

- 6 4. An alternative to the actual defensive action. Defence against native fascism since fighting the German enemy was no longer possible.'

Aan het slot van zijn artikel betrok Hirschfeld De Jongs visie op de Unie in zijn betoog.

- 6 'In his *fundamental* history of *The Netherlands during the Second World War*, Louis de Jong points to the differences existing between the leadership and the mass of Union members, whose intentions were often, as he defined it, "diametrically opposed". According to De Jong, the "Triumvirat" and other leading officials were convinced for a long time that "loyal collaboration" with the occupation authorities would create favourable preconditions for an internal re-structuring of the Netherlands and was essential for the success of their own fight against the only other serious contender for power, the NSB. The people, however, the mass of the members and the officials, soon found themselves in a "common defence front" against the NSB and the occupying power.

Certainly these opposing views are a fundamental component of the phenomenon of the Netherlands Union. On the other hand, such an antagonism – ethically motivated and exaggeratedly formulated – between the "false" (*foute*) objectives of the leadership, even if they varied in intensity and personal commitment, and the "correct" (*goede*) attitude of the grass-roots, who in fact turned the leadership's actual intentions into the exact opposite, raises further questions. In view of the far-reaching differences, why was there never any serious conflict within "the movement", apart from a leadership crisis at the end of January 1941, which was resolved relatively quickly? Was it merely political naivety which caused Union supporters to accept without resistance the appeasing statements and concessions which higher Union officials directed towards the occupation authorities?

We have established that a decisive element in the attraction of the Union in the late summer and autumn of 1940 was, for many members, the prospect of filling the existing political vacuum which had become apparent with the (partly forced, partly self-inflicted) withdrawal of the established parties and trade unions. This had not only enabled them to give expression to the newly-awakened national consciousness, but also provided massive oppositions to the ambitions of the NSB – which indeed for many of the members was one and the same thing. The leadership did not lose the opportunity of turning this line of attack to their own advantage and of pointing out the necessity for a strong national force to overcome the current difficulties. At the same time, however, virtually no opportunity presented itself for them to prove their reliability to the German occupation authorities and for presenting themselves as the only party in the Netherlands which should be taken seriously, and which also, moreover,