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Henri Deterding

Henri Wilhelm August Deterding , KBE (born April 19, 1866 in Amsterdam , † February 4, 1939 in St. Moritz) was a Dutch industrialist. As the main shareholder of the Shell group , he was one of the richest men in the world in his day. ^[1] He was considered the "Napoleon of petroleum". ^[2]



Henri Deterding

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Life

Deterding was born in Amsterdam as the fourth of five children to a seafaring family. His father was the captain of a merchant ship and died when Deterding was six years old. Due to this circumstance, the family ran into financial difficulties, ^[2] he only up to the age of 16 years was able to attend grammar school. He then started training at Twentsche Bank. He soon showed a talent for dealing with numbers. Since his career opportunities in the banking industry did not seem promising, he looked for an alternative. He applied for a position in the Dutch East Indies and was accepted in 1888 by a branch of the Dutch trading company in Medan . ^[3]

On May 15, 1896 Deterding took a position at a petroleum company, whose managing director at that time was Jean Baptiste August Kessler. It was a mineral oil producing or looking for petroleum sources company with the name "NV Koninklijke Maatschappij tot Exploitatie van Petroleumbronnen in Nederlandsch-Indie (KNMEP)". Before Kessler died in 1900, he handed over management of the company to Deterding until his own son August Kessler junior came of age. ^[3] At that time, the Standard Oil Company became aware of Deterding's business and tried to buy it out. However, Deterding refused, relying on Kessler's will.

Shell

He met Marcus Samuel , who founded the Shell Transport and Trading Company and enjoyed the goodwill of the Rothschilds as an international banking house that was heavily involved in the oil business in Russia . Deterding teamed up with him. ^[3] China had been a Rockefeller domain for 20

years . Deterding was able to achieve a logistical superiority in the region and due to this fact undercut the prices of Standard Oil. After a long price war, Shell and Standard Oil finally shared the Chinese market from 1911.

Deterding now bought every oil well on American soil that he could get. Since the Standard Oil Company didn't care about the sources until then, there was a lot to buy there.

The shell Cie. then produced up to forty percent of their oil from the soil of the United States. It was definitely a policy to conserve sources on other continents and empty those of the United States of America first.

Private

Deterding was a Protestant. ^[2] He was married three times and had seven children. His first wife was a Dutch woman with whom he had two sons and a daughter. The second woman he married in 1924 was the white Russian Lydia Pavlovna Koudoyaroff, ^[4] the daughter of the future General Paul Koudoyaroff. After divorcing her in 1936, at the age of 70, he married Charlotte Mina Knack, a German who had worked as a secretary in his company. ^[5] One of his closest friends and business partners was Calouste Gulbenkian . ^[2] His private passions included hunting in high society, for which he sometimes did Achnacarry Castle ^[2] in Scotland.

In 1920 he was made an honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire by King George V of Great Britain . ^[5]

Financial support for National Socialism

Glyn Roberts writes in *The most powerful man in the world* that Deterding was impressed by Adolf Hitler as early as 1921 and donated 4 million Dutch guilders to him through the agent Georg Bell . This donation was confiscated in 1923 after the unsuccessful Hitler coup . Deterding financially supported the German voluntary corps in the east and armed uprisings in the Soviet Union . He financed Alfred Rosenberg early on , who visited him in 1931 and in May 1933 in his country house in Buckhorst Park in Ascot. ^[6] In Spain he initially undermined the Second Spanish Republic and promoted the interests of the Spanish fascists after the beginning of the Spanish Civil War . ^[7]

Deterding founded the *International Group of Oil Companies in Russia* in 1922 and hired the head of the British military espionage service George Macdonogh as political advisor. His liaison with the SA was Georg Bell. Conferences were held in London in 1926 and 1927 under the aegis of detergents , at which the plans of industrialist Arnold Rechberg and General Max Hoffmann to wage an anti-Soviet campaign were discussed.

In 1936 Deterding acquired Dobbin Castle in Mecklenburg . ^[8] His personal friend, the director of Deutsche Bank Emil Georg von Stauß , had his estate in the immediate vicinity.

In 1937 he donated 10 million gulden to Hitler and 40 million Reichsmarks to the winter relief organization of the German people . Joseph Goebbels noted in his diary on January 12, 1937: "Hilgenfeld reports that WHW Deterding has donated 40 million." ^[9]

In addition, he initially owned 60 percent of the Caucasian oil reserves, from which he was expropriated in the course of the October Revolution of 1917. With enormous sums of money he unleashed a campaign against the purchase of the "stolen oil". Deterding is said to have donated up to 55 million pounds to the NSDAP (according to Roberts) . However, documents (according to Sutton) cannot be found.

Death and burial

When Deterding died in the Engadine at the age of 72 , his body was brought to Dobbin and laid out in the castle's riding arena. His family, public figures and academics, industrialists from the German Reich and abroad and Nazi celebrities appeared at the funeral service on February 10, 1939 .

“The hall was lined with pine green and white lilac. The flags of the Third Reich and the Netherlands hung over the podium with the coffin covered with flowers. A white lilac canopy shone from the semi-darkness, enlivened by the dim light from red pylons on either side of the coffin. Two foresters and a body servant of the deceased kept the guard of honor. ”

- Report in *Petroleum* ^[10]



Boulder at Deterding's former grave site in Dobbin (2015)

Hitler had sent a pompous wreath. In his eulogy, v. Stauß Deterding "as one of the first champions against world Bolshevism". ^[11] He quoted the inscription of St Paul's Cathedral : "If you are looking for his monument, look around you." Deterding was buried in the forest between the castle park and the fog . It should have been decided that only one person was allowed to speak at the grave, the representative of the Führer . ^[12] On his behalf, the Neptun shipyard had laid a field railway track , over which a large boulder had been brought to the site. The inscription HENRI DETERDING can still be seen. ^[8th] A circular zinc cast plaque on the back - later removed and destroyed - bore the inscription: ^[13]

RETURNED TO HIS HOME IN MECKLENBURG, HERE IN GOD HENRI DETERDING

At the instigation of his family, Deterding was reburied to Liechtenstein in 1968 . Descendants have received or bought back property in Dobbin and Glave .

See also

- Economy under National Socialism
- William Knox D'Arcy

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- [Marcel Metz: *De Napoleon van de Olie: Henri Deterding \(1866–1939\)* \(Historically Nieuwsblad 10/2005\) \(http://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/nl/artikel/6732/de-napoleon-van-de-olie-henri-deterding-1866-1939.html\)](http://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/nl/artikel/6732/de-napoleon-van-de-olie-henri-deterding-1866-1939.html)
- [Jean Baptiste August Kessler](#) (English WP)
- [George Macdonogh](#) (English WP)
- [Newspaper article about Henri Deterding \(http://purl.org/pressemappe20/folder/pe/003922\)](http://purl.org/pressemappe20/folder/pe/003922) in the [20th century press kit of the ZBW - Leibniz Information Center for Economics](#) .

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10. [Henri Deterding's last trip](#). In: *Petroleum*. XXXV. Volume, No. 9, 1939, p. 165 f.
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