



Gameren in 1955. A farmer returns from the *uiterwaarden* with a cart full of hay. The dike is visible in the background. This horsecart was among the last vestiges of a centuries-old way of life in Gameren. Today, a photo of the same location would likely show a car or two - or perhaps even a truck with the name *Van Tuyl* emblazoned on it. [Collection: J.N.A. Groenendijk]

Chapter 21

Flowers, Potatoes, and Books 1945-1995

Peace and High Spirits

May, 1945 was a time of high hopes for the Dutch people. Buoyed by the joy of liberation, they overcame their grief and resentment and started, as they had always done after shaking off the yoke of conquest, to rebuild their world. Indeed, the astonishing economic recovery which Europe would experience during the 1950s was soon to raise the level of prosperity in The Netherlands to unheard-of heights. Early on, this renaissance would be stimulated by the *Marshall Plan*, an American-financed self-help recovery program for war-ravaged Europe.^{1, 2} In Gameren, funds from this program would help launch a process of land reform that eventually propelled the Van Tuyls' village to unprecedented prosperity. For the Bommelerwaard as a whole, postwar reconstruction was an absolute necessity. Bridges, farms, water works, and indeed whole villages, needed to be rebuilt from the ground up.³

A Total Transformation

Not all of the Bommelerwaard's problems stemmed from war. Centuries of economic and social stagnation had taken their toll, so that by the early 20th century this *Land of the Van Tuyls* was offering little opportunity to its ambitious, hard-working inhabitants. Something had to change. Realizing this, a team of scientists from the University of Utrecht had published a study before the War in which they outlined a program for revitalization of the Bommelerwaard. It was to be carried out under the direction of the *Committee Bommelerwaard*, a community-improvement organization.⁴ This committee knew that restructuring and improvement could only be accomplished by the people themselves, so they made education a top priority. Arie van Tuyl, an early prewar participant, recalled:⁵

¹ Bank, J.Th.M. et al., "De Nieuwste Tijd : 1813 tot heden," Groningen, 1993, pg. 172. Also, De Bruin, H.P., "Het Gelders Rivierenland uit zijn Isolement," Zutphen, 1988, pp. 112-113.

² *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th Edition, vol. 7, pg. 881. Officially called the *European Recovery Program*, this \$12 Billion U.S.-sponsored program was unofficially named for Secretary of State George C. Marshall, who first advocated it publicly in 1947. Through the 4 years of its existence [1948-52], the countries of Western Europe were able to recover [gross national products rose 15 to 25 percent], and thus avoid economic and social instability like that which caused WWII in the first place.

³ Verkuil, G., "Het is erger dan wij hadden kunnen vermoeden," in : *Brabants Dagblad*, 15-09-1995. In Hedel 80 % of the houses were destroyed and 15 % heavily damaged, while at Ammerzoden only 35 of the 320 houses were still habitable after the war.

⁴ Verkuil, G., "Jan Rooseboom trok Waard mee uit de klei," in : *Brabants Dagblad*, 31-03-1993. The university team was headed by Prof. L. van Vuuren.

⁵ Van Tuyl-de Boer, T., "The story of Arie and Adriana van Tuyl," Wellandport, Ontario, Canada, 1985, pg. 8. See: *Dutch Genealogy*, [A1.2.4.1.4.7.4.4.1.4].

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We were encouraged to learn as much as we could through night courses. In the little town nearby [Zaltbommel] there was a night course given in agriculture, which dealt mainly with fruit growing. I went two nights a week for twelve weeks The teacher of this course was the manager of a government experimental farm. That spring [1936] he asked if I would like to work for him. I gladly accepted. They grew various kinds of fruit on the experimental farm: peaches, plums and melons. They grew cucumbers in greenhouses and they also grew strawberries in big greenhouses, which was something new.

During the war the *Committee* transformed itself into the *Foundation for the Stimulation of Prosperity in the Bommelerwaard*. This foundation undertook to stimulate both the agricultural and socio-cultural development of the region.⁶ In wartime little was possible, but afterward, assisted by the national and provincial government and the agricultural organizations, the *Foundation* redoubled its efforts.⁷ This was to be the beginning of a total transformation for an area bogged down by centuries of status quo.

Although the bridges near Zaltbommel and Hedel - constructed in the thirties - put an end to the Bommelerwaard's isolation, the postwar Waard's infrastructure was still much the same as it had been for centuries. Main roads ran along the dike tops, and the inner part of the Waard - mostly low, marshy, small plots of little value - were difficult to reach (among other reasons because so many watercourses were without bridges, and therefore difficult to cross).⁸ The *Foundation* aimed to improve roads and water works, educate and train farmers, and - most importantly - to reallocate the available arable land to those who could use it most productively. This *ruilverkaveling* (reallotment) was initially financed through the Marshall Plan.⁹ Needless to say, such a revolution met with mistrust and resistance. But strong leadership, coupled with adequate government funding, saw the program through, from its inception in 1952 to completion in 1976.¹⁰

Postwar Exodus

Despite the rebuilding, many Dutchmen had doubts about the future of postwar Holland. Fearing overpopulation and unemployment, they started thinking about a new future in underpopulated countries like Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. During the 1950s, around 340,000 Dutchmen emigrated to those countries.¹¹ One of them was Gameren-born Arie van Tuyl. After working in

⁶ Verkuil, 31-03-1993.

⁷ De Bruin, pg. 112.

⁸ De Bruin, pg. 102.

⁹ De Bruin, pg. 115. A reallotment plan for Brakel had been approved in 1941. For the Bommelerwaard four plans were developed : Brakel, Hedel and Ammerzoden, the eastern part of the Waard, and the western part (including Gameren). Things got underway with a meeting on 17 May 1950, attended by Sico Mansholt, Minister of Agriculture (and later European Commissioner).

¹⁰ De Bruin, pp. 117 and 126/27. In 1952, regional meetings started to inform the population about the plans; these meetings were continued until the whole reallotment operation was finished in 1976. The main participants were farmers, their wives, and their older sons. Leaders who enjoyed the farmers' confidence included *Foundation* members Jan Rooseboom and Jan Stuyvers.

¹¹ Atlas van Nederland, deel 1, Den Haag, 1984, pg. 16.

several fruit orchards in Zaltbommel, near Utrecht, and in the province of Drenthe, Arie started considering a future abroad:¹²

We started talking about going to Canada. Many families had already gone or were going. So we started to get the necessary papers together. We had received a letter from Canada, telling us that there was a place open for us around St.Catharines in the Niagara Peninsula I think all the people have it in them that they want to get ahead in the world. But after World War II Holland was not the place where you could do that. We had three boys and we saw a better future for them in Canada. The Canadians were our liberators. Quite a few of them had Dutch girls as their wives and took them home to Canada. Word came back from them about all the opportunities in Canada We departed from Holland on March 15, 1951 on the ship De Volendam.

In Ontario, Arie van Tuyl worked in the fruit orchards before starting his own horticulture farm, where he grew tomatoes and strawberries as his family had done in Gameren. Around 1960, he went into the trucking business, founding *Van Tuyl Trucking Inc.* Some of his sons later joined him in this business.¹³ Clearly, Arie van Tuyl was successful in Canada. But what if he had stayed in Holland? If the example of his relatives is any guide, Arie might have done well there, too.

The Entrepreneurs

While Arie van Tuyl was carving out a new life in Canada, his relatives in Gameren began - quite literally - to rebuild their world. No longer would their farm production be limited by the cold temperatures that constrained their forbears. Like 20th century farmers the world over, these hard-driving *boeren* would turn to technology to improve their production. In their case, the technology of choice - the *greenhouse*. - would completely change the face of Gameren.

Among the first who started to grow vegetables "under glass" were Hendrik and Leendert van Tuyl, grandsons of Hendrik "the swearer".^{14, 15}

Before and during the war, we practiced mixed farming, growing potatoes, pears, apples, prunes, strawberries and other vegetables. After the war Leendert and I concentrated on tomatoes and strawberries. Together we built a "rolkas" [a greenhouse that could be moved on rails] [with an area of] about 400 square meters. Later we each had our own market garden and Leendert built a greenhouse of 500 square meters. The business flourished and we had to expand it several times. The old "rolkassen" disappeared and were replaced by larger greenhouses. Many of our fellow villagers followed the same pattern. We at Gameren are entrepreneurial people: we saw the opportunity and we made the most of it.

¹² Van Tuyl-de Boer, pp. 19, 22 and 23.

¹³ See: *Dutch Genealogy*, A1.2.4.1.4.7.4.4.8.

¹⁴ See: *Dutch Genealogy*, Hendrik van Tuyl [A1.1.1.1.1.4b.2.5b.2] built a new farm on the Florenshof, and Leendert [A1.1.1.1.1.4b.2.5b.9] lived on the family's farm at Burgerstraat 24.

¹⁵ Interview with Hendrik van Tuyl [A1.1.1.1.1.4b.2.5b.2], 10-08-1995.

A Van Tuyl Farm ~ Then and Now



Young Leendert van Tuyl [left] poses with his sisters [Maria, top center, and Heiltje, 4th from right] and some neighbor women after harvesting the family's strawberry fields along Gameren's Burgerstraat *circa* 1955. Some 40 years later, young women harvest the same fields - this time picking chrysanthemums beneath a glass canopy. Gameren's Van Tuyls - along with many other farmers - turned to greenhouse horticulture in the 1960s and 70s, directing their efforts toward flowers and vegetables for export markets. Leendert van Tuyl first erected greenhouses on his farm in 1978. Today [1990s], the entire farm is under glass.



But by the 1960s, competition from strawberry growers in southern Europe had grown so strong that many producers in Gameraen turned to completely new crops - like sweet peppers, or even flowers.¹⁶ Though some farmers combined flower cultivation with vegetable growing, most tended to specialize in one or the other. Antonie van Tuyl, for example, specialized in food crops.¹⁷ He began in 1972 with a 1200 square meter greenhouse planted in strawberries and tomatoes; enlarged it to 4300 square meters by 1980, when he added peppers; and was producing organically-grown peppers under 24,000 square meters [5.9 acres] of glass by 1991.¹⁸ Those who chose to specialize in flower production enjoyed similar, spectacular growth. Leendert van Tuyl and his son Otto Leendert built their first chrysanthemum greenhouse in 1978: it covered 7000 square meters [1.7 acres] of the family farm. By 1992, virtually the entire Van Tuyl farm was under glass (26,000 m²: 6.4 acres - devoted entirely to growing chrysanthemums for the auction market).¹⁹ The booming flower industry had become one of Holland's most important export generators by the 1980s.^{20,21} In Gameraen, chrysanthemums became the main crop, but freesias - and even orchids - were also being produced.²²

To a large extent, this tremendous business growth - and its attendant prosperity - was made possible by the *reallotment*. In the western area of the Bommelerwaard the program began around 1965 and was completed a decade later. Altogether, an area of more than 4,400 hectares [10,873 acres] was completely reformed. Thirty farms were removed and 29 new farms were built in the former marshlands outside the villages. The old *dorpolders* [dike cooperatives] were abolished in 1954 and merged into one *polderdistrict*. This elimination of overlapping authorities helped

¹⁶ Verkuil, G. & Ermstrang, H., "75 Jaar vruchtbaar veilen," Zaltbommel, 1992, pg. 1.

¹⁷ See *Dutch Genealogy*: Antonie van Tuyl [A1.1.1.1.1.4.5.7.2.2].

¹⁸ Verkuil & Ermstrang, pg. 5. Vegetable crops such as sweet peppers [*paprika's* in Dutch], yielded 63.3 guilders per square meter in 1994, but by 1995 - due partly to increased foreign competition - the yield had fallen to 60.7 guilders per square meter [*Source*: NRC Handelsblad, 20 December, 1995].

¹⁹ In 1993 Leendert retired from farm management, having sold his operation to sons Rochus and David van Tuyl, who now own and operate the business.

²⁰ Phillips, M.J., "Destination the Netherlands," Jersey, pg.88. By 1990, the flower industry was earning the country about 4 billion guilders yearly in export revenues. Flowers are sold daily at ten auctions throughout the country. The largest are the *Westland* (between The Hague and Rotterdam) and *Aalsmeer* (close to Schiphol Airport). Together, these two auctions handle over 75 percent of the country's total production. Aalsmeer's proximity to Schiphol means that flowers for export can be on their way to New York or Singapore within hours.

²¹ By 1990 almost 70 % of the international trade in flowers passed through the Netherlands, though by 1995 that figure had dropped to 59 %. Exports of cut flowers from the Netherlands in 1994 totalled 6.8 billion units with a total value of 3.6 billion guilders [about \$2.2 billion]. By 1985, The Netherlands was exporting 200 million guilders [\$125 M] worth of cut flowers to the United States. By 1994, this had dropped to 120 million guilders [\$75M] [*Source*: NRC Handelsblad, 11-08-1995].

²² The chrysanthemum was introduced in The Netherlands around 1900 from China and Japan (Van Wijlen, B., "De Bommelerwaard, een stukje agrarisch Nederland," Zaltbommel, pp. 39 and 41). Sons of Leendert van Tuyl, like Otto Leendert, Rochus, and David are chrysanthemum growers.

speed the later restructuring.²³ Land was distributed to those who already owned small parcels, but needed more land to really prosper. Those who owned as little as 1 hectare were in principle qualified to receive a market garden. Officials purchased property from large farmers who didn't want to continue farming, and distributed this land to qualified small farmers who did. Qualified horticulturists were allowed to borrow large amounts of money against very moderate collateral.²⁴ When all was said and done, this formerly backward agrarian region (where farmers had still been paying *tithes* at the turn of the century) found itself transformed into a thoroughly up-to-date agribusiness enclave run by owner-farmers. Absentee ownership had all but vanished, with predictably positive results.

But there had been opposition, of course, to this forced modernization. Hendrik van Tuyl, a progressive-minded Gameren native who served on the reallocation committee recalled:²⁵

Although the reallocation was a shot in the arm for the economic situation, that did not mean it was easy to convince everyone of its importance. For many, it was a drastic break with the past, the familiar environment, and traditions. But it has brought prosperity [to a region] where some decades ago poverty was normal.

As one farmer pointed out:²⁶

Before the reallocation my yearly income was around 6,000 guilders. During the first year of the new enterprise it more than doubled, and by the third year it was 22,000 guilders.

Land reform, it seems, had worked its economic miracle in the *Land of the Van Tuyls*.

Wholesale Trade It Would Be

At the same time that Hendrik and Leendert van Tuyl were building their first greenhouses, just half a mile east on the Burgerstraat another Hendrik van Tuyl wondered what the future held for him.²⁷ As a boy during the 1930s, he had seen what poverty could do, and he wanted none of it. An ambitious farm lad, his secret wish had been to join the *Agricultural Consulting Authority*. But a lack of education made this impossible, so after completing school he started to work on his father's farm. Like so many of the local farms, the Van Tuyl property along the Burgerstraat produced a variety of crops, including potatoes, strawberries and all sorts of vegetables. A few cows and pigs were kept for family consumption. But Hendrik ["Henk"] van Tuyl set his sights far beyond the Burgerstraat:²⁸

Before and during my military service I took several courses. Among others was a

²³ De Bruin, pp. 268/69.

²⁴ Repayment term was 30 years.

²⁵ Interview Hendrik van Tuyl, 10-08-1995.

²⁶ De Bruin, pg. 302.

²⁷ See: *Dutch Genealogy*, [A1.1.1.1.1.3.12.2.4]. He was born and raised on a farm just to the east of the one where Jan Otten van Tuyl - the progenitor of America's Van Tuyls - once lived.

²⁸ Interview with Hendrik Abram [Henk] van Tuyl, 20-11-1995.

professional training course in wholesale trade. I didn't like working in the fields and became more and more interested in trade. Before I joined the army I started to lease orchards, together with my uncle Bram van de Werken. I was also a trainee at an export trade [firm] at Breda. When I returned from the service - early in the fifties - I had made up my mind: wholesale trade it would be.

Failing to get a job with any established export firm, Henk set out on his own. Perched on a motorized bicycle, he called on farmers in the neighborhood, buying potatoes and bulk vegetables such as cabbages and carrots from them at wholesale. In October, 1953 he set out to sell this produce, touring in a hired van to greengrocer's shops northeast of Utrecht.²⁹

At our first stop we sold several boxes of potatoes and we had high expectations for the day. But it was a miscalculation because at the end of the day that first success wasn't followed by others. So we returned to Gameren with a nearly-full van (after sunset because we didn't want the villagers to witness our failure).

Despite his early setbacks, Henk van Tuyl persevered, building his business bit-by-bit through the 1950s. He bought an old 1939 Ford van to use for deliveries. Specializing in wholesale trade of potatoes, he worked out of a tiny [50 square meter] shed, continuing to drive the ancient Ford up until the day the police declared it unfit for use. But his perseverance finally paid off, and by 1958 he had a new van, a larger [400 square meter] shed, an employee, and a locally-built sorting machine. Henk was on his way to success.

The Potato King

Henk van Tuyl's business grew year after year, and he noticed an interesting trend: more and more of his shipments were bound for foreign destinations. Seizing the opportunity, he set up an export business - *Potato International, Inc.* - and a road transport business to go with it:³⁰

On a rainy evening in November, 1964 I stood on the quay in Rotterdam harbor looking at a ship leaving for Colombo, Ceylon carrying my potatoes. It gave me such a great feeling that I decided to deliver each shipment [to the port] personally. (Later, I realized that lack of time made this impossible).

The growing popularity of French fried potatoes gave another boost to his growing business (by the late 1960s it had become the *Van Tuyl Food Group*). Henk became not only a major supplier of frozen French fries in his own right, but also a part owner of other factories (located in the province of Limburg and near Schiphol Airport). As his business exploded, Henk found himself the victim of too much success: the neighbors were complaining about the constant coming and going of his delivery trucks. Once again, the *reallotment* program came to the rescue - through that program, Henk was allowed to build a new facility on previously undeveloped land near the new provincial road. By 1978 he constructed a cold storage warehouse on the site, which he used not only for his own product, but for that of other producers. *Van Tuyl Cold Storage* had been born in this era of unprecedented opportunity for Bommelerwaard farmers and entrepreneurial

²⁹ Interview with Hendrik Abram [Henk] van Tuyl, 20-11-1995.

³⁰ Interview with Hendrik Abram [Henk] van Tuyl, 20-11-1995.

businessmen. Today, 30 Van Tuyl trucks - as well as numerous other delivery vans - ply the roads of Europe, delivering the French fried potato to customers far and wide. The potato - not introduced to the fields of Gameren until the 18th century - had made all this possible. Today, the giant *Van Tuyl* logo, writ large in illuminated red letters, marks the spot that finally put Gameren on the map of Europe.³¹

Books For The Masses

After World War II, the Dutch people - victims of a war between ideologies as much as between armies - found themselves living on the frontier between the Western free market system and the Eastern Communist empire. They were hungry for news, ideas, and entertainment through the media of radio, television and books. Reading became increasingly popular in all levels of society.³² This new trend influenced the way in which books were distributed. Before the war they were mostly hardcover items, sold exclusively through bookstores, or - infrequently - directly by the publishers. But as the postwar demand for books grew by leaps and bounds, traditional channels of distribution simply could not cope.³³

One of the people who saw this trend very clearly was Jan van Tuyl, the bookseller and WWII soldier. In September, 1945 he returned from Belgium and immediately began several book and magazine enterprises.^{34, 35} His main ambition, however, was to open the world of books to the common people. With this goal in mind, he founded his own publishing company, *Jan van Tuyl B. V.*, with offices in Zaltbommel and Antwerp. Starting with the *Triomfrees* (Triumph series) he published around ten books each year, sometimes with printings of 100,000 copies. These books were distributed through direct mail, leading to enormous printings - up to 2 million copies in a single mailing.³⁶

Not surprisingly, Jan van Tuyl kept a keen eye on foreign developments in the manufacture and distribution of books. One role model was Allen Lane's *Penguin Books* in England. Starting back in 1935, Lane had met resistance from traditional booksellers, so he went directly to Woolworth, a

³¹ In the late 1980s, Henk van Tuyl, having suffered some setbacks in the potato futures market, sold his potato processing business to the McCain Company of Canada. He retained the cold storage and transport business, in partnership with his son Bram.

³² Visser, R., "De Grote Sprong Voorwaarts," in *Boeken in Nederland*, Amsterdam, 1979, pg. 92.

³³ Van der Stoep, D., "Over Honderd Jaar Vak- en Standsorganisaties," in *Het Lam voor de Glazen*, Baarn, 1977, pg. 165.

³⁴ Information from Mrs. E. van Tuyl-Hak and Hendrikus van Tuyl. At first he sold books for the *Winkler Prins* Encyclopedia, but by 1946 had founded the *Centraal Boekhuis* in Antwerp. The company was in operation till 1950; the name was later sold to the *Centraal Boekhuis* in The Netherlands.

³⁵ He also tried to buy the popular government-published magazine *Kijk*. When this didn't succeed, he founded the illustrated magazine *Vizier*, with its office in Amsterdam. The magazine was later bought by the printer, *Rotagravure* in Leiden, and still exists under the name *Televizier*.

³⁶ Information from Mrs. E. van Tuyl-Hak and Hendrikus van Tuyl. Later came the also successful *Omnia* book series.



The year is 1954, and Henk van Tuyl [above] delivers Gameren's produce to outlets around the country in his 1939 Ford. Henk's business prospered in a big way, allowing him to afford his favorite hobby: horses. By 1969 [below] he was able to drive his horse *Rumanus* to victory in the Dutch national equestrian driving competition. [Photos courtesy Henk van Tuyl].



low-price “dime” store, who put his books directly on their shelves, where they sold 64,000 copies in the first week!³⁷ After the War, these “pocket” books caught on in the U.S., so Jan van Tuyl sent a representative to the United States to learn how to sell low-cost paperback books in supermarkets. The news was exciting: people couldn’t get enough of these titles. So Jan van Tuyl founded yet another publishing venture, this time dedicated to paperback books.³⁸ He also set up an arrangement with a distributor to supply grocery stores and tobacco shops.³⁹ In this way people in smaller villages without bookstores could get access to his paperbacks, and busy postwar shoppers could be enticed by the convenience of buying popular books at their frequently-visited establishments. This paperback revolution breathed new life into the book selling business.⁴⁰

But traditional booksellers were skeptical. After all, books were items of culture, not something to be sold in the grocery store! On the other hand, to sell the despised *paperbacks* in a traditional book shop would require them to be cordoned off from the *real* books. Sales revenue would surely fall. The booksellers were frightened by this new phenomenon.⁴¹ They appealed for help to the head of their trade association, who went straight to the government for protection.⁴² They were not to be disappointed. The chairman of the small bookseller’s association appealed to the Ministry of Economic Affairs for help in stamping out Jan van Tuyl’s enterprise. He argued - probably correctly - that Van Tuyl was threatening the existing system. The Ministry was convinced, and on 28 November, 1958 issued a directive declaring that the selling of books was only to be permitted in traditional bookstores!⁴³

Now, it had become a question of rights and freedom - a point of principle. Jan van Tuyl would not be moved.

The *Economic Control Agency* swept into action, visiting grocery stores, summoning grocers that sold paperbacks to court. For more than a year an all-out legal battle raged. Jan van Tuyl found the press and the public opinion on his side, and even one of the officials of the Economic Control Agency informed him that in his private opinion the case was wrong.⁴⁴ Also, book publishers

³⁷ Zaal, W., “Rijksdaalder-pockets,” in : *Elsevier*, 27-05-1995.

³⁸ The new publishing company, *De Bron*, started with the *Diana*-series, followed in 1958 by the *Bel* paperbacks.

³⁹ Oral information from Mrs. E. van Tuyl-Hak and Hendrikus van Tuyl.

⁴⁰ Van Rosmalen, J., “Economische wederwaardigheden van boekhandel en uitgeverij tussen de jaren 1877 en 1977,” in : *Het Lam voor de Glazen*, Baarn, 1977, pg. 147.

⁴¹ Visser, pg. 96.

⁴² Van der Stoep, pp. 165-166. At the time, three organizations protected the interests of the trade: the *Koninklijke Nederlandse Uitgeversbond* (the publishers), founded in 1880; the *Vereeniging tot Bevordering van de Belangen des Boekhandels* (booksellers), founded in 1815; and the *Nederlandse Boekverkopersbond* (booksellers), founded in 1907. H.M. Blok, chairman of the latter organization, brought the case against Jan van Tuyl to the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

⁴³ Van Rosmalen, pg. 148.

⁴⁴ Oral information mrs. E. van Tuyl-Hak and Hendrikus van Tuyl.

finally got the idea that sales to the masses meant more total sales - more business for all.⁴⁵

Assisted by one of Holland's leading law firms, Van Tuyl finally brought his case before the Supreme Court, and there he won. On 22 March, 1960, the Court declared the Ministry's directive contrary to article 7 of the Constitution.⁴⁶ But even after this ruling, the booksellers apparently had the Ministry in their pocket: in 1961, their trade associations were able to cut a deal with the bureaucrats legalizing the sale of books in supermarkets and other outlets so long as those books cost less than 3 guilders, and so long as certain regulations were obeyed. It was *Freedom of the Press* - sort of.⁴⁷ Jan van Tuyl had won his battle of principles, but at great cost. Exhausted from the ordeal, and with his companies reeling under the economic impact of protracted lawsuits and stifled sales, Jan van Tuyl, bookseller, decided to sell out. Others would later reap the rewards in the field he pioneered.⁴⁸

The Greenhouse Revolt

The postwar era had worked miracles for the Dutch. By the last decade of the century, the country was prosperous as never before. Nowhere was this more evident than in Gameren, traditionally one of the country's poorest villages. The Van Tuyls and their neighbors were doing well, indeed. To a visitor experiencing the area for the first time, the agrarian spirit shone through the modern facade as clearly and beautifully as it had for the Dutch poet of the early 1900s:⁴⁹

*Thinking of Holland
I see broad rivers
languidly winding
through endless fen.
Lines of incredibly
tenuous poplars
like giant plumes
on the polder's rim;
and sunk in tremendous
open expanses,
the farmsteads scattered
across the plain:*

*coppices, hamlets,
squat towers and churches
and elms composing
a rich domain.
Low leans the sky
and slowly the sun
in mist of mother-
of-pearl grows blurred,
and far and wide
the voice of the water
of endless disaster
is feared and heard.*

Indeed, the water was still a threat as the 20th century drew to a close. During the first week of

⁴⁵ Furstner, H. & Van der Stoep, D., "Jaren weten meer dan boeken," Baarn, 1980, pg. 74. The magazine of the Publishers' Organization [*Koninklijke Nederlandse Uitgeversbond*] published an article stating the pro-paperback case.

⁴⁶ Van der Stoep, pg. 167. "*Niemand heeft voorafgaand verlot nodig om door de drukpers gedachten of gevoelens te openbaren, behoudens ieders verantwoordelijkheid voor de wet.*" "No one needs prior permission to make ideas or opinions public through printing, subject to responsibility under the law."

⁴⁷ Van Rosmalen, pg. 148.

⁴⁸ Information from Mrs. E. van Tuyl-Hak and Hendrikus van Tuyl. Both *De Bron* and *Uitgeverij Jan van Tuyl B.V.* were taken over by *Drukkerij Breepols* in Turnhout, Belgium. Jan van Tuyl remained as manager for a time, then left to found his last enterprise: *Centrale Uitgeversmaatschappij* at Zaltbommel.

⁴⁹ Hennie Marsman (1899-1940), "Thinking of Holland," as translated by James Brockway in *The Literary Review*, vol. 2, 1961-62.

Chapter 21

February, 1995, as floods from the rain-swollen rivers Rhine, Maas and Waal threatened to engulf their homes, farms, and businesses, a quarter of a million Dutch people learned what it felt like to be refugees. Heavy rains had raised the rivers of the Rhine Delta to the point where dikes were starting to fail. Something had to be done. On Monday, January 30, government authorities - who for years had neglected the river dikes in favor of coastal flood control projects - issued the order: *evacuate!*^{50,51,52} And evacuate they did: 250,000 people, more than 1.5 million chickens, 50,000 sheep, 450,000 pigs and 500,000 cattle took to the roads. In the Bommelerwaard, shops and schools closed about 1 PM, and the bridges at Zaltbommel and Hedel - the lifelines to the north and south - were soon clogged with cars and trucks.⁵³ During the evening houses were emptied as lights burned through the night as if an invasion were on its way. People loaded up trailers and vans with furniture, bikes, refrigerators, video recorders and anything else they could manage. By early Tuesday morning, Zaltbommel and Gameren looked like ghost towns. The last people to leave passed through whole farming areas devoid of people, animals, and other signs of life. They were reminded of how fragile their existence had become beneath the walls of water that surrounded their homes.

By midweek the crisis had reached its peak. Near Ochten in the Tielerwaard and Hurwenen in the Bommelerwaard, weak spots in the dike threatened to give way, and water started to pour over the dikes. Television viewers around the world could watch emergency workers struggle day and night to reinforce the levees as water poured through at weak points. This frantic effort, along with a fortuitous drop in the river level later in the week, saved the Bommelerwaard, though vast areas north of the Waal were inundated. By Sunday morning the people of the Bommelerwaard were allowed to return home. Other areas followed one day later.

But not everyone had obeyed the evacuation order.

"According to the law, we don't exist any more," said Rochus van Tuyl, looking one night that week out of his window over the abandoned village.⁵⁴ He was one of the many greenhouse horticulturists who stayed behind, in hiding, knowing that they would face heavy losses -possibly

⁵⁰ An estimated 100,000 people in the *Land van Maas en Waal*, some areas near Nijmegen and the *Bommelerwaard* were evacuated, along with about 140,000 from the *Tielerwaard* and *Culemborgerwaard* and areas near Gorinchem.

⁵¹ Government authorities have been faced not only with capital spending decisions, but also with environmentally-based objection to raising the dikes. As the populated dry land of the Rhine Delta continues to sink year after year, and as peak flows increase due to development of the watershed upstream, dikes must be raised ever higher to protect property. Environmental activists note that raising dikes does not fix the problem, it simply delays the day of reckoning. Residents of *polderland* see nothing but ruin for themselves if the dikes should fail. Government is caught between these points of view.

⁵² The level of the Waal at Zaltbommel in January & February is normally 4.5 meters above A.P. (*Amsterdams Peil*-- the reference datum). In 1995 the level had reached 7.45 meters above A.P., versus 7.61 meters in 1861 - the last time the Bommelerwaard flooded [*De Toren*, 09-02-1995, pg. 1].

⁵³ In coming trucks to be used for livestock evacuation jammed the inbound roads as well.

⁵⁴ *Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 04-02-1995.

financial ruin - if they failed to protect their crops:

For us it was impossible to leave. We had to look after our flowers, the heating system, the lighting and the manuring. And what if the computer should fail? Then all the flowers would have gone. ⁵⁵

But the greenhouse men were surrounded by police and Army special forces, who had orders to allow only emergency-permit holders in or out. Defying the blockade, these high-tech farmers telephoned friends and workers on the outside, some of whom risked arrest to sneak through the perimeter so they could help harvest flowers under glass. Tensions mounted steadily during the week as the farmers became desperate to get their crops to market. With profit margins cut to the bone by international competition, flower growers faced severe losses should they fail to market even one harvest.⁵⁶ Chrysanthemum grower Otto van Tuyl described the situation:⁵⁷

...there were plans for a combined break-out [through the blockade, in trucks] but it was canceled when we heard that the evacuation would be ended on Sunday. That day - in spite of the long tradition of Sunday rest - everyone worked very hard to harvest the flowers and transport them to the auction. We even got assistance from colleagues outside the Bommelerwaard.

For their defiance of the evacuation order, and despite their substantial losses, the greenhouse men were denied the 500 guilder damage payment the government doled out to every family evacuated from the flood zone. But unlike their distant cousin Henry M. Van Tuyl of Ohio, who in 1913 refused to leave his flood-threatened home, the Gameren Van Tuyls were lucky enough to avoid being swept away by the angry floodwaters. Once again, they had survived.

Postscript

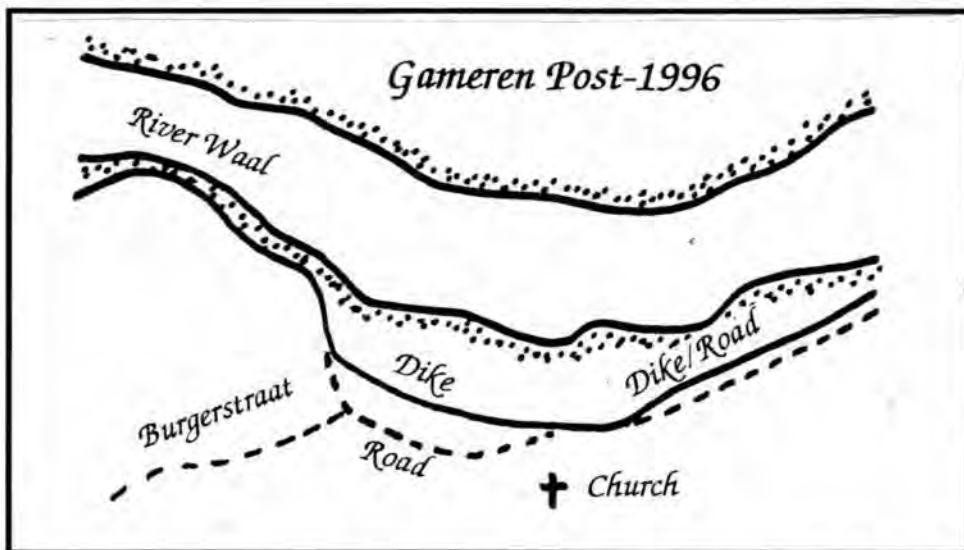
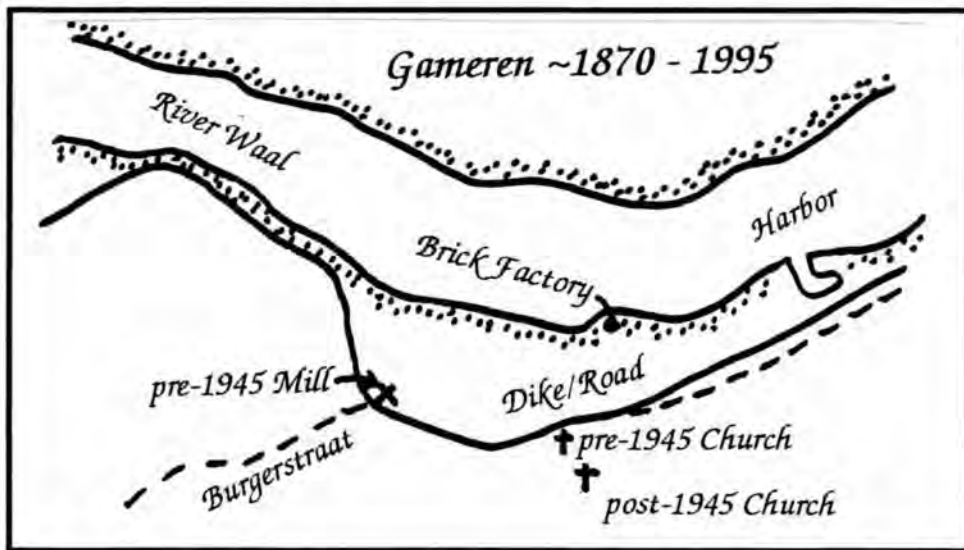
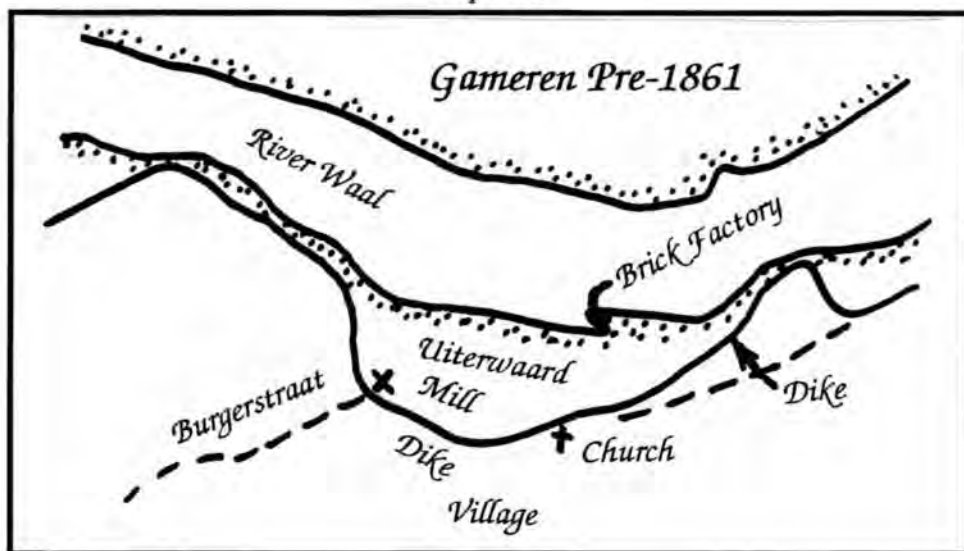
In the evacuation's aftermath the Dutch government acted swiftly. Just 2 months after the flood, they had passed the necessary legislation to enable river dike repair. By June, construction was underway along the Waal, and by fall Gameren had the basic structure of a new dike.⁵⁸ But the threat still remained in this strange world where people live below a wall of water on land that sinks lower year by year. After a thousand-year battle, the issue of who owned the land - man or the river - was still far from being settled.

⁵⁵ Reformatorisch Dagblad, 04-02-1995 [quoting Rochus van Tuyl].

⁵⁶ The chrysanthemum business - a specialty of the Van Tuyls of Gameren - is under particular pressure. Costs of production per flower in 1995 were 0.35-0.40 guilders in summer and 0.80-1.00 guilders in winter. But 1995 auction prices averaged 0.05-0.10 guilders below production costs. Competition from countries such as Colombia, Italy, Israel, Spain, and Kenya (which now comprise 25 % of world cut flower sales) seem to be the biggest problem. Cut flower exports to the United States decreased in value from 200 million to 120 million guilders between 1985 and 1994 . [Sources: NRC Handelsblad, 11-08-1995; Brabants Dagblad, 02-08-1995].

⁵⁷ Vakblad voor de Bloemisterij, 10-02-1995, pg. 25.

⁵⁸ After the flood and evacuation of 1995, the Dutch government decided to improve about 160 kilometers of dike along the rivers Maas, Waal and IJssel over a period of one year. Between Zaltbommel and Nieuwaal the existing dike was enlarged and raised by about 1 meter. In the Gamerense *uiterwaard* a completely new dike was constructed [free of auto traffic], and the entire *uiterwaard* was transformed into a nature conservation area, leaving some creeks to flow freely into the Waal.



[Photo: Wm. Hoogteyling; Collection: J.N.A. Groenendijk]



Today's residents of *polderland* along the river Waal live beneath a wall of water that can rise as high as dike level [6 meters=20 feet] above them. Early dikes were perhaps half the height of today's modern earthworks, and they failed several times per century. But since 1861, there has been no flooding of the Bommelerwaard, because modern organization and construction techniques have kept one step ahead of disaster. The village of Gameren [left] has undergone several stages of dike improvement since it last flooded in 1861:

Pre-1861: 3-4 meter dikes built and maintained by local people were failing badly. In 1861, they broke, causing the entire Bommelerwaard to flood to a depth of several meters, and to freeze over, leaving nothing but housetops visible to those who ventured over the ice sheet.

About 1870: A new dike was constructed between Zaltbommel and Gameren, with a portion of the eastern part of the village being abandoned to the river, and a harbor built in the enlarged *uiterwaard*. This dike also became the main east-west thoroughfare, with road improvements being added in mid-20th century to handle automobile traffic.

1996: Pursuant to near-disasters in 1993 and 1995, the Dutch government raised the dike level by about 1 meter, adding a new section to reclaim a portion of the *uiterwaard* floodplain. Some environmentally-conscious measures were instituted, but the perennial flood problem remains: the river continues to rise due to upstream development, and the land continues to sink. Ultimate resolution of this problem remains uncertain after roughly 1000 years of man-vs-nature.



As crews [top] struggled round-the-clock during the first week of February, 1995 to shore up failing dikes along the Waal, Dutch police [bottom] cordoned off evacuated areas, allowing no one in or out. But a number of Bommelerwaard greenhouse horticulturalists - including some Van Tuyls - stayed behind to save their crops (Collection: J.N.A. Groenendijk. Credits:Wm. Hoogteyling [top]; Harry Pelgrim [bottom]).

