Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

You'll be astonished I'm afraid, on receiving a letter from Holland from an unknown Dutch girl even. But let me explain it to you.

Though it was secret then, we always heard of the great things that were done on the other side of the ocean, during the war, and accordingly a deep feeling of veneration and respect grew in us for the many men and women, heroes born, who were striving for our liberty. And so I got the intention to express my feelings of sympathy for you and your country as soon as that was possible and correspondence between the States and Holland was
taken up again for you, oh, Roosevelt, for whom we have so much sympathy, especially after the death of the late President to whom we are so very much indebted.

We'll never forget him, I'm sure. For this reason too, certainly, can imagine how awfully grateful we are to have won back our own freedom.

After I have fulfilled this duty to you, I want to tell you something about myself. I'm fifteen years old, too, in the third form of Highschool at Haarlem, but live at half an hour's distance from that school, at least when walking, and I take it that way, because bicycles are scarce, but pies are even scarcer over here in this Berlouburg county. So I have to walk that long distance and because there are bad streets it is no pleasant job in cold and rainy weather. But when I think of the time we've had that dreadful period, and of the freedom and the food we've got now I don't complain. It has been worse when the enemy was still here and we didn't dare to go to school at all sometimes on account of the shotting parties that were held on Dutch people. It was so-called executions they held, but of course several boys and girls were killed by it. And when we returned home we did one
Homework in the crowded sitting room by candle light and with numb fingers because of the shortage of fuel and absence of electricity. We went to bed at eight o'clock but then the worst of all came, for as soon as we lay in our beds, the Allied planes came overhead, on their way to Germany and the "futto" (the Dutch word for German) raised hell with their anti-air guns and stone times one of the planes was hit and fell down in flames. But we were often able to help an Allied para-may along, for you know in front of our house is a meadow with a little barn in the middle of it, which has proved to be very useful sometimes.
In this way, Mrs. Roosevelt, you get some knowledge of what happened here in our little country during the war, and I'm sure you understand now that it was my duty to thank you also in the name of the whole population for what you and the late President Roosevelt did for us. Oh, I could tell you a thousand things more than that, the day our liberators came the reception of our lovely Queen Wilhelmina in Holland and so on. We are extremely happy now, because our father, mother, my
Little brother still are together. But I have one thing more in mind, and that is, how I must thank and surprise father and mother, to thank them too for what they did for us during those difficult years. You know they have been away for a long time, sometimes in quest of food, and they did it for us, their children, and I'll never forgive it. But you'll understand that it is very difficult for me to do anything at all for them.

Therefore I have a favour to ask you and I hope you'll be so kind to grant it me. Could you show me a way to avail myself of some kindness for us? I'm afraid you'll think me inmodest in asking you such a question, but it is my heart's desire to do anything for dad and mother, in such a way that it'll be a surprise to them.

I end this letter with the expression of my thanks and hoping that you'll do me the favour I've asked from you. With kind regards,

your most truly

Corrie van Baak

Address:
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Holland.
Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

That morning of the 13th of April 1945 I will not soon forget. I was sitting at my desk in a cold office with gray faces around me, hungry faces. At my back was hanging a large map of Europe, where the frontline changed from day to day. Only too slowly, for we were so tired. At half past nine always the news came in and that day too we sat there waiting for good news, which never could be good enough.

Just then the source of our news came in, looking defeated, white like a sheet. "Roosevelt died yesterday".

Silence.

Eyes blinked. We would not and could not believe this worst of all news. And at the same time we knew it: bad news is always true. Then again, we comforted ourselves with the thought, that the allies would win the war anyway, for that the only thing left to do, was just to run over a piece of enemy debris.

But at the same time we knew it: surely, the war would be won, but what about the peace? And as in a flash I saw it: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it". And again and again, I had to look at the tower of Babel, higher and higher and nearly reaching the skies ... except that the Great Builder had laughed at the attempt of such idle show of human beings and had made this tower into a symbol of human impotence.

Roosevelt, "the builder, the idealist, the honest fighter for a better world", "the aristocrat, who labored for the little man", the man of wealth who stood up for the man of small means and who fought the "malefactors of great wealth". Roosevelt, the man who could have built a better world, in which the one did not exploit the other and where cheating was not paramount. Where "justice" did not sound like a curse.

Roosevelt dead on April 12th 1945. In the full strength of his mighty life. Why? God knows, and we shall not know more than God. For it is not we, but it is God who shall build our future.

This then was the only thought that could comfort us on that dark day in the hunger-winter. Later in the day I could also give to my wife this solace. She felt defeated and could not be made to believe it. Later on I would have liked so much to tell this to that poor negro woman, shown in the Fox Movietone Newfilm of the burial of America's greatest President I understood it so well, why she was weeping and waged with her large white handkerchief at the burial cortege. For she also knew, that his death would bring back the old times of repression. Just like the little fellow in "God's own country" knew that he now again was delivered into the hands of the Eighty Families of hyena's, dominating America financially, economically and socially. Just also like the friends of Roosevelt saw it coming that his lifework would be broken down piece by piece and that the friendly -laughing, but completely insignificant successor of the great President would be enveloped in the intrigue and greed of the "enterprising capital- isate" of dollarland. -- And so it happened, bit by bit. As the last one, Wallace went out; as luck would have it with a little publicity, so that the world at least would know, that the time of renovation in the U.S. had come to an end with the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and that Reaction had its chance again.
From March 4th 1933 to April 12th 1945 he has been the great Number One in the U.S. More than 12 years. And while in Germany, Italy and Spain attempts were made to create a new order, with much terror, concentration camps and executions, the United States saw a bloodless revolution. But it was a revolution of far wider scope than Hitler or Mussolini would have set in motion. They were amateurs, compared with this great invalid. They had unlimited power. He had to see it through in a country where everything could be accomplished with the dollar. Had not three of his predecessors been murdered? Not only a life.

His was a fight up-hill against conservatism and lack of understanding, not only with the wealthy and Big Business, but also with the poor and with Labor. Democracy, with all its possibilities for sabotage, stood as an enemy against him. And notwithsstanding all this, he succeeded in making a free country of these United States, with a planned economy and with prosperity. .......

From time to time he has been called unpopular, but the American people knew, that it was he, who against all tradition again and again had to be President. Of all presidents he has been the most popular. Had he lived in '48, I have no doubt he would again have been the choice of the people. A poll gave him 61% on the question who had been the greatest American. And that was not on the basis as a war president.

Was he then of such supreme intelligence? Was he so dexterous? Was he so inspiring? What was his secret?

All these questions find an answer in his speeches. (Redevoeringen is really too big a word for them) He himself called them "fireside chats". And if one looks critically at them, they surely are not empty discourses. Sometimes they are rather cheap talks. Never one will find intricate thoughts in them. Neither many new ideas. But all of them excel in their honest appeal to humanity, in clear and uncomplicated words.

In five minutes Roosevelt could explain to the simplest American why the dollar should be devaluated. And after those five minutes, the listeners had found it an interesting story and they could quietly go to bed in the knowledge, that the great man in the White House was averse to all intrigue and complications, to all outward show. He talked little and did much.

When talking about more justice in the spreading of the national income, he simply says: "In such a system there ought to be a greater reward for the laborer and consequently the reward of capital shall have to be less". The capitalist does not like to hear that, but it is open and clear language. And he certainly did not hide his contempt for the "malefactors of great wealth": "I do not believe that in the name of the sacred word Individualism a few powerful interests should be allowed to make cannon fodder of half the population of these states!"

The power of Roosevelt's address, is, I believe, to be found herein that he could touch the imagination of the common man. Just like Hitler and Mussolini could make their hearers raving-mad, so that they forgot their own personal existence, forgot all human interests and every thought of humanity, so Roosevelt knew how to make people think; think about their own existence and their families; think of the common man and his daily need; think of simple morality and a humanitarianism common to all.

We, virtuous, moralistic and humanitarian, we may shrug our shoulders about such simple and childlike talk, but we forget one thing t.w. that we do not succeed in inspiring our people with a new élan. And if there is anything in which Roosevelt has succeeded supremely, then it certainly is in giving a new and bright outlook to millions and millions of Americans. Negroes could now hope for equal and decent treatment; unemployed for useful and pleasant work; the man with the small purse could sense, that he was no longer entirely forgotten.
And not only to Americans has Roosevelt given a brighter outlook. A glow of his fire has warmed the rest of the world. Already before the war his brave fight for a better communal life (New Deal) in a land, rotten through and by capitalism, succeeded in all this. But above all during the war, when he, in between Stalin and Churchill, always again knew how to find the liberating word and to give also the last push toward our liberation.

The war won, partly certainly through him.

And the peace?

We had to do it without him. Two years after his death things are worse than on the day of liberation. Distrust, internationally, is returning ever stronger; nationally, most countries, America included, are approaching a catastrophe with unheard-of rapidity. With Roosevelt, things would have been different.

But it was not to be. And we shall not complain, but shall go on fighting. The fight, begun by that invalid. The fight, requiring so much courage, but which must be fought, at least; if we are serious in our socialistic ideal and if we realize our responsibility for our neighbor.

On that path Roosevelt has led us. May we, with the same courage and perseverance, know our vocation and may we struggle determinedly for a society, a new society, a New Deal.

J. G. van der Floeg.