

XIII: SISTER ACT. Pt.1: THE PRINCE AND THE SHOWGIRL: 1931-1932

"Thoughtfully Little Nannj scratched at the dark wood of the table with her fingernail. It really seemed a mistake to leave one's own country. But her mother had decided, and now disaster was approaching her – the love of a foreign man whose feelings, thoughts and actions were so completely different from all she had ever known. She sighed, deeply despising herself.

*Little Nannj felt powerless and ashamed. Cornelis was pursuing her, and there was no escape from the alluring circle of his words, looks and gestures. "Marriage" she thought perplexedly. She did not know; she knew only that this prince, who had lived in the palace on the Amstel, had been meant for her, that she was forbidden to love anyone else and yet had fallen in love with a Niederlander who had long legs and smiling eyes."*¹

But what prospect had 24 year old 'Little' Nannj, my grandmother, her mother's namesake, of finding such a devotee at 'home' in Berlin? *Fabian*, the leading character in *Erich Kästner's* October 1931 novel; '*Fabian*,' would have reminded her that any potential suitor's prospects in Germany were far from good:

*"How many men of 30 can afford to marry nowadays? One is unemployed, another will lose his job tomorrow, a third never had a job. The state today," he continues "is not organized for the growth of future generations."*²

And when it came to her own occupation she already knew it was hard enough as a female acrobat to come by opportunity. That's why she'd been in the US since leaving her birthplace, Leipzig, in 1923 and had moved to Holland earlier that spring.

"Honestly," she thought, "For all the emancipation of the 'Golden Twenties,' Bubikopf hairstyles and knee-length skirts, women's leisure and daily life has remained much the same."³ And now Berlin is tearing itself apart again. Is there any reason to think a home might be waiting for me there? Mama's a world away."

But just who was this prince who had filled her mind with opportunity? He was the stage and lighting manager of the hit 1931 revue, *Hallo Hierheen!* That reminded Nannj of a remark US vaudeville and burlesque star, Gypsy Rose Lee, once made; "*stage managers like to think they own the theatre and everybody in it.*"⁴ Nannj hardly knew whether this man would be the kind to 'own' her, but the prospect wasn't unappealing.



The Anatomy of a Stage Manager
Source: Q2Q Comics

¹ Extracted and adapted from pg. 54-55 of the 2003 Anchor Books edition of Kurban Said's *The Girl from the Golden Horn* (translated by Jenia Graman). where: 'Little Nannj' replaces 'she' in the opening line of the first and second paragraphs, 'Mother' replaces 'father,' 'she' replaces 'Asiadeh,' 'Cornelis' replaces 'Hassa,' 'Amstel' replaces 'Bosphorous,' 'Niederlander' replaces 'barbarian.'

² *Going to the Dogs: The Story of a Moralist.* Erich Kästner. New York Review Books, 1990. Pg. 55

³ Lisa Todd's review of Helen Boak's '*Women in the Weimar Republic.*' *Journal of the German History Society*, Vol. 32, No. 4. Dec. 2014. Pg. 656

⁴ Reference missing



Above: At the *Paleis voor Volkslijst* in 1925 with a pair of Lilyputians
Inset above: Having apprenticed at *Feyenoord's* forerunner club from 1905 to 1908, Many years later Cor still played football in his free time. cca.1925
Right: At *Den Haag's Scala* in 1916 (left)



Cornelis Ridderhof, the reason for all her conjecture, was a nearly 40 year old former footballer who hailed from a small fishing village called *Yerseke* in the southernmost Dutch province of Zeeland. It had been renowned since the 1870s for its aquaculture, oysters and mussel farms, leading it to be nicknamed the "*Klondike of Zeeland*."⁵

Born in February 1894, he was the fourth of ten offspring belonging to Adriann Ridderhof, a self-employed carpenter, and Catharina Maria Meeuse, both Protestants.⁶ From the age of six he accompanied his father in the family business,⁷ and five years later (1905) he went to work "*from six in the morning till six in the evening... for 50 copper cents*" at a *kisten* (palette) factory in Rotterdam.⁸ At 14, 'Cor' went to make cabinets at the *Pander* furniture factory⁹ in *Den Haag*...as an electrician.¹⁰ There he grew acquainted with those affiliated to its *Scala Theater*,¹¹ eventually joining the team.

Following his mother's and father's deaths 12 years later in 1920, he (together with his brother, Emsay), sold the family's carpentry business before moving on to Amsterdam that December at the behest of the premier Dutch theatre on the *Amstel*, the '*Paleis voor Volkslijst*' or 'Palace of Industry' (see the map on pg. 473). There he managed stage lighting (under the tutelage of *John Streletsky*, the *Paleis'* stage manager.¹²) That was followed by color image projection, after which he became its electrician,¹³ supporting revues like those of *Bouwmeester*¹⁴ and its rival, *Ter Hall*¹⁵ (the latter "something phenomenal" he later said)¹⁶ among others.¹⁷

⁵ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yerseke

⁶ According to research completed by Mike Ridderhof at: reocities.com/Heartland/Hills/9782/Ridderhof.html, Adriaan Ridderhof was born in *Yerseke*, 23.08.1863. He was a carpenter and carpenter's son who died in Rotterdam on 23.12.1927. On 21.04.1887 he married Catharina Maria Meeuse (pictured on pg. 470) in *Wolphaartsdijk*, Zeeland, she having been born there, as the daughter of Meeuws Meeuse, a shoemaker and Catharina Bevelander on 08.12.1864. She later died in Rotterdam on 04.06.1920. Among their ten children, two were stillborn, while two died in infancy (one before Cornelis and three following him). Of the remaining six, Paulina ('Pautje') and Meeuwis ('Emsey' - male) were elder than Cornelis, whilst Catharina ('Katrien'), Dick (not Dirk) and Adriann were his junior.

⁷ *Kwart eeuw meester achter de coulissen: Cor Ridderhof van Carré wordt maandag gehuldigd*. Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Specific Source unknown.

⁸ *Cor Ridderhof: Wat zijn oogen zien, maken zijn handen and others*. Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Source n/a

⁹ *Pander* was one of the largest furniture companies in the Netherlands around 1900, with more than five hundred employees. It produced both historically tinted and modern Art Nouveau and Jugendstil furniture, winning the attention of the directors of the World Exhibition of Paris at the time. Following a royal visit important commissions poured in, such as the establishment of the *Vredespaleis* in The Hague and in 1907, *Pander* opened a lumberyard in *Rijswijk* (formerly known as *Ryswick*) in the province of South Holland. www.kunstbus.nl/design/pander.html

¹⁰ *Cor Ridderhof: Wat zijn oogen zien, maken zijn handen*.

Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Also confirmed by his *Gezinskaart*.

¹¹ *Cor Ridderhof trekt 25 aan de touwtjes in Carré*. Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Specific Source unknown.

Also confirmed by photos from *Den Haag* dated 1916, in which he is pictured with theatre folk. Pictures of the theatre can be seen here: historie.hdpnet.nl/scala.htm

¹² *Cor Ridderhof: man achter en van de schermen*. Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Specific Source unknown.

¹³ 'Stage manager,' reports *Cor Ridderhof trekt 25 aan de touwtjes in Carré*. November 1957. Specific Source unknown.

¹⁴ *Cor Ridderhof: man achter en van de schermen*. November 1957. Specific Source unknown.

¹⁵ *This Way Please! Popular Theatre in the Netherlands 1839-1939. Hallo Hierheen! Theater voor het grote publiek 1839-1939*. Paul Blom et al. Amsterdam, TIN.

¹⁶ *Cor Ridderhof: Wat zijn oogen zien, maken zijn handen and others*. November 1957. Specific Source unknown.

¹⁷ *NOTITIES onder de Keizerskroon. Ome Jan, man van vele trekken*. Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Specific Source unknown. See also: '*In het zonnetje*' among the newspaper clippings from 1957.

After discovering his lust for travel in 1927, Cor joined Frits Stapper's *revues*, criss-crossing Holland, first with the show, *Hallo Parijs!*¹⁸ Its (today legendary) Dutch stars included *Louissette*¹⁹ and *Louis Davids*²⁰ under the guidance of writer/producer *Armand Haagman*²¹ (both of the latter were Jewish).²² "That was nothing but hard work!" Ridderhof had said in a 1957 interview. "Setting the scene for the performance, dismantling, loading, driving, unloading, building....not sleeping sometimes for five days in a row."²³ Despite being constantly on the road, his base appears to have remained Amsterdam.²⁴

By mid-1931 he'd been booked for the 1st *Nationale Revue*,²⁵ and that's when his path crossed with Little Nannÿ, she being a performer in the show. He meanwhile took up residence in *Paardenstraat 9* (see '1' on the map on pg. 473), close to Amsterdam's *Rembrandtplein*, between the *Rembrandt Theater* and what was once called the *Grote Théâtre*.

By that time Ridderhof had seen it all. Or so he thought, before Little Nannÿ stood out. "I think he fell in love because my mother was a very attractive lady and very modern," middle daughter, Irene, told me in 2011. Although she added: "my father's family was not happy with him since they talked about him having an artiste with blonde coloured hair."

Cor had the 'gift of the gab,' much like Little Nannÿ's own father is thought to have had. "He was a good communicator," Irene's elder sister affirmed. "In the beginning he spoke German with her. He had a good ear too and could pick up a tune faster than a kid could pick up a guilder off the sidewalk." Nannÿ, having spent so long chaperoned by her former manager, Oswald Büttner, must have felt here was a man she could trust. Perhaps that had something to do with his 13 senior years too.

Lost in her thoughts, Little Nannÿ suddenly found herself preparing to accompany Cor to a wedding party, that of the co-founder of the *Nationale Revue*, René Sleeswijk, who was about to tie the knot with *revue* showgirl, *Rietje de Haas*. "Yes," Irene told me "I think they were there," referring to Cor and Nannÿ. Suddenly she was out hobnobbing with VIPs from the Dutch theatre scene!

Sleeswijk had been acquainted with Nannÿ's showgirl chum since the late 1920s, when she was a *revue* dancer in the *Paleis*.²⁶ There he had learnt the ropes of management within the *Bouwmeester Revues*.²⁷ Like Nannÿ, they were both born the same year,²⁸ having that in common from the get go. Their son, *René Andre*, who had arrived in April that year, tickled Nannÿ pink during the wedding, which took place

¹⁸ *Cor Ridderhof: man achter en van de schermen*. Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Specific Source unknown.

See also: www.eenlevenlangtheater.nl/louis%20davids/repertoire/kleinkunst/1923-1938/2820.html

¹⁹ See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louissette

²⁰ See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Davids. NB: he'd also worked in the *ter Hall* *revues*.

²¹ *Cor Carre Veertig Jahr. Tussen touwen, doeken en lichten* by Lou Polak. Newspaper clipping of November 1957. See also: *Cor Ridderhof: Wat zijn oogen zien, maken zijn handen* and *Cor Ridderhof trekt 25 aan de touwtjes in Carré*. Nov. 1957

²² See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armand_Haagman. NB: Haagman was the partner of *Louissette* until his death in 1942.

²³ *Cor Ridderhof: Wat zijn oogen zien, maken zijn handen and others*. Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Source n/a.

²⁴ In August 1929 for instance he lived in *Harlemstraat*, according to *Cor Ridderhof's Gezinskaart*

²⁵ *Cor Carre Veertig Jahr. Tussen touwen, doeken en lichten* by Lou Polak. Newspaper clipping of Nov. 1957. Source n/a

²⁶ Before it burnt down on the night of April 17-18th, 1929. See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paleis_voor_Volksvlijt

²⁷ See: www.historici.nl/Onderzoek/Projecten/BWN/lemmata/bwn5/sleeswijk

²⁸ Reindert: 1st Oct. 1907 and Maria Helena de Haas: 7th May 1907. See: www.sleeswijk.com/Parenteel/par.html

on August 26th, 1931.²⁹ It looks to have coincided with *Hallo Hierheen!*'s arrival in the Dutch capital (where the family also had its home), the show having been performed in Amersfoort's *Groote Schouwburg* beforehand.³⁰

Speaking of Amsterdam, the main protagonist in Christopher Isherwood's novel, *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*, 'fondly' recalls the city in late 1930, in the following way:

*"It's one of the most dangerous cities in Europe. It has three fatal drawbacks. In the first place, the stairs are so steep in many of the houses that it requires a professional mountaineer to ascend them without risking heart failure or a broken neck. Secondly, there are the cyclists. They positively overrun the town, and appear to make it a point of honour to ride without the faintest consideration for human life... And thirdly, there are the canals. In summer, you know... most insanitary. Oh, most weeks on end I was never without a sore throat."*³¹

He may have been exaggerating somewhat but indeed the share of trips made by bicycle in Amsterdam was high in 1930: around 75 percent (compared with 30 percent in *Manchester* or 77 percent in *Hanover*), figures that cities can only dream of today.³² More reassuring perhaps was the fact that Amsterdam was similar in size to Leipzig at the time, with 757,000 inhabitants³³ compared to 717,000 in Nannÿ's hometown.³⁴ Geert Mak is a little more affecting in his retrospective: *Amsterdam. A Brief Life of the City*:

*During the 1930s; "Amsterdam had the dynamism of a bustling harbor city, an air of rolled-up sleeves, of something in which you wanted to participate and of which you wanted to be a part... Worn-out freighters, a tug boat belching smoke as it tows a line of barges carrying cargo, ferries moving to and fro, a ship laden with ore, lying low in the water."*³⁵

I wonder to what extent Amsterdam reminded Little Nannÿ of Berlin, with its many canals?³⁶ Or perhaps more importantly, could it become home from home? Despite the Ridderhof family's own misgivings over his 'modern *Duitse* starlet,' neither he (nor more importantly, Little Nannÿ) were put off. During the wedding reception she saw more clearly that Berlin and Amsterdam had had a lot more in common during the last decade than she realised.³⁷ Demand for German entertainment in the

²⁹ René Andre was born April 21st, 1931 in Amsterdam. He was followed by Hans born 31st Jan. 1935 in Amsterdam. See: www.sleeswijk.com/Parenteel/par.html

³⁰ It was engaged from August 17th-20th according to the *Amersfoortsch Dagblad* "De Eemlander" of August 14th, 1931. Pg 4. Online here: archiefeemland.courant.nu/issue/ADDE/1931-08-14/edition/0/page/1

³¹ *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*. Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In 'The Berlin Novels.' Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 7

³² www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/may/05/amsterdam-bicycle-capital-world-transport-cycling-kindermoord

³³ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amsterdam#Demographics

³⁴ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in LEIPZIG*. Martina Güldemann. 1999. Pg. 36

³⁵ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage, 2001. Pg. 235

³⁶ The documentary movie: "Berlin wie es war: Symphonie einer Weltstadt" illustrates the similarity between 1930s Berlin and what Mak and Isherwood describe of Amsterdam. See also:

de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphonie_einer_Weltstadt

³⁷ 1920-1940: Berlin-A'dam. Duits-Nederlandse wisselwerkingen. Kathinka Dittrich. Pg. 93 (within 'Berlijn toen en nu').

NB: Kathinka Dittrich (in full Dittrich van Weringh) (see: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathinka_Dittrich_van_Weringh) is a German journalist and author who has written scores on those interactions. Between 2003 and 2007 she was also Chair of the Amsterdam-based [European Cultural Foundation](http://EuropeanCulturalFoundation.org). See:

de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathinka_Dittrich_van_Weringh. Other titles include: *Achter het doek: Duitse immigranten in de Nederlandse speelfilm in de jaren dertig* (Behind the Curtain: German Immigrants in the Dutch Movies in the Thirties, 1987); *Berlijn-Amsterdam 1920-1940 Duitse-Nederlandse wisselwerkingen: een terugblik* (Berlin-Amsterdam 1920-1940 Interactions – A Retrospective, 1982); *Der niederländische Spielfilm der dreissiger Jahre und die deutsche Filmemigration* (The Dutch Feature Film of the Thirties and the German Film Emigration, 1987). A number of these items which are accessible via the Library of the Netherlands Film Instituut which can be searched here: bibliotheek.eyefilm.nl/opc_internet/index.html

Netherlands had been high. Its UFA films there enjoyed great devotion, the cream of the crop of German circuses were well known, German revue scenes were translated and played in Holland whilst entire revues were even brought occasionally from Berlin with their sets, costumes and all. 'Dutch' theatre directors and impresarios were often Germans, and not surprisingly, its stars, including those in cabaret had grown very accustomed to the Dutch market. According to cabaret historian, *Wim Ibo*, "in short, there was a ready market for German artists."³⁸

But still Little Nannÿ wondered whether she was ready to retire from the stage. Was she prepared to become this guy's 'prize'? Cor, unaware that his bride-to-be was daydreaming continued convincing her to stay in Holland. He talked about *Stapper's* former star, *Louis Davids*, who now led the *Scheveningen*³⁹ Cabaret at its *Kurhaus*.⁴⁰ He'd already engaged several German artists that summer for instance, including his 'discovery,' Berlin actress and *Chansonniere*, *Dora Gerson*.⁴¹ Now he was making plans for the opening of a new cabaret theater on Amsterdam's *Leidseplein* through which, he concluded, there was bound to be work for Little Nannÿ if she ever needed it. And were the city to grow tiresome, well, Davids planned to continue touring as a comedian, next up with *Dotz Sohn Rethel* and *Bep & Rit*.⁴² He'd be glad to have a stage girl, for sure. But in Cor's view, now was the right time to settle down, his looks and gestures suggesting she do the same. How could this *Fräulein* resist?

She continued, however, mentally putting things in place. In her late Holsatian grandfather's eyes, the 'Hollanders'⁴³ had been the "*Blood relatives of staunch northern German traders*," the *Hanse*.⁴⁴ Oswald Büttner too had advised her before she left for Holland that the opening lines of the Dutch national anthem, the *Wilhelmus*,⁴⁵ went as far as to recall their German origins: "*Wilhelmus van Nassouwe ben ik, van Duitsen bloed*" (where the word 'Duitsen' – *Duytschen* in the 1568 original – meant 'German'). It also referenced William of Orange's⁴⁶ roots within the Holy Roman Empire when it had incorporated the Netherlands and central European lands had been dominated by Germans.⁴⁷

³⁸ *Dora Gerson en het eerste emigrantencabaret Ping Pong*. Jacques Klöters in *Nederland en het Duitse exil 1933-1940*. Kathinka Dittrich van Weringh & Hans M. Wurzner (eds). Van Gennep, 1982. Pg. 210

³⁹ *Scheveningen*, a district of *Den Haag*, is a seaside resort, not dissimilar to Atlantic City, whose miles of sandy beach buzzed from July. Since being founded as a bathing resort in 1818, it attracted numerous tourists from all over Europe, notably from Germany. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scheveningen

⁴⁰ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurhaus_of_Scheveningen. In its August 3rd, 1930 issue, *Das Programm* published an article: '*Saison in Scheveningen*,' in which it refers to the *Kurhaus* concert hall which stood at the beginning of the pier and where the program changed every half-month, the entrance was free, where instrumental soloists and singers make up the ensemble, and where acts are of the best quality. (It remained in popular use until the 1960s).

⁴¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dora_Gerson

⁴² *Dora Gerson en het eerste emigrantencabaret Ping Pong*. Jacques Klöters in *Nederland en het Duitse exil 1933-1940*. Kathinka Dittrich van Weringh & Hans M. Wurzner (eds). Van Gennep, 1982. Pg. 211-212

⁴³ In medieval sources, 'Hollanders' referred to the inhabitants of the historical county of Holland (what are now approximately the provinces of North Holland and South Holland). In German historiography, however, the term has often covered *Zealanders* and was used interchangeably with '*Niederländer*.' See: *The Close 'Other': Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Hollanders and the Hanse*. Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz. *Journal of the German History Society*, Vol. 31, No. 4. December 2014. Pg. 453

⁴⁴ *The Close 'Other': Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Hollanders and the Hanse*.

Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz. *Journal of the German History Society*, Vol. 31, No. 4. December 2014. Pg. 453

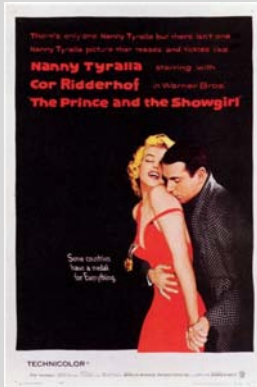
⁴⁵ Although it was not recognized as the national anthem until 10 May 1932, despite it being considered the oldest in the world. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelmus

⁴⁶ William of Orange was the main leader of the Dutch revolt against the Spanish Habsburgs that set off the Eighty Years' War and resulted in the formal independence of the United Provinces in 1648. See:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_the_Silent

⁴⁷ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire#Baroque_period

Who was more superior among the Dutch and Germans though didn't really concern her, especially after seeing during René and Rietje's wedding that most Dutch people respected her homeland. After all, it had honoured Holland's neutrality during World War One and whatsmore, they could all speak or understand German. *"Why? Holland had even offered the Kaiser residence when he fled Germany in 1918"* she thought. *"And the language? Aech, I shall grasp that in no time!"*



13.1: The Prince and the Showgirl

"Mum, I've met this bloke. 'Ridderhof' is his name. It sounds a bit regal, don't you think? You know, like 'Rittergut,' the estate belonging to Schloss Machern near Leipzig."

Cor's family name certainly bore resemblance to that of the grounds and castle that lay a stone's throw from Little Nannj's grandmother's home in *WenigMachern*: the *Ritterburg*. Translated into English, they both mean virtually the same thing too; 'Knight's Court.' Has an air of royalty about it, doesn't it?

But how real was the danger that upon marrying this 'prince who had lived in the palace on the Amstel,' the showgirl would be throwing in her lot with *"a culture that worshipped teenage goddesses"* typically left with so *"little room to breathe"* to become an *"appendage"* or a *"pussycat"* as Jerome Charyn once so succinctly put it?

Either way, Little Nannj had to make a choice. Like *Dr. Labude*, Fabian's friend in Kästner's *Going to the Dogs*, she was at *"one of those rare turning points in history where a new way must be found of looking at life."*

"Damn it!" she thought. In Cor's eyes, she was not only a glamorously sexy and financially independent soubrette, she would make for a good mother and housewife too. She was the embodiment of modern femininity. And that was good enough for her. *Mama* would just have to understand.

Sources: *Gangsters and Gold Diggers. Old New York, the Jazz Age and the Birth of Broadway.*

Jerome Charyn. *Thunder's Mouth Press*, 2003. Pg. 200-201 and

Going to the Dogs: The Story of a Moralist. Erich Kästner. *New York Review Books*, 1990. Pg. 137

"And so" closed Irene, "the bells were ringing for them as well." That would certainly help explain how Little Nannj and Rietje went on to found such an enduring friendship.⁴⁸

Sister Margot, who was an acrobat too and had worked alongside Little Nannj in *Hallo Hierheen!*, squealed in delight when she heard she'd accepted Cor's proposal. Although Nannj had never seemed like your average *'Gold Digger,'* she heartily agreed now seemed like a good time to *'drop anchor'* as it were. *"Finally you'll have your own bed and linen, and a kitchen in which to cook meals. To marry and live a civilian life."* The same dream most nearly all retiring vaudeville stars looked forward to. She had certainly found her place within a new crowd, one that made her feel welcome. And now she was at home amongst a happening Dutch scene with Margot nearby too. The only issue was *Mama Tjyralla*.

"But nowadays, you know, a girl can't afford to keep a man waiting back in Germany," Margot reminded her sister. *"If he asks her once and she refuses him, he may try someone else. It's all these surplus women."*⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Personal correspondence with Irene, July 8th, 2011: *"She always did tell nice about Marietje and not about Rene."*

⁴⁹ Extracted from the second part of *Goodbye to Berlin* entitled; *'Sally Bowles.'*

Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In *'The Berlin Novels.'* Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 328

Little Nannj put pen to paper and awaited her mother's response. In the meantime, *Hallo Hierheen!* continued on the road, wrapping up its initial run, if not at Utrecht's *Rembrandt* theatre between September 8-10th,⁵⁰ then in Rotterdam by late October.⁵¹ Not surprisingly, the *Dickson Girls* (whom the Tjyrallas performed with) were advertised at the end of that month (albeit as the '*Dickson-Ballett*') in German variety trade paper, *Das Programm*, as being 'on stage' at Rotterdam's *Arena*, whilst the troupe was touting for bookings during November and December.⁵² It appeared it was time for a break.

Not so, however as both were already booked, albeit at this point Little Nannj and her sister's career paths appear to have diverged, with the former joining a revue called; *Lachpillen*. '*Laughing Pills*' began its run as early as December 19th, 1931 in Amsterdam's premier theatre, Carré, where it was booked to run for the next two months. The show wasn't a *National Revue* production, but as the poster overleaf reveals, was a '*Moderne*' *Internationale Revue*, a 'mega' conglomerate it would seem of Stapper's stars, among them Louisette, accompanied by the compositions of Armand Haagman and the technical skills of Cor Ridderhof as the electrician – in combination with the talents of René Sleeswijk as stage manager.

Little Nannj presumably performed as one of 24 *Ludowsky Girls* under the instruction of *Balletmeester*, *Alexander Ludowsky*.⁵³ A backstage photo of the cast and crew, probably taken around November 1931, reveals a smiling *Fräulein* and a hidden-from-view, Ridderhof.⁵⁴ Margot is absent, it is thought because she continued with the *Dickson Girls*.



Top:

The crew and cast of the show undertaking its first reading of the script. *Nannj Tjyralla* is second from right (wearing a cardigan we last saw in the US – see pg. 404 and 411), *Armand Haagman* is seated on the left, *Alex Wunnink*, Carré's manager is next to him. *Louisette* is in the centre with the dog on her lap. *Cor Ridderhof*, never a fan of the camera characteristically hides in the back, highlighted by the arrow.

Bottom:

Opening scene from *Lachpillen* with *Nannj Tjyralla* 7th from right. Sources (Middle and Bottom): *Geschiedenis van de Revue in Nederland*. Dries Krijn. Pg. 98-99

⁵⁰ *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 7th Sept., 1931. Pg. 4. Online at: www.hetutrechtsarchief.nl/collectie/kranten/un/1931/0907

⁵¹ No newspaper advertisements follow the Utrecht engagement, although Irene felt *Hallo Hierheen* might have subsequently toured the Benelux region. However, in an article entitled '*René Sleeswijk*' published in the *Leidsch Dagblad* on September 23rd, 1972 (pg.15) Sleeswijk says: "In the provinces it was performed at the fairgrounds, in Amsterdam it did well, moderately so in The Hague and in Rotterdam there was nothing. 'Why not?' Reasons for failure in this profession remain top secret."

⁵² *Das Programm*. October 25th, 1931. See also Chapter XII; Sea Change. Pg. 446

⁵³ Real name, Ben van Schaik. See this introduction to this former *Paleis voor Volkslijst* star from *Weekblad Cinema en Theater*, 1931, No. 412, Pg. 28, online [here](#).

⁵⁴ *Geschiedenis van de Revue in Nederland*. Dries Krijn. De Walburg Pers, 1980. Pg. 98



Lachpillen bill poster, late 1931.
Source: geheugenvannederland.nl

Life was becoming a ball for Little Nannÿ. She worked, she played, she loved and was loved. The only ‘problem’ was her mother back in Berlin, from whom she awaited permission to get married, not to mention copies of her birth certificate and a certificate regarding her marital status. Come Christmas time she was growing impatient, having still not heard from her. She therefore put in a call between shows to wish her a *Frohe Weihnachten* – and confront her.

As she suspected, Frau Tÿralla was up in arms over the proposal. She had to contend with all the reasons why she shouldn’t marry this Dutchman, chief among them, her abandoning of her war-widow mother to fend for herself. “*Oh, the rent*” she cried. “*The taxes in arrears, the bills...*” she went on, before grumbling about “*the rudeness of the coal-man, her pains in the back, her boils, her poverty, her loneliness, her gradually approaching death.*”⁵⁵

Little Nannÿ pleaded with her to alter her stance, arguing she had her partner; *Albert Petzold*. But it was all to no avail. In between her arguments came the cackle of a radio in the background broadcasting Christmas tunes... “*Oh Tannenbaum! Oh Tannenbaum! Wie treu sind deine Blätter!*” As far as Mama was

concerned Nannÿ was making a terrible mistake and was told her in no uncertain terms to finish up her Dutch adventure and return home as soon as *Lachpillen* was over – Berlin was increasingly dangerous for a *gnädiger Frau*.

Nannÿ thought that was it, but she hadn’t finished either:

“*Oh the Nazis, they despise culture⁵⁶ and attack innocents!*” she whined. “*The Café Reimann was destroyed on September 12th... Cabarets like Kadeco are suffering sharp falls in attendance. 1500 Nazis stormed Jewish worshippers emerging from the synagogues in Fasanenstrasse and Kehniner Platz, yelling ‘Kill the Jews.’⁵⁷ Whatever next!*” she implored. Frau Tÿralla needed her daughters to keep an eye on her. “*After all*” she pointed out, “*your Hinsch cousins are still under their parents’ noses. Therefore so should you and Margot be!*”

Once she was off the phone, Little Nannÿ realized her mother, now nearing 50, sounded lonely. With her daughters away, Theo gone, ‘*Onkel Albert*’ pre-occupied with his inventions and her lodgers keeping themselves to themselves, she was short on company.

⁵⁵ Mr. Norris *Changes Trains*. Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In ‘*The Berlin Novels.*’ Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 211.

⁵⁶ Sentimentality towards pets too was a characteristic abhorred by the Nazis and was integrated into their revolt against bourgeois culture in the early 20th century. Source unknown.

⁵⁷ *Faust’s Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 398

As Nannÿ mulled over matters in her and Margot's small shared room at *The Hotel Holland*,⁵⁸ just around the corner from Cornelis flat in *Paardenstraat 9* (from where she had made the phonecall), she read an interview with Erich Kästner, whose children's adventure, *Emil und die Detektive*, had recently premiered in the UFA filmhouses along Berlin's *Kurfürstendamm*⁵⁹ and whose newest novel was now the talk of the town.⁶⁰ A line in that novel struck a chord with her: "*The trees stood there as though they were stricken with leprosy and had been forbidden to leave the wood.*"

Worryingly she thought to herself; "*I was encouraged to leave and now am forbidden to be away. Well,*" she thought, "*if Mama's tactic is to stall matters, I'll just have to take matters into my own hands. I'll fall pregnant, as she did with me! That will recast the die!*"

Nannÿ was committed to staying in the Netherlands at least until *Lachpillen* had finished, which meant, given that it had just started, she couldn't very well return to Berlin nor visit Leipzig's *Standesamts* herself for the necessary identification papers. And so matter of factly, "*she got pregnant to get the certificates to get married,*" confirmed middle daughter, Irene.

Lachpillen remained at Carré until February 1st, being performed every evening on the turn of eight PM. In the meantime Margot was back with *Hallo Hierheen!* and that saw her give two typically sold out performances every Sunday at 1400 and 2000 hrs in Amsterdam's *Hollandsche Schouwburg* until mid-February. The adjacent picture, published in the *De Sumatra Post* on February 12th, reveals her on the far left with the other seven Dickson Girls, together with that on the right.



Strike a Pose! *Hallo Hierheen* publicity shot
Source: *De Sumatra Post*, February 12th, 1932 (left)
and *Geschiedenis van de Revue in Nederlands. Krijn*.

Another call to *Mama* followed in February in which Little Nannÿ disclosed she was now 'expectant.' But that too was to no avail. Frau Tÿralla only grumbled about the worsening political climate and said that she was not in a position to go off to Leipzig on a wild goose chase for her papers. For Little Nannÿ there was nothing else left but for she herself to return as soon as *Lachpillen* had completed its current run and took a late 'winter' break.

⁵⁸ According to Little Nannÿ's eldest daughter, Tina: "*They possibly had accommodation around the Paleis voor Volksvlijt. I remember mum said once she had lived around there a short spell,*" whilst the 'Logis' section of the February 21st copy of *Das Programm* (issue #1559), indicates *The Hotel Holland* at Amstel 83 offered ten rooms to travelling artists with gas cookers, electric lighting and kitchens. NB: Similar offers stood in *Den Haag*. In Rotterdam artists could stay at 'Nord Brabant' at Stationsplein #8 or with Frau Itzeroth, Kurzawski, H.v.Oers and A.v.d.Shilt.

⁵⁹ According to www.imdb.com/title/tt0021836/releaseinfo?ref=tt_dt_dt it was released on December 2nd, 1931, while the DVD inlay booklet for the July 15th, 2013 BFI release of the original film reveals details of its premiere. NB: The film was shot during July 1931, when according to Caren Willig the "Berlin street scenes portray the German capital in which civil liberties flourish."

⁶⁰ Fabian; *die geschichte eines moralisten* was published on October 14th, 1931 according to the Catalog of Copyright Entries. Pt 1. Grp 1. Books. New Series. Library of Congress. Copyright Office. Washington, 1940. Online [here](http://www.loc.gov/copyright/).

Conveniently, *Hallo Hierheen!* concluded around the same time,⁶¹ so Margot accompanied Nannÿ for moral support. Plus, it was almost a year since they'd last been in Berlin. If they were quick, they could still make the third '*Thousand Artists' Festival*' in Leipzig on February 16th at its cabaret and dance palace, *Eden-Arkadia*.⁶² Apprehensively they rode the train home, nevertheless excited to be returning.

Back in Berlin, some things never changed. As in so many of the older Berlin flats, the living room connects the front part of the house with the back. But it was the extraordinary smell in Mama's Charlottenburg apartment in *Niebuhrstrasse*, West Berlin, when the stove was lighted for instance and the window shut. "*Not altogether unpleasant, a mixture of incense and stale buns.*"⁶³ Then there was the tall tiled stove, gorgeously coloured, like an altar, and the washstand, stoic like a Gothic shrine.

But the sisters' reception was far from friendly and *Mama's* conversation, frank. From the outset she told her she could not afford to provide a dowry, never mind pay for a wedding without winning the Prussian State Lottery first (and she'd never had her brother's luck there, she added). She was certainly neither going to fall for her falling pregnant 'ruse.' Did *Mama* have some other bachelor in mind?

Mama had been right about one thing, however. It wasn't a fine time in the capital. The steadily worsening economic crisis had visibly led to a growth in extreme right-wing forces. A few months earlier, in October 1931, the National Socialists, the German National People's Party (NDVP) and the *Stahlhelm* had joined ranks in the so-called "*Harzburg Front*" to fight the *Brüning* government and the Republic. Through skilful manouvering, Hitler had succeeded in becoming its key political figure.⁶⁴ At the same time severe unemployment meant soup kitchens had sprung up on every street corner to feed the starving masses while the city's left and right were making comprehensive preparations for civil war,⁶⁵ following a winter which resident writer, Christopher Isherwood described in his own inimitable way as having "*dragged slowly past...like a long train which stops at every dingy little station.*"⁶⁶

Having reached a stalemate, Little Nannÿ and Margot left with their mother for *Nollendorfplatz* in *Schöneberg* to complete the courtesy visit to her long-term partner, inventor and manufacturer, Albert Petzold. Then out afterwards around *Viktoria-Luise-Platz* to get some fresh air. Albert lived then in the heart of *Schöneberg's* main entertainment district, which was very much a favourite of Margot's. Afterwards they returned to '*Nolli*' and went to a little cinema in *Bülowsstrasse* where a film was showing about a girl who sacrificed her stage career for the sake of a Great Love, *Home and Children*. The parallel was uncanny and they laughed so much that they had to leave before the end.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Nannÿ was sure she was doing the right thing.

⁶¹ At least there were no more press clippings available online come July 2015.

⁶² *Das dritte Fest der 1000 Tausendkünstler in Leipzig. Das Programm.* February 28, 1932. Pg. 5

⁶³ Extracted from the second part of *Goodbye to Berlin* entitled; '*A Berlin Diary. Autumn 1930.*'

Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In '*The Berlin Novels.*' Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 244 and 246.

⁶⁴ *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy.* German Bundestag. 1998. Pg. 249

⁶⁵ *Berlin in Lights. The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler (1918-1937).* Transl. by C. Kessler. Grove Press. 1999. Pg. 412/413. March 23rd, 1932.

⁶⁶ *Mr. Norris Changes Trains.* Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In '*The Berlin Novels.*' Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 107

⁶⁷ Extracted from the second part of *Goodbye to Berlin* entitled; '*Sally Bowles*' where the plural personal pronoun 'we' has been exchanged for 'they.' Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In '*The Berlin Novels.*' Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 292

The state of Germany, however, was beginning to frighten her. On February 22nd, Hitler's candidacy for President was announced and at once he was overwhelmed by a 'storm of enthusiasm.'⁶⁸ Posters went up around the city in early March, President Hindenburg's portrait included an inscription in Gothic lettering beneath striking a distinctly religious note: '*He hath kept faith with you; be ye faithful unto Him.*' The Nazis' PR manager, Joseph Goebbels, on the other hand evolved a formula which dealt cleverly with this venerable icon and avoided the offence of blasphemy. '*Honour Hindenburg: Vote for Hitler.*'⁶⁹ Yet these were challenging times:

*"Hate exploded suddenly, without warning, out of nowhere," wrote Isherwood in his Berlin novels. "At street corners, in restaurants, cinemas, dance halls, swimming baths; at midnight, after breakfast, in the middle of the afternoon. Knives were whipped out, blows were dealt with spiked rings, beer-mugs, chair legs, or leaded clubs; bullets slashed the advertisements on the poster-columns, rebounded from the iron roofs of latrines. In the middle of a crowded street a young man would be attacked, stripped, thrashed, and left bleeding on the pavement; in fifteen seconds it was all over and the assailants had disappeared....The newspapers were full of death-bed martyrs, Nazi, Reichsbanner, and Communist."*⁷⁰

Daunted, Little Nannj and Margot boarded the train to Leipzig. They would stay at their former manager's widow, *Frau Büttner*, some three kilometres west of the city centre in *Klarastraße* in *Plagwitz*. They wondered whether Leipzig was similarly troubled like Berlin, but were comforted by the thought that their visit would give them the chance to meet their former acrobat team mate, *Annedore*, the mother of the Büttner's grandchild, Lester.

En route, they learned from another passenger that the former King of Saxony, Frederick Augustus III, had died on February 18th. His last place of residence had been in their father's homeland, Silesia, at *Schloss Sybilleort*, northwest of Breslau.⁷¹ The girls mused over their family in Silesia that they had never met. *Oma Tjyralla* would be a ripe old age now they thought, if she were still alive. Mother did not keep in touch and so they knew very little of their late father's family.

Upon arriving in Leipzig, the Tjyrallas' saw it too had been stung by Nazi disease. What was perhaps worse was that Hitler arrived on March 4th, just after they did, to address voters at *Park Meusdorf*,⁷² an oft used spot for political rallies,⁷³ southwest of the centre beyond the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal*. In the meantime she witnessed with her own eyes how members of the Hitler youth had gone on a rampage at the *Museum für Bildende Künste* (Museum of Fine Arts) which overlooked *Augustusplatz*, daubing swastikas where they pleased. She heard they'd gone as far as to rename a painting by Dutch Golden Age artist, *Dirck Hals*, from "*Lazy Company*" to "*Jewish Company*." That sent shivers up her spine. Was it a warning of things to come, she wondered?⁷⁴

⁶⁸ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 400

⁶⁹ *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*. Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In '*The Berlin Novels.*' Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 107-9

⁷⁰ *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*. Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In '*The Berlin Novels.*' Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 107-8

⁷¹ See: sachsen.de/en/274.htm

⁷² See: www.hitlerpages.com/pagina65.html

⁷³ See: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meusdorf#Schenke.2C_Park_Meusdorf

⁷⁴ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert*. Martina Güldemann. 1999. Pg. 38



Leipzig's jobless queue for work during the crisis
Source: Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild

In fact, demonstrations, strikes, hunger marches, lock-outs and wage cuts were becoming increasing daily occurrences in Leipzig,⁷⁵ whilst unemployment had shot up, reaching 185,392 by the beginning of April.⁷⁶ Tension was evidently high in the city and it will have come as no surprise to hear that the *Drei Linden Varieté*, where their mother had secured their big break with Oswald Büttner in 1921, had closed on April 1st, after which it was put up for sale.⁷⁷

Being back 'home,' however, turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Although they hadn't kept in touch a great deal (and *Mama* certainly hadn't told her), the timing of Little Nannÿ and Margot's visit meant they could represent the Tÿrallas at their cousin Martin's wedding.⁷⁸ They hadn't seen him since before they had travelled to the UK in early 1928, although the second eldest Hinsch, now 23, had been back in Saxony since November the previous year,⁷⁹ following a spell in *Altenburg* in *Thüringia*. He was now a textile trader.

On March 7th their cousin tied the knot with the slightly elder, *Anna-Marie Rohowsky*, who hailed from Dresden.⁸⁰ Mind you, their wedding did not follow the usual Protestant norms, owing to the fact she was a Roman Catholic. It therefore did not take place in a church at all according to Martin's residential record („*Trauung am Kirchlich nicht*“). I suspect it was not the union all family members desired, recalling the eldest (and somewhat disparaged), *Frits*, had married a Catholic too.⁸¹

Following the wedding, Martin and his new wife moved in with youngest brother, Hans, who lived in a courtyard apartment at *Königstraße 19*.⁸² It lay just south of *Johannisplatz* and ran into *Rosßplatz* – that open space where once upon a time the cousins' grandfather had maintained his *Schneiderstube*. Seventeen year old Hans and Martin's careers overlapped – the latter's work in textiles corresponding to Hans' engagement with the Jewish-owned men's clothing store, *Bamberger und Hertz*.

Being at the wedding naturally lent Nannÿ and Margot opportunity to explain to family how they were both getting on, during a reception which consisted of plates of ham and cold cut wurst, cheese, radishes, pumpernickel and bottled beer. They especially savoured, however, the thin wet slippery sausages that squirted hot water when their skins were punctured by a fork!⁸³

⁷⁵ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert*. Martina Güldemann. 1999. Pg. 38

⁷⁶ Leipzig: *Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild*. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 76.

NB: *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert*. Martina Güldemann. 1999. Pg. 39 cites 150,000 while in 1930 she claims it was 10 percent of the 717,000 residents (while the Leipzig book notes 82,295 at the start of 1930).

⁷⁷ *Das Programm*. April 10th, 1932. #1566. Pg. 9

⁷⁸ Although perhaps fanciful, their presence might just explain why Martin's youngest son, Rudiger, 70 years later recalled that certain Hinsch family members had settled in Holland.

⁷⁹ Martin returned on Nov. 12th, 1931. He then took off for a ten day travel on 01.01.32 and was back on 10.01.32.

⁸⁰ She was born on November 28th, 1906 and was thus a month and a day younger than Martin's elder brother, Frits.

⁸¹ **Rudiger**: Were there any photos of guests or the bride and groom, or anecdotes to keep?

⁸² Martin and his wife moved in on March 19th, 1932 according to his *Einwohnermeldekarte* while Hans had been there since January 1st. Today *Königstraße* is known as *Goldschmidtstraße*.

⁸³ Extracted from the second part of *Goodbye to Berlin* entitled; 'The Landauers.' Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In 'The Berlin Novels.' Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 410

They impressed when they talked about life on the American and Dutch stages, the lads realising how their female cousins had seen the world as ,it' girls. Nannÿ added, however, that she was expectant and whatsmore, engaged to a Dutch native – a theater man – well as soon as she legally could. They were all invited to Amsterdam for the wedding. „Holland,“ they mused, „It must be so much safer than Germany, given all that's going on here.“ At that point Little Nannÿ realised she no longer belonged in Germany. Margot shared her point of view.

A little later on Frits came over to chat with them. He mentioned it wasn't so bad in Germany. He and his family were content in *Eutritzsches*, living not far from where the sisters had grown up, gardening mostly. Meanwhile *Tante Hedy* and her second husband, Walther Martin, still lived in *Wintergartenstrasse*, opposite the *Krystall Palast*. Was it already five years ago since *The Six Rockets* had graced its stage? Walther was now in the process of selling his *Gundorfer Strasse*-based business in Leipzig Lindenau and at 40 was looking forward to a career change. The city's addressbooks now referred to him simply as *Kaufmann*.

So while three of the Hinsch brothers were reasonably settled, personally or career-wise, Heinz, their art-student cousin had rather been uprooted. When the sisters had last been in Leipzig they'd heard he was studying art at the *Akademie* in Dresden. But last summer, *Onkel Fritz* had pulled his funding and that meant Heinz had dropped out.

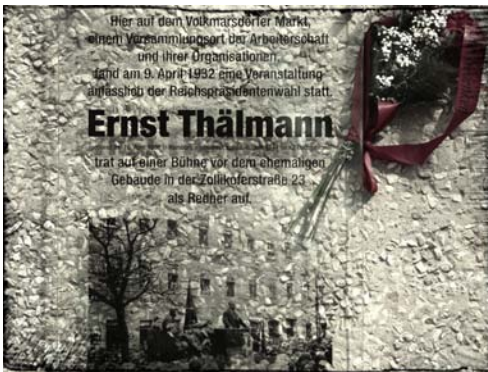
Had his father's move been a precautionary measure following the bank run that occurred last August during the recession? It was true that the newspapers had overreacted to the Republican government's emergency decrees with headlines such as: „Everything collapses!“ while a Nazi journalist had scaremongered; „Germany's downfall.“ In his Berlin diaries Isherwood recalled his landlady's reaction too: „There'll be thousands ruined...we'll have civil war in a fortnight.“⁸⁴

Pulling the plug, however, was hardly smart in the long-term. Although Heinz should have joined the ranks of the unemployed, the 21 year old the girls' heard took leave of convention and sauntered off to Italy with a mate, 'Gandhi,' to capture its 'light' in their paintings. All being well, they'd earn their living from their landscapes. Currently, however, no one was quite sure where he was.

During the coming days Nannÿ was reunited with her former acrobat team mates, *Annedore Frenkel* and *Melanie Geidel*. She repeated her stories as regards life in Holland, besides her plans to wed *Meneer Ridderhof*, he being the reason they were back. Laughter and smiles were shared all round as they recalled with fondness their time in the US, Margot having been part of Nannÿ's second tour. During the girls' chit-chat they ended up discussing *Annedore's* divorce from *Frau Büttner's* son, *Arno*, who still managed *The Six Rockets* in the US and with whom *Gertrud Tafel* continued to work. But securing engagements was tough. Another former rocket, *Lissi Hübner*, they learned had married and was living in *Hilgen-Neuenhaus*, not far from *Köln*.

⁸⁴ Extracted from the second part of *Goodbye to Berlin* entitled; 'Sally Bowles.' Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In 'The Berlin Novels.' Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 309-310.

On March 13th, a week after the family celebration, the German presidential elections took place. It was a close run finale, with Hindenburg failing by less than half a percent to get the necessary majority. The Tjyrallas shuddered alongside *Frau Büttner* when they learned the election would go to a run-off a month later: Hindenburg's chief rival, the fanatical Hitler, was still in with a fighting chance!⁸⁵ How the women abhorred his brand of theatre. Frau Büttner worried for the future of Europe: Hitler's autobiography, *Mein Kampf*, which had been published in two volumes in 1925 and 1926, had already set out his worldview, along with his concepts of a future National Socialist state and society, racial program and plan to acquire living space in the East. She feared particularly for their many theatrical Jewish acquaintances.



Die neue Gedenktafel für Ernst Thälmann in Leipzig-Volkmarksdorf. Sept. 4, 2014
Source: www.lvz-online.de

In response to the election results, Goebbels orchestrated a "Hitler over Germany" campaign, through which he had the Austrian visit twenty cities each week.⁸⁶ The Nazi leader was therefore back in Leipzig on April 3rd to speak at the German engineering association, *Verein deutscher Maschinenbau-Anstalten*,⁸⁷ while rival candidate, *Ernst Thälmann*, KPD (Communist Party) leader, spoke in the city to a rally of ten thousand a week or so later at the *Volkmarks-dorfer Markt* on April 9th. There he forewarned: "A vote for Hindenburg is a vote for Hitler; a vote for Hitler is a vote for war."⁸⁸ Ultimately it took the two rounds to defeat Hitler.⁸⁹ Although Hindenburg won the run-off on April 10th, his adversary remained unstoppable. The next day Goebbels wrote in his diary: "The campaign for the Prussian state elections is prepared."⁹⁰

But for now, for Little Nannö it was time to leave Germany. All her *Standesamt* and *Polizeipräsidium* visitations were complete and all she could do was leave the necessary requests in the authorities' hands for the central administration's approval in the state capital, Dresden. She and Margot therefore prepared for the long journey back to Holland, paying a brief farewell visit to their spritely grandmother in *WenigMachern* – she was out in the garden whenever the weather allowed, accompanied by *Onkel Fritz*. They'd all seen each other of course at Martin's wedding, but strangely enough, whilst telling her grandmother about her plans to get married, the once-promised 'diamonds in the linen cupboard' were no longer forthcoming. Instead they had to sit and listen to Germany's bright future under Hitler. "Opa Herr Friedrich would have been impressed" she waxed. Her granddaughters on the other hand were anxious to escape her 'world view' and return to Berlin and from there hasten back to Holland. The stage awaited them, not to mention a new life, far away from unsettled Germany.

⁸⁵ See for instance: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_presidential_election,_1932

⁸⁶ *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s* from 1972. Otto Friedrich. Pg. 359

⁸⁷ See: www.hitlerpages.com/pagina65.html

⁸⁸ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert*. Martina Güldemann. 1999. Pg. 38 and *Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild*. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 78. See also: lvz-online.de/leipzig/citynews/gedenktafel-fuer-ernst-thaelmann-in-leipzig-volkmarksdorf-enthueilt-marktplatz-umbenannt/r-citynews-a-234202.html (photo)

⁸⁹ The last occasion where a direct presidential election occurred in Germany since following the 1949 restoration of democracy in West Germany, the president has been chosen indirectly by means of a Federal Convention consisting of parliamentarians and state delegates. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_presidential_election,_1932

⁹⁰ *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s* from 1972. Otto Friedrich. Pg. 359

Following the Tŷrallas' departure, the Prussian state elections took place on April 24th.⁹¹ The Nazi's, who had held only nine seats in its previous legislature, won 162,⁹² although that still left them short of a majority. Since they were not willing to work with any other parties to form a new government,⁹³ according to the Prussian constitution, Otto Braun's centre-left coalition remained as caretaker.⁹⁴ The future of the Hinsch 'homeland,' Prussia, therefore hung in the balance. Within a little over two months, however, its fate would be sealed.

Nationally speaking, despite his victory, Hindenburg succumbed to the political right, much as Thälmann had foreseen. Come the end of May 1932 he had been persuaded to dismiss Brüning as Chancellor and replace him with a renegade from Brüning's Centre Party, the "oily smooth, insincere and selfish" Franz von Papen.⁹⁵ His cabinet had almost no support in parliament and just three days after his appointment, he was forced to request the President to dissolve the *Reichstag* and call for new federal elections which were slated for July 31st.⁹⁶

The run up to the election heralded a descent into anarchy with Alexandra Richie defining it as "the most savage in Weimar history."⁹⁷ Street rioting ensued during May 1932, and come June 25th, Count Kessler admitted in his diary: "The country is coming apart." On June 27th he observed: "There are bitter armed disputes between two ideologies which exclude compromise." A day later he wrote: "Gradually they are establishing a reign of terror in the streets of West Berlin."⁹⁸ On July 12th, 17 were killed and nearly 200 wounded by Nazi terror.

In Hamburg it was much the same, in Leipzig too, where during May and June demonstrations and rallies by tens of thousands of labourers under communist party colours took place, venting their anger at Papen's appointment as a concession to the right. These were followed on July 17th, when twenty-five thousand social-democrats and young socialists gathered for an anti-fascist demonstration at the *Messeplatz*.⁹⁹ Prussia itself was dealt its own bitter blow on July 20th, in a coup that effectively heralded its end (see text box overleaf). Hitler then returned to Leipzig on July 23rd to foment Nazi support, speaking at its *Messegelände's Ausstellungshalle*.¹⁰⁰ The country appeared to be close to breaking point.

Poor Little Nannŷ furtively hoped that as soon as her wedding date was fixed, her family would still be able to join her on her big day. The growing unrest ahead of the elections, however, was making that look increasingly unlikely.

⁹¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_the_Free_State_of_Prussia

⁹² *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s* from 1972. Otto Friedrich. Pg. 365

⁹³ The nationally-focused Harzburg Front having since collapsed. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harzburg_Front

⁹⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_Braun.

⁹⁵ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 400

⁹⁶ *Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild*. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 78

⁹⁷ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 400

⁹⁸ *Berlin in Lights. The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler (1918-1937)*. Transl. by C. Kessler. Grove Press. 1999. Pg. 418

⁹⁹ *Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild*. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 79

¹⁰⁰ See: www.hitlerpages.com/pagina65.html

13.2: The 'Prussian coup' (*Preußenschlag*) and the end of Prussia

On July 20th, 1932, under pressure, *President Hindenburg* issued an emergency decree, declaring a military state of emergency in Berlin and Brandenburg while dismissing the legitimate Social Democrat government of Prussia* led by Prime Minister, *Otto Braun*.

The pretext for this was the violent unrest which was occurring in some parts of Germany's largest state (including the July 17th 'Bloody Sunday' events in Hamburg Altona), and the government's alleged incompetence to handle it (in no small part thanks to the President himself having lifted the ban on the SA and SS). However, the real agenda was the Social Democrats' command of the powerful Prussian police force which was one of the last major units standing in the way of new Chancellor *Franz von Papen* and his plans for the Weimar Republic. No surprises then that von Papen appointed himself Prussia's *Reichskommissar* (Reich Commissioner), which vested in him all the competences of the Prussian ministries, thus giving him direct control over the Prussian government.

Prussia remained under the federal government's direct administration until April 1933, by which time the largely Nazi-filled *Reichstag* elected Hitler's sidekick, the veteran World War I fighter pilot, Hermann Göring, as Minister-President – a position he would hold until 1945. By this time, however, all German states had been stripped of genuine powers by Hitler – under new Nazi laws, during 1934 and 1935 (see Chapter XIII, Part 2), Germany's constituent states' governments were controlled by *Reich* governors appointed by him.

Following the Second World War, Otto Braun approached the allies with the aim of having the previous democratic Prussian government reinstated. By that time, however, they had themselves decided to abolish Prussia and divide East Prussia between Poland and the Soviet Union. Since then, the relevance of the term 'Prussia' has been limited to historical, geographical, or cultural usages.

Sources: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prussia; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_Braun;
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preußenschlag; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermann_Göring;

Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 400.

Berlin in Lights. The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler (1918-1937). Transl. by C. Kessler. Grove Press. 1999. Pg. 424.

The Argus. Thursday July 21, 1932. Pg. 7.

*i.e. West and East Prussia, Brandenburg, the Province of Saxony (including most of the present-day state of Saxony-Anhalt and parts of the state of Thuringia in Germany), Pomerania, Rhineland, Westphalia, Silesia (without Austrian Silesia), Lusatia, Schleswig-Holstein, Hanover, Hesse-Nassau, and a small detached area in the south Hohenzollern, the ancestral home of the Prussian ruling family.



By the time the federal election votes had been cast on July 31st, a day in which nine further political murders occurred (in a month seeing 400 street battles and 200 deaths in Prussia alone),¹⁰¹ the Nazis had secured 230 seats in the *Reichstag* (a gain of 123). That meant it was now the largest party in the parliament (although once again it was not enough to hold a majority, thanks to an improved showing by the Communists).¹⁰² In the Tŷrallas' hometown of Leipzig, despite all the protests, the Nazis' level of support there had climbed too, more than one hundred percent above 1930 levels.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, Berlin had not yet capitulated. Three-quarters of its electorate still rejected Hitler and the Nazis, resulting in Goebbels' "*Battle for Berlin*." And with neither side willing to form a coalition in order to create a governing majority, the Nazis scaled up their terror throughout the summer months.

¹⁰¹ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 401

¹⁰² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_federal_election,_July_1932

¹⁰³ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert*. Martina Gŷldemann. 1999. Pg. 38

On August 5th, Kessler wrote in his diary; “Assaults, bomb-throwings and murders continue in East Prussia, Bavaria and Holstein,”¹⁰⁴ while Richie described how “Anarchy and violence ruled Berlin. The mood was violent, the atmosphere tense.”¹⁰⁵ In Upper Silesia, about 70km as the crow flies from the Tjrralla farmstead in Radstein, an event occurred on August 9th in the village of Potempa (Potępa in Polish) which despite denting the Nazis’ bid to form a government, revealed the president was softening his attitude towards them. It is described in the textbox below.

13.3: Silesia in the News

The Potempa Murder occurred on the night of August 9th, 1931. Five Nazi SA (Sturmabteilung) men had burst into the home of a communist miner, Konrad Pietrzuch, who was subsequently trampled to death in front of his mother. The five did little to disguise themselves during the attack and were quickly arrested. Their trial saw them found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. Hitler, along with other senior Nazis, was furious not only with the verdict but also with the sentence.

“My comrades!” Hitler wrote in a telegram he sent to the five murderers in jail. “I am bound to you in unlimited loyalty in the face of this most hideous blood sentence. How could I forsake you?”

Hitler denounced Pietrzuch as a Polish Communist, whom he declared to have been an enemy of the state. Conservative groups such as the Stahlhelm and Konigin Luise Bund also expressed support for the five men and petitioned for a Presidential pardon. The murder and the declarations of solidarity, however, led Hindenburg to renew his rejection of the formation of a government under Hitler and the temporary breakdown of talks on a government of the Nazis.

Nevertheless, again under pressure, the President overturned the Nazi’s sentences to life imprisonment on September 2nd, after which they were all subsequently released on March 23rd (following the introduction of Nazi legislation which granted an amnesty to anyone imprisoned for committing a crime “for the good of the Reich during the Weimar Republic.”

Many Germans looked on, speechless, fearful as to what lay ahead for those in opposition.

Source: http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/potempa_murder_1932.htm and de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mord_von_Potempa

“The madness began to make people think about leaving their homes,” writes Otto Friedrich.¹⁰⁶ Many scientists, artists, writers, and musicians who had earlier flocked to Berlin, left for other countries. The life of George Grosz, the caricaturist for instance, had already been threatened and his choice of destination eventually became the US.¹⁰⁷ Renowned physicist, Albert Einstein famously told his wife in autumn 1932: “Before you leave our villa this time, take a good look at it.” “Why?” his wife asked. “You will never see it again,” he replied.¹⁰⁸

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¹⁰⁴ *Berlin in Lights. The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler (1918-1937)*. Transl. by C. Kessler. Grove Press. 1999. Pg. 425

¹⁰⁵ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 401

¹⁰⁶ *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s* from 1972. Otto Friedrich. Pg. 371

¹⁰⁷ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Grosz

¹⁰⁸ *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s* from 1972. Otto Friedrich. Pg. 374

The Tjyrallas too had left behind Germany.¹⁰⁹ According to Little Nannj's *Gezinskaart*,¹¹⁰ she arrived back in Amsterdam on April 11th, (the same date incidentally, that Dietrich's new movie, *Shanghai Express*, was released).¹¹¹ Perhaps a little shell-shocked, she rejoined *Lachpillen*'s frontline for a final run of shows which she likely caught up with in *Den Haag's het Gebouw* from April 18th.¹¹² The show's engagement, lasting a little more than a month, ran until mid-May¹¹³ (although Little Nannj always let it be known that she continued working until she was in her 'seventh' month, i.e. July).



Formally speaking the 'second' *Nationale Revue* kicked off around July 31st, 1932

For Margot, it seems most likely she rejoined the *Nationale Revue* and what was eventually *Hallo Hierheen!*'s successor.¹¹⁴ It had been a while in coming together,¹¹⁵ emerging eventually in the form of '*Een Geel Bandje, Meneer*' (A Golden Ring...Sir)! Originally a *Meyer Hamel Revue*¹¹⁶ that began life on the road on August 1st, 1931¹¹⁷ within a series named '*Succes*' led on stage by Dutch Jewish actor/singer, *Sylvain Poons*,¹¹⁸ come the following summer, Lou Bandy was at the helm.¹¹⁹ As the poster to the left reveals, the show had already accumulated a huge number of performances, including some 250 in *Amsterdam*, 100 in *Rotterdam* besides 15 in *Gronigen*. Come May 1932, it had integrated a number of scenes from *Hallo Hierheen!*¹²⁰ the basis upon which Margot was likely to have been subsequently engaged.

¹⁰⁹ Nannj and Margot could have been forgiven for thinking they were being followed! A pair of acrobats named *Concha & Concha* performed at Leipzig's *Krystallpalast* from April 1-14th, 1932 and then in Holland until the end of the month, first at *Gronigen* from April 15-21st and then *Den Haag* between 22-28th April. Source: *Das Programm*, April 17th, 1932. Pg. 9

¹¹⁰ There is some minor ambiguity over the dates, owing to the fact that the *Gezinskaarten* are copies of originals microfilmed in 1939 whilst the originals did not survive the war, according to [Goran Pravić](#), an expert at the [Noord-Hollands Archief](#) whom I spoke to via informatie@stadsarchief.amsterdam.nl on July 22nd, 2011. The data recorded upon them was handwritten whilst the small cells in those residential records meant data, for example dates, appear in close proximity of one another, rendering it difficult to discern with one hundred percent accuracy.

¹¹¹ See: www.imdb.com/title/tt0023458/releaseinfo?ref_=tt_ov_inf

¹¹² *Het Vaderland*, Maandag 18 April 1932. Prior to this it was performed at the *Stadsschouwburg* in Haarlem between April 2-5th, 1932 according to the *De Nieuwe Zandvoortsche Courant* online [here](#) and went on to *Utrecht's Schouwburg* from April 9th - 10th, 1932 according to Pg.7 of the April 6th, 1932 issue of the *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, online [here](#).

¹¹³ The April 30th, 1932 issue of the Dutch entertainment '*Weekly Cinema en Theater*' (*Nr. 431*) referenced *Lachpillen*'s successful tour of the country and the popularity of its leading lady, *Louissette*. Although the original source file can not be located, the show is believed to have completed its run at the '*Schouwburg*' around May 15th, 1932.

¹¹⁴ Strictly speaking one is hard pressed to name the shows Margot performed in following *Hallo Hierheen!* since chorusline girls were not typically named in show programmes, not least when they belonged to collective outfits like the *Dickson* or *Ludowsky Girls*.

¹¹⁵ In a 1972 interview, manager René Sleswijk explained that after *Hallo Hierheen!* ran aground he took a year off to complete his architecture studies (and presumably spend time with his new son). *Leidsch Dagblad* September 23rd, 1972. Pg. 15

¹¹⁶ Meyer Hamel produced and wrote songs and shows that were staged mainly in working class districts according to *This Way Please! Popular Theatre in the Netherlands 1839-1939. Hallo Hierheen! Theater voor het grote publiek 1839-1939*. Paul Blom et al. Amsterdam, TIN.

¹¹⁷ See: wiki.theaterencyclopedie.nl/wiki/Meneer%3F-Meyer_Hamel_Revue_-1931-08-01_%27n_Geel_bandje

¹¹⁸ See: https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sylvain_Poons

¹¹⁹ Poons subsequently took on a leading role in an operetta called *Die Blume von Hawaii*

¹²⁰ According to the *Utrechts Nieuwsblad* of Saturday May 7th, 1932 when it was performed at the *Rembrandts Theatre*

It was just as *Lachpillen* concluded that Little Nannÿ received the papers she needed to get married. That meant she and Cor (whose commitment to the show was also over) could finally set a date, namely Saturday July 27th.¹²¹ According to her *Gezinskaart* (in which she's referred to as a *danser*), she squeezed in with her husband-to-be at his flat in *PaardenStraat* before they wed, Irene confirming, "they lived together before they got married."

The ceremony took place in the capital, ten days before my grandmother's 25th birthday. Her mother can be forgiven for not having made it, and had her cousins planned to attend, I am sure they would have tendered the same explanation.

The occasion was not photographed, something her soon-to-arrive daughter put down to Holland "being a country of farmers where photography was not a big thing," although I wouldn't be surprised if it had as much to do with husband Cor not being fond of the camera, never mind much of a romantic. A pity. I guess no one thought to grab Little Nannÿ's box brownie either!

Since referring to *Mevrouw Ridderhof* as 'Little' Nannÿ now hardly seems warranted, not to mention she would shortly becoming a mother, now seems the appropriate time to refer to her simply as 'Nannÿ,' which is also how she was referred to by her friends (rather like her mother was in Berlin).

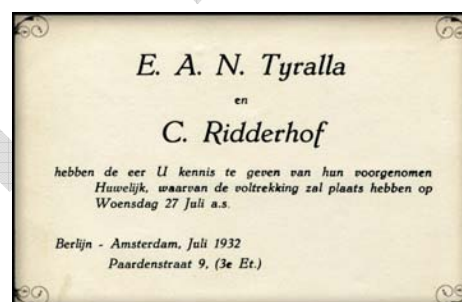
Although my grandmother probably shed tears of joy as she signed her marriage certificate, her wedding also brought to an end a fascinating decade on the international show circuits (for she made no return once she had given birth). Nevertheless, her connection to the theatre remained active thanks to both Cor and indeed Margot, who now represented the Tÿralla name on the stage, continuing to tour the Netherlands with 'Een Geel Bandje, Meneer' until December. Her next known stops included *Alkmaar*, *Tilburg* and then *Limburg* in South Holland.¹²²

Cor on the other hand was back in a job within days of being married, having been invited by *Carré's* director, Alex Wunnink, to trial a position at the capital's premier entertainment venue.¹²³



Above:
PaardenStraat 9 showing the III floor flat where Little Nannÿ and Cor first lived.

Below:
Cor and Nannÿ's wedding announcement



¹²¹ Some 30 years later, youngest daughter, Alice, asked her mother whether she'd married because of her elder sister's imminent arrival. "No" she replied; "I got married before she arrived, because my papers took so long to come through!"

¹²² After its July/ August engagement in *Haarlem* the show went on to *Alkmaar* between August 7th and 10th, and was then repeated there between August 28-31st, according to pg. 4 of the *Alkmaarsche Courant* on Aug 27th, 1932. The show then went on to *Tilburg's Groote Schouwburg* between Sept 1st-5th, 1932 and September 14-16th. It reached the *Limburg Stadtschouwburg* according to the *Limburgsch Dagblad* of Zaterdag September 10th, 1932. Online [here](#). That was followed by the *Dassi Schouwburg* in *Amersfoort* on 29th Sept. 1932 and *Purmerend's Groote Schouwburg* DASSI from 13th-16th October, 1932 according to Pg. 4/5 of *Schuitemakers Purmerender Courant* on October 11, 1932, online [here](#).

¹²³ *Cor Ridderhof: man achter en van de schermen*. Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Specific Source unknown.

Ridderhof and Wunnink had already worked together back in 1927, when the latter was at the helm of the *Paleis voor Volkslijst* and Cor managed the electrics and stage lights there.¹²⁴ Recognising, however, that the bachelor-turned-husband was not only an excellent man in his trade but about to become a father too, Wunnink saw opportunity to get him on his team and so booked him to manage the stage lights for a show called *de Vagabondkoning* that was to run from July 30th - August 31st in Carré.

Said Ridderhof in a newspaper interview upon his jubilee at Carré in 1957: “*We tried it with the most beautiful opera-comique that I have ever seen, Vagabond Koning.*”¹²⁵ It worked out and the crowds poured in¹²⁶ (no wonder the bride and groom never got to enjoy a honeymoon).

It’s a curious thing that Nannÿ retired around the same time Marlene Dietrich made it big in America, although had my grandmother noted the German star’s success, she might well have mused “*been there, done that.*” Dietrich’s philosophy, however: “*The most important thing in life is love, duty. The most important thing in work is beauty, discipline*” remained just as pertinent to Nannÿ in the future as it did to her in those first days of marriage (regardless as to which stage either German found themselves gracing). Nannÿ might have been on the road for the best part of a decade, but she also knew Germany’s Civil Code subordinated the wife to the husband in almost all matters of life. Which is how she approached her partnership with *Cor Ridderhof*. Like Dietrich, she had her Prussian upbringing to thank for that.

From a German citizen to a Dutch. But where would that lead?



Nannÿ became a Dutch citizen on September 13th which meant in turn farewell to her *Reisepass*.¹²⁷ I can’t help but wonder the souvenir that would have been, what with its US and Cuban visas, frontier crossing stamps and immigration controls, exit visas and so on... Most likely, however, it was filed by the Dutch authorities as opposed to being returned for posterity as happens today.¹²⁸ Yet while she thought she had bidden goodbye to her *Heimat*, the truth was it was not going to let of her so easily. In fact, retaining her German identity would before long become something of an asset.

¹²⁴ An undated unsourced newspaper article online at: www.iisg.nl/ondernemers/pdf/pers-1663-01.pdf and referenced via https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex_Wunnink reveals Wunnink joined the *Paleis* in 1927, while *Carre: Het theater van iedereen* authored by Han Peekel and published by V & K Publishing in 1997 (see ‘*Alex Wunnink*’ on pg. 43) reveals he had been its director. Both sources add that he went on to become Carré’s director in 1928. Ridderhof meanwhile had worked at the *Paleis* from 1920 until he quit and went on tour in 1927 which means they could have spent less than 12 months working alongside one another. However, Ridderhof later recalled an incident in which he and Wunnink worked on the road together alongside Lou Bandy, when the pair were sat “on an Arnhem terrace and pelted one another with cream pies. ‘It was just a silent film comedy’ [to observe]. But that’s how the boss was. In his theater he was a paragon of hardworking correctness. But when we were traveling, he could frolic as a young dog!” *Cor Ridderhof: Wat zijn oogen zien, maken zijn handen*. Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Specific Source unknown.

¹²⁵ *Cor Ridderhof: man achter en van de schermen*. Nov. 1957

¹²⁶ Curiously next up was a show that started off life in Leipzig: *Die Blume von Hawaii* or *The Flower of Hawaii*, an Operetta by ethnic Hungarian Pal Ábrahám that now featured Sylvain Poons in the leading role. It had kicked off in Leipzig’s Neues Theater on 24 July 1931 and went on to Berlin before enjoying a run at Carre from September 1-30th 1932. Was Cor involved in that too? Middle-daughter Irene distinctly recalled the show’s name. *100 jaar Carre*. Han Peekel, Fridtjof Meerlo en Han Santing. Loeb Uitgevers B.V., Amsterdam. 1987. Pg. 93

See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Flower_of_Hawaii

¹²⁷ The most likely interpretation of data that appears on her *Gezinskaart*.

¹²⁸ Eldest daughter, Tina, recalled that she had to surrender her Dutch passport to the British authorities after she married over 20 years later.

On August 28th, just before *de Vagabonkoning* wrapped, the newlyweds briefly moved to *Amsterdam Zuid* and *Slingerbeek Straat*, just beyond the *Amstelkanaal*. As Geert Mak reminds us "*Accommodation was sparse in an already crowded city which brimmed with more and more new immigrants to the point it was bursting at the seams with people.*"¹²⁹

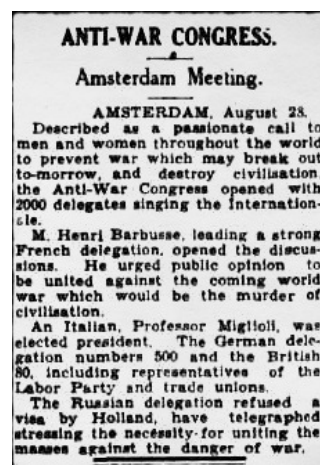
They were in fact in the hunt for a new home. Yet the timing could hardly have been worse. Either side of their moving date Amsterdam welcomed 2,000 delegates from around the globe for a *World Anti-War Congress*. Labelled by some a "futile communist-sponsored peace gathering," as the article right reveals, it was in reality a plea to the world's nations to offset the "coming world war."¹³⁰ Europe was evidently growing tense over events in Germany.

Less than a month later, *Catharina Maria* gatecrashed the newlyweds' party on September 22nd. Lore has it that Nannÿ struggled through the night before '*Tiny*' (short for Tina, pronounced *Teeni*) was born. She being eventually pulled out with forceps. Principally named after Cornelis' mother; *Catharina Maria* (below right), the name also paid homage to both her German forebears, great grandmother *Marie Hinsch* in Machern and *Maria Tjyralla* in Radstein. And in arriving five days before *Mama Tjyralla's* birthday, it meant grandmother and grand-daughter would have joint occasion to celebrate together too.

Nannÿ probably felt that with moving to Holland she'd left behind the aftermath of the Wall Street Crash (and to a large extent she and the family eventually did). By 1930 the economic crisis had begun to reach Amsterdam,¹³¹ although initially the Dutch economy only entered a slow decline between 1929 and 1931.¹³² But by 1932, however, it was becoming more apparent. By then there were four times as many people out of work in Amsterdam as there had been in 1929.¹³³

In old favourite, *Das Programm*, for instance, its correspondent in *Den Haag* wrote a piece which was published on August 21st, 1932, called '*Holland von Heute*' in which he described the challenges facing German artists travelling to and within the Netherlands:

*"Industry and trade today suffer as much under the global economic crisis as in other countries... There are frightening increases in the numbers unemployed; for Amsterdam and Rotterdam it already amounts to 40,000 each... The misery in our business is great enough, and one should not leave without being forewarned of ruin among the few remaining sources of daily bread."*¹³⁴



Above:
Amsterdam hosted the *World Anti-War Congress*,
August 27-29th, 1932

Below:
Nannÿ Ridderhof's late
mother-in-law, *Catharina
Maria Meeuse*, perhaps not
long before she died, aged
55, in 1920



¹²⁹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage, 2001. Pg. 236

¹³⁰ *Anti-War Congress. Amsterdam Meeting*. Townsville Daily Bulletin. Tuesday, 30 August 1932

¹³¹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage, 2001. Pg. 241

¹³² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression_in_the_Netherlands

¹³³ Cca. 10,000 while in the years that followed 1932 that figure rose to 60,000. In: *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage, 2001. Pg. 241

¹³⁴ *Holland von Heute*. Adolf Lorch. *Das Programm*. Issue 1585. August 21st, 1932. Pg. 9-10

As so often happens when an economic crisis kicks in, host nations turn their disaffection towards foreign workers and it's no surprise that the Dutch theatres began to vent their frustration toward non-native variety acts. Just two months later a second article appeared in *Das Programm* entitled: "*Holland im Sommer 1932*" in which the paper protested Dutch theatres who were denying German artists' work, something its writer saw as tantamount to a blockade, in turn forcing German artists' return to an already strained local market!¹³⁵



On November 18th, 1932, Cor Ridderhof joined Carré as its stage manager, serving until 1965

Probably because she was not traveling solo Margot had no problems staying in a job. More fortunately, however, in November 1932, Wunnink offered Ridderhof the job he'd earlier trialled for at Carré.¹³⁶

In all respects, the timing couldn't have been better. When 'Bass' (Boss) Wunnink joined the theatre in 1928, he'd been tasked with overcoming its not insignificant debt. Originally a circus venue, come 1931 it had begun to turn the corner and it was thanks to a revitalized show programme, boasted homegrown revues such as *Lachpillen* and plenty of operetta, that it was in a position to pay out its shareholders for the first time in 30 years – despite the economic climate. Patrons clearly appreciated the daily programme that offered shows for between 15 cents and FL 1.75, not to mention the international stars which came to Carré such as Josephine Baker who took to its stage earlier that summer alongside her 16 Baker Boys and orchestra as part of the 'Casino de Paris' revue.¹³⁷ With Ridderhof behind the scenes, Wunnink knew he'd gained a loyal and hardworking light and stage manager. Nanny's husband's tenure there began on November 18th,¹³⁸ and he spent the next 30 plus years contributing to the theatre's success.

*"I worked flat out for eight years without a day's rest. I was not alone. The boss did too, in order to help the company bounce back to its former glory."*¹³⁹

Wunnink too held Ridderhof in the highest esteem: "What his eyes see, his hands create!" "At a rehearsal" Ridderhof recalled years later, "the boss once remarked of a winter scene: 'What we really need is something that looks like snow!' It was five o'clock in the afternoon. During the premiere that same evening, Wunnink, sitting in his box, had got what he wanted."¹⁴⁰

Cor had only gone and built a snowmaking device! Wunnink's confidence in him paid dividends for decades thereafter, Nanny's husband serving Carré until 1965!

¹³⁵ "Es ist leider bittere Wahrheit für Deutschland, dass sich mehr denn je, wie von Kollege Fossil treffend betont, in allen Handelszweigen langsam aber um so sicherer eine Blockade entwickelt, dass die grosse Gefahr besteht, dass viele deutsche Akte, die sich lange und gut im Auslande halten konnten, zurückkommen und den hiesigen Markt belasten." In: *Holland Im Sommer 1932*. K. Hermes. *Das Programm*. October 30th, 1932. Pg 2

¹³⁶ NOTITIES onder de Keizerskroon. Ome Jan, man van vele trekken. Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Specific Source unknown.

¹³⁷ See: www.theatercarre.nl/EN/geschiedenis-EN

¹³⁸ NOTITIES onder de Keizerskroon. Ome Jan, man van vele trekken. Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Specific Source unknown.

¹³⁹ "Toen heb ik acht jaar lang gewerkt zonder dat ik ook maar één dag vrij had. Ik niet alleen, de baas had het ook niet, want hij wilde het bedrijf, dat niet zo florissant er voor stond, er weer bovenop helpen."

In: Cor Ridderhof: *man achter en van de schermen*. November 1957. Specific Source unknown.

¹⁴⁰ Cor Ridderhof: *Wat zijn oogen zien, maken zijn handen*.

Newspaper clipping of November 1957. Also confirmed by his *Gezinskaart*.

Ridderhof's new workstead was not far from his temporary homestead in *Amsterdam Zuid*, but in a part known as *De Pijp*.¹⁴¹ A day after he joined Carré (see '2' on the map right), the family moved again, this time into a flat on the top floor of nearby *2e* (Tweede or second) *Jan Steen Straat*, 92 (see '3'). The new home would go on to serve the family almost as long as Cor would Carré!

Conveniently for the newlyweds, it was 'home for lunch' distance from the theatre and so crossing the *Singelgracht* and the *Amstel* became Cor's daily pattern for the next 30 plus years. Their apartment (pictured below) was within one of those typically skinny, tall houses with narrow staircases and multiple floors – much like Isherwood's *Mr. Norris* had foretold. The family had three small rooms besides the luxury of a bathroom/toilet. Rumour has it that René Sleswijk's wife, Marietje, helped Nannj and Cor acquire the flat.

Ultimately Nannj had precious little time to prepare for being a wife and a mother and no relevant experience to fall back on when it came to things like cooking (since she'd either always eaten on the move or been catered for by cooks and servants as a child in Leipzig). Says her eldest daughter, "she had no idea even how to cook an egg!" But expected to cook, she learned ("she didn't like it but she had no choice, she had to do what Pa said!")

That made me wonder whether any traditional Leipzig dishes worked their way into her repertoire. However, it was rather savoy cabbage, *Kraut*, and *stampott* that she put on the table, Tiny told me, the latter being a Dutch dish made from a combination of potatoes mashed with one or several vegetables, sometimes with the addition of bacon.¹⁴² On the other hand, when she had the misfortune to table 'wax' potatoes, her 'glass balls' were usually dismissed by Cor in favour of soft potatoes that could be mashed up and mixed with gravy! Besides those traditional dishes, thanks to the family's ties to *Zeeland*, mussels would seasonally¹⁴³ arrive up from *Yerseke*. Nannj dismayed at having to deal with them, particularly the hermit crabs that hitchhiked a ride alongside!



Early 1930s landmarks in southern Amsterdam:
1: Paardenstraat, Cor's flat between 1931 and 1932; 2: Carré Theatre;
3: 2e Jan Steen Straat 92; 4: Tuschinski Cinema/Theatre; 5: Utrechtsestraat, 87



Home for exactly 32 years:
2e Jan Steen Straat in 2014 in the middle with the loft window

¹⁴¹ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Pijp (now today rather 'Oude Pijp,' see: www.thetravelingdutchman.com/amsterdam/neighborhoods/de-pijp)

¹⁴² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stampot

¹⁴³ I.e. whenever there is an 'R' in the season which means from July until mid-April. See: www.holland.com/uk/tourism/article/taste-the-season-zeeland-mussels.htm

Into her new home, Nannö brought remnants of her old. Pride of place was Theo's 1924 portrait (see Chapter XI) which hung in the bedroom and through which she would forever remember her late brother, the would-be jockey. Tucked away of course were her photos documenting her years in America, together with a handful of prints that represented her childhood in Leipzig and at *Oma* and *Opa Hinsch's* in *WenigMachern*. "If only father could see my now," she mused as she settled in.

Mama meanwhile was left feeling more than a little dejected in Berlin. She now lived at the heart of a dying republic, which, thanks to the *Reichstag's* leading parties' inability to form a government, prepared for its "fifth big election in eight months."¹⁴⁴

*"The first week in November came and the traffic strike was declared. It was ghastly sopping weather" complained Isherwood in his Berlin novels. "Everything out of doors was covered with a layer of greasy, fallen dirt. A few trams were running, policemen posted fore and aft. Some of these were attacked, the windows smashed, and the passengers forced to get out. The streets were deserted, wet, raw and grey. Von Papen's government was expected to proclaim martial law. Berlin seemed profoundly indifferent. Proclamations, shootings, arrests; they were all nothing new...in a few days, there would be another election."*¹⁴⁵

That ballot took place on Sunday November 6th. In the western and central parts of Berlin, wrote Kessler in his diary, there was a "very sparse show of flags... but those to be seen were almost exclusively swastikas." In the working class districts in the east and north – *Neukolln* and *Moabit* (*Wedding*) respectively – "the display was greater and here the preponderance lay with the 'three arrows' [the old Social Democratic symbol] and hammer and sickle barriers. Everywhere the same picture of more or less sleepy Sunday afternoon quiet to the accompaniment of damp, cold, overcast weather."¹⁴⁶

Goebbels, Hitler's PR man, of course saw things differently. In his diary he wrote; "Naturally, our people have seized the direction of the strike in all parts of the city."¹⁴⁷ However, his over-confidence in their following turned out to be the Nazi's failure. By the time the election results came out a day later, the Party had scored scarcely 25 percent of Berliners' votes. It was the communists who had gained; 11 seats nationally and a majority of over 100,000 votes in the capital.¹⁴⁸

Overall the Nazi Party had lost two million votes and 34 seats.¹⁴⁹ In Leipzig too, despite the Nazis' raids and violence, when its city council elections took place a week later on November 13th, the social democrats (SPD) and communists (KPD) again fared better, together achieving twice as many votes as the Nazi's.¹⁵⁰ Once again, however, the federal election results left Germany once more with an ungovernable *Reichstag*. And so Hindenburg replaced *von Papen* with his advisor, *Kurt von Schleicher*, whom he entrusted to form a government in early December.

¹⁴⁴ *Berlin in Lights. The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler (1918-1937)*. Transl. by C. Kessler. Grove Press. 1999. Pg. 433

¹⁴⁵ *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*. Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In 'The Berlin Novels.' Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 138

¹⁴⁶ *Berlin in Lights. The Diaries of Count Harry Kessler (1918-1937)*. Transl. by C. Kessler. Grove Press. 1999. Pg. 433

¹⁴⁷ *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s* from 1972. Otto Friedrich. Pg. 374

¹⁴⁸ *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*. Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In 'The Berlin Novels.' Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 139

¹⁴⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_federal_election,_November_1932

¹⁵⁰ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert*. Martina Güldemann. 1999. Pg. 38 and *Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild*. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 79

In an early Christmas card to her daughters, *Mama* relayed news of the general Berlin 'clean-up.' Margot's much-vaunted dives in *Schöneberg* were now being raided,¹⁵¹ the new Chief of Police, *Kurt Melcher*, having begun to implement the strict Catholic policies of the *Von Papen* government having announced that July "an extensive campaign against Berlin's depraved nightlife." Earlier closing times of 10 PM were being enforced and already many bars and dance halls had turned themselves into private clubs.¹⁵²

The Nazis though, thanks to their campaigning, were virtually bankrupt. Stormtroopers became familiar sites on street corners rattling tin cups and begging for contributions. „From a position of authority they've fallen to one of poverty," *Mama* mused. Even *Goebbels* now confessed to his diary: „The future looks dark and gloomy."¹⁵³

„Otherwise" she continued in her Christmas card, „the seasonal sights and sounds of Berlin are much the same as in any other year. Berliners were celebrating the four Sundays of December, making Advent wreaths and adorning them with candles, lighting a new one each week. Even in their hopelessness they sang the traditional carols, „Stille Nacht" and „O Tannenbaum,"¹⁵⁴ and despite their empty pockets they found the means to buy the usual trappings. „All along the *Tauentzienstrasse*¹⁵⁵, between my place and Albert's," *Mama* wrote, „men, women and boys are hawking postcards, flowers, song-books, hair oil, bracelets" whilst „Christmas trees are stacked for sale along the central path between the tram-lines."¹⁵⁶

The year, however, didn't quite conclude as *Mama* would have liked, when 1932 became what one might call a 'Year of Marias.' In Upper Silesia, *Nannj* and Margot's paternal grandmother, *Maria Týralla*, celebrated her 91st birthday on November 15th. The clipping left was rather serendipitously discovered within *Radstein's* archives during late 2014 by distant relative *Gerard Týralla*. Remarkably, it reveals a very much alive and kicking *Oma Týralla*, accompanied by four generations of family members that I've attempted to identify in the accompanying caption and footnote.¹⁵⁷



¹⁵¹ Extracted from the second part of *Goodbye to Berlin* entitled; 'A Berlin Diary. Winter 1932-3.' Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In 'The Berlin Novels.' Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 471

¹⁵² See: www.cabaret-berlin.com/?p=11

¹⁵³ *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s* from 1972. Otto Friedrich. Pg. 376, 378

¹⁵⁴ *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s* from 1972. Otto Friedrich. Pg. 377

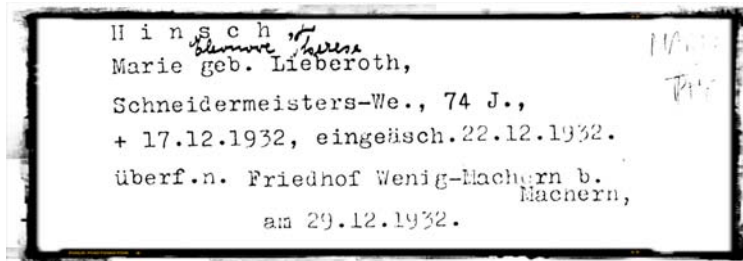
¹⁵⁵ The *Tauentzienstrasse* was more than just a street for the Berliner. As with the *Kurfürstendamm*, it was most lively between five o'clock in the afternoon and nightfall, when the decor at dusk often changed and stood for the multicolored lights of the night and the smell of perfume and gasoline. The 'Tauentziengirls' were those who stood for 'feminine sophistication, a certain depravity and perversion with a demonic twist,' writes Richard Schneider in *Het nachtleven in Berlijn*, within *Berlijn-Amsterdam 1920-1940: Wisselwerkingen* by Kathinka Dittrich (ed.) 1982. Pg. 51

¹⁵⁶ Extracted from the second part of *Goodbye to Berlin* entitled; 'A Berlin Diary. Winter 1932-3.'

Christopher Isherwood. 1935. In 'The Berlin Novels.' Vintage Classics, 1999. Pg. 480

¹⁵⁷ The photograph was published in an anniversary feature that celebrated '250 Jahre Stadt Lörrach in Baden.' The newspaper caption had read: four generations of settlers. The 'daughter' could only have been *Josepha Týralla* (i.e. *Paul Týralla's* sister), born on September 17th, 1874 (although it thus makes her a rather hard-to-believe 58 yrs old in the picture). She'd married *Joseph Ernst* on Oktober 2nd, 1900 and stayed local but reared no offspring. Still, *Josepha* was the youngest of the siblings alive at the time and lived nearby *Radstein* in *Neudorf* when the picture was taken.

Farewell Marie
Hinsch.
Cremated on
December 22nd,
1932.
Interred at the
non-existent
Friedhof Wenig-
Machern



As can be expected, however, *Frau Tjyralla* and her daughters were none the wiser in regards to the celebration of that occasion, much like their blissful ignorance towards the routine visit

Marie Hinsch made in mid-December to Leipzig's *Krankenhaus St. Jakob*. They later learned, however, that the hospital decided to keep her in for observation, before life unexpectedly left her on December 17th. A generation of Hinschs with whom this book centred on at its start, had just breathed its last.

Mama took the train down to her birthplace to pay her respects and bid her last farewell, whilst Nannj, although she would like to have joined, remained in Amsterdam with Margot. Like her husband, Marie too was cremated, her ashes being laid to rest before her house alongside his, eventually together with those of her *Daschund*; Tommy (despite the notice above bearing the same reference as Friedrich Hinsch's to a non-existent cemetery in *WenigMachern*). The ceremony took place on December 22nd. What she left to her family would be dealt with over the next 18 months, chiefly by Mama's elder brother.



Back in Amsterdam at *2e Jan Steen Straat*, Nannj and Margot received a picture in the mail of themselves posing together with their grandmother. It was at her home and from summer 1927, having been taken before the sisters had returned to the US. It had sat on their grandmother's mantelpiece since then.

Margot stared at the photograph, recalling the less than fond memories she had of *Oma Hinsch*. How long ago it all was! She stared at it as though she were staring into a grave. It felt as if an invisible and ghostly pair of scissors had snipped through every tie that bound her to this city. Her home was gone, her brother was dead, Nannj had fallen into another's hands, what was there left for her there, she wondered?¹⁵⁸

The boy on the right is thought to be *Johann Joseph Thoma*, aged 7, who was born November 1925 to *Anna*, who was the daughter of *Marianna Tjyralla*, Paul Tjyralla's ten year elder sister. That, however, would make him a grandchild, not a great grandchild (*Urenkelkinder*). The girl (if it is really an *Enkeltochter*, in the middle) cannot be placed, since according to the available genealogical info (courtesy of Gerard Tyralla's friend), there is no granddaughter (never mind grandson) who would be that young (about 4-6 yrs) in 1932. The only other youngest remaining family member (who survived infancy) appears to have been born around 1910, which would make them at least 22 yrs old in 1932.

¹⁵⁸ Margot replaces Fabian, 'home' replaces 'profession,' 'brother' replaces 'friend,' 'Nannj' replaces 'Cornelia,' 'there' replaces 'here,' whilst overall the personal pronoun 'his' has been replaced by 'her.' Extracted from: *Going to the Dogs: The Story of a Moralist*. Erich Kästner. New York Review Books, 1990. Pg. 155

Indeed, the last 24 months since Theo had died had brought change for everyone. But who would Margot's 'prince' turn out to be? Ought she return to Germany and take up a dull, underpaid and unsatisfying job in restless Berlin, under her mother's watchful eye? Perish the thought! But with '*Een Geel Bandje, Meneer*' now over she would need to find new ways to make ends meet, whether in Amsterdam or Berlin. And with the way things were going in Holland, she could see she'd be more welcome in Germany, as unwelcome as that prospect was.

She sighed and realized she needed some fresh air. Since the autumn time the palatial Art Deco cinema/theater called the *Tuschinski* had been screening a popular German musical movie-cum-operetta called '*Mädchen zum heiraten*'.¹⁵⁹ Set in the German capital it starred *Renate Müller*, who was the toast of late 1920s Berlin along with *Marlene Dietrich*. In the comedy, a matchmaker films 'Talkies' for his clients which are then shown to potential spouses. Since its release it had been packing the venue¹⁶⁰ and Margot, a trifle homesick, desperately wanted to see something romantic and reminiscent of the city she was still so fond of. Wresting Nannj from her duties, she talked her into having a girls' night out.

The *Tuschinski* lay all the way up the other end of the *Utrechtsestraat*, between the *Rembrandtplein* and the *Munt* tower (see '4' on the map on pg. 473). That meant a good long walk to get there. But after spending several hours in the theatre and enjoying a couple of cocktails in the bar afterwards, they headed back into the chilly winter night, still rather short on festive spirit. Margot was forlorn, especially given that it was Christmas and all. Whimpering to her big sister, she asked, almost pleadingly:

*"Who's gonna be my matchmaker, Nannj?
Tell me. Where's my prince gonna come from?"*

For now Nannj didn't have an answer. And so they continued on home in silence.



The *Tuschinski* cca. 1933 to which the crowds had flocked in late 1932 to see *Mädchen zum heiraten*

Sources: Pinterest and www.virtual-history.com

¹⁵⁹ The English version was called 'Marry Me' according to: www.imdb.com/title/tt0023258/?ref=tt_trv_cnn

¹⁶⁰ *Holland Im Sommer* 1932. K.Hermes. *Das Programm*. October 30th, 1932. Pg 2. NB: The Dutch release date could not be precisely determined. In Germany it was released on April 15, in Denmark on 11 October 1932. Whether it was still running at Christmas remains questionable.