

- 6 This reappraisal of the *Unie* from collaborationist group to resistance movement has been one of the more revealing transformations in the historiography of the occupation period. It is one to which most accounts have conformed for the past 40 years. Not surprisingly, its development owed much to the Triumvirate's own statement of its case to the post-war bar. In particular it was the hearings of the Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry that allowed the three men, over a period of some years, to make out the case for the transition. In this forum they affirmed individually the same proposition: that the *Unie* had actively prevented the NSB from taking power.

As De Quay put it to hearings:

"The NSB would undoubtedly have grown stronger and, in all likelihood, have achieved considerable power and influence, precisely during those first few months, if we had not been in existence."

The plausibility of this assertion rested on the fact that it could not be disproved. The NSB had not taken over and, as already suggested, this failure may well have been partly, even largely, attributable to the *Unie*'s well-publicised and massively approved opposition to Mussert which may have convinced the Germans that the NSB was a broken reed. But once this was accepted as possible then the way was clear, first, to justifying the *Unie*'s legal existence (this is the force behind De Quay's careful emphasis on "the first few months"; that is, the critical period when it may be argued that the Germans were still making up their mind about how great a role to give Mussert) and, second, to make that legal existence compatible with the purpose of a resistance movement.

This precise transition was, in fact, introduced at the hearings by Linthorst Homan in an exchange which appears almost to follow a script:

"Linthorst Homan... if you ask: was the *Unie* from its formation a resistance movement, then I would say yes, but not in a sense what was later meant by resistance movement.

*Witewaal van Stoetwegen* Resistance in the open (*bovengronds*) rather than underground resistance.

*Linthorst Homan* Exactly..."

Not the least interest of this dialogue is the willingness shown by the Commission (the acquiescence of Linthorst Homan is perhaps less remarkable) to accept the invention of a quite new category of resistance altogether. Resistance that was indirect and legally sanctioned by the supposed object of this purpose. Only by accepting such an elision was it possible to overcome the major stumbling block of the doubt as to how any movement which was tolerated by the occupier could truly resist his designs. Even more important, by airing and giving credence to the suggestion that there was no substantive distinction between underground and open or legal resistance, the Commission opened wide the path to a further claim that the *Unie* had from the very start formed part of the