

Chapter 8

World War Two Begins!

During my middle teen years, I began to realize that the Great Depression years were leading up to something else, namely, Socialism, especially so in Germany. Germany was Holland's best trading partner, especially where it concerned Westland's huge hothouse grown vegetables, as well as dairy products. We lived at the edge of this huge hothouse trade business. Our parents and all of our relatives were involved in the huge dairy product business. England was strongly anti-socialistic and at the same time was our poorest trading partner. Consequently some socialism sneaked into the lives of a number of Dutch people. Our parents to the best of our knowledge never talked about anything like this, but the parents of some of our town friends did. I also heard something about it from the speakers we had when my friend and I attended meetings of our Christian Heritage Party. With Hitler's rise to power, strong debates were held on the pros and cons of his fanaticism and hunger for the expansion of socialism. He began to forcefully annex small states immediately around Germany. In Holland an organization called "National Socialist Federation" was born. Very few people liked their close alliance with what was going on in Germany. Yet, when this was discussed and debated we were always pointed to German's government and Parliament being so favorably inclined to trading with Holland and taking the surplus products no other nation wanted. Financially and economically Germany was our lifeline! Also, together with other nations in Europe, Holland had fallen victim to both a severe and long Depression. It made the National Socialist Party in Holland say in effect, "What are you narrow minded dairy farmers and hothouse gardeners talking about? Look, Germany has finally begun to improve our lot and not anti-socialist England. They would just as soon have us all starve to death."

And indeed this was true. But all the while our parents were trying to keep their heads above the waters of this seemingly never ending depression. During these years my parents had to keep increasing their debt load and mortgage, until they owned very little of the farm and land themselves any more. They were not only dealing with a first mortgage, but also a second and a third! During my younger years I never knew why certain people carried so much power and influence over my dad's buying and selling of animals. There were two uncles and a man from the city who seemed to determine what my dad was to do, or not to do. Later on this confusion cleared up somewhat, though Andrew was really the only one who knew something about it.

Hitler's dream of establishing his Third Reich was being accomplished by forcing his will on the members of the "Reichstag," Germany's Legislative Assembly. It began raising more and more eyebrows and alarm all around Europe. It was claimed that Hitler's military buildup was far more than was necessary for his own national defense. And indeed it was, for it soon proved to be a military preparation for marching into defenseless nations bordering Germany. England's compromising foreign minister made things immeasurably worse for all of Europe, though many at first applauded his so-called "statesmanship". This compromising attitude made Hitler laugh all the more. In 1939 ominous war

clouds began to show themselves. Months before Hitler's army actually marched into Holland and other nations around us, small groups of people everywhere gathered together out on the streets, parks, factories, and where ever else people had a chance to talk about their rising fears about a new outbreak of war. Too many people still remembered how precariously close the First World War had come to spilling over into Holland.

In April 1939 the Dutch Government called up all reservists, and very soon thereafter declared a general mobilization. It meant that in one day all sons and young fathers who had ever been drafted for army duties, were suddenly gone from work and home. Now they were crowding around their barracks, waiting for further orders. Also, all at once the long and extreme high unemployment came to an end. It was strange that everyone was working again, even habitual "steuntrekkers" i.e., men who loved money being doled out. My brother Andrew too was among those mobilized for possible battle with Germany. I was next in line, as the Government was preparing legislation to also draft 17 year old boys for military service.

Everything was affected by the declaration of general mobilization, including our local "jongelings vereniging." It was the group of young men ages 16 and up. All at once not just the entire executive was gone, also every one 18 or older. It meant that the next meeting was without president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and general adjunct. Our minister arranged that for the immediate future our school teacher and principle would be in charge of the weekly meetings. His name was Albert Klarenberg, both a respected individual and good friend of Corrie's parents. This special arrangement led to the first time in all my life I was called upon to lead in public prayer. This is how it how it came about.

I was sitting next to our new president. When closing time came, out of the blue he asked me to close the meeting with prayer. Now, since I had never been trained to pray audibly, nor for that matter had anyone else, I was completely unprepared for it. Perhaps, I should state that I kind of panicked and froze. But I did stumble into some sort of a prayer. However, as much as I have searched my brains, I have no idea what I prayed. Only God knows, for He searches the heart. He knows all things everything hidden. What I do know is that I perspired profusely, literally from head to toe. But the good thing was that by the grace of God the ice was broken for innumerable public prayers thereafter. Hallelujah! "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."

Nor was this the end of Romans 8:28 fulfilling itself in our lives. Being one of the older young men still left, soon thereafter I found myself in the new executive of our young men's society, helping out with the leadership of the junior group I had left only one year prior. I thoroughly enjoyed the leadership roles in both groups. Although all of our young peoples' work, both senior and junior, was strictly male oriented, long-range planning for special events during the church calendar year made me cross paths with the leadership of the girls group, where my eye fell on Corrie. Youth work became a big part of our lives together, even though we were leading in separate areas.

Never to be forgotten is the morning of May 15, 1940. It was 3:45 a.m. when I was awakened by my dad for the regular morning milking. By this time I had replaced Andrew as his right hand man. Dad now was one man short for all the farm work that needed to be done, so when he called each morning there was no lingering or stretching. When he called he expected me to come promptly downstairs. Well, I can still hear him say this particular morning, "Jan, kom gauw beneden. Ik weet niet wat er aan de hand is, maar de lucht zit vol met vliegtuigen. I ben bang dat de oorlog is uitgebroken. (John, hurry down. I do not know what is going on, but the sky is full of planes. I am afraid war has broken out.) Well, I was downstairs quickly and with the clothes in my hand, I ran in my underwear across the yard, the orchards, and into the very edge of the bush, where I could see slightly to the left, Delft, and immediately to the right, Rotterdam.

There was a military airport at Delft and a good -sized civilian airport at Rotterdam. The sky was full of airplanes, all of them flying about 25,000-30,000 feet high. Anti-aircraft guns from this military airport were blasting away at the overhead flying planes as I dressed in the bush. The planes began to fly lower and lower, trying to drop their loads of bombs on the military airport in Delft. My dad called for me to come in the house. The whole family was up by this time. The fear could be read in everyone's eyes. We were all thinking and praying for Andrew, who now with all the others was battling the enemy. Now we began to see Hitler's evil ambition. He was going to conquer Holland as well. Planes began dropping bombs and parachutists. Machine guns were in action on the ground and in the air. The shellfire became deafening as more and more anti-aircraft guns fired away. Airplanes began flying lower with their machine guns rattling. Not only our hearts were working overtime, so were our intestines!

After an hour, one of our single-family neighbors came over with the suggestion to place supporting beams in our basement. He had an elderly mother. He mentioned it would be one of the safer places. This was the same neighbor who assisted me when I had the accident with my hand. His brother was the night watchman I have mentioned before. The family consisted of three men and three women. But he was thinking especially of his mother. My dad let him do whatever he thought was best. We had no beams but he found some from the man who had purchased the small parcel of land immediately in front of our house and now had a brick-making business there.

In the meantime, my dad and I, and my oldest sister tried to milk some cows that had come running home. However, the cows were so frightened they produced less than half of the normal amount. Every once in a while we had to run for safety. The milking out on the road about two kilometers away, we put off for the time being. Every farmer's strictly organized and regular way of doing things was now replaced by questioning, utter confusion, and plenty of fear. And for us, all along questions about Andrew's situation was in everyone's heart and mind. Where would he be? Would he be in the heat of the battle? How long would the war last? Was he still alive? Who of our friends would already be dead? And would we ourselves live to see the end? These things we were not saying out loud to one another, but they certainly occupied our minds.

Finally, about six hours later, I took our carrier-tricycle to milk our cows 2 kilometers away. It had become quieter, and other farmers began venturing out as well. We all found some our cows in the ditches. They had run scared when airplanes came so low they almost touched the ground. In our area when cows happened to get into one of the ditches, there just was no way they could get out by themselves. They were stuck in three feet of mud. We all helped one another to pull them out. But even with washing them afterwards, it was virtually impossible to keep the milk clean. We just kept it separate to be fed to the pigs. While milking there along the road, several times motorcycles with side-cars drove by. The strange thing was, they were all occupied by "farmers." Several days later we found out that they were German soldiers disguised as farmers. They had jumped out of the airplanes as parachutists and begun to move around, fighting their way through, conquering territory wherever they saw their way clear. Our military soon found out, but sometimes they mistook a real farmer for an enemy. I know that God's angels were around me that morning milking our cows out there. It can't be any other way. During the first few days all the milk was fed to the pigs. By this time we had stopped making butter and cheese. It did not pay any longer. The amount of time and work could be used better for mixed farming, raising grain, peas, and potatoes. For several days in succession we found cows in our ditches, resulting in milk that was unusable. Sometimes there were so many in ditches, at our neighbors' too, that most farmers resorted to pulling them out with a horse. At other times we would occasionally do this as well, but only when everything else had been tried and failed. Only certain horses were good at it. The secret was to have the horse slowly begin to tighten up on the rope and start pulling, otherwise it was easy to severely damage the cow's neck.

Another reason the milk during the first few days went to our pigs was that the milk truck could not make the rounds anymore; it simply was too dangerous. Later on, for other reasons the milk truck did not come around at all anymore. First it was because there was no longer any gas available. Thereafter everything occupation forces could use was requisitioned.

Coming back to the first few days of the war, chaos reigned in our town and countryside, as well as everywhere else, I am sure. No one knew for sure what was happening or what our nation was heading for. In fact, no one knew whether the next bullet that was fired, the next bomb that was dropped, the next grenade that exploded showering its shrapnel all around us, would maim or kill him or her. Some people talked about whether one would 'have my name on it'. Soldiers sometimes refer to it as 'my number coming up'.

Our neighbour soon had in our "kelder" (dugout basement) all kinds of beams, trees, and planks to shore up the ceiling. However, when more and more bombs were being dropped all around us, we began to wonder whether this basement was indeed the best place to be; we just did not know! What if a bomb would directly hit our house? But what else could be done? I came up with the idea to dig a hole in the ground in our small bush. Surely, we could not dig deep, but better to be in a little water than have the whole house cave in on you. And right now during this early part of May it was beautiful weather.

Would it not be better to have two radically different places? Well, whenever we had a bit of time and

opportunity, we dug. We gathered every plank, pole, and tree that could be removed from somewhere else or cut down, and built our "schuilkelder" (bomb shelter), as it came to be known for five long years. Half was in the ground and the other half above ground, with a small trench being dug all around and away from our hiding place.

The third day of the war was Sunday. I think this was the strangest Sunday of our whole life. I can't even recall whether we attended church but there were more prayers offered than was ordinarily the case. They were not long prayers and they may not even have been all doctrinally the way they should have been, but one thing I know - they came from the depth of our heart, soul, and Spirit. We all felt that the only thing that was certain was God Himself. My father and mother moved around in a state of shock those days, even more so than the rest of us. Of course, this was especially so because of Andrew. As a soldier, he now was battling the enemy, and none of us knew whether he was okay, wounded, captured, or.... The word that was most in everyone's mind, no one dared to mention. Just the year before he had been engaged to Neeldje van der Kooy.

During the nights huge search lights lit up the skies, looking for enemy airplanes in order to fire on them. This went on for years. The first 5 days it was the Dutch army trying to focus on German planes, while the next 9 years it was the Germans who sought to find the Allied planes. On the fourth day of the war the fire bombing of Rotterdam took the central place of everything. This is the nearest we ever came to what people refer to as "all hell broke loose". I was way out at the back of our field when a squadron upon squadron of German bombers descended on Rotterdam. Besides the regular bombs dropped to destroy the entire industrial area, including the airport, they also dropped thousands of fire bombs.

Whatever anti-aircraft guns the Dutch army was still able to operate, they used to ward off the raid of these squadrons. But they were so outnumbered in everything, including all the machine gun fire from these airplanes, by the end of the three hour bombing raid little resistance was left. This at last was the time I ventured out of my hiding place in the back of the field and ran home. Our land at the very back was much higher than anywhere else, and there was one spot that had a high ditch bank. This was where I sought protection from all the shrapnel flying around. It wasn't much of a place of safety but it was the best I could find out there. As the crow flies, it was a good 10 kilometers from my parents' farm. Not only was the sound deafening during the first two hours; increasingly, huge columns of smoke began to darken the sky. It looked as if most of Rotterdam was on fire.

I was unaware of Hitler's war strategy regarding the conquest of Holland. However, later on we found out he had sent the Dutch government an ultimatum by way of the German ambassador in The Hague, informing them that unless there was a cessation of fighting and immediate capitulation, the whole inner city of Rotterdam would be destroyed. The next day the same would take place with Amsterdam, followed by The Hague, Utrecht, and other large cities. Of course, the Dutch government instructed the Chief of Staff, General Winkelman to not surrender yet. But when they found out the next day what had taken place in Rotterdam, the Queen, the entire Cabinet, and some generals who were able to get into an

airplane headed for England. The Chief of Staff stayed and surrendered on behalf of the Government. The nation was in shock and found it hard to believe. We too could not believe our ears. Yet soon it became apparent that it was the only thing that could be done in the face of the overwhelming military might against us. We had no other choice. Thousands upon thousands of people in Rotterdam were dead, some by drowning when waterlines broke and basements they were hiding in flooded. Thousands more were bombed and burned to death. There was so much soot drifting through the air, including pieces of clothing, we had to strain the milk twice or three times. Soon it became apparent we had to move everything inside. There was no way to otherwise keep our milk clean, no matter how often we would try.

We did not know that five more years of occupation was to follow with all the oppression, tyranny, cruelty, rationing, and hunger. The real plundering and raping of the land was yet to come.

When Commander in Chief, General Winkelman, surrendered unconditionally, numerous people breathed a sigh of relief, saying things like, "Thank God, no more fighting." This was true for the national defense force. But soon it was apparent that though the war had ended, the confusion and danger continued in other ways. We were occupied by an enemy army, with Hitler directing our national affairs. Even though Hitler had won the war, his battle with Holland had not come to an end.

All Dutch soldiers were made prisoners of war. Belgium fell shortly after the Dutch; France and the Scandinavian nations soon followed. Hitler faced the problem of needing to feed so many hundreds of thousands soldiers that he decided to slowly send them home and have them take care of feeding and clothing themselves. Repatriation of prisoners of war also freed a considerable number of his soldiers for battle elsewhere. However, Hitler did not have the barracks to house these hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war and drafting them into his own army was too risky. How many could he trust to be loyal to him? He was fully aware of the saying, "Met onwillige honden is het hard hazen vangen." (It is difficult to catch rabbits with unwilling dogs)

Andrew's girlfriend was over every day to seek comfort and support from our parents. Each day we hoped and prayed to hear something, something good. The fear of receiving a notice that he had been wounded or far worse, killed, was continually with us. Whenever someone came to our farm we strenuously looked who it was and what the purpose of his visit might be. The first thing Nel always asked was, "Have you heard anything?" and as soon as she tried to get off her bike we looked at her face whether she already had heard something. We all prayed a lot. Others in our town soon were receiving notices or telephone calls that they were OK. A few notices were received of wounding and death. But we just heard nothing for weeks! We asked everyone who could possibly shed any light on his whereabouts. But nobody knew and nobody could tell us anything. Where could he be? Was he still alive? Had he died in action? Was he unable, or was he not allowed to inform us where he was?

But then when the sixth week had just about passed too, Nel came flying over on "wings of excitement and joy," riding her bike as fast as we had never seen before, telling us that Andrew was still alive! He had been taken a prisoner of war and now he was let go! He was held in the heart of Germany but as soon as he had crossed the border, he was able to call one of the few people in Schipluiden who had a telephone with a message for Nel that he was released. I cannot recall ever witnessing and experiencing such a mixture of relief, joy, and excitement in our family.

It took nearly a week before he was able to come home. He had been billeted for a few days with a family at Almelo, just across the German-Dutch border. But after having lived for six weeks on severe rationing, he was fed so well upon his return, and especially at this baker family, that he became ill. The sugar and other abundance of food proved to be too much for his impoverished situation. At last, he arrived home late at night, when we were already sleeping. However, it did not take long before we were all wide awake, greeting him like never before, asking him scores of questions. We have been told that soon thereafter Andrew wrote down the account of his war experiences. For quite a while none of us were aware he had written down his war experiences, or that 12 booklets had been put into print. For some reason, my mother sought to keep the writing strictly for him. In all things my mother was a very private person. She only would open up to a couple of her sisters and so she carried a greater responsibility and burden than God gave her, including Andrew's war experience. She was upset when she found out that a dozen booklets had been published. All of them "disappeared", with the exception of the one booklet Andrew and Nel had and took along to Canada. Perhaps mother's reason for doing away with the rest of these booklets was her way of trying to do away with the pain and agony she experienced during the days of war, the 6 weeks thereafter, and the possibility of never seeing her oldest son again. I can come up with no other reasonable answer. We are grateful that Ralph Postma, Andrew's son in law, has translated the booklet, especially since for a long time it looked as if none of this would ever be shared with anyone in the family.

When Andrew at last had fully recuperated from his ordeal, we sought to normalize things on the farm again. Included in this was Andrew and Nel's hopes and dreams about their marriage. The big question was how and where would they live and be able to make a living? Very few farms ever came available, and even if there would be one to be considered, where would the money have to come from to make such a start? Right at the start of the German occupation these were the questions that were continually mulled over in Andrew and Nel's minds. Month upon month our parents pondered the same questions, - this together with the uncertainty of everything else.

It was hard getting used to the general blackout evenings and nights. At first many people innocently and ignorantly assumed that when the fighting ended, most things would soon be back to normal again. How wrong they were. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Hitler had much larger dreams and goals! Declaring war on England meant he was bent on conquering that and other nations as well. If it meant wiping some large cities off the face of the earth, well then, so be it. He was bent on bombing England into submission or if that would not work, he would bomb the nation into the ground. This in

turn not only meant German bombers flying over Holland to England, but also vis-a-vis. The German military ordered us to strictly follow their rules of: "no-light-shining-out-from anywhere." From the occupation forces' perspective it was an absolute necessity. Squadrons of German fighter planes preceded the bombers on their way to England. In turn, England's fighter planes came out to meet them half way out over the North Sea and the Dutch coast. Often it meant dog-fighting in the sky above us.

Later on, when Hitler's forces were stuck and preoccupied with their Russian war endeavors, the Allied war planes were really making headway with bombing German's industrial heartland. The English, Canadian, and American planes navigated their fighter and bomber squadrons during total darkness along the two main Dutch industrial rivers: Maas and Waal. The Maas River led straight from the North Sea through the heart of Rotterdam and into Germany's Industrial Heartland. This river was located only 10-15 km from our farm. On the other side of us, toward the NW, The Hague was located. All the Government buildings were now taken over by the German occupation forces. Thus this order of total blackout was most strictly enforced in our area, and failure to obey automatically brought severe and swift reprisals.

Another thing we immediately were to comply with was curfew-time. This had not even been in effect during our own five days of war, but now the German occupation forces proclaimed such an order. During the winter this was especially bothersome to city people. For us farmers it only meant we could not go to town in the evening, which most farmers did very little anyway. It only affected courting farm folks. But then, for the farm family there always was the farm work, or just roaming around. Every now and then the curfew was lifted for a while, but as soon as there were troop movements, some sabotage, or planes downed and parachutists that had bailed out, all that changed again. People who had essential duties to perform would be able to apply for a permit temporarily exempting them. However, the more the resistance movement spread, the fewer the special permits were given. Any serious sabotage by the underground forces brought the immediate withdrawal of all permits; but this always with the exception of doctors, police, and top brass people holding membership in the Dutch National Socialist Federation. In our town we had a few of these "informants" and/or German "sympathizers" living as well. We always watched them very closely. One of them especially we did not trust. His wife was German and often he had German soldiers for company.

When we were about a year into the occupation of Holland, the order went out for all young men to appear before a Commission who questioned them on why they should not be sent to work in German war factories. Students were among the first groups to be sent out. Among these was Corrie's brother, Kees, and my best friend Piet Van der Burgh. Many other groups of people followed. Farmers generally were exempt. Many people would go underground rather than help the enemy produce more military weapons for destruction, and thereby help defeat those who were trying to help liberate us. These factories producing war materials were always the Allied bomber's merciless prime target in order to level them to the ground. Many men who went there never returned as a result of this. Corrie's brother took his life in his hands by trying to escape from these daily bombing raids. He got to a railway station in Germany and looked for an opportunity at night to hide himself under a rail car in a heavy iron toolbox. It nearly cost

him his life, but he made it back to Holland where he too now had to go into hiding. For many years he suffered the effect of having his feet frozen quite badly.

Many times the Allied bombers missed their target and hit civilian population centers immediately around these industrial areas, but that was not too much of a concern to the Allied forces. In fact, they used these raids to undermine the German population's support for this war. Approximately 3 months before World War II ended, three waves of British, U.S., and Canadian bombers dropped nearly 3,900 tons of explosives and phosphorous on Dresden, igniting a firestorm that left the city in ashes, killing around 35,000 civilians. This took place on Feb. 13 and 14, 1945. At the time of this writing it is now 50 years ago this took place. Not a word of it was reported by the Dutch press, since everything was controlled by occupation forces. The only way we came to know such things was listening to BBC radio. Some people who understood English and had a secret place for listening would have such news printed in one of the illegal papers which resistance fighters made available. Events such as the Dresden bombing and a multitude of other instances on both sides was the awesome price that is to be paid as a result of war. My own friend was very fortunate. He was assigned to work on a farm in Germany. He worked there during all the years of the Dutch occupation.

This flying of the Allied air force planes kept the German defense forces very busy. First they had to set up their anti-aircraft guns and their huge search lights with which to scan the skies at night. When this project was completed, they began building their living quarters and next to it their massive concrete bunkers. Half of it was under ground and the other half above ground. Thereafter everything was securely camouflaged and the whole area protected by layers of barbed wire. We had one such a defense station 2 km. from our farm. When these canons began firing at the airplanes the windows rattled. Allied fighter planes sought out such places, spraying them with machine gun fire. It was never safe to be in this area.

Every once in while the occupation forces felt the need to organize local "razzias" (raids) in order to locate as many "onderduikers" (people gone into hiding) and those in the "ondergrond" (resistance fighters). Large numbers of German soldiers would swoop down on a town, countryside, or section of a city, surrounding the place and thereby closing off every escape. They would search every farm, haystack, and building, every nook and cranny in a town or city, rounding up everyone who was unable to give proof that they needed to be there. At the same time they also searched for anything that was forbidden, such as radios, crude printing presses, illegal papers, weapons and ammunition, illegal identification papers and rationing coupons, etc. These were frightening hours, for these searches were thorough. Such raids led to a lot of innovation, ingenuity, and fabrication of clever hiding places, such as false walls, ceilings, attics, holes in the ground covered by a great variety of things.

At 't Huis Ten Dorp as well as on our farm we had our best hiding place in the cow barn, where we had taken four cows from their place temporarily, to dig out the ground on which they were standing with their front feet. This was the area where the cows were tied up on the poles which were pounded into the

ground. The top part of the poles were fastened on the big beam overhead, just six feet off the ground. With their hind feet the cows stood on cement, in order to better clear the manure off. After digging out four feet of this hard dirt, we placed several poles opposite to each other into the ground. These poles were held in place by 2x4s. On top of them we nailed planks covering the whole area except the far end. There we made a small door to get in and out. A thick layer of straw covered the ground. The poles between which the cows stood were put back in place again, except this time the bottom part of the poles were nailed between 2x4 on the planks. Some of the dirt was brought back again covering everything. Three cows were fastened in between the poles again, and a calf stood where the opening was. We made sure that with little trouble this animal could be pushed away temporarily while we opened the door a little bit to slide in. It was a perfectly safe hiding place.

Though most of the bombing took place at night, there were also hours during the day when planes were seeking out targets, both German and Allied. During the first couple of years, Hitler clearly sought to bomb England into submission. It was his aim to undermine and paralyze the spirit of ordinary citizens to continue their battle. At the same time Churchill challenged England with his famous words, "Blood, sweat, and tears is all I have to offer." Day and night squadrons of fighter and bomber planes descended on the cities, mercilessly destroying whatever they were able to flatten. Many of these squadrons used Holland's skies. But with every attack by the Germans on their cities, industrial area, factories, and military installations, the Allied planes did the same in Germany. The English, Canadian, and American bombing of Germany was as merciless as Hitler's was in Great Britain. The Netherlands, France, and Belgium found themselves in between the two giant combatants who were out to destroy one another.

Sometimes during the day when the skies were cloudless, Allied planes would be flying high searching out military objects and taking pictures. Immediately German fighter planes would be sent up to bring them down or chase them away. Also, at times when the skies were covered with low hanging thick clouds, we could expect Allied bombers to be flying just above the clouds and suddenly dive out of the low hanging thick clouds, heading straight down to their target. This ordinarily was the result of the picture taking before. But these were very daring missions, for as soon as they had dropped their deadly load they needed to almost get straight up again and beyond the cloud-cover before the German canons would blow them apart. These planes were known as "duik bommewerpers" (dive bombers).

So the scenario was as follows: Many evenings in succession, as soon as it was dark, Allied planes began to fly overhead, squadron upon squadron, following the Dutch rivers right on into Germany. This meant they would have the whole night to carry out their missions, returning to their home bases before dawn. This meant that for all of us, many evenings the whole sky was lit up by powerful searchlights. As soon as the Germans succeeded in focusing their searchlights on one or more of these planes, canons would begin firing and shrapnel was coming down. In turn, these searchlights came immediately under Allied machine gun fire. Moreover, being forced to give away their location this way, other planes would be back the next day to see whether they could drop a few bombs on the area. But when one of these loaded planes were hit and they knew they would be unable to return to their home base, they would try to drop

their load somewhere in an open field. However, these "open fields" were not very large, and everywhere there were cows in the field, and farmhouses and buildings around. The plane crew would try to eject and find hiding somewhere. This was the time the men and women of the underground would swing into action and locate them before German soldiers would arrive. You can imagine that during these hours the German curfew time was both scrupulously and sometimes mercilessly enforced.

Three kilometers from our farm was a military depot, formerly part of the Dutch military, but now used as a German ammunition depot. One night it became clear that the Allied planes were after this dangerous hot spot. The place was known as "De Kogelgieterij". It was a place where they actually made all kinds of ammunition. Whenever we went to Delft we always passed it. All around it was fenced off and at the entrance several soldiers stood guard. The bombers made several direct hits. The explosions and fires that resulted were deafening, sharp, and bright. Throughout the night and the next day, smaller explosions followed. The depot was totally destroyed. It was amazing that they did not hit any of houses that stood around there, nor the farm across the road. The direct hit no doubt was on account of information passed on by our own Government now on English soil. It was done with expert precision. The only damage done around the area were windows blown out.

One day when Andrew and I were working in the field behind our farm, a plane began to circle right above the thick cloud covering. Anti-aircraft guns began firing in the plane's direction, which also meant hot shrapnel coming down around us. Ordinarily each of us would have heavy iron galvanized milk pails with us, which we would place over our head while crouching on our knees. Not this time though because it had been quiet in the skies for several days. We ran home as fast as we could. While doing so, the plane suddenly broke through the clouds; it was hit and coming down in our immediate area, just one km. away. Immediately the canon firing stopped. We jumped on our bike to find out where it precisely had hit the ground. The next door neighbours were already there when we arrived. Rending and sawing away some of the cockpit material, we took the severely injured pilot out and placed him on a blanket in the hallway of the farm home. He had a gaping hole in his forehead. We figured he was unconscious, yet with his hand he was trying to touch the wound. I held his hand, trying to prevent him doing so. He muttered something but we did not know what. When Andrew had seen what had happened he went home. His own war days were too fresh in his mind. Soon our doctor arrived on the scene. He said nothing could be done; it was hopeless and he soon would be dead. Silently I prayed for him, compassion filled my heart and soul - another causality. What about his girlfriend, wife, child(ren), parents? Would they ever find out where he died, how he died, where he was buried? Was he saved?

While I was thinking about some of this, several German soldiers arrived on the scene. Roughly they pushed the doctor and me out of the way, saying something I could not understand. They opened his coat, looked into his pockets, and while doing all this, one of the soldiers discovered a map just slightly sticking out of the long boots he wore. With a jerk they pulled it out and opened it. When they found some markings on it they seem to find some satisfaction. Thereupon the officer in charge told the other soldiers to "load him into the truck". Our doctor told him to not do so, but of no avail. His leg or legs

were broken and no doubt so were other bones.. However, none of it stopped them from carrying him out and putting him in the truck. Right away they drove off, victoriously. Soon other soldiers arrived who took charge of checking over the plane and began the process of removing it.

For a little while we stood around talking with one another about the soldiers' attitude. All at once, Konijnenburg, the farmer who lived there asked us, "Waar is Arend?! Hebben jullie hem gezien?" (Where is Arend? Have you seen him?) No, none of us had seen him; none of us knew where he was. Together we searched for him, one here and the other there. Konijnenburg told us that when the plane was circling low, Arend was standing against the barn wall, protecting himself from the flying shrapnel. About 50 feet from the barn was a haystack. The one wing of the plane had touched the barn roof and then hit the haystack. This was where we found Arend, dead. The wing of the plane had catapulted him into the haystack, cutting it nearly into half. Arend was one class above me in school. I had also gone with him to catechism, young people, and church. And now he too was dead, just like the young pilot. In my heart I sighed, "Lord God! Wars are so frightening and terrible. When will this end? Who is going to be next, on the Allied side, the enemy's, and/or ours?"

Every now and then German soldiers were billeted for certain time on farms. Any farmer who had buildings that were not fully used could count on having horses placed in there. We had them off and on as well, also their trucks, which they operated on charcoal. They had canons too, which they sought to hide here and there under trees. This was necessary, for if fighter planes located them, they came under machine gun fire and everything on the farm yard with it. Even one of Corrie's neighbours, while washing his wagons along the canal, was sprayed from the sky with machine gun fire. An Allied fighter must have mistaken him for one of their enemies. It was indeed a miracle that he came away alive.

Some of the soldiers who were billeted at our place were clearly very tired of the war, hoping and praying it would soon be all over. Others were of the opposite nature: sure of winning, fanatic, bold, daring, and proud of their military superiority. The top brass of the "Wehrmacht" placed such soldiers among them to keep an eye on everyone, and if necessary reported on whoever they thought was not loyal to their cause.

They had three "Safety Organizations" as they were called:

1. The Information Service, known as "Abwehr";
2. The Secret Police, known as "Sicherheitspolizei" (Sipo). This organization was the combination of the old State Polizei (Gestapo) and the Crime Polizei (Kripo).
3. The Secret Service, known as "Sicherheitsdienst" (SD). This was a special division of the S.S., gathering information and carrying on espionage.

Hitler required absolute loyalty, commitment, and obedience. Nothing could ever be too much of a sacrifice for the "Reicht". My convictions were of the opposite nature. Since I had rabbits but no oats to get them ready for eating, there were times when I took some of their oats for their horses. It was very risky because one soldier would always be checking everything, regularly making his rounds through the

orchards and bush, and around the house and barns. But as soon as he had passed the bags of oats, I took my chance. Looking back now, I must say, it wasn't right; it was foolish and surely not worth the risk. Also, afterwards I had to hide the oats and hardly dared to feed it to my rabbits for fear of still being found out. I fed them only small rations to make sure they would eat it at once. I now thank God for making me feel uneasy about it, so I soon stopped it.

The first time I ever came into contact with pornography was during the time when soldiers were stationed on our farm. They were having their lunch break and some wanted to show me pictures of naked girls. I know that some of them tried to befriend my oldest sister as well, but she wasn't afraid to tell them what she thought about them. She counteracted every dirty joke with a disgusted look at them. Some of the town and city girls were of a different mind. They dated some of them to the disgust of the Dutch population. Right then and there, they were "marked" for what was to come later. Girls who did this were talked about as "beulen" with the enemy, i.e., being in league or in collusion with the enemy. When the occupation finally came to an end, these girls were all rounded up, receiving their "loon", literally, their pay. However, it was also referred to as their "treatment", which consisted of their heads being cut bald in the middle of "main street", or in the open market place. At that time as an active resistance fighter, I was needed elsewhere and engaged in nobler things. We had been instructed not to join or even encourage the rowdies to do such things. All in town knew who took the leadership upon themselves to carry out these girls' "guilty" verdict, nor was anything done by the police to stop them. The general feeling was, "They had it coming to them".