



Global Nonviolent Action Database

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Dutch citizens resist Nazi occupation, 1940-1945

May

1940

to: May

1945

Country: Netherlands

Location City/State/Province: *Especially active in Amsterdam, Eindhovenand, and Limberg*

Goals:

To use nonviolent measures to resist the Nazi war machine and end the Nazi occupation.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 010. Newspapers and journals
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 021. Delivering symbolic objects
- 037. Singing
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 051. Walk-outs
- 062. Student strike
- 097. Protest strike
- 106. Industry strike
- 117. General strike
- 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities
- 141. Civil disobedience of "illegitimate" laws
- 180. Alternative communication system

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 087. Refusal to pay fees, dues, and assessments
- 128. Boycott of government-supported institutions
- 139. Noncooperation with conscription and deportation
- 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities

- 180. Alternative communication system

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 128. Boycott of government-supported institutions
- 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities
- 147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents
- 180. Alternative communication system

Methods in 4th segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 079. Producers' boycott
- 097. Protest strike
- 106. Industry strike
- 117. General strike
- 120. Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance
- 121. Refusal of public support
- 128. Boycott of government-supported institutions
- 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities
- 147. Deliberate inefficiency and selective noncooperation by enforcement agents
- 180. Alternative communication system

Methods in 5th segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 128. Boycott of government-supported institutions
- 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities
- 180. Alternative communication system

Methods in 6th segment:

- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 019. Wearing of symbols
- 106. Industry strike
- 128. Boycott of government-supported institutions
- 140. Hiding, escape, and false identities
- 180. Alternative communication system

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 011. Records, radio, and television
- 110. Slowdown strike

- 135. Popular nonobedience › Refusal to turn in metal coins

Classifications

Classification:

Defense

Cluster:

Democracy

National/Ethnic Identity

Group characterization:

- Dutch citizens in general
- Factory Workers
- railroad workers
- shipyard workers

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

No clear central leadership, many small factions of citizens banding together with common goal to resist the Nazis

Partners:

Guezen Action Committee, Medical Contact (group that worked closely with local physicians to help hide doctors who were under attack from Germans), Der Kern ("The Core," group that tried to organize a solidified movement, but towards end of campaign)

External allies:

Not Known

Involvement of social elites:

Queen Wilhelmina and the Dutch royal family refused to accept the Nazi offer for protection under the Reich and instead fled to London. Doctors were also involved in their refusal to join the German doctors guild

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Guezen Action Committee
- Queen Wilhelmina and the Dutch royal family fleeing to London
- University Students

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- Communist Workers
- Factory workers
- Schoolteachers
- artists
- business owners

- doctors
- store owners

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Miners

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Railway workers

Segment Length: 10 months

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Nazi German Occupiers

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not Known

Campaigner violence:

On February 19, 1941, there was a fierce showdown between Dutch Nazis and armed Jewish citizens in Amsterdam. Miners in Limburg fought back against Nazi police forces attempting to end their strike in May 1943

Repressive Violence:

The Nazi occupiers used extensive arrests and killings to combat the resistance effort

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

3 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:

It is hard to measure the success of the movement because the Dutch were not completely successful in resisting the Nazis. For example, slightly more than 82 percent of Dutch Jews were deported by the Nazis. Also, many times striking workers would be forced to return to work when met with Nazi violence.

The resistance campaign survived to see the Nazis lose to the Allies.

It is hard to measure the growth of the movement because there was no central leadership, just many different groups arising in protest. Therefore, there was no “official” resistance that grew

In May of 1940, the Netherlands was occupied by the Nazi war machine. At that time, the Netherlands had a total area of 33,000 square kilometers, and only approximately nine million people living there. The country was also relatively flat, with little natural features that could contribute to an armed resistance against the Nazis. The Netherlands had a policy of neutrality and

had no recent experience with outside invading forces. In addition, Queen Wilhelmina and the Dutch royal family refused to accept the Nazi offer for protection under the Reich and instead fled to London.

Once the royal family had fled to London, the Nazis continued with their plan for takeover. The Nazis had four goals for the Netherlands. The first goal of the Nazis was to transform the Netherlands into a national socialist state which could eventually be part of the Nazi German state. The second goal of the Germans was to exploit the economic potential of the Dutch industries and labor force. The third goal of the Nazis was to purge the Netherlands of all Jews. And the fourth goal of the Nazis was to prevent all aid to Germany's enemies through espionage, sabotage, and guerrilla activity.

In order to fight these Nazi goals, there were many acts of resistance. As early as the first day of Nazi occupation, an Amsterdam group called the Guezen Action Committee proclaimed in a message to the Dutch people that it would gradually develop a group to fight for Dutch liberty, vowing that the Netherlands would never become a part of Germany.

A more large scale act of resistance occurred on June 29, 1940, the birthday of Prince Bernard. The prince was well known for wearing a white carnation for national holidays and special occasions with public ceremonies. On his birthday, people placed vases filled with carnations in the windows of nearly every house and store. That day, crowds of people appeared in front of a statue of Queen Wilhelmina's mother to drop a carnation in an act of defiance against the Nazis. By the end of the day, the entire monument was covered with carnations. In response to this patriotic act, the Germans arrested two of the demonstration's organizers and even Dutch General Winkelman, who had nothing to do with the demonstration.

That fall, the Nazis began to attack Dutch Jews, focusing specifically on public officials and professors. At the University of Leiden, outraged Dutchmen held a demonstration that culminated in the singing of the Dutch national anthem. Also, at the Technical University of Delft, students organized a strike which forced the school to shut down. This idea appealed to the students at Leiden, who also began to strike.

On February 17 and 18, 1941, Dutch shipyard workers struck, preventing the Nazis from deporting Dutch workers to Germany for forced labor there.

On February 19, 1941, there was a fierce showdown between Dutch Nazis and armed Jewish citizens in Amsterdam. Three days later, 600 SS soldiers moved in and arrested 400 young Jewish men. These Jews were beaten and then sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp. When word of this spread to communist workers, they planned a massive strike, using underground printers to produce leaflets calling for a citywide strike involving all workers. Within days, shipyard workers and streetcar drivers joined the strike, soon followed by industrial workers. As news of the strike spread, businesses, workshops, offices, and stores closed their doors so workers could gather in the city center to strike against the Nazis and sing in protest. Out of Amsterdam's population of 800,000 people, approximately 300,000 people took part in the strike.

The Germans retaliated with violence. Hundreds of police officers and SS soldiers moved in on the protesting strikers with orders to fire without warning at anyone who caused trouble. In addition, a curfew was imposed under punishment of arrest. The mayor of Amsterdam was forced to order city officials to return to work, fearful of German punishment.

Although the mayor of Amsterdam was afraid of German punishment, others were not and people continued their resistance against the Nazis throughout the Netherlands. Schoolteachers refused to submit their names for German approval. Artists refused to join the German culture guild, despite the fact that this denied them income. Farmers refused to pay the Nazis, and thousands of Dutchmen refused to report to service in the Arbeitsdienst, an occupation corps devoted to reclaiming the land for Germany. Dutch police refused to aid in the arrest and detention of Jews.

One of the most impressive groups to resist the Nazis was Dutch doctors. Although these doctors were told they had to join the German doctors' guild, forcing them to follow Nazi guidelines such as racial screening, many refused. In December 1941, thousands of Dutch doctors signed a letter and sent it to the Nazi leader there, demanding that he abandon the requirement of membership in the doctors' guild. Many Dutch doctors gave up their practices. One group of doctors even formed a Medical Contact that worked closely with local physicians to help hide doctors who were under attack from German police.

The Dutch Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands sent a pastoral letter and declaration to their members, urging them to resist the Nazi's through civil disobedience. The churches told their congregations that it was their religious responsibility to resist.

Everyday actions began to represent nationalist pride and anti-Nazi sentiment. The “V” sign replaced the handshake and was also painted on walls around every city. The simple greeting “hallo” became an acronym for “Hang alle landverraders op” (hang all traitors). Citizens could also be seen wearing coins as jewelry because they bore the portrait of Queen Wilhelmina. Even stamps were used to fuel Dutch national pride. Stamps were always placed on the left corner of envelopes because the Dutch believed that the right corner belonged only to stamps with the image of Queen Wilhelmina. This nationalist pride is only further illustrated by many university students in the Netherlands. In April of 1943, all university students were forced to sign a declaration of loyalty to the occupying forces, yet 85 percent of students refused to do so.

On April 29, 1943, the Germans announced that 300,000 Dutch army soldiers, who had been captured and released in 1940, were to be recaptured and sent to German labor camps. As soon as this was announced, workers in the town of Hengelo walked off their jobs in a protest strike. Word of the strike spread throughout the provinces. In the city of Eindhoven, every Philips factory shut down. In the province of Limburg, over 10,000 miners went on strike, followed by 40,000 total miners striking the next day. Rural Dutch farmers supported the strike by refusing to deliver milk to dairy factories. To combat these strikes, Nazi troops began shooting at the strikers throughout the country, and those strikers who were arrested were sentenced to death. This caused the strikes to be suppressed everywhere except in Limburg. To put down the strikes in Limburg, a German police force was sent to suppress the strikes with violence. There was violence on both sides and by May 5

th

the Limburg miners agreed to return to work. After days of carnage, the strikes had resulted in over 180 deaths, 400 casualties, and 900 prisoners of war being sent to concentration camps.

The final major act of resistance against the Nazis came in September 1944, when Dutch railway workers went on strike to prevent the transportation of Jews to concentration camps in the East as well as prevent the movement of German troops back to Germany to protect from the Allied invasion. In an effort to keep the trains running, the Germans brought in their own railway men. In addition, the Germans also shipped approximately 50,000 Dutch men to Germany to help prepare defenses for German cities. Although this strike was intended to hinder the Nazi war machine, it also caused the halting of coal, gas, and food to Dutch cities, which resulted in a very difficult winter before the Nazis were defeated by the Allied forces that spring.

One problem with the resistance movement in the Netherlands was that the resistance groups sprung up locally and communication was established slowly. It was not until late in the war that a group called De Kern (The Core) was formed to coordinate a national effort against the Nazis. The Core consisted of union officials, resistance leaders, and editors of underground newspapers, but was ultimately ineffective in organizing a widespread movement. Therefore, the Dutch resistance had no clear national goals and struggled to succeed.

It is also hard to evaluate the success of this campaign because although the Dutch population conducted many demonstrations against the Nazis, the Nazis did achieve certain goals. For example, slightly more than 82 percent of the Dutch Jews were deported. Despite this, approximately 3,000 Jews were able to escape the Netherlands and go into hiding in neighboring countries. Also, it is important to note that the Dutch underground helped 25,000 Jews go into hiding, of which 16,000 went undetected. So although the Nazis succeeded in deporting over a hundred thousand Jews, the Dutch resistance attempted to hide 25,000 from the Nazis.

Research Notes

Influences:

Denmark resistance to Nazis, which occurred during the same period (1,2).

Sources:

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Additional Notes:

Edited by Max Rennebohm (27/05/2011)

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