

ABBREVIATIONS and meanings

AM = anti-meldingscampagne (campaign to discourage military personnel from reporting to German authorities)

IP = Illegale pers (illegal press)

LO = landelijke hulp aan onderduikers (nation-wide organization to help those gone underground)

marconist = operator of a radio transmitter

NSB = National Socialist Party (Netherlands)

O.D. = ordedienst (order service, a policing authority)

PB = Persoons Bewijs (Identity Card)

PTT = Post, Telegram and Telephone [Australian equivalent at the same time was the PMG, now Telstra and

Australia Post]

PV = politieverzet (police resistance movement)

S.D. = Sicherheitsdienst (security department; commonly called the Gestapo)

underground = in hiding, disappeared from all public view, sometimes but not necessarily below the surface of the

ground -----

Record of Bart Folkerts of Piet Heinstraat 61, Groningen, born 18/9/1911 in Oss. Married to Douwina Geziena Hoexum (d 13/3/1966).

Member of Resistance groups A.M., AB, Packard Group. Pseudonym - Willem, W de Ridder.

Declaration concerning the resistance work, in the years 1940-1945, of BARTELD JAN FOLKERTS, who lived in Groningen, first at 61 Piet Heinstraat and then at 1a Dorus Rijkerstraat, and then emigrated to Kingston, near Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, after liberation. There he lives at 61 Cleburne Street, Kingston, Tasmania, A[ustralia].

Bart was enlisted by me, about May 1943, with the Anti-registration campaign for military conscripts and thereby became one of my closest co-workers. Later on he went to the Packard Group, intelligence service, at my request. Here he carried out many dangerous assignments, and the information so gained was sent through to Colonel Somers. He was also my connection with the intelligence group of Vermeulen in Drachten, which was headed in Groningen by Roelof Heidema. Vermeulen was killed, but some of his group are still alive. For the Packard Group Bart kept up the contact with Henk Wismeijer of the telephone service of the PTT in Groningen, and with the PTTers Idema in Beilen and De Boer in Leeuwarden. Through these channels all troop movements and other German military data were advised by telephone (a separate line), and then transmitted to England via the senders, to the headquarters of Eisenhower and to Prins Bernhard. Bart Folkerts was and is a thoroughly trustworthy person who worked

whole heartedly for our freedom and so earns all our co-operation, now that he is suffering in body and spirit from his efforts.

This is only a summary statement, and I will gladly - if this is desired by you - give details.

Groningen, 29 August 1975 R.P Houwen.

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1940 - 1945

MOBILISATION - WAR - OCCUPATION - FREEDOM

Four words, behind which a struggle of unknown ferocity raged. Years of wrestling and tension, of action, of joy and sorrow, years in which much that we loved was ruthlessly broken and destroyed.

On the other hand, bonds of friendship were laid, which proved to be unbreakable in struggle and sorrow, and which also gave support in the many dangers.

These notes are made to preserve for his family and friends, and for them to read in peace, what Bart Folkerts met on his road in those years.

10 May 1940. A day of bewilderment, embittering and rage against the almighty enemy that unleashed itself on us, trampling all rights and laws. In the evening of 9 May 1940 Bart had arrived home with two days exceptional leave; his mother-in-law needed a serious operation and so he was permitted to return home. Friday morning, attacking aeroplanes, the groaning of exploded bridges, bewildered people, tales of panic, and above all, a terrible reality: WAR!

In the morning Bart managed to get a place in a truck to his station in Hillegom. The trip went without serious interruption, although as a lone military traveller he was sometimes seen as an enemy, but with patience he managed to convince the checkpoints of his honest intentions. The truck was stopped by the military within sight of Hillegom. -----

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According to them it was impossible to travel any further. There was heavy fighting in Hillegom, German paratroops had already created casualties.

Good advice was difficult to get. Finally Bart convinced the Commander to let him continue to Hillegom. He was warned "Be careful, look out, and if you see Germans, let 'em have it." Bart promised to do this, naturally, not mentioning that he had no weapons; his revolver was still in Hillegom.

The last part of his journey, which he made very carefully, was completed without hindrance. The company to which he belonged had just gone to a threatened point. He decided, with the few soldiers who had stayed behind, to leave early the next morning and hope to find their company.

Success. They were all happy to see the leave-taker back in their midst, and were bursting with curiosity to hear some news from the North; it seemed that the anxiety of many was exaggerated, the rest would wait and see. The group of 30 men, to which Bart belonged, stationed at the Haagse Schouw, was sent to a threatened point near the Valkenburg aerodrome, where they supported the fighting with their heavy machine-guns.

The next day the true character of the men was displayed - some did their duty calmly and undaunted, others disappointed with their exaggerated angst. Although there was no cause for concern at Valkenburg, the reports from the south were disturbing. The paper we received on Tuesday caused us to fear the worst.

On Tuesday evening the disappointing and painful reality: capitulation. Our Freedom gone To accept this was infinitely more difficult than the struggle of the previous days. To be made a Servant that hurt.

We received an indication of the noble nature of our opposition when Hitler ordered that all prisoners of war were permitted to return home.

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In the last [days of] May the group to which Bart belonged also departed [for home] and he saw his wife and children in good health again. The course of the war was followed with anxious tension. The Germans continued to be successful. The fight for Moscow interested many people - the fear that the Germans would also conquer this city was strong. Some of Bart's acquaintances were actually quite certain, and told him so confidently: "Moscow will not fall in the first three weeks." They promptly offered to have a wager on this matter. Bart, true to his painter's trade, accepted it on the following condition: "The one who loses must paint, twice within 24 hours, on the city wall on the Petrus Campersingel, the words 'NSB is traitor'. Bart lost and went out that evening with tarpot and brush in hand. He told his wife that he still had a small job. The task was completed, after five interruptions: the numerous strollers seemed intent on sabotaging this first test of the skill of the painter, whereupon Bart rode to the dwelling of his friends with whom he had made the bet; on the fence opposite he painted the same message to make it quite clear.

Once home his wife was not impressed that the job had taken so long; so he confessed everything and then it was all OK again.

When his friends stepped outside the following morning, they saw not only the fence with it's message but also an inspector of police, studying the ground to find traces of the perpetrator.

However, seen in the clear light of day, the value of this paint work was judged to be not worth the risks involved. This is why attempts were made to become involved in a resistance group. The long term illness of the first underground contact point hindered enlistment in an illegal group.

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The order that all Netherlands military personnel had to report [to the German authorities] and be taken away as prisoners of war opened the eyes of many to the real nature of their enemy.

A large, nation-wide, strike was the response of the Netherlanders to the oppressor. Although this action was put down with bloodshed, the public displayed strengths which were unbreakable. For many this was the final signal to join the fight against the occupier and to fight for that which was dear to us, to become involved, to protest the permanent loss of our freedom. This was the basis of the resistance and the power in the struggle.

With the support of some friendly relations Bart could offer financial support to some military personnel if they could not or dared not continue in their daily work and were forced underground.

Quite early in the piece Bart received a visit from Bob Houwen, who had joined with Ep Pinkster and some other friends and urged the organised resistance to oppose the reporting of the prisoners of war. The goal and the method were explained to him after Bart promised to work with them. Details of servicemen in his neighbourhood were then given to him and so the work began.

[Bart] visited various people in his neighbourhood, and in their turn they took responsibility for a block or a street; the servicemen were visited and urged not to report in any manner. Although this was a large scale, and thus dangerous, operation, it was quite successful. Numerous financial situations were made safe to relieve the responsibility many had to care for their families.

Slowly the following combination took shape: Bob Houwen, Ep Pinkster, Gerrit Zuidland, Ab de Jong, with Bart taken in as fifth member of the circle of friends;

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a bond was made, that in the coming years of struggle and need would prove valuable and unbreakable.

The various reporting days for the different parts of the [armed] services were tensely observed - when our turn, and that of many Groningen boys, came, we took a look at the station and saw that many thought to gain safety with an *ausweis* and had made the trip with the hope of being home again that evening. It actually happened that there were some who, with all their papers, were held, and mourned their gullibility behind barbed wire. There were also many men who ignored the call to report and calmly went about their daily work, or who took a free day and supposedly reported, there were others for whom it was inconvenient to stay at work and on that day went underground. Apart from the financial support of those in hiding, the organising of coupons [for them] was also undertaken. Contacts spread gradually, and a good relationship with the distribution service made it possible to obtain large quantities of coupons.

Bob and Bart made contact with a small group in AMsterdam via Henk Stouten; together with this group it was possible, several times, to obtain false supplementary sheet

numbers. Together with the contacts in the distribution service in Groningen and the central distribution office in Zwolle, these numbers were printed in between and so we gained a large number of extra coupons.

If we didn't have enough then Bob or Bart would make the trip to Assen, where the Drenthe friends Jaap Bakker, van der Schaaf and van Dalen usually could solve the difficulty. If we suddenly had too many coupons and no requests, the coupons would be deposited at different businesses and so a reserve was built up, which helped us in times of difficulty. On the whole the work went well and no exceptional difficulties were encountered.

In some situations it remained desirable to have a gun,

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to obtain one was a difficult undertaking; Bart made various trips to Holland for one, but had little success except for promises, which was as far as he got for a time. Just one day after the German accomplice Elzinga was shot Bart's doorbell was rung; the previous evening several good citizens had been shot in retaliation, and with that in mind, it was understandable that a ringing doorbell was not a pleasant sound at ten thirty in the evening. Bart crawled into his hiding place and his wife tucked the clothes away, then opened the door and "If you please madam, a telegram", was all that she got to hear. The telegram contained the following: "Have been able to buy a used coat, without lining, if you are interested, come and get it". This tip was not open to two meanings. Bart travelled with haste to Den Haag and took possession of a used revolver without ammunition. On the return journey, in possession of a large calibre revolver, an interesting incident occurred.

[Picture] a full [train] compartment. [Sitting] next to Bart a lady from Amsterdam who found it necessary to speak her mind about the perniciousness of the Youthstorm and the NSB Nobody advised her to be quiet. When her story had reached it's climax, Bart pulled the magazine "Storm" from his inside pocket and began, blatantly, to read silence The woman switched quietly to; "It's a good thing that Hitler sent the Jews to Poland: Jews are not people, they won't even give a Christian the time of day". The reader continued studiously with his magazine until [they arrived] in Assen. There a couple of gentlemen boarded and took a place in the compartment. The magazine had, in the meantime, disappeared into the inside pocket. The lady was still not over the shock, and began anew to praise the actions of Hitler - it seemed she even had a brother on the eastern front.

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One of the gentleman refrained from all speech, and gave no indication of agreement, but gave the impression he suffered from the "English disease".

In Vries-Zuidlaren Bart had to momentarily leave the compartment and, as happens more often, the chatterbox grabbed the moment to warn the gentlemen of the dangerous SS man. The mood in the compartment seemed to be even more pro- German when he returned. At the station in Groningen the gentleman who had not been involved in the discussion, and so had given the impression he was very careful, tapped Bart on the

shoulder and said: "Sir, I have been warned to be careful of you, you seem to be on the wrong side, the lady that sat next to you told me she had said far too much and was frightened you would arrest her in Groningen".

Bart affirmed this and said: "Yes sir, that is right". This made the man more trusting, and he declared: "But we are both in the same trade, you know". What did he mean? Had he seen through the joke, and was he also an illegal worker?

Bart remained in his role and removed all doubt by answering: "Look sir, what the people say at home is their business, but to criticize the Youthstorm in public is not acceptable, and I am prepared to take action against that".

"That's right sir", was the prompt reply, "that's what I think so too. I am a town mayor, and I won't tolerate criticism of the German army. I always bring offenders to the local commander and he's happy to deal with them. If they won't go willingly, then I press a revolver into their back and insist they accompany me".

Outside the station the mayor faithfully waited [in vain] for his [new] comrade, who had deemed it wise not to pursue the relationship.

In the beginning of 1944 Bart handed over a large part of his work and went, at the request of Bob Houwen, to work with him for an intelligence service. The aim was to gather information about the German troops, their movements and fortifications in the three northern provinces.

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Jan van de Meer, a nephew of Bart, was asked to be his co-worker. We had worked together for some time distributing coupons, so we knew we had found a serious co-worker. We began with gathering addresses and information about the German offices and quarters.

Alas, Jan van der Meer fell at the start; through an unhappy run of circumstances he received a house search and the S.D. found some notes about the German army which Jan had just received from Bart.

In the questioning which Jan was then subjected to he gave no clue over the origin of these papers. He held out until the end, and only conceded to have been in contact with 'Piet Brouwer', who had provided him with the coupons, and had also given him the incriminating documents for safekeeping.

Thankfully good arrangements could be made so that his mother could make a similar declaration. Jan was sentenced to 2 years gaol, to be served in a German prison. Jan, with his good sense of humour, [and] his mental strength, undertook this punishment trusting that it would all work out. Shortly after the capitulation he was able, healthy and unbroken, still in possession of his generous laugh, to return to his family and friends.

The work had to continue despite the setbacks. New contacts were made in diverse places, and much information was gathered by themselves as well.

Acquaintance was made with Hoving, alias Eefting, via Ep Pinkster. He was a man with irrepressible optimism, a stalwart worker, fighting fearlessly day and night for his

fatherland. Through his abundant relationships with the O.D. department he saw and heard much, and he passed on anything of importance.

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In September 1944 he [Eefting] was captured by the S.D.; his brave little wife only got to hear after the liberation that her husband was executed [shot] in Westerbork. Hielke van der Heide, alias Piet van der Helst, and Wim Homoet alias Wim Hommes, two underground military police, also gave their energy, for a short time, to the gathering of information, but then they went back to a sabotage group. A little later they were captured by the S.D. and did not live to see freedom again. Annie van der Heide, a sister of Hielke, remained the contact in Leeuwarden and collected diverse information.

A good working relationship was also gained with the information group of Roelof Heidema; this group essentially collected information about aerodromes, war-industry, and import and export. The reconnoitring was conducted throughout the country. The information that Bart gathered, together with Bob and other contacts, were passed on to the group of Roelof. Bob was usually present at the discussions of this group, which were held regularly in the Restaurant Suisse. In this way most co-workers got to know Roelof Heidema. Through the old relationships with the coupon distribution [network] it was possible to satisfy the need of Roelofs boys for coupons, so that they were spared difficulties on their trips, which often lasted a whole day.

Once in a while Bob and Bart went out together to gain information. At these times it transpired that they were well tuned to each other and had the same way of working. In an unknown place a chat in a bakers shop or cafe was often the first introduction to new territory.

The company of Germans or other people in uniform were the travelling companions of choice, a chat with them was often to advantage.

Quick adaptation was often called for to get through a difficult situation. -----

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Once Bart was in Beilen on reconnaissance. The Germans were quartered in a quiet street, where every stroller was noticed. Despite this the facts of the situation were observed; to make the remaining time, before the departure of the train, profitable, Bart stepped into the nearest restaurant and ordered a bowl of soup. He was just starting to eat when he suddenly saw a group of soldiers coming from the building he had just studied. There were marching at double time, with some officers following on bicycle, all apparently searching for the "Spy". At the crossroads, right in front of the restaurant, halt was called and discussion began concerning which direction to follow. For surety they left a guard on the crossroads, the rest raced onwards.

Bart thought it advisable to pull the curtain, behind which he sat, tighter, and then pondered his predicament while finishing his soup. Stay calm seemed to be the best; he put his raincoat on and, looking a little dopey, slowly strolled back to the station. A guard had also been placed there, and on the platform there was also a policeman,

waiting for the train to depart; to pass the time [Bart] chatted with him, and the arrival of the train resolved the situation.

In the autumn of 1944 the PTT was enlisted. The possibilities were discussed with Henk Wismeijer, technician at the PTT, and a plan was formulated. Groningen became the central point. The chief of the exchange in Leeuwarden, van der Hoeff, was enlisted, as was Idema in Beilen. At these three central points other contacts were connected. The news came from the provinces in a special code to these central points, then passed on to Groningen through special [telephone] lines.

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Wismeijer gathered everything together and passed it on to Bob or Bart via Tini Boiten. In this manner a quick report could be received, which reduced the risks. In September 1944 the S.D. accomplices attempted to snare Ep Pinkster, one of the old guard. The necessary [evasion] measures were taken [in a] timely [manner], and they missed. Bart was lucky enough, the next day, to remove the incriminating material that had been kept at the neighbours for safety. The family Pinkster went underground, and the first danger was avoided.

Several days later the S.D. stuck a second time; because of the difficulties Eb Pinkster had, Bob planned to discuss this in the home of Domela Nieuwenhuis. The S.D. had done some brutal work there and were now waiting for the next victim. They thought they had caught a big fish when Bob stepped in, but he managed to wriggle free. Some of the shots fired at him found the mark, and so the S.D. managed to grab another illegal worker.

Interrogation - transport to the hospital - a search of his house, which gave up no secrets, everything followed in quick succession.

With the assistance of a sister of Bart, who acted as nurse, and Ali Bonninga, who stepped up as a so called friend of a servant girl in the hospital, an attempt was made the next morning to abduct him from the hospital too late, Bob had already been brought to the prison the previous evening for added security. Everyone knew that to get someone out of there would be a test of strength. It was situated opposite the grounds of the garrison. Thus every action outside the prison could immediately be put down by the Germans.

Fortunately some of the clothing of the family Houwen, plus the radio, vacuum cleaner, linen and some valuables, could be brought to a safe place.

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A small problem presented itself. The mother of Bob had temporarily left her home. She had the PB [identity card] of Bob in her possession and through anxiety had hidden it

under the mattress of her bed. Coincidentally the people with whom she was staying had problems with the militia and the house was sealed. [her house] She was not home at the time and the identity card remained in the house. To save more difficulties from arising it was decided that this identity card and other incriminating papers would be collected one evening. Piet Laning, one of the co-workers, and Bart would sort this little problem out. Of an evening at seven thirty they went together to the house in question in Heymanslaan. The neighbour who had been given the key for safety dared not lend it to them, and warned that on the left side of the sealed dwelling lived a military man, and on the right side an N.S.B.-er.

With the aid of an iron wire the door was opened. At that moment the [front] door of of the military man opened so that he could let a friend out. When the coast was clear the operation proceeded. Bart searched for the papers, when suddenly the torch failed, and everything had to be done in the dark. After a long search the papers were found, but then the way back was more difficult because Bart missed a step and rolled down the stairs, making more noise than the neighbours were accustomed to hearing. The front door was reached safely, and then it was a dash to et home on time. The clock had struck eight, so Bart stepped inside the home of Luiks in the Stoeldraaijerstraat, where he was always welcome to bunk down.

In close partnership with Roelof Heidema a plan was made to free Bob. After much to-ing and fro-ing a new attempt was made. Roelof, Bram, Gerard, Henk Sportel, Piet and Cor would enter the prison by a trick and free Bob from the sick bay. Moments later a large delivery van would approach the front gate of the prison and take the whole gang away. The whole operation would be protected by two gangs of thugs led by Fré Legger and Henk Ridder.

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At the nominated time the operation started. The gangs were ready in the Hereweg, the delivery wagon with J van Biesum as chauffeur and Bart as sidekick waited in a side street. At the last moment a suspicious person seemed to be hanging about near the prison gate. In the circumstance it was not responsible to proceed, so everything was postponed.

It seemed to be a hopeless situation, and the difficulties mounted. Bart repeatedly tried to encourage Bob's wife, but even he feared that it would all go wrong, especially as some voiced their opinion of the impossibility of their goal.

The only possibility in the end was a liberation by trickery. So, slowly, 'The Plan' was prepared, based on cunning and technique. Bart went to Henk Wismeijer, our PTT man, to explain and discuss it. He said that the plan was feasible and spontaneously volunteered to help, regardless of the dangers involved.

On Saturday 7 October a rehearsal was held and the apparatus that would be used was tested. Everything was OK and so on Monday 9 October the plan was implemented.

Jagt, Roelof Heidema, Mientje Dijkstra and Bart Folkerts were all in the home of Heino Bult. The telephone number of the prison was dialled, and Jagt reported that he was Korn from the S.D., inquiring about the condition of the prisoners Houwen and Westen,

(Westen shared the cell with Houwen, and at the last minute it was decided to take them both out). From the prison the answer came that Houwen was very ill. Jagt, alias Korn, accepted this message and rang of. During the call somebody was busy typing, and someone else stomped through the room, which caused Jagt to yell through the room 'Please be quiet, I can't understand anything'. [in German]

Immediately after the phone call Bart left the house and gave the master of the guard ----

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who was waiting in the area in his car the prearranged signal, whereupon they could proceed to the prison and report there to collect the prisoners.

After a couple of minutes Jagt again rang the prison and gave orders for the prisoners to be prepared for collection by the guard detail R Leegstra, W Hey and T Rijm. He emphasised that they should examine the documentation carefully. In the meantime Bart also drove to the prison and set himself up so that he could observe the front gate. Theo Rijm sat patiently behind the wheel, but jealously eyeing off the cigarette that Bart was rolling.

Five minutes passed, then another five, moments of high tension. It was known that before a prisoner could be brought to the Scholtenshuis it was first necessary to ring there, to obtain authority from the S.D. to make sure everything was in order. Bart had assured the guard detail that this call would not reach the Scholtenhuis, but would be received at the address where Jagt, the 'illegal S.D.', was waiting, to tell the prison personnel that everything was in order.

One mistake and all would be lost. In the PTT the technicians anxiously watched the lines from the Scholtenhuis. Henk Wismeijer had secured the co-operation of Bats and Timmer, two trustworthy co-workers, who knew what was at stake. The prison began to dial a number. The technicians counted it out: 2 - 5 - 2 - 4. If the last number was a 1, the connection had to be re-routed. This was the deciding moment, and when the last number was a 1 a lightning fast reconnection was made with the illegal S.D. Here a 'telephoniste' answered in the approved manner, and after being asked for a connection to

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Herr Korn, some clicks were made in the connection and Herr Korn was put on. He affirmed that although the sick prisoner was not permitted to be transported, the badly wounded one had to be brought over to the Scholtenhuis despite their objections. Finally finally the door of the prison opened, and they they were! The guards were busy to make sure that these two 'heavies' did not escape but remained obedient, (yet with a stream of hope in their hearts). Bob limped to his place, Westen followed, the guards brought up the rear, and closed the back doors. Now drive!
At the moment that the van left, Bart headed for the home of Wismeijer, and from there

rang the technicians in the PTT building. The tension was released with the words: “ Everything is in order, they’re out, I’ve seen them driving [away]!!!!”. A thank you from Henk Wismeijer trilled down the wire

The van was driven quickly down the Middenstraat, at the direction of Roelof Heidema it drove into the shed of Dijkstra, the guests stepped out and were literally and figuratively received with open arms. The guards immediately changed from their uniforms and went underground at the places reserved for them.

Bart had to convince himself that the prisoners had arrived at the safe house. The reunion was “short but intense”! The message remained, be careful, so they all left except for Houwen and Westen. Bart immediately went to see Bob’s wife. He had often gone there, lately, with a heavy heart. Now he could finally bring glad tidings: “Anneke, you can have your man back”.

About an hour after the liberation one of the guards from the prison came to see Bart at home. For just a moment the thought flashed through his mind: Has it been discovered and does this man come to see the lie of the land, in the hope that I know something? Thus the word games began, the guard carefully began to share that he had a message from Houwen. Bart and his wife wore questioning faces. “Yes”, he continued,

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“this Bob Houwen was involved in the underground work, and now he has asked me to ask you to remove the incriminating material from his house”.

The amazement on the faces of Bart and his wife grew. “But sir”, was the reply, “why do you come to me with this request? Do you know what the consequence is, I know Houwen alright, because we go to the same church, and I had also heard that he had been arrested, but to now ask me to collect papers from his house, no, that really cannot be done; I think there are people who do that sort of thing, but truly, I haven’t got the guts to do that”.

“But”, he returned, “why did he send me to you?”.

“Look, I understand that quite well, when Houwen was arrested, all his co-workers naturally went underground, but I really don’t dare, imagine that they grab me there”. The guard declared that he really didn’t understand anything anymore. “You know what’s strange about all this” he said confidentially “I think that something is going on with Houwen and Westen: they were picked up at lunchtime to be questioned at the Scholtenhuis”.

“Oh, what a pity, that means things will not look good for them”.

“No, mate”, he continued, “I suspect that they never arrived at the Scholtenhuis, I think something fishy is happening and that they’ve been abducted”.

Bart braced himself and insisted that this was impossible, surely everybody that went to the Scholtenhuis arrived they! The guard remained confident that something was afoot. Bart then adopted an air of confidentiality and said: “Look, sir, it seems to me impossible to free those men, but if it has happened, I think it’s mightily wonderful for them. When you are sure that they were indeed abducted, will you tell me, I find things like that very interesting, especially because Houwen

lives so close to me”.

The guard promised this and departed, not knowing that the -----

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incriminating papers had already been safely hidden in Bart's house.

Several days later Bart bumped into an acquaintance: “I say, Bart, we can't let Bob sit there in prison, because then they will destroy him; I would give my life to get him out, some guards from inside and us from the outside and we'll get him out in no time”.

Again he had to answer: “I don't dare, I'm too nervous. I don't know any 'heavies 'who could do such a thing, and you're the only one who wants to help, so put it out of your mind, because it is impossible”.

The man left, disappointed, his fantasy had been given a sound thumping, he needed to be more sober. There were new threats from the other side - the consequence of the abduction was the great alarm [they] raised. The owner of the van, van Biesum, had, despite the warnings that he had received, gone home and been arrested that night.

Westen and Houwen had to be moved immediately, because the house in the Middenstraat was known to van Biesum. Houwen was quickly dressed and brought, on Bart's bike, to the family Hoogsteen, where he was hospitably received and cared for. Westen was brought in the same manner to a school friend of Bart. It seemed that neither family knew of the abduction and so did not guess that they housed one of the liberated. That night Roelof Heidema brought Westen to a safe address, while Bart and Piet Laning brought Bob to 'the hospice'. This was the home of a doctor on the Peizerweg, from which the inhabitants could not return to the north because of the events of the war. The house had been specially prepared, by Roelof Heidema, for housing the sick, especially for illegal workers who were wounded or shot, some doctors had agreed to help, and a nurse was present day and night to care for the patients. Excellent care, good food and rest helped Bob recover his strength quickly,

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it was hoped that he would soon be back to normal. Klaas Albers was also in the hospice, he had been grabbed by the S.D. after being shot in the lung. He had been abducted from the hospital and brought to the hospice by Roelof. Alas, Klaas was grabbed by the S.D. again two months later, and died in an unknown place.

The landlord of the doctors house would not let the patients rest, he feared difficulties: it was necessary to move. Klaas Albers found somewhere else to live. Bob found a place in the hiding place that had been made in the home of Mrs Bonninga in the Bilderdijkstraat. Roelof had often found shelter here, made reports and held discussions. In the air raid shelter, which had been set up for long term occupation, lived the three guards and the policeman Wim Vogd, who had, several days earlier, released Johan Pot, a co-worker of Roelof Heidema, from the police station. Also hiding there was Jaap Sluis, an artist for Roelof, a militia visit to his home was the reason he sought shelter. The arrest of van Biesum made it necessary that the residence of Bonninga be cleared; the entrance to the cellar was hidden even more with a load of potatoes. The family Meekes took on the care of the guests, necessities were provided via the emergency exit, and when it was dark they were allowed to get some air. A search of the Bonninga home made the situation for the under grounders critical, although the hiding place had not been found,

but a long term stay seemed now to present difficulties. The emergency exit behind the home of Meerkes was closed off and the evening awaited under the foundations of the house. Meekes kept contact through a sawn off water pipe and arrangements were made to leave at seven that evening. Bart had to provide four bicycles, and money and tobacco - in short, that which a few men would need if going to an unknown place. With the assistance of Folkerts Sr and a sister of Bart the bicycles were brought to the appointed place: for safety Gerrit Zuidland and Flameling were present.

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The 'hole dwellers' were tensely awaited. After several minutes some shapes came out of the dark. As they came closer they seemed to have a sandy look about them. They had actually made an exit under one of the houses, and come out in a backyard. The pavers were removed, and carefully the 'diggers' popped out; they took it in their stride that it happened to be behind the home of an 'East fronter'. A firm handshake, a 'see you later' and the following round began.

Bob went with Gerrit and Bart, the others found their own way. Bob was hospitably received by the family Beuker in the Pelsterstraat; this house was not suitable for long term use so another place was sought.

A trip to Friesland solved the problem. In the company of Kees Brandsma and Bart, Bob cycled to Grijpskerk, and stayed overnight; the next morning they proceeded to Oostermeer, where he was delivered without incident.

Several days later Bart brought the wife and children of Bob to Oostermeer as well: for the first time the whole family was reunited. Bart made several more trips to Oostermeer, and so was able to keep them abreast of what was happening in the city - a packet of tobacco as consolation was always welcome. But the ordinary work had to continue. Since the Allies had arrived in our country, the reports no longer went to Amsterdam, but were sent via the transmitter Beatrix, which was housed in the property of Naber in the Gelkingestraat. Theo Sluis made the connection.

In the summer of 1944 we made an arrangement with Deinum, alias Kuiper, and Hugenholtz, alias Francken, that an officer would be sent from England to strengthen our service. The address to which he would report, and a password, were forwarded; two hours after Bob was grabbed in the Pelsterstraat the man reported to the nominated address, with the password.

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Theo Sluis received him there, and moments later Bart arrived to discuss the difficulties Bob had. It was decided that Theo would host the man first, after several days it would be possible to review the situation and new arrangements could be made.

Several days later the first meeting in the Suisse Rstuarant was held with the new arrival, nick named "Lighthouse", Theo Sluis, Roelof Heidema, Piet Laning and Bart Folkerts.

Theo Sluis had been visited by the militia, and so it was advisable for him to pull back, he then withdrew from the stage and remained underground until the end of the war. The remainder agreed that the code to be used for telephone information needed to be expanded. Lighthouse proposed a scheme; this was worked out in the office of Roelof Heidema and the necessary copies were made. The code by which all information concerning the German Army could be passed on was adopted and worked really well. A little before the arrest of Bob Houwen we received a message from the transmitter Beatrix that four radio operators would be dropped to strengthen and expand the collection of news. The arrest of Bob Houwen made it necessary that new addresses and passwords needed to be passed on [to England]; this happened and then the wait for the 'in-droppers' began. As courier Reina Folkerts, a sister of Bart, was brought in under the name of Martha; she formed a safe connection between Lighthouse and Bart and regularly brought over news.

Just one day before Bob was freed, the four parachuters arrived. Although two had arrived at the prearranged place it seemed the other two were not even in the province of Groningen, but had jumped in Friesland, near Dokkum. Fortunately they had made contact first with Humalda, the leader of the resistance in Dokkum. He found a safe place for them and then cycled to Groningen. At the address to which they were supposed to report he related that the two parachutists were safely in Dokkum.

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Lighthouse went there, on the bike, for several days, and made arrangements for the tasks they had to perform. Several days later, in connection with this, Bart also went to Dokkum, and took 'Anton' with him to Leeuwarden, there a discussion took place with v.d.Hoeff, our contact for the telephone service in Friesland, Anton, Bart and the brothers Schootstra, some of the top figures in the Frisian resistance movement. The result was that they agreed to fully cooperate, and they took Anton under their wing. The administrator of police in Leeuwarden, v.d. Woude, remained, as did v.d. Hoeff, completely engaged, with the support of the Frisian organizations the news reporting from Friesland was now guaranteed, and Anton could begin work with his transmitter 'Margarine'.

The other parachutist remained stationed in Dokkum - he received his instructions via a special [telephone] line from Leeuwarden.

Of the marconists that arrived in Groningen, one was housed with his transmitter 'St Gregory' with the van Balen family in the Parklaan. The other was brought to Assen by Lighthouse and Piet Laning. Groningen remained the central point, where decisions were made if necessary, and directions given. Our new colleagues were barely established in their posts when there was a new blow - Piet Laning was nabbed by the S.D.

He had received his false *Ausweis* from Bart but managed to conceal the nature of his illegal work, though the S.D. still suspected him. He was sentenced to labour on Borkum, and we remained hopeful of seeing him safely home again.

In the beginning of November 1944 it seemed desirable to have access to a number of postal pigeons, a series of personal identity cards from the liberated parts of the country plus films and a camera. This was requested, and the address of Jan Stuurwold, a nephew of Bart, was given for the delivery. The postal pigeons would be cared for by a

farmer until their release. For security a password was sent with the delivery address, which the delivery man needed to use. -----

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This happened on Wednesday 8 November; the previous day Lighthouse had travelled to Dokkum to bring Breadtin to Groningen, where he could do more productive work than in in Dokkum. Lighthouse arrived with Breadtin in Groningen on Thursday 9 November, and Bart had arranged for a temporary address, where Lighthouse was given housing for Breadtin by another group. This later turned out to be at Noorman in the Anna Paulownastraat.

That same Thursday afternoon the courier Reina related that the Germans had made a raid in the Gelkingestraat; Bart thought that the transmitter in that street was the object of the search so he instructed her to warn Lighthouse immediately, and to tell what she had seen. (She did not know where the transmitter was).

Lighthouse was not home, but on the way to restaurant Suisse where he had an appointment with Bart; there he met Bart, who told him of his apprehensions, although nothing was sure. The next morning Bart received a letter from the courier, in which Lighthouse confirmed that the transmitter had been discovered and the operator arrested, at the same time he requested that another hiding place be found for himself. Naber, who with S.P. de Boer had cared for the Beatrix transmitter from the beginning, had also been arrested. He freely accepted death, by jumping from the top of the Scholtenhuis.

The situation remained uncertain; on Saturday morning Bart had another appointment with Lighthouse in the Restaurant Suisse. He failed to show and Bart worried that Lighthouse had also run into difficulties.

On Saturday afternoon the courier came with the fatal news that during the previous night a raid had been made on the property in Parklaan - she did not know whether or not the marconist had been arrested; she had heard from the neighbours

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that one person in the house had been shot, and another had escaped. It seemed that the S.D. had taken possession of the house. The provisional investigation which Bart and Reina made did not result in any certainty, although they did hear that the S.D. had already made a visit to the home of Lighthouse on the Nieuweweg.

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The situation became critical, but it could not yet be confirmed that the marconist had been arrested. On Sunday afternoon Bart received more alarming news; Jan Stuurwold had been arrested! It was necessary to act swiftly. Via Wismeijer, our contact man in the PTT, a call was made to vd Hoeff in Leeuwarden, with the instruction for Anton to signal that the parcel must not be sent to Stuurwold. The answer that vd Hoeff gave was disturbing. On the previous Friday night there was a raid on the home of Schootstra, and that couple was arrested. Anton had moved to another address several days earlier and so was safe, but in the circumstance it was not safe to send the message on.

Contact was then immediately made with the PTT man in Assen, where everything still seemed to be intact, with the exception of a courier that had been arrested; so the message was sent through to England.

The situation was critical, no certainty about Lighthouse, nor about the marconist from the Parklaan. There was no trace of the marconist who had supposedly just arrived from Dokkum, and searching for him was extremely difficult. Although there had, more often, been reason to 'sleep out' for several nights, Bart had little hope that it would work out this time, when he came home briefly on Monday morning. He then said to his wife: "I have a feeling that everything is going wrong".

If it was necessary to suddenly go underground or to leave, a new identity card was necessary. To get one, Bart went on Monday morning to the family Hoving in the St Jansstraat, where he asked the daughter Kootje, a courier of Roelof Heidema, to request a new identity card from Kees Brandsma, a colleague of Roelof. Although the family Hoving were celebrating their twentieth wedding anniversary that day, Kootje promised to attend to the request for Bart, whom they called Willem, immediately: with a photo in her pocket she cycled straight away to Grijskerk.

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Bart stayed for a chat and left at 10.30 am, to Johan Pot, the colleague of Roelof who had been rescued from the police station, and complimented him on his fine moustache. He then drank a cup of coffee in [Restaurant] Suisse, hoping to catch Lighthouse there. At eleven o'clock, after waiting in vain, he went to Willy Nijmeijer to discuss some matters; inquired about Roelof and his boys, was relieved to hear good news about Bob, but there was nothing to tell about Roelof, because nothing was known about any arrests in his group.

As ever, Bart was given some packets of tobacco for the boys, and for Bob. At twelve o'clock Bart met Wismeijer at the post office, hoping to hear something from Leeuwarden or Assen. At twelve-thirty he headed for home, but on the Paterswoldseweg he heard from Mr Meijer the warning that said everything: "Ride on, they are waiting for you at home, they are right behind me". The message did not need clarification and Bart turned right into a side street, then round the block, and stepped inside at the family Wolthekker in the Paterswoldseweg. Contact with the outside world was maintained by Andriessen. Tini Boiten, who was the contact between Wismeijer and Bart, was called in to go very carefully and warn several people. The disturbing news reports followed each other in a regular tempo; Roelof Heidema had been arrested on Sunday morning, the S.D. visited nearly all his boys on Monday morning, some had already been arrested; an hour after his departure the family Hoving had been arrested, they also got hold of Johan Pot and Jagt and Willy Niemeijer; also the mother, sister and brother of Bart were arrested; the morning [servant] girl had been taken to the Scholtenhuis, but they had left, in their mercy, his wife at home to care for the baby.

When the S.D. and militia stepped inside, she [his wife] was just busy putting the photos away for safety because they would attract the interest of the S.D. - she just had time to slip them under a cupboard.

The hiding place, which held the things of Ep Pinkster and Bob Houwen, also contained several weapons, a radio, drawings and similar, seemed to be very effective; even the undergrounder at the home of Bart's parents was not discovered. "Madame, is your husband not coming home?" the militia asked with interest. "I already expected him" was her reply. "Why does he not then come?" "He would be mad", she retorted, "to come home when there are four armed militia standing around the house!" The guard detail remained, in the hope to yet catch something. The two men they did grab could show their innocence and were released after 24 hours.

That evening at seven-thirty a short one-acter was played: The bell rang "Hey, comrade, come here", called the militia, who just happened to be in the passage. "Just open the door" was the advice of the second. "I would be mad", was the answer, "do you think I want to be shot dead? You come to me!" The two guards took their positions in the passage, with rifles at the ready, and called: "Who's there?" The answer came: "Harry". "Who is Harry". Silence the eager guards opened the door too late! Harry was already around the corner.

Over the next few days the militia came from time to time to check the situation, and then they let the matter rest. After three weeks the arrested family members of Bart came home, with the exception of his brother Dirk, who had been sent, in retaliation, to Germany to work. The work was completely finished; uncertainty remained about the lot of the marconists and the contact address of Breadtin could not be reached, nothing could be found out about him. -----

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The girl who had gone to Grijpskerk with the photo of Bart was arrested on the way by the Green Police; it was thus necessary to make another photo, which had to be different from the two samples currently in the album in the Scholtenhuis. This was organised fairly quickly, [and] a new identity card followed, and so Bart was able to go on the war path again.

The first thing [he did] was to find the marconist in Leeuwarden; it seemed that Anton could give him little information, he did not know the real name of Breadtin, although he thought his parents lived in Groningen. The married couple Schootstra, and P vd Woude, who had been grabbed in connection with the arrests in Groningen, were all, with many others, released from the prison and brought to safety.

A courier had gone to Assen to renew contact with the marconist there, but the result was unsatisfactory, such that no transmission on behalf of Groningen could be made on that transmitter. An arrangement was made with Anton in Leeuwarden, that if the fighting moved to the north, some limited broadcasts would again be made; the

information would only be what he had personally gathered or gained from the remaining contacts, because the Frisian organisations no longer wanted to cooperate.

Bart received news via Eric van der Laan that the marconist who had been based in the Parklaan was safe. His hiding place had not been discovered, and he had escaped by leaving in a hurry. His host, van Balen, had been immediately shot dead. Bart made some attempts to renew contact with him, but the arrest of Eric van der Laan radically broke all connections. This arrest caused another visit to the home of Bart to be made by the S.D. Once again they came to have a chat with him, but his wife spoke for him. To the question from the S.D. as to when her husband had last been home, she promptly answered: "For fourteen days, then he packed his clothes and went away".

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"Where is your husband now?" enquired the S.D. man, because he was very interested. "I don't know" was the only possible answer. The question by him, as to whether she dared to put her hand on the Bible, did not shock her [into a change of mind], if it was necessary, then she would do so gladly. She dismissed the announcement from the gentlemen, that she had to go with them to the Scholtenhuis, by saying that was not possible, she had to care for four children, of which the youngest was still a baby.

In response the servants of the Germans made a play on her naivety to catch her; it was not so bad, the things her husband had done, if there was nothing else than distributing three or four hundred ration cards, then it would be alright; but they did want to have some information about her husband; they invited her to visit the Scholtenhuis with her husband on this coming Saturday, if her husband did not come, then she should come alone, there they could talk comfortably. She promised to come, happy to be able to make an end to this intense interrogation. In the short term she consulted with her husband and they decided to break up the household [effects] and to disappear before Saturday; the best things were taken from the house and replaced by some old chairs; the house was then made available for an evacuated family, and she moved with the children to family.

It was now wait and see if the gentlemen would return. It turned out that their interest in Bart had not diminished. They advised a sister of one of the arrested friends, when she came to plead on his behalf, to go to the father of Bart Folkerts and tell him she had a letter from her brother that she personally had to give to Bart; if the family gave her the address, then she had to go directly to the Scholtenhuis and her brother would be released, she could take him home immediately. She was actually smart enough not to take this advice; the gentlemen of the S.D. also did not know

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that Bart was given a word for word report of the attempt to betray him. It was a warning to be careful and not to travel about the city by day unnecessarily.

On the trips to the country[side] or to Friesland use was made of a little camouflage; to prevent the bicycle from being requisitioned, a walking stick was attached with a clasp

to the front fork; the militia and Germans focussed on the walking stick, some even had pity for the poor invalid who had so much trouble getting about.

Several times this ruse saved them from the feared controls. In the beginning of 1945, when there was often control on the movement of people in and out of the city, Bart often came back from a trip to Friesland; just before leaving Leeuwarden he received the tip that various people known to him had been arrested in Groningen, so he better be careful. Close to Groningen a German suddenly appeared, in the middle of a bridge, out of the dark, rifle at the ready. Before he had a chance to ask for the *Ausweis* (identity papers) of the rider, he was asked by the now walking cyclist (in German) "Can you tell me please, what is the shortest way to Groningen?" "Of course", the Kraut replied, (also in German) "go this way and you will be in Groningen in twenty minutes". "Many thanks", said Bart, and continued on his way to Groningen, on a road he could travel with his eyes shut.

It seemed in the spring of 1945 that it was no longer possible to work with one or more transmitters; the transmitter in Assen could not be reached, the only chance was Leeuwarden but the telephone service was disconnected, and also the couriers could not move freely. Thus it was almost impossible to organise a normal information service. Together with Ep Pinkster and Gerrit Zuidland it was decided to prepare the information about the N.S.B.-ers and collaborators. The card system, which was already quite comprehensive through the work of Bob, was now expanded and graded. -----

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The information which we received via our contact in the *wehrmachbezirksverwaltung* (German Army District Administration) were sorted, they constituted very valuable insights about a category of people.

Bob risked the trip to the stable on the last Sunday before the liberation, the old club spoke daily about the situation and made preparations to go directly into action. It seemed that the S.D. remained active right to the end. Jan, a brother of Bart, strolled across the Grote Markt a week before liberation; he had good papers and so needed to fear nothing. One of the most active S.D.-ers had just, several days earlier, taken another look at the photo of Bart, and so suddenly thought he had made a breakthrough. "Hands up, hands in your neck, forwards". Before Jan realised what was happening the doors of the Scholtenhuis fell shut behind him. The man reported to his supervisor with his catch, and triumphantly cried: "I have got Bart Folkerts".

The supervisor had his doubts, the papers which Jan showed indicated that a mistake had been made. "You are a brother of that pig dog" he verified. Thus: "Lock up". When the fighting began around Groningen, Jan was set free.

The last months before liberation Bart had always been able to lodge with the family Willem Swieter. They were aware of the dangers attached to this, but also set a good example of keeping a secret.

15-16-17 April, fighting about Groningen, grenades, rapid fire, burning, wounded

Germans, withdrawing, soldiers around and in the house, threats from tanks, hiding in cellars, everything followed each other in quick succession. Sunday afternoon, 17 April, the first Canadians in our part of the city WE WERE FREE

The freedom brought clarity regarding the lot of the many friends who had fallen into the hands of the oppressors. Slowly we gained certainty, that except for a few, they would not return.

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Various [men] were executed, or succumbed from exhaustion. Herman Koopmans, alias Breadtin, seemed through a series of coincidences to have been arrested on Friday morning, the tenth of November. Lighthouse was arrested that same afternoon when he visited that address.

Theo Hartlief, the marconist from the transmitter Beatrix, in the property of Naber, was, together with Koopmans and Cartouw, all from the same group, executed [shot] in West Hoeve on the eighth of March.

The marconist in Assen lost his life in a shootout with the S.D. in March 1945. Bats and Heino Bult succumbed in prison. Lighthouse saw a chance to escape from the Scholtenhuis on Sunday 12 November 1944. After lying low for several days in the city, he went south.

Of the people who helped after his escape, three were taken six weeks later and executed by firing squad, a fatal word had the horrible consequences.

Roelof, Sietse, Gerard, Johan, Jagt, Willy Niemeijer, Ir. Schelling, Venema, Brunsting, all were arrested through their relationship with the group Roelof in those fatal November days, not one of them returned to the Fatherland Freedom Rewon, at such a high cost, many brave friends and fighters lost their lives, felled in the difficult fight. We hold on to their vision and example life with it's duties calls us, we need to continue working in the spirit and for that for which they fell, for which we all struggled.

Let it be through their death and our labour as in the dying cry of Bilderdijk: Holland blooms again

Holland grows again,

Holland, resurrected from the dust,

Shall again be our HOLLAND.

Willem., Groningen, 6 November 1945.

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