



Pastor
Sjouke Rijper

Born on September 12, 1884, in Amsterdam
Murdered on November 28, 1944, in Leusden

Preface

Amersfoort, The Netherlands, August 2006

This website is created in memory of Sjouke Rijper; teacher, pastor, missionary, husband of Anna Rijper-Ros, and father of fifteen children. The story is not yet complete. Every now and then, I add bits of information, anecdotes, and documents. Consider it a 'work in progress.'

Pastor Rijper was a devout man. He led a challenging yet fascinating life. There were many stories and documents about him, but they were never compiled. The family book, full of photos and documents that I have the privilege to preserve, has been extensively used for this website. I also drew from a life description written by his wife Anna Rijper-Ros, for the booklet '*Kracht In Zwakheid Geopenbaard*' (Strength Revealed in Weakness), by Rev. Simon J. Popma, in memory of Pastor Rijper.

Sjouke A. Rijper
(Grandson)

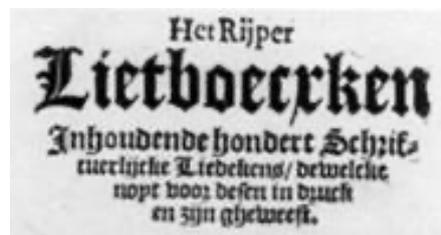
Ancestry

Sjouke Rijper comes from a West Frisian lineage of shipbuilders, skippers, sailors, and fishermen. He owes his last name to a originally marshy village in North Holland. The Mennonite gem of the Schermer Island: De Rijp.



The village where the Rijper family originates becomes a sanctuary for Mennonites halfway through the 16th century. They are chased by the Court of Holland due to their heretical beliefs but are safe in the marshy surroundings of De Rijp. Soldiers have aquaphobia and are unfamiliar with the water-rich area.

Once, De Rijp was connected to the Zuiderzee. The residents are herring fishermen, whalers, shipowners, merchants, ropemakers, coopers, and other craftsmen who earn their living from shipping. The Mennonite Rijpers (or Rijpenaren) are a modest, hardworking people and are also peace-loving. In the second half of the 16th century, they refuse to take up the sword against the Spaniards. Because they are well-off, they buy their military actions from the House of Orange.



Because the Rijper sailors reject violence, they never sail south, where piracy is rampant, but head north, to the Baltic Sea. There, they don't have to defend themselves and can

peacefully fish for herring or whale and buy hemp to turn into rope in their home port. These seafaring believers read their sermons from books, such as the Rijper Sea Postil, and sing from songbooks from their own village.



At the beginning of the 17th century, the landscape around the village changes due to human intervention. One person, to be precise: Jan Adriaenszoon Leeghwater, born in De Rijp and a convinced Mennonite. The Zuiderzee, with its expanding tentacles, gains more and more control over the land. Peat settles and erodes with the tide. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Leeghwater drains various lakes around his hometown, including the Beemster, Purmer, Schermer, and Wormer. Elsewhere in the Dutch Republic, Leeghwater is busy draining as well.

In 1663, nine years after a massive fire almost razes the entire village to the ground, Albertus Cornelis van Rijp is born in De Rijp. Going by the patronymic, the son of a certain Cornelis van Rijp. Albertus is a shipbuilder, a natural profession in that region. In 1602, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) was founded, with a Chamber also established in Enkhuizen. Twenty years later, Enkhuizen also participates in the founding of the Dutch West India Company.

Enkhuizen thus becomes a prosperous trading city. Albert does not stay in his parents' village but moves to Enkhuizen.

Albert works at the VOC shipyard on the Wierdijk. That suggests he is not Mennonite because Mennonites do not get involved with the violent VOC. During his period of work, the Golden Age is past its peak. A decline in prosperity began about thirty years ago when the first of a series of wars with England, France, and Spain broke out. Dutch trade and fishing suffer from significant competition from England, and Enkhuizen, even in its own country, faces competition. Economic activities increasingly shift to Amsterdam, at the expense of activities in northern areas.



During this time of economic downturn, Albert van Rijk marries Neeltje Anna Swaga. At the age of 25, he becomes the father of Johannes Albertuszoon. Albertus himself dies at the age of forty in his hometown. Johannes is only 14 years old at that time. This young man goes into fishing. He sails on the fleet of Enkhuizen. On March 2, 1720, Johannes van Rijk marries Betje Maria Zwagersma.

The economy in Enkhuizen picks up again. In the eighteenth century, the importance of the VOC as an employer in the city grows; dozens of people from Enkhuizen work in the VOC offices, and hundreds work in the warehouses, on the shipyard, in the ropewalk, and on the ships. And then there is also the fishing fleet. Johannes van Rijk sails on one of those boats. With his wife Betje, he has a son on Sunday, March 6, 1735. As is customary, they name him after his father: Johanneszoon van Rijk, also called Jan (van) Rijk in the records. He also grows up in Enkhuizen.

This Johannes combines the profession of a fisherman with that of a grocer. He falls head over heels for a certain Neeltje Hartog. Together they move to the village of Johannes's ancestors: De Rijk, away from the Zuiderzee.

When Johannes is 18, to be precise on Friday, May 18, 1753, he becomes the father of Klaas. In the records, it can be seen that Johannes not only says goodbye to Enkhuizen but also to his last name. Klaas is no longer called Van Rijk but Rijperszoon or Rijper(s). Why? Louis Napoleon, who would introduce the last name in 1811, is not even born at that time. A plausible explanation is that residents of De Rijk are called 'Rijpers'. Johannes lives in De Rijk, is actually called Van Rijk, so he can rightfully call himself a Rijper. Another possibility is that 'Rijper' is his nickname to avoid confusion with his father who has the same name.

Klaas Rijper is a herring fisherman when he marries 20-year-old Maartje Dekker in 1782. They settle in Purmerend and have a son and a daughter: Pieter (1786) and Neeltje (1789). Their eldest son becomes a sailor, and a sailor onshore is often found in 'the little café at the harbor'. In the inn of a certain Markus Haijenga, 24-year-old Pieter falls in love with a woman with the same name as his sister. She is the daughter of the innkeeper: Neeltje Haijenga (23). They marry on May 31, 1812, in Purmerend and have four children: Klaas, Trijntje, Aafje, and Neeltje.

From that family, Trijntje Rijper marries cabinetmaker Sjouke Sjoukes, son of Jacob Sjoukes, ferry skipper/shopkeeper. In their place of residence Oosthuizen, they have a daughter in the summer of 1855: Aafje Sjoukes.

Trijntje's brother, Klaas Rijper, like his father, sails at sea, as a mate, and later, according to a source, as a captain. In 1852, at the age of 28, Klaas marries 20-year-old Cornelia Meijer. They have a son in Purmerend: Pieter Rijper, who, like his father and grandfather, will later become a sailor. Klaas dies in 1873 at the age of 49, in harness: at sea.

On May 2, 1878, Pieter Rijper completes his four-year mandatory military service with the National Militia. Shortly thereafter, he follows in the footsteps of his father Klaas and



grandfather Pieter. Pieter Jr. becomes a boatswain with the Steamship Company Netherlands (SMN) on the mail ship 'Conrad,' a steamship with auxiliary sails that serves on a bi-monthly service to Batavia (Dutch East Indies).

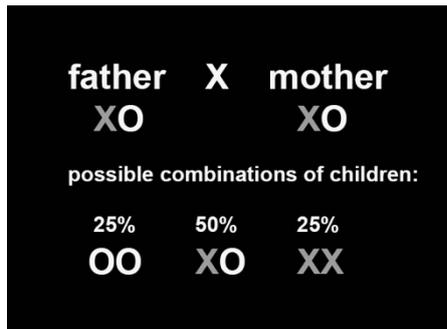
What happens between Pieter (25) and his cousin Aafje (24) during that period is not entirely clear, except that they establish a relationship. Nephew and cousin get married on Wednesday, October 23, 1879, in Den Helder, where the SMN is located. They are in a hurry because the marriage is only 'announced' three days before the wedding day. They receive dispensation from the Public Prosecutor in Alkmaar for the mandatory second announcement because Pieter has to sail again with the 'Conrad' just two days later. The couple does not want to wait for Pieter's return.

Is it true love? Or is speed required because Aafje, during the short period that Pieter is ashore, became pregnant by her cousin? That pregnancy would then result in a miscarriage because no healthy child is born in the first five years of their marriage. Apparently, the relationship is so close (or a divorce is such a disgrace) that they stay together, even despite (or thanks to) Pieter's frequent months-long absences.

Shortly after the opening of the North Sea Canal, the steamships of 'the Company' mainly depart from the Eastern Trade Quay, the Java Quay, and the Sumatra Quay. Therefore, Pieter and Aafje Rijper move from Den Helder to Czaar Peterstraat in Amsterdam.

The absence of offspring in the Rijper family is not surprising given that consanguineous (blood-related) relationships involve inbreeding. In humans, inbreeding results in reduced fertility, a high number of miscarriages, and abnormalities until harmful recessive genes are 'bred out' after about ten generations. The early generations are more susceptible to diseases due to a limited gene pool and weakened immune systems. How does this happen? The website Kennislink explains it as follows:

Each gene has two versions (alleles), which can be compared to two computer files on the same subject but with two different versions stored. When both gene versions are the same, this is called homozygous. Usually, these gene versions differ a little; they are then heterozygous. It may happen that in a heterozygous pair of genes, one of the two gene versions is defective and causes a disease. A second version of the gene that still works can prevent the disease. In other words, if the first version of the gene is broken on a computer, the computer can use the still functioning second version.



The father and mother each have a defective gene version (gray cross) and a good gene version (white circle). The chance that they pass on their defective gene is 50 percent. The chance that their child has both defective versions is therefore 25 percent (=50x50/100).

When the parents of a child are related, there is a greater chance that both possess a defective version of the same gene. Parents pass on only one of their two gene versions to their offspring. The chance is thus 25 percent that both

parents pass on the same defective gene version to their child. Their child now has two defective gene versions, and no 'backup,' making the child susceptible to illness. However, it is not the case that with two different gene versions, one of the two always causes a disease. For example, there are also two gene versions for eye color, namely blue and brown.

A ban on marriages between cousins has never existed in the Netherlands. Article 88 of the old civil code prohibited various unions between blood relatives up to the third degree but not marriage between cousins (fourth degree). The probable reason is that intermarriage within the aristocracy was common.

At that time, only a legal prohibition existed on marriage with a father/mother (first degree), brother/sister (second degree), or uncle/aunt (third degree). Additionally, it was explicitly forbidden to marry an uncle or aunt once removed (sister of the grandmother!). Marrying a brother-in-law or sister-in-law was also not allowed, even though they are not genetically connected. To circumvent these prohibitions, dispensation could be requested from the Crown, which was almost always granted.

Protestants in the past, unlike Catholics, never had an issue with cousin marriages. A significant reason for marrying within the family could be to consolidate 'money and goods.' The Bible also did not pose a barrier. Leviticus 18:6 reads: 'None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness: I am the Lord.' This is followed by a list of marriage and chastity laws, including parents, siblings, aunts/uncles, and even animals. However, there is no prohibition on a sexual relationship/marriage between cousins. Although Protestants were aware that the offspring might have defects, their steadfast trust in the Lord led them to accept the genetic risks of consanguineous marriage.

The descendants apparently dealt awkwardly with the marriage of Pieter and Aaf, as there is no mention of inbreeding in the tradition. According to the same tradition, Aaf Rijper was pregnant eleven times. Two pregnancies resulted in miscarriages. Of the remaining nine children, only three reached adulthood, including the third child born alive in Amsterdam in 1884: Sjouke Rijper.



Research by Marnix Rijper, a great-grandchild of Sjouke, reveals that the Rijper family is associated with a coat of arms. It is a derivative of a master's mark described in the genealogical register in The Hague. It is not an officially registered family coat of arms. The maritime activities of the Rijper family are clearly reflected in it. The shield is executed in gold and blue, with a double diagonal as a separator symbolizing decisiveness. The circles represent the sun and (full) moon. The wavy lines illustrate ebb and flow. The anchor on top of the shield symbolizes security and determination. Additionally, we see laurel coverings in blue and gold, with a gold-blue crest on the helmet with a closed visor.

Early Years

In the early morning of Friday, September 12, 1884, the heavily pregnant Aafje Rijper doesn't feel well. She is alone in her modest home at Czaar Peterstraat 75, on the Eastern Islands of the capital city. Aaf got married in haste five years earlier to the sailor Pieter Rijper. The couple has one son, three-year-old Klaas. Their daughter Trijntje passed away a year earlier, just five weeks after her birth. In terms of genetics, they are not the optimal pair for producing robust offspring; they are first cousins, both grandchildren of the same grandparents. Aafje's mother is a sister of Pieter's father.

Piet is at sea that day, as on many other days. He sails for the Steamship Company Netherlands on the mail ship 'Conrad,' providing a bi-monthly shuttle service for passengers, mail, and cargo via the Suez Canal to and from the Dutch East Indies.

On that day, the 29-year-old Aaf will give birth to her third child. Johanna Brandsen is the midwife and lives a bit further down the street at number 21. When she comes by, she also knows that today is the day. At half past eleven in the evening, a healthy boy is born: Sjouke Rijper, named after Aafje's father, the West Frisian Sjouke Sjoukes. The following Monday, Johanna Brandsen registers the child with the Civil Registry, probably before the then thirty-year-old father at sea is aware of the existence of his second son.

It is the Netherlands in which King Willem III is the reigning monarch and the father of the four-year-old Princess Wilhelmina. Vincent van Gogh is working on "The Potato Eaters," his first grandly conceived painting and masterpiece, in Nuenen, North Brabant. Protestants are in conflict with each other but also oppose Catholics and liberals, leading to the phenomenon of pillarization. Industrialization is in full swing. Steam engines are increasingly applied on a large scale in factories. Despite the growing prosperity, the differences between the rich and poor in Amsterdam in 1884 are significant. Among the wealthy, electricity and the telephone are making their debut, while the middle class often still lacks running water or sewage systems.

For Sjouke, a challenging life begins right away. The Amsterdam family is not well-off. Six pregnancies of Aaf end in miscarriages, most likely due to the fact that she is a first cousin of her husband. Piet Rijper is frequently away at sea, given his maritime profession. When he returns from a long sea voyage to the Dutch East Indies, he discovers that he completely missed a pregnancy (which he himself had caused). By that time, the child has already passed away. It is the era of empty cradles.

When a harbor pilot's position becomes available, Piet suggests to his wife to apply for the job since he would then be home every evening. However, Aafje says, "You better not do it because we have a good marriage now." She knows that Piet is a sailor at heart. Bringing boats from the surf to the harbor is not the same as sailing. Her husband would be unhappy doing anything other than being at sea.

Around the turn of the century, lack of hygiene and proper nutrition plague the family. Breastfeeding is considered indecent in the orthodox-Protestant circles of the Rijpers. Therefore, infants receive a mixture of poor-quality milk and dirty water. All family members sleep in a so-called alcove: a damp, windowless intermediate room with two bedsteads, one for the parents and one for the children. There is little to no ventilation here, which is particularly detrimental to these children with weakened immune systems due to their parents being first cousins.

The consequences are apparent. When Sjouke is one and a half years old, his oldest brother Klaas, then five years old, passes away. In the coming years, Sjouke loses three more sisters and a brother at a young age, presumably to tuberculosis. In the summer of 1901, the family is once again plunged into mourning as Sjouke's four years younger sister, thirteen-year-old Trijntje Rijper, dies from tuberculosis. The family is then living on the third floor of Pieter Vlamingstraat 17, in the Dapperbuurt. Of the nine children born alive, only three remain: Sjouke (16), Cornelis (9), and Klaas (7). The youngest has been given the same name as his grandfather and his two older brothers, both of whom have passed away.

Sjouke Rijper is a 5 feet 9 tall, intelligent young man from Amsterdam with dark curly hair and bright eyes, but with a delicate constitution. On December 23, 1903, the then 19-year-old Sjouke is exempted from military service in the National Militia due to physical defects. Reason number 214 of the medical examination regulation is cited, indicating "a significant deformity of the collarbone, when it hinders the carrying and handling of weapons and leather goods." Number 233 is also mentioned: inflammation of the stomach, small intestines, large intestines, and/or the appendix. Although he is academically inclined, pursuing studies at the gymnasium and later at the university is not an option for him. This is due to financial reasons, but also because the eldest son at home cannot be spared. However, he can attend the teacher training college, which he completes smoothly. On April 22, 1903, shortly after the major railway strikes that paralyzed the entire country, Sjouke obtains his Teaching Certificate. This occurs in the aftermath of the school struggle, during which denominational education fought for nearly a century for recognition.



Teacher

In 1903, he teaches for five months in Naarden and then moves to Alblasserdam. During this period, an interesting incident occurs. While discussing the Liquor Law of 1904 at a meeting of the Anti-Revolutionary Propagation Club, 19-year-old Sjouke insults the then Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper is also the founder of the financially supported Free University (where Sjouke would have liked to attend) and is behind 'the Doleantie': the separation from the Dutch Reformed Church and joining the Reformed Church.

For unclear reasons, Sjouke spreads lies about Kuyper and later regrets it. He feels remorse and confesses on June 14, 1904, in a confused letter, admitting guilt to Kuyper, whom he deeply admires. He writes to him: "And now, one more plea to you. Can you forgive me for the evil committed in my youthful recklessness, that vile slander, if I solemnly declare that I feel and know that God has forgiven me for that sin through Christ's atoning blood?" It is not known whether Kuyper replied to him.

From 1905, Sjouke teaches at the Funenschool in Amsterdam, one of the first Christian schools in the city. "He loves children, and children are drawn to him," writes Reverend Popma, a family acquaintance, who has met Reverend Rijper several times and had extensive conversations with him.

At the age of 23, the young teacher becomes seriously ill. What affected his siblings also affects him: tuberculosis. In 1907, Sjouke spends seven months at the People's Sanatorium Hellendoorn. Tuberculosis forces him to practically live with only one lung. When he is discharged, he can return to teaching but is not allowed to pursue further studies. He needs to rest. However, he cannot. He has a fervent desire to become a minister. After school, he studies theology in bed. He reads everything about theology, exegesis, church history, and the languages Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. In June 1908, Sjouke obtains the diploma allowing him to teach at a School with the Bible. A year later, he passes his main certificate.



Fortunately, Sjouke can still enjoy life. He appreciates the beauty of women. In Amsterdam, at the age of 25, he meets Anna Ros, two years his junior and not unattractive. She was born in Leiden on July 30, 1886, as the eldest daughter of grocer Pieter Ros and Johanna Smit. When Ros' store in Leiden burns down, he becomes a warehouse manager in an Amsterdam warehouse for a supplier to the Royal Navy. Piet Ros, grandson of the English Maria Elisabeth Furley, attends

the same church as Piet Rijper: the Funenkerk. They become friends. Boys and girls are separated in the church. Brother Sjouke on the balcony to the right of the pulpit, Anna on the left balcony. There is eye contact. Anna later recounts: "When I walked out of the church, he suddenly walked beside me every time." On Thursday, March 31, 1910, Sjouke and Anna marry in the Keizersgrachtkerk. It becomes a fruitful marriage with a total of fifteen children.

During the period around that marriage, Sjouke came into contact with Reverend Jan van Lonkhuijzen, also a 'doctor in sacred theology.' On the instructions of the General Synod of the Reformed Churches, he had traveled to Argentina in 1908 to visit the dispersed Reformed farmers ('the scattered') and to assess whether a Protestant Christian life could be further expanded there.

The Netherlands is one of the first countries to recognize the independence of the Republic of Argentina in the early 19th century. As early as 1825, there is a Dutch consulate in Buenos Aires. The close contacts at the time mainly arise from trade and lead to the migration of many Dutch settlers seeking their fortune in the vast and promising Argentina in the second half of the nineteenth century. This emigration is primarily a result of a crisis in Dutch agriculture. Unemployment and poverty prompt many to leave the Netherlands. In Argentina, the development of employment opportunities looks favorable at that time. Craftsmen can easily find work, albeit often under worse living and working conditions than in Europe. Argentina is hot, dusty, and the facilities are very limited.

The Argentine government can make good use of the labor force and encourages immigration from especially Northern Europeans to the sparsely populated agricultural areas of the country in many ways. For this purpose, so-called '*Oficinas de Informacion y Propaganda*' (Informative and Propaganda Offices) are established in several European cities. To enable future immigrants to make the journey, these offices issue '*pasajes subsidiarios*' (subsidized passages). The Argentine government covers the cost of the crossing to 'the south.'

But, as the propaganda wants to believe, it is not that simple. Although Argentina has an abundance of fertile farmland, it is one vast wilderness: everything still needs to be cultivated. It is hot, dry, and dusty, and the facilities are minimal. Many Dutch return shortly after arrival, disillusioned. The price of emigration is high; most families lose one or even several family members.

Building a life requires a lot of perseverance. A significant group of Protestant-Christian farmers in Dutch colonies persists, and with success. Supported by their faith, they eventually manage to thrive. Around the turn of the century, the economic tide turns, and Argentina flourishes. From 1899 to 1929, the country undergoes tremendous economic development. New railways open up large parts of the country, facilitating the transportation of meat and agricultural products. Argentina becomes one of the ten richest countries in the world. The Dutch Protestant-Christian population in Argentina grows with prosperity but remains without pastors and corresponding education in this predominantly Catholic country. The 'lambs' there are without a 'shepherd,' as it is written.

The reception of Van Lonkhuijzen on Sunday, February 9, 1908, in Buenos Aires is warm. The congregation sees him as a gift from heaven. Tears roll down the cheeks of the brothers and sisters as they hear the gospel again in their mother tongue. However, after seven months, Van Lonkhuijzen decides to leave. He has laid the foundations for churches in Buenos Aires and Tres Arroyos and an Evangelization Association in Rosario, but realizes that further continuation is too much work for him alone. He returns to the Netherlands for reinforcement.

When Sjouke Rijper speaks to Jan van Lonkhuijzen after his return, he is interested in teaching in Argentina. The synod initially sends a good friend of Sjouke, Mr. (later Reverend) Antonie Sonneveldt. Rijper expects that Sonneveldt will follow him quickly. But after much discussion, the synod prefers a minister, Rev. Rolloos. Money plays a not insignificant role in

this decision. Representatives of the Reformed churches in the United States only offer financial support if "a confirmed minister" goes to Tres Arroyos. This is a significant setback for Sjouke.

He changes his course of study and starts a French teaching qualification. When he is rejected after applying for the position of head of an elementary school in Kootwijk, he is certain. He sees all events as signs from above. His life's task is not in the field of education. Sjouke continues his theological studies.

Sonneveldt and Rolloos then work together in Argentina. Rolloos in the successful Dutch farming colony Tres Arroyos (three streams). It is a village in an extensive agricultural area where wheat is primarily cultivated.

The descendants of these enterprising Dutch still feel closely connected to the country their ancestors came from. The continued existence of a Dutch consulate in Tres Arroyos is a clear indication of this. Queen Beatrix, in the spring of 2006, together with Crown Prince Willem Alexander and his Argentine wife Máxima, visits the village and the still-existing Dutch school: *'El Colegio Holandés'* (The Dutch School).

Tres Arroyos is located about 35 kilometers from the South Atlantic coast. Sonneveldt works approximately 300 kilometers away in the capital Buenos Aires as the head of the Dutch school. Reverend Rolloos does not last long in Tres Arroyos. During Pentecost in 1912, Rijper receives a request from the synod to work in Argentina. Anna later writes: "My husband apparently saw God's finger in this. And his great love for God and His service made him overcome all the obstacles, which were many and significant." In the summer, he starts an accelerated Spanish course via Berlitz. In the fall, a year after starting as a minister and head of the Christian Dutch school, Rolloos returns to the Netherlands.

In Tres Arroyos, the need is high. They are looking forward to Rijper, who, besides being the head of the school, could also provide catechetical education to the growing church community. Sjouke becomes a teaching elder alongside being the school principal. At that time, he is the head of one of the Reformed Schools in Amsterdam and the father of two young children: Aafje (born in Amsterdam, February 1, 1911) and Piet (born in Amsterdam, March 11, 1912). Sjouke gives his last lesson in Amsterdam on September 31, 1912.

With translated teaching certificates in the suitcase, Sjouke, briefly like his father and grandfather, sets sail. On Tuesday, October 15, 1912 (exactly six months after the sinking of the Titanic), he travels with his family on the steamship Frisia to Argentina. It is a challenging sea voyage of about 13,000 kilometers. Anna is pregnant with their third child at that time.

Argentina

In mid-December 1912, Sjouke starts working. As of January 1, 1913, he is appointed as the head of the Dutch-Spanish School ('Escuela Holandesa') in Tres Arroyos. The school and the church community are happy with the arrival of the Rijper family. After just a few months, it becomes evident that Sjouke and Anna Rijper are well-liked. The only problem is that, unlike Rev. Rolloos, Sjouke is not both a teacher and a minister. And the need is great. Sometimes it takes months before a child can be baptized or a couple can get married. And the church in Buenos Aires is unable to provide assistance.



In March 1913, the request comes to call Sjouke Rijper as a minister. However, the Reformed General Synod in The Hague hesitates. They assume that the Rijper family will stay in Tres Arroyos for at most four years, just as a temporary solution until a real minister is found. The Argentine church community continues to insist. They have an "urgent need for the administration of the Word and the Sacraments." Children are born who die before they can be baptized. Tres Arroyos increases the pressure. They are very satisfied with Sjouke Rijper's work. In May 1913, the synod finally gives in. They allow Sjouke to be ordained by applying Article 8 of church law: "No schoolmasters, artisans, or others who have not studied shall be admitted to the ministry unless it is certain of their singular gifts, godliness, humility, modesty, good understanding and discretion, as well as the gift of eloquence." During "a proper examination with the assistance of the church in Buenos Aires" by the classis of that city in early August, Sjouke demonstrates possessing the required singular gifts and other necessary qualities.

On August 12, 1913, a dream comes true for Sjouke Rijper. He is ordained by Rev. Sonneveldt (1 Peter 5:2-4) and can henceforth be called a minister. That same afternoon, he preaches for the first time (1 Corinthians 2:2).



In that year, work was also done on the school. To have legitimacy as a Protestant-Christian school in a Catholic environment, the school must be excellent, according to Sjouke and Anna's view. Despite Sjouke's weak health, a busy young family, and a lack of money, the couple works tirelessly.

Teaching is done in both Spanish and Dutch. And it is a success. Argentine families who do not understand a word of Dutch are so satisfied that they also attend the Dutch lessons. The school grows rapidly. Within a few months, there are about fifty students. The Dutch school also attracts about twenty children from Baptist families of Dutch origin.

Baptism is a movement within Christianity that believes a person should only be baptized after coming to faith in Christ as a Savior and personally professing that belief. Baptism is performed through complete immersion in water. The form of baptism where infants are sprinkled with water, as practiced by some Reformed denominations, is rejected because babies are not yet consciously believing. Reformed and Baptist communities engage in a "wearying struggle" over this issue. Nevertheless, Baptist families in Argentina prefer to have a Reformed minister rather than no religious assistance at all.

After a challenging day at school, around four o'clock in the afternoon, Sjouke Rijper's work is not done. He then goes into the community, conducts home visits, visits the sick, and gives catechesis to young people. Sjouke and Anna occasionally send postcards to Amsterdam. Anna Rijper, who gave birth to their third child (Sjouke Cornelis Samuel) on June 9, 1913, usually only sees her husband in the evening. Even then, Sjouke Rijper does not rest. In the quiet, nocturnal hours, he writes his sermons and continues his theological studies.



As if all this is not enough, another task is added. Many children from farming families in the Tres Arroyos area live too far from school. Therefore, Sjouke and Anna start a small boarding school. This means that these children are taken into the house. The Rijper family receives about 15 guilders per child per month, which is insufficient for proper care. Fortunately, the family is often surprised with chickens, meat, and eggs.

A particularly challenging period has arrived for 27-year-old Anna Rijper-Ros. She has the care of a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, a one-and-a-half-year-old son, and a breastfeeding child. In addition, she becomes the head of the boarding school.

January 1, 1914, is a black day. Their youngest child, Sjouke Cornelis Samuel, only seven months old, passes away. The suffering from Sjouke's parental family continues in his own family.

And things are not much better on the home front. Less than three weeks after this tragedy, on January 17, 1914, in Amsterdam, Sjouke's brother, Kees Rijper (born Cornelis Pieter), dies at the young age of 22. Besides his parents, Sjouke now only has his brother Klaas, who is then twenty years old.

September 8, 1914, is a day of celebration. A week and eight months after the death of little Sjouk, another son is born in the Rijper household in Tres Arroyos. He is given the same names as his deceased brother: Sjouke Cornelis Samuel. The family is now composed of three children.

In Argentina, the work continues. The school grows, and the boarding school does too. Sjouke and Anna invest all their energy in it. Schools have a summer vacation of three months from December to February, mainly due to the heat. But Sjouke does not rest. He seeks out all the 'scattered' Dutch people in the region and preaches to them in Dutch and Spanish. He travels primitive distances over the scorching Argentine pampas to places like Tandil (56 miles), Azul (62 miles), Pehuelches (124 miles), and even to the larger city of Rosario, 248 miles from Tres Arroyos. After such visits, he sends letters and typed sermons to maintain the nascent religious contacts. At the end of the 'vacation,' Reverend Sjouke Rijper is deadly

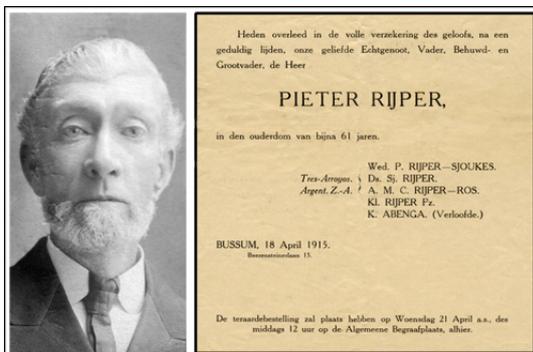


tired. But the school year and the bustle in the boarding school begin again...

Sjouke is also the clerk of the Buenos Aires classis during this time. He has to collaborate with Mr. H.H. Hogendorp from Delft, who has become the head of the Hollandse School in Buenos Aires and will succeed Sonneveldt as the head of the Reformed Church in the Argentine capital in 1917. However, the two mainly engage in disputes. Hogendorp is eventually removed from office in 1923 due to alcohol abuse and misuse of financial resources.

As if Sjouke doesn't have enough to do, he writes a quarterly report for the Netherlands and supporting churches in North America on the progress of the Reformed Churches in Argentina. He does this based on reports sent to him by the churches of Buenos Aires, Chubut, and Tres Arroyos.

From later reports about Pastor Rijper, it becomes evident that all his efforts are not in vain. Wherever he goes, Reformed life flourishes. In The Hague, they can hardly believe that he even gains a foothold in Baptist circles. The boarding school and the school continue to grow steadily. Sjouke also contributes to the reorganization of the church in Rosario. He encourages the people there through letters to start a Dutch school as well. This leads to the establishment of the School Association of Rosario de Santa Fe. The early years in Argentina are, despite the heavy work, happy years. Anna and Sjouke will often talk about this period later. Aaf and Piet learn to ride horses here. Sjouke enjoys his freedom, his status, and the beautiful nature in this vast area. He regularly writes articles in '*de Hollandsche Stem*' (The Dutch Voice), a monthly magazine for Argentine Reformed.



In the spring of 1915, bad news arrives again from the Netherlands. Sjouke's father, retired seaman Pieter Rijper, turns out to have passed away on April 18. His parents had moved to Bussum a year earlier, along with son Klaas, who is now a clerk and engaged. On June 13, 1916, Sjouke and Anna's second daughter is born: Suze. Mother and daughter are doing well, but father falls ill. So severely that the congregation is deeply concerned. But Sjouke recovers within a few

months. He then throws himself back into his work with full dedication.

1917 passes by. In the last week of October of that year, the minister diligently types his sermon for Reformation Day (Romans 1:16-17). Much of that sermon has been preserved.

It becomes clear that Sjouke Rijper cannot sustain this heavy dual role of pastor and school principal much longer. The intense physical and mental efforts take their toll. After five years of hard work, the family is looking forward to the promised six-month leave in the Netherlands. However, the First World War makes the journey impossible.

1918 begins positively, with the birth of their sixth child on February 4. It is another daughter: Annie. But then dark clouds gather again over Tres Arroyos. Sjouke falls ill frequently, experiences breakdowns, and severe headaches. The Spanish flu epidemic reaches Argentina and claims numerous victims.

Sjouke makes one final, wholehearted effort to bring comfort to the sick and bereaved from house to house—the comfort of the Gospel. Through these home visits, the Spanish flu also takes its toll on him. A combination of the flu, his old lung disease, and his exhaustion completes his total breakdown. He can't go on. Almost entirely paralyzed, he lies in bed for weeks. Anna keeps the family and the boarding school running. Doctors recommend a rest cure on the South Atlantic coast. However, Anna anticipates a major disaster and prefers a leave in the Netherlands, now that the war is over. The church council of Tres Arroyos agrees immediately. Church attendance there gradually but steadily declines. The 'lambs' are once again without their 'shepherd.'



It takes over a year before the family has the opportunity to return to the Netherlands. First, there is a birth on September 21, 1919: Kees, named after Sjouke's deceased brother. In November, they bid farewell to his congregation and school. This weighs heavily on them, especially because it is unclear whether this farewell is final. Anna writes: "When the car was ready to take us to the station, the children cried if we were coming back. Half paralyzed, my husband (and I) accepted the journey back to the Fatherland."

There are two anecdotes about this return journey. Before boarding, a gem smuggler approaches Sjouke. He asks the minister if he can hide a few gems in Anna's large black feathered hat. Sjouke teaches the man a lesson. His final lesson on Argentine soil.

The sea journey of a few weeks on the steamship *Gelria* does Sjouke good. Not only because of the fresh air but also due to the peace and the absence of responsibility for the congregation and school.

Upon disembarking, Anna briefly hands her newborn to her mother. Johanna Ros stumbles, and Kees falls hard on the quay stones. Fortunately, he sustains no injury. However, all his peculiarities for the rest of his life are playfully attributed by his brothers and sisters to that fall.

Pastor in the Netherlands

Upon their return, the family finds lodging in Anna's parents' house at 3 Scheltusstraat in Amersfoort. Sjouke recovers. However, it is evident that a return to Argentina is no longer an option. Anna and Sjouke have their inventory shipped from Argentina. Again, misfortune strikes. The steamship hits a mine, and the Rijper's belongings are lost. "They were only earthly possessions," Anna puts it into perspective.

The minister is now strong enough to preach occasionally. However, at that time, it is not that simple. Since he was called in Argentina, the General Synod wants to investigate whether Sjouke has sufficient knowledge of "the interpretation of Scripture, the Reformed doctrine, and church government" for the Dutch church. On October 5, 1920, after questioning, he receives the certificate declaring him eligible for a call to the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands.

He had already been working earlier that year in Amersfoort in the Reformed churches on Zuidsingel and Lange Gracht. He is also active as a speaker at propaganda evenings of the Christian Union. In the city of Amersfoort, Anna gives birth on January 8, 1921, to a daughter: Jo(hanna), named after Anna's mother (and sister). If you count the first (deceased) Sjouke, she is the eighth child of Sjouke and Anna. Later that month, the family moves to Reeuwijk-Sluiplwijk, beautifully situated in a water-rich area near Gouda.

Reverend Rijper is confirmed with Isaiah 40:1 and enters with Exodus 3:14b. It is not easy for the minister to pick up the thread in this village. He is not completely recovered yet. It is a quiet village and, above all, small. In this village, the dynamics within the congregation are different from those in Argentina. The congregation cannot pay the minister enough, and the house is too small. Sjouke, the 'city boy,' also misses the hustle and bustle of Amsterdam on the one hand and the acquired freedoms in Tres Arroyos on the other, which oppresses him.



One and a half years later, he leaves. The next destination is the Drenthe village of Nieuw-Weerdinge, just above Emmen. Not exactly the bustling center of Reformed Netherlands. But it does have a larger church community than the previous village. What attracts him is that he can work among the Baptists there, as he did in Argentina.

He seems to be back. His sermons are again powerfully and elegantly written, as in his early years.

However, Rev. Popma is critical of his preaching style. "Anyone who reads his written sermons encounters the man who has delved into Kuyper's works. The structure and approach of the sermons are dogmatic." ... "The style has a kind of old-fashioned elegance. Broadly constructed sentences; many strong adjectives. For our time, which demands sober, businesslike expressions that want to eliminate every unnecessary word, this style may be a bit overloaded."

As son Kees (also a minister) reflects on the level of his father's sermons, he says, "Mother truly practiced faith. Father was certainly not unbelieving but always based his considerations on writings. Those were sacred. He always said, 'The Bible is God's word.' I said, 'In the Bible is God's word.' He was more of a theological scientist. But then, an amateur scientist."

During this period, Anna is continuously expecting. Sjouke believes that the church will flourish if a strong Reformed lineage is cultivated. Klaas is born on October 3, 1922, named after Sjouke's brother(s). On January 10, 1924, daughter Mien comes into the world. Just a year later, on January 25, 1925, Trijntje Cornelia is born, named after Sjouke's deceased sisters. Less than a year later, on January 15, 1926, the family is expanded with Frans. Again, eighteen months later, on June 11, 1927, another brother, Johan, joins. And on August 9, 1928, yet another one: Theo.



Sjouke: "A wealth of children is not a wealth of money, but with God's promise, it is a wealth much higher than money."

Especially Anna is busy with the children. Sjouke is busy with his work. He is always away, cycling through the extensive congregation with a carbide lantern. After eating at home, he flies out in the evening for catechism or a church council meeting. All this work is not in vain. His congregation grows steadily. The church even becomes too small. Therefore, the minister holds three services every Sunday to solve this problem. In those years, an extra wing is added to the church to accommodate the growth. Sjouke's young son Kees is impressed by the carpenters. But when it's time for a break, he's the one who says, "Let's pray before eating."

This takes place on the eve of the economic world crisis, which will also hit the Netherlands hard. During this period, power outages are not uncommon. Especially the afternoon services around Christmas are dark. Only for the minister of the church in Nieuw Weerdinge, there is a small lamp on the pulpit via a generator, so he can at least read his written sermon. The organist has to do without light. Therefore, if there is a power outage, Sjouke only calls out well-known psalms and hymns that the man can play blind. The congregation starts the fourth verse of Zechariah's Song of Praise. "Thus the Lord's people are led by the light that is now kindled." Believe it or not, to the great amusement of the minister and his congregation, the power is promptly restored, and the church is illuminated.

Sjouke's health has been declining in the last three years, both physically and mentally. He comes under the care of a neurologist, but with no result. His lung condition resurfaces. That one lung can't keep up anymore. He occasionally coughs up blood. Doctors advise him to stop working completely. But Sjouke vehemently opposes this. With a lot of effort, he still preaches on New Year's Eve in 1928. The next day, on New Year's morning in 1929, he spits up blood again. "God puts an end to it himself," writes Anna.

Sjouke Rijper is only 45 years old but completely worn out. On July 1, 1929, he receives resignation and honorable retirement (pension) from the Classis Stadskanaal due to "continuous illness," "complete invalidity," and as a result, "total incapacity for any work." He can't deliver his farewell sermon in the church of Nieuw-Weerdinge. An elder reads the sermon for him.



Two months later, the worn-out minister becomes a father again. Apparently, completely unexpectedly, Henk Rijper is born on September 27, 1929. There is no midwife present. Anna brings her fifteenth child into the world all by herself. It is the only time that daughter Jo sees her father cry.

That summer, the family moved to Amersfoort. Initially, they occupy a much too small residence at Javastraat 7. In 1933, they move to Johannes Bosboomstraat 8, a terraced house. But two years later, when a larger semi-detached house becomes available right across from number 15, the family with fourteen children moves again.

The period of Sjouke Rijper as an emeritus minister is not much happier than the last years in Nieuw-Weerdinge. He remains a sick man: sick nerves, sick lungs. He is withdrawn. Especially around Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, he is frustrated that he cannot lead. He sometimes has aggressive, epileptic nerve attacks. The family is under high tension during these episodes. Everyone walks on eggshells. Anna tries to preempt triggers for an anger outburst. "I don't want a commotion in the house," she responds to requests from the children that could lead to Sjouke's anger. If the time bomb goes off, Anna administers the calming medication Luminal. After this medication, he lies completely exhausted in bed for days with severe migraines.

Anna writes about those difficult times: "He is bound to chair and bed, never goes to church. And if he is ever brought with a friend's car, he is carried out within half an hour. The Lord has severely tested him. So severely that we brought him to Utrecht." There, Sjouke encounters a psychiatrist who is an atheist. Instead of helping him, this doctor criticizes his faith. It leads to conflicts that are not conducive to the minister's recovery. Anna: "After that, he went to the sanatorium in Zeist. There, he learned to kiss the rod that struck him. He returned to us after five months, calm and quiet. He had learned to say and experience 'thy will be done.' He now accepted God's path with faith."

Meanwhile, Anna Rijper keeps the family running with untamed energy. And the children, of course, also contribute. The oldest ones wash and iron clothes. Even the little ones have tasks, such as assisting with meal preparation. The boys pit many kilos of potatoes. They sleep with several in one bed. Sjouke's mother often stays in the house, and sometimes soldiers from the province Drenthe also stay over. These are young people that Sjouke still knows from his time in Nieuw-Weerdinge and who, due to their equestrian skills, are stationed with the mounted forces in one of the cavalry barracks in Amersfoort. The house is sometimes bursting at the seams, but they manage it all.



The downside, however, is that there is no privacy and hardly any individual attention for the children. Son Kees remembers that once he enthusiastically wanted to tell a story after school. Anna was too busy with mending clothes and sent him away. A painful memory for Kees. "We were raised collectively," says daughter Mien. It is the high price paid for a large family with a low income.

As somber as Sjouke often is, the family is cheerful. They are lively, talkative, intelligent children who have a lot of fun among themselves. In the evenings, they play Rummikub, and sometimes they play cards, but only when Sjouke is not there because playing cards is not allowed. Anna allows it.

On March 27, 1935, there is a grand family celebration. Sjouke and Anna have been married for 25 years. Everyone is present, including Sjouke's mother and his in-laws. On the menu: vol-au-vent, cheese rolls, ham, roast beef, and lunch tongue. Also pickles, tomatoes, a variety of fruits, and a small cup of coffee.

Sjouke leads a modest life. Extravagances like the party in 1935 are exceptions. He is a true Calvinist and teetotaler. He speaks about the relationship between Calvinism and asceticism at a meeting of the Reformed Temperance Society. "Calvinism is, let me say it easily, the religious, philosophical, social, and political system that, of all systems, possesses the greatest breadth in the application and experience of that principle," he says. The speech of eighteen written pages has been preserved. "The good is not in the many, but much is in the good," he quotes. And: "Blessedness and happiness lie in the spiritual. All material things are but obstacles to the enjoyment of it."

In the second half of the thirties, Sjouke gradually takes on some tasks again. He supports community life. In August 1938, he celebrates his 25th anniversary as a minister. He even

preaches again in his old church in Nieuw-Weerdinge. But it takes a lot of effort. He preaches intermittently in smaller churches, but sometimes also in a larger one, such as the one on Zuidsingel in Amersfoort.

His sermons are still heavy. Even Kees (far right in the above photo), a boy with an interest in theology, sometimes gets bored during those long church services. "I counted how many pages he had written beforehand. Often it was about thirty-three. Then I sat next to mother and rested my head on the collar of her coat and fell asleep," says Kees Rijper. The children are questioned afterward. What was the sermon about? Trijnie then says, "About Jesus and our dear Lord." Sometimes he asks about the last words. But the children are prepared for that.

After the service, they pass them on to each other. Between church services, the biblical education of the children does not stop. After the cup of coffee with the Sunday cookie, they read from 'Common Grace,' a three-part theological treatise by Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper understands under that grace or common grace that God spreads His goodness over the entire creation, without this meaning that all people are saved. In his common grace, God Himself holds back the full and definitive outbreak of sin and thus creates space for human culture in all its facets.

The Rijper children are believers, that is beyond question. But this material is too heavy. It does not connect with their world of experience. Whenever possible, they talk their way out of this tough Sunday family lesson. Son Johan flips through several pages at once. Daughter Mien often escapes to the kitchen to prepare lunch. After all, it has to be done.

In his free time, Sjouke engages in gardening. The minister has 'green fingers.' He grows chard in his vegetable garden behind the house and cultivates clivias. He is also skilled at repairing shoes. He learned that in the sanatorium in Zeist. He cannot throw anything away. Good coil springs from worn-out chairs are stored in the attic, waiting to be reused. But if someone rings the doorbell during chores and asks for him, his children must say that he is "not available." Sjouke is a proud and vain man who only speaks to people outside his family when dressed neatly in a black suit with a superbly ironed and starched white shirt.

Sjouke also finds relaxation in music. He is a talented and gifted organist. His family is large enough for a small choir. Many psalms and hymns are sung around the organ. Or he listens to Jan Zwart playing the organ on the NCRV (Christian public radio), sometimes for as long as an hour and a half. Because of his deafness, he sits with his ear against the speaker. Everyone in the room must be quiet.

Sjouke and Anna occasionally speak Spanish with each other. It is about matters not meant for children's ears.

During that period, Sjouke receives encouraging mail, such as a personal thank you from the then Prime Minister Hendrik Colijn. He thanks Rijper for his congratulations on the marriage of Crown Princess Juliana and Bernhard of Lippe-Biesterfeld on January 7, 1937. Colijn had guided the approval for this through the House of Representatives. Avoiding a crisis in the monarchy is another step closer now that the 28-year-old Juliana finally has a partner. Sjouke is extremely proud of the prime minister's letter.

He also receives words of encouragement with a card from Henry Beets, a prominent minister and Doctor of Letters in the United States, whom Sjouke knows through the Christian Emigration Center. Beets writes in 1938 that he heard from Tres Arroyos that they still miss Sjouke there. "Some of our best members are those who received instruction from meester Rijper, and they often speak of him! Rev. Rijper did much for Tres Arroyos." In the October issue of the Reformed Review Missionary Monthly 'De Heidenwereld,' Beets writes that more than eighteen years after Rijper's departure, "during home visits in Tres Arroyos, it always comes out how former pastors have not labored in vain. Especially the work of Rev. Rijper is still held in blessed memory."

It means a lot to Sjouke. But just when things seem to be improving for him, there are deaths. On July 26, 1938, Klaas Rijper, the only surviving brother of Sjouke, dies at the age of 44. Klaas had a family with four daughters and two sons (Aafje, Geb, Henny, Nelly, Nico, and Ina).

War Years

Sjouke's youngest child, Henk Rijper, still remembers the moment he sees the first German soldiers. It is spring 1940. Henk, a ten-year-old, walks with his parents and a few brothers in the city. "Suddenly I see those soldiers. I enthusiastically call out, 'Look, Dad! Germans!'" But that enthusiasm is not appreciated. Henk gets a good slap from the minister and has to walk on silently.



During the war, the Rijper family goes through difficult times. The pension is by no means sufficient for this large family with growing children. They are strongly emaciated, just like the minister himself and his wife Anna. But everyone is "excellently healthy." Sjouke gives a friend an update on his family life through a letter. He writes that his two sons, Piet and Sjouke, who live elsewhere, are both married and work as teachers. Daughter Suze, with her husband Gert Veenendaal, runs a flourishing art business in Amersfoort. Annie is happily married to policeman Bert Schoemaker and lives in IJmuiden. Kees marries Lenie de Graaff. Sjouke had previously ordained him as a minister with the laying on of hands. Kees had learned Spanish to continue his father's missionary work in Argentina. However, there was no support for this from his wife, who was very attached to her mother. At home, eight children still live. Jo is a teacher in Amersfoort. Klaas is a procurator for a trading company (Schuitema). Mien is the chief saleswoman in "an important large store"

(Ramselaar). Trijntje is a household assistant. Frans works as a land surveyor at the cadastre in Amersfoort. Johan is in his last year of teacher training and wants to become a teacher. Theo is in the third year of grammar school. Henk goes to the bakery school, as the minister writes. The children living at home who work pay board every month.

Life and death are close to each other during that period. In the first war years, the first grandchildren are born, but there are also deaths. Anna Rijper loses her mother Johanna Ros on April 30, 1940. The following year, on January 15, 1941, Sjouke's mother Aafje passes away at the age of 85.

Family grief seems endless. Sjouke's oldest child, the nurse Aafje, on December 30, 1942, is tasked with guiding a son from a family she cares for to a hiding place to prevent him from being sent to Germany for '*Arbeitseinsatz*' (forced labor). They change trains at Utrecht station. There, in haste, the boy accidentally collides with a German officer with his suitcase. He gets a slap on the ear and a barrage of abuse in authentic German. Aafje steps in, pushes the boy forward, and addresses the German on his behavior. It was just an accident, after all. The 31-year-old nurse then gets the full brunt of the German's anger. What exactly was said and done is unclear. However, it is certain that Aafje is literally frightened to death. She suffers a heart paralysis and dies on the platform. Kees Rijper and his wife Lenie receive a thank-you card from her a few days later, written and posted on the day of her death. She

wishes them a very prosperous new year. "What will be in store for us now?" she wonders in her last writing, a few hours before her sudden death.

Sjouke writes: "A heavy loss, as she, being a nurse, understood father so well. Nevertheless, she rejoices above, and her fate is glorious." And Anna in retrospect: "We were very surprised at the great resignation with which he bore this grief."

And things are also improving for Sjouke. He writes about himself: "Emeritus in the middle of life is no small matter, but now, although I practically live on one lung, things are going more uphill. I may occasionally preach again, and I still have a vocal apparatus that is quite serviceable for about a hundred or so people. My nervous life is stronger again, and my head suffering is as good as completely disappearing. I can study nicely again and, in no way, need to stand as a mentally disabled person in the face of the currents of the time and can therefore also practically be in my preaching work."

Bright spots in these dark days for Sjouke are the preaching requests. Many ministers are in hiding, and Sjouke gladly substitutes for them. Once every two weeks, he ascends the pulpit. He is very pleased and proud when, in 1943, he is allowed to bring the Christmas gospel once again to the small church of Drimmelen in North Brabant. The entire week, he prepares himself to be able to lead on Sunday. In 1944, he occasionally preaches in places like Maarn, Maastricht, IJmuiden, Lunteren, Willemstad, and Renswoude, as evidenced by his last sermon booklet. He is paid in kind. Jo says, "Then he would be brought back home after the service, and there would be food hidden in the car for the whole family. Those were joyful moments."



During that time, he is also the treasurer of the Amersfoort branch of the Dutch Bible Society. Later, he takes on the role of secretary as well. He also provides services for the Free University. Anna is involved in the Christian Women's Union during that time. And to bring in some extra money, daughter Jo tutors schoolchildren. As a true head of the family, he sits at the head of the table during a fancy dinner in January 1944. Much too fancy in his eyes.

Johannes Bosboomstraat 15 is known during the war as an 'Oranjenest' (Orange nest). The family is involved in resistance activities. Sjouke and Anna provide shelter for a person in hiding. Piet has become a sergeant in his military service, and at the beginning of the war, he is mobilized. Officers are required to report after the surrender, but he neglects to do so, goes into hiding in Willemstad and Heerlen, and joins the resistance. In 1944, he is frequently in London. In the spring of 1945, Piet helps the Allies liberate the Netherlands. Frans, Klaas, Suze, and Jo are involved in the resistance.



Frans (standing on the right) becomes part of the Resistance Council through his work at the cadastre. He is actively involved as a group commander in 'Group Max' (led by Max J. Kreupeling and Rudolf Koopmans) in sabotage actions (including on the railway) and raids on distribution offices. Food and clothing vouchers are distributed to people in hiding through the LO (National Organization for Aid to People in Hiding) of the Reformed Church in the Amersfoort Soesterkwartier. Shooting exercises are held in the soundproof cellar of the cadastre building. Frans also involves Klaas (standing in the middle) and the Leiden carpenter in hiding with the

Rijpers (Henk van Dijk, standing on the left) and a few other boys from the neighborhood in his resistance work.

The family is also active in finding addresses for people in hiding. At Hof 7, at the art dealership of daughter Suze and her husband Gert Veenendaal, people in hiding can often find refuge. Here, ingenious hiding places are created in the attic and above the toilet. If a courier is needed for an urgent case, you can always ring the Rijpers' doorbell. Jo fulfills that task several times. The Rijpers consider their illegal work a matter of course. "We are very blessed, and this is also evident from the fact that all, without exception, are good Dutch citizens and are willing to accept the consequences," says the minister.

September 1944 is a nerve-wracking month for both the Dutch, the Allies, and the Germans. On the fifth of that month, it's "Dolle Dinsdag" (Mad Tuesday). There is a suspicion that liberation is near. Dutch people bring out the tricolor. Jews in hiding come out. Germans burn administration in panic, and members of the NSB (National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands) flee. However, the Allies are not sufficiently strong to push into the Netherlands. The Battle of Arnhem, Operation Market Garden, which begins on September 17, turns into a fiasco. The next day, the large railway strike begins, lasting until liberation. 30,000 NS (Dutch Railways) employees go on strike.

On September 20, the British drop used kerosene cans over Amersfoort. One lands on the house of Max Kreupeling, the leader of the RVV group that Frans and Klaas Rijper are part of. The explosion and fire that result from this cause Kreupeling's wife and a person in hiding to die. Out of fear that weapons stolen by the group from a German truck might be found among the remnants of the house, they are distributed among RVV members. Frans Rijper is also asked to temporarily hide a few of those weapons. He does so after his mother agrees. Father Sjouke is unaware of everything.

One evening, a deafening explosion sounds from the window of their house. The boys are trying out a weapon or practicing with it. They are so frightened by it that they don't go any further.

The nervousness is also evident in the threats to the in-hiding son-in-law Gert Veenendaal. He is deeply involved in the Amersfoort resistance and is hiding because he is wanted. Occasionally, when he does show up, he even comes under pressure from the resistance itself. They are afraid that he will be arrested and that he will break during his interrogation, with all the consequences. If he shows up again, he will be killed by the Amersfoort resistance. Veenendaal does not show himself anymore and will never be arrested by the Germans.

On September 29, 1944, the Amersfoort resistance liquidates Joannes Frima, a lawyer and prominent member of the NSB. Four days after the attack, two members of the resistance are shot at the location where Frima died, as a reprisal. Frima's sons, who are fanatical NSB members, swear revenge on the Amersfoort resistance. "We continue his fight," they write in their father's obituary.

On Friday, October 6, a large raid is carried out in Amersfoort. Germans conscript random men between the ages of 17 and 40 for forced labor. They gather six thousand men on the barracks grounds at Leusderweg, a kilometer away from the Rijpers. SS officers search the houses of some arrested men, looking for evidence of resistance activities, such as weapons. The streets of Amersfoort are deserted on that day and the following days. Even the minister's family, hiding an underground person, a radio, and weapons, stays indoors. The tension is so high that the regular Amersfoort ministers are afraid to conduct services. But substitute Sjouke does.

It is a misconception that Sjouke delivers so-called resistance sermons. As mentioned earlier, he doesn't preach often due to his poor health. Openly criticizing the Germans is very dangerous. However, he encourages the brothers and sisters and offers them comfort by preaching the gospel. Two days after the raid, on Sunday, October 8, Sjouke preaches in the church on Zuidsingel in Amersfoort. In that threatening period, this can be considered an act of resistance. As if foreseeing the impending danger, he preaches on Psalm 31 by David; a prayer in distress.

*"In You, Lord, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.
Turn your ear to me,
come quickly to my rescue.
Be my rock of refuge,
a strong fortress to save me.
Since you are my rock and my fortress,
for the sake of your name, lead and guide me.
Keep me free from the trap that is set for me,
for you are my refuge."*

It becomes his last sermon. His swan song, Anna writes. He concludes with the words: "To take refuge in You when everything fails, even when the bullet hits us." At that moment, that bullet is closer than he can imagine.

A little over a month later, on the evening of Thursday, November 16, 1944, things go wrong. From statements in the criminal files of some landwachters (collaborators with the German occupiers) who were convicted after the war, and testimonies from Anna, Jo, and Johan Rijper, that fateful evening can be reasonably reconstructed in detail.

Around 7:00 PM, the notorious Amersfoort police officer Diederik Lutke Schipholt (he would later be liquidated by the resistance) goes out in plain clothes with Political Police detective Willem Dissevelt. They are accompanied by the landwachters (auxiliary police) Piet Frima, Gijsbert van Spankeren, Willem Vergouwe, and Piet van der Zon, all of whom have left their uniforms at home that evening. The landwachters declare after the war that Lutke Schipholt received a tip that the Rijpers possessed a radio without a permit and that they "acted provocatively" about it. However, given the scale of the operation, it seems that the police knew more. The group gathers that evening at Van Spankeren's house, who lives near the Rijpers. They leave their bicycles there and walk to the address, which, according to them, is easily recognizable by the white flagpole in the front yard. Van Spankeren quietly positions himself in the backyard of the house to catch any potential fugitives.

At that moment, the Rijpers are listening to the English radio in the back room. Around 8:10 PM, there's a soft knock on the door, explains Anna, so the family thinks it's their contact Rudolf Koopmans from the Groep Max, who would be back in action the next day. Frans Rijper opens the door and sees a group of men in plain clothes. He believes they are sent by Koopmans and takes the five men, without exchanging a word, into the front room, where no one else is. Lutke Schipholt plays along and talks with Frans for a few minutes. He asks if it's not dangerous to let people in so easily. To this, Frans unsuspectingly replies, "If you were wrong, you'd be dead by now."

Frima later says that at that moment, he thought he had been lured into a trap. "When I heard that, I wished I was already out alive, especially since I could hear from the murmur of voices that the back room was full of people," he declares.

Sjouke, Anna, and the children in the back room also assume that Frans is talking to a contact from the resistance. Frans tells the men that in the next room, they're listening to the English radio. According to Frima, Lutke Schipholt "ends the comedy" by drawing his weapon and ordering Frans to raise his hands. Frima frisks Frans and is surprised to find that he's not carrying a weapon. Piet van der Zon opens the sliding door to the back room and shouts loudly, 'Hands up!' The family faces the barrels of pistols. According to Van der Zon, the family is stunned. Initially, Sjouke, Anna, and the children react dumbfounded, almost laughing. After a second command, they realize it's serious. Frans is pushed into the back room, where his hands are tied with a piece of rope. Klaas immediately recognizes Piet Frima. He was in his class and was, at the time, friends with him.

Since it's established that the Rijpers have a radio and are harboring the fugitive Henk van Dijk, Van Spankeren calls a nearby member of the Feldgendarmarie (German military police). The other members of the Landwacht begin searching the house. Meanwhile, there is cursing and shouting at Frans Rijper. According to Frima, Lutke Schipholt had convinced him that Frans was the murderer of his father, the prominent NSB member Joannes Frima. "We'll get you," Frima shouts. "If you don't tell the truth, I'll take you to De Schothorst." He refers to the model farm in Hoogland where his father was liquidated a few weeks ago. Later, it turns out that Frans had nothing to do with it.



Frima hands his weapon to Vergouwe, who now aims two pistols at the family. While the family stands with their hands on their necks, Frima takes the Bibles from Rev. Rijper's bookcase and throws them on the ground. Sjouke asks him to handle them more respectfully because they are sacred to him. Frima responds with mocking laughter. "If you were Christians, you should have been on the Eastern Front long ago."

Three-quarters of an hour after the start of the raid, around 9:00 PM, the alerted Feldgendarmarie (German military police) arrives. They hear the story from the Landwacht and take Frans, Klaas, and the fugitive Henk van Dijk by car for questioning to the Ortkommandantur on Regentesselaan in Amersfoort. Stabsfeldwebel Jonas interrogates them. Lutke Schipholt is also present and slaps one of the boys during this interrogation.

In the following hours, the house is further ransacked. Throughout this time, the Rijpers, including the ailing Sjouke, who is walking poorly and suffering from a hernia, remain with their hands on their necks. In a hiding place in Sjouke's wardrobe, a helmet, a bayonet, a hand grenade, and two belts are found. The members of the Landwacht also discover railway maps in the home, which they claim are intended for determining where explosive charges should be placed to blow up railroad switches. Additionally, illegal pamphlets are found. After three hours, the remaining family members are taken away.

In the cold, dark November evening, Sjouke (60) and Anna (58), accompanied by three members of the Landwacht, walk in a line through Amersfoort with six of their children still living at home: (in the photo from left to right) Theo (16), Mien (20), Jo (23), [Frans (18) was already taken away], Henk (15), Trijntje (21) [Klaas (22) was already taken away], and Johan (17). It becomes a walk from Bosboomstraat to the former police station at Utrechtsestraat 53, which serves as the W.A. Bankwartier, the headquarters of the Landwacht. They all spend the night in a large locked room under the supervision of Amsterdam Landwacht members.

Based on names and addresses from a notebook found on Klaas Rijper, the Landwacht conducts raids on multiple addresses that night. This action turns into a failure, as none of those persons can be connected to illegality through the Rijpers.

Around 4:00 AM, Frima enters the police station room with a lantern in one hand and a pistol in the other. The family is transported in an open truck with several other detainees to the Amersfoort concentration camp. In the freezing cold, they are reunited with Klaas, Frans, and the hiding Henk van Dijk, all three of them in handcuffs. Klaas, in a hurry the previous evening, couldn't put on a coat and had only one shoe. One of the daughters gives him a scarf. Anna speaks briefly with them. The boys say that Frima suspects them of murdering his father. They are terrified, as are the other family members. In Camp Amersfoort, they are separated by gender and distributed among the bunker cells. There are 22 cramped, concrete cells in a building that looks like an ordinary barracks from the outside.

The day after the raid, Friday, November 17, in the twilight around 5:00 PM, Piet Frima and Piet van der Zon return to the Rijpers' house, allegedly to retrieve the radio. They decide to subject Bosboomstraat 15 to an even more thorough investigation. Under the bed of the daughters Jo and Mien, they find various weapons; according to Frima, two sten guns and a carbine. The daughters were unaware of them.

Frima later states: "We had the opportunity to make the weapons disappear. But we did not take advantage of that. By handing the weapons over to the Germans, I knew that the death sentence of the eldest sons of Reverend Rijper was thereby determined." Frima is afraid of an attack by the resistance after the weapon discovery. He calls a third Landwacht member to guard the Rijpers' house with a drawn pistol while he and Van der Zon continue searching. They find nothing else.



Saturday, November 18, there is a family interrogation at concentration camp Amersfoort. Klaas, Frans, and Henk van Dijk are in one corner of the interrogation room with their hands on their necks. The other family members (including Sjouke and Anna) are directly opposite them in a row under the supervision of several members of the Feldgendarmarie, so-called 'chain dogs.' They encounter the sadistic SS-Unterschutzhaftragerführer Joseph Kotalla. He is a 38-year-old Pole in German service, the eldest of the five sons of an Evangelical Catholic steelworker from Chorzów (in German:

Bismarckhütte). Kotalla is the deputy to camp commandant Karl Peter Berg. Before the war, Kotalla had already been declared insane. As a child, he was psychotic and was treated by a Jewish psychiatrist. Nevertheless (or perhaps because of this), he is admitted to the SS in 1939. In 1941, he is reluctantly assigned as a guard at the prison in Scheveningen. His psychiatric problems resurface here. From January to April 1942, he reluctantly undergoes psychiatric treatment at a German Luftwaffe hospital in The Hague. In September 1942, he is transferred to Camp Amersfoort. In December, Kotalla breaks down again. The left side of his face becomes temporarily paralyzed. In the Wilhelmina Gasthuis in Amsterdam, he is even confined to a solitary cell. According to doctors, he poses a direct danger to himself and others. In that clinic, he receives 'various injections' (lumbar and occipital punctures). Despite doubts among the Germans about Kotalla's mental health, he is allowed to resume his work in Camp Amersfoort. In the camp, he drinks alcohol, consumes liters of coffee, and takes pep

pills (Pervitine). Under the influence of these substances, he brutally abuses prisoners using a Spanish cane, rubber stick, or his infamous Kotalla kick (in the groin).

Kotalla asks the Rijpers where the weapons come from. No one has any idea. He shouts, "Sind Sie Pastors Kinder? Denn ist es eine schöne Kirche in Holland, wenn alle Pastors Kinder so lügen." (Are you pastor's children? Then it is a beautiful church in Holland if all pastor's children lie.) When Kotalla and the chain dogs briefly leave the interrogation room, Frans whispers that he confessed to being solely responsible, hoping to exonerate Klaas Rijper and Henk van Dijk. Henk van Dijk says they were told they would be shot. The Rijpers tell him not to believe that and whisper courage to the three.

Who tipped off the Germans about the radio and/or weapons in the home of Reverend Rijper? This has been widely speculated in the last months of the war and the years that followed. Actually, to this day. The issue is still very sensitive. Boys' carelessness? A leak within the cadastre or the Raad Van Verzet (Council of Resistance)? Infiltrator Rolf de Lange in the Veenendaal household? The true course of events has never come to light. The most likely version is that the Germans knew that the Rijpers were very pro-Orange and, moreover, were linked to the underground Gert Veenendaal through daughter Suze, who had been high on the Germans' wish list for quite some time.

Europe is already half liberated at that time. It is clear that the Germans will lose the war. The occupier no longer cares so much about legal proceedings, for what they were worth. In June 1944, a *Frontbefehl* (front order) from higher up became effective, ordering that anyone in possession of firearms, ammunition, or explosives without authorization be '*nieder zu machen*' (shot without trial). SS Brigadeführer Karl Eberhard Schöngarth, the then Befehlshaber of the Sipo headquarters in The Hague, had sent the following secret telex message on September 11, 1944, which is in line with this: "*Wenn sich irgendwo Widerstandszentren zeigen, insbesondere wenn irgendwo die Abhaltung illegalen Versammlungen bekannt wird, so sind dies alle Versammlungen rücksichtslos zu sprengen und die Teilnehmer niederzumachen, sofern nicht besondere Gründe für eine Festnahme sprechen.*" (If resistance centers show up anywhere, especially if the holding of illegal gatherings becomes known somewhere, then all such gatherings are to be ruthlessly broken up, and the participants are to be shot, unless there are special reasons for an arrest.)

Based on this, it became a practice to execute arrested resistance fighters on the spot, as a reprisal for acts of resistance. Klaas and Frans Rijper, as well as Henk van Dijk, are also such 'death candidates': detainees who, in the eyes of the relevant authority of the *Aussenpost* (outpost) of the *Sicherheitspolizei/Sicherheitsdienst* (Sipo/SD, Security Police/Security Service) in Utrecht, are 'worthy of death.' Sjouke, Anna, Johan, Jo, Mien, and Trijnie are '*vorläufig Festgenommenen*' (provisionally arrested) for the duration of the 'investigation' into their actions.

Sjouke stays with his two youngest sons in one cell. Because there is only one 'mattress,' the boys take turns sleeping on the bunk with Sjouke and on the cold cell floor. Kotalla makes the minister and the boys witness the abuse of prisoners, perhaps to set an example. The glasses of a victim fall to the ground and are smashed. "You don't need those anymore," is added. Henk says, looking back on that time: "I still



hear the camp guard saying that. Now I understand what happened to that prisoner afterward. But I didn't realize it back then. It occupies me more now than ever."

Henk Rijper also remembers a conversation between his father and a camp doctor, probably the employed doctor (also a prisoner) Hein Boerma. "Now we have really ended up in hell," the doctor says to the minister. Sjouke replies, "It seems like it, but believe me, God is here too." Young Henk listens with amazement. "At that time, I thought, if that's true, that's the God I want to serve," he says 62 years later. It forms the basis for his faith in his later life.

The records of the interrogations of the Rijpers in Camp Amersfoort have not been preserved. The Netherlands Institute for War Documentation does have the interrogations of Paul Fröhlich, then a 41-year-old Kriminalsekretär and SS-Sturmscharführer of the Sipo in Utrecht. He tells in a post-war interrogation that the police in Amersfoort sends the police report of the arrest of the Rijpers to the outpost of the Sicherheitspolizei in Utrecht. Utrecht must submit all arrests to Willy Lages, Kriminalrat of the Aussenstelle Amsterdam (later, like Joseph Kotalla, one of 'The Four of Breda'). Lages, in turn, contacts SS Brigadeführer Karl Schöngarth in The Hague by telex. Whether this 'chain of commands' was completely followed in the case of the Rijpers is not certain. Fröhlich does say that he receives the order by telex from Sipo Amsterdam to execute the Rijper brothers, the undercover Henk van Dijk, and the Soest resistance man Henricus van Breukelen. The shifting of responsibilities for crimes was a common defense in the post-war trials.

On Saturday, November 18, 1944, a few hours after the family interrogation, Klaas Rijper, Frans Rijper, and Henk van Dijk are taken out of the bunker by Kotalla. Van Breukelen comes from the Lager. He wears camp clothing. The boys are supposedly being transported to Utrecht and then to Germany. Papers for this are filled out, as later revealed by the camp administration. However, there is no transport. Only the walk to the beginning of the under-construction shooting range. Kotalla puts on a



white doctor's coat to protect his uniform from stains. Four unarmed boys stand without blindfolds in front of the SS men Oberle, Brahm, Reuswich, Herzog, Neuman, Feuerstein, and their commander Kotalla. In this hopeless situation, one of the boys commits his final act of resistance. It could have been Frans Rijper. He had a sharp tongue. Standing in front of the firing squad, one of the boys says to Kotalla in German: "You're a brave guy, shooting us. You'll probably get the Iron Cross for that." This impresses Kotalla. He mentions it during an interrogation in June 1945. Unterscharführer Karl Weinand Feuerstein confirms this last act of resistance in his interrogation and describes how the execution proceeded. "Kotalla stood next to us and ordered every two men to aim at a man he pointed out." The quartet is shot dead without blindfolds at a distance of four meters. Feuerstein: "After the series of shots, three immediately fell. The fourth, a few seconds later because he apparently was not fatally hit. Kotalla then gave two or three prisoners a mercy shot."

Until the end of the war, the family is unaware of the massacre. They think the boys are in the Neuengamme concentration camp, near Hamburg, Germany, or in the Deutsche Straf und Untersuchungsgefängnis in Utrecht. After all, Camp Amersfoort was a 'Polizeiliches

Durchgangslager.' The erroneous camp administration gives the family false hope after the war.

Two days after the execution, on Monday, November 20, members of the Landwacht raid the home of Gert Veenendaal, the husband of Sjouke's daughter Suze. The supposedly deserted German R.H. Bel (alias Rolf de Lange) is hiding next to the Veenendaals at Hof 6. He is a V-Mann (Vertrauensmann) who has infiltrated the resistance. Bel reports to the Landwacht that morning that his fugitive neighbor is now sitting at home having breakfast. An immediate operation is launched. Gert Veenendaal (alias 'Mr. Jansen') is not found, but in the hiding places at his address, Hof 7, they do find five people in hiding. Three of them later die in a German concentration camp.

Reverend Rijper knows nothing about the execution of his sons and is still in custody with Johan, Theo, and Henk. The following Tuesday, at ten o'clock in the evening, there is a knock on the cell. Three policemen come to pick up Theo and Henk, presumably because they are still too young for the camp (they had pretended to be a year younger). Sjouke does not know where they are being taken. The boys go to the police station and spend a week in a cell there. Theo is terrified and emotional. Henk cheers him up with: "Come on, buddy. This way, you're just giving them what they want."

During the day, the boys, under the supervision of a German, fetch food for the prisoners with a handcart from a kitchen. When the guard occasionally isn't paying attention, some onlookers encourage them to escape. But they don't, because where would they go? To Sister Suze? The boys probably know nothing about the earlier raid at Hof. Fearing to betray their sister and brother-in-law, they stick together.

Sjouke is still in custody, along with Johan. He occasionally writes a letter home. Family and friends send cigarettes and other treats. Anna writes about Sjouke's state of mind at that time: "He was fully aware that he had done nothing more than what a patriot could do."

A few days after their arrest, when the women are airing outside, they see a German cycling by with a bag from Klaas on his shoulder and the clock from their living room on his luggage rack. Their house has been looted.

On Sunday, November 26, Sjouke doesn't feel well. Anna asks if Dr. Boerma can visit him, and the doctor does. He has a long conversation with the reverend, who tells him that the prison has become "a Bethel" for him.

The next day, Sjouke and Anna see each other again. He expresses his fear of an interrogation by the *Sicherheitspolizei* (Security Police) in Utrecht scheduled for the following day. He is afraid he won't understand a question (due to deafness) or will give the wrong answer. He fears they will torture him. But he draws courage from his faith. He tells Anna that he loves the Savior. "Oh, woman, the Lord will make everything right." And as if he senses the impending doom: "Whatever they do to me, it doesn't matter. I've taken care of you and the children as much as I could, and the Lord will take care of you further. I'll be with my Savior much sooner."

On Tuesday morning, November 28, 1944, Sjouke meets his wife Anna for the last time in the bunker. Apparently, the interrogation did not take place. He is allowed to go home because he

is so sick. Unaware, they say goodbye. "He was in good spirits," writes Anna. "Trijnie made him a tasty sandwich."

The announcement of his release turns out to be a frequently used trick by Kotalla. To prevent unrest among prisoners, he calls them off to be released. This also happens to eight resistance fighters from Zwolle who had blown up a signal house near the railway. Like them, Sjouke Rijper also receives his release certificate. Ready to leave, they are in the waiting room. It takes a while because supposedly there is no transportation. Sjouke softly sings psalms to himself. In his inside pocket, he has his Bible, his white stone tobacco pipe, a clothes brush, and a nail file. Outside, it starts to get dark. Then, the eight Zwolle resistance fighters are called: Philips Haye, Philip Bergwerf, Eduard Reinke, Ubel Bulthuis, Cornelis Haye, Andries de Vries, Jan Bronsdijk, Hendrik Kolkman. Kotalla, known for targeting clergymen, points with his whip to Reverend Rijper and says, "Take the old man also with you. He's sick, anyway..."

Anna writes: "He didn't go home but to the eternal Father's house, the destination his heart always longed for."

Wearing a black coat, gray gloves, a gray scarf, and a black Garibaldi felt hat, Sjouke Rijper walks in the twilight along the Appelweg. They are going the wrong way. It dawns on him that they are not going home. They walk towards a farmhouse just outside the camp. It's a journey of almost six hundred meters. Sjouke can hardly keep up with his fellow captives. He leans heavily on the silver handle of his walking stick. The place of doom is a heath field behind a farmhouse. Here, Kotalla takes watches and rings from everyone. The first four are shot one by one. The reverend has to wait with the other four. Standing in front of an open grave in the heath and knowing the tragedy that awaits him, he asks if he can read something from his pocket Bible. This is denied. Kotalla takes the little Bible, flips through it, and throws it into the pit. He breaks Sjouke's walking stick and throws it into the hole. The 'Butcher of Amersfoort' steps aside and, at half past five in the afternoon, gives his command for the second time: "Ready! Aim! Fire!"

Reverend Popma: "He died in full certainty of faith. And he had entrusted the fate of his family to God through faith, just as, after years of struggle and effort, he had consciously surrendered his work in South America, his congregations in Holland, his own life's journey, and the future of his children: God does not make mistakes!"

The news of Reverend Rijper's murder spreads like wildfire through the camp. Anna suspects that something terrible has happened. No one dares to approach her. "One person with an even more somber face than the next." On Wednesday morning, Dr. Boerma calls Anna to him and tells her that it is 99 percent certain that her husband has been shot. The confirmation follows that afternoon.

Anna is still in custody with Jo, Mien, Trijnie, and Johan. Mien says, "We weren't allowed to show that we knew. The Germans wanted to keep the execution secret. We had



to hold ourselves together, or they would find out who had leaked. We couldn't go anywhere with our grief."

A few days later, Anna writes in a letter to her children at home about the tragedy. "We are bitterly saddened but thank God that he is blessed at home, elevated from all earthly care and sorrow." ... "We may believe that his task was completed. Otherwise, he would still be with us." ... "And now, children, I continue my journey alone, lonely but familiar with God, until we may once be united to praise God and Jesus Christ, who has redeemed us."

Naturally, letters follow in response. Son Kees, now also a minister, writes, "Has God then abandoned us? Does He allow all this? It is so difficult to hold on to the fact that God is love. And that not a hair falls without His will..." And in another letter: "I feel no desire for revenge. It is true, God will repay."



Sjouke's youngest sons, Theo and Henk, have been placed by the Germans with a 'Deutsch freundliches' baker family. But these people turn out not to be so pro-German and are even connected to the same church as the Rijpers. This baker supplies bread to the German army but has not turned his back on his homeland. It is an uncertain period for these young boys. Unaware of the fate of their brothers and father, they are put to work in the bakery. Their clothes are soiled. On a cold day, in desperation, the boys knock on the door of Ramselaar department store, where their sister Mien worked before she was arrested. Theo and Henk ask for clean, warm clothing. The first few times, they are turned away. But they persist. Eventually, they receive a pair of long stockings.

The boys want to retrieve clothing from home. Johannes Bosboomstraat 15 is now inhabited by the Landwacht couple Doorten. This couple not only moved into the house but is also selling the Rijpers' belongings. Theo and Henk decide to take the risk. They break into their own house in broad daylight. A life-threatening action. There is snow on the ground. Friends keep watch. They pretend to be snow removers. The agreement is that they raise a shovel if there is any danger. Theo and Henk go inside. Many valuable items have already been stolen or sold. With the help of a bakery cart from *Vergulde Korenaar*, the boys secure other family belongings, including three sacks of potatoes that Sjouke had earned with his sermons.

The family hopes that Anna and her children will be released around Christmas, but that hope proves in vain. They spend their days singing because singing relaxes them. When Kotalla gets tired of the St. Nicholas songs, the cell door swings open, and he shouts, "What's going on here? This isn't a brothel!" In the days that follow, Christmas carols also echo through the cold bunker. These not only give the devout Rijpers courage but also fellow prisoners, some of whom are in darkened death cells. They suspect that angels have descended into the camp. A prisoner who did not survive the camp writes about it in his last letter home, as revealed after the war.

One day, when the Rijper ladies return from airing, they briefly make contact with a prisoner inside a death cell. He is thirsty and hungry. Jo and Mien slide ultra-thin pieces of sausage on a piece of paper under the cell door. They make a makeshift channel out of paper and pour drinking water through the peephole in the cell door. It is, of course, not without risk. Mien says, "I almost start trembling again when I think about it." She also remembers how they delivered a piece of Christmas bread from one cell to another. A hollow metal bar from the

bed is pressed between the heating pipe and the wall. They push the bread through the tube to the other side. "Sorry it's a bit tough," they add. Humor helps survival.

It is only on January 23, 1945, after 68 days of detention, that Anna and her daughters Trijnie, Mien, and Jo are released. They temporarily move into the house of their son Piet Rijper, who is in hiding at Vincent van Goghstraat 3, near their own house. Johan remains in custody at Kamp Amersfoort. Jo immediately resumes her resistance work.



At the Landwacht, an anonymous letter is delivered on February 15 with the salutation: "Comrade!" The letter states that in two days at a specified address and time, a woman with a described appearance will hand over a letter to a man. Jo says, "That evening, I was at my brother-in-law's (Gert Veenendaal), who asked me to visit some people in hiding to investigate their complaints about slow or inadequate payments." Jo has a note with their addresses in code in her handbag. They are self-invented memory aids, such as 'piano 3'; a lady who plays the piano beautifully and lives at number three. She is waited for at the corner of Bekensteinselaan and Aldegondestraat by Lutke Schipholt, Frima, and two other Landwacht members. They take her in for interrogation. Landwacht Alexander Loffeld poses as a member of the British Secret Service to try to extract the key to the codes from her. Without success.

Jo is then transferred to Kamp Amersfoort. On the way, Landwacht Piet Frima asks about her brothers. Needless to say, he already knows that the boys have been shot. Jo answers that they are probably detained in Utrecht. After a tough interrogation by Kotalla, Jo Rijper is transferred to cell 160 of the women's section of the *Deutsche Straf und Untersuchungsgefängnis* (German Penal and Investigative Prison) in Utrecht on February 20, "*bis zum Verrecken*" (until you die), as the camp executioner adds. Jo shares her cell with Joyo Bouvy, a distributor of anti-German literature from the publishing house '*De Bezige Bij*', and she passes the time with embroidery. Through a resistance contact in Utrecht and a sympathetic wardress, Jo receives packages from home in her cell. She never revealed the addresses of the people in hiding.

Johan is still confined in Block IV of Kamp Amersfoort. 'Protective Detainee 10048' knows he is the only Rijper detained here and is lonely. "The bunker became quiet when those four troublemakers left," he jokes in a letter home. In the spring of 1945, prisoners are systematically shot in retaliation for resistance acts, such as the failed assassination attempt on Higher SS and Police Leader Hanns Albin Rauter. Johan escapes this fate because he is too young. However, he is transported three times to the Neuengamme concentration camp. But each time, Dr. Boerma takes him out of the prisoner line, claiming Johan Rijper is too ill for transport. Boerma believed that no more Rijpers should die in the camp. Johan ends up in the barracks with prisoners suffering from contagious diseases like typhus. It happens regularly that he



wakes up in the morning and sees several men around him have died. On June 11, he will turn 18. From that day on, he is no longer too young for a reprisal execution.

Fortunately, it doesn't come to that. The Allies are advancing. After a Canadian offensive near Amersfoort, the Germans realize it's better to leave. They do so on April 20, a day after handing over the camp to Loes van Overeem of the Red Cross. Johan was released three days before. Emaciated and with a shaved head, he walks home. There, a warm welcome awaits him.

Jo regains her freedom on April 29. Weak as she is, she walks from Wolvenplein in Utrecht to the temporary residence on Vincent van Goghstraat in Amersfoort. Exhausted, she walks up the garden path. She breaks down when embraced by a surprised family. A release of sorrow and joy. Happy about the return of Johan and Jo, but in deep mourning for the loss of Sjouke and with great concern about the uncertain fate of Klaas, Frans, and Henk van Dijk.

Two months after liberation, the body of Reverend Rijper is found in grave II, in the heath behind the farmhouse just outside the camp. He appears to have died from a gunshot to the neck. On June 28, 1945, Anna sends out the official death notice. "We know that he is with Jesus, whose Name it was his pleasure to preach," it reads above. Question marks are still next to the names of Klaas and Frans. As long as their bodies are not found, there is hope. Are they still alive, in Germany? An earlier appeal in the newspaper has yielded nothing. Four days later, the bodies of Klaas, Frans, and the hidden Henk van Dijk are also found.

Anna faces a difficult task. She must identify Joseph Kotalla, and he must identify her. She stands face to face with the executioner of Amersfoort, the murderer of her husband and two sons. "*Kennen Sie diese Frau?*" (Do you know this woman?) is the question to him. Kotalla answers in the negative. Anna ice-cold: "*So, jetzt erkennen Sie mich nicht mehr?*" (So, now you don't recognize me anymore?) Kotalla: "*Ach, sind Sie die Pastors Witwe? Sie sehen nun viel besser aus!*" (Are you the pastor's widow? You look much better now.)

After that, she, along with daughter Jo, identifies her husband, two sons, and housemate based on clothes, often marked with initials, and her father's cane. They use Sjouke's pocket Bible for identification. They also recognize the scarf Klaas received from his sister and see Frans's blue sports jacket and dark gray striped pants. Jo had once commented on those pants because they were too short, to which Frans said, "I'm keeping these pants. They're waiting for liberation."

Henk Rijper inherits the silver handle of Sjouke's walking stick. In 2008, he donates it to the National Monument Camp Amersfoort Foundation, where it is on display in a showcase as part of a permanent exhibition.

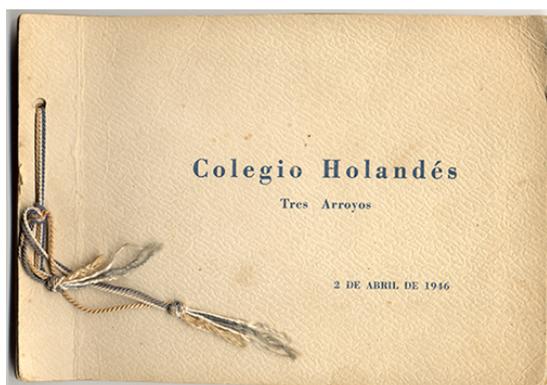
After the liberation, the Rijper family returns to their plundered home on Johannes Bosboomstraat in Amersfoort. They are destitute for the third time: upon arrival in Argentina, upon returning from that country, and now again. Fortunately, they receive help from all corners, even receiving two boxes of clothes months later from Tres Arroyos.

On Wednesday, August 22, 1945, the minister, his two sons, and the housemate are reburied in an impressive ceremony at 'Rusthof' cemetery in Amersfoort. Four coffins stand side by side in the auditorium. On those of the boys lies the tricolor with a simple wreath of lilies. The newspaper writes:

"A final salute fired by the honor guard of the Domestic Armed Forces above the open graves in the cemetery was the farewell to comrades who had gone before in the past struggle."

On February 8, 1946, Queen Wilhelmina signs a condolence message for the loss of Sjouke Rijper. In June, a similar royal letter arrives at Bosboomstraat 15, but this time expressing condolences for the loss of Klaas and Frans.

A woman tells Anna after the war that she cannot understand how she can continue to live with such a great loss. Anna replies: "In Luke 7, Jesus says to the deceased young man from Nain: Arise. And then he stood up. Who am I not to get up? Tomorrow is another day."



On April 2, 1946, a new school building is opened in Tres Arroyos. El Colegio Holandés honors Sjouke by naming the large auditorium after him. At the opening, after an honorable speech ('his house was a stronghold of resistance against the oppressor'), the photo portrait of 'El Dómine' (The Minister) is unveiled. Anna receives a photo report.

In December 1946, Joseph Kotalla is tried for 77 murders and torture of prisoners. His brother Paul asks the court for forgiveness in a letter. His father and two brothers had already died during the war. His mother, Agnes Kotalla, does the same. After all, Joseph had not been a member of the NSDAP. She writes: "We raised our children as good Christians and always made sure that they acted in the Christian faith." On December 14, 1948, Joseph Kotalla is sentenced to death. Queen Juliana commutes it to a life sentence three years later.

In 1972, the then Minister of Justice, Dries van Agt, plans to release Kotalla and the two other war criminals in Breda (Fischer and Aus der Fünthen). Van Agt says, "All the horrors of war and occupation have been endured to regain the rule of law from a system of extreme lawlessness. The rule of law, fought for at such a cost, demands that a punishment with no reasonable purpose be terminated." Strong and emotional resistance from society, particularly from associations of war victims, prevents this. Anna Rijper is in favor of release. She says, "Let them be released. They will be judged by God." Kotalla dies in 1979 in the Breda prison.

During the trial of camp commander Karl Peter Berg, resistance fighter and detective Gerrit Kleinveld suggests that Reverend Rijper was taken by Kotalla in passing. Berg, described by the newspaper as "a puffy demon cunningly lurking in the courtroom," states that there was an order to execute the pastor. "There was no order," responds the prosecutor. "It matters little," says a deeply outraged legal expert in court. "It was an act of shame for eternity." Berg is sentenced to death after the war. On November 22, 1949, he finds himself for a change on the other side of a firing squad. At the crucial moment, he shouts "*Feuer!*" (Fire!) himself, to which an immediate response follows. His last command leads to his own death.



In September 1947, the landwatcher couple is on trial for pocketing 3,000 guilders from the sale of the Rijpers' belongings. A year later, Anna, daughter Jo, and son Johan testify in a trial before the Special Court in Utrecht against the group of landwatchers who behaved improperly during the invasion of Bosboomstraat. The newspaper reports on the trial. Piet Frima, after an appeal, receives a 13-year prison sentence in a state work institution, with pre-trial detention deducted.

Five years after the war, a provisional monument is erected at the site of Camp Amersfoort. Jo Rijper unveils that monument. The local daily paper *Amersfoortse Courant* writes on September 25, 1950:



"With a single hand movement, she removes the cloth from the cross. The tricolor rises on the flagpoles next to it, and the *Wilhelmus* (national anthem) sounds stronger and cleaner over the entire heath than ever before."



Three years later, Prime Minister Willem Drees unveils the permanent monument: '*De Stenen Man*' (The Stone Man) by sculptor Frits Sieger.

From post-war Reformed Amersfoort, there is criticism of the resistance actions of the minister's family. The speculation and gossip about the reason for the raid weigh heavily on the family members. "Good minister's children do not get involved with 'red' RVV (resistant) members." Resistance actions during the war are not at all self-evident for many believers. It is more of a sin. "Illegal is illegal," they reason. An elder comes for tea at Anna Rijper's for some spiritual support. Naturally, the discovery of weapons and the execution of Sjouke and the boys are discussed.

"Well," says the elder and quotes Jesus according to Matthew 26:52, "Those who live by the sword will die by the sword." Anna's daughter Mien wants to attack the man but restrains herself.

A letter to the editor in the newspaper uplifts the family: "And even if a thousand voices whisper about mistakes made, even now, slander still tries to stretch its repugnant claws toward those who no longer see the light and break the bread, for us, the Rijpers and the many others, they remain the shining example in a world filled with darkness." That text was like balm on a wound, writes daughter Mien later.

The Rijpers also receive support from the Foundation 1940 – 1945. The foundation provides additional income so that the youngest children can pursue their studies. In turn, Anna actively contributes to the foundation.

When Anna turns ninety in 1976, she receives many congratulations, including from Tres Arroyos where she and Sjouke are still honored. Later that year, in the public city council meeting on September 28, the mayor and aldermen of Amersfoort decide to name the streets in the new Rustenburg neighborhood after local resistance heroes. This includes the 'Ds. Rijperstraat' (Rev. Rijper Street).

Sjouke Rijper only reached the age of sixty. In those sixty years, he accomplished a lot of work, despite struggling with poor health. He leaves behind a large family. Nine of his fifteen children together have forty grandchildren. Some of those grandchildren are already grandparents themselves.

Anna Margaretha Catharina Rijper-Ros reaches the blessed age of 94. She passes away on December 14, 1980, in the residential care center 'De Amerhorst' in Amersfoort. "I have known struggle and hardship," she writes in her farewell letter. "But the Lord has been near to me and graciously delivered me from many troubles." Four days later, she is interred with great attendance in the grave of her husband, daughter, and two sons. Coincidence or not, the deathly silence during the lowering of her coffin is abruptly disturbed by the rattle of machine guns...

A military exercise on the training ground of the Leusderheide.

