



*De oorlog verzameld. Het ontstaan van de collectie van het Rijksinstituut voor
Oorlogsdocumentatie*

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Summary *De oorlog verzameld*

Preparations for the Dutch State Institute for War Documentation (Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie) were underway even before the end of the occupation. Founded three days after the liberation of the Netherlands, the institute was at the time tasked with the gathering of information regarding the Second World War and with using this information to write a history of the occupation of the Netherlands. The formation of the Institute's collection was of course focused primarily on the Second World War, but the gathering of the documents took on its own dynamic as well. In addition to the goal of accumulation, this dynamic was determined by the cultural and societal climate of the decades preceding the institute's foundation, by the policies of other post-war institutions and the Dutch National Archives, and by the personalities and wartime experiences of those doing the collecting.

The central theme of this book is the formation of the collection during the period 1945 to 1950. In these years, a large portion of the archives of the German occupiers were collected along with those of the Dutch National Socialist institutions. Also in this period, 500 diaries, 5.000 post-War and 20.000 National Socialist publications, countless witness testimonials, 100.000 photos, 250 films, copies of documents in the Allied Document Centers in Berlin, 900 assorted illegal publications, 5000 posters, and all of the newspapers and magazines which had appeared during the occupation found a place in the collection. Additionally, many witnesses were interviewed, and the institute also produced 34 written transcripts of post-war court hearings. By 1950, enough material had been amassed to enable the publication of scholarly works.

In order to provide a good understanding of the formation of the collection in this period, the book discusses two different societal/cultural processes and how they can be linked to the foundation of the institute and to the methods employed by those doing the collecting at that time. Specifically, these influences were on the one hand developments in education and information management of what became known as the "library and documentation movement" and on the other, the anti-modern tendencies of the cultural climate in the third and fourth decades of the Twentieth Century. Attention is also given to a number of practical problems relating to the archives dating from the period of the German occupation, influencing the genesis of the collection and the position of the institute. In the latter case, the book addresses the role played by the National Archives during and after the occupation, and discusses the manner in which wartime archival material was used by the Extraordinary Jurisdiction, as well as a number of other organizations involved in tracing missing victims of the German occupation. The methods used by the State Institute in its documentation of the war, against this background and under these post-war circumstances, are detailed in the corresponding chapters. Herein is described to what extent interviews were used as historical sources, and how innovative that actually was. Also covered in detail is the degree of attention paid to documents from the general public such as diaries, which criteria were applied to the acceptance of this material for the collection, and the chaotic state in which most of the National Socialist archival material was delivered.

The first long term development which the book relates to the establishment of the institute and the composition of the collection is the orientation on the past which so typified the cultural climate in the third and fourth decades of the Twentieth Century. The comprehensive need for what is now called "cultural heritage" played a role in the government's decision to found the institute. A historical myth relating the Dutch Revolt (the second half of the sixteenth century, against the Habsburg monarchy) to the Dutch populace during the occupation fueled the realization that a national war collection was vital. It is important to note that the longing for information about the past was not only reinforced by the German occupation, but also by the occupying Germans' stimulation of the cultural policies of the Department of Education, Science and Culture during the war. This double stimulation of national sentiments found expression in the preparations for the foundation of the State Institute. Prof. dr. N.W. Posthumus, working with a highly placed civil servant with the Department of Education, Science and Culture named mr. J.K. van der Haagen, played a significant role. Van der Haagen had the opportunity, owing to the cultural policies of the occupying forces, to establish a national art

collection. Additionally, during the occupation he applied himself to preparing for the State Institute for War Documentation, and after the war devoted himself to maintaining it. A minister in exile in London, dr. G. Bolkestein, consulted with L. de Jong, later the head of the State Institute, and made plans there as well for a national institute in the Netherlands. To a large extent those plans were based both on historic national sentiments and on the flood of documents expected after London issued a call for donations from private citizens who had experienced the occupation. Orientation on the past was naturally coupled with a significant need for documentation about the present, the occupation, thus the institute's desire for diaries and other sources of personal recollection, which were donated with enthusiasm.

The other development discussed in the book, the library and documentation movement, began around the turn of the century and engendered a number of tools useful for fulfilling both the specified and the more general information-related needs of a modernizing Netherlands. One such instrument was the public library, or reading room. The reading room movement, in its urge to bring public libraries to everyone, rendered the personal development of the population a matter of national interest. The mission with which the State Institute was charged in its first years had similar emancipating, unifying, and educative goals. Society's need for dissemination of knowledge about the Second World War, the government's wish to be responsible for documenting the war, and the connection the institute drew between national interest and the common struggle of the people were a continuation of the public library movement.

The State Institute for War Documentation advertised itself emphatically as a documentation institution. It amassed a diverse grouping of sources which could shed light on the period of occupation. In its free manner of collecting, it is related to another development, this time in the business world, which began at the end of the nineteenth century: the rise of the "special library". A product of the industrialization and internationalization of society, this remained in existence in the business world and in government, but also took on a new, yet recognizable life in the institutions set up, alone or in collaboration with others, by the economic historian Posthumus. As well as the State Institute, these include, for example, the International Institute for Social History.

Practical administrative issues arose which, during and directly after the war, problematically affected the formation of the collection. This book demonstrates, for instance, that the Dutch National Archives were not equipped to preserve the archives which were formed during the war and which after liberation fell to the state. The need to create some certainty around the future of these archives was, alongside the need for a national war collection, ensured that the institute became a State Institute. From this viewpoint, the government's desire to be in charge of it could be seen as an emergency measure. The responsibility for the archives of the German and Dutch National Socialist organizations, in particular, could, because of the sensitive nature of the material, not be handed over to a private organization. Originally, it had also been planned that the institute would be affiliated with a so-called Historical State Commission with far-reaching juridical competencies such as taking depositions from witnesses under oath. Although this commission was not formed, the plans for it not only influenced the manner in which some at the institute conducted interviews, they also, more generally, advanced the judging attitude of the institute.

The necessity for various postwar institutions to make use of the information in the archives originating with, primarily, National Socialist groups, which had fallen into the care of the government, led to problems. These archives formed an important part of the collection of evidence for the Extraordinary Courts of Justice. A cooperation arose between the Courts and the State Institute within which differences between the desires of the historians and those of the jurists could not always be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. The habit of the Extraordinary Jurisdiction employees of taking some documents from an archive and leaving the rest behind, and disordered, clashed with the requirements of historians working with integrally preserved archives and with, in addition, the responsibility levered by the government to safeguard their integrity. In particular, archivist J. Steur of the Bureau Den Haag of the State Institute for War Documentation was prepared to accept the remainders of National Socialist archives, even if L. de Jong and other employees were not always in

favor of his collection policies. The influx of unorganized material in Den Haag led to a great deal of chaos, but it also led to the preservation of archives or parts thereof which otherwise would probably have been lost. In addition, a cooperative relationship existed between the institute - in the main represented by De Jong and dr. A. E. Cohen - and the Directorate General for Extraordinary Jurisdiction which led, among other things, to documents at the institute being described in a manner enabling employees from the Extraordinary Jurisdiction to see quickly whether they would be useful in prosecution. De Jong and Cohen to a certain degree identified with the work of the Extraordinary Courts. Alongside the plans for a Historical State Commission, the cooperation with the Directorate General for Extraordinary Jurisdiction contributed to the institute's judging attitude.

One conflict between various institutions tasked with seeking missing or murdered people, particularly Jews and political prisoners, was resolved in the autumn of 1946. It had a major influence on the distribution of the archives from German camps on Dutch territory and the Jewish Council, which were as a result split between the Information Bureau of the Red Cross and the State Institute. The Information Bureau and the Bureau for Liquidation of the Concentration Camps played the most important role in this, while the institute remained completely uninvolved. Yet the conflict did affect the formation of the collection of the State Institute. Once the investigation and notification work was brought under the aegis of the Information Bureau, a great deal of archival material from the Liquidation Bureau, no longer needed by the Information Bureau, made its way to the institute.

While historians have long agreed that the history of the Second World War can be analyzed in more ways than merely "collaboration and resistance", the history of the State Institute for War Documentation is still mainly seen that way. Independent of the personal status and wartime experiences of the people who have, since 1945, come to work there, the institute has become associated with the resistance. It is now customary to see the institute as a "good" reaction to the evil of the occupation. This book is intended to demonstrate that research into the history of the collection from a broader historical perspective can provide more insight into the history of the institute, the relationship with archives after the liberation, and the assembling of the collection itself.