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# Dominicus as Global Citizen: An Oral History of the Journey of a Dutch Resister

Erik Larson

Macalester College, [larsone@macalester.edu](mailto:larsone@macalester.edu)

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## **Dominicus as Global Citizen: An Oral History of the Journey of a Dutch Resister**

Erik Larson

*The end of the Second World War witnessed the growth of enduring, formal international institutions as well as the intensification of decolonization. Together these events shaped the contemporary nation-state system and the concomitant rise of the ethos of global citizenship. The rapidity of these changes speaks to the profound effect of the lived experience of the Second World War on global leaders. The experience of the populace during the Second World War, however, also offers insight into the emergence of a philosophy of global citizenship.*

*In the Netherlands, as with many other occupied countries, a portion of the populace engaged in actions to resist the Nazi occupation. Amsterdam's Verzetsmuseum provides insight into the larger historical context and the extent and limitations of the resistance, as elements of the previously pillarized population were brought together during the occupation. Despite the country's reputation as a tolerant haven for exiles—notably Jewish populations displaced from other European countries—the registration system established after occupation resulted in a larger percentage of Jewish people from the Netherlands being sent to death in concentration camps than in most other occupied countries. As the war continued and the Dutch populace was subjected to greater deprivation, the resistance grew. During the last year of the war, Nazi Germany desperately tried to hold on to Amsterdam, using it as a source of food and other material for its troops, and thus reducing the Dutch population to survive on whatever it could, including eating tulip bulbs, during the Hunger Winter of 1944–45.*

*While the Verzetsmuseum provides insight into daily life in occupied Netherlands and works to establish a collective memory of resistance, it does not tell the story of how the experience of resistance informed the subsequent life of the populace. To provide insight into the life lessons drawn by individuals who participated in the resistance, I conducted an oral history interview with an individual from Amsterdam who had been involved in the resistance in World War II. Throughout this work, I refer to him as Dominicus, his code name in the resistance.*

*Near the end of our interview, Dominicus said:*

*There is a lot that I didn't tell...I picked out for me what the highlights were. But there are many other little things, perhaps more important that I don't know...I had different jobs to do. I had been visiting the Atlantic Wall to find out things. Little things, perhaps important. I will never know that. For me, the highlights were how I came through, how I organized it, how I was playing it. That is a sense, how I lived.*

*In his struggle for survival, Dominicus was on a journey. His journey—and reflections on it—demonstrate the development of the ethos of global citizenship: the ability to recognize common bonds with other people. In this recognition, one moves beyond preconceived assumptions of right and wrong to understand decision-making in context. However, a core set of principles grounds his judgment, leaving some actions that remain abhorrent to him. In many ways, this ethos may ring familiar as Dutch tolerance; however, Dominicus' journey shows that it is not a simple culture of tolerance, but one that has emerged through the experiences of historical events, particularly as history is drawn on and interpreted by people experiencing new situations.<sup>1</sup> This openness may even extend to the people and places to which one feels loyalty. As such, an openness to change forms part of the ethos of global citizenship.*

*At the same time, readers may notice limits of tolerance. As an ethical stand, tolerance presumes difference with others. These presumed differences could reflect stereotyped understandings. As elements of culture, stereotypes may be drawn upon to enable communication and to get others to act in particular ways. Similar to the prior discussion concerning a culture of tolerance, the typified understanding of others reflects active interpretation of historical events. From the perspective of an ethic of global citizenship, this idea implies that difference need not negate a recognition of common bonds with others, but that one may need to make genuine efforts to find these bonds, particularly when historical experiences drive people apart.*

*Dominicus' story frequently shows individual struggles in the face of adversity. As an individual oral history, this feature may not be surprising since it is a convention of story-telling. However, the characteristic also relates to a philosophical foundation of global citizenship: universal individual personhood, or the idea that every person bears particular capacities that he or she can (and perhaps should) use in composing his or her own life. This premise serves as a fundamental criterion by which to judge individuals' actions (how productively did people live their lives?). It also sets a standard by which actions of governments are judged (What positive actions have governments taken to enhance the capacities of the populace? What actions have governments undertaken that negatively affect peoples' capacities?).*

*I conducted the following oral history interview during one weekend over three sessions. I have edited the interview transcript for length, clarity, continuity, and some grammar, but have also left some of the linguistic constructions that may be less familiar among American speakers of English to capture the flow and tone of the stories Dominicus shared.*

### **Dominicus**

I was born in Amsterdam. My parents were from a mixed background: a strong Reformed father, very old fashioned. My mother was Roman Catholic, from the frontier with Flemish Belgium. That village, just a mile in Holland, nowadays does not exist anymore. My father was a man who would work very hard and had a strong will. He was from a family of fishers—at that time sea fishers. They had a little ship sailing, no engines. They were proud fishermen. They were free. They were their own boss. Other people were

slaves and had to do what others had to say. They were free—that's a fiction I quickly discovered. They had to work day and night. They were slaves for themselves.

My father was in the military from 1914 to 18. He spent time at the frontier of Holland and Germany, where they would dig peat. He was an old fashioned Christian and had an eye for right—the human rights. He was a corporal in the engineers and he marched along the frontier on patrol. And he saw how the better people were using these poor people and they let them work long days from sun-up until sundown for a hungry salary. He couldn't stand that. It was against his feeling—the feeling of human rights informed by the Bible.

So he came back from the First World War. His mind was angry when he saw how the workers in the peat fields were pressed out. I remember there was a sign of a cartoon. There you see a simple worker, a man. He is between parts of a machine and the capitalist is turning at the things and they are pressing him out. That cartoon was always hanging in our living room. My father came out of the war as a socialist.

I must say. The last phone call I had with [a friend in the United States], she said to me, "Obama is not a Democrat, he's a Socialist." At that moment, I was shocked that people don't know what they say. They don't know the difference between a democrat and a socialist. A socialist has to be a democrat. That is the principle of socialism...Now, I'm going too far away. I must go back.

My father came out from the military service after four years and then met my mother in 1918. They decided to marry. My father and mother wanted to marry, but they didn't want to marry in the church. That was the influence of my father. My father said, "This country, this government are liars. They tell us something that is not the truth. They want to save money over our backs that they have more. They are not honest. Then I am finished. I won't have anything to do with a government that is not honest. They only talk about God and Jesus will help you. Bloody nonsense!"

My father wanted to become a mechanical officer on a sea ship. He was working in fabrication of engines, there he was casting—making metal things, very precise. He had that always; it must be exactly good. If not, it is no good—throw it away. That perfection is in him.

I was born on the 3rd of December 1920. The conception, I think was the first night of the marriage.

I was, I think, an unpleasant child. Unpleasant in the way that I wanted to do what I wanted. I had to listen, to obey—obeying was the first principle and I didn't like that. I protested already as a young child. That is my inner self, I think. Well, that's a thing in my character. I'm not willing to accept all things. It must be reasonable. If not, I do not accept it. Finished. I'm not a psychologist. I've no idea what happens and I'm always a bit laughing about psychology. They can declare where you are...vo vo vo vo [*gesturing with hand, laughing*].

Then came in 1930 the big crisis. The crash, the banks of the United States, as usual—you can say that now. I hadn't a bad youth. My father was a man who knew how to work. He was really good. So he had always work. Not a day without. So there was always money—not much, but enough to live. In that time, people were in bad situations. It was a horrible time. When I think of my youth, there is joy—a bit joy—but it has a misty grey covering.

My father was always asking me, “What do you want to be in your life?” I wanted to be an artist. That was bloody hell, dirty. He didn't accept that. Didn't accept that. No way. And he said to me, “You have to choose an ordinary profession.” I didn't want that. My father and mother always complained that I had too much fantasy. I was making forms with material and I was dreaming with it. There always was—I was playing as if there was another person and in that situation, I talked, and my parents got mad that I was always talking with a different voice. I was happy when I would hide myself in my fantasy.

School was a disaster with me. I was always—not always—but I usually didn't accept authority. When it happened that the teacher was beating me, then straight away I was beating back. That was a flash in me always. Sometimes now that I am old, I think that I have a fighter mentality, but that isn't true. I never start, I never start. But when there is something coming, I immediately react. I have quick reactions. Still now, but it is a bit slower. So that brings you difficulties. I can't guide it. It is my born nature. TOFF! But I'm not a fighter. It's not a pleasure. But it is my reaction always until now. But I realize now as an old man—I'm nearly 90—when I go beating a young person, I have a big chance that I will lose.

In my youth, my father was roughly beating me. Then my mother was unhappy with me because I had always troubles with my father. *Always*. It didn't stop. That was going on until I was 18. Then came a moment that I didn't accept it anymore and I was beating back. That was the big crash. We rolled boxing over the street outside and the people had to tear us apart. I didn't accept it anymore.

The clash I had at 18 years old with my father; it had given my mother a lot of sorrow. She was an old fashioned woman. She obeyed my father. He was the boss. She accepted that. For my mother, I know that, when she was old and slowly dying with cancer. My father had to work, my sister had to work. They couldn't spend the nights. I was an artist, a musician, and had time enough. I was sitting during the nights with my mother. That was very special.

And so, slowly, we were nearing World War II. Holland was neutral. Why that was in the circumstances, I'm not a historian, but I suppose the Germans found it practical to have a neutral country between Great Britain and Germany.

I got into the military service when I was 19. I did it with pleasure. You had to be 19 years old. Before 19 it was not possible. That was the law. I was 19 in '39, December. Straight at the end of December, beginning of January, I was in the army. A recruit. But I

was quickly chosen to become a (I don't know the name of it), not an officer, but a half-officer.

The war was already affecting us. The politics of funding the military disappointed me. Always the government tried to make things cheaper. "The military expense was a shame—that's lost money." Dutchmen think like that.

One of the horrors I had, our battalion was sent to the North Dyke. For a few years before, we closed the South Sea and made it sweet. Now it is our biggest drinking water reservoir. But that was the end for my fisher family. There wasn't any more salt water.

I was in the reserve and there were heavy fights. Since that day, I know what the politics are worth. Excuse the word, but it is shit. We had machine guns. Our government bought them from Austria. The weapons were developed during the First World War. At the end, the Austrians sold them. We had to fight with machine guns with one or two bursts. You had to wait to cool it down. The Germans had machine guns that were going on that didn't stop. I must say honestly that I was impressed by the German soldiers. The intelligent way they learned fighting. They did it. They were superior.

The Dutch government—and that's what made me very angry—we had a five days war. The blitz army of Hitler, they were very strong. They had the most modern weapons. They had armored cars, they had the machines, and were well trained; so, we were lost. The bastards sent us with old-fashioned weapons to fight against an enemy that has the best. I was very angry about it. Still I am. Still you hear, "it is cheaper." No way! The best materiel. That's the only thing. I had then in that time a hate. Then you discover that you are living in a country with big liars who just tell stupid things. Now I know that the reason is to get more money out of the business. It's a bit simple, I know that, but there is a connection.

Now, then, the war time started. We were bombed. Rotterdam was flattened to press us. They warned us. If you don't capitulate in 24 hours, we will do the same with Amsterdam. And Amsterdam is a famous old town that has saved a lot of things from former times. That was too much. So we capitulated. Then, it was one of these things, the morale of the people destroyed – you have a king, you have a queen. That's a high person that will lead you, but the second day, she was already away. You expect that he or she as king or queen will lead the country. No. They—the royal family in Holland—is one of the richest in the world. And they always marry with Germans. We have in this country an underground feeling against Germans. Exceptions there are.

I stand there at the beginning of the war, capitulated. I was a prisoner of war. But not for a long time. I get always away. I have something of a cat-like quality. I can hide myself and I disappear—we were located in Alkmaar (a little town in the north). We were put in a school building and there we had to stay. But after a week, the German commander ordered that we had the possibility to walk out in the evening: from 7:00 until 9:00. At the same moment that I heard it, I thought, "That's my chance." So I walked out straight to the railway station, bought a train ticket to Amsterdam. It's not so far: 40 kilometers. There were patrols, but they didn't talk to you. They just patrolled. There was not

personal control. And before the curfew time—we had to be in the houses at 10 o'clock in the evening—I was with my parents.

In the coming years, I say nowadays, I've been living like a dog. Smelling, looking, hiding, sleeping at the back side of a tree or a bush. And that's the reality. I did that. But I have an instinct. Perhaps it is—we can laugh about it—but at that time, I had the feeling that I was a bit of a wolf. I was smelling danger. And still I have it a bit. I feel that. [*Lifts nose upward and sniffs, while scanning the surroundings.*] I lived like a wolf, the wild wolf. Smelling, looking, feeling, looking for food, stealing food. I can tell you in that time, I was not fat. Never in my life have I been so thin.

At my parents, I took off the uniform and threw it away. I was back in civilian clothes. But it was illegal. I hadn't the right to do that. What happened—I had the smell. I knew that during the day, I wasn't at home with my parents. I was sleeping there. But my father had a job at a school and he had to live there. There was a house – a little house there at the canal. It was an old part of Amsterdam. He had to live there. I had the possibility to disappear in the building and we had in the back a botanic garden. Nice little things there to use for the garden. So in the day, I was just walking around in civilian clothes, not knowing what to do, following the operations of the Germans.

Then slowly came the question of what to do now. I was looking for a job, but my nose for danger...In three days, the Dutch military police came to my parents to pick me up, order of the Germans. But I wasn't there. And my parents were happy that I wasn't there. I got the feeling—there were mariners located at the coast. They took little boats and rowed over and arrived [in England], so it is possible. If you have a little compass, that is enough to get to the other side. The last warships were disappeared; the marine harbors were bombed. It was an unbelievable time. It was total chaos. Completely. But the German army was marching on.

After the winter of 1940–41, I started to look for contacts for resistance. There were rumors, but it was not organized. The risk was that you met somebody who was bringing you over to the Germans and you were lost. It was a time that you could live only for yourself and keep your mouth shut. That was the terror: the resistance could be your death.

Then it started. Slowly the pressure from the military police was bigger. They changed – that was laughable. Germans are a laughable people, you must laugh about it. In Amsterdam, we had a traffic regulation: a cop with a sign that you can turn. And on that was standing “Stop”—that was then forbidden. It must be German word, “Halt.” Unbelievable. But they were proud and marching through the streets. Even when they were going out and walking, they were soldiers. Nose high, shoulders straight. And we must laugh about that, but for them it was very serious. Then came difficulties between the people and Germans and it started. And then they [the German army] started very quickly with terrorism—I call it terrorism. You were not free anymore. Any moment, they could pick you up from the street and put you in jail without reason. For us, it was a

terror. The hate was growing. And the resistance came a bit slow, but heavier and heavier.

But there was a big strike, a famous strike, and I was living in the Jewish part of Amsterdam. It was very big. A lot of Jews were hiding. They came from Poland, they came from everywhere. Holland was the country for freedom. They were accepted as human beings. And still it is. That's the reason we have so many Muslims now. They come in and have the profits of our freedom, even they get money, they get food. The other side, it is human. You can't stop giving support when people misuse the support; that's not my, but their, fault.

Also among the first difficulties was that some Dutch killed a German soldier, just with a knife. Well, when that started, the Germans started also with their terror. Then they took 10, 20 people just from the street and they were assassinated, just at the same place and leave them lie dead. That is pure terror.

The reaction there was that the hate was more and more. At that time, I decided, "How can I get into England?" The coast was nearly impossible and I hadn't any connection there at the North Sea coast in the dunes. So that didn't work. So the only way was, in that time, through Belgium, through France, and then through Spain to Portugal and then with a ship to England. But that was a very special problem: you couldn't pass the frontier. All the people were to stay in the frontiers of their country. You have no possibility to travel out. When you did it, it was illegal, dangerous. It could cost your life. I wasn't working organized in the beginning, but very quickly I got contacts. There was slowly moving an organization over the country, but you didn't know how big it was or how small it was. You had no idea.

I had family in the south, from my mother's side. I had a relative and he was regularly in Belgium, smuggling tobacco. In Belgium, they have tobacco plantations. It is a black, heavy tobacco with a strong taste. But it is tobacco. You could make cigarettes of it. I wrote him, "Can you help me to get into Belgium?"

He said, "Right away. I do it myself. I know the way." And they were living two miles from the frontier. It was an old road with little stones, not made for cars. And he showed me and I came to that. That is the possibility. Here, you can go over.

Along that road was a little wooden place where the soldier is standing with his weapons—a guardhouse. My relative said, "You can't pass here. He will stop you. Or arrest you, because it is an illegal action. But the road has at both sides places for the water to come in." There are no stones in it; it is earth. He said, "You crawl through it and you pass at the back side of the guard house. That's all. When he is looking, then you've had it."

So I crawled through that and I came into a little village. I knew that village because with my grandparents we went to a special place where Roman Catholics have all holy things. And I walked through the village. And suddenly there comes marching two German



policemen. The military police. They have a metal plaque on their wrist to show their authority. You have to immediately do what they command. I was shocked. I thought, “Oh good heavens, what to do now?” I slipped quickly into a beer café. Some people were there, but I hadn’t any money. You had Belgian francs, you had French francs. So you couldn’t buy anything when you were over the frontier. So, I did play something there. I looked at any person sitting down. There was no service. You had to go to the bar to order. So I was just sitting and hiding until they had passed. After they passed, I could get out.

That was the first difficulty. Then there was there, a tramway—very old fashioned, from 1900 with steam. That was going to Oostmalle; there you have to change to an electric tram. Then you arrive in Brasschaat, near Antwerp. I was on the entry area from that old fashioned tram; I hadn’t the courage to go into the wagon. And there were three men standing there at the other side of the balcony and I had a feeling, “What will come out of these three men?” They were talking French. Suddenly, the boss of the three – they were policemen, but in civilian clothing. Belgian policeman. And he said, “*visite*,” meaning they will control your clothes and inside things. And they did. They took out of my pockets of my raincoat everything. A little dictionary—Dutch-French/French-Dutch; a card; some money; and I took with me a first-aid kit.

They found all these things. He looked at me and he said, in Flemish, but I understand Flemish quite well because my mother had it as a tongue. I was feeling this alarm in my body and then he said to me, he asked me. “What for do you need a French dictionary? What for do you need the medical things?” I said, “That’s my safety and I like this to have it so I can help myself if something happens.”

“What happens then?”

“Well, you must be prepared. I’m not a Boy Scout but you must be prepared.” I tried to joke a bit.

Then he said to me, “Where do you come from?”

“I come from Amsterdam.”

“What was your job?”

“I had no job. I came from school and went straight into the military. I was prisoner of war.”

He said, “Ah-ha...Ah-ha. I can help you.”

But I didn’t trust him. I have always the feeling—that I’m not so trust willing. I have always the feeling “You never know.” But I did as he said.

He said, “At the station you sit there in that place where the passengers are sitting. There you stay. I have to do one control from the front to the back and I will help you.”

He came back. He paid the ticket for me. And I went by electric tram and we came into Brasschaat. There we walked. It was dark already. And suddenly, suddenly, it was a shock. I immediately thought I’m betrayed. I saw a German soldier; it was a guard from a German troop that was there in Belgium. But we just continued walking. So I came into the police officer’s home. They were very nice to me. His wife was also Belgian, but French Belgian. She was speaking French Belgian, refuses to speak Dutch. Fortunately, I learned French in school, so I could help myself.

There I was offered a bed and a nice meal. It was fabulous. During the day he disappeared and his wife—then something very strange. I didn’t know how to react. Girls didn’t like me. But, of course, I had sexual feelings. Now, this older lady, the wife of the police officer, it was 11 o’clock in the morning. She just jumped on her knees before me and took my body and said, “I love you.” I didn’t know what happened. I said, “Oh, good gracious. That is the wrong way.” But nothing happened.

The policeman came back. He asked how would I go. “South.”

The Belgian troops were in the south coast of France. He said, “When you reach there, look for this man. I give you a letter. He is a businessman. He has a winery and other things.” At that time, you had the occupied France. There was a demarcation line and there were very heavy controls.

In Amsterdam, I had permission to have a bike—for all these things, you needed German permission. So I had a card with a German stamp on it. I had to pass the frontier to France. First, I was thinking, I will walk. But that’s long and there’s the problem of finding food and drinking water. Then, I decided, no. I will just sit in a train and I will try to pass. But you had to pass the control in the station in Brussels. That was the train to Paris. At that time, it was still running, but controlled by the Germans. So, I — [laughs] this was the first hero thing that I did. You see that there was a station control and here stand the German military. And everybody had to—but I had the bike card with the German stamp on there. I walked there and I put up that card to his face and “*Ja*.” He saw already his “Heil Hitler” stamp. It was the way I came into France [chuckles]. I’m still a bit proud of that. It was a good trick. You have to think of it. I thought quickly. It’s a card with my photo, German language on it, and a German stamp from the military. That will do, if he’s not looking really. And it worked.

And then I had a queer experience. I was sitting there on a wooden plank; these old fashioned trains. Your back becomes like wood. And there was a French girl—or I don’t know from where—but she was speaking French. She had nice long, slightly red hair. I found her very nice girl. And she suddenly put her head on my shoulder to sleep and I hadn’t the courage to push it away. It was very unpleasant. Until Paris, she was sleeping on my shoulder.

I had never been in Paris. Gare du Nord, north station. And you have the south station. If you want to drive with the train to Marseille, you have to take the tram to the other station. The train doesn't pass. Now they have a quick connection, it is outside Paris. I was on my way. I thought, "In Paris, there will sure be resistance somewhere. But how to connect? And you speak a French that is with an accent."

I was counting my money, but I needed French francs. At the Gare du Nord, there were always men that were walking around that can arrange things for you. Illegal. Still, I needed to change, so I gave my money, except for a bit that I needed for the underground to pass to go to different places to find out information. I changed the Belgian francs illegally for French. And I had Dutch money. I had to lose a lot.

And then I went to Montparnasse—that is famous—you have Montmartre and Montparnasse. Two centers of everything. You can f\*\*\* and fick everything, you can buy everything, everything you can buy. It is crowded with whores. I went to a house that was a guesthouse. I saw that it looked poor and I discussed with the boss there. I rented a room on top. It was a place to sleep and to be myself in a closed room.

But I had no money then. All the money was in the room. Two weeks. What then happens, I don't know. We'll see. And I tried to get connections, but no way. I wanted to have some information; perhaps somebody can help me to get to the south. Nothing. Really nothing.

One night, and I hadn't any more to eat, so I was living from water. And my stomach was already [*motions to show distending*]; that was a hungry time. Then happens something very, very special. I will never forget it. I see it happen—I can dream from it and I see the faces and the things. One evening, I was laying in bed and I couldn't sleep. It was eleven o'clock. Opens the door and there comes a whore in it. And says, "Shall we hook?" "No."

She put down one thing—she was naked. Tears the cover off my body and wanted to ride on me. She tried but nothing happened. I was hungry and it doesn't rise. Then she was sitting on my legs, looks at me, and said, "You have hunger."

She jumped out of bed [got dressed again], and she disappeared. She came back with a tablet, with coffee, bread with butter on it, marmalade, and said, "Here, eat." It was...unbelievable. I was in high spirits. I was so happy with something to eat finally, after a week not eating.

But she had to look for men that want to f\*\*\*. And between the visitors she brought up to her room, she always came to have a look at me.

Since then, I say, "I like whores. They are human beings." They don't do that for their pleasure, but they are in a forced position. Suddenly, I got an understanding for the situation. And she was protecting me. When I got some force back and could walk again, we went out again in the afternoon. And she offered me something to eat in a café.

I had feelings for that girl. Yeah. It was a bit—it never disappeared from me. It was so unbelievable in that big Paris. Nothing to eat, no money. Only rest in the bed for a few days. She helped me and she said, I can't remember exactly, but one day, I said "*adieu*." The language was difficult, of course. For me, she is a lady—real human. "He has no money; he is hungry. I help him."

I had arranged enough for a ticket to Marseille. At the demarcation [between the occupied north of France and the *zone libre* administered by the Vichy government], the train stopped for half an hour. And the Germans came into the train to control. I decided, for myself, with my German permission to have a bike, to try my trick again. You must have a face for that. Don't be very kind – it is of no use. Then they think, "hmmmm." Keep a distance, polite. It worked and I came through.

I arrived in Marseille, a few months after I had left Amsterdam. Then starts the most unnerving period. I arrived in the early morning; it was 7:30. I was proud. I came out of the station and there happened something. I got a slight little shock. The French police from Pétain [the Vichy leader] took me. And I looked at them and in the most hard way of German speaking, I ordered them to go away and down. And they disappeared. They wanted to control. They were French; they couldn't speak German. For a Frenchman, it was very, very difficult. What can he do, when they hear from a mile away that it is a German? I have a touch, perhaps my theater side. I am good at imitating and it goes farther than only the sound. It goes also in the body language. I'm very good at that.

Then the next difficulty was how to get farther. I met a Dutch-speaking Jew. He was also trying to get out. And he was a typical Jew—I know the Jews quite well and—it is generalizing, I realize that—but they are keen liars. They can tell you they want to sell their business things and it is a super quality, the lowest price. It is unbelievable that they have that. I have been living between Jews because my father was obliged to accept another job at a high school. It was a school where you were prepared to become a teacher. And he had to live there at a house on the canal—it was not bad. But for him, it was not so pleasant. It was the crisis in '30. He had to accept two jobs for the price of one. It was crisis. It was after all not so bad, but we were all around only Jews. I can tell you believe it or not, it is not only a pleasure to live between Jews. They are tricky people and understand that they have always had the trouble that people hated them. They had to live with that and find a way to manage income. Then you get these extreme tricks.

Anyway, we were going by the tramway and he was paying for me. Later, I was thinking, he was a bad man. He had the tricks of the street. There was a young lady that came into the tram that let you pay with a piece of paper. And my traveling companion moved something and the young lady's lap full of money fell on the ground. Oh, that poor little girl. That is money from the company and she has to pay it back. And I saw it happen. He was on the ground to help her, but a lot was disappearing into his pockets. Then my mind changed, so that I would go away from that man.

So, I arrived outside Marseille in Bouches-du-Rhône. There happened a lot of things. In Bouches-du-Rhône, you have flat country, big flat with red sand from the Sahara that comes from the wind and falls down in Provence.

At that time, the British were fighting in North Africa and the famous Marshall Rommel pushed them back into Egypt. Then the British general managed to stop it. The problem for Germany was you had the sea between North Africa and South Europe. The British had a lot of strong points in that sea – the warships and the submarines. So shipping was not a possibility for the Germans. It was very risky. There only was the air. They had a big Air Force. These four-engine Junker transport planes. They sent by plane over—but you need a lot of planes to bring over tanks, cannons, all the materials for your shooting: ammunition, grenades, and cannons.

The Germans were masters in gliding. The army they were rebuilding after World War I had no Air Force, but the pilots were trained in gliding. The solution to transport material to North Africa was solved by gliding. They built big gliders—and I saw it myself—there in Bouches-du-Rhône. These junker transporters, they had behind them a glider, loaded with war materiel and the junker itself. They needed a long way—that flat place with the red sand was a nice place. You have to make streets for that.

But I had to eat: how to get some money for that? Anyway, I worked for a Frenchman who had a gravel operation. What I had to do was to spit [dig] in the burning sun. I was nearly dying.

During this time, I met a girl—an older girl, a woman. And the woman did like me. And as soon as there's a woman, I like it also. There came out that she was mixed French-Polish. And she worked for an organization that brought Polish pilots from the military over to England. England was then bombed and they were short of pilots. You can make another machine, but you cannot make another pilot. That was a big problem for the British.

One day, I was at work. Suddenly, the United States Air Force came. I had military experience, so as soon as the first bomb came, I was in a hole already, for the little parts springing around. And suddenly, there came a man in that hole and his clothes were blown away. He was naked. It was not far away, there were a lot of dead. Then the Germans came with big cars—transport cars—and they picked up people just in the street. I was lucky. They didn't take me.

Then happened one thing, very unhappy. Oh! That was a shock. I was at the bureau of that Frenchman who was the boss of the gravel operation to get my week's money. At that moment, two civilians entered. Outside was a nice Citroen with French colors on it and a French number. And the man said, we are looking for (I had a second name, a hiding name): Dominicus. We are looking for Mr. Dominicus. The Frenchman was shocked. I wasn't shocked. I was now on my way, they can't change it. I said, "Yes, that's me." We walked and they said to me, "Secret police. Follow." I said, "Yes." And I walked behind them.

I could speak German. I had to sit in the back with one agent and the other was driving. It was good to listen. You must listen with imagination to the situation to what happened.

Suddenly we stopped at a house in the fields. They say to me, “We have something to do in that house. Can we trust you wait here?”

“Of course you can trust me. I’ll stay in the car. Promise.”

The two men went out and then broke out yelling out of the windows from the house. A man was arrested. It was the secret police. He was in the car, but then we had a problem: I was also a prisoner. I have that my whole life. I can play in such a situation what is necessary—not always, emotionally, family whatever. But in that situation, yes. The problem was, I had to sit in the back. When you are a prisoner...don’t put that man near the man that is steering. That’s clear.

They said to me, “Can we trust you?”

“You can trust me.”

The other man said, “I don’t understand what is wrong with me. Why are you taking me away? I don’t understand it.”

“We can’t help that you are so stupid.”

You play the role of—but not too much—with a good behavior, that is important. So I was sitting beside the driver and we drove to Marseille.

I said, “Did you hear that stupid shouting there?” That’s not very nice of me toward the other man who was arrested, but for the situation, I did that. Intuitive.

When we arrived in Marseille, I was taken by one man into the building. It was a military from the French army building. I walked in there and the whole corridor was with machine guns. There was a German army, but a special German army. I have been a prisoner and I have been treated in the cellars of the SS Totenkopf. Does that say anything, to you? That is a special SS, super SS. They had a dead head on the insignia. SS Totenkopf. Unpleasant people, horrible people. I was following the Hauptmann, the captain. And I came into a room.

“Sit down.” He was opposite me. And he said, “There is something wrong with you.” But he was a very intelligent man, so I had to be very careful. “There is something wrong with you and I have to find out what is wrong with you.”

But you are very kind; be on good behavior. I have never been in my life in such a polite situation that was the same as death. It could be the end of my life.

The interview with me was a cross-interview. Two officers were sitting opposite me and they worked with me two hours. Then they were changed out for two fresh officers. And so it was going on. Day or night, just the same. They gave me black coffee. Good coffee. And nice chocolates. That has been the situation between life and death. It went the

whole night through—the afternoon, the evening, the night. In the morning, I got some rest, something to eat. And other people came in, talking with me. But attention – they are so tricky. But I had a feeling that my head was clear, that I could see everything. And that I was feeling everything. I was feeling myself powerful. I wasn't any more normal. And then another group came and we restarted till the evening. I had already been in the situation for 24 hours.

Then the captain—original captain—said to me, “Now, it is time to sleep. I'll bring you to the prison.” I came into the prison and there were two guards with him. The guards were there in the prison. They opened a cell. The prisoners were standing and falling out—the cell was so crowded. He looked at me. And I was, I said, “No way. You can't put me with these stinky Frenchmen.” He liked that.

Unbelievable, unhuman. Bastards. They all are bastards. For me, every German is a bastard. They have the same mentality. As soon as they get power, they are lost. Perhaps there are exceptions. I'm a bit stupid in these things. Can you imagine when I got in love with my wife, a German-speaking Swiss woman. And I had to learn that language again? It was a trouble. A bit sore. After we were married, we are living there at the flat. It was a part of Amsterdam where a lot of middle-class youth had been living, but they took them out and they gassed them. She tried to speak Dutch, but had a horrible accent. A bloody German accent. I was irritated by that. On my back, my hairs are raising, like a cat's. And what happened? Sometimes she came weeping home. Then she tried to speak Dutch with a Swiss accent, but these people don't hear the difference between the Swiss or the German or the Austrian accent and they didn't help her. They refused to help her. And that was '56. That's eleven years after the war.

The German ambassador has asked permission to honor...emotion...hooo...the fourth of May. Then we weep for our dead [*Dodenherdenking*, the Dutch national holiday remembering those who have died in war and peacekeeping missions]. A silence of a few minutes. The whole country is flat. Nothing moves. The next day is the Feast of the Recovery. The last years we have a new ambassador and he tried it again, said to the government: “Do you allow me to be there at Dam Square to honor your dead?” That is the most stupid question that you can do. We can't see a German at that time. They try, the ambassador, to honor our dead that were murdered by them. Then I think, are you stupid or are you unbelievable? Hate is a queer thing. I won't kill them, but I...[sniffs] I mean, if I can help them, I help them. I'm a human being. When there is a German in trouble, that is no problem. [*Tearing.*] Sorry, but, there's a wave of angry, of hate. You understand.

Now, back to the prison in Marseille. You imagine that when you have your enemy—it is your enemy and you can play the role of good behavior, nice gentleman. And I said to him, “Don't let me sleep between these stinky Frenchman.” That was the right word. He said, “No, that's not possible.”

We went out and opposite that building there were private houses. He said, “We have there some houses for our use. There you get a bed and a shower. Come tomorrow

morning at 10 o'clock at my office." I'm still proud of that. I tell it – I feel the feeling that I had then. Tuk! And then they entered at 10 o'clock exactly. I got coffee and chocolate. And they started again: an hour, special questions. Then I had two captains of the secret service opposite me and they said to me—very keen, very keen—"You have to do something good for us. You are obliged to do that. Because you did something wrong, that is clear. But you can make up for that if you do what we want."

I already had bad feelings about that.

He said, "You know that French woman? But that French woman is working for a Polish organization. And what we want to know is how it works, that organization. We will forget everything from you if you do that."

These things are more difficult than shooting and fighting. A small mistake, you've had it. You are living on your nerves.

I said, not straight, I looked at them—honestly, looked them in their eyes. "I don't understand you. I did nothing wrong. In the meaning of the war, it is no use to do that. You have occupied the whole of Europe. You have occupied North Africa. What can we do? That war is lost for the Allies. That's clear. You have everything in your hands." Till they started to Russia—there were the strong forces. I knew a lot of things then in that time. That was prepared in Poland – they came with big armies and they rolled over the Russians. Still, I feel—you may think of me what you want, but I'm honest of you—I felt some respect for them. How they organized the whole thing so perfect, everybody of the people. Don't let you tell anything – every German was full of power. "Now we get them. These bloody Americans and these bloody Englishmen." Really, it is one of the things that I am getting so angry when they come in the television and the radio and times that there are these memories. "We didn't win..." They had a killing machine...

I was sitting there and they said something to me that wasn't true. I didn't work for the British. I would like to do that. But, they said that I did. I didn't deny that. I said, "I don't understand you. What you are saying to me, I don't understand that. But if I can do some help, okay."

"Okay, they said. That's promised."

And I got a meal. We had a meal together. With a glass of beer. It was very nice and nice conversation. You fall from one to the other. But that makes you weak. When they go on with beating you that makes you stronger. Just you fall in a pleasant situation—yeah, they have that. They are not stupid. And—my brains were working, heavy—then I thought. After the meal, I said, "Now, well, I have to go, but before I go, I have a problem."

I was in a queer situation. So I said, "Excuse me, but I have to contact these people to find out how it works. What the network is." It was very clear what they wanted. "But then it can happen that these simple men from the normal police set me in prison. Thank you, but I don't want that."



They looked at each other. “Okay. You get a code. As soon as you are arrested by the normal police—the police that is for terror—you give the commander officer your code and you’re free.”

“That is very well. Thank you.”

And then I said, “I have another question and then I’m ready, sorry. I have to live. I have to travel. I have to go to Perpignan. There is the center, I know. That lady is often going to Perpignan.” I got money [*laughs*].

So, I took my leave and said “See you later.” I didn’t hope that, but I was really kind. And I went—not straight to Perpignan, because I was sure that they would follow me. [*Sniffs as if a dog*] You have that in your nose. You can follow that. So I went through villages and I was there—had some meal. And one day at a little station, I got on the train. And then I changed and took the train to Perpignan.

I looked in Perpignan. I didn’t know where it was. I knew the street, the name of the street. It was a Spanish house and the garden was round with walls, stone walls. I rang and there came a very old lady and I told her that I came from Mrs. So-and-so and she looked at me. She took a moment and closed the door and said, “Come in.”

I was brought to a back room and I looked in a little square around the house. It was filled with geese. I thought, “What was that?” I didn’t know that. Geese are marvelously noisy – something happens when one climbs in the window, geese will shout.

I warned them...And then I had to go. But where? So, I went outside Perpignan and rented a room. I thought, “Now, I have to try to get into Spain.” I had bad feelings about Spain: that was Franco, the fascist. It was horrible. And then you came in Portugal and there was also a dictator, Salazar. They were very rough for people who were crossing Spain to get to England. Portugal, not so much. But the Spanish are a horror. Still I don’t like them. It is a subjective feeling.

So, my problem was to come out. To get out. The only way. With that situation, I promised to do that. I was free, I got money, I got a code. So I was in a certain sense, a member of that organization.

Then suddenly, I was pressed to find my way out. I had no connections. I had some help and the help came from the Polish organization. And I was guest at a farm in the Pyrenees. But you had an official frontier and there, high in the mountain, were the Alps military from Bayern. I was there at the farm and the farm was in the forbidden zone. (The Germans had a zone of thirty kilometers parallel to the frontier.) And they had heavy-fire weapons, automatic, these guns. Just on part of the mountain there. So they had a whole row from the west to Portugal. And they were blocked and battened. When something moved in that little area, it was automatically shot.

So, how do you come through? Then you need a man who lives in the mountains and knows every little path. Then you can find out what is a safe way. I needed a man who could do that for me. So I found via the Polish organization and they brought me to the farm. I was accepted there by the farmer and his wife and children.

There happened something that was very unlucky. That was nearly killing me. The children were sent by their mother to the backgrounds to pick up champignons for the meal. You never know, you never know if it was bad luck or something that was organized, but I got very, very ill. I had a poisoning of my liver. I got the wrong champignons. I was...that was a difficulty for the farmer family.

I was brought out by the French resistance. I was completely yellow—a nice liver. No medicines. They brought me back to Perpignan and hid me there. And I landed on top of a house in a...you have a place where you throw old things. They had a little bed and that's where I would sleep. And sometimes came a lady and brought me milk—milk and bread.

And one day came a minister from the frontier. Well, I didn't understand what he was talking about. But slowly, I was thinking, "I must go away from here." So one day, I disappeared. I walked out of the square and came to the station. I got into a train.

Earlier, when I was in the south of France in the Pyrenees, not in the Pyrenees, but above, a bit north, I got something better than my Amsterdam bicycle card. In the area, there were little air places for light planes and they were used by these quick fighters. There was a squadron there. I met the commander, a major. And I was moving a bit between German to keep contact. He said to me, I was speaking fluently French. "I need a translator. Can you do that?"

"Well not for long."

"Well you can help me."

I said "Okay."

That was also my situation. Then I had German protection if it was going wrong. Then I made a study. And the major went out to eat. He was used to having a nice warm meal at 12. I made a time study. What is the average time he is out? After some weeks, I found a machine. And I knew in his bureau he had a stamper, a military stamper. He was a major. And I knew at that time—so many things were in my head. The ink; the ink is important. It is very important. The ink is changing with other chemicals in it. Then you lay that in—when you look at paper money, you can see if it is false or not. That's the same system and you can see if that is the right ink or not. You could have a nice passport, nice German passport, with all stamps, but if you haven't the right ink: bye-bye you've had it. Then I thought I must stamp some *Marschbefehl*—marching orders. In occupied Europe, they had a special German army pass. It was only for German military or civilians, civilians that are also working on army. Then I made a study of his signing. Then came the big job. I printed, I stamped march orders—about twenty-five, thirty. And I didn't

take much risk. I did two or three at one time and I quickly stuck them in my pocket. The longer you work, the bigger the chance that he gets you. So I had private twenty-five marching orders. I could travel the whole Europe from north to south, east to west.

From Perpignan, when I got into the train, then I thought, perhaps it is better that I go to Denmark. That was my original plan. But I stopped—I couldn't help, I'm a human being. I stopped at Antwerp and went to those people there. That is one of the things of the secrets of life. You can think that I'm silly—sometimes I think I am silly—but that is the truth. I arrived from the train to the tram and the tram I come to the outside of Antwerp in Brasschaat and I walked from the fields and the lady, the police officer's wife, that liked me so much that she said, "I am so in love with you." And that's unbelievable. I don't know, it is telepathic or something like that. I walked there from the tram in the direction and suddenly I saw her standing on the balcony waiting for me. Unbelievable. It was about 11 o'clock in the morning. I came in, she was happy.

She said, "I am waiting for you. We will have together a nice meal and all is made." The table was decked nice, the wine was filled. That is a secret I will never know why that happens. She knew that I was on my way, coming to her and she prepared a meal and the table was feast-like made. And I come from Perpignan. We had never communicated. It was dangerous. You didn't do that. No way. Till now, I don't understand how she was waiting there.

After the war, I tried to contact them and then I heard that he was executed and she disappeared back to the French part of Belgium. I heard that. But where? I thought, "Well, I leave it. The war is over."

And then I did something stupid—very, very stupid; unbelievably stupid. I arrived with the train in Amsterdam and there you can change direction to Denmark, Copenhagen. There was a big resistance in Denmark. I think the best thing is that for some time I would disappear there before I go back. Until it quiets down and then I come back. But I couldn't stand it. I went to my mother. That was a shock for her.

She was very happy and she was very unquiet with what might happen. "They will come and they will shoot you."

I had an aunt, sister of my father. She was, she worked in the simple resistance: helping people with false papers and these things, coupons for food. I went to her. I saw her outside and I promised that I would come back the next morning. She said, "You can help. You can help some few Jews."

The next morning, I ring at the door, the door opens. Puff! "Enter!" There are standing German police. I thought that is the end.

If they are informed, if they get the information, then I am away. I'm a theater man. I was quiet, sitting down and greeting everybody. I knew that my aunt worked for an organization to help people that didn't want to work in Germany. They were picked from

the streets. Instead, they would hide themselves. That was what she did, helped those men hide. But she also had a few Jews who were in bigger difficulties and asked my help for that. There was a possibility to do that. I thought, well, it was my dearest aunt. I liked her very much and still I like her—long, long ago she died. Not narrow-minded. A nice woman.

A lot of thoughts were going through my head. “Good gracious, me.” After a long day, in the afternoon, oh, five o’clock, we were transported to prison. So I came in the headquarters of the security service of the German army of the occupation of the town of Amsterdam. And where was that? In this neighborhood [*where we were conducting the interview*]. You walk to the Beethoven Street, on the right hand you see a school. That school they occupied and that was the office. I had problems to rent a house here. And still when I bike or walk along the street, it is really true, when I have to be there at the tramway, I go by another way. So I do not pass that school. Very deep difficulties. Now, there happened something. I had a marching order of a German army. But I had a feeling of the Gestapo and so I was looking at him also—this ordinary, stupid policeman and he was shouting to me. And he said to my marching order, “That’s false! That’s false! Hey!”

I looked cool at him. Then I had enough and I said. “Prove it. You have an apparatus to control it.”

He looked at me and said to me, “Come. You go out.”

And I was in the hall. And I had so a lot of urine. I said to him, “May I pinkle?”

He opened the door and said, “Go on.” He was standing and I was standing inside. Then we went downstairs and it was slightly dark.

There was an evening curfew: 9 o’clock. Everybody had to be in. It was then 7 o’clock and my head was thinking “What to do? Where can I go now?” Not my family—that is spoiled. There are situations that your whole nerve system is in alarm to find a way out of the situation.

I had from high school an English teacher, a lady, an older lady. Once during the war, I visited her and her sister—unmarried. They had a nice house in the eastern part, near the IJ. I thought, that was a brain wave, they were royalists, I’m not. The orange, the queen. And my English lady has been in prison for two months because at the birthday of the queen, she walked in the streets with orange on. (That was not acceptable. I can’t understand such things. Let that lady walk with the orange. That is not German mentality: “Everything must be!”)

So, her sympathy was on the side of the resistance. I thought, well, I go there. It was already dark at half past seven. I had no Dutch money; I had nothing, so I couldn’t take a tram. I had to walk from here to the eastern side of Amsterdam, but I arrived before 9

o'clock. They opened and they stood at the stairs—long stairs you have here in Holland—and I said, “I have a problem. May I come up?”

“Of course, come in.”

They were kind for me. I was a resistance man, so she had high thoughts about me. I told them what was possible to tell—not too much, but the circumstance at the moment. Then she said, “We will hide you but you have to stay in the house. Don't look through the windows. Stay far from the windows.”

But unfortunately, that woman fell in love with me. She was more than 22 years older than I but it was the same as the wife of the police officer in Belgium. Oh, it is so difficult. She was so nice to me. And you are in situation. You are pushed in a situation that you cannot change so directly. You must find another way.

Not immediately, but with some weeks to have some rest, then, I tried to find contacts. And during these weeks there, the allied troops occupied Antwerp, Brussels.

The Allies were coming from south of the Rhine into the industrial areas of western Germany. The British prepared a landing at Arnhem, which was a disaster. At that moment was a German fighting regiment on its way and they arrived at the Dutch frontier east of Arnhem but the British didn't know and the Germans didn't know what the British were doing. Fifty miles away was a German regiment. That was bad luck. The Germans marched quickly and they finished that: most of the British were killed. Then came the parachutes and the Germans were waiting. They were shot in the parachutes; it was prize-shooting. It was awful.

That shot of the Germans—by luck. Why? Why did that woman [in Belgium] know that I was coming? Why didn't the British know that a German regiment was on its way to the Rhine to help the invasion more south? There are things that happen and you don't understand why that happens. You can call it bad luck. It doesn't matter how you call it, but it's a fact. That has delayed the freedom for Holland.

Then to find a way out. Well, there is a way out. You can cross the rivers, but the Germans are waiting. How to do that? So I had a very queer situation and then I thought, I can cross over. But that winter was freezing. Snow. It was a horrible winter. I thought I could swim over the Rhine, but no.

Then, the only way for me was to go into illegal forces that are not civilian forces that take the weapons. One of the things of illegal activities was we are citizens and we are helping our citizens that are in difficulties.

I got in contact with the resistance in Amsterdam because I had a sign to give and then somebody passed—a little man with a stupid face and poor clothes. He rang and he came in. He brought me a weapon, ammunition and I thought, “What have I to do with a weapon? When something happens and there is a German with an automatic weapon,

then my pistol is nothing.” What I thought was stupid, but...it was that simple way. Simple: you can’t believe that a gun can save you. It’s nonsense. Complete nonsense. Weapons are in fact never the solution. Talking, and to try to arrange and to crawl in his brains to find something out.

So I retook my activities and then. I have a military heart. That’s a side of my personality and I knew in all occupied countries were little organizations on military foot. And we had here in Holland the KP [Knokploeg, fighting group]. They had cars, they had petrol, they had little machine guns, infantry machine guns, handy. All these things. What they did was very dangerous, very dangerous. Most times, they were killed.

I came in that group. I tried to change my hair, my face, my clothing. I was used to weapons. So that is no problem. There was a building and in that building you had a lot of food [ration] coupons. There you go in that building with shooting and you get it out as quick as possible and then away. It is a criminal activity.

And then I got a contact and they asked me to wear the weapons and that special group that most times the most doesn’t come back alive. Where you go into town with the tram, you go that side more west, you come at the Leidseplein. There you had a prison. That was a prison the Germans used for heavy illegals.

There was an action and everything was prepared. You heard there the shooting at the Leidseplein. You heard the screams of the Germans and they sent immediately troops to surround them. And the whole group...I was in the reserve, the next wave, the last wave. We stood ready with weapons and cars to drive there. At the very last moment, the order came. We heard the shooting there, the machine guns. And then the commander said, “boys” (we were not a military organization, but there was one person who organized and others), he said, “go home.” And I never forget. I walked out and around the corner and I came on the—there’s a little park there—and there, the Germans came with two transport cars. There: standing our men, seven or nine of them, I don’t remember (it was very emotional), and they put the men in a row there in the park and *dut-dut-dut-dut* [machine gun noise]. They didn’t pick up the bodies; they left them. I thought, what a bad day. Finally, I came to England and I thought, they will welcome me. No way, they didn’t trust me. So I was again passing a secret service. They were asking so many things. Then you have the feeling, I’m not welcome. But when it was over, it was over. I got my primary training in Scotland. Then I went to Yorkshire and Wolverhampton. I was travelling all over Great Britain in the different centers. Finally in Ripon, Yorkshire at officers’ school.

Then I was sent over to Europe, but the end of the war was nearing. I did some fighting...it’s not so important.

But I was in England and V-J day came. Then the peace is there. What to do with peace, huh? [*Laughs*].

At the end of the officer's course, you had a final interview with two high officers about your profession: what you want to do, what you would like to do. Then I said to them...they knew of my illegal operations. The secret service of Britain is very good, they are keen. They asked me—no, I asked them, “I should like to be professional. Is that possible?”

“Yes, that is possible, but you have to be British and you are Dutch. Sorry. But, we could offer you full British honors.”

So, I was asking can I be a professional. He said, “Yes, your reports are excellent. We should like to have you, but you must be British. But you can start. There is a waiting period.”

I said, “How long?”

“It can be a year before you are sure that you have a British passport. Do you regret that that you lose your Dutch nationality?”

“No.” Why should I? I was happy there. And I found here in Holland a stinky policy and I thought it was better in England. But it's not true.

Then I said, “I'm very sorry. I'm not willing to do that.” The reason is that before the war, as a boy, my father was a contact for the people that fought in the Socialist army of Spain against Franco. That was a regiment of all Europeans in that. It was solidarity. But when they came back in their countries, they lost their nationalities. I remember that very well, because I said to the British, “I would like to really become a professional and British, but now or not.”

He said, “Sorry, we can't force that. You'll have to risk that.”

Then I said, “No, I don't risk that.” In Holland, we say “butter with the bread.”

Such was my life and, of course, I did important things, but you didn't know that it was important. You had an order to go to there and to notice the situation there, the terrain, how it was. And you gave it. It was finished. They didn't declare to you, “Would you be so kind to go to that and will you find out how Mr. So-and-So?” Just: “Do that.” Orders. To the point. All around, you don't know. In fact, it is not so interesting as people sometimes think.

But politics, I'm sorry, but it's a bit rough. I know it is not correct. They are stupid people. When I look at Bush. His talking—unbelievably stupid. And that it is possible in such a mighty country as the United States they take a president that is super stupid. I can't understand it. People can't choose; they don't know what they are doing. That's what is disappointing to me. The first thing I had in the United States...people can't think critically, clear. You must know what happens in the world. Then you have the

possibility to have a clear meaning. If you don't know the things and you don't bother about that. Then you have no choice, or a stupid choice.

I think the story of me is in fact only these illegal things. I am not proud about my fighting. Even I'm not proud about everything, but that has been a very keen situation these years that I came through travelling through Europe and find my way, always find something to do.

### **Notes**

1. See also Gert Hekma's essay in this volume explaining the changes to Dutch attitudes toward sexuality.