

After the enemy had left, the problems began

Reprisals against Dutch women after the liberation

by Thomas Dirven

In 1945, after five horrible long years of occupation and starvation, the allied forces finally liberated The Netherlands. The lack of proper food supplies and the confiscations by the German army resulted in a postwar population that had almost been starved to death. The anger of the repressed population regarding the German occupation is indescribable. The contrast to women, who had lived in a relationship with “the enemy,” could not have been any bigger. During the war, they could enjoy a luxurious life that was considered completely selfish and decadent by the starving people, although for many of them, this was just a way of survival.

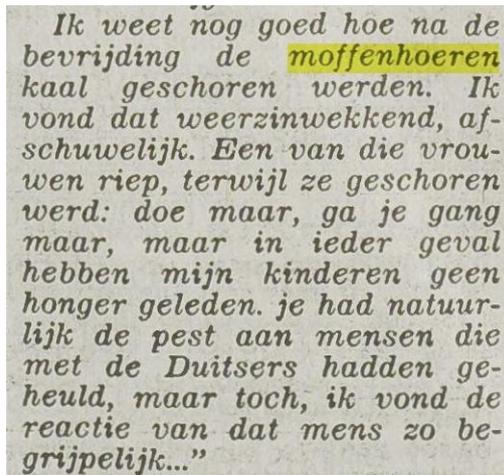
An eyewitness' account by Ms. T. Sauer:

“I still recall very well that after the liberation, the ‘German whores’ were shaved bald. I found that disgusting, horrible. One of those women shouted, while they were shaving her: ‘Go on, as you like, at least my children did not starve!’ Of course you hated those women, but on the other hand I understood that woman’s reaction...”¹

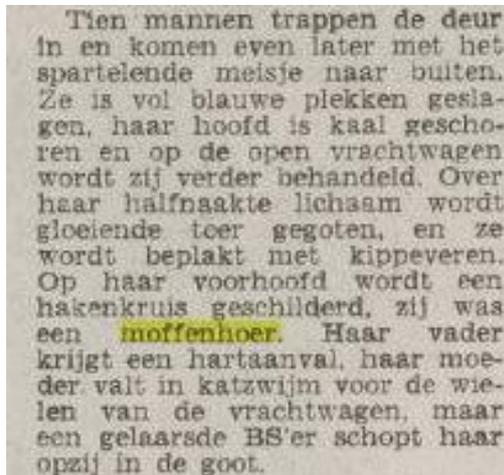
The reaction of the people to these women was not that surprising. The public opinion quickly turned against them.

Eyewitness Jan Cremer tells about what he saw in June 1945:

“Ten men kicked in the front door and a moment later, they came back with a



*Ik weet nog goed hoe na de bevrijding de **moffen hoeren** kaal geschoren werden. Ik vond dat weerzinwekkend, afschuwelijk. Een van die vrouwen riep, terwijl ze geschoren werd: doe maar, ga je gang maar, maar in ieder geval hebben mijn kinderen geen honger geleden. je had natuurlijk de pest aan mensen die met de Duitsers hadden geheuld, maar toch, ik vond de reactie van dat mens zo **begrijpelijk...**”*



*Tien mannen trappen de deur in en komen even later met het spartelende meisje naar buiten. Ze is vol blauwe plekken geslagen, haar hoofd is kaal geschoren en op de open vrachtwagen wordt zij verder behandeld. Over haar halfnaakte lichaam wordt gloeiende toer gegoten, en ze wordt beplakt met kippeveren. Op haar voorhoofd wordt een hakenkruis geschilderd, zij was een **moffenhoer**. Haar vader krijgt een hartaanval, haar moeder valt in katzwijn voor de wielen van de vrachtwagen, maar een gelaarsde BS'er schopt haar opzij in de goot.*

screaming girl. She was completely bruised, her head was bald and they forced her onto an open van. On her half naked body they put hot tar and chicken feathers. A swastika was painted on her forehead; she was one of the ‘German whores’...”ⁱⁱ

These accounts of eyewitnesses show us the harsh reality of how these women were treated but they do not give a clear idea of what the majority of the people thought about this issue. In order to understand the situation better, it is necessary to adopt different perspectives. The following paragraphs provide insight into the public opinion by analyzing voices of different newsletters.

The Nationalistic Point of View

De Waarheidⁱⁱⁱ, a nationalistic resistance newspaper, writes that the girls who had sexual intercourse with German officers should be arrested and sent to prison or a forced labor camp. Only by doing so, they would comprehend the immense shame they brought over their proud motherland. According to the article, it would be every Dutchman’s duty to help to punish and persecute these ‘German whores’. Unlike other nationalistic newspapers, ‘Paraat’^{iv} does not encourage the public humiliation of these women. They say that it would be an enormous mistake, now that they are finally liberated, to put their objective informative role as a newspaper at risk, only to please the irrational feelings of an angry society.

The communist Point of View

Het revolutionair Marxistisch orgaan^v, a Dutch communist newspaper, calls the shaving of the so-called ‘German whores’ by the patriots ‘a nationalistic pogrom’. Some very skeptical remarks are made: Why would you persecute someone because he or she loves someone with another nationality? Is there a difference when prostitutes sell their bodies to German or Dutch men? What about the Dutch men who stayed in Germany to work in forced labor and had relationships with German women? Is their situation not exactly the same as the one of the ‘German whores’? Why are they not punished for their ‘treason’? Unfortunately, this very satirically written article is also full of communist propaganda, but nevertheless it’s critique of the post-war establishment is incredibly valuable.

The suffragette Point of View

De Oranjekoerier^{vi}, a journal written by and for women, published an article with the title ‘Some questions’ written by a reader called Eva. Her main argument is what she calls the ‘double moral’; the inequality between the fate of the ‘German whores’ and the Dutch forced laborers in Germany who both had relationships with locals. The women were humiliated and punished, the men returned in complete silence. But she is also quite critical: in her opinion, those women were a danger for the public health

because they transmitted sexual diseases, which were almost extinct before the war. She also adds that love is something natural and that you cannot punish people because they fall in love with someone who belongs to the other side of the war. Nevertheless, she believes that if those two people both would have good nationalistic feelings, they would split up eventually by themselves. The article's conclusion is a very smart criticism of the nationalist's remarks, who blame 'the German whores' for their dissolute behavior. The author asks, if the girls dating with the 'American Tommies' would be any better than the 'German whores'.

Conclusion

The 'German whores' were seen as traitors by some, but not by everyone. On the one hand, a very big part of the population was against their public humiliation, but on the other hand, no one stood up for them or tried to stop the violence against them. They were the victims of an outrage caused by five long years of starvation and repression by the German army. One could conclude that they were partially punished and held responsible for crimes they had nothing to do with.

ⁱ Het vrije volk : democratisch-socialistisch dagblad, [08-12-1984](#) ("Een man viel dood neer, iedereen liep door 'Die hongerwinter draag je heel je leven bij je' Van onze verslaggever BERT VAN DOMMELEN TULPENBOLLEN WAREN NIET EENS ZO VIES". "Het vrije volk : democratisch-socialistisch dagblad". Rotterdam, 08-12-1984. Geraadpleegd op Delpher op 29-09-2015, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010961895:mpeg21:a0241>)

ⁱⁱ Het vrije volk : democratisch-socialistisch dagblad, [21-03-1964](#) ("Een man viel dood neer, iedereen liep door 'Die hongerwinter draag je heel je leven bij je' Van onze verslaggever BERT VAN DOMMELEN TULPENBOLLEN WAREN NIET EENS ZO VIES". "Het vrije volk : democratisch-socialistisch dagblad". Rotterdam, 08-12-1984. Geraadpleegd op Delpher op 29-09-2015, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010961895:mpeg21:a0241>)

ⁱⁱⁱ De Waarheid, [08-05-1945](#) ("Amsterdam zuivert Amsterdam Van kale koppen en vluchtende landverraders". "De waarheid". Amsterdam, 08-05-1945. Geraadpleegd op Delpher op 29-09-2015, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010451227:mpeg21:a0015>)

^{iv} Paraat, [06-05-1945](#) ("Kale koppen!". "Paraat". Amsterdam, 06-05-1945. Geraadpleegd op Delpher op 29-09-2015, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010436114:mpeg21:a0021>)

^v De Rode October: Comité van Revolutionnaire Marxisten, [15-04-1945](#) ("MOFFENMEIDEN KAALKNIPPEN", EEN NATIONALISTISCHE POGROM.". "De Rode October : orgaan van het Comité van Revolutionnaire Marxisten (CRM)". Rotterdam, 15-04-1945. Geraadpleegd op Delpher op 29-09-2015, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010439214:mpeg21:a0002>)

^{vi} Oranjekoerier, [16-05-1945](#) ("Enkele vragen". "Oranjekoerier". Lisse ; Oegstgeest], 16-05-1945. Geraadpleegd op Delpher op 29-09-2015, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010454183:mpeg21:a0001>)