Teacher Handbook

Resistance Movements in the Netherlands and Denmark during World War II
Teacher’s Handbook on Resistance Movements in the Netherlands and Denmark

Slide #3 Definition of Resistance:

• Resistance n the Resistance: is an illegal organization fighting for national liberty in a country under enemy occupation.

Questions for discussion: — (Slide #4 Origins of Resistance)

• Why fight back?

People may fight to protect friends, family or possessions. It is of course a very personal thing to reason. Also common people may resent the fact that they are living in an occupied country and not want any influence from a foreign power; particularly one that is a cruel and brutal dictatorship such as Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler.

• Is it worth the risks to friends, family and possessions?

This is a question of conscious. What we do know from the time period is that many people did find the risks worth taking as many common Dutch people wanted to stand up for what was right. It is worth noting that many Dutch people perished as a result of resisting the Nazis, however many Jewish people were also helped as a result of such heroics.

• Religious conviction a factor?

Europe and in particular the Netherlands was during this time period strong and devoted Christian nations. The vast majority of Dutch people were followers of Christianity and strongly supported the morals and values of the faith. Having one predominant religion meant that this was a unifying force against Nazi oppression. Not only that but many people saw it as their Christian duty to stand up to be counted to fight such oppression and abhorrent acts of violence and cruelty that were perpetrated by the Nazis.
• Patriotism/Nationalism?

The Dutch knew their culture and traditions clearly. The Netherlands was a monoculture society and they were proud of whom they were as a people and felt that they did not necessarily want to endorse or embrace Nazi ideals.

• Can 1 person or small group of people really make a difference?

Any Jewish person that was rescued, protected or saved by a Gentile (non-Jew) is clearly a victory for freedom, justice and humanity. Many individual acts of kindness resulted in many people being saved. Although it must be said that 90% of the Jewish population in Europe were still exterminated by the Nazis.

• A force for National unity & pride?

The Dutch prided itself on resisting the Nazis in a whole range of non-violent ways. From listening to illegal radio broadcasts to printing and distributing pamphlets of protest; the Dutch felt a sense of united hostility towards their oppressors. This was certainly a unifying force within the society and their people.

Slide #5 Countries involved in Resistance Movements in Nazi occupied Europe during World War II

‘In every occupied country resistance movements of some kind came into being in the early days of the war.’ However he also states that: ‘The unity and harmony of the national movements varied greatly. Most resistance organizations were strongly political and religious in character.’
Questions for discussion:-

• Why is it that Resistance Movements in Europe were not able to unify under one banner to fight against the Nazis?

It must be noted that the majority of people who resisted the Nazis were not military people but civilians. Also communication and transport was not as fast as we have in the 21st century and many of the activities that the different resistance movements were involved in had to be secret. This meant that a highly organized and well coordinated resistance movement throughout Europe was unlikely.

• What political & religious beliefs motivated citizens to fight & why?

Many Dutch were advocates for democracy and freedom as well as having a strong and committed Christian population. This combination of beliefs meant that there was organized and determined resistance.

Slide #12 Co-ordination of Dutch Resistance

‘From the outset, however, small networks of people who knew and trusted one another and mostly shared a common religious background (Calvinist and Catholic) did actively help Jews, notwithstanding the risks. The limited scope of the grassroots actions has been attributed to the absence of hands-on leadership from the hierarchy of all Dutch Christian churches, despite some of the courageous protests, particularly of Archbishop de Jong.’

Questions for discussion:-

• Using the above quote could the Dutch had coordinated their resistance better?

With the benefit of hindsight it could be said that resistance could be much better organized, led and coordinated. This should not diminish guilt from religious or political leaders that could have done more to help Jewish people.
• If so why did the Dutch people not step up their efforts to resist the Nazi occupiers with greater fervor?

Leadership, resources and equipment are factors that can hamper resistance. Many Dutch as well as other Europeans were bystanders and did not actively participate with resistance movements or collaborate with the Nazis. They were the fence sitters who could have done much more.

• Referring to the previous two slides; did the Dutch still make a difference to some of the Jews in the Netherlands during this time? Evaluate their effectiveness.

Considering the geographic and cultural factors as well as resources available the Dutch did do a good job under the circumstances. They were effective as the Nazis had to continue (throughout the war) trying to stamp out the Dutch resistance but were unsuccessful.

Slide #13 Effectiveness of Dutch Resistance

‘The resistance movement was slow to take form in the Netherlands. As Nazi oppression slowly took shape, so did Dutch resistance. Hitler underestimated the Dutch people and the Nazis were unprepared to deal with the primarily non militaristic character of Dutch resistance. Much of Dutch resistance can be characterized as either passive resistance or non-violent active resistance. Radio broadcasts under Nazi control consisted principally of propaganda. Thus, while it was illegal to listen to British radio, many Dutch began to listen to the BBC and radio broadcasts from the Dutch government in exile. In 1943, over one million radio sets were confiscated by the Nazis in response to these acts of resistance.’
Questions for discussion:-

• Compare & contrast the above quote to that of Friedlander.

Similarities include the discussion of Dutch resistance, common Dutch people resisting Nazi oppression.

Differences include the fact that the first article is critical of church leadership not having greater hands on involvement in resistance. The second article discussing

• What characteristics are clear in the Dutch people resisting the Nazis?

The Dutch were strongly independent people who were non-militaristic in nature. The Dutch that did resist the Nazis did so through passive resistance or non-violent active resistance. The fact that over 1 million radio sets were confiscated by the Nazis during the war period shows clearly that the Dutch were non compliant with German demands.

• Was this approach in your opinion effective?

It is very easy to think that armed resistance is the only answer to fighting an invading army. This approach is really the only way to decisively beat an occupying force. However, passive and non-violent active resistance certainly frustrated and confused as well as tied down Nazi resources that could otherwise have been used elsewhere.
Slide #17 Questions – Netherlands (Revision questions).

- Account for the Netherlands involvement in resistance activities. What methods did they use to resist the Nazis?

- Outline the reasons why the Dutch people resisted during World War II

- How did they protest/resist?

- Was this protest or resistance effective?

- Who coordinated resistance and was it done properly?

- Account for the reasons as to why so many Dutch Jews perished as a result of the Nazi regime (including geographical and cultural reasons).

- Could this have been avoided? If so how?

- Discuss the role that the Church played during this time, did it do enough to help the oppressed Dutch Jewish people?
Slide #20, Read the following story on the rescue mission of Jews in Denmark:

The Danish Solution: The rescue of the Jews in Denmark

http://www.thedanishsolution.org/history.html

The "Jewish Question" in Denmark

The events took place during the German occupation of Denmark from April 9, 1940 until May 4, 1945. Germany attacked Denmark in the early morning hours of April 9, 1940.

The Danish government and King Christian X, deciding it was futile to resist, negotiated with the Germans agreeing to export food and industrial products to Germany and securing guarantees that Jews would be treated as all other citizens in Denmark.

Danish politicians formed a new government for the occupation with Thorvald Stauning as Prime Minister and Erik Scavenius as the new minister of foreign affairs. Scavenius was an elderly man, brought out of retirement because he was considered able to handle the Germans - he had served as a foreign minister in the First World War.

Many Danes were ashamed that their country had put up so little resistance, but Scavenius viewed cooperation as an opportunity to retain at least some national sovereignty. Still he blocked German efforts to bring up the “Jewish Question.”

A serious crisis developed in 1942 when the king responded coldly to a birthday telegram from Adolf Hitler. Hitler, smarting from the insult, determined to control Denmark with a heavy hand. He demanded that Scavenius, a more malleable official, be promoted to prime minister; and he replaced the German civilian administrator with an official known for his brutality, SS-General Werner Best.

Danish Upheaval to Rescue the Jews

When final orders for the raid arrived from Berlin on September 28, Best informed his confidant, Georg Duckwitz, that Jews would be rounded up within two days, on the night between October 1 and 2.

Duckwitz leaked the information to Danish politicians and the news spread like wildfire through friends, business acquaintances, and strangers wanting to help. Ordinary citizens all over the country offered refuge in churches, attics, and country homes, and residences. Complete strangers walked up to Jews on the street to offer keys to their apartment. Medical staff hid more than 1,000 Jews in Copenhagen hospitals.

On the night of the raid, Germans only found 284 Jews out of almost 8,000 in the population. Still, Danes knew this could be a short-lived victory, for how long could the other thousands hide?

Photo: Danish refugee just arrived in Sweden and a Swedish policeman. (The Museum of Danish Resistance 1940-45)

Danish institutions rose up in protest over the round-up. Hans Fuglsang-Damgaard, the Bishop of Copenhagen, issued a defiant ecumenical letter which was read in almost every church in the nation. After negotiations with Danish leaders such as physicist, Niels Bohr, Sweden announced it
In November of 1942, Best who had risen through the ranks as an ambitious Nazi fundamentalist and mastermind of the Gestapo, arrived in Copenhagen. He was a colorless, cold intellectual anti-Semite who based his anti-Semitism on notions of the "Volk" and had sent thousands to their deaths in France and Poland.

Surprisingly, Best no sooner arrived than he adopted a policy of moderation in Denmark. He reasoned Germany should crush biologically inferior peoples, but be flexible towards the Danes, who, as Aryans, were people "of good race."

He worked closely with Georg F. Duckwitz, a German shipping expert and member of the Abwehr, German's military intelligence, who knew Denmark intimately and was friendly with leading Danish politicians. German officials in Denmark and Berlin were constantly debating how to handle occupied countries, often exploring what local populations would tolerate.

Werner Best played the pragmatic card, arguing with officials in Berlin that Danish food supplies to Germany, providing 12 percent of German food needs, would be jeopardized if they targeted Danish Jews.

Best's policy of moderation seemed to work for a few months until the following spring of 1943. He allowed a general election to take place in March, but the Nazi party was roundly defeated; elsewhere Germany faced major losses in North Africa, Russia and Italy.

Fishing boats and other illegal transports began to ferry Jews across the Øresund (the sound separating Denmark and Sweden). In less than a month, almost 700 voyages transported almost 95 percent of the Jewish population to safety.

But some were not so lucky. Some died in transit. Others committed suicide. And 481 Jews were arrested and sent to Theresienstadt, a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia.

Danish officials such as the director of the Foreign Ministry Nils Svenningsen determined to follow up on the captured Danes. They launched negotiations with Werner Best and the SS officer in charge of implementing the Final Solution, Adolf Eichmann, to permit Danish prisoners to receive parcels of food and medicine, and to assure that none would be transported to death camps.

By 1944, as Allied forces gained the upper hand and Danish resistance grew, Germans cracked down on the population. Executions and arrests intensified. While Werner Best was out of the country, Germans arrested the entire Danish police force and shipped them with many saboteurs to concentration camps.

Hitler wanted new terror measures against the increasing sabotage, but behind his back, Swedish officials and Heinrich Himmler struck a deal in the spring of 1945 permitting them to get Scandinavians out of several concentration camps before the war's end.

In March, 1945, a convoy of white buses drove through Europe amidst heavy bombing raids, to pick up prisoners at several concentration camps.

On May 4, 1945, German forces surrendered in Denmark. A month later, Danish exiles began to return. Most found their homes well tended and their belongings untouched. Others had suffered for his brutality, SS-General Werner Best.
Danes grew defiant as it became clear that the Allies could win the war. Unrest spread. Massive strikes and a wave of sabotage actions hit the country. Best's efforts to combine democracy and totalitarianism, and to manage Denmark as a "model protectorate" failed.

On August 29, 1943, he declared martial law and demanded the introduction of capital punishment. The Danish government, after cooperating for three years, defiantly stopped functioning but refused to resign formally to prevent Germans from taking over, without violating the Danish constitution. The Danish administration however continued to function.

In a move to save face, Best decided to crack down and launched plans to arrest Jews. On September 8, he sent a telegram to Berlin: "The time has come to turn our attention to the solution of the Jewish question."

great losses. Although only a few left to go to Israel, many recognized that the occupation had imposed a Jewish identity on them in a country that had always considered them simply Danes.
Questions on the Danish Solution: The rescue of the Jews in Denmark.

• Discuss why the Danish people felt compelled to assist its Jewish inhabitants.

The Danes saw the Jewish people as Danes not necessarily as a separate ethnic/cultural identity. Many Danes were also disappointed with how little resistance was fielded against the invading Nazi armies into Denmark.

Similar to the Dutch, many Danes followed the idea of passive & non-violent resistance. This meant that the Nazis could not gain total control or allegiance from the occupied territory.

• Assess how successful the Danes were in helping its citizens. Could they have done more?

The statistics clearly show how successful the rescue of Jewish people being ferried to neutral Sweden was. Only 472 out of about 8,000 Danish Jews were lost to Hitler’s ‘final solution.’ The vast majority of Danish Jews were saved which is an incredible and bold achievement.

• Could the rescue have still worked if people had not cooperated so wholeheartedly? Why/Why not?

The simple answer is no. The Danish government as well as people at grassroots level had to act quickly and decisively to move such a large number of people without being noticed by the Nazis within a short time frame. Had the Danes hesitated or wasted valuable time the chances of success would have been greatly diminished.

• Does this rescue show that resistance although not armed still made a difference and undermined the occupying Nazi authorities? How/Why?
Yes non-violent resistance was indeed effective in rescuing countless people, however without armed intervention from the Allied forces Denmark would still be an occupied territory.

**Collaborators**

Slide #3 List the names of the three main organisations that collaborated with the Nazis:

- N.S.B (*Nationaal Socialistische Beweging*) Dutch Nazi/Fascist Party
- Dutch volunteers for the Waffen SS
- Danish Volunteers for the Waffen SS

Slide #4 Definitions:

- **Collaborator**: ‘To cooperate with an enemy invader’
- **Traitor**: ‘A person who betrays friends, country, a cause etc’
- **Treason**: ‘Betrayal of one’s sovereign or country, esp by attempting to overthrow the government; any treachery or betrayal’
- **Sedition**: ‘Speech, writing, or behavior intended to encourage rebellion or resistance against the government’

Slide #7 Questions

- After reading the definitions as well as a brief outline of the N.S.B, describe whether the members of the N.S.B were collaborators and why?

The N.S.B was a Fascist party that supported Nazi ideals and were willing to assist the Nazis in the ‘final solution’. This is apparent in N.S.B members running Westerbork internment camp which housed Dutch-Jewish inmates that were to be transported to the death camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

- Discuss why so many Dutch people were willing to support the idea of National Socialism.
Support for the N.S.B was predominantly from Dutch Catholics. Many of these people believed that because the Jews Crucified Christ that they ‘deserved’ to be persecuted; tortured & executed.

The Jews were scapegoats for a nation’s problems, remembering that the 1930’s was the time of the Great Depression; it was easy to blame minority groups for the position of the Dutch economy. Many Dutch followed the German lead in blaming the global conspiracy that the Jews were responsible for their difficulties.

- List reasons as to why the N.S.B were so willing to work alongside the occupying German forces.

N.S.B members were fully engrossed into Nazi ideology and therefore saw a strong tie between Dutch and German culture, language, religion and tradition. Also many Dutch involved in the N.S.B were fervently anti-communist and wanted to expel the threat of Bolshevism also.

- Did the N.S.B represent the majority of Dutch?

No, there were only 52 000 members which gained 8% of the nation’s vote in elections. The population of the Netherlands during this time was 9 million.

Slide #10 – Waffen SS

- By swearing an oath to Hitler rather than the German nation/empire do you think it had a strong influence on the actions of many of the Waffen SS volunteers? Why/Why not?

Yes, many volunteers took the oath very seriously. In fact many used it as an excuse to commit crimes against humanity because they were ‘following orders’. The oath also tied in with indoctrination and propaganda instilled into many volunteers by the Nazis. However for a foreigner (non-German) to willingly volunteer for the Waffen SS shows that they may already have strong ultra right-wing nationalist sentiments.
Slide #15 Questions

• Why do you think so many non-Germans decided to flock to the cause of National Socialism?

The reasons for non-Germans to betray their own country could be for a variety of reasons. Including the following: Strong feelings of connection of race and culture with Germany, anti-Bolshevik beliefs, living in a country threatened or occupied by the USSR, hatred towards Jews/Gypsies & other minorities, believing that the Nazis would win the war and protect themselves by supporting the ‘winning side’.

• What would motivate so many Europeans from a variety of background to join the Waffen SS?

This question has a similar answer to the previous question, but also including other reasons such as prestige, adventure and sense of power over their fellow citizens.

• Why did Hitler allow so many different ethnicities to be represented in fighting for the German cause, some of which were clearly non-Aryan?

Hitler saw the greater cause as being the annihilation of the Jewish people as the most important objective to be achieved. Therefore at this point in time he was happy to have say a Turkish Waffen SS division fighting for the Nazi cause.

• After reading the heroics of many Dutch and Danish citizens why would so many of their countrymen betray their own nation and people and support Hitler?

The answer may be as unique and different as the men themselves. However as mentioned previously the reasons for betrayal may be ideological, self preservation, prestige, power and so forth.
• What would you have done if you were put in a similar situation? Would you have collaborated or resisted? (This is an excellent discussion question open to debate with the class.)

**Personal Story of the de Vries Family**

• Students are to view the slide show on the de Vries family.

• This personal story can be used to show that a small family in one of the occupied territories under Nazi control were able to defy tyranny and fight for justice.

• This personal account also supports the notion that a single person or small group of people can make a difference as with the majority of the Jewish people in hiding with the de Vries’s survived the war and had families and careers themselves. Some emigrated from the Netherlands, others did not.

• The story as a whole can give the students a more personal and ‘real’ account of World War II. With slides of photos, certificates and other artefacts it can show clearly how these events really did happen and that they occurred not very long ago.

• The presentation is more for special interest and discussion and debate, rather than specific questioning of details as with the other power point presentations.