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Prologue

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Prologue

Cyrille Fijnaut

1. The Status of the Historical Research

Since the end of the 19th century much has been published about the Dutch police.¹ Most of these publications deal with contemporary police issues. They include many texts on the organisation of the police system, as a whole or its individual parts, as well as numerous publications dealing with all kinds of police work, ranging from the usual duties of maintaining public order and investigating crime to promoting road safety and lending assistance in an emergency. However, it is true to say that comparatively little has been published about the history of the police in the past couple of centuries.

Certainly in the past few decades successive national police forces have repeatedly used the services of amateur historians both inside and outside their own force to record their history. The publications that resulted from these efforts differ widely from one another in many respects. They range from comprehensive works that rely to a large extent on a serious study of the original source material to coffee table books that offer little or no insight into what really happened. It is also worth remembering that the abolition of the municipal police forces as part of the major police reform of 1993 produced a flood of texts about their history. As may be expected, the differences between these publications are even greater than those noted in the case of the national police forces. At one end of the spectrum are collections of *faits divers* peppered up with photographs, at the other end are well-documented texts about the internal organisation and operation of police forces at particular points in time.

¹ C. Fijnaut and W. Vos, *Bibliografie van de politie in Nederland, 1813-1988*, Lochem, J.B. van den Brink, 1992.

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Some publications are more difficult to pigeonhole, however. These include works about the history of some of the police trade unions. There are also a few biographical and autobiographical texts that police officers have written about their service in the police. Not forgetting a couple of journalistic books about former scandals in which the police, or at least certain police officers, played an important part.

So what about academic research on the history of the police in the Netherlands? This kind of research is exceptionally scarce. Even in the Netherlands professional historians have never been very interested in the subject. In the light of modern developments in social and political historiography, this is strange. Not only because since the 18th century the police have increasingly become a ubiquitous and ostentatious part of society, but also because police forces and individual police officers usually have a crucial part to play when there is a real struggle for political power going on, whether during revolutions and *coups d'état* (impending or real) or in times of war and Occupation.

Be that as it may, the absence of the subject of the police in the academic discourse of historians in the Netherlands is a fact. Is it because there has never been an eminent university professor who recognised the relevance of this subject and brought it to attention in his or her own research or in that of others? Is it because – unlike the army – the Dutch police do not really have a tradition of seeking to improve knowledge about their own past and, at least until recently, academics never felt prompted or challenged to research that past in any depth? Or is it because the history of the Dutch police does not in itself seem to be such an inspiring subject because it automatically comes across as being rather pallid compared with the history of the police systems in large European countries like Germany, France and the UK? It may of course be the case that the interaction of these three factors has been responsible for the rather paltry state of historical research.

The little academic research that *has* been conducted in recent years has largely been concerned with the history of the police during World War II and has focused on two aspects. First, on the organisation and operation of the German SS police on Dutch soil and the attempts to model the Dutch police on the SS. The main studies in this context are those by N. in 't Veld about the SS, by G. Meershoek about the Amsterdam police, by D. de Jaeger about the attitude of the police in the cities of the province of Noord-Brabant and by J. Kelder about the police training college in Schalkhaar.² The other focus of research is the role of the army in policing

² N. in 't Veld, *De SS en Nederland*, Amsterdam, Sijthoff, 1976; G. Meershoek, *Dienaren van het gezag; de Amsterdamse politie tijdens de bezetting*, Amsterdam, Van Gennep,

during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Besides the study by J. Smeets on the *Korps Politietroepen* (Police Troops) between the two World Wars, it is worth citing the work done by R. van der Wal on the military support of the police in the maintenance of public order during the period from 1840 to 1920.³

In a similar vein, mention must be made of the study by N. Manneke on the reform of the municipal police in Rotterdam towards the end of the 19th century and continued efforts to modernise this force in the course of the 20th century.⁴ The restructuring of the local police in cities like Rotterdam was in a sense a prerequisite for the gradual withdrawal of the army from the task of maintaining public order. It is well known that in many countries this development was associated with the expansion of national political intelligence services. Fortunately a few important historical studies have been written about these services in the past few years, about both the Dutch National Security Service (BVD) and the Dutch Foreign Intelligence Service (IDB).⁵

One study that must certainly not be forgotten in this context is the one by J. Joor, because she paints an excellent picture of how the police system operated in the period immediately preceding the annexation of the Netherlands as part of the Napoleonic Empire.⁶ In connection with this it should be mentioned that the history of the police, as it existed before the French Revolution, has only sporadically been the subject of academic research. In particular, F. Egmond has devoted some

1999; D. de Jaeger, *De houding van de Nederlandse politie tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog in de grote steden van Noord-Brabant*, Tilburg, Gianotten, 1999; J. Kelder, *De Schalkhaarders; Nederlandse politiemannen naar nationaal-socialistische snit*, Utrecht, Veen, 1990.

³ J. Smeets, *Het Korps Politietroepen, 1919-1940*, Soest, Klomp, 1997; R. van der Wal, *Of geweld zal worden gebruikt! Militaire bijstand bij de handhaving en het herstel van de openbare orde, 1840-1920*, Hilversum, Uitgeverij Verloren, 2003. See also J. Smeets' study on *De affaire-Oss; van lokaal conflict tot nationale rel*, Amsterdam, Wereldbibliotheek, 2001.

⁴ N. Manneke, *Uit oogpunt van politie; zorg en repressie in Rotterdam tussen 1870 en 1914*, Arnhem, Gouda Quint, 1993, and by the same author: *Korps zonder kapsones; geschiedenis van de Rotterdamse gemeentepolitie, 1340-1993*, Bussum, Thoth, 1993.

⁵ D. Engelen, *Geschiedenis van de Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, The Hague, Sdu Uitgevers, 1995, and B. de Graaff and C. Wiebes, *Villa Maarheze; de geschiedenis van de Inlichtingendienst Buitenland*, The Hague, Sdu Uitgevers, 1998.

⁶ J. Joor, *De adelaar en het lam*, Amsterdam, De Bataafsche Leeuw, 2000.

attention to the organisation and operation of the police as part of her research on organised crime and efforts to combat it in the 18th century.⁷

2. The History of the Dutch Police in the 20th Century: a Research Project

Back in the early 1980s the *Korps Rijkspolitie* (National Police Force), together with a few professors, tried to stir up the interest of historians in the history of the Dutch police. This initiative was fairly successful, but eventually petered out.⁸ An initiative of Jan Wiarda, Chief Constable in Utrecht since the 1980s and appointed Chief Constable for The Hague region in the late 1990s, met with more success in the long term. During his time with the Utrecht police he was faced with acute differences of opinion between police officers, and in a sense between police families, which had everything to do with the choices they had made during the Occupation. The police officers who had been active in the Resistance movement were diametrically opposed to those officers who in their view had been nothing more than collaborators. When they retired from the force they wanted to square their accounts with one another once and for all: who were “right” during World War II and who were “wrong”? This conflict prompted Wiarda to ask a well-known historian from Utrecht University, H. van der Dunk, to have one of his students carry out further research on the subject. This task was entrusted to J. Smeets and the results helped calm the situation within the force.⁹

This incident demonstrates that even after 40 years, the so-called German Period had not been relegated to the past in the Dutch police. The choices that police officers had made in their work at that time with regard to the policy of the occupying forces were still resented within the force 40 years on. This is understandable, since sometimes these were very fundamental, existential choices – life-or-death choices upon which hung their own lives and, in some cases, the lives of others.

⁷ F. Egmond, *Op het verkeerde pad; georganiseerde misdaad in de Noordelijke Nederlanden, 1650-1800*, Amsterdam, Bert Bakker, 1994.

⁸ One particular result of this initiative was the book entitled *Redenen van wetenschap: opstellen over de politie veertig jaar na het Politiebesluit 1945*, Arnhem, Gouda Quint, 1985.

⁹ J. Smeets, *Tussen plicht en geweten; een dilemma van de Utrechtse politie, 1940 –1945*, Utrecht, 1988.

But what World War II had done to the lives of individual police officers was just one aspect that concerned Wiarda. Another was the question of what had happened to the police as a whole during the war, i.e. to the system within which police officers had made, or were forced to make, their “right” or “wrong” choices. He thus got interested in the history of the Dutch police during World War II and began to look for ways of financing research on the role of World War II in the history of the Dutch police.

By the end of the 1990s things had reached the stage where the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the *Korps Landelijke Politiediensten* (National Police Agency) and the regional police forces of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague were willing to finance a research project on the history of the Dutch police in the 20th century. The task was then to get a history professor at a Dutch university interested in the project. For various reasons, that came to nothing. The result was that Wiarda, who knew I was very interested in the history of the police in Europe, approached me in 1998 at the KU Leuven in Belgium to head up the project.¹⁰ At the time I did not feel it was possible to manage such a large project from abroad and turned down the request. After I took up my post at Tilburg University in 2000 this argument no longer held water and I agreed to act as project leader.

The first step I took was immediately to contact the historians who, as was evident from their research, were already very familiar with elements of the history of the Dutch police. Their names have been mentioned before: J. Smeets, G. Meershoek and R. van der Wal. We then discussed how the project would be organised and it was decided that the research would be carried out from three different institutional points of view: the national police forces (Smeets), the local police forces (Meershoek) and the police trade unions, which have long been important players in police matters, for instance in the area of training (Van der Wal). Furthermore, it was agreed with the steering committee that had since been formed that the results of these three areas of research would be published separately and that I, as project leader, would produce a general integrated final study and an abridged version for the general public. The research project got under way in the course of 2000 and should be finished by 2005. The project is therefore well over half-way towards completion.

¹⁰ C. Fijnaut, *Opdat de macht een toevlucht zij? Een historische studie van het politiewezen als een politieke instelling*, Antwerp, Kluwer, 1979, 2 vols.

The 20th-century police literature was well known to us of course and can easily be consulted in several libraries up and down the country. The big question concerned the status of the unpublished source material and the journals: what was located where and under what conditions could it be consulted? A large part of the first year of the project (2000-2001) was devoted to drawing up an inventory of this source material and discussing the strategic consequences of the findings – for example regarding the choice of police forces that would be included in the research on the local police.¹¹ But that is not all that was done that first year. We also investigated the developments in historical research on the police in neighbouring countries over the past few years and considered what conclusions could be drawn from this for the benefit of our own research. We also made a start with collecting all the debates that have taken place in the Dutch Parliament since 1880 concerning the organisation and operation of the police. The following year (2001-2002) was wholly devoted to a study of the source material relating to the period 1880-1940, combined with reading the literature of that time. This was more or less finished by the end of 2002 and at the time of writing – the summer of 2003 – there are three interim reports about the aforementioned period: one about the development of the national police forces, one about the development of the local police forces and the third about the development of the police trade unions and police training. A great many archives have also been studied that are relevant to the organisation and operation of the police during and after World War II.

One point I would like to add is that another research project has been launched, spurred on to some extent by this research project. Its focus is on the history of the police in the former Dutch colony, the Dutch East Indies. This research, which is also partly funded by the Dutch police, is being carried out by M. Bloembergen under the supervision of E. Locher, and is also due to be completed by 2005. There are also plans afoot to get together some money to finance research on the history of the police in the other former Dutch colonies of Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles.

¹¹ The findings have been set out in the report published by C. Fijnaut, G. Meershoek, J. Smeets and R. van der Wal, *Drie ingangen op de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse politie in de twintigste eeuw; bibliografie, archievensgids, tijdschriftenoverzicht*, Tilburg, 2001.

3. The Aim of the Symposium

Against the background of this research project it is easy to understand why the impact of World War II on the Dutch police is such an important part of it. The role of the Dutch police in this war, and particularly their role during the German Occupation, is still a controversial issue. And not just in police circles, but also elsewhere. Where did the police, indeed individual police officers, stand when it came to implementing the policy that the Nazis were pursuing in the Netherlands? Particularly, of course, the policy on Jews and other sections of the population whose lives were made impossible within this regime. And which police are we actually talking about? The police forces and police officers from before the war? The supporters of the new regime who were transferred into the reorganised police? The auxiliary police units that were set up to support the new regime? And following on from these questions, there are of course others concerning what happened after the war. This raises questions both of a personal nature – for example concerning the purge of police ranks – and of an institutional nature, such as what happened to the police system that was built up during the Occupation.¹²

In view of the importance and complexity of these questions, it seemed useful to us to study the available source material and the available literature from the point of view of both the Netherlands and neighbouring countries. By comparing with what happened elsewhere during and after the Occupation, we felt (and still feel) that it is possible to minimise the risk that the interpretation of the data would inadvertently get bogged down in the prevailing opinions about what happened at that time in the Netherlands in police circles. The main reason for organising the symposium was therefore to firm up our own plans concerning the best way to research such a controversial period in the history of the Dutch police. Of course, we could have confined ourselves to studying the literature about what was going on in other countries after 1940. But a direct exchange of views about what had happened and about the literature on the subject definitely seemed to us to be just as important.

In selecting the countries that, in our opinion, it would be most useful to include in such a comparison, our first thought was of course to look at countries where the

¹² See, for example, B. Huizing and K. Aartsma, *De zwarte politie, 1940-1945*, Weesp, De Haan, 1986, and C. Dekkers and J. van Kasbergen, *Oranjemarechaussee; marechaussee tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog in ondergronds verzet tegen de Nazi-onderdrukking*, Naarden, Uitgeverij Lunet, 1987.

police system before World War II was broadly similar to the Dutch system. The other criterion was that these countries had also been occupied during the war. The choice was not difficult: Belgium and France. Another reason why this was the obvious choice was that research had already been conducted in these countries on the role of World War II in the history of the national police.¹³ But we also thought of Germany itself of course. Not only because there is still tremendous interest there in the role of the SS police organisation in the Nazi regime, but also because there is growing interest in the effect this regime and organisation had on the subsequent history of the German police in the 20th century.¹⁴ Another candidate was the United Kingdom. On the one hand, to examine what happened in police circles during World War II in an important European country that was not occupied.¹⁵ And on the other, because after the war the Dutch police no longer modelled itself on the French or German police, but in some respects on the English police.

Incidentally, this latter argument touches on an additional aim of the symposium, which has already been briefly mentioned in the preface. In the European Union

¹³ For Belgium see, for example, C. Fijnaut, *Een kleine geschiedenis van de huidige organisatie van het Belgische politiewezen*, Antwerp, Kluwer, 1995, and for France, J.-M. Berlière with L. Chabrun, *Les policiers français sous l'Occupation*, Paris, Perrin, 2001, and J.-M. Berlière and D. Peschanski (eds.), *La police française (1930-1950); entre bouleversements et permanences*, Paris, La Documentation Française, 2000.

¹⁴ For recent research on the SS police organisation, cf. F. Wilhelm, *Die Polizei im NS-Staat*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 1999; J. Banach, *Heydrichs Elite; das Führerkorps der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1936-1945*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 1998; M. Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten; das Führerkorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes*, Hamburg, Hamburger Edition, 2002; and H. Buhlan and W. Jung (eds.), *Wessen Freund und wessen Helfer? Die Kölner Polizei im Nationalsozialismus*, Cologne, Emons Verlag, 2000. Regarding the impact of World War II on the post-war history of the German police see, for example, H. Reinke (ed.), *... nur für die Sicherheit da ...?; zur Geschichte der Polizei im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt, Campus, 1993; A. Kenkmann and C. Spieker (eds.), *Im Auftrag; Polizei, Verwaltung und Verantwortung*, Essen, Klartext, 2001; K. Weinbauer, *Schutzpolizei in der Bundesrepublik; zwischen Bürgerkrieg und Innerer Sicherheit: die turbulenten sechziger Jahre*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 2003; and G. Furnetz, H. Reinke and K. Weinbauer (eds.), *Nachkriegspolizei; Sicherheit und Ordnung in Ost- und Westdeutschland, 1945-1969*, Hamburg, Ergebnisse Verlag, 2001.

¹⁵ See, for example, C. Emsley, *The English Police: a Political and Social History*, London, Longman, 1996; B. Weinberger, *The Best Police in the World: an Oral History of English Policing*, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1995; and R. Geary, *Policing Industrial Disputes: 1893 to 1985*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

more and more effort is being put into police cooperation between the Member States, particularly since the Treaty of Amsterdam. Policy documents on the subject often refer to the major structural and cultural differences between the national police systems but almost never examine their history, even though this goes a long way towards explaining these differences and certainly offers some points of reference for bridging them.¹⁶ Why the policy of the European Union in this area has such an unhistorical character is a question that one is justified in raising. Is this a consequence of the lack of historical research in the Member States themselves? Does it have something to do with the still very economic bias of this European project? Is it because Brussels tends to deal with sensitive issues like the organisation and operation of police systems in a much too pragmatic way? Do they simply not know that the police systems of the Member States largely stem from the French police system that was developed in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries in France, and was introduced in many neighbouring countries during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic dictatorship? Do they not know that the police forces of the Member States have often followed one another's example since that time when reforming their organisation and adapting their operation? Do they not know that inter-state police cooperation in Europe has a long but burdened history that still has an effect to this day on the attitude that countries take on the subject in international discussion forums?

If people do not know these things, the few police historians in Europe are to some extent to blame. With a few exceptions, they have not only ignored international or comparative research, but also neglected the recent history of the police in Europe.¹⁷ The symposium was therefore partly intended to stimulate this kind of research. Let us hope that this publication attracts a wider audience than historians.

¹⁶ With regard to this policy, see, for example, M. Anderson and M. den Boer (eds.), *Policing across National Boundaries*, London, Pinter Publishers, 1994; D. Bigo, *Polices en réseaux; l'expérience européenne*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 1996; M. Sabatier, *La coopération policière européenne*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 2001; and H. Aden, *Polizeipolitik in Europa*, Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998.

¹⁷ Cf. J-M. Berlière and D. Peschanski, *Pouvoirs et polices au XXe siècle*, Paris, Editions Complexe, 1997; C. Emsley and B. Weinberger (eds.), *Policing Western Europe: Politics, Professionalism and Public Order, 1850-1940*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1991; and C. Emsley, *Gendarmes and the State in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999.