

VERBIEST, Cornelis
Netherlands Documentation Project
Dutch
RG-50.570*0002

Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, former policeman Cornelis Verbiest talks about his work in Amsterdam at the time of the German occupation. He focuses on how, from being a small town boy, he went from the army into the police force. In a later stage he describes how the Amsterdam police force collaborated with the German occupier, comments on the role of the police force in the round-up and deportation of Jews and explains his role as a member of the Dutch resistance.

[01:] 00:53:00 – [01:] 08:46:59

He discusses his birthplace **Zonswijk**, his date of birth and the region in which his birthplace lies (the island of **Goeree Overlakee**); discusses his experiences growing up in this region; comments on the role religion played within his family and in his upbringing.

[01:] 08:47:00 – [01:] 13:02:59

He comments on Hitler's rise in Germany in the 1930s and the change in Dutch political climate; explains the role and position of Jews within his community; focuses on the difference in openness about being a Jew between then and now; comments on how he experienced the rise of Dutch National Socialism under the leader of the Dutch National Socialist Party, **Mussert**; discusses how living on an island prevented the effects of Jewish refugees or Kristallnacht reaching him.

[01:] 13:03:00 – [01:] 16:47:59

He explains the political situation in his family while growing up; discusses the norms and values of his parents; explains how his parents practiced their religion; discusses the family history and the differences in religion within the family; comments on the difference in religion in the different regions of Holland; explains how religion made the inhabitants of **Goeree Overlakee** "trustworthy" and "honest."

[01:] 16:48:00 – [01:] 21:05:59

He comments on the atmosphere on the island (**Goeree Overlakee**) and the influence of the crisis of the 1930s on this atmosphere; explains the sober lifestyle of his family; explains how there was no showing-off of wealth; explains how he became used to

“recycling” usable products found on the streets or left at the garbage heap; explains how being “sparing” did not mean being “greedy.”

[01:] 21:06:00 – [01:] 23:37:59

He comments on his life after finishing primary school; explains he was 12 years old when he started looking for jobs in 1930; comments on the different jobs he took to make a living.

[01:] 23:38:00 – [01:] 26:40:59

He discusses the question if it was noticeable in **Goeree Overlakee** that the world “was on fire”; remembers how his father would comment on the political developments in **Germany**; remembers that he left **Goeree Overlakee** on February 1, 1938, at the age of 19.

[01:] 26:41:00 – [01:] 28:05:59

He comments on the interaction between the different religious groups on **Goeree Overlakee**; explains how different religions were separated but lived together.

[01:] 28:06:00 – [01:] 35:55:59

He explains why he left **Goeree Overlakee** in 1938; remembers how he was searching for new a job; remembers that he joined the civil defense group, “Vrijwillige Landstorm,” where he learned how to use a rifle; explains why he wanted to join the army and how he eventually succeeded in doing so; comments on why he wanted to become a police officer instead.

[01:] 35:56:00 – [01:] 42:04:59

He comments on his six month period of military service and his placement in **Breda**; comments on why he stood out and was recommended for a post as noncommissioned officer, “onder officier”; comments on the 11 months of training he received in **Bergen op Zoom** for this purpose; explains how he was fired from the army after his promotion for not possessing the right diploma; comments that during his army training things were already rumbling in Austria and Germany.

[01:] 42:05:00 – [01:] 47:07:59

He explained how religious differences played no role in military life; comments on the only Jew in his regiment during the time of mobilization (1939); remembers how during the time of mobilization an imminent German threat was not taken seriously by him and his men; remembers that they listened intensely to Hitler’s radio speeches; explains how the rise in threat was mostly viewed as a raise in pay by him and his men.

[01:] 47:08:00 – [01:] 51:45:59

He explains that there was no pro-Hitler sentiment among his men since members of the National Socialist movement, Nationaal Socialistische beweging,” (NSB), were not called upon to enter military service; explains how the 10 to 12 percent that voted for the NSB were mainly farmers; explains how sympathy for the NSB was the cause of many small feuds; explains how Mussert’s NSB was not anti-Jew at first; comments on his stationing in **Elst** between 1939 and 1940; discusses how he was in charge of supplies around the border posts.

[01:] 51:46:00 – [02:] 03:43:59

He comments on the atmosphere among Jewish soldiers; remembers how all of his men were very anti-German and anti-Hitler; explains why National Socialists or communists were not called upon to enter military service and how strict this policy was; explains that sympathizers of both movements were seen as trouble until June 1941; remembers how all soldiers thought Holland would remain neutral; comments on the lack of arms within the Dutch army and the antiwar sentiment within Holland itself; comments on the threat of a German invasion not being seen as very likely or being taken seriously; explains how the Dutch army was mobilized against a German attack coming from Belgium and Germany; comments on how in between bombardments they barricaded the border roads and withdrew to the western parts of Holland; remembers they moved from Eindhoven to Tilburg; comments on the effects of the bombardments [*he starts crying as the testing of the emergency siren outside of his house reminds him of the bombardments*]; remembers that the French soldiers fought back while the Dutch soldiers retreated; remembers Dutch soldiers were scared and already dressed as civilians after two to three days; remembers the city of Breda was totally deserted when they entered it.

[02:] 03:44:00 – [02:] 04:30:23

He describes the route they took during withdrawal; comments on the plan to sabotage all roads and withdraw behind the rivers in the area known as fortress Holland, “Vesting Holland.”

Box 1, Tape 2

[02:] 05:37:00 – [02:] 10:07:59

He describes how 1,500 soldiers crossed the river and traveled to **Gorkum**, which was already flooded; remembers how they arrived at The Hague the next day and Holland had just capitulated; describes the atmosphere among the soldiers when they had to hand in their arms; remembers smoke was coming from Rotterdam burning in the distance.

[02:] 10:08:00 – [02:] 17:08:59

He comments on the atmosphere in the week after capitulation; remembers he traveled back to his hometown to help his father on the land; explains that the Dutch government offered him a job in the reconstruction service, "De Opbouwdienst," and why he refused the job; remembers he got into the Amsterdam police force on August 19, 1940; comments on the number of NSB members in the Amsterdam police force.

[02:] 17:09:00 – [02:] 25:00:59

He describes the general feeling about the duration of the war; describes the police education; remembers the February Strike of 1941; analyzes the chain of events that occurred between the security force of the NSB, "Weerbaarheidsafdeling," (WA), of the NSB and the Amsterdam police force that led to the February Strike; comments on the course of the strike; explains why the police were not allowed to go out on the streets; explains how the rounding up of Jews by the "brown shirts," "Bruinhemden," (a name for the WA), led to the strike; describes how Jews were deported in trucks; describes how the Jews that fled into the police station were locked in cells and thus saved from deportation by the Amsterdam police.

[02:] 25:01:00 – [02:] 27:19:59

He describes his first day of duty as police officer at the office of the Warmoestraat, "Bureau Warmoestraat," (Red Light District), in Amsterdam; describes how police officers used to beat pimps inside the police station to teach them "morals."

[02:] 27:20:00 – [02:] 31:32:59

He describes how he had to move back home to help his father on the land after his four brothers were arrested for refusing to cooperate with the Germans; returns to the subject of the Jews arrested before the February Strikes; remembers how 400 were arrested and transported to the camp of Mauthausen; explains how relatives came to the police station in February or March 1941 to inform about their deceased family members and how it was possible that they had died; comments that there was still a bond between Jews and the local police; remembers how his brother told him Jews were imprisoned in local school buildings and severely beaten; explains how Jews knew exactly who were NSB'ers and who not.

[02:] 31:33:00 – [02:] 35:27:59

He describes how all 230 young police officers, just graduated from police academy, in Amsterdam were stationed in barracks; remembers how Pietje **van Kleef** [**Van Cleef**] was the instructor of the young police officers; describes how Karel **Lotzy** [**Lotzie**, **Lotcie**] took over his role and came to teach police officers songs on behalf of the Germans.

[02:] 35:28:00 – [02:] 38:09:59

He talks about the division between “good” and “bad” in the police force; remembers how they called National Socialists “wet,” “Nat”; describes how the instructions for police officers on the streets were a failure; remembers there was a shortage of police uniforms; remembers how police officers sang the song “For Queen and Fatherland,” “Voor Koningin en Vaderland,” while practicing marching; explains how this led to a redistribution of police officers to different police stations; explains how this led to the drafting of police officers who had to fit National Socialist standards, called “Schalkhaarders”; explains how these new police officers were destined to round up Jews, but that this was unknown at the time.

[02:] 38:10:00 – [02:] 39:40:59

He elaborates on the atmosphere on police stations and police work; explains the situation of the rounding up of Jews on the Johannes Daniel Mijer square, “Johannes Daniel Mijersplein,” in Amsterdam

[02:] 39:41:00 – [02:] 45:09:59

He explains how the police reacted to the growing number of restrictions towards the Jewish population; remembers that the same antisemitism found within society was found within the police force; remembers how one of his colleagues left for the German security service, the “Sicherheitsdienst,” and how he was arrested at Christmas 1944 by the same man when he was part of the resistance.

[02:] 45:10:00 – [02:] 50:52:59

He explains how the February Strike was a turning point for him; explains the mentality of the German occupation force right after the invasion and the difference one year later; remembers a demonstration of NSB’ers on Dam Square Amsterdam, “De Dam,” on November 9, 1940 under supervision of Mussert; comments on his role as a police officer during that demonstration; mentions how he was beaten up by the son of the famous Jew hunter Sam Olie [Oli], Jan Olie [Oli], a boxing champion.

[02:] 50:53:00 – [02:] 52:18:59

He explains the change in position of police as boss on the street; describes how NSB and WA tried to gain control of the streets by harassing Jews; describes how Jews formed their own self-defense groups; describes how the death of Ko [Co], a member of the NSB/WA, during one of the fights with one of the Jewish defense groups led to a round-up on Jews.

[02:] 52:19:00 – [02:] 54:46:59

He explains the effect of the February Strike, how the whole world knew about the February Strike; describes why the strike was unique; explains the position of

communists in Holland under German rule; focuses on communism in occupied Holland; explains how communists liked to be and how they disappeared.

[02:] 54:47:00 – [02:] 56:05:59

He explains how he felt when fellow police officers were arrested and disappeared; explains how in May 1940 NSB'ers were first arrested by the Dutch but freed by the Germans once they had occupied Holland; explains how afterwards the communists were arrested.

[02:] 56:06:00 – [02:] 58:59:59

He explains how during a round-up in Amsterdam Jews fled from the Germans on the streets into police buildings; explains why no one in the police station felt like helping the Jews; explains that every police officer could see what was going on if they wanted to; comments on what the war has taught him; mentions "we were not used to anything" and that everybody looked away; explains that most people do not want to burden themselves with other people's troubles.

[02:] 59:00:00 – [03:] 07:02:59

He discusses the trust Jews put in the Amsterdam police force; explains the difference in situation between 1940 and 1945; refers to the February Strike as turning point for him; focuses on the role of all Dutch people concerning the deportation of Jews; explains the Dutch chain of command in this process; explains his refusal of decorations and his sense of guilt; comments that he could not have helped more people.

[03:] 07:03:00 – [03:] 09:00:00

He explains situations in which people "snapped" or "changed."

Box 1, Tape 3

[03:] 10:11:00 – [03:] 14:13:59

He elaborates on the meaning of the February Strike as the Germans showed their true face; comments on German rule as a "pure dictatorship"; explains the realization that came after seeing the use of force by the Germans; remembers the total shutdown of the Jewish quarters in Amsterdam; assumes that the staff of the Amsterdam police force knew that a round-up of Jews was coming; comments on the position of the chief of police and a major in Amsterdam in regard to the round-up; explains that there are still a few Jewish police officers left.

[03:] 14:14:00 – [03:] 15:43:59

He explains the gradual introduction of restrictions towards the Jewish population; describes how people just “let it come over them.”

[03:] 15:44:00 – [03:] 16:33:59

He explains that the police officers of Amsterdam probably did not know about the existence and the concept of concentration camps; explains what kind of news was in the papers.

[03:] 16:34:00 – [03:] 25:19:59

He explains that the first round-up of (400) Jews was not carried out by the Amsterdam police force; remembers that in a later stage the police detectives helped with the raids; explains the procedure of the first raid he was part of; mentions how the Dutch government in exile in London ordered them to cooperate with German orders; explains that these orders were also given out by the Dutch government; talks about the order to seize the client registers of radio stores in Amsterdam; explains how he sabotaged that raid.

[03:] 25:20:00 – [03:] 33:07:59

He talks about a different raid on “asocial elements” on the streets of Amsterdam; explains how sabotaging this raid was difficult; describes how the police raid was controlled by the Sicherheitsdienst; explains how the Germans locked the Jewish neighborhoods down and how the Dutch police did the rest of the work; remembers how he met the famous Dutch Jew hunter **Dave van Boekholts [van Boekholt]**, who was the head of the Bureau on Jewish Affairs, in the police office at Warmoesstraat; talks about the (mis)behavior of this man.

[03:] 33:08:00 – [03:] 37:32:59

He explains the role the police played in deportations of Jews or orders to round up and capture Jews; describes how many times this happened; describes the procedure.

[03:] 37:33:00 – [03:] 39:59:59

He describes how “righteous” colleagues had to participate in these deportations; explains the impact of refusing an order; explains how real the threat was if not cooperating with these orders.

[03:] 40:00:00 – [03:] 41:44:59

He talks about his role in identifying Dutch war criminals and collaborators after the war; focuses on the press conference he held on this subject in 1946 that focused on the criminals, perpetrators, and collaborators within the Amsterdam police force.

[03:] 41:45:00 – [03:] 44:08:59

He explains the danger for a police officer when refusing an order; explains that no police officer would ever refuse an order; explains how the Germans used “Schalkhaarders” for deportations.

[03:] 44:09:00 – [03:] 48:43:59

He explains how “righteous” police officers who had to pick Jews carried a heavy burden; describes how after the war the police force was never “cleared”; talks about a corrupt chief of police close to the end of the war.

[03:] 48:44:00 – [03:] 52:47:59

He describes how police officers knew “something was wrong” with arresting Jews; explains how police officers could not explain their actions to themselves; explains that only the most notorious collaborators were expelled from the police force after the war; comments on the responsibility of perpetrators; discusses why these “righteous people” should “do penance” for their crimes against Jews.

[03:] 52:48:00 – [03:] 57:32:59

He explains how police officers did not know the consequences of arresting and deporting Jews; explains how they thought that “the gas chambers” were propaganda; explains how nobody knew what happened in Auschwitz; explains how they knew of the horrors and the camps, but they had never imagined that it could lead to total destruction.

[03:] 57:33:00 – [04:] 01:06:59

He explains that nobody understood why the elderly, children and women had to go to “work camps”; comments that lack of knowledge is partly caused by repression; explains that most police officers lacked the strength to refuse orders; explains the penalty for refusing orders gradually moved from loss of job to heavy punishment.

[04:] 01:07:00 – [04:] 03:47:59

He explains how he became involved in the resistance; comments that “becoming good” is a gradual process, just like “becoming bad.”

[04:] 03:48:00 – [04:] 05:52:59

He explains how he played a double role between police officer and resistance fighter; comments how war corrupts.

[04:] 05:53:00 – [04:] 07:01:59

He explains his role in the resistance and how he had access to identity cards as a police officer.

[04:] 07:02:00 – [04:] 12:05:59

He explains his involvement in police actions against citizens who possessed radios.

[04:] 12:06:00 – [04:] 15:00:00

He describes what he saw of the raids against Jews in Amsterdam; comments on the people collaborating in round-ups.

Box 2, Tape 4

[04:] 15:36:00 – [04:] 20:00:59

He explains why he sees man as a “herd animal”; discusses that there was no resistance group in the whole of the Dutch police force; focuses on his police career after the war; focuses on the retrieval of Jewish property after the war.

[04:] 21:00:00 – [04:] 23:29:59

He talks about his daily routine and business during his work of retrieving Jewish property.

[04:] 23:30:00 – [04:] 26:54:59

He discusses the role of chief of police **Voordewindt [Voor de wind, Voordewind]** in his career as a police officer; discusses the retrieval of books and radios and explains how he sabotaged these actions and exploited his position in these matters.

[04:] 26:55:00 – [04:] 28:29:59

He discusses whether other police officers could have used their position to sabotage police actions towards the rounding up of Jews; comments on their behavior and righteousness.

[04:] 28:30:00 – [04:] 33:04:59

He explains why he never spurred his colleagues to perform sabotage; describes why he never discussed these issues with direct colleagues; talks about the “mores” of police officers before and during the war; explains corruption within the police force.

[04:] 33:05:00 – [04:] 34:23:59

He comments on active and passive resistance within the police force.

[04:] 34:24:00 – [04:] 41:14:59

He discusses the deportation and round-up of Jews in Amsterdam at night by tram; comments on why Jews did not flee; explains the responsibilities of family life; explains why going into hiding was almost impossible for Jews; comments on the nature of Dutch people who were not courageous; talks about what his colleagues said as to the deportations and the safety of Jews.

[04:] 41:15:00 – [04:] 42:15:59

He comments on the usage of the word “gas chamber”; explains no one had ever heard of this or it was seen as propaganda.

[04:] 42:16:00 – [04:] 45:08:59

He explains the involvement of the police in the deportations of Jews at night; focuses on the people that were hired to do these “dirty jobs”; explains the responsibilities of a regular police officer.

[04:] 45:09:00 – [04:] 48:49:59

He comments on the “righteous police officer” and the fear of resistance and sabotage; explains the differences between collaborating and the bystander syndrome of police officers; talks about betrayal among police officers; explains the power of righteousness versus the power of the masses; explains why he thinks 90 percent of the people are weak.

[04:] 48:50:00 – [04:] 59:17:59

He comments on his statement regarding the war: “I did good things and I did bad things”; explains why he feels he did not do enough for the Jews from **Goeree Overvlakee**; explains how his resistance group was betrayed by a woman from the Sicherheitsdienst; comments on his position in the resistance group, being a police officer; discusses the position of the police force during the war compared to the average Dutch citizen; explains how being a follower is part of being human; comments on the quality (bravery vs. being corrupt) of the police force employees; how the selection was tougher than it is today and how only the best could become police officer; explains how this resulted in the police’s role during the war and explains that the police force could be far worse off; comments that “the police were a better group of people, honorable and righteous”; explains how hard it is to be honorable and righteous; comments that Dutch people were no better than police officers.

[04:] 59:18:00 – [05:] 02:12:59

He focuses on the resistance within the Amsterdam police force; mentions the lack of organized resistance; mentions the national armed forces and interior combat forces, called the “Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten,” (BS); comments on the position of the communist resistance.

[05:] 02:13:00 – [05:] 09:55:59

He explains his involvement with resistance work; explains what kind of jobs or tasks the resistance entailed; explains what he did for the resistance; explains the state of affairs concerning police work during the war; focuses on the difference between his original job as a police officer and his “illegal” work; discusses the falsification of identity cards and the raids on prison transports and the role he played in them as a police officer.

[05:] 09:56:00 – [05:] 18:22:06

He comments on the attack on the jail in Amsterdam by the resistance group and explains the different attempts of his resistance group; discusses the different chains of events; talks about the last attempt which was betrayed; explains his role in the attack on the prison as a supplier of information.

Box 2, Tape 5

[05:] 19:00:00 – [05:] 29:01:59

He shows official and falsified documents and statements used during his time in the resistance:

[1. Falsified entry of the register of inhabitants of the municipality of Amsterdam:] He describes how he and his wife got a false name in the registry of inhabitants, the “Bevolkingsregister,” of Amsterdam.

[2. Official identity card with false name:] He explains how he got these documents in a robbery of the national government’s printing office that produced these documents; comments on his role and the role of the other resistance fighters in that robbery.

[3. Official identity cards issued by the resistance themselves:] He explains how his wife issued blank identity cards; he explains how falsified identity documents helped to save people; he mentions that Jews applied for these identity cards.

[4. Blank official identity card produced by the resistance:] He shows and explains how the resistance produced identity cards themselves.

[5. Letter from a renowned Dutch historian **Lou de Jong** [**Loe de Jong**], dated Friday, November 1, 1963:] He reads the letter aloud.

[6. Statement from a doctor, concerning Gerrit van der Veen, a resistance fighter:] He mentions this letter briefly.

[05:] 29:02:00 – [05:] 35:04:59

He explains how he saved large parts of the archive of the Office of Jewish Affairs that related to the period of World War II; comments on the letter by **Lou de Jong**; comments on return of several NSB'ers to the Amsterdam police force; comments on the orders of police staff to destroy large parts of the archive; discusses the chain of events after the press conference he held in 1946; comments on the role of **Lou de Jong**, to whom he gave a lot of documents; comments on his intention to clear the Amsterdam police force of its misdeeds, and why he was stopped by higher-ups in the police force; describes the report he made on the names of police officers that had worked for the Amsterdam police force and what happened to this report.

[7. Book written by historian Guus **Meerzoek** [**Meersoek**] who researched the police force of Amsterdam during World War II:] He comments on how Guus **Meerzoek** used the report he wrote in 1946 for his research, which was published in 1999; explains how Guus **Meerzoek** found this report in the archives of the Amsterdam police force.

[05:] 35:05:00 – [05:] 40:49:59

He comments on facts about the war, which according to him people still do not seem to understand;

[8. A blank stolen identification document / ID card:]
He mentions that the interviewers can keep these documents.

[9. A stolen and falsified identification document / ID card:]
He mentions the date when they stole these documents.

[10. Newspaper article concerning Doctor de **Clerck-Sublie** [**De Clerk-Subly, de Klerk-Sublij**], who gave resistance fighter Gerrit van der Veen the first medical attention and ended up in a concentration camp for his action:]

He remembers what happened when Doctor de **Clerck-Sublie** came out of the concentration camp and how he rewarded the doctor with a bike which was repossessed by the police; mentions that his father had taught him not to steal; [*he reads the article out loud*].

[05:] 40:50:00 – [05:] 48:30:00

He discusses the role of his wife during the war; remembers resistance fighter **Hans van Gogh [Han van Gogh]**, reads out a letter written by **Hans van Gogh** concerning Cornelis **Verbiest [Verbiets]** and the actions of the resistance.