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Provo van de politieke pornografie: leven en werk van Bernhard Willem Holtrop.

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SUMMARY

Cartoonist Bernhard Holtrop was absent on January 7, 2015 during the terrorist attack on the editorial office of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. His aversion to meetings saved his life. However, he now found himself the subject of global attention.

Of the various Dutch post-Second World War editorial cartoonists, Bernhard Holtrop is the most interesting for historians to study. Starting off in the Netherlands, before advancing his career in France, he managed to gain worldwide renown in his field. However, his rise to fame was in no way straightforward. Throughout his career Holtrop tested the boundaries of freedom of speech. In 1966, at a young age, this led to his arrest by the Dutch police on suspicion of lese majesty and insulting public authority. During his time in France, his political cartoons and comics led to further legal troubles, even culminating in censorship. These and other conflicts can all be traced back to Holtrop's cartoon trademark: *political pornography*.

Provo of Political Pornography. The Life and Work of Bernhard Willem Holtrop offers an analysis of editorial cartoonist Bernhard Holtrop's career and work by inquiring into three research questions. Firstly, the conservative and prudish Calvinistic environment of Holtrop's upbringing meant that a career as an editorial cartoonist was far from a given. So what moved him to choose such a subversive profession? A second topic concerns his development and use of political pornography. Why did Holtrop choose this specific instrument from the range of possibilities available to him as a satirist? Thirdly, the extent to which Bernhard Holtrop and his work fit post-war revolutionary social developments in the Netherlands and France known as 'the sixties' or 'les années 68' will be examined.

An extensive range of sources in the Netherlands and France was consulted for this research. These include the Provo collection at the International Institute of Social History (IISG), court records in the North Holland Archives in Haarlem and the archive of publisher De Harmonie, housed in the Museum of Literature in The Hague. For magazine inquiries, visits were made to, among others, the Regional Archives of South Utrecht,

the IISG, and the IWO depository of the University of Amsterdam (UvA). In addition, digital newspaper and magazine collections were viewed via Delpher (Netherlands) and Gallica (France). Lastly, the internationally oriented Dutch website Comiclopedia provided useful background information on press cartoonists and comic book artists.

Answering questions relating to the cartoonist's environment and upbringing entailed essential research into Holtrop's family history and formative years. Besides secondary literature on the anti-revolutionary emancipation movement, the Historical Documentation Center for Dutch Protestantism (1800-present) of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) offered important archive material. It provided valuable insight into Holtrop's maternal grandfather, Jan Durks de Vries, who fostered national political ambitions and maintained high-level contacts in the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP).

Other important sources for the understanding of family history were personal documents and memories. For one, Bernhard's father Roelf Holtrop's experiences in the concentration camp Vught, published under the title *Arts in oorlogstijd* (A Doctor in Wartime, 2012), was consulted. Furthermore, interviews were conducted, compiling a corpus of several dozen. Those interviewed were living family members, former classmates, fellow students, colleagues, friends, and acquaintances from various periods in Holtrop's life. Often these witnesses supplied additional sources, such as newspaper clippings and photos. But the reconstruction of Holtrop's family history and youth using oral history was not only important for answering research questions. It also provided an opportunity to illustrate the prudish social and political climate in the Netherlands of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Moreover, the information gathered in the conversations allowed for Bernhard Holtrop's life and work to be placed in contemporary social developments.

Information was also obtained directly from and through Bernhard Holtrop. Two extensive interviews were conducted, one in Paris and a second, together with his wife, on the Breton island of Île de Groix. Additional information was requested and received via email. In his dealings with the press, Bernhard Holtrop rarely revealed the whole truth to his interlocutors, often to their frustration. What is more, in the television documentary *De koele woede van Bernhard Holtrop* (Bernhard Holtrop's Cold Anger, VPRO, 2008), his wife, Medi Brath, let slip: 'You don't tell the truth all the time.' A silver lining to Holtrop's reticence is the fact that it allows the researcher to more easily maintain appropriate distance.

Apart from some prose, columns, and cartoon scenarios, Bernhard Holtrop primarily published comic book albums and collections of political cartoons during his career. The Bibliothèque nationale de France acquired

the archives of his colleague Georges Wolinski (1934-2015) as well as those of Bernhard Holtrop himself, underscoring the scientific importance the French attribute to editorial cartoonists and their work. During the research, however, his oeuvre of over 25,000 drawings had not yet been made publicly accessible or digitized. Winning the Grand Prix de la ville d'Angoulême in 2013 – the highest honor for a cartoonist – further underscored the importance of Bernhard Holtrop as a graphic artist.

Since the research examines Holtrop's personal life, his career and his work, a biography was the most appropriate form. It does, however, differ from a conventional biography, since, at the request of Bernhard Holtrop, no attention is paid to his family life. Neither was any time spent investigating everyday business concerns, given his long-term commitments. As Holtrop's career was nearing its twilight years at the time, the biography concludes with the attack on *Charlie Hebdo's* editorial office and its aftermath. A day in his life, written by Holtrop himself, is included to effectively bring to life the person he was.

Finally, Holtrop's cartoon albums and collections were of course studied as part of the research, but for copyright reasons most of the relevant cartoons and comics are absent from *Provo of Political Pornography*. *Provo of Political Pornography* also does not provide a complete and systematic overview of all published works.