

Summary

Aeronautical Research for Nazi-Germany in The Netherlands

As soon as Hitler came into power in 1933, aeronautical research became a top-priority in Nazi-Germany. Many Research Institutes, like AVA (Aerodynamische Versuchsanstalt in Göttingen, founded by Prandtl), contributed to the expansion of the Nazi war capabilities. The close cooperation between industry, research institutes, academia and the organization of professionals will be outlined. Together they formed the network of people that delivered high tech developments like the jet-engine, swept-wing aircraft and the V-2 ballistic missile.

Only three days after the surrender of The Netherlands to Nazi-Germany, the premises of the Aeronautical Laboratory NLL at Amsterdam were 'secured' by representatives of the German Ministry of Aeronautics (Reichsluftfahrtministerium). Soon after that the leaders of two German Research Institutes came to Amsterdam to ask the directors of NLL whether the Laboratory was willing to perform contract work for AVA. The Secretary-General of the Dutch Department of Transport, the Board of the foundation NLL and the Directors of NLL all agreed that work for AVA could be done provided that it was restricted to 'basic research', without a contribution to the war effort. For a period of four years, between August 1940 and August 1944, up to half of the NLL budget was related to work under contract from AVA. In the presentation the work that was actually done will be discussed.

As a result of this work NLL expanded during the war from almost hundred employees in 1940 up till hundred and forty in 1944. At the same time the commercial director of NLL was actively involved in a resistance group till he was arrested in April 1944. He finally returned after the war from the concentration camp Sachsenhausen. Other employees of NLL were also involved in resistance activities, two of them did not survive the war.

The most important facts of this period will be presented as a kind of case study for the role of aeronautical scientists during the war. It is left to the audience to reflect on lessons for our profession.

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