

6 the author has not followed the practice (observed in the official British history of the Second World War) of respecting the impersonality of the civil service or the collective responsibility of the cabinet.

The outstanding scholarly merits of Dr. de Jong's work are partly the result of his long-standing and intense preoccupation with his subject. His profound interest in the history of the Netherlands of the wartime period originated during the years he spent in London, when he served as a broadcaster for the Dutch government-in-exile. At that time he published a three-volume history of the Netherlands under German occupation. Entitled *Je Maintiendrai*, it had no pretensions to being more than a very tentative account based on limited evidence, yet it none the less contained some remarkably solid chapters which are still worth consulting today.

Immediately after the end of the war in Europe Dr. de Jong was appointed to the position of acting chief (later director) of the newly established Netherlands State Institute for War Documentation and was thus given an ideal opportunity of familiarizing himself with much of the massive evidence which became available on the wartime history of his country. Under his dynamic leadership the new institute began to display a feverish activity and soon acquired an international reputation for excellence in the field of Second World War studies. It admirably served its primary function as a temporary depository for the numerous captured archives of German occupation authorities, Dutch Fascist or Nazi parties and Nazified government institutions, while many private individuals and organizations were also persuaded to entrust their diaries, correspondence or other wartime records to its custody. After the initial years – mainly concerned with collecting and cataloguing source material – the institute became increasingly engaged in the preparation for publication of some of its most important documents, as well as of a series of monographs on subjects which were regarded as being of crucial interest. Furthermore, from the beginning of the institute's existence it was planned that its manifold activities would ultimately find their conclusion in the publication of a comprehensive, scholarly history of the Netherlands in the wartime period.

Originally it was held that such a work could most profitably be written by a team of historians, but in 1955 this idea was abandoned in favour of a single author. This decision would never have been taken if Dr. de Jong, with his unusual combination of qualities, had not been prepared to undertake this difficult task. It was rightly felt that a collective authorship would not necessarily produce the work more quickly and it would certainly be lacking in unity of composition. There existed, of course, a risk that the selected author's energies might fail him before he had finished his work, and even now with half of the project completed it is not certain that Dr. de Jong will be able to carry his task to a successful conclusion.

In planning his work Dr. de Jong decided to subdivide it into seven