

Extracts from a British intelligence report on the German occupation of the Netherlands, 9th September 1940

Holland under occupation; FO 371.24392

The Dutch people, especially the peasants and working classes, have now recovered from the great moral abandonment and defeatism which came over the country after the military collapse.

The Germans are also getting very fed up with the way they are boycotted by the Dutch, and they complain openly about this. At the same time, it is believed that there is no organised movement among the Germans of disloyalty towards the Nazi régime. In conversation with the Dutch it is very seldom that Germans dare make any statements of an anti-Nazi nature, although this has occasionally occurred after drinking. The food conditions in Amsterdam, in spite of rationing, are still fairly normal, and the Germans are especially well fed. The Dutch, however, are absolutely certain that Holland will suffer famine conditions this winter, because the Germans have taken away all the reserve stocks, including feeding stuffs and seed for sowings. The Dutch are quite sure that the Germans will not return any substantial part of these stocks, and that the Dutch will be left to suffer.

What is this source?

This is part of a report written by officials in the British intelligence services. The main purpose of the report was to get an idea of morale among German troops in Holland and also of the Dutch people under Nazi rule.

The opening section of this document states that the information came from an 'absolutely first class source in Amsterdam'. So the British were convinced that this was an accurate report.

What's the background to this source?

After invading Poland, Hitler's forces invaded Denmark and Norway. After that, Hitler turned his attention to Belgium, Holland and France. By mid June all three countries had surrendered.

The Netherlands was very important to the Nazis because it had important ports that could be used for shipping supplies and for the war effort.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: OCCUPATION**It's worth knowing that...**

As in Norway, the experience of the people of the Netherlands during the war is still being debated and can sometimes be a sensitive issue. There is no doubt that there was heroic resistance by Dutch people but there was also collaboration as well.

Although there were relatively few Dutch Jews, a very high proportion of them were turned over to the authorities and sent to labour camps. The most famous example was Anne Frank, whose diary has been read by millions.

Does this source support the drawing by T. Cuneo?

1. What do we learn about relations between the Dutch people and the German soldiers?
2. Do you think that conditions for civilians in the Netherlands were similar or different to those in Poland? Explain your answer as fully as possible.
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this document as evidence of what it was like to live under Nazi rule?

Use the table to record your views.