bruine boek in Nederland 1921-1945* (Nijmegen, Vantilt, 2001), p. 329.

6 Correspondence J. van Dam – A.M.E. van Dishoeck, 9, 15, 22 and 28 October 1942. Department van Opvoeding, Wetenschap en Cultuurbescherming. NIOD.

The DVK may have been cast in the German mould, but even the early days of the occupation provide evidence to show that those Dutch civil servants who were concerned with book production were already, and of their own accord, operating a pro-German policy. Work started on the construction of the system adhered to by the *Afdeeling Boekwezen* as early as 1941, i.e. well before the *Kultuurkamer* was established and became active. The most striking aspect of this was that, on their own initiative, Dutch officials and publishers were both actively engaged in collaborating on the preventive censorship of books. Not even the then *Vereeniging ter Bevordering van de Belangen des Boekhandels* [Netherlands Book Trade Association, literally translated: Society for the Promotion of the Interests of the Book Trade, often simply referred to as the *Vereeniging*] made an exception to this rule.<sup>7</sup>

Formally, Dutch bodies such as the *Afdeeling Boekwezen* were controlled by the *Referat Schrifttum* [Literature Department] of the *Hauptabteilung Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* [Office of Public Information and Propaganda] of the *Reichskommissariat*. The job of running the *Referat* was given to H. Lohse, a former bookshop assistant from Berlin. The findings of the *Afdeeling Boekwezen* had to be translated into German and sent to the *Referat Schrifttum*, which was housed in a building on the prestigious Kneuterdijk in the centre of The Hague. If the *Referat* agreed with the recommendation of the *Afdeeling Boekwezen*, it could be passed on to the *Rijksbureau voor de Grafische Industrie*. However, the *Referat* rarely issued a response in matters concerning books: on the Kneuterdijk they were much more interested in newspapers.

Every now and then the Germans would intervene, but not through the *Referat*. On 1 March 1941, for example, booksellers and publishers found in their letterboxes a missive from the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) in which they were instructed on no account to distribute that year's *Boekenweekgeschenk* (a free gift for buyers of books worth over a certain amount during the annual Book Week). The volume in question was a collection of verse and novellas edited by Emmy van Lokhorst and Victor van Vriesland. No reason was given, but it looks as if the SD had been alerted by a review of *Novellen en gedichten van 27 auteurs* in the Nazified *Nationale Dagblad* of 27 February: 'There among others stands in all its glory the name of the Jew Maurits Mok . . . . The empire of these Jews and friends of Jews [the *Boekenweek* committee, regardless of

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<sup>7</sup> Jan Schilt, *Hier wordt het belang van het boek geschaad . . . Het Nederlandse boekenvak 1933-1948* (Amsterdam, Uitgeverij Jan Mets, 1995).

who they are] is doomed to fail.<sup>8</sup> The reason for this intervention – 45,000 of the 67,000 copies printed (the rest had already been sold) had to be returned by the bookshops to the *Vereeniging ter Bevordering van de Belangen des Boekhandels* – lies in the identity of the book's compilers: Emmy van Lokhorst and Victor van Vriesland, a Jew. The *Referat Schrifttum* had been asleep on the job. The SD were more zealous: on 17 October 1941 seven Jewish bookshops and antiquarian booksellers were closed down on the orders of the Amsterdam *Außenstelle* [branch].

On 30 September 1940 the *Vereeniging* was ordered to hand over information on companies that were in 'non-Aryan ownership', stating business name, address, year of establishment, nature of business, owner up to and after 10 May 1940 (the date of the German invasion), and, in the case of 'Aryan' businesses, whether there were 'non-Aryans' who had any kind of financial interest. 'The board of the *Vereeniging* carried out this order with more than average enthusiasm by making all its members fill in a questionnaire in which to the required questions they added, at their own initiative, a new question 6b: "Is it possible for Jews in any other way (if so, specify) to exert influence in your business?"' writes historian P.J. Buijnsters.<sup>9</sup>

The appearance of 'Jewish' books, Resistance publications and other suspect works, most of which were brought to its attention by Dutch citizens, always attracted a response from the *Sicherheitsdienst*, but Dutch bodies were far from inactive when it came to the unsolicited detection of suspect books. On 5 November 1941 the chief constable of Kampen sent a report to the DVK concerning a local bookseller by the name of Gerardus Bos, asking whether the police ought not to do something about him. Even before the war, Bos had placed in his window 'tastelessly displayed prints' from the left-wing weekly *De Groene Amsterdammer*, following these with photographs of members of the royal family. Even now, the chief constable reported, Bos was displaying the proscribed *Orient express* by the (pseudonymous) social democrat A. den Doolaard.<sup>10</sup>

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8 'Daar prijkt o.a. in volle glorie de naam van den Jood Maurits Mok. . . . Het rijk van deze Joden en Jodenvrienden is ten ondergang gedoemd.', Jan Silt, op. cit. (n. 7), p. 170.

9 'Het Vereenigingsbestuur heeft deze opdracht maar al te ijverig uitgevoerd door middel van een enquête onder alle leden, waarbij aan de reeks van vragen op eigen initiatief nog een nieuwe vraag 6b werd toegevoegd: "Kunnen Joden op andere wijze (welke?) invloed in Uw bedrijf uitoefenen?"', P.J. Buijnsters, *Het Nederlandse Antiquariaat tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam, De Buitenkant, 1997), pp. 17-18.

10 Official report by Kampen police, in DVK file Censuur 168Ae-7, Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogs Documentatie (NIOD), Amsterdam.

Quite apart from the zeal displayed by the SD, the Dutch book trade was characterized by a finely networked nazification by Dutch officials who in almost all cases had been employed in the trade before the war, as has been demonstrated in the publications of Jan Schilt and Adriaan Venema. The effect of this practice was that the *Zivilverwaltung* [civil administration] reached more profoundly into the workings of the book trade than did the *Militärverwaltung* in other European countries such as Holland's neighbour Belgium. The difference could be more readily seen in the way the rules were applied than in how they were arrived at. Many measures were promulgated in all the occupied territories (albeit not all at the same time), but the extent to which they were adhered to varied widely. Thus the prohibition in the Netherlands, from January 1942, of translating, selling and lending books by North American authors born after 1904, was paralleled by the ban that applied in France to all American and British books published after 1870. This rule was preceded by a selection of proscribed books in this category that came to be known as the Otto List. A similar list was used in Belgium: a document issued by the military commander in Brussels that ran to over 1500 prohibited books. Many of the titles were of French-language books and other publications that were officially viewed as giving rise to 'provocation and disorder'.<sup>11</sup> In the Netherlands such lists were less precise and more theoretically defined. Instructions came straight from the *Referat Schrifttum*, but implementation was left to the *Afdeeling Boekwezen*, i.e. a civil rather than military body. This is at the same time the reason why the rule was not strictly enforced. 'In general, American and Jewish books are prohibited and English, Russian and Polish books undesirable.'<sup>12</sup>

### The Lectoraat

Another trump card for the *Afdeeling Boekwezen* was the so-called *Lectoraat*, a body to which, from the beginning of 1942, prospective publishers had to submit the manuscripts of all forthcoming publications. Professional readers specially appointed for the task then had to assess these proposed publications on their political and moral tenor in addition to their language, literary value,

<sup>11</sup> Pascal Fouché, *L'Édition française sous l'occupation 1940-1944* (Bibliothèque de Littérature française contemporaine de l'Université, vol. 3 ; Paris 1987). In fact there were several lists: 'Les Listes Otto', pp. 21-37 and 'La liste d'interdiction belge', pp. 37-40.

<sup>12</sup> 'In het algemeen zijn Amerikaansche en joodsche boeken verboden en Engelsche, Russische en Poolsche boeken ongewenst.' Letter in file 'Censuur', DVK 171 a 50 k.

historical accuracy, and academic quality. These readers were often pro-German teachers and critics who had either volunteered their services or had been asked to help by van Ham (in either case, this was in addition to their day jobs).

A reader would draw up a report for the *Referat Schrifttum*, which was officially the body that had the power to grant permission for publication. In effect, however, that privilege was exercised by the *Afdeeling Boekwezen*. The *Lectoraat* may have had about 150 readers but most of the reports that survived the war were written by the head of the *Afdeeling Boekwezen*, Jo van Ham.<sup>13</sup> It was he who gave the *Referat Schrifttum* negative reports on Johan Brouwer's *Philips Willem* and *Johanna de waanzinnige* on the grounds that they were 'too strongly Jewish and humanistic'.

The reports show that there was much objection to books in which the Jews were portrayed in a positive light. One reader reporting on the 1937 novel *Twee honderd gulden voor Darja Wledinskaj* by Jan van der Made complained about an episode in which 'a Jewish doctor is represented as a humane and helping person'. As a result, the novel was not reprinted, which is particularly interesting given that van der Made, the author, was a faithful adherent of the new order.

Once a book or brochure had reached the market it was possible to see from the fact that it had a *K-nummer* (i.e. a *Kennummer* or identification number) that it had been published with the permission of the *Afdeeling Boekwezen*. On the other hand, in September 1942 Piet Bakker brought out the first volume of his famous *Ciske de Rat* trilogy without having registered with the *Kultuurkamer*. It was published by Elsevier, an approved publishing house – and it was not confiscated. The Germans' methodical way of doing things was not as perfect as they would have had people believe.

Very often, permission for a book to be published was only granted when the author had made certain changes. *Geuzen*, by the pro-German writer Jan H. Eekhout, is a case in point. The book could be published, its publishers were told, on condition that the following two sentences were removed: 'De Duitschman heeft ons onrechtmatig aangerand' ['The German has unlawfully

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13 Adriaan Venema, in: op. cit. (n. 4), pt. 1: *Het Systeem*, pp. 68-138, arrived at a different estimate for the number of readers from that reached by W.A.M. (Wam) de Moor, *J. van Oudshoorn 1933-1951* (Amsterdam, De Arbeiderspers, 1982), pp. 614-82. The best argued calculation will be found in Arnold Lubbers, *Uitgeverij Wolters-Noordhoff tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, graduation paper ('doctoraalscriptie'), University of Groningen, 2005. See also Groeneveld, op. cit. (n. 5), p. 324.

assaulted us'] and 'Laat de Duitschmans maar komen, geene duim wijk ik voor hen!' ['Let the Germans come – I'll not give them an inch!']

That van Ham did not simply confine himself to the manuscript placed before him but also took account of its writer's reputation when reaching his verdict is clear from his report on *Herfsttij der middeleeuwen* (published in English as *The Waning of the Middle Ages* and more recently as *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*) by the famous historian Johan Huizinga. Van Ham called Huizinga a vehement opponent of National Socialism: 'This is seen most clearly in a work written before the war, *In de schaduwen van morgen* [In the Shadows of Tomorrow].' True enough, in his study of cultural history, written in 1935, Huizinga foresees a type of degeneration in which it is easy to see the new political order. The opening sentence reads: 'We live in a world possessed, and we know it. It would come as a surprise to no one if this lunacy suddenly erupted in an insane rage that left the unfortunate peoples of Europe blunted and dazed, engines running and flags flying, but their spirit gone.'

Over the years much has been said and written in defence of the *Lectoraat* and its members.<sup>14</sup> If the criterion for judging the organization's readers is their membership of the NSB – an institutional norm – one comes to a different conclusion than that arrived at by applying a more substantive standard. For example, one might scrutinize members of the *Lectoraat* on the basis of whether their own publications showed them to be favourably disposed towards the Nazis. As a standard this makes better sense, if only for the fact that not all the NSB's membership records have survived. Besides, the *Lectoraat's* aims, as set out in what the DVK called its *Richtlijnen* [Guidelines], are unambiguous when it comes to the organization's political purposes: permission was to be refused for books that 'give evidence of leaning towards Jews, the living members of the House of Orange, Marxism, Bolshevism or other enemies of the German Reich, or those who seek to defeat National Socialism.'<sup>15</sup> On the other hand there were also books that were refused on grounds of literary quality. A writer by the name of Went wrote a novel entitled *Mannen aan den slag* ['Men getting down to it' and/or 'Men, get down to it']. The NSB were keen to publish this little masterpiece, mainly on account of such observations as 'There is no greater racial difference than that between

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Wam de Moor, op. cit. (n. 13), pp. 614-24.

<sup>15</sup> '...welke blijken van waardeering geven voor Joden, de levende leden van het Oranjestad, voor het marxisme, bolsjewisme of andere vijanden van het Duitse Rijk, of die het nationaal socialisme bestrijden.', Hans Renders, 'Fout na de oorlog', in: *Intermediair*, 24 (1988), no. 38, pp. 5-13.

German and Jew', but when the manuscript was submitted to the DVK the opinion was: 'Clearly the idea underlying the work has merit, but it will also be clear that the standards required of a National Socialist novel must be quite high.'<sup>16</sup> Publication did not ensue.

Many of the *Lectoraat*'s readers had their own literary reputations to uphold: among them were Martien Beversluis, Henri Bruning, Jan Eekhout, Jeanne Kloos-Reyneke van Stuwe, Dr Gerard van der Leeuw (later to be Holland's first post-war minister of education), Wouter Lutkie, Dr P.J. Meertens (who after the war collaborated on the book *Onderdrukking en verzet* [Repression and Resistance] and published a number of articles about Resistance poetry in the literary magazine *Ad Interim*), S.J. van der Molen, Klaas Smelik, Jan de Vries and Gerard Wijdeveld. In the *Algemeen Dagblad* for 20 April 1944 Wijdeveld published a poem in celebration of Hitler's fifty-fifth birthday, while *lector* J.K. Feijlbrief, better known as the novelist J. van Oudshoorn, was described by his biographer as 'a superb and perceptive critic with a sense of humour who was entirely honest in his opinion of what seem to have been the generally very poor manuscripts submitted to him.' This would seem to be borne out by the terms in which Feijlbrief evaluated the manuscript *Het onmogelijke* [The Impossible] by C. de Booy: 'ach, such a pathetic little sprout of a talent, it wouldn't even let itself be stifled in the impossible'. His verdict on the stature of the work: 'Piffling'.<sup>17</sup>

But even writers who were not readers for the DVK would sometimes consort with the organization of their own volition. They could ask the department for money, accept literary prizes created by it, or they might even send in unsolicited testimonials as to where and how their work was in alignment with the spirit of the New Order. The regional novelist Anton Roothaert drew van Ham's attention to the fact that his popular book *De vlam in de pan* [The Fat in the Fire] was written 'in the National Socialist spirit, save that the anti-toxin is administered in small and virtually undetectable doses'.<sup>18</sup> This kind of thing tended to meet with a favourable reception, and in June 1943 van Ham

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16 'Het is duidelijk dat de gedachte waarop het werk gebouwd is, waardering heeft, maar het moet ook duidelijk zijn dat aan een Nationaal-socialistische roman vrij hoge eischen gesteld moeten worden.' DVK, letter to Went, 1 October 1942, DVK 172 i 315/169-f.

17 'Ach, een zoo armetierig sprietje, van talent, dat zich zelfs in het onmogelijke niet verstikken liet.', De Moor, op. cit. (n. 13), pp. 614-24.

18 '... in nationaal-socialistischen geest, met dien verstande dat het tegengif in kleine, haast onmerkbaar beetjes wordt toegediend.' Curiously this quotation does not appear in Frans Walch's biography of Anton Roothaert (Baarn, de Prom, 1996). For more on this matter see e.g. Hans Renders, 'Een schaduw van een schim', in: *Het Parool*, 21 March 1997.

instructed the publishers Bruna & Zoon to print 15,000 copies of *De vlam in de pan* in a conveniently small 'edition for the front'. These were then sent to cheer up Dutch soldiers fighting on the German side on the Eastern Front, the members of the *Nederlandsche Arbeidsdienst* in Poland, and wounded members of the *Waffen SS*.<sup>19</sup>

### **Kultuurkamer**

The *Kultuurkamer* was finally installed on 22 January 1942 (having been established on paper in the previous November), though as far as the various guilds were concerned its activities did not begin to be felt until later. Tobie Goedewaagen was appointed president. The *Letterengilde* [Literary Guild] was formally established on 2 March 1942. Serious consideration was given to the idea of a cultural police force or *Kultuurpolitie* organized from Berlin, but from the German point of view it was much more effective to have Dutch officials looking after the interests of National Socialist ideology – or, as *Reichskommissar* Arthur Seyss-Inquart had put it in the first phase of the war, 'winning the Dutch over as friends'. To a considerable extent this worked. After all, the Dutch bureaucratic machine had already demonstrated that it could be loyal to the new order. The *Kultuurkamer* was organized on the lines of the ancient guild system, based on groups of occupations: Theatre and Dance, Music, Architecture, Visual Arts and Crafts, Press, Cinema and Literature. Each guild was headed by a leader and an administrator. Jan de Vries became head of Literature and was assisted by Hans Klomp, then better known by his poetic pseudonym Mien Proost, as administrator. The guilds themselves were grouped in departments. The Literary Guild was in charge of the 'producers' department, to which anyone involved in the creation, production and distribution of books had to belong. Only those whose part in the production of books was purely technical (e.g. printers) or administrative, and the authors of works of scholarship or science, were exempt from joining the Literary Guild – though instead they had to register with Jan van Dam's

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<sup>19</sup> For the phenomenon of the special edition for the men at the front, see Hans-Eugen Bühler in Verbindung mit Edelgard Bühler, *Der Frontbuchhandel 1939-1945. Organisationen, Kompetenzen, Verlage, Bücher. Eine Dokumentation* (Frankfurt am Main, Büchhändler-Vereinigung GmbH, 2002). The NAD was an organization (1941-4) that sent young Dutch workers, initially volunteers, to work in German industry and increasingly in the armed forces.

DOWC [Department of Education, Science and Culture].<sup>20</sup> Censorship, for which paper rationing and the *Lectoraat* lent themselves admirably, remained the province of the *Afdeeling Boekwezen*. From January 1942 the *Kultuurkamer* was able to use its own fortnightly magazine *De Schouw*. Announcements and edicts to which publishers had to adhere continued to appear in the *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*.

In February 1942 a group of artists led by the critic and poet Anthonie Donkersloot wrote to Seyss-Inquart with a request that was calculated to prevent the establishment of the *Kultuurkamer*, but to no avail. Writers wishing to continue publishing their work had to register with the *Kultuurkamer*, as did publishers and anyone else involved in the writing, production, advertising and distribution of books. To make sure the message got home – there appeared to be some confusion about the matter – the *Nieuwsblad* carried a clear notice that all publishers, whether recognized or not, were obliged to register.<sup>21</sup> Most of them caved in, as indeed they had to if they still wanted to continue publishing books.

But the question of how registration with the *Kultuurkamer* should be viewed today is not as simple as it might appear. After the war, writers who had registered were judged more harshly than, say, actors, and curiously enough no attention at all was paid to publishers. During the war, of course, writers could always continue writing without publishing, or they could publish under a pseudonym. In that respect actors had fewer options. When it comes to publishing houses the position is more complicated because quite a few firms had been taken over by new owners – not always of their own volition. De Arbeiderspers, for example, continued publishing throughout the war, but in fact it was a company that had been plundered by the NSB, quite openly, through the appointment of a *Verwalter* [Administrator]. There were also less obvious forms of plunder. The Jewish publisher Willem Ort of The Hague had found himself obliged to sell his publishing business W.J. Ort, but unbeknown to him or anyone else not closely involved, his firm was then used as a cover for the publication of covert National Socialist propaganda.<sup>22</sup> It would have been unfair, after the war, to punish the pre-war owners and management of De Arbeiderspers or W.J. Ort for what others had done to or with

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20 Arnold Lubbers, op. cit. (n. 13).

21 *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel*, 26 March 1942, p. 129.

22 Hans Renders, *Wie Weet Slaag Ik in de Dood. Biografie van Jan Campert* (Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij, 2004), pp. 307-8.

their businesses during it. But then again – to return to the example of *De Arbeiderspers* – not all the employees of a ‘plundered’ business were replaced in May 1940. So how was any commission designed to purge public life in the Netherlands of National Socialist influences supposed to deal with situations of this kind? True, all sorts of appeal committees made representations regarding particular companies and individual publishers in the *Nieuwsblad*, but many of these were rejected by the relevant branch of the *Centrale Zuiveringsraad* [Central Denazification Board]. Because of this perception of sloppiness the official denazification files on publishing houses in the Netherlands have still not been released into the public domain. To this day they lie in the safe of the *Koninklijke Vereniging voor het Boekenvak* (KVB, the Royal Netherlands Book Trade Association).<sup>23</sup>

(*Translation by Harry Lake, Bussum, Netherlands*)

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<sup>23</sup> This at least is what the *Vereniging* told Jan Schilt on 19 December 1994 when he unsuccessfully submitted a request to be allowed to inspect the files as part of his research for his book *Hier wordt echter het belang van het boek geschaad* (op. cit., n. 7). On 11 July 2005 I myself submitted a similar request; it was rejected on the same grounds. I was told the files contained too much that was not in accordance with the facts.



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1. Dr Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Germany's Minister of Propaganda, meets with Dutch artists at the *Departement voor Volksvoorlichting en Kunsten* [Department of Public Information and the Arts] in The Hague. (Collection Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, NIOD, Amsterdam.)

2. A German soldier at an Amsterdam newspaper booth.



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3. NSB leader Anton Mussert reads a newspaper clipping. (NIOD collection.)
4. Advertising poster for *De Zwarte Soldaat* [The Black Soldier], published from August 1940 through May 1945. (NIOD collection.)



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5. Uniformed Dutch National Socialists – ‘NSB-ers’ – selling *Volk en Vaderland*.  
Bystanders are poking fun.
6. After the liberation NSB books were publicly burned in The Hague.  
(NIOD collection.)