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Reframing the Diplomat: Ernst van der Beugel and the Cold War Atlantic Community

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1. “The Great Mistake of the West”

“Those who have not experienced the 1930’s, during which my student generation witnessed the horrifying consequences of the lack of will-power and strength in the West, which brought the Second World War upon us, who have never experienced the simplicity of purpose of the Second World War, nor the joy of recovery and integration of the Western world, will approach the fundamental problems of international politics differently.”¹

A key component of New Diplomatic History is not just to reassess the role, but also the identity of ‘the diplomat’, for example by examining the development of the cultural, political and social contexts of those involved in the diplomatic realm and the networks to which they belong. It also means we need to take the private life – including the milieu and significant formative experiences – of these actors into account. As the above cited quotation demonstrates, Ernst van der Beugel clearly perceived his experience of the 1930s, followed by the Second World War, the liberation of Europe and Western cooperation as key formative experiences that profoundly influenced his post-war approach to international relations. Moreover, he seems to suggest that these experiences left a deep impact not just on him personally, but on an entire generation. This idea will largely be confirmed throughout the following chapters, as allusions to these experiences will resurface over and over again. It will furthermore become clear that the shared memory of these key moments in transatlantic history had a transnational appeal and left marks in the diplomatic arena as well. These shared experiences not only helped to foster strong transatlantic bonds among the generation that shared them, but also created a significant divide between this generation and the generation that followed; a generation whose formative years were not marked by world war, liberation, reconstruction and Western cooperation, but rather by the Vietnam War and Watergate, causing a very different appreciation of the transatlantic relationship and the values it embodied. This had clear repercussions for transatlantic diplomacy as it caused the challenge of the “successor generation”, which will be described in more detail in chapter 7.

Since these memories play such a fundamental role throughout the narrative that follows – both on a personal level in understanding what made Ernst van der Beugel ‘tick’ as a diplomat as well as in the development of the Atlantic elite and transatlantic diplomacy more generally – it is useful to take a closer look at the nature of these experiences, which will also help to gain a better understanding of the environment in which Ernst van der Beugel came of age and the foundations of his social network. While this chapter will mainly focus on the 1930’s and the war years, the following chapter will concentrate on the period of reconstruction and the development of post-war Western cooperation.

¹ Ernst van der Beugel, “Leiding VS in Atlantische wereld is onmisbaar”, *Het Parool*, August 23, 1968 (translation mine).

Youth and Student Years

The First World War still raged through Europe when Ernst van der Beugel was born on February 2, 1918 as the second child of Theodor Max van der Beugel and Sophia van Praag. Theodor van der Beugel was a self-made man. While born the son of a hairdresser, costume specialist and make-up artist who worked behind the scenes of Dutch theater, he had become a rising star on the firmament of the international banking world. As the daughter of the deputy director of a large textile wholesaler, Sophia van Praag was not born into the upper class either. They got married in the summer of 1913 and their first child, a daughter they named Ina, was born in December 1914. Born roughly three years later, Ernst would be the last addition to the family.

As a reorganizer of bankrupt businesses, Theodor Max van der Beugel had made it to senior partner of Labouchère & Co – one of the most eminent banking houses in Amsterdam which he had established together with Henri Labouchère. In practice, Van der Beugel ran the place, while Henri Labouchère, a real ‘country gentleman’, contributed the illustrious name. Theodor van der Beugel travelled an awful lot and had an exceptional cosmopolitan orientation for his time.² His network of friends and colleagues was tightly woven into the cobweb of transatlantic financial structures. He closely cooperated with the Warburg bank in London, Lazard in Paris and Chase in New York and was widely acknowledged as a member of the international *haute finance*.

While the Great War left its marks on the Netherlands despite the country’s official neutrality, Ernst’s childhood battles had more to do with his social background.³ He spent his elementary school days at the Hagendoornschool, an upper class private school where he had a “horrible” time. Except for his friend Ynso Scholten, the later minister of Justice, he did not have many close friends.⁴ Because his father had made an enormous jump on the socio-economic ladder Ernst was regarded as *nouveau riche*. Children’s parties at the school were extremely selective and as a result of his modest roots Ernst did not fit in. To make matters worse, his parents divorced in 1926. While they did so in a very civilized way – without fighting – this was still a deed that was very uncommon during those days. Ernst was the only child in his class with divorced parents.⁵

Theodor van der Beugel remarried immediately after the separation, while Ernst stayed behind in the family house in Amsterdam with his mother until his mother remarried four years later. Even so, Ernst’s father was never really out of the picture. He made sure that Sophia and the children could keep the same standard of living as before the divorce and he remained deeply involved in the upbringing of Ernst and his sister Ina. In the process, he bent over backwards to stay in close touch no matter where he was. He would travel long distances just to be able to spend his Sunday afternoon with his children and assisted them

² EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, file 61-66, Ernst van der Beugel Papers (hereafter “EvdB”), NAH, p.3.

³ On the complexities of Dutch ‘neutrality’ in practice during the First World War see: Wim Klinkert, Samuël Kruizinga and Paul Moeyes, *Nederland Neutraal: De Eerste Wereldoorlog 1914-1918* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2014).

⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

with arithmetic problems over the telephone from Paris.⁶ Throughout his life, Theodor van der Beugel would remain a dominant presence in the life of his son who greatly admired him.⁷

With four Jewish grandparents, Ernst van der Beugel was of full Jewish descent, but his parents were not religious practitioners. “As far as anything of our Jewish identity trickled through in our upbringing, it was on the Day of Atonement – Jom Kippur: then we did not go to school, but stayed at home,” Ina van der Beugel recalled. “If we don’t do this’, our mother said, ‘it may cause people to think that we are ashamed of being Jewish.’ But she never got to explain to us, what *Jom Kippur* actually meant. Those things I had to look up later on in the book of rabbi Soetendorp.”⁸ Even so, the Van der Beugels were not free of certain Jewish atavisms. With few exceptions the families of both of Ernst’s parents exclusively tended to marry ethnic Jews and Friday nights remained special – not so much in a religious sense, but usually people did come over for dinner.⁹

While anti-Semitism was not yet as venomous during those days as it would become later on, during Ernst’s childhood Amsterdam was not particularly free of “emotional and social discrimination” against its Jewish population either. Many social and recreational clubs, like rowing club *De Hoop* and tennis club *Festina* did not accept Jewish members. The same was true for an association of Amsterdam’s economic and cultural elite called *De Groote Club*. For Theodor van der Beugel, however, they were willing to make an exception. A man of his stature was welcome to join the Club despite his Jewish background. Theodor, however, refused. “If I cannot come in through the front door, I will not enter through the back door either,” he proclaimed. Ernst regarded his father as a remarkable man with “a very pronounced sense of justice and injustice.” He was emotionally sensitive, highly principled and he possessed a strong sense of discipline. He was not the sort of man who took the easy way out.¹⁰

During the summer, Theodor van der Beugel took his children to Austria for the *Salzburger Festspiele* with its magnificent operas, plays and concerts. They also spent numerous holidays in Chenonceaux, France, where Theodor owned a second house about two hundred meters from the grand castle to which the little town in the Loire Valley owed its renown. When they visited the *Château de Chenonceau* and Ernst or his sister mentioned how incredible it was that the building had been constructed in 1521 and how pretty it was, Theodor would remark: “very pretty indeed – if you stood on the right side.” He knew from experience that wealth was not something one could take for granted and rarely missed an opportunity to point this out to his children. Every now and then he also took Ernst and Ina to one of Amsterdam’s poorest neighborhoods. Once there, he would address them from a

⁶ Ina van der Beugel, “Zeer persoonlijke herinneringen van Ina van der Beugel”, (private, 1990-1992), Private collection Aukelien van Hoytema-van der Beugel (hereafter “AHB”), p. 10. Ina van der Beugel recalls that her father would travel for thirty six hours by train for a meeting in Budapest just to be able to spend a Sunday afternoon with his children.

⁷ See for example: EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 4,6.

⁸ Ina van der Beugel, “Zeer persoonlijke herinneringen”, p. 47 (translation mine).

⁹ EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 15-16, 153.

¹⁰ EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 7-8, 10, 22, 911 (translation mine).

sagging sidewalk, saying “look, there are also children living in these circumstances”, recalled Ina van der Beugel. “We had no idea, though, what ‘these circumstances’ entailed exactly. We just really preferred going to the Tuschinski Theater instead.”¹¹

Ernst’s father was not a typical banker. Despite the enormous jump he had made on the socio-economic ladder, he consistently voted for the Social Democratic Labor Party (SDAP) – something that “simply did not happen within Amsterdam’s *haute finance* circles.”¹² He also read the socialist newspaper *Het Volk*, which had a clear emphasis on social justice.¹³ He was emotionally interested in the matters of his time and gave money to causes he supported like the *Amsterdamsche Kunstkring voor Allen*, which tried to make the enjoyment of art possible for lower middle class and working class people by organizing concerts, lectures and exhibits with entrance fees depending on a person’s ability to pay – a typical SDAP form of cultural policy. According to Ernst van der Beugel, these things made his father unique, but also lonely at times. While Theodor van der Beugel “strongly believed in accepting the consequences of one’s ideals,” Ernst observed that, at the same time, “you could not imagine somebody whose lifestyle differed so much from the lifestyle of the average social democrat.”¹⁴ The complex relationship between Theodor’s social-democratic ideals and his luxurious lifestyle might best be illustrated by the following recollections of Ernst’s sister Ina:

Years later, I realized that our car was a Cadillac. I simply thought that a car was a car and saw hardly any difference. In those days it was very common to have a driver. Practically everyone who owned a car also had a chauffeur who drove the vehicle, separated from the company by a glass window. Because of my father's socialist ideals that window was almost constantly turned down. The idea that it must have been quite painful for the driver that, as a result, the more confidential conversations always started with: “Turn up that window again,” apparently did not occur to him. Our driver was the only one in Amsterdam with a fixed day off in the week – an arrangement for which father was criticized by his colleagues. “What would be next if even drivers got a regular day off?”, they asked with exasperation. Drivers had enough days off when their employer stayed abroad. My father believed, however, that the first assertion was based on the right of the employee while the second assertion was based on the whim of the employer. But, the fact that drivers – including ours – spent entire evenings waiting just in case ‘Mr. van der Beugel’ needed him, did not occur to him. In fact, he tended to refer

¹¹ Ina van der Beugel, “Zeer persoonlijke herinneringen”, pp. 17-18; EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, p. 911 (translation mine).

¹² EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, p.6 (translation mine).

¹³ Anjo G. Harryvan and Jan van der Harst, *Max Kohnstamm: Leven en werk van een Europeaan* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 2008), 38. With the help of *Het Volk* journalist Piet Bakker, Ina van der Beugel, Ernst’s three-year-older sister, even started her career as a journalist at this newspaper.

¹⁴ EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 7, 10; Ina van der Beugel, “Zeer persoonlijk herinneringen”, p. 18 (translation mine).

with great regularity to that fixed day off by saying: "oh yes, it is your day off...that is annoying..."¹⁵

Ernst van der Beugel seemed destined to follow in the footsteps of his father. As he put it: "If there was a plan, the plan was that I would study economics and join Labouchère." With this prospect in mind Theodor sent him to the *Openbare Handelsschool* (OHS), which was the customary school for future economics students at the time. As opposed to his elementary school days, Van der Beugel had an excellent time at the OHS. It was a completely new environment, which lacked the pretentiousness of the Hagendoornschool which stifled social interaction. Here the young Ernst was not an outcast, but totally included in the company of his fellow students. To Ernst van der Beugel, who was undoubtedly a very social type, this made a huge difference. "I do not think that the desire to fit in is unusual, but in my case it is obviously a very distinctive characteristic," he once remarked. "During my entire life, I have enjoyed the interaction with people. I'm not somebody who is easily self-contained."¹⁶

Advisors of Theodor van der Beugel had recommended that his son study economics at the University of Amsterdam, where he enrolled in the fall of 1935.¹⁷ The alternative was the Netherlands School of Commerce in Rotterdam, which was founded through private initiative with broad support from the Rotterdam business community. As opposed to Amsterdam, the Rotterdam school was not a university and focused more on the practical aspects of preparing students for a job in the business community than on academic development. By integrating the commerce faculty into the university in 1922, Amsterdam had chosen for a more academic approach.¹⁸ Theodor van der Beugel's advisors had recommended sending Ernst to Amsterdam not so much because they thought the economics education was better compared to Rotterdam, but because they perceived it as a great advantage to study at a university. In addition, sociology professor Willem Bongers – a prominent social-democrat and the father of Frank Bongers, one of Ernst's best friends at the OHS – had specifically recommended that Ernst join an elite student club called the *Amsterdamse Studenten Corps* (ASC).

The Amsterdam student population at the time consisted of a select group of approximately 2500 students.¹⁹ Tuition was high, scholarships barely existed and it was natural that parents paid for their children's education. With a little over 300 members, the ASC represented a relatively small portion of the total student community. While the ASC regarded itself as the embodiment of all students, its elitist character and high membership fees alienated many. About 60% of all students did not belong to any social club at all. At the

¹⁵ Ina van der Beugel, "Zeer persoonlijke herinneringen", p 11 (translation mine).

¹⁶ EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 28, 32-33 (translation mine).

¹⁷ Ibid., 37-38 (translation mine).

¹⁸ Willem F.V. Vanthoor, "Zeventig jaar Economische Faculteit binnen de Universiteit van Amsterdam 1922-192," in *Samenleving en economie in de twintigste eeuw*, eds. Martinus M.G. Fase and Ids van der Zijpp (Leiden: Stenfert Kroese, 1992), 7.

¹⁹ Peter Jan Knechtmans, *Een kwetsbaar centrum van de geest* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1998), 26. To be more precise: in the academic year 1937-1938 a total of 2473 students were registered at the University of Amsterdam.

same time, the pillarization of Dutch society on the basis of worldviews and the emancipation of women had led to the emergence of new student associations. These new clubs drew mostly members from the middle class and attracted many students whose families had no history with the club. Since many of the professors had been ASC members themselves, the bond between the university and this club was still much closer than between the university and the other student associations.²⁰

Thus, the ASC was *primus inter pares* among Amsterdam's student associations and it was not entirely self-evident that Ernst van der Beugel would become a member of this select group. Just like the university itself, student club life was *terra incognita* for the Van der Beugels. The core of the ASC consisted of a rich variety of debating societies – twelve in total – each with its own traditions and identity. Ernst was eventually invited – one had to be invited – to join *Breero*, which he regarded as “one of the most colorful and sophisticated debating societies in Amsterdam.” According to the biographers of Max Kohnstamm, a four year older member of Breero who would become an intimate and lifelong friend of Ernst, “Van der Beugel was originally a bit of an outsider at Breero. At the ‘blooming’, the traditional recruiting session for the club, it was not beyond question whether Ernst should be invited as a member.” Or, as Ernst van der Beugel put it: “I sure did not owe my membership to my personal background.”²¹

Indeed, as a first-generation student, Ernst had to find his own way into the well-established club, where most other members followed in the footsteps of their fathers. Max Kohnstamm's father had been an ASC member and his oldest brother, Dolph, even was a member of Breero, but the Van der Beugels did not have any history in the ASC. In addition, most of Ernst's fellow students had received a classical high school education at the Vossius or Barlaeus gymnasium or the Amsterdam Lyceum, while Ernst had gone to the OHS, like his father before him. Theodor van der Beugel knew that the OHS was an excellent school, with outstanding teaching with regard to economics and political science as well as foreign languages, but since he did not have any university experience himself he “did not have the antennae”, according to his son, “to recognize that there were other elements” that mattered as well. Looking back, Van der Beugel praised the quality of the *Openbare Handelsschool*, but thought it was a “terrible pity” that he had not received a classical high school education like most of his university friends, including his elementary school buddy Ynso Scholten. Their high schools had better prepared them for a university education and they still had a choice of what to study once they entered the university. After finishing the OHS, economics was the only option while Van der Beugel's preference would probably have gone out to studying history like Max Kohnstamm.²²

When Ernst enrolled, the Amsterdam department of economic sciences counted approximately 250 students – almost one fourth of the economics students in the

²⁰ Ibid., 19, 33; Albert Kersten, *Luns: een politieke biografie* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2010), 35.

²¹ Harryvan and Van der Harst, *Max Kohnstamm*, 37; EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, p. 41-42 (translation mine).

²² EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 28-29.

Netherlands.²³ The main faculty consisted of professors Nico Frijda and Theo Limperg, responsible for respectively political economy and business economics – the program’s two core mandatory subjects.²⁴ Other courses belonging to the economics program were civil and commercial law, economic history, geography, and statistics.²⁵ The renowned social historian Nico Posthumus, “without doubt an impressive man,” taught economic history at the department. “It was a real academic community”, Ernst recalled, “which was still small.” For Van der Beugel, one of the great benefits of studying at a university was the fact that he was not restricted to studying economic subjects. Instead, he took the opportunity to enroll in other courses like philosophy and sociology, and – above all – he was preoccupied with the ASC.²⁶ Club life was very intense, as Van der Beugel recalled:

In the club you saw each other more or less every day. You ate together and you went for a drink with each other every day. As a freshman you had to turn up for drinks at 6 PM, and twice a week we had beer at 11. If you did not appear they phoned you up. Friday night was a special evening. First the club went for a drink in the Carlton-corner, close to the Mint, then we ate together in the Poort van Cleef (now called Port van Cleve), then we went to Tuschinski’s, then back to the Carlton-corner and finally to the club bar.²⁷

At first, Max Kohnstamm frequently had to push Van der Beugel to come along for drinking sessions at the club. Soon, though, a strong bond developed between the two and Ernst became well known for his songs, jokes, party performances and knowledge of classical music.²⁸ “In Breero we quickly realized that he was extremely gifted and funny”, Kohnstamm recalled. “He was a great lover of classical music and possessed an enormous music collection. During those days, students could go to concerts almost for free. Often, we went to his home to listen to the music we were going to hear in the music theater, before we went to the actual performance.”²⁹ Joseph Luns, the future minister of Foreign Affairs and Secretary General of NATO, was another older ASC member. Luns recalled “many happy evenings spent with Ernst in and outside the club” and remembered Van der Beugel as a “very young student” who was “considered one of the brilliant young men of his generation. (...) Witty, highly intelligent, with a swift and original turn of mind and interested in more

²³ Vanthoor, “Zeventig jaar Economische Faculteit”, 10, 36; Knegtmans, *Een kwetsbaar centrum van de geest*, 48.

²⁴ Vanthoor, “Zeventig jaar Economische Faculteit”, 8; EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, p. 54.

²⁵ H. Frijda and Th. Limperg Jr., “Aan de leden van de Faculteit der Economische Wetenschappen, 27 april, 1939, Annex Notulen Vergadering II Mei, 1939”, file 1968, Archief van het Amsterdams Studenten Corps (ASC), Stadsarchief Amsterdam.

²⁶ Knegtmans, *Een kwetsbaar centrum van de geest*, 58; EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 38, 55 (translation mine).

²⁷ Harryvan and Van der Harst, Max Kohnstamm, 39-40. Translation by Ian L. Fraser, *A European’s life and work*, <https://www.parlement.com/9353202/d/kohnstamm.pdd> PDF e-book, p.24, accessed: August 4, 2016.

²⁸ Harryvan and Van der Harst, *Max Kohnstamm*, 38.

²⁹ Max Kohnstamm, interview with the author, 27 January 2010 (translation mine).

problems than usual for young men, he became rapidly one of the popular students of his year.”³⁰

Looking back at his student years, Ernst van der Beugel concluded that the ASC had been of great importance to him. In 1965, he even wrote an article in the Labor Party's magazine *Socialisme en Democratie* completely devoted to the importance of these clubs. Since Dutch universities tend to be solely focused on transmitting academic knowledge, Van der Beugel regarded social clubs such as the ASC indispensable in the general education of university students. According to him, they focused on those elements that he considered essential to the full cultivation of students' personalities while preparing them for key positions in society:

In the club, being 'smart' does not equal a special recommendation if it does not come with a personality that is real. I am not aware of any other environment in which the instinct for true personality is so well cultivated as in the club. Next to all unforgettable pleasure (and there's nothing wrong with having some fun) the true quality of the club for me, above all, is the instinct for what is 'real' and the scorn for what is not. In this, the 'clubs' are rightfully tough, and through this process they contribute to the cultivation of an elite.³¹

Van der Beugel was convinced that the ASC had helped him to grow in his interaction with people. In addition, while his father's social network should not be forgotten, Van der Beugel regarded his student years, "without doubt", as the place where his own network began. People he got to know during this period, like Max Kohnstamm, Joseph Luns, Pieter Blaisse, Emile van Lennep, Hans de Koster, Antonie Knoppers and Jaap Kymmell, would cross his path again throughout his later career. Many of these friends would find each other again in The Hague, where the contribution of former Amsterdam students was relatively large after the Second World War.³²

³⁰ Joseph Luns, contribution in: "Book on Ernst", The Bilderberg Meetings, April 1980, Series 6, box 27, file 1, Shepard Stone Papers, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College (hereafter: RSCL).

³¹ E.H. van der Beugel, "De Corpora," *Socialisme & Democratie*, 22 (1965), 232 (translation mine); See also: EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 41,48.

³² EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 39-40,51-52, 61, 565; E.H. van der Beugel, "Speech for the Netherlands-America Foundation, New York, November 15, 1990", box 96, file 8, George W. Ball Papers, Princeton University Library (PUL); Albert Kersten and Ralph Dingemans, Interview with Jaap Kymmell, 8 July 1998, accessed: August 4, 2016, <http://www.eui.eu/HAEU/OralHistory/pdf/INT661.pdf>. Joseph Luns would pursue a career as a diplomat and as a politician for the Dutch Catholic Party. Between 1952 and 1971 Luns served as Minister of Foreign Affairs after which he was appointed as the Secretary General of NATO. Partly due to his insistence, Ernst van der Beugel served as his Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs from January 8, 1957 until December 22, 1958; Pieter Blaisse would become a top civil servant at the Ministry of Economic Affairs. As such he would be instrumental in giving Van der Beugel a job as deputy director at the Planning department of the Ministry of Economic Affairs in 1945. Between 1952 and 1967 Blaisse was a member of the Second Chamber for the Dutch Catholic Party, the KVP; Emile van Lennep served as the Treasurer General at the Dutch Ministry of Finance between 1951 and 1969 after which he was appointed as the Secretary General of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a position he held until October 1984; Hans de Koster served as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1967 until 1971. Between 1971 and 1973 he served as Minister of Defence, after which he joined the Second Chamber of the Dutch parliament as a member of the liberal VVD Party. As Minister of Defense, De Koster appointed Ernst van der Beugel to the Van Rijckevorsel Committee, an advisory committee on Dutch defense; Antonie Knoppers was a professor of Pharmacology at the

Ernst developed an “exceptionally close bond” with Max Kohnstamm. Van der Beugel: “We have had some wonderful years at the university. He was brilliant - absolutely brilliant - with a special ability, which he has always maintained, to formulate problems and to express emotions. He also had a very strong bond with my father.” According to Ernst, his father possessed an enormous empathy for youth, which “made that many of my friends, belonging to my generation, my university friends, had a relationship with my father in which I was not involved. For many of my friends my father was an extraordinary important person.”³³ The fact that Max Kohnstamm only spoke about Theodor van der Beugel at the dinner organized to celebrate that Ernst had received his master’s degree, illustrates this point.

Ernst also frequently visited the Kohnstamm family in their grand wooden house on the Dutch countryside in Ermelo. The Kohnstamm home was characterized by a very intellectual atmosphere with a fervent debating culture. Max’s father, professor Philip Kohnstamm, was a physicist, pedagogue and philosopher who acquired fame as the founding father of scientific pedagogy and didactics in the Netherlands. He also displayed a great interest in theology. He was married to Anne Kessler, the daughter of a former president of the Royal Dutch Oil Company which later became Royal Dutch/Shell. While *Royal Dutch* was not as successful yet when her father was in charge, her mother unexpectedly became very wealthy when her enormous pile of previously worthless stocks turned into gold after the spectacular revival of the oil company in the early 20th century. Although the Kohnstamms generally lived soberly, their living environment was the milieu of the bourgeoisie and all its privileges. All year round the hospitable Kohnstamm home was frequented by guests from different signature; from the renowned physicist Albert Einstein to poor children from Amsterdam who came to recuperate on the country side. With two sons in Breero the Kohnstamm home also served as an important meeting point for the debating society.³⁴

Professor Kohnstamm was formally affiliated with a progressive-liberal political party called the *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond* (the Liberal-Democratic Federation), but in practice his social and political engagement tended to reflect the mindset of the Social Democratic Labor Party. He was of Jewish descent, but had embraced Christianity in 1917 when he was 42 years old, after which he had become a member of the Barthian wing of the Dutch Reformed Church.³⁵ While Ernst came from a very different background, the Kohnstamms and Van der Beugels could relate to each other’s social-democratic engagement as well as their concerns about the rise of national-socialism.

Free University of Amsterdam before he joined Merck and Co. in 1952. He held various positions in the International Division of Merck Sharp and Dohme. In 1971 he became President and Chief Operating Officer of Merck. Ernst van der Beugel became a member of the Supervisory Board of Merck, Sharp & Dohme in 1967. Jaap Kymmell would become one of Van der Beugel’s closest advisors at the Directorate-General for the Economic and Military Aid Program at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He had received his PhD in Amsterdam in 1950 and between 1955 and 1973 he also worked as Professor of International Economic Relations at the Dutch School of Economics in Rotterdam. In this capacity he would also serve as Ernst van der Beugel’s PhD dissertation advisor.

³³ EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 7, 384 (translation mine).

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 179, 384; Harryvan and Van der Harst, *Max Kohnstamm*, 19.

³⁵ EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, 20,26.

The Worst Years: “The idea of war is growing more familiar to us every day”

Since his high school years at the OHS during the early 1930's, when Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany, Ernst habitually discussed politics with his father. Both men had the impression that things were going badly wrong in Europe. They closely followed developments in Germany compelled by more than sheer political interest. As a fully Jewish family the Van der Beugels were very much aware of the existential threat posed by National Socialism in the 1930's. This awareness was reinforced by the refugee problem, which brought large flows of Jewish immigrants from Austria and Germany to the Netherlands. Ernst van der Beugel experienced this development from up close since his father's second wife worked for the Dutch committee that tried to accommodate Jewish refugees to the Netherlands in the 1930's.³⁶

The Kohnstamms shared these concerns. Professor Kohnstamm had been born in Bonn, Germany, where many of his family members still lived. Through his German contacts, he was very well-informed about developments in his mother country. As a philosopher he acknowledged the dangers of National Socialism early on and published books on topics such as ‘the psychology of anti-Semitism’ and ‘national socialism as a spiritual danger.’³⁷ He was also a member of the anti-fascist society *Eenheid door Democratie* (“Unity through Democracy”) and the *Committee of Vigilance* of anti-national-socialist intellectuals, which had been founded in 1936 and in which the University of Amsterdam was well represented. Ernst and Max did not shy away from expressing their resentment towards Hitler's Germany either – sometimes in rather curious ways. Max Kohnstamm's biographers relate that Ernst's father regularly visited sanatoriums in places like Marienbad in today's Czech Republic. When during the late 1930's Max and Ernst joined him on one of these trips, they stubbornly held back their urine until they passed the Czech border out of rebellion towards the political situation in Germany “so as not to fertilize the German soil.” In compensation they gleefully threw their cigarette butts out of the car windows onto the German *autobahn*.³⁸

Despite the looming danger, Ernst decided not to leave the Netherlands, even though he had the opportunity to do so. The main reason for this decision was the close bond he experienced with his friends. “I did not leave,” he explained, “because I had the feeling that I belonged to a group of friends who thought like I did and I did not want to leave them to receive some kind of special treatment.”³⁹

The Amsterdam student club was traditionally more politically engaged than other Dutch student clubs. Next to the common view, which regarded feasts and partying as the main objectives, there was a social democratic-leaning wing interested in issues like unemployment and the rise of fascism. As a “progressive, *avant la lettre* artistic and political

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 35, 62.

³⁷ Harryvan and Van der Harst, *Max Kohnstamm*, 46; Philip A. Kohnstamm, *Psychologie van het anti-semitisme* (W. Ten Have: Amsterdam, 1934); Philip A. Kohnstamm, *Het nationaal-socialisme als geestelijk gevaar* (Van Gorcum: Assen, 1936).

³⁸ Harryvan and Van der Harst, *Max Kohnstamm*, 38-39 (translation mine).

³⁹ EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, p.62 (translation mine).

debating society,” Breero clearly belonged to the latter.⁴⁰ While Van der Beugel was not extremely excited about his economics courses at the university, he shared a great fascination for Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal with his friends from Breero. “We were deeply impressed by the dreadful situation of American society during the crisis and captivated by the ingenuity of the New Deal. It was the first time that Keynes was brought into practice. There were some individuals in Roosevelt’s *entourage* whose books we read in which a new way of handling things was discussed.” In the Netherlands, it was not easy to get one’s hands on this American reading material during the 1930’s. American literature was not yet part of the economics courses at the University of Amsterdam. Instead, Ernst’s textbooks were predominantly German and French with a little bit of Keynes in English. Fortunately Ernst’s father, who shared his son’s interest in the New Deal and who regularly visited the United States for business, was able to help out in providing literature from the U.S. Whereas the New Deal was fresh and exciting, the European climate with its traditional austerity measures was significantly less inspiring. While the United States were rising up out of the Great Depression, Ernst and his friends had the feeling that things were reaching a deadlock in Europe. Overshadowing all the parties and pleasures of student life, there was always “the dark cloud of the 1930’s.”⁴¹

In 1936, Max Kohnstamm was selected from a group of approximately sixty students as rector of the ASC senate. Club leadership rotated between the two dominant factions in the ASC: the ‘reds’ and the ‘whites.’ “White” stood for ‘conservative’; a group that was linked to the Catholic debating society Hera, which took rituals and symbolism very seriously. Max belonged to the ‘red’ wing, which was less formalistic, although it also followed the club’s ‘mores’. Breero, in particular, was also “very outspoken in its resistance against national-socialism.” Kohnstamm succeeded the ‘white’ Joseph Luns who had succeeded the ‘red’ Henk Bonger jr. - one of Professor Willem Bonger’s sons.⁴² In his inaugural speech, Kohnstamm stressed the importance of community and described the character of the dark clouds which hung ominously on the European horizon:

Our social future is very uncertain. The idea of war is growing more familiar to us every day. As we await the day when we shall become involved in it with our own lives, we can follow the madness in South America, in Africa and in Spain. We have grown as familiar with race hatred and crisis as with food and drink. Every newspaper we open seems to bear witness to this craziness. It has permeated even our bookshelves, we see it in paintings and we hear it in music. Science, in which previous generations of students had a trust that seems to us childish, is leaving us completely in the lurch in the face of the threatening chaos. In a society that has lost all style, the rise of the hordes is threatening even the bulwarks of culture we had thought impregnable. In the middle of all this, are we perhaps to stand among

⁴⁰ Knegtmans, *Een kwetsbaar centrum van de geest*, p 36; Kersten, *Luns*, 35; EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, p. 911.

⁴¹ EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 43, 165, 174, 179, 165 (translation mine).

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12, 911; Harryvan and Van der Harst, *Max Kohnstamm*, 42 (translation mine).

the group of cynical onlookers, recruited from every rank and class? Then where so many are talking we might as well maintain a decent silence. But that is not what our place is!⁴³

In 1937, with Max Kohnstamm in the lead, the ASC lustrum celebrations were used as a manifestation against national-socialism. Next to speeches by students and professors and a concert with lyrics written by the Dutch anti-fascist poet Albert Verwey, the ASC staged the play 'Liluli' by Romain Rolland in the famous Amsterdam theater *Circus Carré*. The subtle social critique of this production, which Rolland wrote primarily as a response to the 'infatuation of public opinion' during the First World War, did not go unnoticed. The eminent Dutch modernist author, publicist and devout anti-fascist Menno ter Braak wrote an extensive article about the play in the Dutch newspaper *Het Vaderland* saying it "exceeded all other lustrum plays he had ever seen in importance."⁴⁴ Despite the efforts of Kohnstamm and the ASC Senate to add a more serious tone to the lustrum celebrations, the group that really took note was probably rather small. As the Dutch historian of Amsterdam student life, Peter Jan Knegtmans remarked: "To his young audience, [Kohnstamm's] serious words probably sounded like rumbling in the distance on a beautiful summer day. On the outside, the most distinctive characteristics of the club were still its formal pomposity, its condescension of the common man and its explicit and often noisy presence at any more or less official or festive ceremony of the Amsterdam elite."⁴⁵

In 1938, Ernst van der Beugel was chosen as secretary of the ASC senate, causing his father to hesitatingly ask him whether this was really a good idea. "In those days it was sensible not to expose yourself too much as a Jew, he believed", recalled Ernst's sister Ina. "We thought that was ridiculous. We lived in the Netherlands. 'If that is what you are thinking', I remember myself saying, 'you should leave for Israel right away'. That was not what we were thinking. My brother joined the senate, and as far as I know, it gave him nothing but joy."⁴⁶

In March 1938, Ernst van der Beugel and his friends listened with tears in their eyes to the radio when the news came in that Germany had annexed Austria. They had read *Mein Kampf* and were well informed about Hitler's political ideas, which they regarded as utterly despicable. Books like *Die Revolution des Nihilismus* by the ex-Nazi Herman Rauschning, and *Edda en Thora* by the Dutch protestant theologian Heiko Miscotte served as important sources on the attitude of the West for Ernst and his friends.⁴⁷ They talked about the

⁴³ Harryvan and van der Harst, *Max Kohnstamm*, 43. Translation by Ian L. Fraser, *A European's life and work*, 27.

⁴⁴ Menno ter Braak, "Het lustrumspel 'Liluli': Romain Rolland's idealistische critiek op den publieke opinie en den oorlog", *Het Vaderland*, 26 June, 1937 (translation mine); EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 42, 59; Knegtmans, *Een kwetsbaar centrum van de geest*, 16-19.

⁴⁵ Knegtmans, *Een kwetsbaar centrum van de geest*, 18-19 (translation mine).

⁴⁶ Ina van der Beugel, "Zeer Persoonlijke Herinneringen", 32 (translation mine).

⁴⁷ See: EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, p. 276. Rauschning had renounced Nazi party membership in 1934. In his 1938 book *Die Revolution des Nihilismus* (translated in English as *The Revolution of Nihilism – Warning to the West*) he wrote that the National Socialism that came to power in 1933 was no longer a nationalist but a nihilistic revolutionary movement destroying all values and traditions. Miscotte strongly opposed national socialism and

attitudes of France and England and the consequences of their actions for the Netherlands. After the Munich agreement between Hitler and Chamberlain was signed in September 1938, the event was discussed at length within Breero. The conclusion was that this had been a huge mistake. “We thought it was an abomination,” Van der Beugel recalled afterwards. After the annexation of Austria and the occupation of the Rhineland he regarded this as the next step towards war. They had assumed that at some point the English and French would stop Hitler. Instead, the European countries believed that they could make deals with Hitler – to appease him. “We were convinced that in principle you could never make a deal with Hitler”, said Van der Beugel. The failure of France and England to prevent Hitler from executing his catastrophic plans was the great disillusion. Van der Beugel: “The way in which [the French and the English] behaved after 1933 was not only morally gutless, but it was also incredibly foolish, because it directly affected their own interests.” Van der Beugel’s worst fears seemed to materialize. He worried that Hitler would go on and invade the Netherlands, eventually establishing the control of national socialism over the entire European continent.⁴⁸

Kohnstamm and Van der Beugel were not just shocked by what happened in Munich, but also by the Dutch response. “We witnessed this as the absolute catastrophe, while in 98% of the world and in 99% of the Netherlands flags were hung out” to celebrate that peace had been maintained.⁴⁹ Van der Beugel experienced an intense sense of loneliness during this period.

This has without any doubt greatly influenced my political thinking after the war, that despite the incredible pleasure of those student years, with regards to the world I experienced the 1930’s as the worst years – partly because of the loneliness. Not some kind of personal loneliness, but the loneliness of the West; the small minority that was completely appalled by what happened in Munich in 1938. Almost nobody in the Netherlands was appalled. You could barely see the houses because of all the flags indicating celebration.⁵⁰

What stung Van der Beugel’s little band of friends especially “was the lack of acknowledgement of the demonic dimension of national socialism. This we experienced as the worst of all. And the group who understood this, who saw through this, was extremely small.” The loneliness described by Van der Beugel was instigated by a feeling of “we are right and nobody sees it. The masses don’t see it and neither do our political leaders.” Instead, Van der Beugel recalled, “we were confronted with all that empty talk of the Netherlands being the Jeanne D’Arc of the world.” Van der Beugel particularly detested the attitude of the Dutch government which was characterized by the “arrogance of neutralism, the idea that whatever

fascism in his work and was part of a Barthian resistance group from the Dutch Reformed church in the south of Amsterdam to which Ernst van der Beugel’s father in law also belonged.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 62, 65, 70 (translation mine).

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 129 (translation mine).

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 62 (translation mine).

was going to happen, the Netherlands would stay out of it. Nothing was going to harm them. No, they were a shining example.”⁵¹

The image Van der Beugel sketches here is, of course, a rather black and white caricature of the Netherlands and Dutch neutrality during the run-up to the Second World War.⁵² Even so, it is important to be aware of the fact that this was how Ernst van der Beugel memorized these events as these memories informed his thinking later on. For the rest of his life Van der Beugel would remember these experiences as a grandiose failure in the history of Western leadership. “The great mistake of the West,” he said, “can be found in the 1930’s. It was not that they did not bomb Auschwitz. It was too late by then. The West is to blame for the 1930’s (...) for non-intervention after the re-militarization of the Rhineland, for neglecting to intervene in Austria, for non-intervention in Abyssinia and for the idea that you could make deals with Hitler.”⁵³ Their hope was now vested on the arsenal of democracy still standing on the other side of the Atlantic. As Van der Beugel would later recall: “already in this situation, although at that moment still unnoticed, the instinct was already present, that the only ones who could help us out of trouble were the Americans. It was a very strong instinct (...) that the Americans were in the reserve and that they had the ability to stop this absolute downfall. I remember that my father greatly influenced this.”⁵⁴

Theodor van der Beugel was not the only transatlantic traveler who infused Ernst with stories about the New World. Shortly after the Munich catastrophe, Max Kohnstamm embarked on a nine-month journey through the United States. His trip was enabled by a scholarship of the World Council of Churches, which was established only shortly before. In the U.S., Kohnstamm bought a second-hand car for 150 dollars and went on a road trip to study the labor and industrial relations of the New Deal while sharing his experiences through an intensive correspondence with family and friends back home.⁵⁵

During his journey, Kohnstamm beheld from up close the profound scars that the Great Depression had cut in American society and was deeply impressed by the grinding poverty he witnessed in the South. He was particularly upset about the extreme poverty and racial discrimination to which the African-American population was exposed in these states. At times his indignation almost dripped from the pages of his letters. At the same time, he was also captivated by the social revolution that the United States had gone through since Franklin Delano Roosevelt had come to power in 1933. Here he witnessed the social-democratic ideal of the ‘socially engineered society’ as preached by the SDAP in practice. Among Americans, the feeling prevailed that they were going to improve the world, that they could do this and that the government could play a positive role in the social life of its

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 67,72.

⁵² For a more nuanced understanding of Dutch society during this period see: Gerke Teitler, ed. *Tussen Crisis en Oorlog: maatschappij en krijgsmacht in de jaren '30* (Dieren: De Betaafse Leeuw, 1984).

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 62-64 (translation mine).

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 72, 129 (translation mine).

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 156. A selection of Max Kohnstamm’s letters has been published in: Max Kohnstamm, *Nog is er geen oorlog – Briefwisseling tussen Max en Philip Kohnstamm, 1938-1939* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001).

citizens. “The new society, if anywhere, will be built here,” Kohnstamm proclaimed, thus further instigating the fascination with the New Deal among his friends back home.⁵⁶

For a Dutch student to visit America in those days was an extraordinary rare event. In fact, it was so exceptional that Kohnstamm’s entire debating society escorted him on two open carriages to the train station to send him off.⁵⁷ Ernst closely followed Max’s adventures and observations from the other side of the Atlantic. Kohnstamm, in turn, also frequently wrote about the menacing threat of war in Europe in his letters. He shared Van der Beugel’s indignation concerning the Dutch attitude after the Italian attack on Albania in April 1939 and informed the home front about the political climate in the United States, including his expectations with regards to America’s response if war would in fact break out. “In the case of war, American hatred towards England will be insignificant,” Kohnstamm wrote on 26 February, 1939 from a YMCA in Tennessee that was so dirty that he wrote his letters wearing gloves and took his showers with his clothes still on. “I increasingly have the feeling that America will join after approximately four months, at the very least through active weapon supply.”⁵⁸

Two months later the idea was born that Ernst would also travel to America to accompany Max during the summer months on a trip to California. Kohnstamm’s mother, who heard of this plan from Ernst on the phone, responded disappointed – not so much because this meant that Max would not come home for the summer, but because she was afraid the trip would lapse into ‘sightseeing’, which was clearly not supposed to be the objective of the journey. “I think it would be better,” Max’s father wrote in response, “if you could get in touch with individuals who can help facilitate Western cooperation, which seems to become a more urgent necessity with every week that passes (because, it is of course utterly unlikely that Hitler will live up to his assertion that he will henceforth only serve peace).”⁵⁹

While Max was in the United States, his father read the book *Union Now: a Proposal for an Atlantic Federal Union of the Free* (1939) by the Atlanticist New York Times journalist Clarence K. Streit, which left the professor quite impressed. Professor Kohnstamm recommended Max to read the book and encouraged him to meet with Streit, arguing that “it is a man who knows something and who dares to think in the right direction and from good principle.” Streit’s book would eventually mark the beginning of an Atlanticist movement that grew in popularity after the Second World War. Whether Max actually met with Streit during his trip does not become clear from his (published) letters, but the book certainly left a deep impression on him. In fact, it would plant the seeds for his ideas on a European federation after the Second World War.⁶⁰ What does become clear, however, is that Kohnstamm

⁵⁶ Harryvan and Van der Harst, *Max Kohnstamm*, 51 (translation mine).

⁵⁷ EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, p. 165.

⁵⁸ Max Kohnstamm, *Nog is er geen oorlog*, 47 (translation mine).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 61 (translation mine).

⁶⁰ Jérôme Heldring, interview with the author, 1 December 2010. Jérôme Heldring maintained a lively correspondence with Streit, especially during the 1960s. In 1965 Streit met with Ernst van der Beugel in an attempt to

eventually recommended Van der Beugel not to join him on his trip to the West Coast – “mainly,” he wrote, “because I have the feeling that one should undergo the immense experience called ‘America’ not in the company of a friend, but by oneself.”⁶¹

A journey to the United States was also part of the education Theodor van der Beugel had in mind for his son. Ernst’s sister Ina had studied journalism in London after which she had lived for two years in New York during the late 1930’s. She had her own section in the Dutch daily newspaper *Het Handelsblad* called “Under the Skyscraper” in which she shared her impressions of American society with her Dutch readers. According to Ernst, his father was “*avant la lettre* very much focused on the United States” and through their upbringing he had given his children the impression that the United States “was the country where *it* really happened.” This idea had only been confirmed by the experiences of Max Kohnstamm. While an internship with a befriended banker on America’s East Coast might have been the obvious choice – considering the career path Theodor van der Beugel envisioned for his son – this was not what he had in mind. Instead, he planned to send Ernst for postgraduate studies to an American university. First, however, Ernst needed to finish his studies in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, by the time he graduated it was 1941 – the war had come in between.⁶²

The War Years

While Ernst van der Beugel entered the ASC senate dressed in civilian dress in 1938, he wore a military uniform by the time the next senate transfer came around a year later. On August 1939 the (still neutral) Netherlands had started its general mobilization. A week later, when England and France declared war to Germany, a quarter of a million Dutch soldiers – professionals, reservists and draftees – were called to active duty. The University of Amsterdam had to do without 20% of its male students. Ernst had also been called upon. As a student he had been exempt of the regular draft, but now the situation had become too serious for further delay of military training and Ernst was sent to the Dutch military academy in Breda.⁶³

On May 10, 1940, Germany attacked the Netherlands. Five days later, the Dutch surrendered. With the Nazi occupation soon came the repression of the Jewish population. At the University of Amsterdam a *numerus clausus* for Jewish students was introduced. In September 1940, only 213 Jewish students, including Ernst van der Beugel, were allowed to continue their studies. Applications of first year students of Jewish descent were not accepted and the selection of Jewish students that could continue their studies had to face many restrictions. They were not allowed in libraries, reading rooms or museums and each

recruit him as a spokesperson for his movement of Atlantic federalists. Van der Beugel, however, found Streit’s ideas too idealistic (and referred to his movement as the ‘Clarence Streit boy scouts’). Instead, he became an advocate of a more realist stream of Atlanticism. See: “Netherlands, 1945, 1955-1967”, box 28, Clarence Streit Papers, U.S. Library of Congress.

⁶¹ Max Kohnstamm, *Nog is er geen oorlog*, 59-60, 62, 64 (translation mine).

⁶² EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 38, 166 (translation mine).

⁶³ Knegtmans, *Een kwetsbaar centrum van de geest*, 73; Aukelien van Hoytema, interview with the author.

month that screw was tightened more and more with little things, Van der Beugel recalled: “not allowed in the tram, not in the train, not allowed to sit on benches, not allowed into the movie theater, and so forth.”⁶⁴

On 26 November 1940 Ernst van der Beugel married Miekje van Bruggen, who studied medicine in Amsterdam and did not share Ernst’s Jewish background. They had met as students and “probably would not have married at such a young age if the circumstances had been normal.” He was 22, she 21. In consultation with Miekje’s father, they decided to get married on that day because they had read in the newspaper that because of Ernst’s Jewish background, this would soon be prohibited. The wedding ceremony took place in the Willem de Zwijger Church in Amsterdam and was led by Ernst’s father in law, the Dutch reformed reverend van Bruggen. During the service news came in from the University of Leiden where Professor Rudolph Cleveringa had just delivered his famous speech in which he protested against the resignation – forced by the German occupation authorities – of his mentor and colleague professor Eduard Maurits Meijers as well as other Jewish professors. According to Van der Beugel, the ceremony subsequently “turned into a massive demonstration with hundreds of people – mostly students and acquaintances of his in laws – and ended with the singing of the patriotic [student song] *Io Vivat* in the church.”⁶⁵

Van der Beugel was able to finish his studies just before Jewish students and professors were completely excluded from the university. It was customary for economics students at the time to write their doctoral thesis based on an internship at a company of their choice. Despite the relatively more academic approach to economics at the University of Amsterdam, real academic doctoral theses about general economic problems were still extremely rare. Ernst’s father had arranged an internship for his son at Wilton-Feijenoord, a Dutch shipbuilding and repair company, where Theodor served as a member of the advisory board. Based on this internship, which Ernst was able to finish before the war broke out, he wrote his thesis about problems in the shipbuilding industry. He was able to take his exam in political economics before professor Frijda was forced to stop his work at the university because of his Jewishness in November 1940. Van der Beugel eventually graduated on July 10, 1941. On the 28th of October 1941 the ASC senate, by now under the leadership of Ynso Scholten, dissolved itself as a response to the Nazi demand to ban Jews from the club.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Ibid., 131; EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, p. 78 (translation mine).

⁶⁵ EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 79-80. *Io Vivat* is a student song, which was often sung loudly by groups at fraternity gatherings, but the song was also considered appropriate for use at quiet, patriotic civil celebrations and memorial services, containing phrases like “Hooray, long live the good health of our people. May those who hate us perish. May our friends always prosper”. See: “Broadside Ballads - 6. Io, Vivat”, Meertens Institute, accessed: August 6, 2016, http://www.geheugenvannederland.nl/?en/collecties/straatliederen/6._io,_vivat

⁶⁶ “Doctoraal Examen Ernst Hans van der Beugel”, file 394: Registers van kandidaatsexamens afgenomen door de Faculteit der Handelswetenschappen en vanaf 1936 de Faculteit der Economische Wetenschappen, met indexen 1923-1964, Archief van de Universiteit van Amsterdam: Faculteit der Economische Wetenschappen en Econometrie, Stadsarchief Amsterdam; EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 56, 60; Knegtmans, *Een kwetsbaar centrum van de geest*, 86, 132; A.C.A.M. Bots, “Frijda, Herman (1887-1944)”, Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland, 12 October 2013, accessed on August 5, 2016, URL:<http://www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/BWN/lemmata/bwn2/frijda>

After his graduation Ernst van der Beugel started to do research for a PhD dissertation he planned to write about the New Deal based on literature he had already collected on the subject before the war. In addition, he assisted his father in law, who was the chairman of the Dutch Reformed congregation in Amsterdam and a leader of the resistance movement within the church. Van der Beugel became part of this group, which focused mainly on the distribution of food coupons and false identification cards for individuals who were in hiding. Three or four times a week he walked for 70 minutes to the “Nieuwe Kerk” (“New Church”) to help with the administration of the baptized Jews.⁶⁷

In January 1942, some close friends of Ernst van der Beugel, among whom were Max Kohnstamm and Ynso Scholten, were arrested and sent to detention camp Amersfoort. The arrest was a retribution for an attack on a house of the national-socialist student front in Amsterdam earlier that month. They were released three months later on Hitler’s birthday – wrecked, broken and utterly famished. “This was our first experience with a concentration camp,”⁶⁸ Van der Beugel recalled. Meanwhile, Ernst and Miekje lived on and off in their own home, where they had a hiding place for Ernst. They also spent some time in hiding at different addresses, mostly at acquaintances of the Kohnstamms.⁶⁹

One early morning in 1943 Ernst and Miekje were at their own house when somebody knocked on their door. The visitors turned out to be two SS officers who had just completed a series of arrests in a resistance movement to which Ernst was connected. In the process they had come across his name. Since Van der Beugel had not anticipated anything unusual, he had not retreated to his hiding place and was apprehended right away. At that moment Miekje was eight months pregnant of their first child. With both his Jewishness and the charges of illegal activities testifying against him, Ernst said his goodbyes after which he left the house convinced that he would return never again.⁷⁰

He was brought to the SS *Zentralstelle für Jüdische Strafsachen* where he had to walk up stairs whose steps were covered with human bodies as a means of intimidation. Once confronted with the SS-officer who was in charge of his file Van der Beugel realized that denial was nonsensical. Instead, he decided that his only chance of survival was to resort to a more unorthodox tactic. After the SS-officer asked Van der Beugel about his father in law being a reverend and disclosed that he was an elder in the *Evangelische Kirche* himself, Van der Beugel had found his strategy and appealed to the SS-er’s conscience by questioning and attacking the compatibility of the officer’s ecclesiastical role with national-socialism. When the conversation was over, however, the effort seemed to have been in vain as the officer told Van der Beugel that he would be locked up to expect deportation to camp Westerbork first thing in the morning.

⁶⁷ EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, pp. 86, 91, 175.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 75; Harryvan and Van der Harst, *Max Kohnstamm*, 65, 71 (translation mine).

⁶⁹ They spent some time in hiding with the Heyning family in Beverwijk and with Ms. Fokker a sister of Max Kohnstamm’s mother. See: EvdB/Kersten Oral history, p 76.

⁷⁰ EvdB/Kersten Oral History Interview, p. 84.

“That night at 4 o’clock,” Van der Beugel recalled, “that same officer entered my prison cell and said: “*Raus!*” He opened the doors of my cell and the entrance to the building downstairs and put me on the street.”⁷¹ Despite the fact that he had to walk the streets of Amsterdam in the middle of the night with a Jewish star stitched to his clothes, which was strictly forbidden, Van der Beugel was able to return home safely. It would not be the last time that he jumped through the eye of the needle while escaping deportation. As a result of his marriage with a non-Jewish woman Van der Beugel had winded up in a rather exceptional position. During the first years of the war, the mixed-marriage stamp in his passport had excluded him from the dire fate of most other Dutch Jews, the majority of whom had been deported to concentration camps by 1943. While almost all other exemptions were withdrawn as time passed, most mixed-married Jews continued to receive special treatment.⁷² In the fall of 1943, though, the law seemed to change to the detriment of Ernst van der Beugel as mixed married Jewish men without children would be excluded from requests for exemptions from 12 September onwards. Again, Ernst van der Beugel was able to escape deportation just in time when on 11 September, 1943 – just one day before the new law would become effective – his first daughter was born. Hence, Van der Beugel would contribute the fact that he had survived the war to the ‘mixed-marriage stamp’ in his passport and to the birth of his first daughter, Aukelien.⁷³

The start of the war had taken away the piercing feeling of loneliness that had overtaken Van der Beugel in the years leading up to it, “because,” he explained, “those who had seen it coming and those who had not came together at that very moment. At once, there was one common enemy.” In contrast to the loneliness of the run up to the war, Van der Beugel had experienced a “most incredible intensity of social and intellectual contact” during the war itself. He ran from one discussion group to the next to talk about the situation at hand as well as the future of the post-war world – an experience he would later describe as a “feast of human and intellectual contact.” The war simplified all discussions. “There was only one issue: how to win the war and what will happen afterwards?” Van der Beugel recalled. “Never again did I have such an intense contact with people.” Inspired by these lively conversations, and convinced that the realization of the anticipated future – the rebuilding of the country – would begin in The Hague, the war had put Ernst van der Beugel on a new track that led towards civil service. Consequently, just a couple of days after the liberation of the Netherlands he took an old rusty bicycle with wooden wheels and pedaled to The Hague.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 85 (translation mine).

⁷² For a detailed history of mixed married Jews under the German occupation in the Netherlands see: Coen Stuldreher, *De Legale Rest: Gemengd getrouwde joden onder de Duitse bezetting* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2007).

⁷³ Stuldreher, *De Legale Rest*, 293; EvdB/Kersten Oral History, 83.

⁷⁴ EvdB/Kersten Oral History, pp.74, 85, 108 (translation mine).

Conclusion

The international nature of his father's work and social network made Ernst van der Beugel aware of a broader international context from early childhood on and endowed him with a broad, cosmopolitan perspective and an interest in foreign affairs. From an early age onwards, Van der Beugel exhibited a special interest in the United States, a fascination that was inspired by his father's regular visits to the country, his sister's stories as a New York journalist and Max Kohnstamm's travels as a student. It also expressed itself in his fascination, shared by his college friends and nourished through American books provided by his father, for Roosevelt's New Deal policies.

The importance of personal relationships, of social bonds that blur the lines between the diplomat's personal and professional life stressed by New Diplomatic History is also relevant in this context. After all, the foundations of Ernst van der Beugel's social network and status are also rooted in the period described in this chapter. His father's status as a member of the international *haute finance* provided access to an extensive transnational social network and student club life further introduced a young Van der Beugel to Dutch elite circles. During his student years Ernst van der Beugel also started to weave his own social network. The personal bonds that he developed during this period with individuals like Max Kohnstamm, Pieter Blaisse, Emile van Lennep, Hans de Koster, Antonie Knoppers, Jaap Kymmell, Ynso Scholten and Joseph Luns would not just be of personal but also of professional significance during his later career.⁷⁵

Furthermore, Van der Beugel's approach to international relations would forever be informed by his experience of an existential threat, appeasement, war and liberation. The existential threat Ernst van der Beugel experienced as a Jewish man under the Nazi regime was real and immediate. Once the war was over the fear of suppression by authoritarian rule again seemed to linger just around the corner in the context of the Cold War. His memory of the experience of the loneliness of belonging to a small group that acknowledged the threat of the demonic character of national socialism amidst the joy of the masses about appeasement at Munich, the celebration of a neutrality drenched in idealism and characterized by a moral superiority that looked down upon power politics, may very likely have strengthened Van der Beugel in his own convictions when also during the Cold War his ideas were not always in sync with what was popular among the public at large. He would forever be disgusted by idealistic rhetoric that depicted the Netherlands as the "Jeanne D'Arc of the world" while presenting neutrality and weakness as morally superior to taking a strong position against authoritarian power. In Van der Beugel's mind, the American role in the liberation of Europe would stand in stark contrast with the "the great mistake of the West": the failure of the European countries to stop Hitler in the 1930s. The lessons he took from these experiences – that power relations were fundamental; that a dangerous enemy should be confronted from a position of strength and that weakness, neutrality and appeasement in

⁷⁵ See footnote 32 of this chapter.

the face of such an opponent were never acceptable – would be essential to the way in which he would approach international relations and defense policy for the rest of his life. It also demonstrated the importance of close transatlantic bonds with a powerful ally that shared the central values of Western civilization. Thus, these experiences will be key to understanding Van der Beugel's diplomatic goals and motivations as a private diplomat later on. What is more, the role of the Americans in the liberation of Europe also planted the seeds of a deep-felt gratitude towards the United States and of an emotional bond, which – as the next chapter will demonstrate – would only grow stronger as a result of the American role in the reconstruction of Europe.

