

## Netherlands, The

Country in Western Europe, also known as Holland.

When Hitler rose to power in Germany in 1933, many German refugees moved to the Netherlands. Those that entered the country illegally were interned in camps. In 1939 a central camp was put up in Westerbork for this purpose. After the outbreak of World War II in 1939, approximately 34,000 refugees entered the Netherlands, and more than 15,000 were still there in May 1940.

Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940; four days later, the Dutch army surrendered. Queen Wilhelmina fled to Great Britain, where she set up a government-in-exile. The heads of the government ministries stayed behind, forming a substitute cabinet. Hitler soon ordered the establishment of a German civil administration, led by Reich Commissioner Arthur Seyss-Inquart. At that time, the Netherlands had a Jewish population of 140,000; 75,000 Jews lived in Amsterdam.

When the Germans invaded, many Jews tried to escape the country. A series of anti-Jewish measures began in the fall of 1940. In September, almost all Jewish newspapers were shut down, and in November, all Jewish civil servants were fired, including Lodewijk Ernst Visser, the president of the Supreme Court. Soon the Germans began "aryanization" by ordering all Jewish business owners to register their enterprises. In January 1941 the Jews themselves were ordered to register with the government.

In response to these anti-Jewish measures, the Jewish community decided to institute a committee which would serve as their leadership; the Jewish Coordinating Committee, chaired by Visser, was established in December 1940. Two months later, the Germans set up a Judenrat called the *Joodse Raad*; it was chaired by Abraham Asscher and David Cohen. Several days later, the Germans arrested 389 young people and sent them to Buchenwald (and from there to Mauthausen) in response to a fight in a cafe between Jews and German police. In a singular act of solidarity with the deported Jews, strikes broke out throughout the Netherlands, beginning on February 25, 1941. Responding to pressure put on the Jews by the Nazis, the strikes ended

after three days. It was clear to the Nazis, however, that most of the Dutch would not be converted to Nazism.

Nevertheless, while some Dutch were inclined to sympathize, others collaborated. Ever since the Nazi Party had risen to power in Germany in the early 1930s, the Netherlands had had its own antisemitic, right-wing movements, whose members strongly resented incoming Jewish refugees. On the other hand, many Dutch citizens, including many intellectuals, strenuously criticized the anti-Jewish measures being enacted.

The Jews' situation deteriorated throughout 1941. Reinhard Heydrich set up a Central Office for Jewish Emigration in the Netherlands. During the summer, Jews were banned from public places, subjected to a night curfew and travel restrictions, and thrown out of schools and universities. Operational Staff Rosenberg (*Einsatzstab Rosenberg*) began plundering Jewish art and property. In late 1941 the Germans opened forced labor camps, and charged the *Joodse Raad* with finding workers to fill ever-increasing labor quotas.

In January 1942 the Germans began removing the Jews from the provinces and concentrating them in Amsterdam, and in March, the German administration started confiscating Jewish property. A month later the Jews were ordered to wear the Jewish badge (see also BADGE, JEWISH). Many non-Jews protested this decree, and some even wore Jewish badges in solidarity with their country's Jews.

DEPORTATIONS began in the summer of 1942. Jews were taken to Westerbork, and from there to AUSCHWITZ. By October, deportation was accelerated: Jewish men in Dutch labor camps were sent to Westerbork, where they were joined by their families, and all were sent to Auschwitz.

During that summer the Germans also began confiscating Jewish money. Jews had to put all their money in blocked bank accounts; those accounts were soon cancelled and all the moneys deposited into one general account which was used to fund the *Joodse Raad*.

By April 1943 Jews were only allowed to live in Amsterdam, in the VUGHT and Westerbork camps. Deportations were again accelerated in May 1943. By the summer of that year, only a small number of Jews were left in the Netherlands; on the eve of the Jewish New Year, in September, most of the

remaining Jews---including the *Joodse Raad*--were deported to Westerbork. Most of the Jews deported from the Netherlands did not survive.

Some 25,000 Dutch Jews managed to go into hiding after being ordered to report for forced labor or deportation; about one-third were eventually discovered by the Germans. One famous case is that of the family of Anne FRANK, who lived in a secret annex for two years before being found by the Germans. The Franks, like other Jews, were helped into hiding by non-Jewish contacts. These non-Jews would help Jews move from hideout to hideout, and provide food, ration cards, and forged identity documents. Many non-Jews selflessly helped hidden Jews without asking for any money. Some, however, took advantage of the situation. Nonetheless, all those who helped Jews were in danger of being deported to CONCENTRATION CAMPS. Later on, organizations were set up to help Jews in hiding, and in early 1944 the national underground organization set up a section to assist Jews in hiding. Many children were also hidden with non-Jewish families; in all, 4,500 children were taken in, and very few were found by the Germans.

Some Jews tried to escape the country altogether, but this proved a very difficult task. Most Jews who tried to reach Britain failed, and movement through FRANCE and BELGIUM was very dangerous. Some Jews did manage to reach SWITZERLAND, and some even reached SPAIN. Several hundred Dutch Jews escaped by being exchanged for Germans, while others were let out of BERGEN-BELSEN because they held Latin American passports.

No specifically Jewish resistance movement was established in the Netherlands, but many Jews joined in general resistance activities. The Netherlands was liberated on May 6, 1945. After the war, the Dutch Jewish community tried Asscher and Cohen of the *Joodse Raad* for collaboration; they were removed from communal posts. The two were later exonerated, but they never returned to Jewish public life.