

Peter Romijn, Der lange Krieg der Niederlande. Besatzung, Gewalt und Neuorientierung in den vierziger Jahren, Göttingen (Wallstein) 2017, 293 S. (Vorträge und Kolloquien, 19), ISBN 978-3-8353-1813-7, EUR 15,00.

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Dirk Luyten, Brussels

Peter Romijn, for many years researcher and director of research at NIOD, the Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam, is one of the leading historians of the Second World War in the Netherlands. He has been studying the history of the Second World War and its aftermath since the 1980s.

This book is the result of a guest professorship Peter Romijn held in Jena, starting in October 2014. The first part of this book is a collection of articles by Peter Romijn, most of them previously published, on the »long history« of the Second World War in the Netherlands. The second part of the book is a long talk of Norbert Frei and Christina Morina with Peter Romijn, who outlines his »scientific biography«, the history of NIOD and the position of *Zeitgeschichte* in the historiographical field in the Netherlands. In this second part, Peter Romijn explains that political history is somewhat marginalised in the historical profession in the Netherlands.

Nevertheless he started his career as a political historian: his PhD, published in 1989 and re-edited in 2002 treated punishment of collaboration in the Netherlands and the subsequent reintegration of collaborators in Dutch society. This book focused on the political aspects, integrating political science theories on the functioning of the Dutch political system: a consociational democracy based on »pillarization« (clusters of organisations based on religion or political ideologies). The elites of these pillars dominated and controlled the political system. Although the Dutch polity was, as a consequence of pillarization deeply divided, the elites were in a position to bring pacification.

The book on the Second World War in the Netherlands is also to a great extent a political history, but the essays reflect the evolution in research trends in this field over the years. The central question is how elites, national as well as local (reflecting Peter Romijn's shift in research to local administrations and especially mayors, of which the 2006 monograph »Burgemeesters in Oorlogstijd« was the result) succeeded in leading the Dutch society through the occupation and the big post-war conflicts resulting from war, on the one hand the punishment of collaboration and the exclusion of collaborators, especially supporters of the Nationaal Socialistische Beweging (NSB), the main Dutch collaborationist party and on the other hand the decolonization process of Indonesia. After the Dutch political elite and the Queen had left the country shortly after the German invasion and had established an exile government in London, the administrative elite played a key role in the occupied country and its position is analysed in detail in this book.

Next to these elites, Peter Romijn brings in three new dimensions, reflecting the evolution of historiography since the 1990s: (war) violence, the role of the law and the judiciary and the »globalisation« of the war,



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which the Netherlands felt directly as a consequence of the Japanese occupation of Indonesia and subsequently the decolonisation process, dragging the Netherlands in longer and more intensive warfare than the 5-days battle with the German invader in May 1940.

As a consequence of the decolonisation, demobilisation after the war in the West was immediately followed by a new mobilisation to secure Dutch interests in the colony. In the recruitment campaigns, aimed at the armed resistance, the only available reservoir for military recruitment at the Liberation, the continuity between the occupation and the »sortie de guerre« in the Netherlands and the situation in Indonesia was used as an argument to convince former armed resistance men to fight in Indonesia.

One of the most innovative aspects of this book is that the predominantly national perspective on the Second World War is replaced by a more internationally oriented approach. This shift leads to the widening of the chronological perspective: Peter Romijn demonstrates that the Second World War impacted the history of the Netherlands for one decade, the 1940s, primarily as a consequence of the decolonisation of Indonesia. This point of the »long war« is made clear by the sequence of war, occupation, punishment of collaboration, reconstruction and decolonisation, but also by transversal issues as citizenship.

Citizenship or the question who was considered to be part of the national community dominated political debate in the second half of the 1940s and determined the treatment of former collaborators as well as the decolonisation: could those engaged in the NSB become loyal citizens again? Could loyalty be expected from the inhabitants of a colony struggling with the Dutch »motherland« for independence? Or formulated in another way: who was a friend or a foe in the internal political order? This way of analysing clearly brings politics in: the distinction between friend and foe is according to Carl Schmitt the essence of politics and it is not difficult to see at this point a direct effect of the war. Looking at politics from the perspective of friend and foe also indicates the interference between internal politics and international politics.

In this book much attention is paid to international politics: internal Dutch politics were more and more influenced or determined by other countries or international processes. The occupation led to a direct dependency on Nazi-Germany and the changing fortunes of international warfare. The (long) liberation made the Netherlands dependent on the allies and the Dutch authorities returning from London had difficulties to secure their sovereignty. International law played an important role during (The Hague Convention) and after the occupation, but in the conflict in Indonesia, the Dutch military not always complied with international law. As was the case for other small countries, the Netherlands were more and more integrated into international organisations and alliances, since the Second World War had shown that neutrality could no longer guarantee the international safety of the country.

Next to this political perspective, Peter Romijn also focuses on the experiences of the people, especially those engaged in direct warfare in Indonesia. This reflects also shifts in the historiography on war and conflicts, where (daily) experiences receive more attention.

This book is an outstanding and innovative introduction to the history of the Second World War in the Netherlands and its long-term impact on Dutch society: a specific chapter is devoted to war memories. The



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overall impression after reading this book is that the Dutch population was rather passive, not very politicized and that social conflicts between segments of the Dutch population under occupation were not outspoken. The communists, who were actively involved in the February 1941 strike against the persecution of the Jews, were a key component of the Resistance, successful in post-war elections and easily politically marginalized after the war. In this respect, the Netherlands differed from Belgium or France. Can this difference solely be explained by the anti-communist consensus among the elite or rather by the socio-political relations during the occupation, where there was a tendency of a sort of *réveil* national, of which from a Belgian perspective the rather curious Nederlandse Unie (Dutch Union) was an emanation?

One of the subtexts in this book is the emergence of a Dutch patriotism/nationalism during and after the occupation, leading to an exclusion of groups which were considered to be »un-Dutch« and could as a consequence easily be excluded from political and social life, even if the legal grounds were not always solid, as appears from the treatment of people interned for collaboration at the Liberation. This Dutch nationalism/patriotism was often top-down and elitist, not free from authoritarianism and closely linked to religion (as the central role of religion in the re-education of former collaborators also shows).

In the Netherlands, the Liberation was less directly associated with a straightforward democratic revival and it was only in 1943 that a defeat of Nazi Germany and as a consequence, the restoration of democracy, was seen as the most likely outcome of the war, which was relatively late. From the perspective of the political balance of power, the Netherlands bended after 1945 rather to the right than to the left, with a dominant political role for the Catholic People's Party (Katholieke Volkspartij), neutralising the attempt of the Dutch Labour Party (Partij van de Arbeid) to counter pillarization by a party reform, to open up to religious voters. From a long-term perspective, the Second World War did not lead to an opening up of the political landscape formatted in the wake of the First World War, when the labour movement was politically marginalized. As a consequence, the working class is relatively absent in this book.



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