



Fig. 1: Carré Advertisement. Source: Nat.-Soc. Jrbk., PVII

Six Degrees of Self-Delusion: A Micro-Historical Study of the 1942 NSB Yearbook

Anne de Klerk

Anne de Klerk does a deep dive into an NSB yearbook to reveal the intricate methods this organisation used to forge a singular identity among its members. Analysing everything from seemingly mundane theatre advertisements to overtly anti-Semitic cartoons, this study provides a vivid and chilling portrayal of the inner workings of a truly dangerous group of people.

This story starts with an exceptionally normal picture, which – outside of its context – would probably not capture anyone’s attention. It displays an extremely mundane advertisement from the Dutch Theatre of Carré. The advertisement (Figure 1) exclaims to its observers that Carré offers “variété, operette, revue and opera” in the busiest theatre of the Netherlands. Why are they the busiest, the advertisement asks rhetorically? Because the theatre always offers 100% entertainment. This affirmation is accompanied by a drawing of the façade of the theatre in Amsterdam. There is absolutely nothing exceptional about this advertisement. Or is there?

Something that is so easily overlooked in this picture is the small addition in the lower right-hand corner: the roman numerals “VII”. This number suggests that this picture is not merely an advertisement, but also part of something bigger, as it has a page number. Perhaps it is part of a catalogue, or a newspaper? Neither of those are

true, even though they are infinitely more plausible than the reality behind these numbers. This advertisement promoting an evening’s entertainment of theatrical leisure is in actuality part of a yearbook published by the national socialist movement (NSB) of the Netherlands during the Second World War.

This juxtaposition of something so ordinary as an advertisement for a theatre amid a book published by such an extreme movement is mind-boggling. How did this advertisement become part of this yearbook? To answer this question, I have scoured every page of this nearly 400-page monstrosity to compile all of its content. Unbeknownst to me at that moment, this research on a very mundane picture gave me a glimpse into the self-image, or rather the self-delusion, of the NSB.

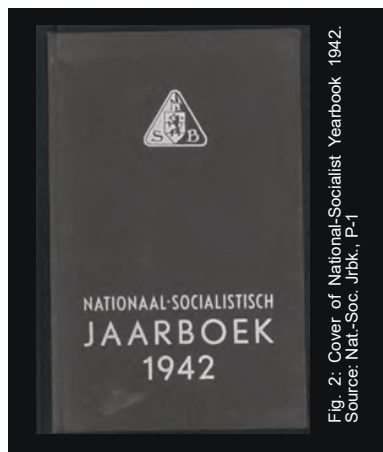
The lives of its members cannot be separated from the past, present and future of the NSB.

The yearbook, its creator and its origin

The yearbook in question is titled *Nationaal-Socialistisch Jaarboek 1942* and was edited by Jan de Haas and presumably published in 1941. Jan de Haas was born into an extremely religious Dutch family in 1918. Shortly before his twentieth birthday, he joined the *Nationaal Socialistische Beweging* (NSB) in 1937 against his family's approval.¹ A year later, De Haas became a journalist for *Het Nationale Dagblad*, a paper published by the NSB. Additionally, he wrote a multitude of anti-Semitic propaganda pieces such as the brochure *Joden in Nederland*.² After a while, the NSB offered him bigger and more important jobs such as writing the history of the movement for the newspaper *Voor Volk en Vaderland* and the responsibility for the creation of the *Nationaal-Socialistisch Jaarboek 1942*.³

The yearbook, a luxurious hardcover wrapped in red cloth (Figure 2), was created on the instruction of the leader of the NSB, Anton Mussert.⁴ The reason for this creation is stated in the signed preface of the yearbook:

De veel bewogen Jaren 1940 en 1941 hebben voor den strijd der Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging groote betekenis gehad. De werkzaamheden der Beweging, zoo goed als die van haar snelgroeiende nevenorganisaties hebben zich in deze periode tot een ongekenen omvang uitgebreid. Met het oog hierop, en mede in verband met de voortdurend



belangrijker wordende plaats, die de N.S.B. in het leven van de Nederlandsche volksgemeenschap en van den Nederlandschen staat is gaan innemen, is reeds langen tijd de behoefte gevoeld aan een uitgave, waarin iedere Volksgenoot gegevens zou kunnen vinden over de organisatie, den strijd en het leven der Beweging.⁵

However, this book offers so much more than mere information about the organisation, its battle, and its life. What does this book tell its readers, both in and in between the lines? And how does the advertisement of the theatre of Carré fit into this? The answer is sixfold.

The self-image, or rather the self-delusion, of the NSB

⁵ Nationaal-socialistisch jaarboek, jrg 1, (1942) 5. (21-10-2021) <https://bit.ly/3nK0MF0>.

If you fail to plan

Firstly, the yearbook tells its readers how to plan their lives. It literally provides a weekly calendar for 1942. Figure 3 and Figure 4 show the first week of that year as an example. As with contemporary weekly calendars, the week is spread out on two pages, which are divided into seven sections – one for each day of the week. Each section shows the date, what day of the week it is, and specific information about that day. This specific information can include the cycle of the moon (as seen on January 2nd) or a historic event that happened on that same day in the past (as seen on January 4th).⁶ These historic events either refer to important dates for the NSB or adjacent movements such as the one mentioned on the 4th of January,⁷ or important dates in Dutch history such as the departure of the first voyage to the Dutch Indies in 1595.⁸ At the top of the page, the month is mentioned in both its Latin-derived name and its *Dietse* name.⁹ The NSB – traditionalists at heart – heavily used and argued for the use of these Old Dutch month names.¹⁰

A final important detail about the calendar is the inclusion of a weekly quote. Most of these are aphorisms from Anton Mussert himself, but sometimes they are derived from other people important to the NSB such as George Kettmann Jr.¹¹ or from Dutch historical figures like Jan Pieterszoon Coen.¹²

⁶ Ibid., 24, 25.

⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁹ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰ M.C. van den Toorn, *Wij melden u den nieuwen tijd: Een beschouwing van het woordgebruik van de Nederlandse nationaal-socialisten* ('s-Gravenhage, 1991) 307-308.

¹¹ Nationaal-socialistisch jaarboek, 141.

¹² Ibid., 75.

Almost all of these quotes are highly political, such as the statement by Mussert that “debatteren is een liberaal-marxistische gedachte waarvoor wij geen tijd hebben”.¹³

Besides the provided information, there is a lot of free space in the weekly calendar for the user to plan their week. This makes the calendar a clear materialisation of what the NSB thought its role should be in the lives of its members: part of your life plans. Furthermore, it suggests that the lives of its members ought not be separated from the past, present and future of the NSB.

They who control the past

Secondly, the yearbook tells its readers the history of the NSB and its adjacent organisations such as the German NSDAP. A total of thirteen pages gives a brief overview of the important dates of the history of the NSB, complete with explanations from its inception on the 14th of December 1931 to the last event in October 1941.¹⁴ Besides this list, there



Fig. 3: Calendar Example (left page). Source: Nat.-Soc. Jrbk. P24

¹³ Ibid., 35. Translation: “debating is a liberal-marxist idea for which we have no time.”

¹⁴ Ibid., 184, 186, 194, 196, 198, 200, 204, 207, 209, 210, 212, 215, 216.

is a full account of its battle 'against all odds'. This history lesson is concluded with the statement that "De kern van het Nederlandsche nationaal-socialisme heeft bewezen dat zij niet vernietigd kan worden: niet door tegenstand, niet door leugen of laster, niet door verboden en terreur".¹⁵

The NSB clearly used all its power to reconstruct its own history, portraying itself as the victorious underdog. Its account of events paints it as a heroic movement that won against all odds. Such a whitewashed self-image is highly dangerous, as it conceals the truth for both its members and the outside world. It is unclear, however, how many readers have consumed this false historic account of the NSB, as I have not been able to find the amount of published or even purchased yearbooks. Either way, it is abundantly clear that the NSB had constructed a delusional backstory to feed its members.

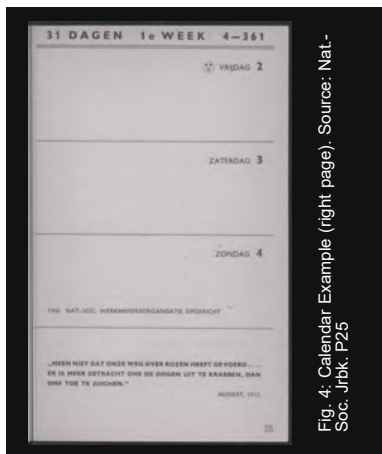


Fig. 4: Calendar Example (right page). Source: Nat.-Soc. Jrbk. P25

¹⁵ Ibid., 227. Translation: "The core of Dutch National Socialism has proved that it cannot be destroyed: not by resistance, not by lies or slander, not by prohibitions and terror. The rapid growth after the war days has fully confirmed the recruiting power of the idea and the fighting power of the core."



Fig. 5: An Example of Blatant Propaganda. Source: Nat.-Soc. Jrbk. P33

Sir, yes sir

Thirdly, the yearbook tells its readers how the NSB is organised and who its important members are. The book lists an overview of the different sections of the organisation: its leader, its agents and advisors throughout the country,¹⁶ the employees of headquarters located in Utrecht,¹⁷ and the different districts, circles, and independent groups.¹⁸ Within these lists, it is explained how to contact these different people and where they are located. Furthermore, De Haas has also included a section with coloured depictions of the different distinctions of the NSB and its subdivisions such as the W.A., *de Jeugdstorm* and *de Nederlandsche SS*. Despite this clear celebration of these adornments, De Haas warns the reader that "Een distinctief is geen belooning maar een opdracht [tot meer werk]".¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid., 161-162.

¹⁷ Ibid., 162-164.

¹⁸ Ibid., 165, 166, 168, 169, 171, 172, 174-180.

¹⁹ Ibid., 248. Translation: "A distinctive is not a reward but an assignment"

they were nothing more than an unintended persiflage

The inclusion of the organisation of the movement has a rather straightforward reasoning, as it educates the reader on who is important, how to reach them, and how to recognize them by their distinctions. Furthermore, this emphasis on the importance of its structure says a lot about how important the NSB deemed this structure. The NSB was structured hierarchically like an army. This connection with the army is also clearly visible in the number of distinctions, flags, and crests. The fact that the yearbook mentions these aspects of the movement, again, tells us a lot about the self-image of the NSB. However, despite the amount of love it had for army aesthetics, in actuality it was nothing more than an unintended persiflage.

Practise what we preach

A fourth aspect to consider is that the yearbook tells its readers the beliefs of the NSB. A first – rather shocking – example in the early pages of the book is shown in Figure 5, which is the reminder



Fig. 6: Anti-Bolshevist Propaganda (Example 1). Source: Nat.-Soc. Jrbk. P195

of "een veelzeggende herinnering", namely a 'joke' with a clear anti-Semitic punchline that was spread around. The picture shows a first class one-way train ticket to Jerusalem, which can be used from every station.²⁰ It is hardly a secret that the NSB held anti-Semitic beliefs, but with this cruel 'joke' they are certainly not beating around the bush: Jewish people in the Netherlands would have to find a new home if the NSB had its way. It reminds us again that this book is not ordinary at all, but the materialisation of some despicable beliefs.

Another belief, which returns multiple times, is the anti-Bolshevik attitude of the NSB. Figure 6 shows a poster from 1936 that displays a burning church with the accompanying words: "Kerken branden in Spanje!!! De S.D.A.P. juicht!"²¹ This poster refers to the Spanish Civil War, where the left-leaning government – aided by anarchists and communists – fought against the nationalists. De Haas put a caption underneath the poster, claiming that the NSB already fought against Bolshevism in 1931 and had been doing so ever since. He proves this statement by showing this poster from 1936 in which they already warned the Dutch population about the inaction of its labour party, the SDAP, against this threat.²²

These examples are not as extreme as other NSB propaganda. However, their reduced extremity is perhaps far more dangerous. These pages are sprinkled throughout the yearbook, and always surrounded by much lighter content. While examining them one by one their meaning is striking, but in the context their heaviness almost disappears. The self-delusion of the NSB in this case is the severe normalisation of its horrid beliefs.

²⁰ Ibid., 33. Translation: "a telling reminder"

²¹ Ibid., 195. Translation: "Churches are burning in Spain!!! The S.D.A.P. cheers!"

²² Ibid., 195.

DRESS FOR THE JOB YOU WANT

Fifthly, the yearbook tells its readers in twelve consecutive pages how to look and behave like a proper NSB member. This firstly includes how they ought to dress, with tips on how one should wear their standard issue hat or coat, for example.²³ Secondly, there is an entire paragraph with instructions on hygiene, because – according to the yearbook – national socialists should be proud of their bodies.²⁴ Thirdly, a lot of time is spent on describing how one should greet another member, and what to do when meeting the leader.²⁵ Fourthly, it is stressed how NSB members should act in social situations. For example, it is strictly forbidden for members in uniform to smoke in public.²⁶ Surprisingly, I found a rather heartwarming social rule: “bij plaatsgebrek in openbare vervoersmiddelen en gelegenheden wordt steeds onmiddellijk opgestaan voor vrouwen, grijsaards en gebrekkigen, ook al kennen wij hen als politieke tegenstanders”.²⁷

This section gives a rather good look into how the NSB prefers its members to look and act. In summary, they should be clean, presentable, and courteous. The last one is rather surprising for modern onlookers. It is certainly interesting how a movement, so violent and inconsiderate of others and their livelihoods, is so adamant about being courteous to people that disagree with them in a publication solely meant for its own members. They seem to be

²³ Ibid., 264.

²⁴ Ibid., 269.

²⁵ Ibid., 271, 272, 273, 274.

²⁶ Ibid., 268.

²⁷ Ibid., 268. Translation: “when there is a lack of space in public transport and facilities, women, the elderly and the infirm are always immediately stood up for, even though we know them as political opponents.”



Fig. 7. Advertisement for “Mijn Kamp”. Source: Nat.-Soc. Jbkk. P-4

truly delusional, to think of themselves as courteous to other-minded people when they have included the anti-Semitic train-ticket joke in the same book.

Buying a lifestyle

Sixth and lastly, the yearbook tells its readers what to buy. In the book, there are a total of 96 advertisements spread out over 71 pages. As the Theatre of Carré paid 100 guilders for an entire page according to their ledgers,²⁸ we can estimate the total of revenues in advertising to be 7100 guilders, equivalent to 58,015.37 euros in 2022.²⁹ The advertisements can be divided up into two categories. The first consists of advertisements promoting national socialist goods such as a new version of Adolf Hitler’s *Mijn Kamp*,³⁰ the NSB newspaper *Het Nationale Dagblad*,³¹

²⁸ Amsterdams Stadsarchief, in: *30864 Inventaris van het Archief van het Koninklijk Theater Carré*, 193 “Tabellarisch kasboek 1 mei 1942-30 april 1942”, 51.

²⁹ Calculated with a tool from CBS, <https://bit.ly/3U2Bm2p>.

³⁰ Nationaal-socialistisch jaarboek, -4.

and a store selling Nazi merchandise.³² An example of this is Figure 7. The second category consists of advertisements from private companies selling items such as shoes,³³ fur coats,³⁴ insurance,³⁵ typewriters,³⁶ and advertisements promoting bars, cafés, restaurants, and hotels.³⁷ Even though these latter advertisements have nothing to do with the NSB – apart from the fact that they have chosen this yearbook as a medium – they do often refer to their ties to the movement in their advertisements. An example can be found in Figure 8, where the company Genever Drusus claims to be the oldest advertiser in Dutch national socialist papers.³⁸ Moreover, another company took this referral game to another level when they added their prior work for the German *Wehrmacht* in bigger letters than their actual company name in their advertisement.³⁹

This book is not ordinary at all, but the materialisation of some despicable beliefs.

³¹ Ibid., -2.

³² Ibid., V.

³³ Ibid., I.

³⁴ Ibid., IX.

³⁵ Ibid., IV.

³⁶ Ibid., VI, XI.

³⁷ Examples are: Nationaal-socialistisch jaarboek, XXIX, 234, 326, 327, but there are many more.

³⁸ Ibid., 323.

³⁹ Ibid., 318.



Fig. 8. An Advertisement With a Clear Undertone. Source: Nat.-Soc. Jbkk. P-323

It is unclear if the advertisements were chosen at random or had to go through a rigorous selection process before appearing in the yearbook. To me, their placement does not appear to be random, because of the fact that the advertisements share the same target audience. None of the goods on sale are to be considered cheap or ordinary products. Moreover, a hefty amount of the advertisers play heavily into the target audience of this yearbook, and clearly have no scruples about being associated with the national socialist ideology. On the other hand, Alex Wunnink, the director of Carré was certainly not of a like mind, as he was involved in the resistance.⁴⁰ However, despite the fact that he disagreed with the NSB ideology, he did not refrain from using it as a medium for this particular advertisement and others. This rather puzzling decision will need more study in the future. One preliminary reason behind it could be the rough financial

⁴⁰ Mariëtte Wolf, *Een plek om lief te hebben; geschiedenis van Carré* (Amsterdam 2012), 211-215.

weather surrounding the theatre in 1941.⁴¹ But this decision does prove that not all advertisers on display in the yearbook were in favour of the Nazi regime. A hefty miscalculation on part of the NSB, and rather delusional at that.

Conclusion

This story started with a mundane advertisement for a theatre. Now, we have established that the context of this advertisement is rather shocking and that this changes the meaning of the advertisement significantly. This advertisement is not solely an advertisement at all, but plays a role in the NSB's self-delusion regarding its image presented in this yearbook. On its own, it was unimaginable that this picture could result in any interesting historical research. Its juxtaposing nature in its context is what revealed its secrets. This is a true example of what micro-historical research can bring to the table. Although, it is important to keep Stewart Stafford's warning in mind that if you "separate text from context all that remains is a con".

Anne de Klerk is an energetic History Research Master student at Utrecht University. Her research interests include but are not limited to the politics of conflict, remote warfare, and military history. However, she does not shy away from a (historical) challenge. After concluding her studies, she hopes to make a societal impact with her research.

⁴¹ Wolf, *Een plek om lief te hebben*, 215.