

The Organizations

4.1. Introduction

In the following sections, the principal organizations which were engaged in 'pilot help' will pass review. Any attempt to offer even a limited overview will not be a simple task. In fact, the term 'organization' is much too rigid to define accurately the loose relationship that existed between persons who were in contact with each other during World War II. Frequently individuals had remained completely unaware that they had ever been part of an organization during the war. Joke Folmer, for example, who has been recognized as one of the most important Dutch 'pilot helpers' as well as a member of the specialized 'pilot-help' organization *Fiat Libertas*, only discovered after her imprisonment that she had been part of this organization. The group of *passeurs* from Hilvarenbeek in Noord-Brabant who had linked up in Brussels with the famous Dutch-Paris Line run by Jean Weidner only learned this fact after the war had ended. For most resistance workers the rule applied that, while they might know of other co-workers in the underground – preferably as few as possible – they must have little or no knowledge of their inter-relationships for that would only have endangered everyone.

Generally, the task of helping crewmen had only been a secondary activity within the resistance because airmen were not always on hand and in need of assistance. The G.L. Ottens family from Amersfoort who had not only given shelter themselves in their home to tens of airmen but had also helped them reach their next underground transit address can serve as an example.

"Underground workers also went temporarily into hiding in the Ottens home. ... For years they had had a large supply of weapons and munition stashed under their coal bins. Entire packages of distribution coupons and forged papers were constantly being entrusted to them. For a long time, an illegal radio transmitter stowed in a suitcase had stood on view in their hallway under the coat rack."¹

In contrast to Belgium and France, The Netherlands had not had an extensive network of escape lines extending as a continuous flow through the country, linking up at crossroads where groups of refugees could enter the stream. It was only beyond the border that the smaller Dutch escape lines, which to some degree had already begun to swell in size south of the country's major rivers, were funneled into the larger escape routes. Anyone now attempting to describe a singular group rapidly finds oneself caught in a tangle of many loosely knotted ends. A large number of the Dutch resistance organizations operated within a local or regional area. Although a number of organiza-

tions merged in 1943 into the more extensive context of the *Landelijke Organisatie voor Hulp aan Onderduikers* (LO), some smaller groups remained largely self-sufficient. Escape lines frequently formed as a result of unexpected contacts between local groups or individuals. Because these limited escape lines were constantly being rolled up by the German authorities or because their arteries easily became clogged when too many fliers tried to pass through them, it was always necessary for 'pilot helpers' to be on the lookout for new stepping stones in order to pass 'their' airmen onwards towards freedom. Thus resulted a hodge-podge of intertwining lines, not held together systematically but rather by the necessity of the moment.

Illustrative of the strange and nomadic journeys that some airmen were forced to make between their various underground addresses in The Netherlands, because a clear-cut escape system was lacking, is the story of Captain Charles D. Crook.² After his plane had crashed on 22 February 1944, he wandered around by himself for the good part of a day before coming across a resistance worker who took him to Doorn where he remained for six days. Thereafter Crook was moved to Hilversum (three weeks), Boxtel, Amersfoort (six weeks), Laren in the province of Noord-Holland (two months) and Nijverdal. From Nijverdal he traveled alone for six days to Boxtel, arriving on 26 August in the town that he had left only five months earlier. Thereafter he traveled in succession to Erp, Bakel and Zeilberg where he finally was liberated.

Ab Jansen, an expert in the area of air warfare above The Netherlands during World War II, has justifiably stated: "Ordinarily, a successful retreat [for airmen going south] was more a question of improvisation and inventiveness than a fixed and reliable plan."³ Thus it is difficult to find an appropriate sequence for describing these escape lines systematically because one must repeatedly refer to other groups and individuals. It is impossible to adhere to a fixed chronology. Even when employing the criterion of geography, one must occasionally go off on a tangent, although using this criterion will probably be most accurate.⁴

4.2. National network: *Fiat Libertas*

The first organization, *Luctor et Emergo/Fiat Libertas*, which will be discussed is actually atypical because it functioned on a national level. *Luctor et Emergo*⁵ emerged in the spring of 1942 as a result of the efforts of Jan C. ('Jan Dijkstra') Wannée from The Hague. Wannée, who had been involved in underground activities since the first years of the German occupation and had become interested in sending secret messages to England, sought contact with a resistance group in Brussels which could communicate with London. Wannée was already known in Brussels because in 1940 when he had been a civil servant working in the State Office for Food Supply in Wartime (*Rijksbureau for Voedselvoorzieningen in Oorlogstijd*) he had met several times with Belgian authorities. After first using courier services to Brussels, Wannée later decided to travel to the capital city himself.

Thanks to the efforts of Willem Marinus Kolff, mayor of the village of Deil in the Betuwe, Wannée came into contact with Deacon Reinier David Kloeg (born in 1908) who had studied for the priesthood in the late 1930s in Belgium and the south of France. After both the Dutch and Belgian armed forces had capitulated, Kloeg chose to remain in a monastery in Belgium where he rapidly became involved in helping Jewish refugees escape either to Switzerland or to areas of France that were still unoccupied. Because his resistance activities had not gone unnoticed by the Germans, Kloeg was sent by his abbot to a Trappist monastery called 'De Achelse Kluis' which was located on the Dutch border. There Kloeg met M.H.L. Beelen from Tungalroy near Weert who was working in the monastery as a carpenter. In 1941, Beelen had attempted to escape to England, via France, but was arrested at the demarcation line with Vichy-France which was then still unoccupied

territory. He was placed in forced labor working for a French farmer but quickly fled back to his home. Upon Kloeg's request, Beelen began creating an escape route, using information that he had amassed about safe underground addresses while in Belgium and France. His escape line ran via Maaseik, Brussels, and Namur through Belgium and via Givet (located on the French-Belgian border), Reims, Dijon, Lyon, Tarascon and Perpignan through France into Spain. In Perpignan, Beelen made use of the Dutch Office (*Office Néerlandais*) which was a continuation of the former Dutch Consulate. The director of this office was J.W. Kolkman, previously a correspondent in Paris for the Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad* and brother of the mayor in Weert. Two months after the Germans had occupied Vichy-France, on 11 November 1942, Kolkman and his wife were themselves arrested while attempting to escape to Spain. Kolkman did not survive his imprisonment in Germany.

In the beginning, the Kloeg-Beelen Line had only been used by Dutch citizens who for any reason wanted to flee from the German regime. To test if his route was still trustworthy, on a given moment Kloeg and Beelen had asked an officer from Zeeland to broadcast the phrase "*Luctor et Emergo*" via Radio Orange if and when he reached England safely. After the words were indeed successfully broadcast, they baptized their escape line with this code name.

In addition to addresses in Maaseik, Kloeg and Beelen also had access to underground addresses both at Bree in Belgium as well as near the monastic complex De Achelse Kluis which was built partly on Dutch and partly on Belgian soil. During a brief period in 1942, because of the activities of the monastery's Father Nivardus and A.H.G. van Driel, who was a Belgian carpenter working in the complex, a number of airmen could be helped across the border on behalf of *Luctor et Emergo*.⁶ However, the Germans soon became aware of these activities and, on 14 January 1943, De Achelse Kluis had to be vacated upon the orders of the German State Commissioner in The Netherlands. Only one priest and ten laybrothers were allowed to remain in the workhouses. In the summer of 1942, several people, including Kolff, were arrested on both sides of the Dutch-Belgian border.

Thereafter Wannée successfully made contact with Elise Chabot who was a Dutch woman living in Brussels, with Lotti Ambach who was Chabot's daughter, and with Ernest Van Moorleghem who (see Section 3.7) maintained contact with the Comet Line as well as worked for the intelligence agency 'Bravery' that was responsible for sending secret messages to England.

A limited number of people later became involved in the transportation of airmen via *Fiat Libertas*. Individuals who had been active within The Netherlands were Nelly Elisabeth ('Nel', 'Mrs. Balkema-Teensma', 'Willy van Veen', 'Suus de Wit') Lind from Alkmaar, Wubbo ('Bob') Graafhuis from Amersfoort, Herman Bosboom and Bob van Hilten. Nel Lind had been involved with the Dutch Scouts movement and demonstrated a great organizational talent.

In April 1943, Kloeg and Beelen were arrested. J.A. Kwak, a courier with access to information about their escape line, had already been arrested in November 1942, but it was not until after he had spent six months in prison that he finally confessed what he knew about the resistance. Kloeg attempted to carry all responsibility for their underground activities upon his own shoulders so that Beelen was 'only' sentenced to a term in prison. Upon his release from prison in Haaren on 9 May 1944, Beelen immediately went into hiding, fearful that the Germans would use him to smoke out other members of the resistance. Kloeg and Kwak were both condemned to death; Deacon Kloeg was executed by firing squad on 15 March 1944 in Utrecht, and after liberation Kwak died on 31 May 1945 in Bergen-Belsen as a result of the hardships which he had suffered.

Meanwhile, the *Bureau Inlichtingen* (BI, Dutch Intelligence Office) dispatched P.R. ('Kees Verhoef') Gerbrands in the night of 23 to 24 March 1943.⁷ It was only for the second time that this organization, established towards the end of 1942, had sent an agent into the field. Gerbrands who was accompanied by Nout Bergman, a radio operator, received the order to organize a courier route into Spain. To fulfill this task, Gerbrands had to contact Nel Lind, who was known in London as having access to resources necessary for moving both material and manpower across the Dutch-Belgian border. In 1942, Lind had helped Gerard Carlier travel to Spain. Upon arriving in Suriname, via Spain, Carlier met Colonel J.M. Somer and told him about his own escape. Later when Somer became head of the BI, he instructed Gerbrands to make contact with Nel Lind in The Netherlands. If successful, he was to instruct a group named '*Luctor et Emergo*' to concentrate their efforts on *passeeur* activities.

After barely reaching Dutch air space, the plane carrying Gerbrands and Bergman was shot down by a German fighter plane. Their aircraft crashed into the IJsselmeer. The dead body of Bergman and his radio sender remained on board the airplane while Gerbrands and the crewmen were able to reach safety using a rubber dingy. Soon thereafter they were taken aboard a freighter travelling from Lemster to Enkhuizen. Before the German police could board the ship, Gerbrands had fled. Gerben Bootsma, the ship's captain, was arrested and convicted of espionage; he died in April 1945 as a result of his imprisonment in Germany.⁸

In order to complete his assignment, Gerbrands made contact with Ch.V.J. Brummans, a teacher at the *Bisschoppelijk College* in Weert where young men studied for priesthood. After the arrests of Kloeg and Beelen, Brummans would become a permanent worker for the *Luctor et Emergo* organization. Upon request of an agent from the BI, Brummans created an escape route named 'St. John' running from Weert to Andorra via Brussels, Paris, Orléans and Toulouse. After Brummans had successfully completed the framework, Gerbrands entrusted its leadership to his brother Adri. Thereafter, towards the end of 1943, Gerbrands personally traveled to Spain along the new *Luctor et Emergo* route which by then had already been renamed *Fiat Libertas* ('Let There Be Freedom') as requested by the BI. Thanks to the efforts of Gerbrands, towards the end of July 1943, *Fiat Libertas* made contact with Garrelt A. van Borssum Buisman, a BI agent, who provided them with a radio transmitter so that rapid communication with London became possible.

As a result, the work of *Fiat Libertas* was greatly safeguarded. During this period, Wannée maintained contact with Ernest Van Moorleggem from Belgium who supplied the Dutch resistance worker with a checklist of questions with which he could test the reliability and trustworthiness of the Allied crewmen who were placed under their care. Gerbrands who was familiar with RAF slang extended the list even further and American slang was later included. Through their radio contact with London, *Fiat Libertas* was able to verify with greater certainty the identities of Allied airmen whom they had taken under their wing.

In the night of 19 to 20 September 1943, two more BI agents named O.M. Wiedemann and H. van der Stok were dispatched in order to make contact with *Fiat Libertas*. By mistake, Wiedemann made contact with another group which also called itself *Luctor et Emergo*. He continued his resistance work with them even after discovering the reality behind his apparent error in recognizing their names. However, Van der Stok was arrested on 2 February 1944; he did not survive German captivity.

After Kloeg and Beelen had been arrested, a section of the escape line via Brussels could no longer be used. However, Nel Lind and Wubbo Graafhuis continued crossing the border near Stramproy in The Netherlands to Bree in Belgium. Nel Lind never crossed the border into Belgium herself

as she considered her knowledge of the French language to be insufficient. She passed the Allied military men who had been entrusted to her care on to *passeurs* such as Henk Geerdink, who was a customs official, and the young L.F.J. ('Twan') Bergmans from Bree who accompanied people over the border. The last stopover before the illegal crossing was 'Café Gravendriek' belonging to the Verkennis family from Stramproy. From this location airmen were usually taken to Twan's uncle Alfons ('Oom Fons') Bergmans who ran a pastry bakery and café in the Belgian town of Bree. Although the road from Stramproy to Bree covered only a few kilometers, many hours were required if airmen were to travel it secretly. Walking through forests and boggy areas, the *passeurs* brought their airmen as far as Bocholt in The Netherlands. After arriving, the men had to cope with crossing a bridge over the canal called Zuid Willemsvaart which was usually heavily guarded. The group would then be forced to wait until the German guards were less vigilant before making a fast dash across the expanse in front of them. In mid-1943, Lind and Graafhuis also made contact with J.A.A. van Ass who was a milkman and café keeper in the hamlet Weerd near Roermond. Early in the war – at the end of 1940 – the home of Van Ass and his wife H.G.A.L. van Ass-Maessen had been functioning as an important temporary shelter and transit house for all types of refugees, including airmen. Wannée, who by this time was living in Brussels, would collect the airmen who had been helped across the border into Belgium and then pass them along to a Belgian resistance organization which had its own escape route running to the Pyrenees mountain range. Sometimes airmen were moved directly from The Netherlands to Wannée in Brussels.

After the summer of 1943, fate struck a blow to *Fiat Libertas*. In August 1943, Fons Bergmans handed several fliers over to Prosper de Zitter who was a Canadian-Flemish traitor. Bergmans discovered in time that he was in danger and went underground in Weert disguised as 'Alfons Mathijse', a so-called beer tradesman from Amsterdam. In total, he was able to hide more than forty airmen.

One month later fate struck again. At the end of September 1943, a number of airmen who had been helped by *Fiat Libertas* were arrested in Paris. In this way, the Germans discovered what was going on in the café in Roermond where Nel Lind and Bob Graafhuis were accustomed to collect their airmen before moving them to Weert. The German *Sicherheitspolizei* sent two of its *V-Männer*, H.W. ('Hans') Vastenhout and J.H. ('Jozef', 'Sjef') van Wesemael, to the café keeper saying that they were also involved in 'pilot help'. The café keeper did not discern their guise and brought them into contact with Bob Graafhuis who was surprised to see two lads whom he had known during high school in Amsterdam. Graafhuis, who trusted his school chums completely, told Nel Lind that "I would put my hands into the fire for them."¹⁰

Rapidly thereafter, Graafhuis and Nel Lind, who by this time had helped about twenty airmen escape from The Netherlands,¹¹ were arrested in Amsterdam during a pre-arranged meeting with Vastenhout and Van Wesemael. Especially devastating was the fact that, when searching Nel Lind's house, the *Sicherheitspolizei* found the identity papers for Dutch secret agents Van Borssum Buisman, Letteboer, Hoekman, Grisnigt, and Van der Stok. It would take months before the Germans could arrest four of these men, and Hoekman was never found. However, within the *Fiat Libertas* organization, a series of arrests followed. Two days after Nel Lind and Graafhuis were arrested, Wannée was detained.

The disaster would get even worse. The Germans promised Nel Lind that they would not bother her sister and brother-in-law who lived in Amersfoort if she would agree to help them. Nel was instructed to write a letter to her sister stating that Annie van Leeuwen (the traitor nicknamed 'blonde Annie') could join forces with the group. Although Annie van Leeuwen had first been involved in successfully smuggling Jews into Belgium, after her arrest in June 1943, she had turned

traitor and begun working for the German *SD*. Nel Lind agreed to help, thus telling her sister that she was staying in Brussels and needed a shipment of clothing. She had expected her sister to understand her encoded message – she never crossed the border because of her poor French and she did not even own the clothing which she had requested – and be warned of the impending threat. Unfortunately, Nel's warning went unnoticed and 'blonde Annie' was able to penetrate further into the *Fiat Libertas* organization. As a result, the actor Eduard Vetsman who had supplied forgeries for *Fiat Libertas* and Adri Gerbrands were arrested. Later an attempt was made to assassinate Annie van Leeuwen; she was put out of action but survived the attack.

After suffering a wave of arrests, *Fiat Libertas* was placed under the leadership of Jan M. Kielstra who was a lawyer and J.J. Henny who worked for an insurance company. In spite of these many arrests, the organization was able to increase its 'pilot-help' activities. Up until September 1943, *Fiat Libertas* had helped several tens of crewmen escape The Netherlands.¹²

The nineteen-year-old Johanna Maria ('Joke', 'La petite') Folmer who while studying at the Sociale Academie in Amsterdam had become involved with the resistance also began moving airmen on behalf of *Fiat Libertas*. After June 1943, she was already helping fliers who had been passed on to her from other students in Delft. Herman Bosboom had been one of these men and remained active in *Fiat Libertas*. Nel Lind's father who was employed by the Air-Defense Service in Zeist had access to telex messages regarding Allied aircraft that had crashed within Dutch territory. Similar information was given to Joke Folmer by her contacts who worked in the police departments in both Amsterdam and Rotterdam. After receiving relevant information, she would telephone her friends in areas near the crash site, requesting that they keep an eye open for any Allied crewmen who might be roaming around in need of help. One of her contacts was Peter ('Piet') van den Hurk, leader of a resistance group in Meppel, who had taken it upon himself to care for Allied crewmen.

Joke Folmer also maintained contact in Maastricht with the Vrij group, in Echt with Harry Tummers and in Venlo with J.J. ('Ambrosius') Hendriks who was provincial leader of the *LO* in Limburg. Because Folmer had papers saying that her job was to inspect 'soup kitchens', she was entitled to a free train ticket and could easily travel throughout The Netherlands. Such a permanent rail pass offered her the additional advantage of not easily becoming suspect should her airmen be detained because they, in contrast, would be traveling on a regular 'day' railroad pass.

Folmer brought airmen to Zeeuwsch-Vlaanderen and occasionally would herself travel directly to Brussels¹³ where one of her contacts, the Dutchman named David Verloop, worked for the Dutch-Paris Line and could help her find contacts within the Comet and Eva Lines. Just like Folmer, Verloop had studied at the Lyceum in Zeist.

In September, arrests were made in Belgium while the safe house of Fons Bergmans had already been eliminated. Across the border in Belgium, a new transit address in Hamont for receiving airmen was set up in the home of the Dutchman Frans Wijnen-Kwant. This address was used by Pieter Moors who together with the Dutchman named Hubert Peeters, who was married to a woman from Hamont and owned a brewery in Dutch Maarheeze, moved crewmen across the border with the help of the Dutch Marechaussee.

In April 1944, Joke Folmer was at last arrested after successfully helping many people retreat to the south. According to her own calculations, she had aided 120 people, among whom were at least seventy fliers.¹⁴ Both her father and Peter van den Hurk continued her work after she was

arrested. At least seventeen Allied men had stayed for varying periods of time during the war in her parents' home.¹⁵

In July 1944, twenty-one members of *Fiat Libertas* stood trial in Utrecht. One of these people was Jet ('Gaby') Roosenburg, who had mainly been responsible for taking information obtained by espionage across the border on behalf of *Fiat Libertas* and who had been the first person to travel the so-called 'Zwitserse/Swiss Weg B' to Bern carrying information on microfilm. Eleven people, including Wannée, Bosboom, Lind, Folmer, Graafhuis, Adri Gerbrands and Veterman were sentenced to death. However, by September their sentences had not yet been carried out and the prisoners were transported to Germany. Luck was on their side, however, and in the ensuing chaos of '*Dolle Dinsdag*' their personal files had gone missing. Nel Lind, Jet Roosenburg and Joke Folmer labeled as '*die Häftlinge ohne Papiere*' were transferred from one reform house to the next instead of being executed. At last on 7 May 1945 in Waldheim in Saksen, they were liberated by the Russians.¹⁶ The others who had been sentenced to be executed also survived the war. Among those who had received prison sentences, five died while in prison.

4.3. Southern Limburg

4.3.1. *The Eijsden group*

Soon after being deported as prisoners of war to Germany, many French and Walloon soldiers who had managed to escape began trickling back over the border into Limburg. Occasionally private citizens in Limburg were asked to supply these men with food and clothing and to assist them in returning to their homelands. Help in Limburg became more structured when an escaped French POW informed some of his countrymen who were still being detained in Germany about the possibility of getting help from the fruit vendor M.H.A. ('Alfons') Smeets in Eijsden. Smeets and his sons Sjef and Joseph took refugees to the train station in Visé in Belgium. It is thought that several tens of Belgian and French refugees were helped in this way during the summer of 1940.¹⁷

After some time had passed, Smeets and his sons were contacted on behalf of the Belgian resistance by Arthur Renkin, a Captain and bandmaster in the Belgian army who also directed one of the two village bands in Eijsen. Renkin's organization, which later merged with 'Luc', had established an escape route along the Belgian-French border, running between Heer-Agrimont in southern Belgium and Givet in northern France. Once within French territory, the escape line split, continuing either to Switzerland via Nantes or to Spain via Bordeaux. Smeets had also made contact with Nicolaas E. Erkens living in Lieges who was a reservist and first-lieutenant in the Dutch infantry. Erkens had created an intelligence service, which he named 'Roodkapje' [Red Riding Hood], in the border area between The Netherlands and Belgium.

Erkens had personally tested the escape line from Heer-Agrimont several times and accompanied fugitives from The Netherlands to the French-Belgian border. While people using this escape route were primarily Dutch '*Engelandvaarders*', help was also available for Allied airmen who had been shot down. Such airmen were brought by Ir. Willem Breukelman ('Willem Spoor') who was a lieutenant in the Dutch reserves and headed the exploitation department of the Dutch Railway. Breukelman led a group in Utrecht that collected information about train traffic as well as about factories working for the Germans. Breukelman obtained explosives from Erkens and in return offered his service to airmen, primarily coming from the province of Friesland, whom his group received.

Furthermore, crewmen were also being supplied by the espionage group led by Jan ('Broeder Van Tuyt') Broedelet, who was a grain trader from Rotterdam. The Allies were taken by Bets ('Zus') van Bochove-Bruggeman, who was Erkens' courier in Rotterdam, to Maastricht where either Alphons Smeets or one of his sons would collect them. Sometimes fliers were sent unaccompanied from Rotterdam to the south. Their pending arrival was announced in advance by either courier, telephone or telegram. Thus Smeets and his sons knew how to recognize a flier, for example, by a newspaper that he carried or a flower worn in his lapel. Up until October 1942, this group had been able to help 'several hundred people' escape from The Netherlands.¹⁸ Among these escapees were 'a small number' of airmen probably not exceeding ten people.¹⁹

On 8 June 1942, Broedelet was arrested when a member of the resistance group to which he was also a member gave away his name to the *Ordedienst*.²⁰ Rather than being sentenced and condemned, Broedelet was given the status of *Nacht-und-Nebel* prisoner, namely a prisoner for whom the death penalty was impending and for whom any contact with non-prisoners was strictly forbidden while awaiting trial. In spite of this threat, Broedelet managed to survive the war.

In 1942 a number of *V-Männer* with the *Abwehrstelle Wilhelmshafen* infiltrated Erkens' network posing as 'pilot helpers'. Breukelman was unmasked as 'pilot helper' and arrested on 9 September 1942. A wave of arrests followed. In October and November, for example, Erkens, Mr. and Mrs. Smeets, their son Joseph, his uncle Hubert Smeets and 'Zus' van Bochove were arrested. Breukelman's wife Corrie, who had supported her husband in carrying out his underground activities, was detained. In total, eighty-six people were taken into custody: thirty-five in the Dutch province of Limburg and fifty-one in the Belgian province of Limburg. Sjef Smeets managed to escape to Amsterdam where he went into hiding. Erkens and the Smeets brothers, Alfons and Hubert, were executed by firing squad on 9 October 1943 in Fort Rhijnauwen (*Waterliniefort Rhijnauwen*) near Utrecht. Alfons' wife Aleida Smeets-Debeij and Bets van Bochove-Bruggeman were transported to the concentration camp for women in Ravensbrück. Joseph who had been given the status of *Nacht-und-Nebel* prisoner was sent to Natzweiler and during the last years of the war was frequently transferred from one German prison camp to another. He, his mother and 'Zus' van Bochove survived the war. Corrie Breukelman was released from prison in October 1943. Her husband who still had to stand trial for another case of espionage was executed on 10 March 1944.

4.3.2. The RAF group

Soon after The Netherlands had capitulated, in the border office for customs duties in Maastricht-Caberg, various officials were quick to demonstrate a strongly anti-German sentiment.²¹ For example, this was the case for D.I. Hage. He had maintained contact with P.M.J. Dresen, a 43-year-old ex-military officer, who in turn kept in touch with the Erkens group via his brother Alphonse. Hage and his colleagues had been able to get Belgian and French POWs across the border with the help of members from the Belgian resistance. In the summer of 1941, after his first attempt to help an airman reach freedom had failed, Hage began thinking about new means of escape. He had learned that W.C.L. van Schaik, an engineer in Maastricht, was willing to guide fugitives through the complicated system of tunnels under the Sint Pietersburg mountains into Belgium. Border posts at Geulle and Eijsden were also put to use.

This 'pilot-help' group, which for a time had called itself the RAF group, was not overly concerned with security. Hage was rather loose-lipped when announcing the possibilities that his group had to offer, even going so far as to publish a pamphlet called '*RAF*'. Some of the group's members actually wore a flattened metal RAF emblem on the inside of their coat lapels.²² During November

and December 1941, almost all of the members of the Dresen group fell into German hands due to treason. Nineteen persons were arrested; nine of these individuals were labeled '*Schutzhaft*' prisoners, i.e., they could be directly imprisoned without trial because they were considered to have behaved dangerously towards the German Reich. Dresen, Hage and six other prisoners died at the end of 1942 or the beginning of 1943 in Neuengamme. According to post-war allegations from the Dresen group, they had helped a total of ten airmen reach safety.²³

4.3.3. *The Bongaerts group*

Erkens' group not only had bases of support in Eijsden and Maastricht but also, after the summer of 1941, maintained contact with Charles Marie Hubert Joseph Bongaerts who was Commander of the Fire Brigade in Heerlen.²⁴ Early in the war Bongaerts, a former military man, had established a multifunctional resistance group which was part of the *Ordedienst*. Thus Erkens would send Allied crewmen to Bongaerts who, using the departmental fire engines, then passed the men onward to Dresen in Maastricht. After Dresen's group had been rolled up in 1941, and Erkens' group at the end of 1942, Bongaerts had to make new contacts, such as Father Goossens in Echt. Bongaerts' co-workers had also begun taking crewmen to Coba Pulskens, a 'pilot helper' and woman active in the resistance in Tilburg. An important link in this newly established chain was H.H. ('Harry') Tobben who, in the spring of 1942, had introduced his nephew J.A.A. van Ass, who was a milkman and café keeper in the hamlet De Weerd near Roermond. Via this contact, more links could be made to other 'pilot helpers' in and around Roermond and Weert. Finally, Tobben provided for other contacts between 'pilots helpers' in the area surrounding Venlo and Horst.

In the summer of 1943, as an offshoot of the infamous *Englandspiel* when the *Abwehr* and German *SD* had been able to infiltrate the resistance after intercepting British agents, several *V-Männer* agents came across a trail left by Tobben who was investigating ways to get himself to England. Because he had been in contact with D.H. Schortinghuis, a civil servant from The Hague and passionate '*wadloper*' in the Wadden or Dutch Shallows, Tobben did not even consider the most obvious escape route, namely, crossing the Belgian border. Instead he traveled to Hornhuizen in northern Groningen in the company of Paul J. Gulikers, a 'pilot helper' from Sittard and member of the Bongaerts group, and four airmen who had been collected from Coba Pulskens. From Hornhuizen the group proceeded to a shoal between Schiermonnikoog and Rottumerplaat where they expected to be collected by a British submarine. What they did not realize at the time was that the people who were supposedly helping them were the notorious *V-Männer* Anton van der Waals and his henchmen Vastenhout and Van Wesemael. While pausing in Apeldoorn during their journey, the airmen and their helpers were arrested. Tobben and Gulikers were sentenced to death; however, their executions were not carried out and they were transported instead to a German POW camp. Tobben died in March 1945 in Hameln and Gulikers survived the war.

Meanwhile, the traitors Vastenhout and Van Wesemael together with their colleague Rodo Jordens had been able to infiltrate even deeper into the Limburg circle of 'pilot helpers', also gaining the trust of Coba Pulskens. As a result, the *Sicherheitspolizei* could make their move on 6 November 1943. Bongaerts and Van Ass were among those arrested. A notebook was found on Van Ass containing the names of all the crewmen and fugitive POWs whom he had helped. While Bongaerts was allowed to go free, the café keeper/milkman spent the rest of the war in a German POW camp and died in captivity in camp Sandbostel near Hamburg.

After his arrest, Gulikers found a way to smuggle a letter to his wife warning her of the treachery of Vastenhout, Van Wesemael and Jordens. W.H. van Keulen who was a policeman for the coal

mines, A. Vesterling and Servaas Vroomen who were both members of Bongaerts' group, and Jacques Vrij who was leader of the 'pilot-helper' group in Maastricht decided on 6 November 1943 to ambush and liquidate the trio near a train tunnel just north of Sittard.²⁵ Because the *V-Männer* realized what was going to happen in the nick of time and the guns of both Vrij and Vroomen misfired, only Jordens was killed. Van Wesemael was wounded and Vastenhout managed to escape. Van Keulen, Vesterling and Vroomen were forced to go into hiding after the attempted assassination. Vrij was not forced into hiding because his name and description had not been known by Vastenhout and Van Wesemael. However, their disguises having been disclosed, both surviving German *SD* infiltrators no longer posed a real threat in Limburg.

Bongaerts' co-workers were able to continue his work as 'pilot helper' after his arrest. Among the people who had collaborated with Bongaerts, several individuals later became involved with *KP* resistance workers in Heerlen. Later in 1943, *KP*-Heerlen would become responsible for the interception and safe removal of ten crewmen in the coal mining area to the east of Heerlen.²⁶ One of the locations along the border where *KP*-Heerlen took its airmen was Slenaken, a village where several Marechaussee and J.H. ('bruine Jan') Everts who was a Franciscan priest were involved in illegal border crossings. The priest had also been running a courier service to Switzerland via his own route which appeared not to be part of any other organization. In December 1943, Father Everts helped Charlotte Lucie Adelheid ('Charlotte Tercier') van Berckel who was a student from Nijmegen living in Heerlen but travelling southwards via the Voerstreek. She herself had guided eleven fugitives to Perpignan in France before the escape line had sprung a leak. She had hoped to be able to repair the line but was arrested in southern France. In May 1944, she was transferred to the concentration camp for women in Ravensbrück where she was liberated in April 1945. Her father who worked with Bongaerts' group was arrested on 25 August 1944; he was executed by firing squad 11 days later in Vught on 5 September.

4.3.4. *The Blok group*

After both the RAF group and the Smeets/Erkens group in Eijsden had been rolled up in 1941 and 1942, most of the Allied airmen had to be moved across the border in central Limburg until the autumn of 1943. Thereafter, new possibilities for safely transporting airmen via Maastricht arose thanks to two groups centered around Sijmons and Vrij.

Petrus Johannes Sijmons was an inspector working in the State Office for Taxation. His group known as the Blok group or *Belasting Groep Maastricht* [Taxation Group Maastricht] can more or less be viewed as a continuation of the Dresen group. The Sijmons group obtained its crewmen primarily from Echt and was able to provide temporary lodgings to airmen in transit while they awaited an opportunity to cross the border. To accomplish this, contact had been made with J.J.H. ('Jacques') Sangen who was a civil servant in the State Office for Traffic Inspection in Hoensbroek and J.R.P. ('Jacques') Crasborn who was a member of the *KP*-Heerlen.

For transportation of crewmen into Belgium, the Sijmons group had several channels at its disposal, i.e. (a) the extensive network of tunnels under the Sint Pietersberg Mountain to Kanne and Klein Ternaayen in Belgium where members of a resistance group called the Belgian National Brigade collected the airmen, (b) the Belgian and Dutch railroad networks that were used to transport fliers into Belgium, (c) contacts in Eijsden, and (d) a route via Caberg and Smeermaas, Belgium. Finally, Fernand Dumoulin from Belgium transported airmen whom he had obtained from the Sijmons group across the border using a Belgian truck in which a secret compartment had been constructed. The Blok group, which had remained active until the summer of 1944, was able to help ca. 80 to 100 airmen cross the border into Belgium.²⁷

4.3.5. *The Vrij group*

Jacques ('Van den Brink') Vrij employed by the State Office for Traffic Inspection in Maastricht was a member of the Dutch Reformed Church in this capital city of Limburg.²⁸ Together with a number of other members of this community, such as Arie Hendrikus van Mansum and Derk van Assen, Vrij began circulating the underground newspaper called *Vrij Nederland*. In October 1943, he had become involved in helping airmen. The group had connections with the *LO* from whom they received ration coupons. Vrij received his fliers from several sources: Remco Roosjen and Frans Verbruggen in Roermond, H.W.J. Jacobs in Venlo, Sangen in Hoensbroek, and Joke Folmer in Zeist. His group had approximately nine transit addresses in Maastricht where airmen could safely be lodged while awaiting new identity papers for Belgium and a fortuitous chance to cross the border. They usually had only to wait several days.

One safe underground address was that of Eduard van der Noordaa, head of the dactyloscopic service of the Maastricht Police Department, who thanks to his job could provide false identity papers on behalf of the men in hiding. Van der Noordaa also maintained contact with the Sijmons group.²⁹ At the beginning of 1943, Sijmons asked Van der Noordaa to commit military and economic espionage on behalf of the Allied war machine. Thus Van der Noordaa was brought into contact with the Packard intelligence group. On 22 February 1944, Van der Noordaa was arrested, but Sijmons and several co-workers were able to buy his freedom. Shortly thereafter Sijmons was also able to appoint Van der Noordaa to a fake position as border commissioner in the province of Twente. It was there that Van der Noordaa met Jan Harm Bosch, a tax inspector from Enschede, who had begun working with the resistance as early as 1940 and just like Van der Noordaa combined 'pilot help' with intelligence work. In this way, a link was established between the eastern and southern parts of The Netherlands permitting safe removal of airmen. However, after the summer of 1944, among all of Bosch's underground activities the greatest emphasis now had to be placed on financing and coordinating the resistance movement. On 31 March 1945, Bosch was arrested by the German *SD* and executed by firing squad the following day, just hours before Canadian troops liberated Enschede. The Vrij group had used the border crossings at Caberg and Itteren in The Netherlands and to Smeermaas in Belgium to help airmen reach Belgium and had relied on the help of several Dutch *passeurs* living in Belgium. One such *passeurs* was P. Souren living just over the border in Smeermaas, who helped about fifteen airmen cross the border. Usually he would collect his airmen in Maastricht early in the evening and allow them to spend the night in his own home. The following morning he would leave with the airmen, taking the first morning train to Brussels. Another *passeur* was Henri Beckers who lived in the Belgian town of Lanaken. He had been able to transport approximately twenty-five airmen across the border via Caberg. After March 1944, Beckers had been forced to quit his resistance activities because the Germans had become suspicious. G. Eikeboom, a Dutchman from Neerharen, had been able to transport about twenty-five airmen across the border, generally at Itteren, on behalf of the Vrij group. Ms. C.M.A. Spierings, who commuted between the Belgian town of Rekem where she lived to Maastricht for her work, had been successful in transporting a number of airmen on behalf of the Vrij and Blok groups. In total, the Vrij group had successfully taken about eighty airmen across the border into Belgium.³⁰

Airmen who had been transported to Belgium by the Vrij group were usually handed over to the resistance groups named 'Zéro' and the 'Witte [White] Brigade' or sent down the Dutch-Paris Line.³¹ Contact with the Dutch-Paris Line had been made via A.H. ('Tonnie') Gielens who was a colleague of Vrij from Maastricht. After Gielens had failed in his attempt to reach England, he had come into contact with David Verloop and Paul van Cleeff in Brussels from the Dutch-Paris Line. Vrij together with E. Smits from Maastricht, who was studying in Leuven in Belgium,

traveled repeatedly to Brussels in order to coordinate their plans and transport airmen. The *passeur* Souren was arrested in March 1944 as he left the train station in Hasselt. He was condemned to death but the sentence was never carried out; after the war had ended, he returned home from a German prison camp. Because Verloop, Van Cleeff and Souren had been arrested, the escape routes used by Vrij for safe removal of airmen via Belgium had become clogged. Marianne Spierings, however, was able to create a new escape route to the Pyrenees mountains.

In May 1944, Vrij and his co-worker A. Wittebol were arrested. In August 1944, Vrij made a successful escape from the concentration camp in Vught. However, because of his arrest, the work that his group had been doing almost came to a halt. Wittebol was transported to the concentration camp in Sachsenhausen but returned to The Netherlands after the war.

4.3.6. *The Sangen group*

J.H.J. ('De Bruyn') Sangen was a civil servant working for the State Office for Traffic Inspection in Hoensbroek, just as Vrij had done in Maastricht. During the first half of 1944, Jacques Sangen had been able to organize a number of safe houses for airmen both in and around Hoensbroek. For example, he and his associates had a number of houses in Nuth. His fliers were passed to him from De Zwarte Plak via P.J. ('Jef', 'De Witte van Sittard') Ronden who was a former officer active in the Sittard resistance group. A limited number of airmen from the Sangen group could be taken to Maastricht, and Sangen personally moved several fliers to Slenaken. About thirty of the (approximate) forty crewmen helped by this group were taken across the border at Stramproy in the summer of 1944 when all of the other border crossings in Dutch Limburg could no longer be used because of arrests.³²

4.3.7. *The Koers family*

After September 1943, Klaas Koers who was a sergeant-major with the State Police and his wife Nel who was a woman search officer with the border patrol were actively involved in helping airmen in Geulle. On the Dutch side of the border they worked with Mies Bruynen and Evert ('Nico') Bakker who both circulated the underground newspaper *Trouw*, and on the Belgian side of the border in Uikhoven they maintained contact with representatives of the White Brigade and Comet Lines.³³ The airmen who had been passed on to Mr. and Mrs. Koers had some way managed to contact the people who worked for this underground newspaper.

When Klaas Koers wanted to make an appointment to rendezvous with his *passeurs* at night, he would use a special method to inform his Belgian friends on the other side of the river Maas that he and his fliers had arrived. He used a trick that he had learned from smugglers. Very softly he whistled the first lines of 'Wilhelmus', the Dutch national anthem, which was only audible to someone holding an ear very close to the surface of the water. From the other side of the river a reply was softly whistled, i.e., the first lines of the 'Flemish Lion' after which the Belgians lowered their boat into the water to collect the anxiously awaiting Allied airmen.

The last person to be taken into Belgium by the Koers family was Bram ('Bob') van der Stok.³⁴ He was a medical student who after reaching Great Britain as an '*Engelandvaarder*' in the summer of 1941 had joined the Royal Air Force. In 1942, he had been shot down over France and imprisoned in *Stalag Luft III* in Sagan near Breslau. There he became involved in a massive escape of seventy-six officers at the end of March 1944. Fifty of these men were murdered while twenty-three men were re-captured and imprisoned. Van der Stok had been one of the three men who resisted capture, travelling to The Netherlands by train. Via his acquaintances in Utrecht, he was brought to the

Ottens family in Amersfoort where he remained for one month. When the local resistance refused to help him further because his identity could not be verified with any certainty, he set off alone, traveling by train to Maastricht, and finally reached Belgium with the help of the Koers family. Via Brussels, Paris, Dijon and Toulouse he arrived in Gibraltar on 8 July 1944. After returning to England, he became Commander of the 322nd (Dutch) Squadron of the RAF.

4.4. Northern and central Limburg

4.4.1. *Venlo and surroundings*

A well-known center for 'pilot help' was De Zwarte Plak. This was an area where black turf had formerly been harvested, located to the west of America – a village in De Peel which was part of the northern Limburg community of Horst. Only a few tens of families lived there, having to work hard for their daily bread and not paying much attention to the modern world. The surroundings of this closed and obstinate community was viewed by many people as being 'the end of the civilized world'.³⁵ In this region had been built the farm Antoniushoeve, belonging to a Catholic family named Poels: Jacobus Gerardus, his wife Johanna Emonts, and their children Lambert ('Bert'), Antoon (1916), Gerard Wilhelmus (1919), Antoon Jan (1921), Pierre (1923), Maria (1924) and Francisca (1927). Theirs was a large farm having 30 hectares of ground where farmer Poels had introduced modern farming methods. In 1941 the Poels family along with their second cousin Jan Poels, the neighbor's boy Piet Smedts and a friend named Frans Janssen had become involved with helping escaped POWs. The fugitives would be taken by bicycle to Budel, thus making De Zwarte Plak a transit area for the first time. The farm was situated rather safely on the edge of De Peel. Thus when German patrols appeared in the hamlet called America to search De Zwarte Plak, they were often sent searching in the wrong direction so that the courier Martha Van der Coelen could quickly warn the Poels family of impending danger.

After some time, escaped POWs were being joined by Jews who had gone underground and then in 1943 by Allied airmen. These airmen were transported by the group centered around Vicar Vullingshs. One of the most important sources from whom the Poels family received their fliers was Richard van der Poll, a sergeant with the Marechaussee in Griendtsveen. The most important individual taking airmen under his wing was Harrie Hendriks from Haelen, nicknamed 'De witte van Haelen'.

At the end of July or the beginning of August 1944, various members of the Poels group were arrested: Harrie Driessen, the brothers Gerard and Antoon Poels, and Gerard Antoon Smulders. Bert went underground, and father Poels died of a heart attack shortly thereafter in the night of August 4th.³⁶ Gerard and Antoon were released, but Gerard Smulders died a few weeks later. Driessen died about one month thereafter during his attempt to escape. The Poels family and their co-workers had been able successfully to help about thirty-five to forty airmen reach freedom.³⁷

After the winter of 1943, De Zwarte Plak was increasingly being used as a base for the Council for Resistance that had also begun helping airmen and other refugees. One of these men was the dare-devil Frits ('Alphons') de Bruijn who worked with Martinus A. ('Watje') van der Eynden from Asten. 'Alphons' and 'Watje' also took part in the activities of the KP-Bakel. On 5 September 1944, they were intercepted by the Germans while attempting to sabotage train rails between Eindhoven and Venlo near Griendtsveen; they were immediately executed on the spot.

In Grubbenvorst near Venlo in Dutch Limburg, Vicar Henri J. Vullingshs (born in Sevenum on 14 September 1883) had displayed a fighting spirit by playing a central role in helping crewmen and escaped POWs.³⁸ During the second half of the 1920s, he had studied music in Italy and the United States. While in Italy he had encountered fascism which filled him with repulsion. After his appointment as vicar in Grubbenvorst in 1939, both he and Father P.J.H. Slots had begun warning their parishioners against the dangers of national socialism even one year *before* German occupation. During the horrific days in May 1940 when Germany invaded The Netherlands, Vicar Vullingshs risked his own life to administer the last rites to Dutch soldiers dying in the trenches along the Maas defense line. On Whit Sunday, 12 May 1940, two days after the German invasion, he preached the following words from his pulpit: "Our soldiers can do nothing more. Now it is up to us. We shall obstruct the Germans where we can."³⁹

Vullingshs did not stop at rhetoric. When, during the second half of the 1940s, French POWs were fleeing across the border, he left the church door unlocked at night so that the fugitives could hide inside until it was time for early morning mass. In general, almost all (ca. 200) of the escaped POWs who passed through Grubbenvorst during the war⁴⁰ had been passed on to Sevenum by Vullingshs and his associates.

In Sevenum, it had mainly been the Vermeeren family as well as Eugenie M.T. Boutet, a live-in family member and teacher who had been born in Lieges and spoke fluent French, who were significant pillars of help.⁴¹ There had also been a sewing circle in Sevenum which transformed military uniforms into ordinary anoraks given to airmen fleeing through the town. In 1943, Boutet was named head of the *LO* in Sevenum but on 1 May 1944 was forced to flee. Travelling via various safe houses she arrived in Baarlo where she remained, waiting for the war to end.

When Monsignor J.H.G. Lemmens, bishop of Roermond, heard about Vullingshs' experiences, he established contact during 1941 with H.A.L.M. Lahey and Martinus Antonius Marie ('Bob') Bouman who were, respectively, district group leader and chief controller working for the *Crisis Controle Dienst* (CCD, Service for Crisis Control) in Roermond. Lemmens had already been aware that these two civil servants had helped POWs escape to Belgium and France. The CCD, an organization hated by many during the war because of its strict control of black-market butchers, provided many a resistance member with a useful disguise because these workers enjoyed great freedom of movement. For example, Lahey and Bob Bouman who was an invalid had a Chevrolet in which they covered a wide area of Limburg daily. Therefore Bouman and Lahey were able to transport escaped POWs in their car from Grubbenvorst and Sevenum to southern Limburg. In the spring of 1942, Bouman drove the French General H.H. Giraud by car from northern Limburg to Eijsden. Giraud who escaped to North Africa vied later in the war with General Charles De Gaulle as heir apparent of the Free French. As time passed, Lahey and Bouman discovered numerous transit addresses where POWs, Jews, airmen and other people seeking refuge could await transport into Belgium; e.g., the addresses of the farm owned by the Poels family in De Zwarte Plak, of butcher G.P.H. ('Harrie') Joosten, of the Hendriks family in Grubbenvorst and of the Hendrikx family in Haalen.

Bouman and Lahey had a number of addresses at their disposal in central Limburg where they could place fugitives in hiding. One such address was that of Jan Mathijs ('Sjang') Peters in Roosteren, at that time headmaster as well as commander of the local *Ordedienst*; after the war he became a representative of the Catholic People's Party in the Dutch House of Representatives. Peters led a small resistance group which included Leo Coensen who was a customs official, Cees H. van Eck who worked as a Marechaussee and P.H.J. ('Jules') Schulpen who was a cattle trader.

Peters and his cohorts received their airmen from the groups run by Father Goossens and Harry Tummers in Echt as well as from Susteren.

The most important address where Bouman and Lahey had been able to hide their fugitives was that of Renier H. ('Neer') van de Vin in Neeritter. In 1941, Bouman and Lahey had detained two lads who were in possession of several bicycle tires. When questioned further about how they had obtained the tires, the boys admitted that they had come from the 'Zonnehoeve' farm belonging to the cattle trader Van de Vin and were used in transporting French POWs.⁴² Shortly thereafter when, during a control, Bouman and Lahey stumbled across eight escaped French POWs, they directly approached Van de Vin who also owned some land and had relations in Belgium. For example, his wife's sister lived in Lieges and he had contact with the butcher Albert Coenen in Dilsen where a very lively center – an offshoot of the Comet Line – for Belgian 'pilot helpers' could be found. Van de Vin also maintained contact with the active Belgian 'pilot helper' named Theodoor Florquin, a cattle trader who had formerly taught Van de Vin his trade, and during the war was involved with the Belgian espionage group 'Luc'.⁴³ Neeritter became a fixed border station, the most important in all of Limburg. Together with his wife and two foster children, the brother and sister Graad and Anna C. Heythuyzen, Van de Vin had helped 800 people across the border: first he had aided escaped POWs, then Jews, and later in total about twenty-five airmen.⁴⁴ His contacts in Belgium also collected airmen at Van de Vin's farm.

After a period of time, the Van de Vin farm which was known by many 'pilot helpers' in both the Dutch and Belgian provinces of Limburg had to be more frequently avoided for safety reasons. However, this was to no avail because on 24 January 1944 the *Sicherheitspolizei* from Hasselt raided 'Zonnehoeve' after they had found a piece of paper showing the name of the farm on an escaped POW in the Belgian province of Limburg. Mrs. M.Th.H. van de Vin-Tholen and her foster son Graad were arrested. Neer van de Vin and his foster daughter Anna who were both sick in bed at the time were not detained. Graad Heythuyzen was able to escape after two weeks and Mrs. Van de Vin's freedom was bought. Her husband was deeply shocked by what had happened and immediately ceased all of his resistance activities. His two foster children continued secretly but only occasionally to give some help at border crossings.

During the April-May strike of 1943,⁴⁵ Bouman had allowed his office to stencil a call to strike. After the Germans had arrested a number of the people who were passing out these stencils, Bouman, hoping to save their lives, turned himself in to the authorities. However, he was executed by firing squad with six other people. At the time of his death, Bouman and his co-workers in the CCD had already transported safely to the border several hundred fugitives, among whom were 'several Allied airmen'.⁴⁶

Vicar Vullingsh had been supported when assisting fugitives by Father Jacobus Johannes ('Jacques', 'Van Doorn', 'Van Thiel') Naus who came from the nearby town of Venlo. Naus in turn was being helped by a 26-year-old teacher named Johannes J. ('Ambrosius') Hendrixx.

Bouman and Lahey were not the only resistance workers who had passed people on to Neer van de Vin. Another of his *passeurs* was Willem ('Wiel') Laurens Houwen who was a civil servant working for a distribution service in Helden and head of the Air-Defense Service. Quite early in the war, he had already become leader of an extensive resistance group within the distribution service and quickly was drawn into helping Allied service men thereafter. He collected more than 100 Frenchmen from the Vermeeren family in Sevenum.⁴⁷ When at the end of April 1943 the Germans called for a renewed internment of Dutch military personnel, Houwen upon the instigation of Father Naus established an underground camp, called 'Camp Bovensbos', at an

out-of-the-way location between Helden, Neer and Roggel. There tens of people had found refuge until mid-July 1943 when the presence of the camp was discovered by the German *SD* after someone in the *NSB* had informed on them. Houwen together with his fiancée A.G. ('Annie') Verlaak had played an important role in the local *LO* and led an active *KP* in Helden. Using a car belonging to the Air-Defense Service, he collected and drove more than sixty airmen from Venlo, Sevenum, Horst-America, Vierlingsbeek, Sterksel and Bakel either to safe transit havens in the area or to other locatons.⁴⁸ One important transit address in Helden had been that of Ben and Lies Martens which was used by thirty-two airmen during the war.⁴⁹ Houwen also received strong support from the teacher M.H.W. Crijns. Wiel Houwen brought his fliers to Van Ass, Vrij, Peters, Roosjen and Verbruggen as well as to Mrs. Hooijer-Dubois in Haelen. On 23 April 1944, Houwen was arrested, condemned to death, and sent to prison in Vught to await execution. However, because the Germans had confused him with another prisoner during the chaos following *Dolle Dinsdag*, Houwen was sent to prison in Sachsenhausen instead of being executed. Thus he survived German imprisonment.

Even Vicar Vullingshs had been unable to escape imprisonment. His underground activities had been a public secret in his community. Almost everyone in Grubbenvorst knew what he had been up to and from the pulpit he regularly called for donations of clothing "for a certain goal which is generally known".⁵⁰ For a long time he had been able to avoid arrest thanks to the warnings given him by friendly parties preceding German raids. However, on 1 May 1944, the warning did not come in time. Via concentration camps in Vught and Sachsenhausen, he finally arrived in Bergen-Belsen on February 1945 where he died on 9 April 1945. Six days later, on 15 April 1945, Father Naus also passed away on the same day that the camp was liberated. Many other religious men from Limburg had also made the long journey via Vught and Sachsenhausen to the prison camp in Bergen-Belsen.

Father Naus who in 1943 had become one of the *LO* leaders in Limburg was arrested in June 1944 together with Hendrikx and six other men while they were meeting in a monastery in Weert to discuss what sanctions should be taken against the introduction of a second distribution master card. 'Ambrosius' Hendrikx died early in 1945 during a transport of POWs in Germany.

4.4.2. Roermond and surroundings

Roermond had held a central position regarding housing and transport of airmen. From the end of 1940, the home of J.A.A. van Ass, café keeper and milkman, and his wife H.G.A.L. Maessen in De Weerd near Roermond had functioned as an important thoroughfare for all types of fugitives, including airmen. The administrator of the sanatorium 'Hornerheide' F.W.G.H. ('Frans', 'Broer') Verbruggen and Remco ('Huizenga', 'Hoogenhuizen') Roosjen were initially active in Roermond by helping escaped POWs, but more frequently they had found themselves helping Allied airmen. Verbruggen, for example, had been responsible for caring for airmen hidden in the nearby estate 'De Bedelaar'. He also could use an important address for airmen in Ittervoort at the home of J.H. de Vries, a *CCD* civil servant. Between December 1943 and April 1944, De Vries and his co-workers had been able to smuggle several tens of airmen across the border and pass them on to members of the Belgian group named 'Zéro'. Roosjen as well as Verbruggen became members of the *LO* and were in contact with Joke Folmer.

Lahey and Bouman were not the only people actively transporting airmen in and around Roermond. After 1943, several police officers, namely W.B. Heiligers and G.H.J. Munten, had begun collecting crewmen in northern and central Limburg as well as in Eindhoven using either police cars or motorcycles. Thereafter they passed the airmen on to such people as Van Ass and

the resistance group centered around Father Ludovicus Adrianus ('Lodewijk') Bleijs. As a result of the raid and ensuing arrests of members of the Bongaerts group, Heiligers and Munten were also arrested at the end of 1944. After about one month, however, they were released. Upon the advice of Father Bleijs, they directly went into hiding.

Haelen, situated close to Roermond, had also been a center where airmen could be collected and moved to safety. There two important addresses could be used. One address was a farm called 'Spikkerhof' dating from the 18th century which was situated rather out of view in the woods and was home to the widow A.H. Vossen-Salimans and her eight children. The second address was an estate called 'De Bedelaar' in which Mrs. M.E. Hooijer-Dubois had lived since the beginning of 1943 after being forced to evacuate her home in Bloemendaal to make room for the construction of a coastal Atlantic defense. After she had established a routine for keeping people safely hidden, she began taking fliers under her wing after November 1943. Although she took offense to the behavior of the American airmen, which has previously been mentioned in Section 3.4, she gave shelter to at least a total of forty-six airmen.⁵¹ The two people who had been most important to her for supplying fugitives were Wiel Houwen and E.H. ('Eduard') van Wegberg.

In July 1941, a night transport of nine airmen on their way from 'De Bedelaar' to Molenbeersel stumbled upon a German patrol. The men fled in all directions and by the time that they had finally re-grouped it was too late to cross the border. Their guides were given permission to hide them temporarily in two chicken coops in the orchard belonging to A.L.J. ('Andries') Mooren living near Kelpen. Afterwards, this location would become a permanent camp where at least thirty airmen spent some time.⁵²

In Echt, which was located somewhat further to the south, there had been an important 'pilot-helper' group centered around Father Emile A.F. ('Charles') Goossens and the 23-year-old Harry Tummers who was an active propagandist for 'Catholic Action'. This committee was struggling to safeguard Catholics from the influences of national socialism during the war and later would attempt to restore Catholic institutions after the war had ended. These men first began offering their help in the eastern part of the country in the Haeck group. One helper was the student P. ('Lange Piet') Marang from Hengelo who had attempted to take escaped POWs by himself over the border into Belgium at Gronsveld. However, in 1942, when a new idea came to mind he decided to visit his Aunt Françoise who was staying in the Ursula convent in Echt, which was located between Roermond and Sittard. She attempted to introduce him to Father Goossens who in turn referred the student to Tummers. Thus Marang had become involved with helping escaped POWs.⁵³ In October 1943, they began aiding Allied airmen, an underground activity that had already been taken up by the Haeck group. Tummers worked closely with Father Goossens and a customs official named J. Hobbel. Another important point of support in this region was Father H.L.J. ('Bergmans') Janssen in Horn. Tummers and his men used the border crossings at Maaseik and Thorn. In addition, there were diverse routes heading towards the south: e.g., to Roosteren, via the Koers family in Geulle, and the Sijmons group in Maastricht. Finally, airmen were also being moved towards the north: e.g., via Roermond and Weert to Budel. Between September 1943 and May 1944, more than 100 airmen passed through Echt on their way to Belgium.⁵⁴ In June 1944, Goossens who himself had gone underground in Nunhem was discovered by accident when a search party went looking for an underground worker. He was arrested and later died in the concentration camp in Bergen-Belsen.

4.5. Noord-Brabant

4.5.1. De Peel

De Peel⁵⁵ had been an area in which many people had found a location to go underground and it had also been an important thoroughfare for airmen. Various homes and hideaways offered shelter to tens of airmen such as, for example, the home of the Otten family in Erp. This family consisted of two sisters named Antoinette and Thea, who were both teachers, and their brothers Gérard and Harrie.⁵⁶ Harrie and Antoinette belonged to a small underground group in Erp that would later be absorbed into the *LO* in 1943. In April 1943, the Otten family had become involved in helping airmen after a young farmer had told them in confidence that he had found an airman hiding in a dry canal nearby. At first the Ottens had no idea what they should do with the flier who was ready to surrender to the German authorities. Because the Ottens did not agree with him, Antoinette, suspecting that a solution could be found, sent their maid Jaantje van de Krommenacker to seek contact with a priest in the monastery 'Brakkenstein' near Nijmegen. Her suspicions were well grounded and the holy man brought the Otten family into contact with Jan and Piet Vermeeren who ran the local postal office in Sevenum in Limburg.⁵⁷ This marked the beginning of a permanent escape route from Erp via Sevenum which remained in use until January 1944 when the Vermeeren brothers were forced into hiding during a search party.

After helping their first flier, the Otten family took into their home airmen from Ermelo passed on by the courier Nel Eskens from Meppel and by Henk L. van Cleeff from *Luctor et Emergo* until he was arrested on 25 July 1944. Airmen were also being supplied by Paul Reybroek and Gerard Wassenberg from the resistance group in Boekel. These men collected their airmen in Breda at the home of M.W. ('Rob Kooymans') Rombout where they had been hidden by Leo Verkaik, a Marechaussee from Riel who himself had been forced to go underground. Verkaik had formerly been a colleague of Karst Smit who was also active at the border.⁵⁸ The Otten house on the Kerkstraat 6 in Erp had provided shelter for a total of fifty-one airmen of various nationalities – a respectable number indeed!⁵⁹ There were never more than five airmen in hiding at one period of time, and they stayed underground anywhere from several days to no longer than 55 days. Coupons and forged identity papers were supplied to the family by representatives of the *LO* who regularly met in this house on the Kerkstraat. Help in transporting and caring for the airmen was provided by G. Groot-Bruinderink from Sint Oedenrode.

When the number of airmen seeking shelter at the Otten home became too large, alternative addresses used were the homes of the widower Piet Barten, who was a veterinary doctor, where his daughter Truus ran the household, and of Johanna Maria ('Hanneke') Verwegen in Boekel until she died on 31 May 1944.

The Ottens transported some of the airmen themselves on bicycle. After the escape line to Sevenum became clogged, they eventually had to move their airmen via Schijndel to Coba Pulsken in Tilburg and to Dr. A.P. ('Oom Jan') Nelemans and his neighbors Bernard and Mientje Manders-Beijers in Bakel.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the Ottens maintained contact with the *KP* called 'De Uiltjes' [The Little Owls] which was active in the area surrounding Boekel. After the summer of 1943, the *KP*-Boekel was actively helping airmen. An important man within this group was the carpenter Cor van Laanen. Because he was considered to be ruthless, he was entrusted with few names within other resistance groups and was thus forced to operate alone. However, this did not hinder him from bringing a number of Allies to safety. Guus van den Broek, Leo ('Lelox') van Druenen, Paul Reybroek and Gerard ('Graadje van Boekel') Wassenberg were active in Boekel and the surrounding area on behalf of the *LO/LKP*. They collected airmen in Breda and Sprang-Capelle, taking

them, for example, to the Otten family in Erp and to farmer Willem Habraken in Nijnsel. At the beginning of 1944, the *KP*-Boekel merged with the *KP*-Nijmegen called 'de Viooltjes' [the violets] which had functioned under the leadership of the legendary resistance leader Theo Dobbe. When it became too dangerous for the men from Boekel to operate in the 'Kaiser's city' Nijmegen, *KP*-Boekel moved its base to Sint Antonius and Sint Oedenrode using the name 'De Uiltjes'. In total, De Uiltjes brought twenty-three airmen originating from various places throughout the country to Nijnsel and Erp.⁶¹

Jan Bode, who was a sergeant with the Marechaussee in Lieshout, regularly took airmen to Dr. Nelemans, to Mr. and Mrs. Manders in Bakel, and to the Otten family in Erp.⁶² He transported 'his' airmen as if they were his prisoners already under arrest. He was assisted by Piet Swinkels and Jacques Kruijssen who in June 1944 took part in a raid on the *Landwacht* or Quisling militia in Gemert at which time two men were killed. Swinkels and Kruijssen were arrested several weeks later, and on 19 August they were executed by firing squad in the concentration camp in Vught.

In Asten, it was Frans Hoeben and the bicycle salesman Harrie Peeters and his wife Mien Vannisselroy who had been involved with 'pilot help'. At the end of 1943, Peeters set up a camp called 'Dennenlust' for people hiding in the region between Asten and Lierop where airmen were also welcome. This camp only functioned for a brief period because it became necessary to disband it for security reasons. In December 1943, Mathieu Hubertus Bussers, a 48-year-old game keeper in the national forests in Lierop, was asked whether he saw any possibility to create a refuge shelter for thirty to forty airmen.⁶³ Bussers was in agreement with the plan but with one stipulation, i.e., that he must be the only person allowed to communicate with the airmen and that he must only be known by the code name 'Mr. F'. The commander of the camp, known as 'Camp Moorsel', was F.W.C. ('Wim') Gebhard who had links with the *LO*. After February 1944, Allied airman (six British, one Canadian, one Pole and probably seven Americans) began using Camp Moorsel together with Dutch fugitives. While some fugitives could be moved with the help of people such as Frits de Bruijn to regions that had already been liberated, other individuals had to remain in the camp until liberation.

On 19 July 1944, those people still hiding at 'Camp Moorsel' banded together to form an organized armed resistance group. Their uniforms and armbands carrying the text 'PAN' (*Partisan Action Netherlands*) were made by Johanna Arnoldina Kusters, the wife of Bussers. The 22-year-old air force sergeant and air gunner Frank E. Doucette from the American town Belmont functioned as master at arms, giving instructions on how to use weapons. Horace F. ('Brad') Bradshaw from Philadelphia led a group that generally committed sabotage. After the Allies had landed during 'Operation Market Garden', resistance fighters openly provoked armed conflict with the Germans who were then in retreat. Thus on 19 September, just days before Lierop was to be liberated, Doucette lost his life in such a skirmish. The American who was Catholic was secretly buried at night in the cemetery of the parochial church in Lierop. The following morning the priest held a requiem mass for 'an unknown soldier'.

Help had also been offered to Allied airmen in other locations in De Peel area. The family of C. van Staverren in Veulen near Venray must be mentioned. During the war, twenty-eight Allied airmen were safely given shelter on their farm 'De Eijkenhof', sometimes briefly but often for longer periods of time.⁶⁴

4.5.2. Budel-Maarheeze

In addition to what has already been said in Section 4.2 about *Fiat Libertas* and the *passeur* activities in Weert in northern Limburg, another group centering around H.J. de Kort had also been at work. De Kort had been transferred to this region in March 1943 as superintendent of the Dutch Heather Company. The area in which he worked stretched over the southern part of De Peel which allowed him access to many hiding places for fugitives. Thus he came into contact with *Fiat Libertas* as well as with other groups that were moving airmen. Via Budel in Noord-Brabant, airmen were being guided south to Hamont in Belgium.

In Budel several customs officials and members of the Marechaussee acted as *passeurs*, not only for De Kort and *Fiat Libertas* but also for a resistance group guiding airmen from Eindhoven via Maarheeze to Budel. Johannes Zandvliet, who carried out sabotage as well as other underground activities, was a member of this group. On 5 September, he was discovered by the SS while attempting to derail a train and was immediately executed. The escape route between Weert-Budel-Hamont had functioned from the summer of 1943 until the summer of 1944. In June 1944, De Kort was forced to flee to Zeeland because the Germans had caught wind of his underground activities. Several of his co-workers were able to continue his resistance work until they were liberated in September 1944. It is still not known exactly how many airmen were assisted by De Kort's group. Estimates vary between several tens to as many as sixty airmen.⁶⁵

4.5.3. Boxtel

In the summer of 1942, Gerard ('Graad') van der Meijden who lived in Boxtel was asked to move a flier. Thus he transported the RAF airman in his truck to Hilvarenbeek and passed him over to members of the resistance group called the White Brigade. Thereafter Café Royal, located on the Stationsplein in Boxtel, which belonged to him and his wife Theodora van der Meijden-Konings became an important junction for the Nijverdal-Hilvarenbeek escape lines as well as a center where members of the *LO* could meet.⁶⁶

In the autumn of 1944, Van der Meijden helped care for several tens of American and British 'airbornes' who in September had landed in the vicinity of Boxtel with their gliders, thus becoming isolated from their own companies.⁶⁷ For security reasons, it was decided to isolate these paratroopers as one large group and hide them at the edge of the woods in Kampina. Klaas Dekker who was a civil servant in the *CCD*, his brother Roel and an assistant policeman named Sjeff de Jong had been involved in this action. This band of Allied airmen eventually grew in size to number more than 100 people. Although the Germans were aware of their presence, they did not dare risk a direct confrontation with the Allies. However, they did set fire to the home of Aalt van der Ham, the forest warden who had been responsible for supplying provisions to these military men in hiding. However, when several German soldiers deserted, they took cover with the 'airbornes' in hiding, bringing with them two barrels of meat and 5,000 cigars that they had stolen. Shortly before the liberation of Boxtel, these 'airbornes' joined the fight against the last Germans remaining in the area.

4.5.4. Schijndel

The *LO* in Schijndel which operated under the leadership of Father Frederik Woestenburg took a total of twenty-six Allied airmen under its wing.⁶⁸ The fliers were either moved by or via Cor van Laanen from Dinther. The most frequently used safe houses had been those of Janus van Mook who sold and repaired bicycles, of the Van den Boogaard and Timmermans families who

lived under the same roof, and of the Van Roy-Verhagen family. Allied airmen were passed on from these people to the group centering around Bim van der Klei from Oisterwijk, the two tailors J.H.M. ('Jan') Putters and H.W. ('Harry') Putters from Hilvarenbeek and Th.F.L. Backx, a sergeant with the Marechaussee in Esbeek. Between 17 September and 23 October 1944, the Sint Lidwina convent in Schijndel had hidden approximately twenty-four glider crewmen, thanks to the hospitality and resolute actions taken by Mother Veronica (Henrica Seelen).

4.5.5. Tilburg-Goirle-Baarle

The question of resistance work done on behalf of 'pilot helpers' in Goirle has already been mentioned in Section 3.7, where the activities of the Smit-Van der Heijden group have been discussed at length. However, in comparison to Baarle-Nassau, for example, even more was happening in Goirle which was not amazing as its border was poorly patrolled.⁶⁹ After the arrests of members of the Smit-Van der Heijden group, Meeuwisse and Jonkers, members of the Marechaussee, who had been operating in Goirle were forced into hiding early in 1944. They had been helped by Piet Leermakers, a veterinary doctor in Biest-Houtakker who had supplied many resistance workers with safe shelters. Leermakers personally assisted airmen and kept contact with Marechaussee Pieter van Gestel and policeman A.J. van Broekhoven.

In the summer of 1942, Van Broekhoven from Goirle, a 37-year-old sergeant-major with the Marechaussee who had formerly been a village policeman, was asked by Piet Hornman from Tilburg if he could take a few airmen who had been stranded in Tilburg across the border.⁷⁰ 'A.J.' as Van Broekhoven was nicknamed sought contact with a man from the area who was known as 'the king of smugglers'. By way of his brother Miel Heikants, Van Broekhoven was brought into contact with Miet Cornelissen and thus became a stepping stone in an escape line for airmen.

Maria Josepha Cornelissen-Verhoeven, mother of five sons and three daughters, was known fondly by the name 'Miet Pauw'.⁷¹ She was a Belgian citizen born in 1898 in Hoogstraten, Belgium. During World War I, she had lived near the Dutch border where the Germans had erected an electrified fence of barbed wire as barricade. She and her mother had helped refugees escape through the barrier into The Netherlands which was then free territory. As a secondary task, she had also passed information about dislocated German military troops. During the last year of World War I, both she and her mother Mrs. Verhoeven had been captured, imprisoned, and in danger of being sentenced to death. Just before they were to be sentenced, the truce was called. Mrs. Verhoeven was decorated after World War I by the Belgian government for her resistance work. In 1921, this bold-minded and self-willed Catholic married the 17-year-old Hugo Cornelissen, nicknamed 'Pauwke', and went with him to Baarle-Hertog to make their home.

After the Germans had invaded The Netherlands in 1940, Miet Pauw began helping Allied prisoners of war, Jews and '*Engelandvaarders*' to escape across the border. To accomplish this task, she worked closely with Miel and Anna Heikants who owned a farm located in a wooded area near Nieuwbroek on the Dutch-Belgian border. The Heikants were members of the Belgian group called the 'White Brigade'. Both the farm as well as Miet's textile shop functioned as a primary address for *passeurs*.

After making her first contact with Van Broekhoven, airmen began passing through Miet's house and shop. The fliers came from Coevorden, from the André group in Sprang-Capelle and through the Biest-Houtakker-Esbeek escape route. Generally the airmen were first taken by Piet Hornman to Van Broekhoven. Usually Hornmann would telephone Van Broekhoven one day in advance, inquiring in coded words if the 'distribution goods' had been stored well. This question would

not raise anyone's suspicions because Hornmann was controller for distribution offices. This 'question' was in reality the long-awaited message telling Van Broekhoven that he should go to the city hall to collect the fliers. At about 11:00 hours, Van Broekhoven would appear outside the city hall, walking beside his bicycle to make his daily rounds. The airmen had been instructed by Hornman to follow Van Broekhoven from a distance of ca. 50 meters. Should he suddenly mount his bicycle, the airmen would be forewarned that danger was present. Should danger later arise around the border area, then the policeman Van Broekhoven would treat the airmen as if they were common smugglers under arrest. Thus Van Broekhoven walked, followed by his fliers, to the home of Miel and Anna Heikants or to a villa in the forest belonging to Germaine de Penarande de Francimont-de Meester de Betzenbroek, who was from Belgium. In resistance circles, she was better known by the somewhat shorter name of 'Gravin Jambline de Meux'. She took charge over the airmen, who usually had found their escapade very enervating and were bundles of nerves while waiting to cross the border, and tried to calm them by conversing jovially in their own language. When the time was ripe, the airmen were passed on to Miet Pauw and her associates. As soon as Van Broekhoven had delivered his fliers, he continued on his 'patrol' as usual before returning to the city hall at about 13:00 hours. Thereafter, he would telephone Hornman, letting it ring three times as a sign that all had gone as planned.

The house belonging to Miet Pauw was also used as a transit address by a *KP* group in Noord-Brabant in which the Marechaussee ('Geert') Gerritsen and ('Edward') Van Gestel were members. Furthermore, Dr. Bloem and Father J.A. de Kerf were associated with this group. Dr. Bloem could provide airmen with medical care and sometimes even drove them in pairs over the border in the trunk of his car. He called the fliers 'his little pills' when speaking about them. Miet Pauw herself frequently went to Turnhout to collect identity papers (*eenzelvigheidskaarten*) for the airmen.

What the group did not realize, however, was that almost all of the airmen taken across the border by Miet Pauw were being detained in Antwerp by the Belgian *Abwehr* agent René van Muylem and his associates. As long as this network continued to function, the German *SD* did not bother with Miet Pauw and her helpers. In the beginning of September 1944, after the Allies had swept with rapid strides through Belgium, time came for Van Muylem and his men to move somewhat farther to the north, thus placing the Tilburg-Goirle-Baarle-Nassau escape line in the danger zone.

The situation intensified when on *Dolle Dinsdag*, during the euphoria surrounding the forthcoming liberation of The Netherlands, a man ran into the street in Baarle waving his flag prematurely. He was arrested by the Germans who were still masters of the territory. Not knowing what the man knew or what he might tell, Van Gestel and Gerritsen decided not to risk arrest and went into hiding at Miet Cornelissen's address. Perhaps it would have been better if she herself had also gone underground; she had been offered an address in which to hide but refused to use it. On 7 and 8 September, the Germans raided the Marechaussee barracks in Baarle-Nassau looking for Van Gestel. Perhaps because they had suspected that he might be hiding there, a number of Germans in an armored car stopped in front of Leermakers' house on the morning of 7 September 1944. During the previous evening, underground workers had gathered at this house to discuss the approaching liberation. Jan van Dongen, a resistance worker and student in hiding, who had been responsible for providing provisions for Allied soldiers underground, had slept over at Leermakers' home that night. When Leermakers and Van Dongen saw the German vehicle parked outside, both attempted to escape via the back of the house. However, the building had already been surrounded and the Germans immediately opened fire on the men, peppering their bodies with bullets. Leermakers' wife and their eight children – the youngest being only six months old – were forced to leave their home which was then burned to the ground.

On the same day, two young women – one Belgian and one Dutch – stopped by Miet Pauw's house, claiming to be the friends of two of her sons. However, the girls were both associates of Van Muylem. In fact, Pauline Vlaming from Yerseke and her Belgian helper Marie De Mey had come looking for a Marechaussee who might be in hiding at that address. Miet Pauw found the girls' behavior strange and realized that the Baarle-Nassau line was soon to be betrayed. Thus she decided that Van Gestel and Gerritsen would have to be moved elsewhere. Baarle had become too dangerous for them to remain.

However, they were not given a chance to relocate; on Saturday morning, 9 September, the Germans forcefully entered Miet Pauw's home. She had just enough time to take leave of her children who were at home and grab her cross. Thereafter, Miet Pauw, her husband and both members of the Marechaussee were transported to a prison in Breda. Once in prison, it became clear to them that the once enthusiastic flag-waving man who had already been arrested on 5 September had talked freely about the Marechaussee who had helped airmen cross the border. This had been the reason behind the German raid – they had been looking for Van Gestel.

Miet Pauw's husband 'Pauwke' who had never been involved in his wife's resistance activities was released from prison the following Saturday night. After first being cruelly tortured, Miet Pauw, Van Gestel and Gerritsen were taken to the Galderse Heide near Breda and, without due legal process, were executed by firing squad early Sunday morning on 10 September. During her autopsy, the medical examiner reported that Miet Pauw's skull had been fractured in three places and that her ribs had been broken. Van Broekhoven immediately went into hiding. Seven weeks later, on 28 October, a unit of the Polish army finally liberated Baarle.

4.5.6. Hilvarenbeek

In addition to the group centered around Smit-Van der Heijden, another resistance unit had also been helping airmen in Hilvarenbeek. It was led by Frans Smulders from Goirle and Kees van Halteren from Hilvarenbeek.⁷² Both men were employed on the estate 'Gorp en Roover' where, with the knowledge of the estate's director Eduard van Puijenbroek, they were able to hide crewmen as well as other fugitives from the Germans. Van Puijenbroek gave these men extra moral support when he promised that, should anything happen to either man, he would make it his own responsibility to care for and financially support their children until they reached the age of 21 years. The estate was ideally situated near the border and, in the summer of 1942, when Van Halteren happened to stumble across a downed flier on the grounds of the estate both men decided to begin helping airmen. Together with Smulders, Van Halteren took Allied airman across the border. Somewhat later, Lentink, who was a fellow gamekeeper from Moergestel, asked if airmen could be moved through the grounds of the estate in order to reach the border. Thus, 'Gorp en Roover' became a stepping stone in a 'pilot' escape line.

4.5.7. Chaam

In the 'pilot-help' group running through Chaam,⁷³ various excise men could be relied upon to offer a helping hand. Lems and Monnier who worked for the customs office transported their airmen as if they were already 'under arrest' before passing them on to people who could provide them with shelter until they could be moved to Belgium. One such address was the home of the Vermeeren family living on the Hondsdonk estate. Leaving from their underground addresses in broad daylight, Lems and Monnier took airmen across the border where they handed them over to members of the Belgian resistance.

4.5.8. Sprang-Capelle

The André group which had operated under the leadership of André L. ('Jos') van Wijlen, who was a radio salesman, had originally been an intelligence-gathering group in Sprang-Capelle. As time passed, however, there were few resistance activities in which the group had not become involved.⁷⁴ In particular, the brothers Leen and Faan Kuysten, André van Wijlen and Piet de Groot were all very active in helping airmen. During the occupation, a total of thirty-four airmen had been given shelter with the Kuysten family in Sprang-Capelle.⁷⁵ In Kaatsheuvel, Piet Felix had been in charge of an important rendezvous location for the André group. At various locations in 's-Gravenmoer, crewmen were being given shelter for brief as well as longer periods of time.

The group maintained contact with Ir. Th.P. Tromp, the leader of the Harry group who also worked at Philips in Eindhoven. Tromp had access to a radio transmitter with which he could reach the Allied authorities in London in order to verify any personal data supplied by downed fliers. The airmen whom the group took under its wing usually began their escape from different locations to the north of the country. For example, until their arrests, Ineke van Asbeek and Wim van de Leur brought airmen from Amsterdam. The André group then passed their airmen on to units working in Baarle-Nassau, Chaam and Zundert/Wernhout. In total, the group aided more than 100 airmen.⁷⁶ It has even been suggested that ca. 180 members of the Allied Air Forces had been helped.⁷⁷

In addition to the André group, another unit in Sprang-Capelle centering around Vicar D.A. ('Jan') van Lummel of the Dutch Reformed Church was involved in 'pilot help'. This group was also affiliated with the local *LO*. Because Van Wijlen could not get along with Van Lummel, he first avoided working with the national *LO* organization.⁷⁸ After Van Lummel had been forced to pull out of the *LO* in Sprang-Capelle for security reasons, Van Wijlen then became willing to work with the *LO/LKP* organization towards the end of 1943.

4.5.9. Convents and monasteries

Religious homes had played an important role in 'pilot-help' escape routes, as previously mentioned in respect to the Trappist monastery De Achelse Kluis. A 'white' missionary priest, answering to the name 'Elsa' during the war, regularly accompanied airmen from Helmond to the abbey in Postel located directly across the border in Belgium from where the journey to England could begin. Situated farther from the border was the Sint Norbertus monastery in Elshout where fifty glider crewmen had found a roof over their heads. Allies were being hidden in the monastery when a German officer arrived demanding to inspect all of the rooms to see if they would be suitable for billeting his troops. The abbot reacted *ad rem* when the German officer reached the room where the Allied airmen were hiding, saying that the specific area was 'holy' and that no one could be allowed access. The German respected this explanation without protest.⁷⁹ Thus the Allied soldiers remained undetected in the monastery, even eating from German rations.

4.5.10. Tilburg

Jacoba Maria ('Coba') Pulskens became involved with people seeking shelter in 1942 after her brother Nico had asked if she would be willing to hide several Jews in her home.⁸⁰ She was then 57 years old, unmarried, and employed as a cleaning woman by the Public Works in Tilburg. After she had successfully hidden one individual, more people were to follow, such as the 'pilot helpers' Paul Gulikers, Harry Tobben and his fiancée Jet van Ooijen who stayed with her for some time. When asked if she were willing to take Allied airmen into her home, she complied. In August

and September 1943, her contacts within the Limburg resistance – as well as Harry van Beurden from Tilburg – were arrested after the German *SD* had infiltrated their organization.

Pulskens herself remained out of harm's way which was strange because the Germans were well aware that the Allied airmen as well as the men now under arrest had been in her home. The *V-Männer* Vastenhouet and Van Wesemael had even been in her house. Perhaps the German *SD* had assumed that, by not detaining Pulskens, she might supply them with more information about 'pilot' escape lines. As it turned out, Jet van Ooyen had also not been arrested because the Germans had a clear-cut objective in mind, i.e., to shadow her in order to infiltrate deeply into the Limburg 'pilot' escape lines. If that had indeed been their objective, the Germans missed their mark. After various members of the resistance had been arrested, Pulskens decided to distance herself from any 'pilot help'. Almost a year later, however, at the beginning of July 1944, the 'pilot helpers' Leonie ('Jopie') van Harssel and Bep ('Kitty') van Harssel approached Pulskens requesting that she shelter five airmen. The airmen were to be brought from Eindhoven where a group of 'pilot helpers' had been working for several months under the leadership of police detective Henricus ('Harry') Aarts and M.G. van Bruggen who was assistant head of the chemical laboratory at Philips. This group generally had received its airmen from Van der Born in Amersfoort. Thereafter the airmen were moved to Limburg, in particular to Roermond, and later also to Budel-Maarheeze. Upon the request of Van Harssel's sister, Coba once more dared to help airmen.

Van Bruggen maintained contact with Bim van der Klei, a member of the resistance in Oisterwijk, who could regulate transportation for the airmen. Thus Wim Tensen, who was an associate of Van der Klei, was sent ahead to Eindhoven to arrange for transportation while J. Brunnekreëf, a resistance worker from Oisterwijk familiar with Coba Pulskens' address, would guide the airmen in two stages. After three of the five crewmen had been successfully transferred, the last two men were arrested in Moergestel on 8 July during their transportation together with Aarts and Brunnekreëf.

After being submitted to a very rough interrogation, the men finally confessed to the Germans where the fliers would be taken. One day later, a raid was made on Pulskens' home. The three airmen⁸¹ already in hiding there were immediately shot to death in her kitchen and on her back terrace – an execution that was absolutely forbidden under the Geneva conventions of war. When the Germans asked Coba to supply sheets to cover the dead bodies, she gave them the Dutch flag instead! The Germans took it from her without protest, draping it over the bodies of the dead men.

Aarts and Van Bruggen were executed on 19 August. Coba Pulskens and Leonie van Harssel were arrested and later imprisoned in the concentration camp for women in Vught. In September 1944, they were transferred to the concentration camp for women in Ravensbrück. Leonie was later sent to Dachau where she survived the war. Coba died in February 1945 in the gas chambers of Ravensbrück after swapping places with a mother of ten children who had been earmarked for execution.

4.5.II. Oisterwijk

In Oisterwijk, S.C.M. ('Bim') van der Klei, who was the son of a public notary who himself had gone into hiding, had been responsible for creating an underground unit. He had already been participating in a resistance group in Haaren near Oisterwijk which had fallen apart rather quickly for various reasons such as the arrests of some of its members.⁸² In Oisterwijk, some members of the newly established group were Wim ('Lange Wim') van Enter, Hans Gerritsen, Hans and Jacky

Kapteyn, Ab Nijboer, Mark van de Snepscheut, Wim Tensen and Martien van de Weijer. An Antillian resistance man named Segundo Jorge Adalberto ('Boy') Ecury was temporarily part of this group which depended strongly on the Council for Resistance. The group's primary goal was sabotage, in particular, of train rails and the overhead electric wires used by the railway. Fire bombs were being manufactured by Johannes Franciscus Christostimus ('Ome Jan') Linthorst and his co-worker Jan Brunnekreef in a factory known to produce household products such as substitute soap and shoe polish. Furthermore, the group kept contact with Piet Leermakers from Biest-Horst and with the farmer Willem Biljouw who both were willing to hide airmen as well as other refugees. The group received much assistance from farmer Janus Rooyackers in Moergestel who had built an underground hideout on his property.

The group became involved in 'pilot help' after Linthorst and Van der Klei had asked if they could regulate the transport of airmen. Linthorst probably got his airmen from Caspar ter Galestin, known by Linthorst, who was employed by the State Office for Chemical Products. Later, crewmen were passed on to the group mostly from members of the *LO*, particularly from the vicarages in Dinther, Heeswijk, Veghel and Schijndel. Bim van der Klei's group sent their airmen to the André group as well as to Coba Pulskens. As a result of the drama that had taken place in the home of Coba Pulskens, Brunnekreef and Linthorst were both detained. Neither man survived the war. Van der Klei and Tensen escaped arrest by going underground.

4.6. Eastern and northern regions

4.6.1. *Twente and the Achterhoek*

The Frenchman Jules ('Piet Hendriks') Haeck had deserted from the French army during World War I but later came to regret this act. Thus he decided to put all his efforts into helping his fugitive countrymen.⁸³ After World War I, he had taken up residence in Hengelo where he ran a large vegetable and fruit company. In February 1942, because of his knowledge of the French language, the 47-year-old Haeck was called upon by local farmers to help translate for several escaped French POWs who had knocked at their doors seeking shelter. Haeck took the Frenchmen to Gronsveld, just to the south of Maastricht, where he further directed them on how to reach Belgium. One of the escaped POWs whom Haeck had guided to the Belgian border was later recaptured and sent to prison camp near Münster in Germany. In prison he had told other men about his experience, and they also began trying to escape, finding a way to reach Haeck who thus became the coordinator for an escape line in Twente. The Frenchman decided to tackle the problem on a grand scale and swore that he would free every last prisoner from the nearby prison camp in Münster. His plan was grand and expensive, costing him handfulls of money. In total, the Haeck group helped ca. 130 POWs.⁸⁴

It has already been mentioned in Section 4.6.1. how Haeck's group, as a result of the link between Piet Marang and Harry Tummers, established a connection in Echt in Dutch Limburg. In June 1943, Haeck was kept so busy that he found it necessary to introduce the 23-year-old H.A. ('Fons') Gerard, who worked at the distribution office in Hengelo, into the group as co-leader. From that moment, the first fliers began moving through his escape line. It was Gerard, in particular, who kept in contact with G.J. ten Zijthoff from Hengelo who was also a member of the *Luctor et Emergo* group.

To do his work, Haeck linked up with various people and used a number of addresses throughout the Gelderland-Overijssel region, i.e., with J.M. Kroeze in Deurningen, H.A. Kooiker in Tubbergen, the 46-year-old Gerrit Hendrik Rietberg and his daughter Mina Johanna in Zutphen,

various associates in Lichtenvoorde, Arend ('Kees') Schipper who in particular was responsible for transport in both Overijssel and Gelderland, the J. Kolkman family in Holten,⁸⁵ and A.J. ('Appie') Koeslag from Laren in Gelderland.

One of the 'pilot helpers' in Lichtenvoorde was J.B. ter Haar who had been brought into contact with Haeck via Maria ('Mies') Bruynen, a courier for the newspaper *Trouw*. Joep ter Haar, who was the son of a police sergeant, was so active in helping airmen that he was nicknamed '*Pilotenjoep*' or 'Joep of the Pilots'. He was successful in moving twenty-five to thirty airmen to the south.⁸⁶ Among the individuals involved in underground activities in Lichtenvoorde were H.J. ('Jo') Blaauwgeers, J.W. ('Willem') Doppen, Hendrik J.A. ('Pietje') Leemreize, A.F. ('Toon') Slot, H.H.A. Wekking and the Lelivelt family who has already been discussed in detail in Section 3.3.⁸⁷ In 1943 and during the first half of 1944, Albert J. ('Appie') Postma from Nijmegen, who was a student at the Nautical College and nephew of Mia Lelivelt, accompanied crewmen whom he had collected at the train station in Lievelede to Nijmegen and Limburg.

In total, several tens of airmen were moved by Haeck's group into Limburg.⁸⁸ Via the town Echt, an escape line was established with Roermond where it linked up with another escape line via Neeritter. In addition to its lines of communication with Echt and Roermond, the Haeck group also maintained contact points along the Tilburg-Goirle-Baarle route.

Disaster struck the group in 1944. In March 1944, Gerard was arrested. When he was freed from prison in Almelo 10 days later, he went underground, spending the remainder of the war disguised as a woman. He no longer participated in any resistance activities.

The situation worsened when in the spring of 1944 the 42-year-old German *SD* agent named Willy ('Willy van Erp') Marcus infiltrated Haeck's 'pilot' line. On 20 April, Blaauwgeers, Doppen, Martin Lelivelt and Slot were arrested in Lichtenvoorde. Although Lelivelt was sheltering two Allied airmen in his home at the time of the raid, the Germans did not discover their well-hidden hideout. On 6 June 1944, Blaauwgeers, a master-sergeant with the *Marechaussee* in Overveen, was executed. On 25 July 1944, Lelivelt and Slot were executed by firing squad in Fort Rhijnauwen near Utrecht. The postman Doppen died in March 1945 in Buchenwald. Ter Haar who had managed to escape fled to Limburg where he continued his resistance activities together with Hobbel from the Goossens-Tummers group. Gerrit Rietberg, a nephew of Helena Th. Kuipers-Rietberg who was one of the founders of the *LO* organization, was arrested on 16 June 1944 by the German *SD*. He was later liberated by American troops in Bernau.

On 4 October 1944, Haeck, who had been able to continue his resistance work in spite of the Marcus' treason, was himself arrested. Twelve days later, he was shot to death at the airport in Twente. In October 1945, his body together with the bodies of five other people was discovered in a bomb crater at the airport.

4.6.2. *Salland*

In Heino, a group mainly centered around Jan ('Kees') Brinkman offered support to Allied airmen.⁸⁹ Their hideout which was merely a hole in the ground on the farm belonging to the Heuven family was situated in a forest just outside the village and had been used to shelter a total of fifteen airmen. Such airmen would be brought from Dalfsen, Vilsteren, Ommen and Steenwijk. It was in Steenwijk that Albertus van Olphen, a sergeant with the State Police corps and local *KP* leader, had been involved in 'pilot help', transporting his airmen to Deventer. In Ommen, a group centered around J.H. Seigers had been very active in helping downed fliers.

In Nijverdal as well as in the surrounding towns of Hellendoorn, Haarle, and Daarle, relatively large numbers of airmen were kept in hiding.⁹⁰ T. ('Ome Tiem') de Jonge who was one of the resistance leaders in Nijverdal maintained contact with Jan Koeslag in Laren (Gelderland) who in turn had links with the Haeck group. In addition, Gerrit Jan Piksen, a bricklayer in Nijverdal who was associated with the *LO* and *LKP*, played a central role in helping airmen. On 14 October 1944, a massive 'razzia' was held in the region surrounding Nijverdal and Hellendoorn. Piksen who before the raid had just moved two Allied airmen and a Russian POW to an underground address was arrested in the village of Haarle. After being subjected to an intensive interrogation, he was executed on the same day.

4.6.3. *Western Overijssel*

In Zwolle, a group centered around Hendrik J. ('De Groene') Beernink who was a member of the *Ordedienst* had carried out numerous resistance activities, including helping forty-seven airmen.⁹¹ These Allied airmen had been hidden on a houseboat anchored on the river Vecht in the province of Overijssel and in a building which was formerly called 'Hotel Van Gijtenbeek'. The teacher Chris ('Bos') Huiberts had also actively helped airmen in Zwolle. On 29 March 1945, two weeks before Zwolle would be liberated, Huiberts and nine friends were killed by the Germans in Wierden.

In Deventer, the courier Jeanne Krooshof had been involved in caring for crewmen in hiding.⁹² Two addresses that had been initially used as hideouts were the homes of the Den Dool family and of the Calvinist minister H.P. Tulner. In addition, in village Colmschate, airmen were being hidden in the rectory of the Dutch Reformed Church where Vicar A. van der Walle lived. From the rectory, airmen were usually first taken to the farm 'Het Zonnenberg' belonging to Gerrit Slagman in Harfsen near Gorssel in Gelderland. From Harfsen, the airmen moved southward along escape routes running, for example, to Baarle-Nassau. Slagman's farm was a center for resistance where members of the *KP* as well as fugitives from the Germans were welcome. On 14 October 1944, however, his farm was surrounded by tens of German *SD* agents. All the residents, including the Dutch citizens who were in hiding along with two Poles and one Canadian gunner, were arrested. The farm was burned to the ground. Several days after liberation, Slagman died in Wöbbelin as a result of the inflictions that he had suffered while in prison.⁹³

4.6.4. *Liemers and surroundings*

In Ulft, one group that had actively helped airman had been led by Harry Cappetti, a Nijmegen student of law who was also head of the *LO* in the area around Liemers.⁹⁴ Other participants in the group were the medical student Jan Cappetti, Cees Bakker, Gerrit Geven, Jan Hoek, Theo Kok and Wim Willemsen. Offering help from the sidelines were the chaplains from Ulft and Gendringen. The towns of Azewijn, Zeddam, Didam and Babberich fell within the area protected by the *LO*-Liemers. In Azewijn, the farmer Joep Garben together with his sister Agnes, Berend Geerling, Teun Hettelaar, Leo Kempers and the Jew Harry Strausz who was hidden on Garben's farm offered their help to fliers. Indirectly policeman G. te Dorsthorst and Hein Reijers had been involved in underground activities. From Gendringen, Ulft, Babberich, Lobith and Millingen on the Rhine, airmen were moved via Nijmegen to Limburg, in particular to Gennep. In Babberich, a customs official named Harrie Smits and his wife Leida Peer played an important role.

4.6.5. *The Noordoostpolder*

In the Noordoostpolder, tens of airmen were being kept hidden in a barn belonging to farmer De Feyter who was originally from the province of Zeeland. Among the 'pilot helpers' who were responsible for moving airmen out of the Noordoostpolder were the building contractor J. Muller,⁹⁵ H. Kingma, Marten Kingma, W. Soetendal who was employed by the department for travel and transportation in the Kampen office of the directorship for the Wieringermeer (Noordoostpolder works) and Harmen Visser who was a sergeant-major with the Marechaussee in Vollenhove. J. ('Hannes', 'Oom Jo') Vos and Jo Leo ('Ario') Snoep both from Kampen had been able to transport airmen by using the vehicles to which they had access. Such was the case for Marten Kingma, originally from Friesland, who had been living in Vollenhove since 1942 where he built farms in the Noordoostpolder which was the land that the Dutch had reclaimed from the IJsselmeer. Using his company car, Kingma drove his fliers to Meppel. In June 1944, the Germans were alerted to Kingma's activities so that he and his family had to go underground in Friesland. Snoep was later arrested and, on 12 October 1944, shot to death while trying to escape. From the Noordoostpolder at least fifty airmen were safely handed over to resistance groups in Drenthe and Overijssel.⁹⁶

4.6.6. *Drenthe*

Peter Jan van den Hurk, an investigator with the *CCD*, had led a resistance group in Meppel which was responsible after April 1943 for the transportation of approximately eighty airmen out of the three northern provinces, especially from the Noordoostpolder, to Limburg and Noord-Brabant.⁹⁷ The group which was mainly composed of resistance members who were affiliated with the protestant Dutch Calvinist Church led a rather independent existence. In Meppel several addresses could be found where a large number of airmen stayed. For example, the widow Jentje ('Jentien', 'Tantien') de Groot-ter Bruggen, landlady for Van der Hurk's fiancée Marchje Ariaantje ('Mimi', 'Marijke') de Jong, gave shelter to thirty-five crewmen. Elsewhere in the town, Tine and her sister Frouke de Vries had hidden a total of twenty-five airmen in their home.⁹⁸ Between April 1943 and January 1944, the Calvinist minister W.N. van Nooten sheltered a total of eight airmen, some- times for months. Airmen had frequently been guided by Joke Folmer and associates of the Smit-Van der Heijden group across the Belgian border. Sometimes Van der Hurk traveled together with Joke Folmer to the south, for example, to link up with the *Vrij* group.

After the Allied front had reached the Dutch border, Van den Hurk and his men kept their airmen hidden in an underground hollow called 'The Wigwam' in the forest near Diever.⁹⁹ On 21 November 1944, the hollow was surrounded by Germans who had been informed of its whereabouts by a traitor. All of the people present were arrested: eight of those individuals would lose their lives in the concentration camps in Amersfoort and Bergen-Belsen.

In the week preceding Christmas, Van den Hurk and his courier M. ('Mientje') Nip had moved the airmen Loel Bishop and Howard R. De Mallie to the home of Mrs. De Groot. On 18 December 1944, Van den Hurk, his fiancée 'Mimi', Bishop and De Mallie were arrested by the German *SD* in De Groot's home.¹⁰⁰ The widow together with an employee of the Dutch railroad whom she was hiding managed to escape, both going underground at her sister's house. Mientje Nip and several other members of the resistance were arrested shortly thereafter. They were roughly interrogated and underwent inhuman torture before being incarcerated in Meppel. However, Van den Hurk discovered that one of the policemen was willing to inform a member of the *KP*-Meppel, which was under the leadership of J. ('Oom Hein') Gunnink, about the fate that awaited them, namely impending execution. On Christmas Eve 1944, Gunnink and his men forced their way

into the police station and a shootout followed. The prisoners were freed but one member of the *KP*, the 21-year-old shoe salesman Gerrit ('Willy') de Boer, and a policeman died of their wounds. Bishop and De Mallie, who had been imprisoned separately, had already been put on transport to Germany on 23 December. At the end of the war, Van den Hurk was made Commander of the *BS* in Meppel.

In Hoogeveen, various families such as those of Albert ('Alva') van Aalderen and his brother Johannes ('Jos') van Aalderen had been involved in sheltering airmen. From Hoogeveen the airmen were sent to Sprang-Capelle, Breda and Tilburg. One of the people who had helped to achieve this was the *LO* courier Hillegonda Wilhelmina ('Hilde') Dekker.

In November 1943, the radio-telegraph operator Nicholas Mandell crashed in his airplane at Genemuiden. Among the people who rushed to the crash site were Roelof Heijs who helped him reach Coevorden. Once safely installed, Mandell met a student named Frits van Faassen who lived in the same boarding house. Van Faassen took Mandell to his parents' home in Slagharen where his father Hendrik van Faassen was a teacher in the Christian-National School in Schuinesloot as well as a member of the *LO*. Sheltering Mandell in his own home was not a simple deed, however, because their maid who was a member of the *NSB* must not learn of the airman's presence. Mandell was given the choice of either remaining underground in The Netherlands or attempting to reach freedom by traveling to the south. The American chose the latter option, departing 12 days later for Hoogeveen where he was taken to the Kuysten family in Sprang-Capelle. Later Van Faassen would hide several other airmen, but no longer in his own home.¹⁰¹ These Allied fliers would travel along the same route taken earlier by Mandell. Van Faassen stopped participating in resistance work in the summer of 1944 after he himself had been forced into hiding. Shortly thereafter Vicar F. ('Frits de Zwerver') Slomp, who was leader of the *LO*, sought shelter in the home of Van Faassen after he had been freed from the prison called 'De Koepel' in Arnhem.¹⁰²

4.6.7. Friesland

In the province of Friesland, the towns of Zwaagwesteinde and Drachten had developed into centers for 'pilot help'.¹⁰³ It all began in Zwaagwesteinde where a sergeant-major in the police department, Andries ('Kappie Marie') van der Meulen, had refused to hand over a downed British airman to the German authorities. Instead he took the flier to Roelof Cornelis ('Friso') Vermeulen, a trader of building materials living in Drachten who had been a resistance fighter from the beginning of the occupation. The policeman was already familiar with Vermeulen from distributing the underground newspaper *Vrij Nederland*.¹⁰⁴ Vermeulen took the flier to Sittard where he passed him on to J.L. Muyres, director of Maas Grind en Zand Exploitatie NV. Because this company worked along the river Maas, Muyres was able to help airmen cross the river. More fliers were to follow after this first meeting. 'Kappie Marie' also accompanied airmen into Limburg, for example, linking up with a group in Maaseik centered around A. Gielen who, in turn, had connections within *Fiat Libertas*.

As a result of the arrests that had taken place during the summer of 1943, the resistance work of the Muyres and Gielen groups came to a halt after several months. Consequently, the number of airmen whom the groups had helped was small.¹⁰⁵ Mid-1943, Vermeulen was forced to go underground after a traitor had infiltrated the organization of the newspaper *Vrij Nederland* in Drachten. From Leeuwarden, he continued to prove himself a leader in 'pilot help', but Drachten remained the central base.

A young woman named Tiny Mulder ('Zwarte Tiny' because of her bundle of dark hair) had become involved with the resistance in Drachten.¹⁰⁶ Shortly after the capitulation, she found work in the distribution office in Drachten where Pieter ('Geale') Wybenga was in charge. After the autumn of 1942, she had begun working as an underground courier for the *KP*-Drachten. She hid Jews as well as other people who sought shelter from the German authorities. A secondary responsibility given to her after September 1943 was caring for wounded Allied crewmen who had been shot down. Thus she provided transportation, mainly within the province, and supplied airmen with civilian clothing, identity papers, books and games for entertainment. This young woman also hid airmen in the home of her parents. From their home, airmen were moved to Leeuwarden, when an opportunity arose to send them southward, to rendezvous at the home of the accountant D. Bosma. Tiny Mulder also accompanied airmen by train to Ermelo, Arnhem and Den Bosch. From Ermelo, the airmen were sent to the Otten family in Erp, using Nel Eskens as courier.

In March 1944, the Drachten group placed about fourteen new Allied airmen in hiding on the houseboat owned by De Vrieze which lay anchored in an estuary of Smalle Eester Zanding. A neighboring fisherman and his wife provided them food while Tiny brought bread, books and games. It was not easy for such a large group of men to be bivouacked in the confined space of a houseboat.

"They slept in shifts having only several beds and did not have an easy time. The furnace could not be used because the smoke would betray them. The curtains could not be opened because they had always been kept drawn during the winter months."¹⁰⁷

On 13 March 1944, Van der Meulen was arrested after someone in *Fiat Libertas* had informed on him. He heard himself being sentenced to death but, rather than being executed, he was transported together with Veterman and several other men as *Nacht-und-Nebel* prisoners to Germany instead. It was in the Luttringhausen prison that he was liberated on 15 April 1945. After several farmers who had been harboring airmen were arrested in 1944, Tiny Mulder and 'Geale' went underground in Leeuwarden where she continued to help airmen. The farmers who had been taken prisoner were released several weeks later.

In various Friesian locations outside the town of Drachten, 'pilot help' was being carried out on a smaller scale. In De Wilp near Drachten, for example, the local resistance group hid "various" airmen.¹⁰⁸ J.J. Zijp, the headmaster of the *Bijzondere Lagere School* (an elementary school) was one of the leaders of the group in which the mailman Popke Venema and Piet Plas participated. In Leek, located somewhat farther to the east, Th.A. Lycklama à Nijeholt, headmaster of the *Nationale Christelijke School*, had been involved in 'pilot help'.¹⁰⁹

A.A.C. ('Tinus') Mous and John Keulen from Bakhuizen, Simon T. Hofstra from Nijega and Matthijs ('Thijs') Westra from Gaastmeer were all important 'pilot helpers' in southwest Friesland.¹¹⁰ Mous passed his airmen on to Marten Kingma, leader of the 'pilot-help' organization for the Noordoostpolder, in Vollehoven.

4.7. Western region

4.7.1. Amsterdam

One group that had rapidly become involved with 'pilot help' after the Germans had occupied The Netherlands was that of the journalist named Willem Lenglet, better known under his *nom*

de plume as 'Eduard de Nève'.¹¹¹ Lenglet had joined the French Foreign Legion during World War I and had become involved in French counterespionage. Since the autumn of 1936, he had been a traveling correspondent for the *Daily Herald* newspaper and was stationed in Amsterdam. When the Germans invaded The Netherlands in May 1940, Lenglet was given the opportunity to return to England with his British colleagues. However, he did not want to leave his 17-year-old daughter Maryvonne alone in The Netherlands. Moreover, he felt that he could be of more service by remaining in The Netherlands.¹¹² The work that he had in mind would include espionage on behalf of the British Secret Service, MI6, for whom it appears that he had formerly worked.¹¹³

Members of the Royal Air Force were supposedly told that, if they ever found themselves stranded within Dutch territory, they should get in touch with Lenglet/De Nève who soon after the capitulation had taken up residence with his daughter on Koninginneweg 151 in Amsterdam. This story has also been reported by L. de Jong.¹¹⁴ It has been related that RAF airmen were told to get themselves to the 'Queen's Way' (referring to the 'Koninginne' in Lenglet's address) in Amsterdam. His house number '151' was supposedly marked on the laundry tags in their clothing. This is a fantastic story which should certainly be taken with a grain of salt! For security reasons, up until the end of 1942, no airmen – not even commandos sent on special missions – were given the names and addresses of people to contact within occupied territory.¹¹⁵

However, it has been documented that Lenglet did manage to form a group which supported him in his resistance work, especially espionage. Among the participants of this group were his old friend, the architect and ex-marine Dirk Brouwer, Brouwer's wife, a friend of Brouwer, the ex-marine/flier Jan Huese from Amsterdam, and the German teacher and poet Harmen van der Leek,¹¹⁶ the invalid Boessenkool who could forge documents, the businessman Willem Leonhardt from Laren and his Canadian wife Mona Parsons.

In 1941, the Lenglet/De Nève group came into contact with a resistance unit in Leiden that claimed to be able to return airmen to England by submarine. However, the contacts in Leiden were really the *V-Männer* Gé ('Bob de Goede') Stellbrink, Edmond Passier and Piet ('Karelse') Rothert who were working for the *Abwehrstelle Wilhelmshafen*.¹¹⁷ In the autumn of 1941, the Lenglet/De Nève group was given the responsibility of hiding the British flight engineer Jock Moir and the navigator Richard Pape who had crashed in the Achterhoek region on 7 September 1941. At first the airmen had been hidden in Toldijk near Steenderen where they had been cared for by farmer H.W. ('Bernard') Besselink and J.W. ('Jan') Agterkamp. Later they were moved to the west and placed under the wing of the Lenglet/De Nève group.

From their safe house in Amsterdam, Moir and Pape were moved to Leiden by Van der Leek and his friend, who is still only known as 'Kleine Peter'. After the 'pilot helpers' had mistakenly entrusted their airmen to the traitors, they themselves were arrested. When 'Kleine Peter' confessed,¹¹⁸ Lenglet, Huese, Dirk Brouwer, Boessenkool, the Leonhardts as well as others associated with the group were arrested.

In October 1941, Agterkamp, Besselink, Brouwer and Van der Leek heard that they had been sentenced to death.¹¹⁹ On 17 November, they were executed by a firing squad in the dunes near Bloemendaal. Although Mona Leonhardt-Parsons had been given the death penalty, her sentence was changed instead to life imprisonment. She survived various German prison camps. After the war, her husband also returned from prison camp in Germany, but remained an invalid for the rest of his life.

Although during his trial Lenglet had attempted to carry all of the blame upon his own shoulders, he was not given the death penalty. Friendly parties had produced evidence from two doctors during his trial showing that he was of unsound mind and thus unaccountable for his actions.¹²⁰ Upon his friends' insistence, Lenglet agreed to play this game with the Germans. In the spring of 1942, he was sentenced to life imprisonment in a sanatorium for the insane. Finally, after almost dying of starvation in the sanatorium in Eickelborn in Westfalen, he was forced to end this comedy. During a new trial in 's-Hertogenbosch at the beginning of September 1944, he eventually received a sentence of two death penalties. However, two days later he was placed on a transport to the concentration camp in Sachsenhausen. While he was being transferred to a prison in Germany, his personal file went missing. Thus he survived the war. His daughter was imprisoned for one year. Huese, who was sentenced to five years in a house of correction, died in 1943 of a heart attack at the age of 51 years in Rheinbach. Moir and Pape were made prisoners of war. In his books *Boldness Be My Friend* and *Sequel to Boldness*, Pape has acknowledged the support that he was given by Dutch 'pilot helpers' during the war.

By the time that Lenglet was arrested, according to the Dutch historian L. de Jong, the Lenglet/De Nève group had helped thirteen airmen escape The Netherlands.¹²¹ It has never been proven whether this number is correct or whether more of Lenglet's airmen had fallen prey to traitors as was the case with Moir and Pape. If Lenglet and his associates had indeed helped other airmen, in addition to Moir and Pape, then this latter possibility is quite probable because the Lenglet/De Nève group had always operated under the assumption that their airmen would leave the country by submarine. The possibility of such a daring escape from The Netherlands only existed during World War II in the fantasies of hopeful men or in the minds of malevolent provocateurs. However, it is known that Lenglet was involved in two escapes, totaling six Dutchmen, on 5 and 6 May 1941 by airplane from Schiphol airport in Amsterdam.¹²²

Of greater importance but significantly less extensively recorded were the activities of Henri Jean ('Sandberg') Scharrer who aided Allied airmen. French by birth, he had married a Dutch woman with whom he lived in Amstelveen. Before the war he had been employed by the *Deuxième Bureau* (French Intelligence Office), while at the same time working on behalf of the Belgian secret service.¹²³ Scharrer had been able to supply false papers, resembling those of German organizations, that could be used by both the national resistance as well as by escape lines. He gave people retreating to the south the name of a hotel (*Hotel des Deux Hémisphères*) in Paris as an initial transit address. For example, Scharrer supplied this address and false German *SD* papers to Bob Celosse and Kas de Graaf when they attempted to escape to England after their resistance organization CS6 had for all intents and purposes been rolled up.¹²⁴ Kas de Graaf later assumed an important position in the *Bureau Bijzondere Opdrachten* (Office for Special Assignments) in London. Scharrer maintained contact with *Luctor et Emergo* as well and supplied the resistance worker Fritz G.M. Conijn from Alkmaar with forged papers. Early in 1944, Conijn had been the leader of a *KP* group and was involved in the transportation of both weapons and Allied airmen. At the end of August 1944, Scharrer who had already been forced to go underground was detained while traveling by train. Unfortunately, he was carrying an attaché case filled with forged papers and a revolver. Conijn tried to buy Scharrer's freedom but was also arrested during the attempt. At the beginning of September, both men were executed by firing squad.

In the capital city of Amsterdam, a group centered around the Amsterdam police inspector Johannes Adriaan ('Joop', 'Carl') Meeuwis had actively begun helping Allied airmen.¹²⁵ Meeuwis who was the leader an Amsterdam *knokploeg* called 'Carl' was involved with numerous resistance activities throughout the city. After January 1944, his work also included helping airmen. Other individuals associated with the 'pilot-help' group 'Carl Meeuwis' were Henk L. van Cleeff, Anna

Lina ('Anneke') Hemrika, Wim van der Heijden, and H.E. ('Ernst') Smidt van Gelder. The group 'Carl' had hidden approximately fifty airmen and moved nineteen airmen to the Otten family in Erp, generally via the train station in Veghel. This group also passed their airmen on to *Fiat Libertas*. Van Cleeff was arrested on 25 July 1944.

4.7.2. Northern Noord-Holland

Outside the city limits of Amsterdam, at several locations in Noord-Holland, 'pilot help' was taking place on a somewhat larger scale, although not by much because of the limited number of planes being shot down in this region. In western Friesland, 'pilot help' was given to some degree by the carpenter/building contractor Jaap ('Oome Jan') Balder from the town Broek op Langedijk. After the autumn of 1942, he had become involved with various resistance organizations, such as the 'Dutch Reformed Group 2000' and the *Ordedienst*. In mid-1943, he aided the first Allied airman to reach an escape line from northern Noord-Holland¹²⁶ and Balder did not stop after this one instance. He came into contact with Joke Folmer who was involved with *Luctor et Emergo* in Amsterdam. In the capital city, he could 'drop' his fliers into the hands of the group centered around J. ('Oom Jan') Coops who was a professor at the University of Amsterdam. Balder, who had a police car at his disposal, also drove airmen to Rotterdam although his airmen were usually transferred to other contacts. On 23 June 1944, Balder was arrested at his home by the German *SD* stationed in Amsterdam. Three weeks later, he stood in front of a firing squad in the dunes in Bloemendaal.

Piet Brouwer, a grocery man from Urk, had offered his help to various American airmen. On 28 October 1944, he was arrested upon suspicion of being involved with resistance work. Thereafter he was imprisoned in one concentration camp after another in both The Netherlands and Germany, until he was liberated by the Americans in Neuengamme on 2 May 1945. Several weeks later, however, he died as a result of the hardships to which he had been submitted in the concentration camps.

4.7.3. The Hague

Engineer C.J.A. ('Caspar', 'John') ter Galestin, a civil servant employed by the State Office for Chemical Products, led an intelligence-gathering service that passed secret messages via Paris to Spain.¹²⁷ After a series of arrests in 1943 in Friesland, R.C. Vermeulen from Drachten had hidden thirty airmen who were waiting to be transported elsewhere. In need of help he contacted J. Le Poole from The Hague who in turn approached Ter Galestin. Thereafter the 'Ter Galestin' group began moving three to four airmen each week from Friesland. In order to transport the airmen across the border, Ter Galestin was brought into contact with Brummans in Weert who had established an escape line named 'St. John' on behalf of Piet Gerbrands and *Fiat Libertas*. The 'Ter Galestin' group also had an illegal radio transmitter which was operated by Wouter Brave. However, the group was balancing on its last leg as it had already been seriously infiltrated by the *Abwehr* agents R.L.G. Christmann, C. Leemhuis, G.C. van Bree and H.I. Rouwendaal. About the end of December 1943, or the beginning of January 1944, various members of the group were arrested, including Ter Galestin who was executed on 5 September 1944 by firing squad in the prison camp in Vught. Two of his co-workers, Albert Keuter and his son Barend, died in Bergen-Belsen.¹²⁸

4.7.4. Coastal region

The activities of A.B. ('Ton') Schrader on behalf of Allied crewmen, although limited, were unique because he was the only person who successfully returned airmen to England by sea. Before the war, Schrader had been a member of the *NSB* youth movement, but after the German invasion of The Netherlands he had rapidly turned his back on the foreign occupier. He became substitute head of the Office for Raw Materials in the State Office for Food Distribution in Wartime.¹²⁹ Thus he had access to a car, worked with German organizations, and possessed working papers which permitted him legally to enter the *Sperregebieten* along the coast. Because of his connections with, for example, various shipyard owners, he was able to lay his hands on small but sea-worthy boats in which the North Sea could be crossed. In total, Schrader had organized seven departures.

During the first crossing in February 1943, Schrader accompanied his group of airmen. However, the journey had to be halted when the boat's motor failed. Schrader and his party returned to shore without being arrested. A little more than one month later, he had arranged for a second crossing which also failed. The third journey, on 5 May 1943, was a success, however. Among his passengers were Jaap Burger, a lawyer from Dordrecht who was destined to hold an important political position¹³⁰ and Cyril Michael Mora, a radio-telegraph operator from New Zealand whom Schrader had picked up in Utrecht.

On 26 July 1943, J.B.M. Haye (mentioned in Section 3.1) together with the British airman Alfred Hagen and eight other *Engelandvaarders* boarded a barge carrying potatoes that belonged to Kees Koole from the village of Schipluiden. Koole who sailed his barge between Nieuwe Beijerland and Flakkee changed course once at sea and secretly lowered the airmen into a sea-worthy sloop.

On 9 October 1943, Schrader organized his last crossing of the North Sea and this time planned to be on board as well. Among the other passengers were Tobias Biallostowski and Reindert Bangma, who later became agents in the Office for Special Assignments. Also on board was Jan de Bloois, a resistance man and son of a market gardener, who had been dropped into The Netherlands in May 1944 in order to make contact with both the Council for Resistance and the intelligence-gathering group called 'Albrecht'. In the autumn of 1944, he became involved with the transport of 'airbornes' via Langbroek.

After arriving in England, Schrader raised the suspicion of the counterintelligence expert Oreste Pinto because he had had such exceptionally good luck in taking his various parties across the North Sea. However, Pinto finally gave him the benefit of the doubt. Considering the level of suspicion that had arisen around Schrader, it was remarkable that the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a precursor of the CIA, was willing to drop him as agent 'Bobby' above Ulrum in Groningen in November 1944. Schrader was the first 'American' agent to be parachuted into The Netherlands, and the Dutch authorities protested loudly at his dispatch.¹³¹ His mission had been to establish a route through which OSS agents could move into Germany by way of The Netherlands. Instead of being an ex-filtration expert, he had become an in-filtration specialist. However, he did not fulfill this task successfully, and generally spent his time only transmitting military messages. In February 1945, he was arrested by the German SD in Zoutkamp. With Schrader's help, the Germans began playing radio games with the Americans in London; however, Schrader managed to make it quite clear to the Americans that he had indeed fallen into enemy hands. Pinto, who after the war extensively studied Schrader's behavior in prison, finally came to the conclusion that Schrader could not be found guilty for his actions. Pinto put aside his last doubts and later spoke of Schrader as being one of the most courageous and patriotic Dutchmen.

From the American government Schrader received the Silver Star Medal, a very great honor for someone who was not an American citizen.

4.7.5. *Overschie*

Overschie was a crossroads for airmen who were being moved from the province of Zuid-Holland towards the south.¹³² This had been primarily possible thanks to the activities of Dirk Zandbergen, who not only sheltered fliers in his own home but also collected and transported them. He was aided in his underground activities by the couriers Ada ('Annie Hoogendijk') Ockers and Wil van der Zwaal as well as by Johannes Haase who was a '*Rijksduitser*'. At first, airmen were taken either to Baarle-Nassau or to Coba Pulskens in Tilburg. After October 1944, when Noord-Brabant had already been liberated, airmen were taken to Sliedrecht. Occasionally, Ada Ockers personally accompanied airmen to Antwerp. The Overschie group also maintained contact with Piet ('Jim') Prins who lived in Overschie but was part of the top management of the Rotterdam resistance. At least twenty-five airmen traveled through Overschie.¹³³

4.7.6. *Zeeland*

In Zeeland, 'pilot help' had been concentrated in Zuid-Beveland and eastern Zeeuwsch-Vlaanderen.¹³⁴ During much of the war, military occupation had been sparse in this region. From Zuid-Beveland help was offered to individuals wishing to cross the body of water called the Westerschelde. One of the locations where crewmen could be hidden was the Capucijner monastery in Rilland-Bath.

In Zeeland, Sas van Gent (crossing into Belgium at Zelzate), Sint Jansteen, Clinge and Nieuwe Namen were the locations used to enter Belgium.¹³⁵ Just as in Noord-Brabant and Limburg, the Marechaussee offered to help people wanting to cross the border secretly into Belgium. Some Marechaussee maintained contact with the 'Zéro' group in Sas van Gent and with the 'White Brigade' in Clinge. Via Sas van Gent, seventeen airmen crossed into Belgium; however, the number for the entire province of Zeeland was only several tens of airmen.¹³⁶

4.8. Central region

4.8.1. *Eemnes and surroundings*

In Eemnes the *KP* in which, for example, Herman ('Rolf') Leeraar was a member helped a number of Allied airmen reach safety. Underground addresses could be found in Eemnes, Blaricum, Laren, and Bunschoten. After 1943, various airmen were being hidden in 'Café Schippers Welvaren' which was situated on the Wakkerendijk in Eemnes.¹³⁷ Among the six members of the Staal family, it was the 23-year-old Wout, son of the pub keeper, who had actively been involved in helping airmen, usually hiding them above the café. The family also had excavated a hole in the ground under the floor of the café where airmen could hide while the guests – sometimes even Germans – enjoyed their drinks overhead.

4.8.2. *Amersfoort*

An important link in the 'pilot' escape line which passed through Amersfoort was the Ottens family. After 1943, about forty to fifty airmen had been hidden with policeman Gé ('Theo') Ottens and his family for both long or short periods of time. Ottens worked closely with Gerrit ('Jos') van de Born from Terschuur, who after June 1944 had been named leader of the *LO* organization

in Amersfoort, and with Van Schuppen. It was Van Schuppen who had remained on the lookout for Allied planes that had been shot down and who would immediately respond in order to save the lives of any survivors. Ottens and Vonkeman took their airmen to Holten. Some airmen were also picked up by Joke Folmer.

4.8.3. *Apeldoorn*

The 'Narda' group in Apeldoorn was one of the few resistance groups that had been organized by a woman, Meinarda M.K. ('Narda', 'Miss Jansen') van Terwisga who in her daily life taught typing and stenography.¹³⁸ Her resistance group was primarily concerned with caring for fliers and other people who were in hiding. Among the people affiliated with this group were Aart Kliest who had hidden various airmen and the courier Joke Bitter. In 1944, the *V-Mann* Willem l'Écluse had infiltrated the group under the pretense of taking typing lessons from 'Narda'.¹³⁹ Various members of her group were arrested due to this treachery. At the time of these arrests, two Allied airmen – the American Robert W. Zurcher and the British Kenneth H.C. Ingram – more or less just happened to be in hiding at the home of Joke Bitter's mother, the 65-year-old widow Juliana Catharina Bitter-van der Noordaa. On 2 October 1944, during the early morning hours, six members of the resistance group and both airmen were executed in the Apeldoornse Bosch. Their bodies were put on display at various locations throughout Apeldoorn. It was decreed that each body should carry a sign around its neck labeled 'Terrorist' and that the corpses remain on public display for three or four days. Narda van Terwisga and Mrs. Bitter-van der Noordaa were transferred between various concentration camps during the ensuing months, eventually arriving at the women's concentration camp in Ravensbrück. The widow died there on 6 January 1945 but Meinarda survived the war. The Woltman family who lived at Jachtlaan 48 in Apeldoorn had also actively helped airmen. In addition to reserve-officer Woltman and his children who were named Job and Tiny, Lieutenant-Colonel Berends and Captain Ebers were active workers. Berends would later be arrested by the Germans and executed by firing squad.

4.8.4. *The Veluwe*

At various locations throughout The Netherlands, hideouts had been dug in wooded areas in order to shelter people needing to go underground. In the forests of Soerel near Nunspeet, Eduard H. von Baumhauer who was a lawyer in Amsterdam and Secretary for the Dutch-American Chamber of Commerce had set up and furnished a camp using a mobile canteen and an American army tent.¹⁴⁰ It had initially been intended for Jews whom Von Baumhauer had already placed in hiding elsewhere. Later, when other people such as students, English and American airmen, and an escaped Russian POW had appeared seeking shelter, the camp had expanded to include nine huts. The small community eventually numbered about eighty people, but sometimes as many as 120 individuals were hidden simultaneously. The 'secret village' was named the 'Pas Op Kamp' [Watch Out Camp] because it was located near 'Pas Op' road, a name which actually originated from as early as 1700 when travelers frequently fell prey to bandits along this road between Deventer, Harderwijk and Elburg. As appropriate as the name might appear during the German occupation, it did not find its origin in World War II.

Von Baumhauer had asked an elderly couple – 'Opa' [Granddad] Bakker who was a pensioned head conductor of the Dutch railroad and his wife 'Tante' [Auntie] Cor Bakker-Van Reenen – to take charge of running the camp. Von Baumhauer ('Boem') was strongly individualistic and not always easy to get along with. However, he was wise enough to acknowledge this fact about his own character and gradually withdrew from the day-to-day management of the camp. However,

'Boem' who had a large network of contacts always answered anyone's call for help in cases of emergency.

On Sunday, 29 October 1944, the 'secret village' was discovered accidentally by two German SS agents who happened to be hunting in the area. Assuming that they had stumbled across a terrorist camp, the Germans called for backup. Thus the residents of 'Pas Op' had time to escape, seeking shelter elsewhere in the surroundings: seventy-nine fugitives escaped to safety while eight Jews were arrested and executed two days later on 31 October in Vierhouten.

4.8.5. *Barneveld*

In Barneveld, the Klooster family gave shelter to thirteen Allied airmen in their home on the Amersfoortsestraat.¹⁴¹ Dries Klooster, employed by the Dutch Postal Office, was affiliated with the 'Hein' group centered around Hein Sietsma from Nijkerk who was primarily involved in helping people who had already gone underground.¹⁴² Klooster, who was a member of the Dutch Calvinist Church, had Allied airmen in mind when he bought Bibles that were printed in English.¹⁴³ Before leaving his home, an airman would read Psalm 121 with Klooster: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help". Reading this psalm together always made quite an impression on the airmen. Klooster was later killed by a German grenade just one day before Barneveld was liberated.

4.9. Regional distribution and social background of 'pilot helpers'

The above-mentioned overview of groups involved with 'pilot-help' activities has already given some indication of the regional diversity in this regard. Now an attempt will be made to emphasize the regional distribution of 'pilot helpers' using data. However, it must be noted that definitive and clear-cut data are not always available.

In as far as data can be found in the existing literature, regarding the numbers of Allied crewmen who were helped by either individuals or by specific groups, the numbers are frequently and considerably exaggerated.¹⁴⁴ Notorious in this respect are the memoirs of Bert Poels in which he falsely appropriated various airmen who had in fact been helped by other groups or individuals. His claims have incited a biting commentary from Matthieu Smedts, chief editor of the newspaper *Vrij Nederland*, who used to live in the same hamlet.¹⁴⁵ Sangen, a 'pilot helper' from Hoensbroek, has been accused of exaggerating the real number (ca. 45) of Allied airmen who were actually helped by his group to almost 300 Allied crewmen.¹⁴⁶ Fred Cammaert, who studied the resistance movement in Limburg extensively, has discussed such types of exaggeration in his dissertation: "In a good 'fisherman's tale' not tens but rather hundreds were needed to make the mouths of guileless listeners drop open."¹⁴⁷ Elsewhere he also noted: "So often numerous helpers thought that the quality of their resistance work had to be related to quantity."¹⁴⁸

Moreover, exaggeration began in London even during the war. In the spring of 1944, in Dutch government circles people were already boasting to the British authorities about the numbers of Allied airmen who were safely in hiding in The Netherlands. The head of the Dutch Intelligence Office, J.M. Somer, had written a report suggesting that in Amsterdam and Rotterdam alone several thousand Allied airmen were being given shelter. Via diplomatic channels in Bern and Washington, similar stories were being heard. Perhaps the seeds of these exaggerated stories were sprouting from idle hope or perhaps out of fear that The Netherlands, being such a small country, might too easily be overlooked during the impending liberation. At MI9, calculations were made showing that, under no circumstances, could more than 200 Allied airmen be hiding throughout

the entire country. Showing a typically British sense of understatement and speaking with mild irony of “the Dutch offensive”, MI9 brushed the data aside as being “possibly somewhat exaggerated”.¹⁴⁹

Not only through the stories told by ‘pilot helpers’ and government authorities but also in the literature exaggerated data were being trumpeted. For example, it was said that 200-235 airmen had been hidden in the province of Friesland and in the Noordoostpolder.¹⁵⁰

What follows will mainly be based upon either data that has already been published or data supplied by W.J.M. Willemsen, who has extensively documented information obtained about Allied airmen and their helpers in The Netherlands during World War II. Not only has Willemsen used the existing literature but he has also included interviews, correspondence between airmen and their helpers, and interrogation reports of Allied crewmen who returned to their airbases. In addition, regarding ‘pilot helpers’ in The Netherlands, use has been made of information indexed by both American and British authorities during the year following the war. A special office had been set up in Wassenaar to collect and evaluate all data before individuals could be honored or decorations conferred for bravery. The Medal of Freedom was given to a total of 328 Dutch men and women, showing that each individual had aided more than eight Allied airmen. Of these 328 individuals, however, twenty-seven people had not been active within The Netherlands, so that a total of 301 people remained on the list. In addition, an Eisenhower certificate was handed out to honor 4,870 Dutch men and women for their assistance in helping eight or fewer Allied airmen. Thus the number of Dutch men and women honored for their help during the war reached a total of 5,171. In reality, however, it has been shown that 10%-15% of the helpers were overlooked for some reason or another. One can thus assume that during the German occupation of The Netherlands no more than 6,000 people had offered their help to Allied airmen. How these individuals are distributed across the country can be seen in Table 1 which shows the percentage distribution of airmen who crashed but survived and ‘pilot helpers’ represented throughout the eleven Dutch provinces.¹⁵¹

Table 1: Percentage distribution of airmen who crashed but survived and Dutch ‘pilot helpers’ in eleven Dutch provinces

Province	Helpers (airmen)		Airmen	Population	Resistance
	(≤ 8)	(> 8)			
Gelderland	21.5	23.9	16.7	10 .6	9.5
Overijssel	14.7	9.0	19.6	6.6	7.0
Noord-Brabant	13.7	17.9	23.6	11.9	5.1
Zuid-Holland	10.9	12.3	6.7	24.1	22.4
Limburg	10.6	23.3	7.9	7.0	4.1
Noord-Holland	9.6	5.3	2.9	18.9	27.6
Friesland	6.2	1.7	7.7	5.0	5.3
Utrecht	5.9	5.6	4.2	5.5	6.0
Drenthe	2.8	0.3	4.9	2.8	4.5
Groningen	2.1	0.3	1.9	4.8	7.1
Zeeland	2.0	0.3	3.9	2.8	1.4

A number of factors should be considered when studying data which show an over- or under-representation for the number of airmen who survived their plane crash within the eleven Dutch provinces. Three major factors contributed to these variations: (1) the presence of airfields, especially those where German 'night-hunter' fighter airplanes were stationed, (2) the flight paths used by the Allies, and (3) the surface area of each province. It appears that very few airmen either came down or survived their crash within the provinces of Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland and Groningen, in contrast to the numbers of survivors in the provinces of Friesland, Overijssel, and Noord-Brabant. Responsible for the over-representation in the last three provinces was the fact that (night)fighter airplanes were stationed at airfields in Leeuwarden, Twente, Deelen, Gilze-Rijen, Welschap, Volkel and Venlo. The 'night-hunter' fighter airplanes stationed in Venlo alone shot down ca. 450 Allied planes, namely above De Peel where numerous search lights had been erected.¹⁵² From the *Fliegerhorst* airfield in Leeuwarden, German fighters brought down 400 Allied airplanes, half of which crashed into the sea.¹⁵³ Many flight paths cut cross the southern region of The Netherlands. For navigational purposes, other flight paths which were frequently chosen followed the course of the major rivers flowing through the middle of The Netherlands. There were also numerous flights paths to the north, following the coastline along the Wadden Islands, as well as above the IJsselmeer where crewmen were not faced with much anti-aircraft artillery. However, when airplanes were attacked along these routes, they usually crashed into the sea so that the crewmen could not be saved. This partially explains why so few (ca. sixty-five) Allied aircraft crashed onto land in the province of Groningen, although there were flight paths crossing this region.¹⁵⁴ The dimensions of the province as well as ground conditions in the region were also of importance: Gelderland (5,022 km²), Noord-Brabant (4,972 km²), and Overijssel including the Noordoostpolder (3,845 km²) were the largest provinces in those days while Utrecht (1,363 km²) was the smallest. The three largest provinces contained the largest areas of forest which provided airmen with more cover in which to hide in contrast to a landscape composed of flat open fields. With respect to the data on 'Helpers' in the column for Gelderland, one should not lose sight of the fact that ca. 350 paratroopers have been included in the data; on the whole they were helped within Gelderland (and to a lesser degree in Noord-Brabant and Zuid-Holland) while the 'airbornes' have naturally not been mentioned in the column for airmen who were shot down.

When calculating the percentage of helpers divided over the provinces, the above-mentioned ground conditions were decisive, as well as the presence of airmen, the size of the population and the location of the province in relation to Belgium which was the second country that an airman had to tackle when going south towards freedom.

From the data given in Table 1, one can see that 'pilot help' was greatly concentrated in the eastern provinces of The Netherlands, i.e., in Overijssel and Gelderland, where many planes crashed and in the southern provinces of Noord-Brabant and Limburg where airmen were helped across the border into Belgium.¹⁵⁵ Even in Gelderland, relatively large numbers of 'pilot helpers' were needed after the Allies had failed to take Arnhem in September 1944. When studying the data for Limburg and Noord-Brabant, one should remember that large areas within these two provinces were liberated about seven months before the rest of The Netherlands. Escape via Zeeland was almost impossible due to the *Küstenverordnung*, which declared that the entire province of Zeeland, as well as the Wadden Islands and some Zuid-Holland islands, had been declared *Sperrgebiete* by the Germans.

Finally, when data on 'pilot help' are compared with that for the percentage participation in all forms of organized resistance within the various Dutch provinces (Table 1, last column), the over-representation for Overijssel, Gelderland, Noord-Brabant and Limburg and the under-representation for Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland and Groningen are shown in vivid contrast. In

relation to other forms of resistance, 'pilot help' was given relatively often, respectively, only occasionally in these two groups.

Furthermore, when comparing the helpers who aided no more than eight airmen with those who helped eight or more airmen, it becomes clear that 'pilot help' was concentrated in Limburg. In contrast, in the northern provinces, 'pilot help' was less concentrated, thus clearly illustrating movement of airmen towards the south. From Noord-Holland, Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe, and Overijssel, the escape routes were like fine capillaries running southwards through the body of the country before expanding into larger arteries.

As a result of this distribution of 'pilot help' throughout the country, more members of the Dutch Reformed (to the east) and Roman Catholic (to the south) churches were found working within specific 'pilot-help' groups rather than within the general Dutch resistance movement.¹⁵⁶ Among the larger national resistance organizations, it was the *LO* in particular which unified the denominational section of the resistance, taking airmen under its wing. An additional factor was that the *LO* organization had access to a large and extensive network throughout the country which was necessary if, for example, 'stepping stones' were to be laid successfully between (a) locations where airplanes had crashed and (b) addresses where airmen could be hidden and (c) border crossings where people could eventually be helped to reach freedom. The network belonging to the Council for Resistance was not sufficiently branched for this purpose, although its members did play a substantial role in 'pilot help', especially in Gelderland and in Noord-Brabant.¹⁵⁷

Many Roman Catholic clerics had become involved in helping both escaped POWs and downed airmen for which various factors were responsible. First, clerics were familiar with both the English and French languages, which was one reason why so many doctors and school teachers were asked to help. For example, Vicar Vullingsh spoke good English because he had studied at a university in Washington. Second, clerics played a leading role in the communities of both Limburg and Noord-Brabant. During the uncertain years of the German occupation, many people sought solace within their sociocultural relationships.¹⁵⁸ Above all, it was assumed that Roman Catholic clerics, who had taken a pledge of silence to the seal of the confessional, would never betray anyone to the authorities for requesting help even when perhaps refusing to get involved themselves. Third, an Allied crewman who was in distress would certainly trust a cleric. This was true both for French POWs who spontaneously put their faith in these 'spiritual shepherds' and for Allied crewmen who had been instructed at their airbases in England to ask the church for help when needed.¹⁵⁹ A cleric would also be expected to have good insight into the political/religious convictions of the believers in his flock entrusted to him and would probably know to whom an airman could be safely entrusted. A large number of Roman Catholic priests found themselves imprisoned and frequently paid with their lives for helping Allied airmen. Some members of the clergy who were executed were Father Beatus (G.L.J. van Beckhoven) and Father J.W. Berix from Heerlen, Father Goossens from Echt, Father J.J. Naus from Venlo, Father A.J.A. Sars from Roermond and Vicar Vullingsh from Grubbenvorst. It should be noted that the help given by many of these religious men began early in the war and was not limited to the provinces of Noord-Brabant and Limburg. In the summer of 1941, for example, Vicar N. Goossens hid in his vicarage in Klazienaveen a British captain named Guy C. Conran who had crashed near Barger Compascuum. Conran had been arrested after leaving the vicarage and two months later Goossens himself would be detained. The chaplain was sentenced to death but his life was eventually spared. Although he spent 3.5 years in concentration camps, he survived the war. In May 1942, Vicar A.J. Scheers from Velp was arrested for aiding airmen. Other clergymen from the Roman Catholic church actively involved in helping fliers to the north of the major rivers were, for example, Father Wolfs from Groenlo and Father Kolkman from the Mill Hill congregation in Groenlo.¹⁶⁰

Protestant vicars, while less prominently represented among the 'pilot helpers', certainly had been involved. Various names have already been mentioned. In the overview *Het Verzet der Hervormde Kerk* [Resistance within the Dutch Reformed Church] mention has been made of the 'pilot help' given by Vicar J.J. van de Wal and Vicar A. Sirag from Made and Sprang. Vicar J.A. van Nie from Hoogetveen had been forced into hiding in 1943 and thereafter began preaching as a field chaplain in Zuid-Drenthe to people in hiding, including Allied airmen.¹⁶¹ In his rectory in Molenaarsgraaf, the Calvinist minister K. Dekker hid a number of airmen who then traveled across the Merwede river and through the Biesbosch into Noord-Brabant. When the liberating Allied forces finally arrived, five airmen were still hiding in the church.¹⁶² Airmen had also been sheltered in the rectory of his colleague Jac de Koning in Schipluiden. In April 1944, the Germans, while looking for Allied airmen, raided the building which was also used as a center for *KP* activities and found anti-German stencils being printed. De Koning together with his son and three other people were arrested. The minister died in December 1944 in Neuengamme.¹⁶³

Just as a herder knows his own sheep, so did the veterinary doctors and *CCD* inspectors know which farmers could be relied upon and which farmhouses had sufficient space for hiding several young men while they awaited a chance to return to their airbases. Therefore, these two professional groups were well represented among 'pilot helpers', also because they had access to means of transportation. Because they usually could speak English, school teachers were frequently asked to help translate when Allied crewmen were discovered hiding among the population.¹⁶⁴ Even English speakers who were themselves in hiding were occasionally asked to translate. Periodically the resistance requested that people donate books that they might own written in English in order to keep airmen occupied while they remained hidden.

Doctors usually gave first aid, if not always on their own initiative, when faced with wounded airmen brought to their waiting rooms.¹⁶⁵ It was relatively easy for a doctor to extend his medical treatment of an airman into the arena of 'pilot help' as seen in the following story of the American airman Donald Schumann who as the sole survivor had parachuted to safety near Lheebroek when his plane crashed near Dwingeloo on 11 January 1944.

"Doctor J.L. Dinkla, who at that moment was busy visiting his patients by motorbike, had observed the distressed plane and gone to the crash site to see if there were any survivors. From eye witnesses he learned that one of the airmen had been able to parachute to safety. He found the man, put him on the back of his motorbike, took him to his home, and tended to the wounds on the flier's burnt face. Thereafter, he quickly managed to get him into hiding – with success as the crewman did not fall into enemy hands and eventually was able to return to his home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin." ¹⁶⁶

It appears that the German authorities were not entirely blind to what people within the medical profession were doing. In any case, in July 1942, the German *SD* in Zwolle pronounced the following dictate in rather inhuman terms:

"When an Allied airplane has crashed, wounded personnel may only be aided when German help is not present or cannot reach the site quickly. One must adhere to the following indications:

- (1) Notify, or send someone, directly to the nearest department of the *Wehrmacht*;
- (2) Drag wounded crewmen at least 300 meters from the airplane;

- (3) Only after (1) and (2) may a private physician be summoned if no help from the *Wehrmacht* is possible;
- (4) Never shelter a wounded crewman in a private building or hospital;
- (5) Never speak to the wounded;
- (6) Make adequate note of the local situation so that a detailed report on the positions of the wounded can be formulated.”¹⁶⁷

Such warnings had a negative effect on some doctors. For example, out of fear for German repercussions, a doctor in Gauw did not dare help an airman who had broken his leg and sustained various contusions while landing by parachute in late 1943. The doctor advised the people who had already taken the wounded crewman under their wing to leave him behind “somewhere near the Sneekerveer”. The helper took the flier home instead; however, the next day the police had to be informed because the airman was suffering such intense pain.¹⁶⁸ Fortunately, many doctors acted differently.

When an airman became ill while hiding at an underground address, the local resistance would usually summon a doctor who had gained their trust.¹⁶⁹ Because doctors had access to cars or motorbikes, they could be of use when transportation was needed. Moreover, they often knew which of their patients were sufficiently trustworthy to help airmen.

Because it was essential to use reliable individuals when moving airmen illegally across the border, help from the Marechaussee as well as from customs officials was often requested – if these employees had not already realized the important part that they could play within escape lines. An additional factor was that many of these functionaries had served in the military. After The Netherlands had capitulated, Dutch military personnel were given the choice of working for either the ‘*Opbouwdienst*’, border patrol or police force. It was among ex-military men that one found, especially when German occupation first began, a higher than average spirit of resistance. Marechaussee and border patrols who were allowed to be on the street any time of the day or night could freely travel back and forth across the Dutch-Belgian border. The Marechaussee were frequently relocated along the border. Such changes were desirable from the viewpoint of an individual seeking promotion but probably also from the German perspective of preventing officials from becoming too friendly with the local population where they were stationed. However, because of these frequent relocations and through their contacts with numerous colleagues, Marechaussee were well informed regarding both poorly and well-guarded border crossings. Because a large portion of the Dutch Marechaussee came from urbanized areas, they were more accustomed to having contact with other parts of the country in contrast to people living in the rather isolated communities along the border. Thus they were naturally more easy to approach when someone coming from outside the region needed information about possible locations for crossing the border.

Smugglers – naturally opposed to the Marechaussee as well as to customs officials – played a role at border crossings. During the years between 1940 and 1945, smugglers and official border patrols often conspired together, temporarily burying the hatchet. In Limburg, both farmers and cattle traders played an important role in *passeurs* work, thanks to the fact that many of their businesses and family relationships extended across the border. Members of the Air-Defense Service played a large part as ‘pilot helpers’ because they had data about where an airplane had crashed, had access to vehicles for transportation and were allowed to move freely during the hours of curfew.

Game keepers, forest rangers, and estate agents could play a role because they knew the forest areas intimately, were familiar with out-of-the-way locations, and could help construct hideouts.

Finally, it is noteworthy that, in contrast to the data obtained from both Belgium and France, the percentage of Dutch women offering their help to airmen was not large. Outside The Netherlands, a relatively large number of helpers working within escape lines were women.¹⁷⁰ In France, women were more involved in 'pilot help' than in any other form of resistance. On an average, women represented 40% of all individuals working in escape routes throughout France.¹⁷¹ Within the Comet Line, ca. 65% to 70% of the helpers were women.¹⁷² For the Burgundy, Mary Lindell, Brandy and Pat O'Leary Lines, the percentages of women involved were 40%, 36%, 35% and 20%, respectively.¹⁷³ The leadership of these escape lines had frequently been placed in the hands of women. In The Netherlands, the percentage of women working within organized 'pilot-help' groups did not deviate from the average percentage of women taking part in general resistance activities, i.e. 10%.¹⁷⁴