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Living With the Enemy

Valedictory lecture Peter Romijn
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I. The enemy, who doesn't know him? In times of war and other large-scale violence, he is there, demanding all attention. The enemy embodies the threat in all its dimensions. He - usually in male form - threatens human lives and the way of life in a society, even if there is no actual struggle yet. Today we see in our part of the world how Vladimir Putin is widely recognized as an enemy, is omnipresent, and evokes as much fear as disgust. In any case, living with an enemy means the need to know the name of the enemy. Apart from his actions, how can we know the enemy's character and what will it bring?

Today I want to say a few things about the meaning of the enemy in our thinking and acting: is it the case that we need an enemy in a certain way, even if we fear him? What historical images have been handed down of him, and how do we deal not only with the enemy, but also with those images? Enemy images are important to historians of war because they are also driving forces in conflicts. In recent years, as a researcher, I have often had to relate to enemy thinking. How do we deal with this in scholarship and in the public domain?

The Dutch word for enemy is *vijand*. In ancient Dutch texts the word FIANT occurs, meaning besides 'enemy' also: the Devil. The Devil has a number of dimensions in the theological tradition. He is the Tempter who puts you to the test, wants to rob your soul to drag you into evil. He is the Traitor, who from within undermines your mental resilience and allows evil to happen. He is always the Destroyer of lives and lifestyles, the power that subjugates a society and disenfranchises and enslaves people. In all these ways the enemy evokes fear and hatred, as well as absolute opposition. If he wins, all is lost.

This contradiction raises the following questions: what is permissible to prevent this to happen? Is the stake of the battle destruction or being destroyed? Do we want to know the source of all evil in order to keep it out, to overcome it, to destroy it? Are we simultaneously afraid of its capacity to tempt us to evil? Or do we want to gain self-knowledge, to know what motivates us, who we are and what we want to stand for?

My inaugural address at the University of Amsterdam in 2002 was about evil governance. I posed the question of when people will come to realize that power has fallen into the hands of malicious rulers. Experience shows that this can take quite a long time. People can keep reassuring themselves for a while, as many Dutch people thought in 1940: it didn't seem so bad with those Nazis who had taken over the country. Seyß-Inquart started as a seducer, who wanted to reassure in order to obtain obedience. When it quickly became clear what his regime wanted to destroy, the top Dutch officials were still careful not to provoke the power. But we also just saw how Mr. Visser experienced that within that framework it was no longer possible to react adequately.

The enemy as a threat is much less abstract and more personally present than an evil regime. An external enemy may still be kept out, an internal enemy is a threat that first presented itself as yourself but wants to undermine your power. How can you recognize enemies from within, what harm may they have done before you saw them engaged? Because of this double threat, the urge to destroy internal enemies is often even more all-encompassing. This is why Frans Goedhart called the annihilation of NSB leaders essential and morally justified. Internal conflicts are often even bloodier and more compromising than wars between states because the enmity is even more absolute.

II.

How did "the enemy" take shape in recent Dutch history? Much has been written about the famous pacification of internal antagonisms as part of forming the Dutch nation. Yet internal enmity has also been a constant factor, which requires more consideration. In the 19e century, the breakaway Reformed dissenters were quartered with soldiers to keep them under their thumb. Roman Catholics were equally long regarded as potentially deloyal second-class citizens and on the left the worker's movement has long been branded as an enemy of the social order.

Troelstra's proclamation of the socialist revolution of 1918 – that did not materialize – fueled distrust of the reformist social democracy until after the end of World War II. The revolutionary communists chose the class struggle as their starting point and more and more oriented their politics toward Stalin and the Soviet Union. Thus, until the end of the Cold War, they became the "*Angstgegner*" of everything that confessed to liberal parliamentary democracy. Since September 11, 2001, the radical right in the Netherlands has, without exception, identified its Islamic compatriots with new enemies from outside.

It was precisely such international interconnectedness that caused transnational ideas and political goals to be perceived as existential threats from enemies. I would now like to say a little more about two issues that have marked the Dutch wartime experience and with which I have been concerned: Colonialism and National Socialism. These are literally and figuratively transnational practices and ideologies. Both embody enmity, thus also on enemy images. In both cases, the enemy not only came from outside, but was also inside the nation, thus chasing internal aggression. Colonialism and National Socialism challenge us to examine the three forms of Seducer, Traitor, and Destroyer more closer, also by way of self-examination.

The process of exclusion and reintegration of NSB members was the subject of my PhD dissertation and I then explored it further in collaboration with Ismee Tames and others in the program 'Legacies of Collaboration'. Now we have the plan to explore the stratification of the concept of 'internal enemy' more in-depth. The Indonesian Revolution has come to me in various research programs. Together with Remco Raben, I am now investigating how Dutch military, administrators and politicians took the reporting of colonial warfare to their own ends. With Martin Conway I have been investigating the underlying principles of the legitimacy in struggle against an enemy.

Branding an enemy, internal or external, is accompanied by the rigging of "war culture" and the mobilization of society for struggle against the enemy. The state fortifies itself for war by fielding as many soldiers as possible. It must also create social support for resisting the enemy - that too is mobilization. Leaders appeal to familiar ideas about what distinguishes one's nation and, according to them, makes it outstanding. Through mass media, cultural activities or social institutions, they cultivate recognizable social norms such as loyalty to the political system and the willingness to make sacrifices.

Part of the culture of war is not only displaying strength to the outside world, but also dealing with internal enemies. In the bronze theater we already saw how Frans Goedhart declared total war on the Dutch National Socialists. In the heat of battle, he advocated in his resistance newspaper to destroy these enemies with arms in hand. In *Vrij Nederland* Henk van Randwijk disqualified the indigenous national socialist in absolute terms as a fellow citizen and as a fellow human being, using the words I have often quoted, namely as "the human being without standards, without a past, without a neighbor, without God.

Dutch Nazis were dismissed in wartime culture as traitors, as hangmen, as social failures and scum, in short, as anti-Dutch. As mentioned, these words come from the heat of the moment. Once the war is over, the question of demobilization becomes topical - and then what do you do with the enemy? Frans Duynstee, in his article in the daily *Het Binnenhof*, struck out in that direction. The NSB still embodied enmity, but he limited it to the leadership and those with blood on their hands. Duynstee built on the idea that many party members came from the margins of society. They would have come to their wrong choice as a result of poor integration. Together with my old friend Jaap le Poole he took the initiative in 1945 to reintegrate the large mass of so-called "light cases of collaboration" into society. According to them, reintegration had to go hand in hand with surveillance. Fellow citizens had to help and at the same time be careful not to stick together like enemies, waiting for new opportunities.

Reintegration in fact amounted to depoliticizing: the ex-NSB'ers had been politically overcome, they were now declared a social problem. Their choice was now explained as a consequence of little integration in society; they had been seduced into making the wrong choice. This was suddenly much more understandable and made the problem easier to solve. Therefore, there was an opening to providing basic support, which was previously unthinkable. This did not automatically solve the exclusion. As Marieke Oprel shows in her book on dealing with Germans after the war, 'making enmity undone' remained a tough process, both in a bureaucratic and a psychological sense.

Remarkably, the resistance movement fared almost the same way after the war. These people too were classified by the state as a category with specific social problems. In their case, demobilization meant surrendering not only their stenguns, but also their ambitions to continue playing a political role as resistance. Arrangements were made to provide material support to victims and surviving relatives, but there also remained concern about possible unsocial behavior on their part. That is why after a few years resistance fighters also began to complain that they were being marginalized. This was certainly true for the communists among them who were now associated with a new enemy. After liberation, the political center succeeded in demobilizing society on its own terms, while enemy images about outsiders remained intact.

This last point certainly applies to the attitude toward the Indonesian revolution. On the Dutch side, during the Indonesian War of Independence, few people spoke in favor of the complete and immediate independence of Indonesia. The dominant currents in politics determined the public debate - they wanted to enforce restoration of Dutch authority through military intervention. When decolonization proved unavoidable, the goal became to arrange it in such a way that Dutch interests would remain optimally intact. Again the military was the instrument which had to enforce this. The colonial hardliners were prepared to wage war but didn't want to call it that - after all it was an internal conflict within the Dutch empire.

The culture of war that supported this was fueled by what Remco Raben has called "the colonial dissociation”. This is the entrenched idea that the Netherlands was designated by history and capacity to gradually lead Indonesia into the modern world. Again and again, Dutch administrators, politicians, journalists, and military personnel argued that Indonesians would not be able to establish a viable state of their own and a corresponding national feeling. To underscore this enemy image, the Republic and its leaders were continually portrayed as non-legitimate, incompetent, and criminal.

This 'war culture' underscored the aversion and repugnance to the enemy. The so-called "extremists" were said to have seduced the "well-meaning Indonesians" into a futile adventure. In the Dutch perspective, their enemy betrayed an age-old relationship and destroyed not only lives but also common livelihoods. At all levels, the dislike of the enemy played out: in battle reports and correspondence from administrators, senior officials, and politicians. Top official Idenburg in Batavia thanked the army command in January 1947 for a few photos of a Republican commander. He wrote that "the mean mug" of this enemy was very useful for propaganda, because the picture would say more than any story.

Dutch leaders projected onto Indonesians their own ideas of what was good for others. Anyone who did not comply was the enemy. They counted on support from Indonesian politicians like Soetan Sjajrir, Anak Agung or Sultan Hamid, without considering what their own agenda could be. The "meekness" Beel articulated stood for the harsh paternalism of colonial authority. The Dutch enemy image misunderstood and criminalized the authentic momentum of the independence struggle, as articulated by Roswitha, noted for having grown up in the circles of the pre-war governing elite.

The Dutch home front and most opinion makers wanted to believe in the significance of this policy, on the basis of the virtues they ascribed to themselves: reasonableness, expertise, selflessness. When reports came in about the cruelty of their own troops, they looked away, made things small or denied them adamantly. “Our boys” could not be like that, and if they did transgress, it was the fault of the cruel enemy, of the dire circumstances, of the prolonged stress - and these were always incidents.

Veterans themselves were actually quick to reflect in their publications that they had participated in a dirty war - that, in addition to appealing to good intentions, marked their shared identity.

The enemy was to blame for the fact that the worst sometimes came out in their own troops. It reminds me of what German author Wolfgang Schivelbusch described. After a lost war, the losing side likes to distinguish between their own warfare according to civilized standards on the one hand and the barbaric actions of the enemy on the other. This helps to see yourself as a moral winner after all.

The demobilized soldiers felt "*nicht im Felde besiegt*“. They blamed the politicians who had sent them out for the waste of their lives and opportunities for development. As had been the case earlier with resistance fighters and the “wrong Dutchmen”, the problem of the demobilized veterans was also depoliticized. The post-war governments confirmed their self-image founded on good intentions and sacrifices made. They steered the veterans towards social integration, first on austere terms and with a limited degree of material compensation – something that, incidentally, has changed a great deal in later decades.

Recapitulating, what do these examples about the relationship to "the enemy" say about how the Netherlands relates to war and mass violence? Total rejection of the enemy can seriously cloud one's own view, as in the conflict with Indonesia. Demobilization of the war culture and resocialization, on the other hand, can reinforce each other - within limits, of course. Does this apply to historical research into the enemy and his images? This is worth more research.

The psychiatrist Hans Keilson, in his novel Under the spell of the adversary, has examined why perpetrator and victim need each other as enemies. The answer, briefly and incompletely stated, is: to gain the necessary self-knowledge from that opposition. It is about getting to know yourself through your enemy, with all the positive, negative and problematic sides. With some flexibility, this can also be applied to a society. And that raises, finally, the question of how both enmity and reflection on it can have a historical impact.

III.

Surely, unlike the orchestrated clarion calls that mobilize a society for war, political and cultural demobilization is a much more diffuse process. It also requires much more time. In the first years after the German occupation, initiatives were developed with government support to “re-educate the German people”. Nevertheless, for one or two generations, the attitude of many Dutch people remained one of mistrust and aversion. The former internal enemies, the NSB members, were formally reintegrated but in many ways they continued to clash with a glass ceiling.

The Indonesian enemy was also met with ambivalence after the war ended. The war was concluded through negotiations, but after that there remained conflict material: much unfinished business and a near-war over New Guinea. Thus Indonesia went from enemy to permanent stressor, from whom people preferred to turn away, as well as from the post-colonial communities that the conflict had brought to the Netherlands. The perpetual enemy image, personified by Sukarno, also allowed the horrific mass killings of 1965 to be perceived by the Dutch with disinterest or even a certain sense of relief.

This brings me to the question of how wars have become history and what that means in relation our work. War has a long echo, and that echo is amplified when the times call for it. During the German occupation, royalists liked to fall back on the struggle against the Spanish for their much-needed inspiration. At the same time, the Nazis invoked the naval wars with England and the Boer Wars to point out the real enemy of the Dutch people.

Investigating the diffuse process of transition and demobilization is scientifically important; it prompts introspection. Thinking about the former enemy also shows us who we are, who we want to be, what we stand for. This is as true for us, researchers of the past, as it is for all participants in the public debate. We are not doing clinical science under equal conditions in laboratories. We, as researchers, are equally parts of power relations in society, which first became clear to me when I worked with Jan Bank on the concluding Volume XIV of Loe de Jong's historiography.

What struck me much later in the course of researching Indonesia is that I began it with the ambition to finally bring clarity to the discussion of Dutch war crimes in Indonesia. At the time I already felt that De Jong had unjustly backtracked in his well-known confrontation with the veterans. This had to be rectified and also the word “police actions” had been dropped. Gradually I found out through discussions that the continuity of the colonial system and its structurally violent character had to determine the research question in the first place. As a NIOD researcher I need to distance myself from the national and state frameworks of historiography. Who knows, maybe it's not too late to learn Indonesian.

As NIOD researchers, our task is to work nationally and internationally in a scholarly groundbreaking manner. It is equally essential that we share our work generously and with conviction in the public debate. It requires an open mind for the question of how and why the problematic past occupies people's minds. This is inspiring and enriching, but not always easy. It can only be shaped properly by experience and sensitivity. In principle, it is about interaction, not teaching. Yet this interaction can also be hampered by the fact that enmity can be permanent and can be inherited, by hostile images, by heritage work and by conflicts of interest related to identities.

This always asked me to place myself: where do I stand, what do I think, what do I want to stand for. What should we do with the enemy of the past? Hitler and Stalin still personify evil and The Enemy here in optima forma. We know how they could seduce, betray, destroy. We can also explain the importance of the fact that Sukarno at the time was portrayed as 'the Indonesian Mussert', by whom and for which interest? But was Ratko Mladic primarily the enemy of the Dutch, or that of the Bosniaks whom he had massacred? In any case, the permanence of enemy images is a subject that we as historians can deal with professionally. How do you deal with the victims of such enemies and their relatives; how do you reflect their voices in your work?

Enmity can be inherited and inheritance includes heritage. The growing attention to heritage of war and mass violence may steer toward fascination with the enemy as perpetrator of evil. What does the recent term "perpetrator heritage" mean in this context? I sometimes think that perpetrators have consciously or unconsciously managed to claim space for their ideas and goals through their material legacy and that we are supposed to look at this with some awe.

I know a number of colleagues will disagree with me, but why shouldn't Mussert's Wall at Lunteren be better be left to ruin, as a symbol - hopefully - of the crumpling of his political aspirations? Why should the archives of the Special Prosecution be characterized as “perpetrator archives” - after all, the trial of collaborators was of a much broader social character. Let us be especially careful that the social and political context of heritage will remain visible, or be elaborated. That is our job!

I have participated in a number of studies on postwar dealings with the historical enemy. Such programs were intended to pacify the political debate, but they did not thereby demobilize. In colonial practice, pacifying meant suppressing opposition by force so that the world could quietly move on. Yet extremely sensitive cases like Srebrenica or Indonesia have not been pacified. In a number of respects, investigations have actually revived or reinforced the contradictions.

Pacifying does not work that way, we have found out, because there is also social backlash. It is not surprising that people who see their interests and identity linked to an unresolved past are stirring. How do the children of NSB members, Indonesian and Moluccan Dutch citizens, former resistance fighters, veterans, descendants of mayors look back on the war history and how do they relate to the enemies of the time? And how is it possible, I wonder, to break away from the binary “yes-no” attitude? How to communicate the results of your research in a polarizing environment?

The other day, someone wrote in a letter to the editor about "those privileged historians” who think they can judge veterans' experiences from behind their desks. Two years ago historical advocates of Indies veterans filed an integrity complaint against me with the University. They were angry with me because I had written about possible war crimes, committed by Dutch troops, and obviously considered me to be an enemy who had to be punished. Fortunately, the complainants lost the proceedings, also when appealing. Nevertheless, all this was an unsettling experience for me, because discussing a piece of the past was translated as an issue of moral failure. At the same time, working at NIOD and UvA is a privilege that also brings responsibilities.

As a scientific institution with public outreach, we conduct research based on the optimistic idea that more knowledge will bring more understanding and more acceptance of the past. Whether I wanted it or not, as a NIOD researcher I was also a part of the establishment. And as such I should consider that the ideal of sorting out the difficult past and thereby serving science and society is not a quick-fix medicine. Nevertheless, I believe we can learn from the past and teach about it. This is not a solution to everything, but can be seen as a socio-pedagogical project through which a war culture can be studied, deconstructed, and demobilized, even after a long period of time. But in doing so, we have to be willing to devote all the attention and effort we have in us to what people want to know about the past, even if it nags them and they exhibit angry and hostile behavior.

The question then is: what is their preoccupation, what do they fear, how do they think they can move forward, what dialogue makes sense. For myself, I have also always wanted to see that that research into the historical enemy requires consideration of what you yourself want to stand for. In which way you may get tempted to betray values and destroy? Searching for answers requires professionalism, in the form of expertise, experience and empathy. But professionalism is not a guarantee for success, it requires constantly self-knowledge: what lessons and experiences have I learned, what do I worry about and what do I just not see? Such considerations also require time. As far as I'm concerned, it has passed at the NIOD, but that's fine - there is, my dear colleagues, there is so much commitment, professionalism and generosity in you: it will only get better.