

- 6 the resistance part of the spectrum. The collaborationist claim by which a million citizens would effectively be placed beyond reintegration in the nation could only be rebutted by a case that the *Unie's* original purpose entirely and exclusively prefigured a resistance end.

The first step toward such an evaluation is already to be found in the report of the Schermerhorn tribunal. There it had been argued that the *Unie* had been formed on a patriotic basis: namely as a direct response to the threat that the NSB would be given power. The appearance of the *Unie* in the fluid politics of the early occupation period expressed and made more firm, it was said, the patriotic resolve of the Dutch and, as the report phrased it, "provided a prop for their opposition to the NSB and its creatures" thereby establishing the conditions by which to attract a mass following of its own.

Two general features are worth noting in this formulation of the *Unie's* immediate significance. First, it placed the *Unie* completely, and by design, on the opposite side to the one movement in the Netherlands which was agreed to have been wholly collaborationist in its policy. That opposition in itself was, in the tribunal's view, both starting point and justification for the *Unie's* intervention. Second, since the *Unie's* purpose was so limited – to prevent the NSB from coming to power – the way was open to suggesting that the rapid build-up of a mass following was the response to a patriotic and, essentially conservative, appeal and not to the attraction of, let alone conviction in, the *Unie's* own ideological position. This limitation of the *Unie's* significance and ability to recruit so widely to a focus on its hostility to the NSB received support from the fact that the *Unie* and the Mussert movement did show a consistent and public antipathy toward each other. For much of the second half of 1940 and the early part of 1941 one of the *Unie's* most visible activities was the battle between its own street-corner news vendors and those of its rivals; clashes that were supplemented by, on the one side, attacks on the *Unie's* kiosk and shop window displays and, on the other, abuse and criticism of the NSB's policies. These may, however, only suggest that the two movements – legal both – were violently competing for the same ground. To avoid this conclusion with its damaging possibility of ideological affinities, the reality of the clashes and disputes had to be seen, from the *Unie's* point of view, as expressing much more than a popular fear and hatred of the NSB and being the channel for popular anti-Nazism. Thus, it had to be argued that the *Unie's* success in first gathering, then retaining, such a huge following stemmed from it having been a resistance force by proxy, and that it was so because that was how and why it had been set up. In other words the *Unie's* anti-NSB activities were the first, though necessary, steps to achieving its real intention which was to oppose and frustrate German plans for the Netherlands in the largest sense. If these plans had, as they appeared to, the NSB as their instrument, then the *Unie's* ability to prevent their realisation depended on focussing a mass rejection of the NSB. By so doing the *Unie* itself took on the characteristic of a resistance movement.