

TRANSLATION.

9-7-44 In the morning I got the idea to keep a diary that I shall try to keep up regularly. I am staying home from school, after the rumors that the English and Americans are already in Arnhem and some even say in Zutphen.

Yesterday American fighter planes strafed the retreating German troops, but with little success. The German trucks with soldiers, civilians and luggage such as motorbikes and machine guns etc. are usually camouflaged very well.

9-8-44 The rumors turned out to be false and I am going to school again. Classes are not normal and like in kindergarden we just listen to what the teacher reads. During p.e. from 11:30 to 11:50 there was an air raid alarm but nothing happened. Last night about 10:45 PM we heard a big explosion: the tunnel at the Ijsbaan Road was bombed to rubble. "Aunt Coba" (codeword for the underground resistance forces) made a lot of noise, but I just got word that the attack failed.

9-9-44 Got up early and look with a lazy face at the school roster where I find "Latin" twice. The first hour we had Greek instead but with the announcement that we would be off the last hour. After the last bell I packed quickly to go to the covered swimming pool. After swimming again the announcer of trouble: alarm. From 1:30 PM to 1:45 PM, nothing happened. Something rare happened today, the safe sign was not only given at 1:45 but again at 2:00. Probably in error.

At 5:30 PM another alarm and an approaching drone of airplane engines. During the alarm I am on pins and needles because I still have to ride my bicycle to Boekelo and at 8:00 PM there is a curfew At 6:45 all is clear, but too late for me. We only observed 10 airplanes.

Woning van Koningin
Wilhelmina door vliegende
bom getroffen.

Naar verluidt is in Londen het verblijf van Koningin Wilhelmina getroffen door een vliegende bom. Een lid van het personeel vond hierbij den dood. Wij herinneren er aan dat de woning van koningin Wilhelmina in 1941 reeds eerder werd getroffen, waarbij twee leden van het personeel het leven verloren. Koningin Wilhelmina heeft zich thans buiten Londen gevestigd.

(Translation of above newspaper article: **Residence of Queen Wilhelmina hit by flying rocket.** As reported the residence of Queen Wilhelmina was hit by a flying bomb. One member of the personnel was killed. We remind you that the building was hit earlier in 1941, during which two members of the personnel lost their lives. At the moment Queen Wilhelmina has moved to a building outside of London.)

9-10-44 The entire morning it was cold but very clear weather. The Yankees leave us no rest : 5 minutes past 1 pm the air alarm went off and airplanes rumble over the city for about 2 minutes.

Twenty past one "safe" again. Our current money will be replaced by new silver coins, according to the minister of finance. I hope therefore to buy loads of series of stamps that should keep their value, or at best will increase. Half of my bet with Rein (an uncle) is over with and I have hopes I will earn my ten guilders. Hope springs eternal. It becomes annoying: 3:15 air alarm; 4:15 safe again. The Siegfried Line is being bombed. The weather is not nice. 5:00 PM alarm 5:15 safe again. Nothing happened here and nothing was heard. This was the first day with 3 alarms in one day.

Monday September 11. Got up late this morning and after I am seated in the room for geography, the door is opened and Weysink, the assistant concierge steps inside with the message that the school has been commandeered (by the Germans). A suppressed mood of "whoopee" was present. For the time being lessons will continue, but the school is being cleared out. Air alarm is becoming a daily routine occurrence.

11:20 air alarm; 11:30 "safe". Heard nothing.

11:40 air alarm; 12:15 "safe". Heard many airplanes.

1:15 air alarm; 1:50 "safe". Saw a few speedy fighters.

2:00 air alarm; 2:15 "safe" Heard nothing.

The record of 4 x daily has now been established.

Pardon me, I spoke too early: 5:30 alarm, 5:45 "safe; 6:10 alarm, 6:45 "safe".

Airplanes are circling over the city, probably scouts.

Later in the day enemy planes (sorry: allied) planes are shooting. Target not known, but may be V1 rockets!!! So we are going to sleep after a tiring day, with a few pears dad brought home, along with some milk.

Tuesday September 12. While going to school Klaas (my brother) and I predict how often we will hear air alarm. Klaas says 2, I say 4. At half past eleven it was said "in the bus to Losser" (code words for the underground or the BBC) that the Allies march towards Eindhoven, which had 17 air alarms, but that no city or village in Holland has been liberated yet.

12:30 alarm; 1:00 all clear. 1:45 alarm; 2:00 all clear. Observed 10 bombers.

Today we also heard the sad news that our school will be released.

6:45 heard lots of noise in the distance, probably in the Ruhr area.

Hannover was heavily bombed today.



Van het luchtfront valt te vermelden dat Amerikaanse formaties vliegtuigen gisteren aanvallen hebben gedaan op het industriegebied van Leipzig. Talrijke Duitse jagers stegen op en vielen vooral in het gebied Kassel-Erfurt de bommenwerpers aan. Bijzonderheden over 't verloop van dezen luchtslag werden nog niet door het D.N.B. medegedeeld. Wel werden tientallen Amerikaanse vliegtuigen neergeschoten.

From the air front it is reported that American formations attacked the industrial area of Leipzig. Numerous German fighters took off to attack the bombers especially in the area Kassel-Erfurt. No details were given by the D.N.B. (German News Bureau). They did report that tens of American planes were shot down.

Wednesday September 13, Not much news today.

4:15-5:00 air alarm; saw nothing.

About 6:30 10 bombers passed overhead.

A few planes (probably mosquitoes) were observed over the local airport, but I did not see them.

8:00 three (allied?) planes of a very special type and fighters thundered overhead. Eindhoven is supposed to be in flames.

Thursday September 14. I have absolutely no desire to go to school; Klaas says that there will be one air alarm, I say two.

This morning many bicycles were "requisitioned": little boys that had to relinquish the bike of father or mother to snottoses of 19 years of the K.K. were standing to the side, crying. Dad will walk to Terwelle. (a farmer who gave us support by selling milk, bacon, eggs etc.) I too have to sacrifice: with pinching shoes I have to walk to Harberink (another farmer) for just one pint of milk and hurry too because curfew is at 8:00 P.M.

Friday 9-15. Only today shows how many bikes were stolen: of the teachers mr. Quispel was the victim. Some of my school buddies lost their bikes: Evert van Senter, Nico Vondeling, Jan Heutink, Jan Reysoo etc.

Almost all schools have now been "commandeered" by the Germans.

Saturday 9-16. Tonight there was a bout a 15 minute air alarm, but I stayed in bed, a few airplanes came over. Again another tragic announcement, rather two of them: 1st The public swimming pool is closing and 2nd in Eindhoven they report public murders are being committed. Maastricht has been liberated.

This afternoon I went to jiu-jitsu classes and noticed that I lost my touch after a 2 week vacation. We'll have a little party tonight with an acquaintance and hope to eat well. Wait one more day, Americans!

Sunday 9-17. During the past night we had another alarm from 3:15 to 3:30.

The airplanes literally thundered overhead and a heavy lightning, probably anti-aircraft was observed from our house in the direction of the railroad station.

Our party did not materialize last night, but hopefully it will happen tonight.

Today is almost guaranteed alarm because the sky is blue with just a few clouds on the horizon. We were barely in church when the alarm came and coming out of church I already see the first formation. After that, many "there" and "theres" follow, above, below, in front, behind!!! At least 25 formations of 12, very clearly visible, flew over. The target was Aken. Rest.... It's still alarm: a few fighter planes are returning. Suddenly--- rrrang---rang-rang. I am startled and stare into the sky: nothing to see. Was a car accident. Two German trucks collided at the corner of the singel and Deurninger street, two lightly and one heavily injured, close by. At the same time the all-clear is sounded. Silver or aluminum strips are again released in great numbers, to confuse the radar.



From many sources I hear that paratroopers have landed near Amersfoort and Soesterberg. I won my bet. Tonight the party was held. I hope no alarm will come this night.

Monday September 18. The same atmosphere as on Tuesday September 5 is in the air. Columns of vehicles drive through town, mostly Germans on the run. A quarter to twelve bunches of low-flying aircraft, fighter planes of unknown nationality to me, are flying over. Nothing special the rest of the day.

Geallieerde lucht-landing in Nederland.

Bij Tilburg, Eindhoven en Nijmegen.

Het D.N.B. meldt: Nadat de Anglo-Amerikanen de laatste dagen tevergeefs geprobeerd hadden, de Duitse versperingsgrendels tusschen den mond van de Schelde en de Maas te verbreken, lieten zij Zondagmiddag in de gebieden van Tilburg, Eindhoven en Nijmegen sterke landingsformaties neer uit de lucht. De Duitse troepen begonnen terstond met de bestrijding van de gelande vijandelijke strijdkrachten.

Interinf meldt nader, dat de gelande formaties omsingeld zijn en dat reeds aanzienlijke deelen vernietigd zijn. De verliezen der geallieerden zijn groot.

Om 10.30 gisteravond meldde het D.N.B.: Bij den strijd tegen de geallieerde luchtlandingsformaties, hebben de Duitse troepen, naar het D.N.B. verneemt, de eerste gevangenen gemaakt. Zij maken deel uit van het eerste geallieerde luchtlandingsleger.

Tuesday September 19.

The weather is good.

Lots of bad news:

- a. Men of 16-50 years of age are being corralled, half of Enschede goes underground.
- b. Men that work in a factory must report at 8:00 in the morning at the railroad station to "dig ditches at the Ijssel- river".

The railroads are also striking; the locomotives are being manned by Germans.

New landings are rumored to have taken place near Deventer.

About half past three heard heavy plane noise after air alarm, safe again at 4 o'clock.

4:15 alarm, 4:30 all clear.

6:00 alarm, 6:15 all clear.

At half past three large quantities of bombers flew overhead.

Above newspaper article of Monday said the following:

Allied air-landings in the Netherlands near Tilburg, Eindhoven, and Nijmegen.

The D.N.B. (German News Bureau) reports: After the Anglo-Americans tried in vain the past few days to breach the German defenses between the mouth of the Schelde (a river) and the Maas (Meuse, another river), they dropped strong formations of paratroopers in the areas of Tilburg, Eindhoven and Nijmegen.

The German troops immediately started to fight the landed enemy forces.

Interinf also reports that the landed formations were surrounded and largely demolished. The losses of the allies are great. Last night at 10:30 the DNB

reported: In the battle against the allied airdrops the German troops took their first prisoners. They were part of the First Allied Landings Army.

Wednesday September 20. Today only 9 of the 18 students showed up in class, so the lessons were not taught.

Coming out of school about 12:30 PM I noticed that our former neighbor Mrs. Hollander, whose husband and son are in hiding, moved in with us.

Her husband had to point out those who should go to Germany, which he refused. In the early evening I went to get some milk and see that in the neighborhood of the Spanish School a few tanks and many freight trucks are parked, with boys of 16 or 17 years of the Hitler Youth obviously manning them. About the same time many planes, ostensibly American are flying in a South Easterly direction.

Thursday September 21. In the morning about 8:30 (I don't go to school) a farmer comes by, bringing 70 kilos of potatoes. I also see a large contingent of Germans on bicycles pedal direction Gronau, (the nearest German village). The entire rest of the day is relatively quiet here.

At night I went to ter Welle (a farmer) where the always pessimistic Voogd tells his stories. Going home I heard a tremendous noise and looking up I see a turbulent smoke trail, probably a V1.

Friday September 22. This morning many trucks departed for Germany. We were told by the secret underground that razzias (round-ups) will be held.

In the afternoon about half past three a few cars of the "Gruene Polizei", (the German MP) drive by to the Roomweg (a street) to cordon off three factories. Many men and boys were picked up here to be packed in a train and transported. After I came back tonight from "Verkoln" (a nickname that means having a cold) do I see at the corner by "Poepjes" (another nickname that means little Poop) a collection of men of the Gruene Polizei with guns at the ready. Quickly I tell the story at home where dad and the neighbor's son hide in the chicken coup.

At eight o'clock the somber group of 25 leaves for the railroad station.

Saturday September 23. It is a rainy day. I will organize my stamp collection better. The rest of the day is spent playing cards for stamps, because it is such somber weather. As quiet as it was during the day, the night was very busy. Enormous numbers of airplanes flew over the city. About eleven o'clock at night I sit up in my bed and it looks like a wonderland. Lights come down slowly, lighting up the city underneath, making the roofs shining, contrasting with the dark background. All of a sudden an enormous explosion and cannon fire.

We, except Egbert the neighbor, are shocked and flee hastily towards the cellar with Mrs. Hollander knocking over a bottle with cream of the milk and Mrs ter Horst (a neighbor) getting a nervous break-down. Deep silence. Slowly all lights are out and it is night again.

Sunday September 24. This morning mother came back from scrounging some milk telling us that the house of ter Mors on the Spoordijkstreet was completely demolished by a bomb, probably dropped last night during the "festival of light". We speculate that it may have been meant for either the viaduct with train tracks or the People's Park where many German trucks are parked.

Sunday service is cancelled because the minister, ds. Fagel is in hiding.

9-25: French army report 1939. (in other words all quiet on the Western Front)

Tuesday September 26. A nice day as far as the weather goes. Around 5:00 p.m. a few sections of fighter planes fly over, coming back a half hour later to circle above the airport nearby. A few moments later they let their guns do the talking. 5:15 alarm. 6:00 all clear. At least 500 plainly visible aircraft flew over. 6:30 air alarm, 6:45 all clear. Saw nothing.

We also got a letter from Germany. Uncle Herman is sick, Anne Marie got married and they have lots of air alarms too, because they are in Heidelberg. (By way of explanation, my mother was born in Germany and one of her brothers, uncle Bernard, started a transportation business transporting mainly groceries when Hitler came to power. As a result however three of my uncles living in Holland were hired by him to escape a worse fate under occupation)

Translation:

„De hel van Arnhem”

Nieuwe luchtlandingen.

Sinds zeven dagen en zeven nachten woedt de hevige strijd bij Arnhem ononderbroken voort. Alle hoop van Engeland en Amerika is op het welslagen van de krijgsonderneming bij deze Nederlandsche stad, de forceering van de Rijn-overgangen om van daaruit naar de Rijnvlakte en het Ruhrgebied door te stooten, gevestigd. Oorlogsverslaggevers van den vijand spreken van „de hel van Arnhem”, wel een bewijs van de hevigheid der bij Arnhem woedende gevechten.

“The hell of Arnhem”

New air landings.

Since seven days and seven nights without interruptions a heavy battle is fought nearby Arnhem. All the hopes of England and America are focused on the success of the battle near this Dutch city, the forcing of the Rine crossing in order to push forward into the valley of the Rine and the Ruhr area.

War correspondents of the enemy talk about “the hell of Arnhem”, proof of the severity of the battles near Arnhem.

Wednesday September 27. I'm getting up early because I am going to do deliveries for Jan de Jong, primarily bakery goods. During serving of the first customers the German fighters are busy. I already hear the alarm in Hengelo (a nearby city) and here at the same time 10:00 AM. The customer is served quickly and I drive outside the city on the side of the road to count the ration stamps and the money. Many planes fly overhead. After 15 minutes I don't hear anything anymore. Despite the fact that the alarm is still on, I ride into town to serve more customers. Barely did I finish a few or I hear the “all safe” signal at 10:20. The German fighters flew, circled and dived over the city in a heroic way. (truth be told, just before the Americans came and after they left) Alarm 2:30 to 3:00 pm. Visited Nijhof and Rutbeek. (farmers close by, to get food)

Thursday September 28. Last night from 10:45 to 11:00 pm alarm, a few airplanes flew over. It is a clear frisky day and in the morning did I visit Harberink. Since I am not going to school I am just going to hang out and looked at stamps in a window for my collection, because I saw Hartje, (the science teacher). Like pursued wildlife we have to escape because there was air alarm from 11:55 to 12:15 during which time I have jotted this down.

The weather moves backwards (just like the Tommies at Arnhem) and soon we will get the German winter-time as reported by our big paper of 40 by 50 cm.

Friday September 29. I consider if I should go with Jan or to school, because attendance has gone up I hear. Nevertheless I decide to go with the baker. At 11:05 the alarm sounds, but I continue on the job; a few fighter planes race over us, direction West. 11:15 all clear. I have to hide this diary in a hole under the floor, Holland is that "free". Only because it pertains to political questions. It is reported that big round-ups, will take place this afternoon.

The battle of Arnhem, the biggest and bloodiest here has been lost.

Saturday September 30. Got up at 6 to help Jan again; was there at seven. Was on my bicycle and busy all morning and have served about 45 customers, mostly far apart. When alarm was sounded from 12:55 to 1:05 I was at Jan's place, settling up. I earned 6 guilders. This afternoon there was a long alarm from 2:30 till 3:40 during which we heard much noise, which I found out were bombs dropped between Usselo and Boekelo, because later on that day I had to go to Boekelo (a village). Big craters were visible in meadows. Also found shrapnel for my collection. When I returned from Boekelo I saw numerous signs proclaiming "Danger...non detonated bomb". Counted about 35 alarms this month.

Sunday October 1. It is a somber rainy day and the woolen underpants tickle me silly, have a slowly leaking container for milk and a bike that is too small and half rusted through, not very comfortable riding to Olink (a farmer). The rest of the day is just as miserable.

Monday October 2. Last night 3 air alarms. A munitions train between Hengelo and Enschede was shot at and set ablaze. We had school from 8:30 to 12:20 and from 2:00 till 3:30 pm. Air alarm from 1:15 to 1:45. many low flying planes.

Friday October 6. I did not think of keeping my diary.

This week was extremely and uniquely heavy.

All week long many bombers flew over at low altitudes, it was a beautiful sight to see all those silvery birds go over and come back again. Today was the worst, from about 11:00 am on Hengelo, Oldenzaal and Gronau were bombed, among others.

Saturday October 7. Last night we saw heavy fire display in the air in the direction of the Ruhr river. (an industrial area). Many returning planes came back over our city. At 10:30 the wailing sound of sirens was heard and we could distinguish the low flying bombers. Swarms of planes, alternately looking like black eagles or silvery sea gulls. Just for the hell of it we counted: 300, 330, 360, 390, 420, 450, 480, 510, 540 and it keeps on going, formations of 30 planes. We already counted a thousand and still no end in sight.

It is an awe inspiring, fantastic grand spectacle. At 12:05 everything is all clear. After I came back from running some errands, the baker saw me and told me that my mother had said to help him and I could eat at his place. At first I did not like it. At 1:00 pm I joined him and see all the planes coming back.

Suddenly rattling and thunder is in the air, windows and walls are shaking all over the place: airplanes coming from a southerly direction dump their deadly loads. Anxious questions come up: anybody in the family hurt, is the home still there or demolished? The thundering keeps going, while the sirens are blaring, which creates the impression that we are the target.

The thundering gets weaker but the questions multiply.
Hundreds of planes, like birds, are returning to their bases.
"It should be finished by now" is the comment of several people but more are approaching again and we now see some dogfights in the air.
Officially 2900 planes participated according to the BBC.
Sunday October 8. It was eerily quiet all day, as if it were Peace.
We played kick the can and all kinds of other mischief, uninterrupted, a really peaceful Sunday.

Monday October 9. Very cloudy day during which I was an errand boy for our neighbor with a letter in Italian to his boss, a Mr. Levati.

I learned the piece by heart and hoped to see Mr. Levati's daughter who is gorgeous. I will not be so vain as to think that I pronounced it properly, but she did not laugh so it could not have been too bad. I said "Bongiorna signora, una piccola lettera di signor Ter Horst, deve attendera per la riposte".

It stayed quiet all day.

Tuesday October 10. Hoping it will be a better day than a year ago, I get up and go to school, only to get a 1 and a 5 in Greek, both below passing, but every start is difficult. A letter arrived from aunt Marie in which the important parts were:

- a. V1 launching pad was destroyed (this was near the Hague)
- b. 10 kilo's potatoes for 5 guilders. (profiteering by farmers)
- c. electrical power was disconnected.
- d. quiet in The Hague.

Wednesday October 11. At half past ten I left school and go with a pushcart of Heergrave (an acquaintance) to pick up firewood with Klaas and Henk.

On the way to Driene (a wooded area) we are being disappointed by people who say that the German MP and six Dutch policemen were stationed there to prohibit people from hauling wood, but we keep on going, but turning left where we still managed to get the cart filled by using an ax and saw.

In the afternoon it looks like a lumber yard: sawing, chopping and storing.

At five o'clock a few fighter planes came over that were being shot at by anti-aircraft artillery.

Thursday October 12. It is a real Tommie day, clear skies with a few clouds.

10:05 – 10:30 Air alarm. Heard nothing.

11:00 – 12:00 Air alarm. Many airplanes.

12:25 – 12:30 Air alarm. Heard very little.

Brief overview from October 13 to October 23.

Friday: normal day, cloudy miserable weather.

Saturday: little cloudy. Alarms: 8:45 to 9:15 / 16:10 to 16:25 / 17:25 to 17:35.

Sunday: No alarms but heavy bombardment of Ruhr area.

Monday: No alarm. General Rommel dead. American fleet loses to Japan.

Tuesday: Round-up of bicycles.

Wednesday: Alarms 9:10 to 9:25 and 10:00 to 10:40.

Thursday: Alarm from 17:00 to 17:10

Friday: (no entry)

Saturday: Very clear day, "lightning fighter" action. (later known as jetfighters)

Sunday: Today is real soccer weather, meaning crisp with a little wind but no rain. This afternoon after lunch we went to Glanerbrug to play against the buccaneers. Before half-time against the wind; at the half the score was 2-2. After that we had the wind in the back. We won at 13 to 9.

I scored 2 of the 13. During the match we saw large formations of bombers overhead. In the city there was about an hour long period of air alarm.

Played monopoly tonight.

Monday: Miserable day, nothing special. Tonight we went to B. in B. (for one reason or another this was secret) and got 2 sacks of potatoes.

Returning home we saw something we will better understand tomorrow, the cordoning off of the city by Germans.

Tuesday October 24.

4:00 A.M. shots ring out: soldiers in front of the house.

We still don't see the situation for what it is.

7:30 A.M.: I walk through the city and realize only now the danger hanging over dad's head.

10:00 A.M. The hour of decision.

A car with a loudspeaker announces that "All men from 17 to 55 years of age must report before 11:00 this morning at the van Heek Park; refusal will result in summarily execution." Cold words, but what a content!!!

"I am not going" says dad and on the surface he is calmly sitting in his chair.

The whole neighborhood is in an uproar: everybody is going to report, so dad decided to go along. We see them all depart, guarded by heavily armed soldiers.

This diary is continued on February 12 1945.

(What I did not write down at the time was that father considered for awhile to hide underneath the flooring where we had a secret hiding place, but he did not want to expose his wife and kids to the German wrath. Around noon two German soldiers rang the doorbell, ostensibly to search the house, but they apologized profusely for what they were ordered to do by their superiors. They had to linger for awhile inside in order not to raise suspicion by their commander, so there are still decent people, after all.)

Summary of important military and civilian occurrences
Between October 24 and February 12.

November 6: City mayor Ruckert (a real patriot) removed and replaced by W.R. Jager, a real collaborator (with the Germans).

November 8: house to house fighting reported in Middelburg.
November 9: Reports of new German weapons; according to the German News Bureau we can expect V2 and V3.
Churchill predicted the end of the war to come at the end of 1945.
November 17 The bridge across the Moerdijk has been totally demolished.
November 20: Bank robbery of the Netherland Bank in Almelo.
Fl. 46.150.000 missing, that is more than 46 million guilders.
November 30: Radio speech by prof. Gerbrandy via the (forbidden) BBC.
December 1: Bank robbery solved, all the money is recovered.
The church in Lemele has been taken as well as the minister and custodian.
It had an underground storage room for ammunition.
December 18: "Care and Service Enschede" started.
Terror attacks on the city of Leiden. (student uprising because of persecution of a Jewish teacher)
December 19: German offensive direction Belgium. (the famed Ardennes offensive and Bastogne; around this time mother went by bicycle to visit my dad in the German city of Goch, an amazing act of courage in ice cold weather)
December 22: The Germans advance in the Ardennes but the Russians prepare to attack in the East.

The following was written much later, after I had migrated to America.
"In the spirit of Christmas I will write a real story that happened long ago in 1944 when I was a teenager in Holland and Holland was occupied by the Germans. On October 24 my father was captured by the Germans during a razzia or round-up of the men of my hometown in Enschede. Very early in the morning all roads were cordoned off by groups of soldiers with machine guns and bull horns, ordering all men of 17 and up to the officer in charge. Only those who worked for the Germans already were exempt, all others were to be sent to labor camps to help Germany defend itself against the Allied forces. Many of our neighbors were caught in the same net, but pretty soon we were informed of their location and could send mail to them in Germany. In December of that year my mother got the "bright idea" of going to that camp to visit my dad, and no reason in the world could persuade my stubborn mama to forget that crazy idea. The roads were already being strafed by fighter pilots, the weather was extremely cold and windy, she could probably not cross the Rhine anyway, and we had no relatives or acquaintances on the way to the city of Goch, which would take her at least three days by bicycle, all assuming that the guards would even admit her. None of that and more deterred her even one bit. I can still see her departing on her bicycle, her "full figure body" wrapped in wool and fur, looking like a polar bear. My brother and I waved goodbye and wished her luck, thinking that she would soon return and give up, but we should have known better. Perfect strangers gave her a place to sleep, after they heard what she was up to, and even gave her all kinds of goodies for the men. She arrived the day before Christmas to the utter astonishment of the neighbors. Only my father was not surprised.

A minister of our hometown had volunteered to join the forced laborers and he led the prisoners as well as some of their guards in an unforgettable Christmas Celebration, in a hostile land, with many men, only one woman, my mother.

January (1945)

1-16: Millions of Russians attack with very good results.

1-30: Stabilization of the Oder Line of defense, an enormous endeavor from Warsaw in one push to the Oder (river), a distance of about 500 kilometers.

February.

2-7: Tension on the western front, Americans prepare for a big offensive.

2-8: Prof. Gerbrandy (minister of the Dutch government in exile) offered his resignation.

2-12: New Russian offensive in the triangle Breslau-Liegnitz-Glogan, called Overture (=opening or prelude) has begun as part of a big Allied Attack.

12 February

12 o'clock. Mid day.



The joy of this day cannot be imagined.

Last night Mr. Poepjes was picked up in Groenlo with a rental car of John Molenaar. This morning mother visited him and he told her that dad was on Dutch soil. We discussed what to do. We cannot go by bike because they can be confiscated and the refugees take shortcuts, not the main roads.

In order we were visited by Jo Termos, aunt Sophy, Egbert and Jan Heres (a member of the Resistance). Lidi, a "girlfriend" walks behind the house and calls me, about which I am a little ashamed, but am going anyway.

"John" she said "your father is walking on the street."

"Don't make fun of it" says pessimistic John.

And there----- there stands dad in the gate!!!!

"Dad is back again!!!!"

In a flash the kitchen is overcrowded, there is not even room enough in the house. The families Reysoo, ter Horst, Prinsen, Lurvink etc.

Dad looks like a globe trotter, backpack, suitcase in one hand and he has a moustache. Now the stories start about the walk from Goch about 100 kilometer (65 miles).

The Bombing.

On a Wednesday night dad woke up to go to the bathroom.

As usual he heard some planes overhead.

Flares were dropped and the bombing starts at once.

Two hours in an inferno of steel, fire, crumbling houses, burning buildings, detonating bombs, noisy anti-aircraft guns he stands in his underwear underneath a small tin roof. That is the best I can describe it from his words, but words fail. When it began to let up dad and a few others went outside, climbed over rubble, dead horses, human arms and legs etc.

They experienced another bomb attack of about one hour, which convinced the "hunderschaft" (a group of 100 forced laborers) to flee en mass.

P.S. It is reported that 700 planes worked the city of Goch over. Krefeld got a similar treatment.

The Flight.

After walking about 25 kilometers dad and some neighbors arrive at the river Rhine, the first big obstacle. It is remarkable, but the entire 11th "hunderschaft" is completely intact and 1 km away from the Rhine, all our neighbors. The Rhine is beyond its borders and the roads are inundated as well, to about their ankles. A farmer is willing to bring some people to the Rhine with his horse and buggy. The buggy gets stuck in the mud several times, but they arrive at the river. Now the big question: how to traverse it?

The question is answered right away because they are brought by boat to the other side. When they arrive at the other side a "gold pheasant" (German officer) Shouts to the tired men "drei zu drei" (columns of three) and "pack auf" (get your ass in gear) Imprisoned again.

Try to describe the feelings and thoughts of these citizens of Enschede. It is impossible. After walking another 5 km they arrive at a (concentration) camp where men stare at them with bony faces, beards, living skeletons, only interested in what the newcomers may have in the way of food they can steal. Not a very uplifting welcome.

Epilogue.

I don't know why there is no further entry.

I know they escaped from this camp promptly, but do not remember how.

Father had to go into hiding until we were liberated on April 1 1945.