

1936 - 1937 CRISIS

1. 1936

Furious, Ed threw his pay envelope on the table. "Here, less again! His Mightiness the Prime Minister has in his wisdom decided that this cutback is inevitable to overcome the crisis" he mimicked the head administrator of the HTM, the Hague Tram Company, where he worked as a conductor for several years now. "People should have never voted on that bloody Colijn. Now you see what happens. Everybody must contribute a quarter. Like nothing! If Troelstra had been able to seize power none of this would have happened!"

"Ed, mind the children!" Grietje hushed him - Rietje and Koos stared at their father's tantrum with fright. "Be happy that at least you have work, you are one of the few left in our street. And in Germany you could not even buy a piece of soap for that money some years ago."

Ed stomped off to the kitchen for a wash-up, muttering under his breath about right-wing politicians and haughty Prussians who had gotten a dose of their own medicine.

Inwardly, Grietje was not as optimistic as she sounded. In daily life she'd experienced the misery of poverty and unemployment, especially at the Cooperation Shop. Less and less housewives could buy on tick. When they sent their children, the grocer and his wife even refused to serve them. It was a bloody shame, it was a Co-op shop, for Pete's sake! They should stand up for poor people. So what if they got less dividend on their stamps....

Behind her back she heard people whisper that Ed only held his job because he betrayed his mates to the chief. And about Germany the most outrageous stories had circulated. Like Dutch men who had seduced German girls for a nickle which was a fortune over there. And until a little while ago you could go out and dance and drink all night together with your mates for a dime. Now a man had come to power from that chaos who had promised to bring the great Germany back to glory. They could hear his roaring on the new wireless they had recently bought. Even in Holland there now was a movement which sympathized with his ideas. There would not be war again, would there?

2. 1937

Panting, Rietje sat down on the little hill. Wim just kept on dancing with her around the may-pole. Probably because that charming Belgian boy also wanted to dance with her. Pity he only spoke a little bit Dutch, and she didn't speak French. Not to mention English, those nice guys she could not understand at all. Maybe next season she should take a course on English or French at the Trade Union for Office Workers, which she had joined. Might come handy, she thought.

German did not appeal to her, it reminded her too much of that windbag on the wireless, this Hitler. People said he was after war. And now some Dutch people believed that his ideas were the answer to the crisis and had voted a befriended Dutch political party, the NSB, into Parliament. It seemed almost like you could here that nasty German up to here

Suddenly she sat straight. What noise was that?

"We NSB stand for a rightful society where foreign nations do not teach us lessons how we should rule a country!!!Our friends from the great Third Reich will help us to"

While the *"Sieg Heil!! Sieg Heil!!"* loudly echoed across the field, Wim came running back from the headquarter's tent.

"It's Mussert" he cried, "they've organized a meeting on the spot right next here, just to bully us. Tonight we'll have to patrol with a gang of strong-armed boys, otherwise they'll tear the place down!"