

WHO BETRAYED THEM?

Willem van Maaren

Following the war, Kleiman and the other Helpers are increasingly occupied with the question of who the betrayer was. Immediately after the end of the war, Kleiman writes a letter to the Politieke Opsporings Dienst [POD] (a former Dutch equivalent of the FBI). The POD is responsible for hunting down the people who had collaborated with the German occupier.

In the letter, Kleiman expresses his suspicions about Van Maaren and asks the *POD* to conduct an investigation. Yet, nothing is done with the letter for two years. Finally in 1948 an investigation is set in motion, probably resulting from a discussion Otto Frank had with the *Politieke Recherche Afdeling (PRA* or literally Political Investigation Department) of the Amsterdam Police Department.

The police question the helpers Miep, Kleiman and Kugler; the warehouse employees Van Maaren and Hartog; as well as others who worked in the warehouse. Hartog testifies that Van Maaren had told him two weeks before the raid that there were Jews being hidden upstairs. Certainly, Hartog's wife could also have known. In looking back, little can be said about the quality of the investigation. Many questions were not asked and few people were interrogated. It was a shoddy investigation, and it is brought to a close because no evidence is turned up. Fourteen years will pass before a new investigation takes place.

Lena Hartog-van Bladeren

In 1998, Melissa Müller's book *Anne Frank, The Biography* was published. In this book, the author states that the other warehouseman Lammert Hartog, as well as his wife Lena Hartog-Van Bladeren, must have also known that there were Jews being hidden in Opekta's building. Not only did she work as a cleaning lady at 263 Prinsengracht, she also cleaned the home of Petrus and Anne Genot. Petrus Genot happened to work for the company owned by Kleiman's brother.

When Lena Hartog was questioned in 1948, she neglected to mention to the police that she had worked on the Prinsengracht. According to the 1948 testimony of Anna Genot, Lena told her, in July 1944, that she was terribly concerned about the safety of her husband because Jews were being hidden on the Prinsengracht. Lena also supposedly said to Bep that they would all be in grave danger if this were discovered.

In her book, Melissa Müller suggests the possibility that the people in hiding were betrayed by Lena Hartog-Van Bladeren. There is however no proof to substantiate this. What is clear though, is that the 1948 investigation as well as the one conducted in 1963-64 were both too preoccupied with Willem van Maaren. The role played by Lena Hartog-Van Bladeren and her husband was never seriously investigated.

1963-64 Investigation

The new investigation was spurred by the tracking down of Karl Silberbauer, the SS non-commissioned officer who had led the arrests. The 1963 investigation was much more thorough than the one in 1948. Again, it pointed towards Willem van Maaren.

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In the 1950s, the diary of Anne Frank becomes world famous. Theatrical and screen versions follow on the heels of this fame. The unknown identity of the betrayer is increasingly seen as an unsatisfactory loose end. Tracking down Karl Silberbauer, the *SD*-officer in charge of the arrest, is the impetus for a new investigation. In 1963, famous Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal finds Silberbauer in Vienna (Austria) where he is then working as a policeman. Silberbauer still remembers many of the details of the arrest, but not who the betrayer was. The person who had taken the telephone call, his superior, Julius Dettman, committed suicide shortly after the war ended. Silberbauer's police duties are suspended during the course of the investigation, but because he had "only followed orders" during the arrest and had "acted correctly", his old function is restored. He dies in 1972.

A number of new witnesses are questioned, yet unfortunately some of the important witnesses have already died. Kleiman died in 1959. The warehouseman Hartog and his wife are now also dead. Much more comes to light about Van Maaren, including the fact that he had actually committed the warehouse thefts of which he was suspected, but there is still no evidence to support the suspicion of betrayal. In 1964, the investigation is closed without concrete results. Willem van Maaren dies in 1971.

Tonny Ahlers

Otto Frank and Tonny Ahlers meet for the first time in April 1941, long before the Frank family goes into hiding. Apparently, Otto Frank expresses his doubts about a German war victory to an acquaintance he runs into and this person then sends a letter to the Gestapo informing on him. Tonny Ahlers, who is active in the NSB (Dutch Nazi-party) and knows many people who work for the Security Police, somehow gets hold of this letter. In return for his silence, Ahlers blackmails Otto for money. According to the writer Carol Anne Lee, this was not a solitary incident and Tonny Ahlers continues to blackmail Otto. After the war, Ahlers claimed that he knew about the people being hidden in the Secret Annex. Therefore, as far as Carol Anne Lee is concerned, Tonny Ahlers was the person who betrayed the people in hiding.

In 2003, the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation investigates (NIOD) both theories related to the new suspects: Lena Hartog-van Bladeren and Tonny Ahlers. Both hypotheses are carefully considered and found not to carry enough weight.

The NIOD's report therefore concludes: "Unfortunately, we are bound to abide by what we concluded in 1986: 'It is impossible to reconstruct the actual events.' Of course this is regrettable, because we would naturally have liked to unmask the culprit(s) in order to complete this part of the Anne Frank story. That is not what has happened. The possibility cannot be ruled out that new betrayal hypotheses will be advanced in the future. We shall have to wait and see whether these hypotheses are based on [solid] source material."

You can download this [report](#) from the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation's website.

“The conclusion of our inquiry is that we do not consider any of the three suspects to be a likely candidate for the role of betrayer.”

--NIOD, 2003