

Chapter 10

The Underground Resistance

During the last two years of the occupation, the nation began to run out of practically everything. City people were approaching farmers requesting them to rent out a small garden plot. We too had a dozen or so city folk who grew potatoes and vegetables for their families on our farm. Farm commodity prices sky rocketed. There was almost no limit to black market prices. And finally after many years the financially strapped farmers all at once had some cash! Farmers all at once discovered they had a "gold mine" out on their fields. Whatever they grew was worth literally silver and gold! Hungry city people no longer offered farmers practically all their money, they also offered them whatever they had in the house, no matter how precious it had been to them before. Yet, in the midst of all this food shortage some people would still rather have a cigarette than a slice of bread, carrots or a few potatoes. So for the first time in our life we saw people grow tobacco. A cousin who grew brussel sprouts on share on our farm also planted a few tobacco plants. I still remember where they were growing: right around the manure pit. He always had been a heavy smoker. His name was Jaap Kalisvaart. He later became a leading elder in our church at Scbipluiden, but I am sorry to say that he died suddenly of a massive heart attack just when he had retired.

At first food coupons enabled people to obtain some groceries on a more or less regular basis. Put here too a black market soon developed. Also, there were many people who had gone "underground", and they need to eat as well, although none of them of course had any coupons enabling them to buy food. As a result of this, resistance fighters carried out daring break-ins at coupon offices, distributing them to the thousands who were hiding such people. Soup kitchens became a familiar sight as well, starting in the bigger cities. Soon soup kitchens were to be found everywhere, including in the smaller towns as well. Everywhere there were long lines of skinny and hungry people waiting to even get just a little bit of food. There was little nutrition though to really help them through the day. No wonder that country roads began to swarm with city people contacting farmers everywhere for something to eat. Sometimes people were lying on the side of the road, so weakened they could hardly rise anymore. During the "hongerwinter" of 1944-45, each day an average of 100 people would come to our farm each day, begging for something to eat: a slice of bread, a potato, a carrot, a piece of a turnip, cabbage, red beets, a few brussel sprouts, half a cup of milk, or whatever. That winter we had grown about two tons of sugar beets for our milk cows but none of them were eaten by the cows because the hungry people were all too glad to receive even half a sugar beet for their family.

Stealing became the order of the day, except we began to wonder whether this stealing to try feed families should still be called stealing. Many times when farmers went into the field to get their cows to the yard for milking, some people already were out in the field with a pail, trying to milk the tamest cow themselves. City people who used to look down on farmers now tried their level best to befriend them. Cows that were milked by them out in the field still had more than half of the milk left in their udders. This was because hardly any of the city people knew how to get all the milk out. They ordinarily left with the top part of the milk, and thereby also with the lower percentage of butter fat milk. At our place people broke in several times too. They knew we grew wheat and peas, oats and barley. But one time, we had some real thieves around who stole two bags of peas, a total of 160 kilograms. This is what we had laid aside to help some of our closest hungry friends. During the summer of 1944 people even cut off ears of grain in the field before it was ripe. Also, many of our potatoes were dug up while still very small. It became so common that during the last month of growing and ripening we stayed in the field watching during the noon hour. Even at night we took turns being there with our .22 rifle protecting our crops. I am sorry to say that experiences like that have brought us to look more or less skeptically at present day food bank sob stories.

One day when we had dug all the potatoes in the back of the field, (or rather, those that were left), and I was bringing them home on our horse drawn flat wagon, something occurred that I had hoped to avoid. I knew there would again be a number of people on the yard seeking to get some food. I had been memorizing what I would have to tell them when they would beg me to sell them some potatoes. And the story I was to tell them was that the very situation in which we farmers found ourselves. The occupation forces had informed all farmers to set aside a certain percentage of all they would raise and/or grow, to repay them for "taking care of our nation". This was very hard pill to swallow. And I doubt very much that any farmer did what they were told to do. We felt cornered to become "cheaters". My Dad had some difficulties with making up a story, but not the rest of our family. And as to our potatoes, the fact of the matter was that we had not been able to set aside anything of the quota assigned to us. Ordinarily the quota was 50% of whatever we grew or raised. I therefore had made up my mind to tell these people out on the yard waiting for the opportunity to buy some of our potatoes that it was impossible for me to do so whereas these potatoes were designated to be part of our quota. In fact, this load was both the first and the last of that quota - it wasn't even one quarter of the assigned quota. Even by trying to set aside this wagon load, we were already in deep trouble for failing to follow their orders.

No sooner had the people out on the yard seen me approach the gate leading to our farm and they were opening the gate for me and begging me to sell some of the potatoes to them. With all the conviction I could muster I tried to tell them the hard facts. It was of no avail. No one listened to our side of the story. Each of my "arguments" fell on deaf ears, or maybe I should say, they

counteracted with their own accounts of hunger and suffering. And so, when my horse came to a stop, the people just climbed onto the wagon and helped themselves without saying anything more. All my protesting fell on deaf ears. In no time the entire wagon load of potatoes was gone. I think that just about everyone of them put some money in my pocket or otherwise placed it in one of the empty bags. Now all of this meant that the fines the occupation forces had already given us for failing to deliver our initial quotas would lead to far more serious consequences. My father was very upset and worried, fearing the worst. Actually, we were all scared. Dad already saw himself so heavily fined that he could never begin to pay it - or worse - a jail sentence, hard labor, or one of us sent off the Germany. Right then and there I vowed to go to court on his behalf and put up a defense by telling what had actually taken place - that many of our potatoes had been dug up by hungry people before they had time to develop properly. Further, that half of our potato harvest was forcefully removed from the wagon that particular day. I'll never forget biking to court in The Hague as a man who should have been working in one of Germany's war factories, but who instead was a member of the Dutch resistance army, and now finding my way around to face some unknown judge. It just cannot be any other way but God's hand in it directly, that I even came that far without being hauled off to who knows where.

And all of this was unmistakably confirmed when the judge accepted our side of the account and let my dad off with a written warning that such a thing should never take place again, "no matter what". He even lowered the initial fines! I felt such a mixture of triumph and relief when riding back home, it was as if I was being carried on angels' wings. Our family was so happy and my dad especially was so relieved and thankful to God that tears welled up in his eyes. Somehow, my dad's nature and character was such that everything inside of him always seemed to clash with the hard realities of the times. He just could not see that there ever was a time where "the end would justify the means". At that time I did not know what "pious" was, but this would be a good picture of our father. And no doubt because of this model, more and more of these kinds of actions and transactions were being mirrored by mother and the older ones of the children. Dad had always been far more passive than aggressive, but during these special times he was fully resigned to rather not know too much at all of what was going on

This same quota system stood for the raising and slaughtering of a pig, calf, or cow for family use. Depending on the size of the family, farm families were allowed to raise and slaughter one or two farm animals for their own use. Again, this was on the basis that each animal allowed was to be butchered for personal use, but the farmer was also required to fatten one for the German military, who would buy the hog for market price. To the best of my knowledge, every farmer raised a few animals clandestinely, but a few farmers went out of line here. They had their eyes on the immoral but big and thriving black market. Even though by far the majority of farmers frowned upon and despised the black market, some farmers made a fortune on this type of business. For it could not

be denied that it was on the backs of hungry and starving people. Their rationalization was that during the Great Depression they received next to nothing for their products and now this was a way to even out their losses. A convenient excuse, but very unacceptable just the same. And when local underground members knew this was taking place, these farmers ran the risk of any number of their pigs, of whatever size, being taken away without receiving one cent. Also, they were at the top of the list for breaking in and taking away their black money to help support the work of the resistance fighters.

We, too, raised a few animals "illegally" but for altogether different reasons. We did it to help the local underground people feed some of their starving family members, and also to put something worthwhile into soup kitchens that had sprung up in Delft and other cities. And since I was the only farmer's boy of the group, it was also my job to approach farmers asking about the possibility of allowing their hog to be "stolen" just before the time came to ship the animal to the German military. Then at night I would go there with one other member of the underground and take the animal away. Although it was not much of a problem to kill a calf, it was a different story to stab a pig without too much noise, which was plainly impossible. This is why we always requested the farmer to make sure his animal was quite a ways from the house so he could tell the military that he "had not heard a thing". The farmer in turn needed plenty of blood on the ground as evidence of theft when he reported it to them. The treasurer of the local underground group would pay these farmers the same market price for their stolen animals as the military did for raising them for the Wehrmacht.

When Jan Bemmel (his real name was Piet Van Berkelaar, who was a policeman from Nijmegen in hiding at 't Huis ten Dorp for having illegal activities with Jews) and I were about to steal two hogs from the van Leeuwen farm, we suddenly realized that we had forgotten our knives. I had come with horse and wagon to take the dead pigs to our place for butchering. The only way was to get into van Leeuwen's kitchen and find a sharp knife, and it all had to be done in the dark. I still remember how my heart beat for fear of waking up someone of the approximately 18-20 people who were sleeping there. The only possible way I can explain that all went well there and being kept safe on the road during curfew time was that God had His angels around every move and step of the way. A horse and wagon on the road makes a lot of noise. I could easily have been met by anyone of the military or local police, whom we did not trust either. The squealing of the two pigs could and possibly should have aroused some of the van Leeuwen boys from their sleep.

I also should mention that the forgotten knife had not only been necessary to kill the pigs, but it was also needed to cut a rope. For Corrie's brothers had protected their barn from repeated break-ins by using of a rope that at one end was hammered at the top of the barn's door, and the other end was fastened to a 40 liter iron milk can placed on top of a high beam in their sleeping quarters.

Every morning they would untie the rope from the milk can in order to have the slack to get into the pig barn. When I brought Corrie home the following Sunday evening, I had to listen with a straight face to the younger children's' exciting story of two pigs being stolen a few nights before. Corrie's older brothers were suspicious and tried to corner me with various questions. They were sure it was an inside job.

The longer the occupation years lasted the more problems everyone began to face. Besides hunger and near starvation, one of the other problems was cooking and heating. In this respect too, the hunger winter of 1944-1945 was an unforgettable one. Holland had quickly run out of coal, gas, diesel, petroleum, wood and turf. Electrical power was becoming more scarce all the time as well. Candles, too, were very hard to come by. It was extremely hard on us people living in the corridor of Rotterdam, Hoek van Holland, and The Hague, because most of the other parts of Holland had already been liberated by the Allied forces (mostly Canadian battalions). Besides hunger and starvation, the population in this corridor was also plagued by severe heating problems. I do not know how many people died because of cold but some did. There was so little physical resistance remaining due to hunger, and now the cold made it worse. Whatever paper anyone in the city could find would be tightly made into a ball and along the way sprinkled with a little water, and thereupon used for burning in a stove for some warmth and cooking (if there was any food). On our yard we had quite a few trees when the war broke out, but by time the occupation years came to an end, they were all gone. You can imagine what trouble they would have trying to burn live wood! Several times we would find people sawing down trees on our farm without asking permission to do so. But knowing their circumstance and condition, what could anyone say or do?

In Remembrance of the Terrible Winter of 1944/45

Winter, four-upon forty five, Strong frost in this poor Land.
No transportation; cold, hunger, death ravaging us from border to beach.
Thousands leaving their homes, struggling for their preservation, discovering that
people in this country have hearts of gold.
Netherlands, Netherlands, our beloved Fatherland-Native Land.

When Corrie and I were visiting Holland in 1994, the Overvoorde family came to see us. There was a lot of reminiscing. Sjaan had cut out something she had written in one of the papers that sought to keep contact with those in the underground during the war years. Below is what she wrote about their stay at our place:

“Warm welcome.

During the war my husband and I and two small children had gone into hiding on a farm. The family was very good to us, yet I always had the fear that it was too much for them. This was especially so when our third child was born there, who cried so much.... The baby was only a few months old when, with our children, we went for a few weeks to our parents. On the day we would go back to this farm, it had snowed and was bitter cold. The journey lasted hours (25 km). And I looked against the reunion at the farm as against a mountain. How would they receive us again? Would I be able to sense that they would rather not have us after all? But you know what? When we at last arrived there with our numbed little ones, the whole family was waiting for us. They had warmed our rooms, for the baby there was a hot bottle in the cradle, and for the other children warm porridge was on the stove. This warm welcome is my most beautiful remembrance of this terrible time."

The proclamation by the German Director General of the Dutch police forces shows what risk was being taken by a policeman to leave the force and go into hiding. The same of course stood for those who opened their home for them.

Let me also relate an experience concerning one of the times I was taken away from the farm by a number of soldiers and our town policeman. Andrew and I were planting potatoes by way of a horse drawn planter. Andrew was steering the horse and I was sitting on the planter, head bowed down over a wheel that slowly turned around. This wheel had twelve equally spaced holes in it. Underneath the wheel were hinged flaps that would close off to temporarily hold the potato I placed in the hole. And while the wheel was turning, the tiny door would open and drop the potato in the furrow the planter had made. It was a very precise job and required quick handling. Especially so when the horse would occasionally pull a bit faster than he should.

All at once someone behind us spoke up in German. Neither Andrew nor myself had been aware of a number of soldiers and the policeman approaching us. But here they were, six of them in all. The officer in charge ordered me to get off and come with them. You can imagine how I felt. All at once all the forbidden things I had done during the months before just flashed through my mind. And just the day prior to this, I had brought around to various locations the nation's illegal paper called "Trouw" ("Faithfulness"). This paper later became one of the Dutch major daily newspaper and even today has a large circulation. I judged that for now all I could do was obey and go with them. On the way down to the farm I tried to get out of the policeman what they were up to. He did not know; they had not told him; all they had told him was to show them where Jan Moerman lived. I was angry at him for not doing more to somehow inform me that they were on their way to our farm. He said he was unable to, which was probably true. Andrew was allowed to stay

behind. This in turn made me more suspicious that they might have found out a few things about me.

Arriving at the farm I saw a few more soldiers waiting around, all carrying guns. I was told to get myself a bike and follow behind two soldiers leading and two on bikes riding behind me. I asked them to be allowed to go into the house and say good-bye to my Mother, who was standing in the doorway wondering what this was all about (I had in mind to somehow get away). They firmly refused. Then I told him we had no bike left, that other German soldiers had come and taken them all. This wasn't exactly true for they had left us with one, but we had hidden it so well that I was sure they would not be able to find it. They did not believe me and went out looking for it themselves. Soon they came back with a bike I had forgotten about. This was the one we only used when absolutely necessary. It had no rubber tires, just a strip of hard rubber around its rim cut off from an old truck tire. It was next to impossible to ride this thing for any length of time, and especially so on brick and cobble stone streets. I had no choice but to mount this bike and do what they told me. All kinds of people in town wondered what the soldiers were up to with Jan Moerman. At the center of our town where the "Valbrug" was located, I was instructed to get off and wait, being guarded by one soldier. They would not tell me anything else but that they would soon be back. I did a lot of thinking and searching and above all, praying. Who could possibly have told them? What exactly did they know about my underground activities? "Lord, you have helped me so often, help me again!"

I told the soldier guarding me that I had a relative living just 400 yards away who just the day before had a baby. It was Corrie's oldest sister, but this I did not tell him for fear of drawing Corrie into my activities, and now apparent predicament. I requested him to briefly let me go and see her. My plan was to try to somehow escape. I knew the area down there very well. When I was younger, I often went there for just brief times to see the rabbits of one of the boys in my class. Of course, the soldier trusted me as much as I trusted him, yet to my surprise he said, "Well, quickly then". I was ecstatic. Not for long though, for he followed me only five feet behind me with cocked gun. He even walked right into the bedroom where Corrie's sister and baby were. And within half a minute I was ordered to get out again.

Back at the bridge again, my wondering at the purpose of all this turned into worrying, and a fearing for the worst. They had shot people on the spot before as methods of reprisal for serious damage done by members of resistance groups, and according to them it "worked well" too! It brought enormous fear upon the general population. Also, it more and more tied the hands of those in the resistance movement from doing such things again. All of these things and more went through my head as I was waiting for the other soldiers to return. It was a tremendous relief when after half an hour the soldiers came back with a number of other farm boys, all of whom had never

been involved in underground activities! All at once I was sure that my situation wasn't serious for none of these boys were known to be involved in any illegal activities, and now I was one of them! At worst we might all be heading for forced labour in Germany, but Germany was far away, and who knows what chances there might be to escape before getting there?

The commanding officer instructed all of us to mount our bikes and follow the two leading soldiers, while the others would follow behind us, preventing a way to escape. I soon began to fall behind somewhat. This bike just wasn't too comfortable for a normal ride. They had no mercy with me though, I was to keep up with the others. After riding about five km I requested the other farm fellows to slow down a bit and they obliged. After riding another 10 km or so, we were told to stop. We saw immediately what they were up to: we were to dig holes for long poles to be placed in the ground. These projects were going on all around us. Whole fields were covered with these poles they had shipped in from the eastern part of our nation, where masses of spruce and pine trees grew. When these poles were up, all about 50 feet apart, they would attach electrical wires between them. The purpose of the effort was to electrocute Allied parachutists in case of invasion from the sea. For the roles had now been turned around! At the beginning of the occupation years it looked as if Hitler would soon be invading England, but toward the end of the war it became more and more apparent that not only from the east were Allied forces on the march, but also from the west! An invasion from England was more and more likely; it just had become a matter of time, and the Germans wanted to be as ready as possible. But then, this at the same time was one of the many things the Dutch resistance forces were trying to block and sabotage. At night we would go down to these fields sawing down as many poles as possible. And now, here I was drafted to put up more of the same. There was no way that I would freely do so.

When there was a change of guard, I informed him that I had to relieve myself. He told me to go ahead. What he had in mind though was to sit down right there at his feet. I told him, "No, I am going out there to the bank of the ditch." He did not seem to object, as he was busy giving instructions to other farm boys on how to go about placing poles in the ground. This was my golden opportunity. So, at the top of the ditch-bank, I lowered my pants for all to see, and thereupon "struggled" going down toward the ditch. But as soon as I was out of sight, I pulled up my pants, and bending over, ran for all I was worth away from the area. Finally I arrived at the same road again where I stopped someone and told him my story, and then asked him to get my bike which happened to be close by (away from the place where we were doing our digging). Within a minute, with a triumphant look on his face, he was back. I thanked him very much and immediately headed another way back to Schipluiden. Of course, the first part was all unknown territory. However, I knew that I was heading in the direction of De Lier, and from there it was not far to where Corrie's parents lived. Arriving there, I quickly told her what had happened and what

I was now up to. It meant I could no longer be at home, and certainly not at night because this was the German's preferred time to surround a farm and search the house and other buildings. We briefly discussed whether for the time being I should stay there. It was quickly decided that this would not be the best way either. With a prayer in our hearts, we kissed each other another big good-bye not knowing what would be next. In the light of everything, the "terrible bike" did not seem so terrible any longer. All at once, it had become a good way of transportation!

After riding a while, I stopped off at the farm home of Cor van de Kooy. He was Andrew's brother-in-law and lived on his parent's homestead. He was a man for whom I had deep respect, a very dedicated and committed Christian. He lived his faith. He had also been our junior youth leader for a number of years, and I was his helper for several years. After telling him what had happened, they both agreed to open their home to me. I well remember how, when I went to bed that night, I felt God's arms around me. **I POURED OUT MY HEART AGAIN THAT NIGHT IN THANKS, GIVING GLORY TO GOD. I ALSO TRUSTED THAT HE WOULD LEAD ME THE FOLLOWING DAYS.**

This time Corrie and I had only been able to part with prayers in our hearts. Otherwise we would always pray together before I left. With the amount of involvement in illegal activities these prayers for safety always came from the bottom of our hearts and were as sincere as we could make them. We always fervently hoped and prayed that soon again we could put our arms around one another, but of this we could never be sure. All of this did two things though:

1. It caused our faith to be deeply rooted in our great and mighty God.
2. It made our love for one another grow unbreakably strong.

Whenever Hitler came on the radio to inform his subjects about certain things, ordinarily at the beginning or the end of his rambling talk, he would throw in the word "Providence". When doing so he had more himself in mind than Almighty God. The first evening there in bed at Cor and Teuntje van der Kooy's, I knew within my heart who the real "Voorzienigheil" was: a different Almighty God than Hitler so often referred to. Again and again that I have never have ceased to be amazed at how God granted us His protection, how He provided for us direction, how He not only opened and closed doors but how He opened and closed eyes and ears as well. There is no doubt in our mind that God must have had angels around our homes, as well as around us wherever we went. For example, during the last year of Hitler's occupation, which included this terrible hunger winter 1944-45, we had given shelter to a resistance fighter and his family. And they in turn also had a young lady with them who was in hiding. This family lived in the big room which had always been off limits for us as little children. They ate from what we provided and during the winter we just kept our door open so some of the warmth from our stove would reach them. The old Dutch saying of "roeien met de riemen die je heb" (row with the oars that you have) was so

true and needed to be applied daily. The name of the family was Paul and Jane Overvoorde. Jane was the daughter of Corrie's aunt.

Paul and I would at times go out to cut some of these big spruce and/or pine poles which had been put up here and there in farmers' fields. We needed a lot of wood for burning during this hunger winter to cook and keep us warm. We had no more wood for burning; all of our trees had been cut down prior to this winter. And even some of our friends and relatives came for whatever was left. So together we decided that it was time to get some much needed wood. The place we went was to his brother-in-law, Arend Van De Perg, who was a farmer that could be trusted and had a field full of these poles with electrical wires hanging in between them. There was such a shortage of electricity even among the soldiers, that they had planned to only switch everything on when an actual invasion by the Allied forces would occur. Only one mile from his place were a bunch of soldiers, manning machine gun installations and bunkers. In the evening we would go down there to saw a number of these poles down, just here and there in between all the others so that they would not immediately notice it when they came around. We also would cut the wires. The next day, I would take our horse and wagon and we would load up a number of these poles and bring them home; all neatly covered up with something and hidden from anybody's sight. To saw them to the right length, we knew an old man who did some light work at our place regularly for a number of years. I can still see old Arend Van Perge-HeiiegoLiwe steadily sawing for hours on end. Of course, he helped himself to whatever wood he needed for heating and cooking.

The van Overvoorde family had two children and a third on the way when they arrived at our place. It had been arranged that when Jane would go into labour, I would need to go to Delft and bring their midwife to our place. There was no telephone and the midwife didn't know where they were hiding. And so it happened that one night Paul called me out of bed informing me that Jane had gone into labour and I needed to get the midwife and bring her to our place. It was already past 12 o'clock midnight and of course curfew time. Anyhow, I took my bike and started riding through town on my way to Delft. All at once, out of nowhere two soldiers with drawn guns jumped in front of me. They demanded I tell them what I was doing out on the street at this time of the night, and that no one was to be out at these hours of the night. Before I could answer, they also demanded that I produce my identification card. They told me that they could have shot me and now had a right to arrest me. Of course, I knew this. I told them that my wife was in labour and I was on my way to get a midwife. They saw I was nervous, but not from what they thought I was nervous about. They asked me some more questions but I told them that I was in a hurry, that "my wife" was close to delivery and I needed to get going. They asked me how long it would take before I would be back? They told me that they would be waiting there for me the half hour I would be away to verify that I had not been lying. And so, off I went without being stopped anywhere in all of Delft. This midwife had a special permit to be out at night. And so when we

returned and they demanded to see her permit, they were satisfied. The baby that was born that day was named after me.

Among all the other things that were getting more and more scarce during the closing years of the begetting (occupation) was a severe lack of horses with which to do our farm work. “Vorderen” (requisitioning) as it was called, was the order of the day. And nothing could be done about it. They needed our horses for their war in Russia, period. They probably needed hundreds of thousands of them. The problem was that all of us farmers needed our horses as much as they did, except for different purposes. We still had one good Belgium horse, for we were known to be producers of grain, potatoes, and peas for the military. However, we were not at all sure how long this “favour” would still last. We felt that at any time they could come and confiscate our last horse as well. Therefore, we had made a place ready way back in our field, where at a high part of our land a ditch had been partly filled in. With sticks and branches we had made somewhat of a hiding place for our horse. Also, farmers who were “privileged” to keep a horse still were ordered to share their horse certain times of the week with those who had none. Heavy fines were imposed if a farmer refused the order. The farmer with whom we were ordered to share our horse took advantage of the situation. He was very inconsiderate toward my dad. He demanded to have the horse way too often and kept the horse much longer than was arranged. He acted as if it was his horse instead of ours.

Joe Waardenburg, whom I have mentioned before, was staying with us at that time. He, too, had been drafted to work in Germany's war factories but had refused to go, and so he too had become an “onderduiker”. He insisted that he and I should “teach him a lesson or two” for mistreating my dad so badly and mouthing him off so often. We just could not stand it any longer that my dad so good natured and kind, understanding and patient, and always giving in. No sir, we were going to stop this, beat him up in the dark and teach him a lesson. We were going to do what we said “needed to be done”, and still today I thank our great God and merciful Father that He kept him in the house and had us wait in vain. Lord, forgive the foolish sins of our youth.

Being granted special permission to keep one good horse not only meant sharing it with other farmers to do their work, it also meant being drafted every now and then by the “Wehrmacht” to do work for them. Even their horses had been taken away to fight the now losing battle that was raging in Russia. This time one of us was ordered to plow up a large strip of land covering many farms. Not that all the land of each farmer was plowed up, but only a 300 meter strip or so. The idea was that when the Allied Invasion they feared from the west would take place, their tanks would not be able to cross this strip with all its ditches, creeks, and now fields of mud as well. These German orders always came by way of our town hall administration, bearing the sign and

signature of the highest German officer in our area. These documents always were registered letters and delivered personally by the Dutch police. And we hated it.

I have often searched my mind and heart how and why Andrew never got stuck with any of these things. Though it never dawned on me at that time, it must have been that when any such orders came or soldiers came around, he either stayed in the background or away from them altogether. It would be very understandable knowing what he had gone through during the five days of war, and thereafter his prisoner-of-war experience. Also, he had married July 29, 1942, and during the worst times of the occupation they carried the responsibility of caring for a set of twins.

Moreover, when they married, Andrew had become dad's hired man.

In any case, when this order was given my name was on it. It stated that I was being drafted for the plowing. I came up with all kinds of alibis ignoring the order to join the others plowing up the fields. In fact, several other orders had already been ignored. When this latest order I too disobeyed, one night during the evening supper hour a high official of Schipluiden's town hall came over to our place almost begging my dad to have me go the next day and join the others who were plowing up the fields. If my memory serves me correct, it was the mayor himself. He told us how a number of officers late that afternoon been over and were just furious that we had not shown up. At first they blamed him for not instructing us to do so. When he told them that many registered letters had gone out, they told him "this farmer better be out tomorrow or otherwise his farm will go up in flames."

Early the next morning several German soldiers were out on our farm, scolding and threatening my dad. I came to my dad's defense, for certainly it was not his fault; it was mine. I informed them we had no plow. We didn't, kind of. We had taken the plow apart and thrown some parts in the ditch at one location and other parts somewhere else, always remembering exactly where. They did not believe me. They said, "You have land which you plowed this spring, so you do have one". I told them that someone had taken our plow away. Still they did not believe me. They said they would find it because we had hidden it somewhere. Well, it wasn't long before they called me; "they had found our plow" they told me. What they had located was a "greppel ploeg", something we used to cut out small trenches in the field for the water to run to deeper trenches and from there into the ditches. Certainly no one could plow with something like this! I was informed in no uncertain terms to get our horses and start plowing for them. When I told them we had only one horse they said "We'll get one from somewhere else; we'll be back in a little while". So off they went, but not before they gave me a good hard kick in the rear, so to speak.

And yes, they were right for within a hour they were back with a horse. No more excuses. With all kinds of threats they sent me off the farm and onto the road. I had to travel about 3 km to get

there. When I arrived the others who had already been there for many days told me, "So finally they got you too!" When they saw what kind of a "plow" I had come with, they saw trouble. I did too, but what could I do? I set the "plow" as narrow as possible in order to cut trenches as shallow as possible. The officer in charge was furious when he saw what I was doing. I informed him that this was not a plow but a trench cutter. He said, "I don't care what it is, just make the trenches much wider." He looked over the thing himself and again I had no choice but doing what he told me. The whole situation was very tense and I watched him and his gun closely.

Yet, what was I doing? I was helping to dig graves for our friends who would be coming soon to liberate us. My work in the resistance and underground was to sabotage as much as I could. And here I was, doing the opposite! That evening I talked with the commandant of our underground resistance group. I told him of my plight, and yes, he sympathized with me. "Well, what do you think we can do?", he asked. I laid out my plan before him. I had in mind to go that very night to the field where all these plows were and take one wheel off each plow, so all farmers would be in the same boat and no plowing at all could be done anymore. Would I dare doing this? I told him I would. Only one thing: I needed someone to help me do this job. It was agreed upon that at night I would go to Corrie's place and together with the under-commandant of our group who was there in hiding, leave the farm around midnight and see what we could do. That particular evening it snowed a little. Our bike tracks were clearly visible. But angels were at work. We managed to get 16 of the 17 wheels off. The other one was so rusted on we gave up. We carried all the wheels to the river which was only about 1500 yards away and deposited all of them in a pile on the side, hopefully to retrieve them when we would be free again. By now it was four o'clock a.m. and we headed the 5 km back home. Jan Bemmel (real name Piet Van Berkelaar) went to 't Huis ten Dorp and I went home, awaiting the new day.

The next morning I went back to the place we all been plowing the day before as if nothing had happened, that is, outwardly; though inside I was filled with apprehension at what was to come. When I arrived at the place, I was met by a number of farmers who been out there in the field already, planning to continue their plowing. They excitedly told me what they had found. I played along, telling them that I did not believe it until I would see it with my own eyes. As I walked on they called behind me, "The guys of the underground must have done this. Go and see for yourself." I can even now still hear them say it. In the meantime, several other farmers had arrived as well. When they were all there, we discussed what we were to do. It was quickly agreed upon that the only thing we could do was to immediately inform the German officer in charge of work what we had found. There after we all went with him to show what had happened. I had already lifted a prayer to God, and the snow in the meantime had disappeared: there were no more tracks visible! He told all of us to come to his "office", just a shack of a thing. I can still see him standing in the doorway with a big frown on his face, contemplating what to do next. By way

of his pacing around, we could see he was getting angrier by the minute. All at once he looked at all of us standing in a semi-circle around the door way, and his eyes came to rest on me. I tried to remain as calm and ignorant as possible. But right out of the blue he said, "Hannes, you come in here." As I obeyed his order, I could "feel" the eyes of all the others resting like a deadweight on me, following me in. He slammed the door closed and with fire-flashing eyes he said, "You did that, didn't you!"

I have never been requested to take a lie detector test, but had it been the case then and there, I would have failed miserably. I would have fallen through cracks half a meter wide! Yet, with a face as straight as possible, I sought to deny every word he said. I maintained I knew nothing about the whole thing, which of course, was as big of a lie as anyone could ever have told. God knew my heart, my conviction, motivation, attitude, circumstance, situation, and also understood my predicament, and now has forgiven me. (It wasn't that I confessed my lying right away thereafter. It came years later.) As the officer shoved me back out of his office-shack, he told us all to be back in the afternoon with another plow, under the threat of having our farms going up in flames and being shot as well. How I dared, I still don't know and perhaps will never know, but after we were told this and the officer had gone back into his office-shack (no doubt to make telephone calls to his superiors), I sought to persuade every farmer to throw every old plow they had on their farms into a ditch and all of us go back in the afternoon empty handed. I encouraged them it would be the only way to call his bluff and together stand strong. Well, it did not work. All but one rejected the idea. Everyone was frightened to the core. I could understand it because for most of them it was their first direct and personal encounter with a big mouthed German officer.

On our way back home, this farmer's son and I talked over the idea at greater length, looking in depth at the dilemma we faced. At last we decided it would be useless to fight this thing just with the two of us. If all the others would come back with a plow except us two, we would be taking a foolish and grave risk. On my way home, the thought came to my mind that I might already had done so. I also should mention that we had not been allowed to take our horses home. Some soldiers would watch them for us. How they expected us to bring a plow back I do not remember, for to the best of my knowledge none of us had another horse to drive out there. I do know though that when I arrived on my bike back in Schipluiden at the place where I could see my parent's farm, I saw a military motorcycle with side car entering our driveway. This really scared me. What would they be up to? Many things flashed through my mind. And the first thing was, "What about my Dad? Would he be the one to pay for what I had done? Was this threat at last real? It also flashed through my mind, "God! What must I do now? Help my dad and mom and whoever else will be there to face these officers!" From this vantage point on the farm, I quickly got off my bike and ran with bike and all through the small gate leading to the Albert Klarenberg home. The

family of course was very well known to us. Also, for quite some time now, he had come over each noon hour to have a meal with our family. Yes, he was the one I could trust. I threw my bike behind some of the big shrubs around there, rang the bell and without waiting for anyone to let me in, walked into the house. I informed whoever came to meet me that I did not dare to go home where I had just seen German officers enter the lane way. In a few words I told them what had happened out at the field where we had been plowing, knowing full well that it would immediately become known any way. I asked them permission to go upstairs from where I could have a full view of my parents' farm. Would I now see flames destroying our home? The Klarenberg family came up to watch with me. These were very tense moments. Sometimes I would fear they heard my heart pound. We waited there nearly an hour. Then to our great relief the motorcycle and side car drove out of our lane and back into Schipluiden again. I waited until they had passed the Klarenberg home and thereupon I grabbed my bike and went home.

But what a consternation I found there at home. Everyone was still in a kind of shock, my dad more than anyone. I felt so bad for him especially. He always was such a quiet and peace loving man. So conscientious in all things, so pious, so faithful, such a deep believer; and now this ... all my fault! The risk I had taken to stop this plowing, thereby helping the Allied invasion forces which were soon to come, had backfired right into my face and fallen on our family. I thought, yes, it is good and necessary to be patriotic, but there are limits. Had I gone beyond these limits? I must have. I was told they had threatened my father with their revolver. We had come upon a situation where there was no choice left but to comply with our enemies' instructions. And so that same afternoon, I too went back plowing for the enemy, just like all the others. Every one of us had "found" a plow, some of them being taken out of creeks and ditches. If God would understand my reasons for sabotage and lying, He would also understand my feelings about doing what was wrong: working against the best interest of our liberators. Yes, angels were out there again! They were there with dad and mom, my sisters, Riek, and also with me. Riek was the young lady who was in hiding with Paul Overvoorde and family. She had joined them to assist with the translation and communication with the officers. I was told that if it had not been for her, the fury would have been worse. She helped my dad say the right things, whether he said the right things or not, but she "translated" it in the way she thought the reply should be. She was God's "angel" there at that very hour.

On certain occasions our Allied friends would go on low flying bombing raids. From the sea they would swoop down on the Dutch coast, just clearing tree tops and houses. However, before being able to do this, they had to first encounter the German firing lines of anti-aircraft guns set up on the coast itself. In order to avoid this as much as possible these formations of fighters and bombers would fly in upon the Dutch coast by almost skimming the very waves of the North Sea. This way they were inland before any serious firing could be done out at sea. Once these

squadrons were over us all hell broke loose as far as exploding grenades right above our heads were concerned. The sound of this was deafening. It did not happen often, but when it did we knew it. One time this very thing took place on a Sunday morning when we were just home from church. Some of the pilots were clearly visible in their cockpit. We lived only 15 miles from the coast. We later learned that they were on their way to bomb the Philips factory complex at Eindhoven. It was reckless to stay outside during such times, for hot shrapnel came down everywhere. Once when I was working in the corral out on the road where my dad had rented land in the Zouteveense weg, a couple of planes were flying low overhead just above the low hanging clouds. I could not see any plane, but it was not merely flying above cloud cover on their way to somewhere else -- I had concluded it was Allied planes looking for something to bomb or spray with machine gun fire. No sooner had I concluded this when grenades began exploding very low above my head. Not only was the sound deafening, everything vibrated. In the corral there was a 25 ft long fence for the cows' protection against the wind. I literally threw myself against this fence. Whether it was of any protection or not I do not know. All I know is that I came away from there alive when it was over. The grenade explosions lasted 10 minutes and were all around me, and I was very frightened that I would be killed. I know that I cried louder to the Lord for protection than ever before. It was only when I rode back home that I discovered there was somewhat fresh cow manure on my feet, pants, shirt, and hands. During the next milking time we found all kinds of shrapnel in the corral. I was told when I arrived home that I was as white as a sheet. Of course, I could not see this, but I knew that I was still shaking all over.

Thinking back about a number of these episodes, I must say that I more fully recall my crying out to the Lord for help and protection than remembering loads of gratitude directed heavenward. Sure, I was deeply thankful to God for sparing my life over and over again, but I did not spend time pouring forth praise from my heart. As God spared my life over and over and enabled me to later grow in His grace, I came to see this sin of omission. I therefore even now here pause to do so once more:

Thank You, O Sovereign God, for hearing these cries of desperation to direct the red-hot shrapnel away from me when I rolled there against that fence. And please, forgive me for always being more ready to cry for help in such times of fear and panic, than taking generous time to express my thanksgiving and praise for this protection. I vow to never forget Your gracious and mighty hand during these special years of my life. You taught me so much during these times, though I must admit that I began to learn these lessons only years thereafter. Please, forgive me for this as well. I love You, Lord, with all my being. This belated prayer I offer to You in the Name of my Redeemer and Master, Jesus, the Christ. Thank You, for Your great patience with me. Your love never fails. Amen.

Whether bombers came by day or by night, it always was my deaf sister Mina who was the first one to warn us that there was activity in the air. At night she also was always the first one to get out of bed and arouse all the others as well. Her sensitivity for vibration was so sharp. If we did not get up right away when the canon fire became heavy, mother was always there to make sure we would not linger.

When Hitler began to fall back with his drive into Russia and lose territory elsewhere as well, his orders to silence the radios were being fanatically followed by those who came searching for them. More and more it became clear that he did not want any of us to note with glee that things turned against him. But the more he was losing, the more we rejoiced. Also, they tried everything possible to interfere with our forbidden listening, trying to scramble BBC airwaves. People had simply not turned in their radios. They had only hid them in most unusual places. People who understood English were in high demand during those days -- they had become everyone else's ears. The volume of course was being kept to a minimum. People would press their ear against the radio trying to hear any news at all from the Allied side. The few people who had an expensive radio prior to the outbreak of the war had a clear advantage to hear more than anyone else, but we were not among them. The German Information Service, as it was called, only tried to do an effective job in twisting the news and trying to mislead us. According to this "news service", battles with Allied planes always resulted in downing nearly all of them, while German losses were either very few or nil. Soon everyone knew that nothing could be believed from the German Information Service.

As the tide began to turn against Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini, more measures to limit our freedom were announced. Radio searches became the order of the day, and curfew hours became longer. This was especially so when Allied planes had been shot down and the crew or some of the crew had escaped. Masses of people were arrested and sent to the infamous concentration camps. Retaliations became harsh and the cruelty at times indescribable. I cannot tell them: they are too gruesome. Being sentenced to death by the military became common too, and also being killed on the spot without any trial. Hunger and starvation was closing in on Rotterdam and The Hague, the two large cities around us. Fathers and mothers did anything and everything to keep their children alive. This can explain why we have never been able to throw crusts of bread away.

Below is a picture of a group of officers who had become the bane of the Resistance in another part of our country, namely the province of Limburg. They were called the "Auenstelle-Maastricht", or the "Sipo Maastricht" (Gestapo and Secret Police). In order to give a picture of what took place there, I will translate a few paragraphs of the entire article as found in the VRIJ NEDERLAND, April 30, 1994.

"Right away Sipo obtained a widely sinister reputation. Especially the name P. Nitsch (left in picture) was greatly feared because of his cruelty and sadistic attitude. His name became a synonym for Sipo, for fear and hate. Originally he was appointed to combat various activities that had sprung up against German occupation forces, but his activities were soon narrowed down to searching for and fighting against organized resistance fighters and espionage. With total dedication he gave himself to this work, completely blind for the sorrow he brought upon his victims and their loved ones. Without a sign of any human consideration and with unrestrained sadism, he committed one cruel offence after another. His boss, Strobel, (picture) repeatedly called him to more revolting activities. Occasionally a few atrocities leaked out from such scenes of torture which were carried out during the evening hours and nights in the famous torture chambers of the Sipo building.

After the war his colleague Elsholz declared that Nitsch by way of his avowed sadism was able to get to the bottom of several underground activities and espionage cases. 93 people of which Nitsch was the "Sachbearbeiter" died in concentration camps. Besides these there were hundreds of other people sent down there who returned home only as lifelong invalids or mentally totally broken. Besides this, Nitsch took an active part in many murders that were committed, ten of which he himself carried out.

Concerning his boss, Strobel, not much has come out in the open because he was able to disappear from the scene at the end of the war. But this much is known: with the Sipo boss, crimes against humanity went from bad to worse to unbelievable. Here, too, just as with Nitsch, Strobel maltreated many people and committed a large number murders. Elsholz characterized his chief as a sadist without any sense of justice, and further as an underhanded, false, and unscrupulous man. Under his reign the "Auenstelle Maastricht" arrested more than 3500 people, most of whom were treated mercilessly.

During the years of the occupation churches everywhere were packed. Yet at times German soldiers would just walk in and search for individuals who were not supposed to be in Holland any longer. A few soldiers would walk in through the main door while others would stand guard at the other doors. The minister immediately would stop preaching, for everyone immediately stopped listening. All eyes were on the searching soldiers. They would also climb the tower itself. I know at one time I had a close call, but I can't remember the details. Also, during these years our General Synod would prepare "Pulpit Proclamations" for ministers to read to their congregation. They always expressed concern at what the "Bezettingsmacht" was illegally carrying out. Of course, it was strictly forbidden to write, distribute, or even read them at home. Many ministers chose not to speak them for fear of being arrested and sent to a concentration camp. I do not know

how many of them our minister read. Most of them decided whether they would read them or not based on the severity of the criticism leveled in these proclamations. But even though the authors of the documents ran the greatest risk of being arrested, the occupation forces sought to avoid antagonizing the whole Dutch Reformed Church. Ordinarily it was the most outspoken ministers who bore the brunt of punishment for these Pulpit Proclamations. The minister in our town's Christian Reformed Church, Dr. J. De Koning, was hauled off to a concentration camp and never came back. But his arrest was not because of the writings, rather he had hid downed Allied pilots in his home and helped them be transported to other places.

Dr. Visser 't Hooft, who later became the first Secretary General of the World Council of Churches, published a book containing all these Pulpit Proclamations. At one time I had a copy. It had a soft green cover, and I would love reading them occasionally. It is possible that I gave it to the Library at the Western Theological Seminary. It is a booklet of great personal historical significance.

During these years of the German occupation a small number of people managed to cross the English Channel by way of a small outboard motor boat. They were known as "Engeland Vaarders". The name itself automatically demanded great respect, for it spoke of bravery, daring, and heroism. A band of people from our town succeeded in doing so as well. Since Schipluiden is divided by way of a canal, a number of our town's people were "schippers", or "boat-folks". One of them who made his living hauling coal, sugar beets, winter carrots (for the cows), potatoes, and vegetables had brought a number of these "Engeland Vaarders" by way of a network of canals to a place where they could hoist the outboard motor boat out of the hull of a ship and send them off across the sea. They always hid their own ship in the reeds along the sea shore until it turned dark. I would like to refer you here to a booklet entitled, "Gedenkschrift – Gevallene Schipluiden". Among those who reached England was Kees Waardenburg, a fellow who was already an officer in the army when the war broke out; he was three years older than I was. In England he became a pilot who made numerous bombing raids into Germany. He received one of the highest British war decorations.

One action of sabotage our group carried out in our town almost backfired on us. Such things had taken place elsewhere as well. It was often difficult to foresee what the consequences were to be. One thing was known: reprisal, retaliation and revenge were being used increasingly to counteract the underground's activities. It was the Wehrmacht's way to frighten the whole population. It reminded us of an old Dutch saying, "Een kat in het nouw maakt rare sprongen". (A cornered cat makes strange jumps). The military saw harsh measures as an effective and perhaps airtight way to end these activities. It was their way to tie the resistance movement's hands behind their back. Yet our objective more and more was to make it easier for the Allied forces to liberate us. Hitler

was losing left and right and the Allied forces were gaining ground. The Wehrmacht's handwriting was clearly on the wall and Hitler's days were numbered. And so the underground now was trying to prevent the German military might to set up stronger defenses in our area. Yet while the Allied advances made them jittery, in turn the German's desperate repercussions made us at times almost feel the same way.

Thus when the occupation forces one day were making preparations to block off a main road in our area, we felt that we had to prevent this as much as we possibly could. These barricades were not just ordinary obstructions. They would build huge cement blocks ten feet high, erecting one on the left side of the road and the other on the right side, leaving a narrow opening in between through which a truck could still pass. However, they had another cement block ready to be placed in between the two others. How they would move this huge monster in between the two we do not know. All this the underground forces sought to prevent, or at least slow down. Other groups in other places had been doing this as well, and we felt it was our calling and moral obligation to do the same. The particular road they were about to block in our area had on the one side a wide canal, and much lower down on the other side, a very wide ditch. The drop on that side was at least 29 feet. So one day, truckloads of cement were being unloaded just outside of town. We had not seen a bag of cement for nearly 5 years! Quickly the alarming news spread throughout our town. Just as fast a meeting was held to determine what we had to do in this situation. The consequences were carefully weighed: letting them go ahead vs. the possible reprisals they might take on us for sabotaging their work. Actually, the latter was of much greater concern than the danger the underground members would personally place themselves in while carrying out the job. At last it was decided that we could not let the military go ahead. I was instructed to find out whether a German guard was posted at the place. There was none and so that very night all the bags of cement were thrown into the canal. Personally, I was not involved in doing the job. I do not remember for what reason. But I do know that my sisters the next morning talked about Paul Overvoorde's coveralls stiff from cement.

The next morning was a very uneasy morning. When the Wehrmacht discovered what was done, they were furious. In no time a bunch of officers were at our town hall, threatening the mayor and some of the other town elite with death "unless the culprits who had done this would within 24 hours give themselves up to the area commander". Failing this, they would arrest the town's three clergymen and physician, "bringing them to the grassy area in front of the town hall to be shot". All of this "unless those who had done this hideous and cowardly thing would come forward by 12 o'clock the next day." They also threatened to set fire to the churches, town hall, and houses where the mayor, ministers, and doctor were living. With their losses of territory becoming so enormous, the underground itself felt they were bluffing. Others felt they might just carry out their threats. Our minister made sure that his whole library would be safe, as well as church documents,

furniture, etc., by getting all kinds of town people to take it from his garden and bring it to a safer place. And so the wait was on. Would they dare doing what they was threatened? This was on everyone's mind and the talk of town. In the meantime, those whose lives were supposed to be in danger left town prior to the deadline they had set.

The local underground group was quite sure the German Commander would be realistic enough to consider that indeed their days were numbered. Everyone could see they could not hold out much longer, perhaps half a year, but no longer. Everyone also hoped and prayed that this way cooler heads would prevail. (It was exactly 6 months later that liberating large-truck columns of Canadian soldiers rumbled through town.) At this late hour of their battle, the underground forces were quite sure that these threatened reprisals would not materialize. We figured that they would think about a day of accountability for such insane actions, and that such murderous acts would come before some Allied military court.

What did weigh heavy on us was that a large number of the town's people were turning against the resistance fighters. All town people instinctively knew that only the men of the underground group would do such a thing. They also wondered out loud who they might possibly be? It reached even further than that! Some people had a pretty good feeling who a few of them were. And now with the fear reaching this level, would some of the town's people report these names to the German authorities? Corrie too was challenged by someone in her girl's group, implicating me as one who had helped throw the cement in the canal. Yes, we were now also facing the loss of community understanding, sympathy, and their much needed support. We were so grateful to God that the Commander's threats were indeed idle words and never saw the light of day. They must have considered their own future situation. Also, the road barricade never materialized. Perhaps they too had run out of cement.

In our area the van Leeuwen farm stood out as an isolated place. Actually, three farm families were living there. It was one of the very few locations way off the main road where the ground was hard and solid. Centuries before this was the place where Castle "Dorp" was located. Also, from the road, the lane way leading to the farm could easily be missed. Furthermore, because of the patriotic attitude of the parents, they were often requested to open their house to people who had to go into hiding. Jan Bemmell was there, who was a former policeman in Nijmegen who went into hiding because of his hiding of Jews. He was a very valuable man and one of the first ones in Schipluiden's underground group. He was our second in command. Like all others in our group, he too was a strong Christian. One day he asked Corrie's dad and mom whether he could bring over a downed American pilot "just temporarily". After weighing the consequences, it was decided he could. And so here on this farm were several men whom the Germans were eager to capture. Surely, God's angels were active there as well. (Corrie will relate more about this). Stun

guns, revolvers, and ammunition were hidden there, and, under a large stack of straw bales, a milk truck was hidden. I should mention that it was here on the van Leeuwen's farm where I had occasion to try out my very rusty English lessons after more than ten years.

When visiting Holland in 1994, we had occasion to visit two of our underground comrades and their wives: Paul Overvoorde and Piet van der Windt. Paul is 80 years, and Piet is half a year older than I am. We are so thankful to have been able to have this visit with Piet and his wife and pray with them, for Piet has now been called into the Lord's Presence. Actually, we look upon it as a miracle he still became this old, for he was unable to work regularly since shortly after the liberation of Holland in 1945. All the stress and strain of the underground had been too much for his heart. Paul reminded me of other underground activities I had completely forgotten about. I believe my forgetfulness stands to reason because we immigrated shortly after the ending of the war, while they continued to live and labour with the thoughts, memories, developments, and conditions these years had left upon them. Corrie and I had our own special challenges and experiences to cope with in our new land. It was not as though the underground experiences were all at once erased from our minds. They had become too deeply imbedded in the subconscious. For approximately 19-20 years Corrie had to arouse me from my sleep because I was swaying my arms, kicking my feet, or groaning in my dreams.

One day Piet was caught delivering packs of our newspaper "Trouw" (faithful or loyal). Basically, this newspaper informed our population of Allied advances and German losses, while challenging everyone to remain faithful and loyal to the cause of winning the war. When we found out that this had taken place, it presented a grave situation for a lot of other people. The interrogators had special ways to torture people not cooperating with them, revealing things the Gestapo insisted on knowing. I was instructed to go to Delft and keep my eye on the police station to determine whether he might be temporarily held there, and to immediately inform the others if he was being transported to the infamous hold-over cell in Scheveningen. Of course, it was folly for the same person to ride around the area more than a few times. I therefore had to dress myself differently every time. Sometimes, I would get dressed as a very dirty farmer wearing wooden shoes, other times as a gentleman farmer, or business man with dark glasses, without glasses, long coat, short coat, old coat, no coat, or whatever. Even during our last visit Piet reminded me that he knocked as loud as he possibly could at the basement jail window while I rode past without hearing or seeing him at all. Later, one of the policemen informed us that he was held there; we offered him and his family safe hiding if he would get a chance to free Piet. This indeed did happen.

Bikes and parts of bikes were precious commodities during the years of the occupation. Bikes were the underground's only mode of transportation -- they were our life line so to speak. Good tires were unheard of during the last two years. Yet those who befriended the occupation forces

still had the luxury to have new tires on their bikes. It made us not only jealous, but also furious at times. One person who very often had German soldiers over to his farm and duck sanctuary (he was married to a German woman) always rode around on a transport bike with brand new tires. He was even allowed to ride around during curfew hours. He often visited our socialist gardener neighbor, and when he did he would always park his transport bike against the buffer where the railway parked their empty railroad cars. He then would walk the 400-500 yard to his friend's house. All of this was just beyond our orchards with only one other farm field in between. One evening he parked his bike there just before dark, and though the Law of God says, "You shall not covet", I must confess that I surely did. The temptation to get this bike for our needs in the underground became too much for me. For a long time already my mind had worked overtime rationalizing. Our group simply needed this bike to do our work. And now, all at once, I saw my way "clear" to get it. The only question was, how much time would I have? Would he stay there long enough until it was altogether dark?

Jumping the ditch between our orchards and our neighbor was no problem, but crossing the field while it was not completely dark called for crawling and crouching. Then I had to get up right in front of the railway station, where another family lived, and take a run at the wide ditch there, making my way to the place where the bike stood. When I had jumped the ditch the station-master must have heard something for just when I reached the shack behind his station, he opened the door to see what was going on. I quickly hid under his rabbit pens but not before I had grabbed a loose iron bar just in case. He might have seen something but decided it would be safer inside that to take a look around outside. Then I ran to the transport bike, jumped on it, rode past the railway station and on through town to Piet van der Windt's parents' home. I knew there was a box in the big carrier on the front, but I had no time to check what was in there. Opening it up we discovered new carpenter tools which no one even dared to dream about anymore. To our further surprise we found a box full of whiskey bottles. Sometime later I brought them all to our family physician who was more than happy to receive them for his medical work. I recall he said, "I will not ask you how they came into your possession. I only want to thank you very much. This will be of great help to me in my practice."

We dismantled the bike that evening, hiding parts everywhere. Furthermore, it was decided that I should take the frame home because it was too large to hide anywhere else. (We hid it in the haystack.) When at last I walked home, going mainly from one backyard to another, just before arriving at our own road I picked up the voices of men talking loudly. I hid under the shrubs at the Klarenberg front yard and waited there for them to pass just 19 yards in front of me. It was the man who "lost" his bike and a few of his German soldier friends. My heart beat wildly. As soon as they had gone far enough I followed behind them to go home. The next day this was the talk of town. Basically, everyone rejoiced that someone had stolen his transport bike.

Throughout these years the Providential Presence of God has been around us. I would be sorely amiss if I would not stress this. It was faith in God, loyalty to our Queen, and patriotism for our land which had brought us to become resistance fighters. We request our children and grandchildren not to think of us as heroes. Please, only remember us as people who did what we felt we needed to do for our family and nation. We were convinced that this is what God wanted us to do during these years. We made plenty of mistakes while doing so, and in certain things we did I sometimes question whether we should have risked our lives this way. But we can't undo the past and I am not altogether sure that we should even if we could. I have confessed to the Lord what I felt needed to be forgiven. I further believe that if there are other things where I should do the same, the Spirit will lay it upon my heart.

By the providential leading, grace, and power of God, finally the hunger winter passed and the five years of German occupation came to an end. When writing and thinking about all of this, we still catch ourselves sighing and saying quietly, "Praise God. Thank You, Lord God Almighty." When Sennecharib and the Syrian army threatened Jerusalem during the time of king Hezekiah, he encouraged the people of Judah with these words,

"Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us and to fight our battles"
(2 Chron. 32:7,8)

I believe that it was something like this that the Spirit of God laid upon our hearts during these years as well. It wasn't that we heard such words in audible ways, but all the "Ora et Laborall" (Pray and Work) made us more and more convinced that God would enable the Allied forces to defeat the devilish plans of Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini. The vast toll of the entire war no one will ever know. This is only known to the All Knowing One, God Himself. Both of our families count it miraculous that not one of our entire family on either side was maimed or killed. Praise the Lord! Perhaps, it is all of this that has made Psalm 91 so meaningful and precious to us. For over 47 years Corrie and I have read the words of this psalm on each New Year's Eve together. Here now follow the words of this Psalm, and we ask that you allow it to speak to you freshly in the light of what you been reading concerning our war experiences.

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."

Surely He will save you from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.
He will cover you with His feathers,
and under His wings you will find refuge;
His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday.
A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
You will only observe with your eyes,
and see the punishment of the wicked.
If you make the Most High your dwelling –
even the Lord, who is my refuge –
then no harm will befall you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
For He will command His angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways;
they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
You will tread upon the lion and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

“Because he loves Me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him;
I will protect him, for he acknowledges My name.
He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him.
With long life I will satisfy him,
and show him my salvation”