On May the 10th the scourge of war swept over Holland.

Early in the morning while most people were still asleep, the heavy drone of planes told them that war had come to their country. Thousands of parachutists swept down on or near by the airfields and the German army with heavy tanks marched into the country.

The onslaught brought about in a few days was great. The big cities were threatened with destruction and after a struggle lasting for five days the commander-in-chief was forced to capitulate to prevent further unnecessary destruction in a hopeless battle.

Holland was in the grip of Germany of Nazi-Germany. Amsterdam being in the centre of the defence-lines had suffered little—but now the German army marched into the city and its population was filled with grief.

Many Jews committed suicide fully aware of their fate if they fell in German hands.

Communications having been broken off it was difficult to get in touch with Rosa Manus. What had been her reaction? Her many friends were worried. At last being able to get a call through by telephone it was with relief that we heard Miss Manus answering the telephone in her usual manner: "Yes she was alright..."—we found her at her Amsterdam flat surrounded by her family and friends depressed and looking ill. For the first time we had to comfort and reassure her who during all her life had always been comforting and reassuring others. It was no easy task and with troubled minds we listened to her story:—Dutch friends had tried to persuade her to leave Holland together with them but she had declined their offer. "I am Dutch" we still say! to continue my task as long as it is necessary."

Her discouragement at the general situation proved to be temporarily disappearing almost imperceptibly under her heroic conception of her duty. And though Miss Manus never regained her full strength she soon set herself apparently with her old energy to work again. At the same time she decided to move to her sister's flat.
Chapter III. — HER MARTYRDOM.

This was Rosa's road to martyrdom, began on May 10th, 1940.

It was the date upon which the German armies invaded the low countries, and though no particular harm came to Amsterdam during this five days' battle in Holland, the devastations carried out by the Germans in other parts, the many losses of life, caused grief and dismay all over the country. The Dutch capitulation to the German forces on May 15 had opened a stern and ominous prospect of life.

For this reason many had tried to escape from Holland. And many, especially Jews, committed suicide.

After the capitulation it was consequently with relief which later proved to be ecletic, that we heard Miss Manua's voice answering the telephone in her usual manner:

"Yes, she was all right."—

It was her as we arrived. A tired and discouraged Rosa we found in her Amsterdam flat.

Sitting in an easy-chair, surrounded by her family and friends, she looked ill. And for the first time we had to comfort and reassure her, who never in her life had done else than comfort and reassure others.

It was no easy task, and with troubled minds we listened to her story:—that Dutch friends had tried to persuade her to leave Holland together with them, and that she had refused. "I am Dutch," we still hear her say, "and have to remain at my post, continuing my task as long as it is necessary."—

Her release proved to be a temporary one; and though Miss Manua never regained her full strength, she soon set herself with apparent energy to work again.

At the same time she decided to move to her sister's flat.

"In these times, one has to be together," was Rosa's opinion, and with the lack of sentimentality, which characterised her, she cleared her own house, full of happy memories.

This act was one of the first indirect destructions caused by the Germans in Amsterdam.
In times like these we must cling together,” was Rosa’s opinion
and she cleared her own home full of happy memories.

This act—typical of many—was one of the many consequences of
the German occupation.

Enemies of freedom, peace, internationalism, women’s
rights…, they indirectly destroyed this home, which
had interpreted these very qualities.

The large bookshelves, the collections of archive-
papers, containing the test of life-long work in the
service of a cause…, they had to be removed to other-
safer places. The photographs on the desk, proofs of
friendships made all over the world, they had to go, where
German eyes would not easily find them.

The peaceful study adjoining the comfortable sitting-
room, from where old Mrs Manus used to watch her
daughter’s manifold activities—, the pleasant
atmosphere of that house had to be destroyed, never to
be built up again.

Certainly many, who now may pass this Rosa’s former
house, will with gratitude and with regret be reminded of its warm hospitality.

With gratitude, as one’s visit to that home was never
in vain, its owner having the remarkable gift of stir-
ing one’s courage and other good qualities.

With regret, as in this dark and disturbed world, her
personality is so badly needed.

But the house where Mrs Stern-Rosa’s sister-lived,
was gay and bright, and soon became the centre of its
new inhabitants many activities.

“One had to accept life as it comes”, was one of
Miss Manus’ favourite sayings, and the first task, which
she saw before her, was the care of her family.

This care, indeed, was more than ever needed. For many
were the relations, who—worried by the political
situation—came to her for help.

They never came in vain.

Whether they were the relations of her late brother-in-
law, a German non-aryan, whose high character, and
charmingly kind personality had been a great help to
Rosa in her often lonely life...

Whether they were the many children of her brothers and
sisters, who had been her adopted children ever since
their early youth…, they always went away amply provided
with both mental and material help.

Untiring was her energy at that time, in finding them
lodgings, or work… and more than ever they would
turn to her with their sorrows and difficulties, those nephews and nieces, who in their childhood, used to go to Aunt Rosa to play their games in her "Hindeloopen" sittingroom.

Could not Aunt Rosa, with her clever brain, extricate them better than anybody else, from difficult situations, and lead their youthful lives into a right and safe direction? Miss Manus very seldom referred to the difficulties, concerning the many lives she came across.

But if she did, she used to overlook, with her goodhumoured kindness, the darker side of one's character, drawing out the better qualities, which inevitably illuminated the whole picture.

Alas, had her help and advise been available all through those difficult times of German occupation, how many difficulties might have been overcome; how many disasters avoided.

The K(orpor) V(rouwelyke) V(rywilligers), the Dutch Women's auxiliary corps was situated in one of the big, old-fashioned Amsterdam-houses on the Keizersgracht. It was there Miss Manus daily went during the first year of German occupation, fulfilling her task of organising in this corps, which came into existence during the Dutch army-mobilisation before the German invasion. It soon became the source of many difficulties, especially for Miss Manus.

It has been one of the well-known German aims to incorporate the manifold concerns of occupied Holland into the Nazi-system, and to eliminate the Jews from all existing firms.

Why make an exception for the K.V.V.; why for Rosa Manus well-known feminist and pacifist?
It was therefore not so long after that ominous fifteenth of May 1940, that the German order came that Rosette Manus had to give up her place in the K.V.V.-committee, an order, immediately followed by the determined K.V.V.-committee's answer, that they did not intend to let Miss Manus go.

And then followed a difficult time for Rosa Manus. What was to be her line of conduct? Was she to stay in this committee, which so courageously backed her, or was she to go, and obey German orders?
She often asked for advice in this difficult situation, and seated before her own desk, placed in her sister's sitting room, she would look expectantly but wearily through her thick spectacles; her face pale and unhappy, all cheerfulness gone. And "please, dear Miss Manus", we used to plead, "please retire from the whole thing". "What is the use of staying in this organisation, which is hampered in so many of its old activities by the Germans. Why expose your life to those men, who-you know- are such brutes."

But there was more than one side of the question, and not all her friends were of the same opinion. From different places they came, the women, most of them members of the K.V.V., urging her to stay, as they could not do without her.

Did they realise, that Miss Manus-by staying in office-risked her life?

For it was against German policy to repeal an order once given, or to tolerate its obstruction.

And one afternoon, when-as they knew- a national celebration was taking place in the K.V.V., the "Grüne Polizei" came to the old-fashioned house on the Keizersgracht, and claimed "die Rosa Manus".

Their visit, however, was without success.

Vaguely aware that trouble was ahead, Miss Manus had remained at home that day. And this time the Germans gave up their search.

Their revenge for-the-time-being was a bit-lateron to seal the doors of the K.V.V. building, thus making further work there impossible.

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After this experience Miss Manus seldom left her house.

Before this it had been impossible already to persuade her to visit her many friends, much less to stay with them.

From now on her fear of compromising them by her presence increased. If she left her house, it was in order to visit her Jewish relations, in distress like herself. Provided with French and English grammarbooks, she regularly went to her young nephews and nieces in order to teach them and to distract them.

But her eyes had suffered from the strain of the times
and reading soon became difficult.

So Miss Manus came to live the kind of life, which many in the occupied countries had to face later on, when the Nazi-terror intensified. Closed in between four walls, one’s energy was to be spent, and one’s amusement found within this small space.

A difficult situation, especially for those, who used to work on international affairs like Miss Manus did. Her position, however, never became a source of complaint. "Were not many lives more difficult to live than her own", she often remarked. "Was not her life with her younger and dearest sister, with her many nephews, nieces and various friends, still full of attraction?"

Cooking and knitting, Rosa’s favourite pass-times, were still possible and necessary occupations. Her judgment and advice were still often needed.

If the air had not been full of evil forebodings, results of the very circumstances, which urged this her seclusion, life would have been more bearable.

It was on one of those early spring days in May 1941, that Miss Manus received a card from S.S. headquarters at Amsterdam, announcing that her presence there was wanted. And after long deliberations whether to go or not to go, Miss Manus went to that office, which many before her had never to come back again.

Miss Manus, however, did return this time.

After an interrogation lasting for eight continuous hours, the Germans released her "wegen ihr feines Benehmen". Her experiences in this S.S. office gave her a temporary hope, which enlightened her surroundings in dark, occupied Holland.

And she, Miss Manus, almost became her own self again, whenever she told her story:

"After being received by a German S.S. officer of the underground type, she had been left to a German of a less unpleasant kind. It was he, who had conducted her long interrogation.

Her entire life had been examined in detail. Her journeys and work abroad had been carefully gone over.

"Was soll ich Ihnen noch erzählen", had been Rose’s frequent remark."Sie wissen ja schon alles".
For a big file lay upon the official’s desk, wherein all details of Miss Manus’ life had been collected. This examination was—nothing else than a verification. The questions were not put in an unpleasant way. Her interrogator seemed often favourably interested. What an interesting life you had, was his secretary’s remark. “Ich möchte mit Ihnen arbeiten...” This examination which had started in the morning, lasted until six o’clock in the afternoon.

“Do you understand my feeling, when I passed through the front door of that building... Free...?”. Some years had to pass before experience gave us understanding.

It has been a feature common to many in occupied Holland, that they realised too late the extent of Nazi-terror. Too late they understood, that upon a German promise one cannot rely, that German atrocities, and German cruelties are boundless. So too readily trust had been given to the promises of Seyss-Inquart, the Nazi—“Protector” for the Netherlands, when in his first official speech he proclaimed, that no Jew would be harmed, and that the Dutch institutions would not be altered.

This mentality might explain—in fact—this sad and weary story. Her relations were not her friends, as well as Miss Manus herself too ignorant of the realities of the Nazi-regime? Given more knowledge of the likelihood of her fate, might this part of Miss Manus’ life have been utterly different? A futile question, as this record can never be changed, nor the terrible end avoided.

One thing, however, seems certain in this painted story, that even with more knowledge of the methods of the Nazi-regime, this story might have been different in detail, but its general characteristics would probably not have been altered.

For no one, not even her dearest friend, had been able to persuade Miss Manus to go overseas in order to escape this country. And no one had the power to make her go to anyone of her friends in order to seek shelter there.
To hide was against Miss Manus' ideas.
So when in 1941 she rented for the summer months a country-house at Noordwyk-aan-Zee, her Bank always possessed her full address, while in her many letters and cards, she made no secret of her new abode.

And yet Miss Manus was not convinced that no harm would come to her. *Seldom she* left her house at Noordwyk-aan-Zee, and on beautiful days, she went, where no passer-by would find her. This charming house was therefore a joy to her. Built in old Dutch country-house style, its cozy hall, its bright and comfortably furnished rooms, and its peaceful garden and dunes gave a cordial welcome to all those who came there.
The memory of this last period at Noordwyk-aan-Zee gives, indeed, a slight consolation.

There she was, still surrounded by her relations and friends, as no harm had yet come to any of them.
The lunch- and dinner-table were often too full for her taste, the teashour was often too crowded.

So sometimes Miss Manus would fly from this party, which on beautiful days, gathered in the dunes behind the house, and where laughter and jokes were still possible.

"Do come and let us have a quiet cup of tea inside the house. There are so many things to talk about...Those children—referring to her many guests—make a sensible word impossible..."

She *never did* not seem unhappy in these new surroundings. Even with enthusiasm she would show her visitors the house:

"It must be an favorite of mine" was her frequent remark.

"was not I lucky to rent it...?"

In this state of mind we left Miss Manus in the end of July, slightly tranquillised by this state of affairs. Too little indeed we were aware of the danger that was ahead. Too little we realised her awkward position.

For within a few weeks her sister's letter arrived telling us the terrible news, that Miss Manus was in German hands and in the prison at Scheveningen.

Our planned visit to Rosa could no more take place.
We were never to see her again.

From that time the severity of the Nazi-regime was directed in increasing strength on the Manus-family.

As Rosa—the head of the family after her father's death—was on her way to a cruel death...
the wiping out of the family was imminent. Her younger nephew, whose imprudent actions often caused her alarm, was shut up in a concentration camp. Her elder nephew, whose intelligent personality used to be her joy, was living underground. Her brother, who tried to escape over the Belgian border from the Nazi-terror, was caught and a prisoner in German hands. And Erika, her beloved niece and adopted child, died after a similar attempt to escape. “This was a terrible tragedy for the family. Erika, whom we used to know as a bright and happy child, full of energy and fun, intelligent, gentle and kind…” Erika, who was to sail to Amerika one single day after the Dutch capitulation came about, in order to join her parents there. Erika, a victim of the Nazi-regime.

Anything seemed possible next.

And we still see her, whom we counted among our nicest friends, growing silent and shy owing to the course of events, reluctant to go on the street.

We were wrong, when we said to her: “But surely, Erika, no harm will come to you…”

And by walking along the smaller canals of Amsterdam, we used to avoid the streets crowded with German soldiers, while we made plans for the times, when the world would be in a happier state.

Alas, this was not to be. Not suspecting any of her plans, dear Erika’s fate was sealed, before we even knew. And her aunt Mrs. Stern was almost speechless at the loss of this so promising life. “Will ever the Germans realize what they have done”, were her words. And then, “I wonder which of us will follow next.”

Her charming flat seemed deserted now, when the daily visitors had gone. Sister Rosa’s room was empty and shut.

No sons came to stay with her for the week-end. Her brother, her niece were forever gone.

What, indeed, was to happen next.

For all efforts to release her sister and son were unsuc-
unsuccesful. The many visitors and telephonenumber brought bad news almost every day.

Her son, Herbert, ill in his concentration-camp, was allowed to go into hospital with a slight chance to be released. From Rosa occasionally short letters came, telling her sister that she was alive.

But soon the hope, which these messages gave, was dashed to the ground.

Herbert, though still ill, was sent back to his camp. And ex-prisoners from Scheveningen, who had been released, visited Mrs Stern.

They brought no good news of Rosa, indeed.

She was ill, so they told Mrs Stern, and they were afraid, that Miss Manus, if transported to Germany, would not survive.

And Mrs Stern, her fine, pretty face, pale and drawn, used to sit on the sofa in her sitting room, sad, exhausted, but self-restrained.

Alone she was now, she, who since her early youth had been the spoiled child of a large family: Relying on her parents, on her husband, on her sons. And her sister Rosa had always been near to help her in her difficulties.

And now, in this hopeless state, she-Mrs Stern displayed a courage and self-restraint, which impressed everyone. Few words of complaint, no thought of revenge; resigned she waited what the postman or the telephone-calls might bring.

By telephone the Germans announced the fate of her niece. The telephone again brought her the message we all feared.

In June 1942 she was informed in that way, that Rosette Manus had died in the concentration-camp at Ravensbrück on May 1942.

Mrs Stern probably suffered her sister's fate.

A month after the announcement of Miss Manus' death, she was taken to prison by the German S.S.

Her flat was cleared by the Germans.

Only two members of this large family in the end survived.
Upon Rosa's martyrdom the following letter gives some light:

3 October
The Hague 1945

Dear Miss van der Meulen,

Yen, I did meet Miss Manus in the prison at Scheveningen, as well as in the concentration camp of Ravensbrück.

It was not for long, as in March 1942 she was transported to Auschwitz with all the Jews, who were at Ravensbrück at that time.

She probably never arrived. Whenever a transport of two thousand Jews went to that camp, not more than a hundred or a two-hundred arrived, and that were only the very young girls of 18, 20, 22 years old, who were "richtig arbeitsfähig". The other prisoners went at once to the gasroom.

Very soon after their departure we learned out of messages from home, that most of them died, including Miss Manus.

In the prison at Scheveningen Miss Manus was in a cell next to mine, but I could only talk to her, when we were "aired". I liked Miss Manus from the beginning, and thought her a very sensible and sympathetic woman.

She was ill, but no notice was taken of that.

In Scheveningen she still hoped, that she would be released, as she had never done anything wrong. In those days not so many Jews were put in prison, just because they were Jews.

The woman with whom she shared her cell, was not so nice. That was unpleasant for Miss Manus.

But notwithstanding that, she was very courageous.

When however news came, that she was to be transported to Germany, she was all of a sudden quite depressed.

"That is the end", she said again and again, "I shall never come back!"

She gave me a letter of farewell to her sister in Amsterdam. I was to bring that letter to Amsterdam on September 12 the date on which I should be released. This however, never happened.

My companion in the cell, who was to go home on October 5
should bring the letter instead.
But she, in the end, was frightened. So she learned the
contents by heart. I sewed the letter in the sleeve of my
coat in order to be able to deliver it later on.
But I never saw my coat again in the concentration camp.
In the end my companion did go to Miss Manus' sister, and
she told her, what was in the letter.

When I arrived in Ravensbrück on October 27
1941, Miss Manus had arrived a week before. Her journey
had lasted much longer than mine. She left Scheveningen
certainly 8 weeks before I did.
In Ravensbrück she was more cheerful than during those last
days in Scheveningen, but she always kept to her opinion,
that she would never return.
She worked in Ravensbrück among the knitters, as I did.
That was one of the best possibilities for work.
In the morning we always stood together at the roll call.
On account of her general knowledge I often asked her
opinion on all kinds of subjects.
In the barracks of the Jews she often lectured on different
subjects. We were not allowed to go there. In the begin-
ning things were more severe in the camp than later.
Through the many thousands, that regularly arrived, the
leading power was not able to cope with them.
Here again no notice was taken of Miss Manus' illness.
She was permanently yellow in the face, but did not even
get a diet.
When she said goodbye to me before her departure for
Auschwitz, she was very much depressed.
She gave no message then for her family. I think that she
did not expect, that any of us would survive. —
It is a pity, that I cannot remember my talks with
her. We all lost our memory more or less at Ravensbrück,
and so many ten-thousands have passed us.
One impression was swept away by the other...
I hope that this letter may be of some use to you. —

Yours sincerely

(signed Nelia Epkor).