

## Netherlands Documentation Project

### Interview Summary

**RG-50.570\*0024**

**Interviewee**

**Mr. Gerard van de Beld**

**Date**

**29 January 2005**

**Place**

**Amsterdam**

*Mr. Van de Beld lived near the Dutch-German border. In 1930's and in 1940 he spent time in Germany. He witnessed Kristallnacht. He became a policeman and was trained at Schalkhaar. He was stationed in Amsterdam and was ordered to arrest Jews. He warned people that they will be arrested. He said he never arrested any Jews. He had to guard transports from Amsterdam to Westerbork, Vught and Amersfoort. He wanted to join the resistance, but he was caught for trying. He was imprisoned in Vught and Amersfoort. Then he was sent to Berlin, Germany to work. He was liberated in Berlin.*

#### **Tape 1**

- 00.00 Mr van de Beld was born in Amtvollenhoven on 22 April 1922. They moved to Steenwijk. He was the youngest of six sons, his father was a fisherman. In 1924 the family moved to Emmen and his father became a farmer.
- 00.65 His mother died in 1930, his father remarried in 1935. At 13 M.r van de Beld began working. His family was very religious, Calvinist Protestant.
- 00.10 About elementary school time
- 00.11 His mother made clothes, she bought the fabric from a Jew.
- 00.12 At his reformed school there was a lot about the Jewish people, nothing negative. When they sold cattle, it was to a Jewish dealer, he gave the best price. In 1937 his father had to sell the farm because some sons wanted their part of the inheritance from their deceased mother. So the question arose of what should become of Gerard? The Jewish cattle dealer suggested he could join the police. But he was not yet interested.
- There were many National Socialists in this area. It was close to Germany and everybody could see that life in Germany was better. Some went to work there.
- 00.21 With 16 years, Mr van de Beld tried to join the army to enlarge his chances with the police, but he was too young. He started to do a two year course of 100 lessons to take the police exam.
- 00.26 Then he wanted to find a job. He heard about a German farmer who had work. He went by bike to Nordhorn.
- 00.28 He lived in the family as if he was part of it. He learnt a lot about politics. The farmer had been in WWI. The farmer was not pro-Hitler, his wife was anti-Hitler. But the oldest son from a prior marriage was a Nazi, SA and his wife was an even worse Nazi.
- 00.33 Another son worked in a concentration camp in Germany near the Dutch border near Emmen. One daughter was very against Hitler and another one was pro. In 1956 he went back to visit this family and he was greeted as a lost son.
- 00.38 Break. About Kristallnacht 9 November 1938. Mr van de Beld witnessed burning synagogues.
- 00.41 The attack on Poland. At that time he was still in Germany. On May 10, he was in the Netherlands; he was minding the farm of his brother. The people were surprised about the attack, but not him, he was not surprised at all.
- 00.44 About a speech by Hitler on German radio and the responses of the German farmer.
- There was no fighting before Meppel.
- 00.46 His brother returned to the farm. And Mr van de Beld worked at another farm, he

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- was still too young to join the police.
- 00.49 Out of work. He was sent to Willemshaven to work. He was present at a speech by Hitler in Willemshaven.
- 00.56 In 1941 he was allowed to go to the police. But he still had some trouble with the Labor Office.
- 00.58 Finally he could go. But he was not sure; he would be sent to Schalkhaar, so he consulted with the mayor. But he was not obliged to be a NSB member, so he decided to go. He was in the second group trained at Schalkhaar. He started on 23 March 1942.
- 1.00 On the first day the NSB members had to take off their insignia's. This was not allowed with the police. The first two groups at Schalkhaar did not have to give the German Greeting Salute. It was just a lot of working out, sports. There were also information gatherings which were propaganda. But he did not remember what was said in those classes.
- The atmosphere went from 'independent' to 'pro-German'.
- 1942 the Dutch military was asked to sign a loyalty oath to Germany. If they do not sign, they were put into prison or camp.

### **Tape 2**

- 00.00 There were gatherings of the NSB, but he never went there.
- 00.03 There were classes on race, but he did not remember what was taught in those lessons.
- Some teachers were NSB, not all. One teacher, Heil would chase Jews in hiding in Gorsel in his spare time.
- 00.05 There was a group of ten men who were in agreement. One was NSB, but he was not for the persecution of Jews, he was more a Mussert fan, not a Hitler fan. The training took seven months. Van de Beld was sent to Amsterdam
- 00.09 15 October 1942 he arrived in Amsterdam and was stationed at the Cornelis Troost plein. There was already a group of 100 stationed there. Van de Beld arrived with a group of about 150 persons.
- 00.14 They had to check buildings, go on night watch. He had to guard the Muiderpoort train station and the emplacement Rietlanden, the trains. He would stand guard for 12 hours. His mate was Jan Smit.
- 00.20 When on duty one had to wear one's uniform at all times.
- Soon they were sent out to pick up Jews. The first time Jan Smit was not with him. It was him, an old Amsterdam policeman and a NSB volunteer police helper (WA)
- 00.24 The old cop was in charge. The people were not arrested. He did not remember much of this first time.
- Later he had to do it himself. They would leave the people at home and say that they were too sick to go on transport. Later a man that he declared sick was arrested, so this became too obvious.
- They started to warn people instead. They went to the houses to tell people that they will come to arrest them later that day. Some did not leave after such a warning. In that case they handed in a paper that the family was arrested even when they were not.
- 00.31 He had to hand in the papers at the Dutch Theater.
- 00.32 About some families that he got to know: David Groenteman (later gassed) and two sisters called Keizer in the Beethovenstraat.
- The lists were made up by the Jewish Council, they would send it to the SD and

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the SD would send it in to the station.

Then they would go in civilian clothes to the houses at night and the next day, they could fill out: not at home. He was a specialist in kicking in doors.

They would have three addresses for one night; this happened maybe 12 to 13 times.

00.38 About a speech by Aus der Funten at the station.

Mr van de Beld never had to do a razzia.

He never arrived with people at the Dutch Theater

00.43 The Jews went as lambs to the slaughter house.

When colleagues were bringing in Jews, Jan Smit and van de Beld would act as if they had participated in the arrest. They could not refuse to take part or they would be sent to Vught.

00.46 One time he was visiting the Groenteman family when the Grune Polizei came by, it almost went wrong.

00.50 The Jews were just too optimistic, naïve.

00.52 About the people he would walk to the Theater. It could be old people or young people, he could not remember anything about young children.

00.54 He remembered that one time a colleague came walking into the station with an old Jewish woman on his shoulders, she must have been ninety, he did not remember why the colleague took her to the station.

00.55 At the Theater there was a German guard. Van de Beld would chat with him about Germany so that Jews would have the opportunity to leave the building.

00.57 He did not remember how this was organized or how contact was made with the people inside the Theater.

00.58 Most people were taken to Westerbork and from there to Germany. He had to go with transports from time to time. He had been to Vught, Amersfoort and Westerbork. He talked with a German guard in Vught, asked him where the Jews were going, and the guard said that they were not coming back. Of course van de Beld had heard Hitler speaking, he knew. People did not take it seriously, but he did.

00.01 Van de Beld did not understand how people could believe that they would be fine. How they could let this happen to them?

### Tape 3

00 The atmosphere in the Theater was good, incredible. He never saw any children there.

He knew of colleagues who were anti-Semites and of colleagues who stole. This was not talked about.

00.04 He remembered a colleague saying: Let's round up some Jews and then we can give a party.

There were also so-called Friendship evenings, but he did not go there. There was a picture with a man on it that looked like Van de Beld. After WW II there were two cases brought against him, people who thought they recognized him.

00.08 About the transports. Always two men per carriage. When he arrived the people were already on the train. When he was doing this, it was always with Schalkhaarders. He would be locked in on the train, with the Jews. Outside was the Grune Polizei. Westerbork had only Jews; Vught and Amersfoort was also for other prisoners.

00.11 He remembered a Jewish girl who got off the train near Westerbork, through the toilet, she asked him to stand guard, which he did. Later he saw her in

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- Westerbork. The number of people on the train was not checked at arrival.
- 00.14 He was never inside Westerbork itself. He remembered he was inside Vught; Amersfoort, he did not remember. He was not involved in letting the people off the train. In Westerbork it was Jews who would take the people from the train. It was without sound. He and the other policemen would go back by themselves.
- 00.20 July 1943. On a transport in Amersfoort a man came up to him. He said that he was with the resistance and that he needed a letter sent to somebody with the resistance in Naarden. Van de Beld sent the letter and he added one of his own, saying that he would like to help. He had a contact in Amersfoort and he offered to give messages.
- Later he was called to the commander Mansen, who had the letter. Van de Beld was arrested. He was interrogated for 36 hours, no violence, but also no food. He spent six weeks in the prison at the Weteringsschans. He was sent to Vught.
- Break
- September 1943, he was in Vught. He only weighed 68 kilos, he was malnourished, very sick. He was a punishment case; he had to work at the Moerdijk. There was no trial.
- 00.38 He hardly saw any Jews.
- 00.44 He heard about the Philips Jews, but did not see them.
- Hemelvaart commando
- 00.54 Three months in Amersfoort. The food was good. In Vught it was filthy; in Amersfoort it was better, but very little. They did not wear prison uniforms like in Vught, but old army uniforms.
- 00.56 About the "Rose garden". He was never put in it.
- About life in the camp

### **Tape 4**

- 00.05 He had a suspicion of what was happening to the Jews.
- 00.07 Liberation in Berlin. He worked in a factory here; to his own surprise he was not sent to a new camp. He was free to move around in Berlin.
- 00.11 June 44, he heard something about destruction camps.
- 00.13 April, he saw the Russians coming.
- Break
- 00.18 Why did he help the Jews? Christian, you have to love your neighbors like you love yourself. Others were afraid, but he was never afraid.
- 00.20 He remembered when he had just arrived in Amsterdam, he had to close the street near the Tropical Institute. People would be taken to the train. He saw how two girls tried to flee. When they were caught they were hit and kicked. He decided that he would never do something like that.