
Shame and Pride

The Memory of the Rescue of Jews
in the Netherlands, 1945 to the Present

IDO DE HAAN

On February 1, 1956, a local Dutch newspaper in The Hague, *Het Haagsch Dagblad*, ran the headline, “Mr. F.M.A. Schokking Ordered the Arrest of a Jewish Family in 1942. Father, Mother, and Child Dead.” The article revealed that during the German occupation, the mayor of The Hague, Frans Schokking, had been instrumental in the arrest of a Jewish family. In the small town of Hazerswoude, where Schokking had been serving as mayor in 1942, he had called the *Sicherheitsdienst* to inform them that a Jewish family named Pino had been hidden in his community. Only after Schokking called for a second time was the family arrested.

After the war Schokking survived the purge of government personnel without a scratch, and in 1952 he even experienced a boost in his career when he became mayor of The Hague. When his role in the arrest of the Jewish family in 1942 came to light, Schokking’s defense was that he had acted in the best interests of many others, Jews and non-Jews, who had been in hiding in Hazerswoude. He claimed that the Pino family had acted irresponsibly by going outside all the time. He even suggested they might have been secret agents in German service, deployed to reveal resistance against the German authorities. Initially, Schokking’s line of defense was backed by an official committee established to investigate the case by the minister of the interior, Louis Beel, and led by the president of the Supreme Court, Jan Donner, which published a report exonerating Schokking of all accusations. It emphasized that, at the time of the incident, the mayor had long pondered what to do before he called the

Sicherheitsdienst for the second time to ask for the *verwijdering* (“removal”) of the Pino family.¹ “And thus it happened,” concluded the committee, without mentioning that Jakob Pino had committed suicide in prison after being separated from his wife and daughter, who were both deported to Auschwitz, where they were killed.²

The committee warned against judging Schokking with hindsight, but that did not stem the wave of publications that compared his behavior under German occupation to that of other Dutch gentiles, some testifying to heroic acts of rescue, but others to reluctance or even rejection of helping to Jews. Remarkably, Jewish survivors hardly participated in the debate, and were even actively discouraged from doing so, most forcefully by the party leader Carl Romme of the Catholic People’s Party (KVP)—the largest party in parliament. When Jakob Pino’s sister, who had survived, asked the prosecutor general to open a criminal case against Schokking, Romme qualified it as “dirty politics [. . .] to file a complaint after literally ten years.”³ The most vocal participants in the debate were members of the former resistance. *Het Haagsch Dagblad*, the daily that had first revealed the case, belonged to a newspaper syndicate that had emerged from the social-democratic resistance newspaper *Het Parool*, which was clandestinely published from February 1941 and continued to appear after the liberation—until the present day. The communist newspaper *De Waarheid*, published from November 23, 1940, onward (until 1990), also paid ample attention to the affair. When Schokking’s case was finally discussed in parliament, the Labour MP and resistance hero Johan Scheps recalled his own experience rescuing Jews, and noted, “We always urged Jews who did not look too Jewish to go out and act like born Christians.”⁴ On the other hand, the conservative-liberal MP Govert Ritmeester argued that, as a mayor of Den Helder, he had known many Jews, some brave, some cowards, but many also “unruly,” like the Pino family: “They had to be disciplined, very forcefully.”⁵ Anton Roosjen, MP for the orthodox Protestant Antirevolutionary Party, started his contribution to the debate with his recollection of his imprisonment in Buchenwald, where he had seen 250 Dutch Jews arriving in March 1941:

Six weeks after their arrival, 52 of them had already died of dismal mistreatment, and when the others were deported to Mauthausen, we all understood that their fate was sealed. And we felt tortured by the knowledge that we were unable to offer any help. We can be grateful that the willingness to lend aid to the hunted Jews in the Netherlands could often be turned into action and that in very many cases this was done. As a result, thousands of our Jewish compatriots have

certainly escaped a horrible death, and for that we must be grateful, above all to those who have risked their own lives by providing this assistance. But because of that we are all the more tormented by the question regarding the incident in Hazerswoude: Could these three lives not also have been spared? At the moment everyone will give an affirmative answer to this question. An error was committed there in Hazerswoude, a serious error; that is calling the S.D. That should never have happened—irrespective of whether this was a trap. That is why I repeat: That was wrong.⁶

The term Roosjen used here for “wrong” was *fout*, which in the context of the war meant collaboration, and if that had resulted in the loss of life—which was generally the case when Jews were denounced—the death penalty was imposed in some of the postwar trials. Of the 154 people who received the death sentence for collaboration, thirty-nine were executed, while all but four were released within fifteen years after their death sentences were reversed.⁷ Not so in the case of Schokking. After a series of debates, he resigned as mayor of The Hague, but he lived a long and happy life, fulfilling less illustrious public functions until his death in 1990.

The Memory of Rescue in a Dutch Context

The revelations about Schokking and the debates about his role in the demise of the Pino family reflect the contradictory images in the public commemoration of the rescue of the Jews in the Netherlands. On the one hand, this is a history of failure. Around 74 percent of the total number of Dutch Jews perished during the Holocaust. More Jews were deported from the Netherlands than from any other part of Western Europe. As a result, some 104,000 Jews from the Netherlands were killed. Contrary to the popular notion that all Dutch, like so many others in Europe, flatly denied responsibility for the destruction of European Jewry, it is argued here that, from the immediate postwar period onward, the failure to rescue Dutch Jews and the inaction of the majority of the Dutch population in the face of genocide have been central issues in many of the public debates in the Netherlands.⁸ To apply Michael Rothberg’s concept, there has been an extensive debate in the Netherlands about the moral responsibility emerging from the fact that Dutch society and its institutions were implicated in the Holocaust, because of the sole fact that the mass murder happened “in our midst.”⁹

Yet on the other hand, alongside this discourse of shame, there has been a persistent tendency to boast about rescue efforts, most significantly about

the general strike of February 1941 in protest against the deportation of Jews. Another remarkable symptom of excessive pride about rescue activity is that the second largest group of Righteous Among the Nations recognized by Yad Vashem comes from the Netherlands. Up until 2019, 5,778 Dutch gentiles had been awarded this title for helping Jews. While the highest number of Righteous comes from Poland, the Dutch contingent is by far the largest of any national group of Righteous gentiles in relation to the size of the Dutch population, to the number of victims of the Holocaust in the Netherlands, or to the number of survivors.

Addressing the questions as to why there are so many Dutch Righteous Among the Nations in a country that failed significantly more than other nations to rescue its Jewish fellow citizens, and more generally, how to account for the contradictory tendencies of the memory of rescue in the Netherlands, has an intrinsic relevance. Even if the Holocaust was transnational in nature, its impact was first of all experienced and has been remembered locally. These two aspects, of the impact and resonance of the experience of rescue, matter equally to the memory of rescue, and both history and memory are conditioned by local political, social, and cultural circumstances, and by the boundaries of the nation-state. The Dutch case is of crucial importance to a better understanding of the international developments in the field of Holocaust memory. The high number of Dutch Righteous is not the only intriguing issue. The legacy of Anne Frank and the failure to rescue her have also given global Holocaust memory a distinctive Dutch twist, which is generally invisible in the debate over whether Anne Frank is a Jewish or a universal icon.¹⁰ But the amount of scholarly studies on the memory of the Holocaust in the Netherlands accessible to a non-Dutch speaking audience is very limited.

However, the intrinsic relevance of the Dutch case has clear limits. The aim to fill in lacunae in scholarship runs the risk of contributing to the predicament of memory studies already identified in 2011 by Astrid Erll, namely that it turns “into an additive project: we add yet another site of memory, we address yet another historical injustice.”¹¹ Equally troubling is the tendency toward methodological nationalism, in which the national context is treated as an impermeable and immutable framework for studying developments of Holocaust memory. Even if one acknowledges the relevance of the national context, it should not entail a reified and static notion of a national culture of remembrance.

This chapter strives to circumvent methodological nationalism by emphasizing the contradictory and layered nature of the memory of Jewish rescue and the interplay between national and international developments. As Michael Rothberg argued, we need to conceptualize “multidirectional memory” as an

articulation of the past in the context of networks of communication, institutions of the state, and social groupings within society, the impact of which is characterized by “displacements and contingencies” and highly ambivalent affective impacts.¹² Schokking’s case serves as an example of how a historical reconstruction of a rescue story in the Netherlands needs to take into account the voices of the members of the former resistance, Jewish survivors, and politicians, as well as of people claiming a professional capacity to interpret the past, such as journalists, historians, and judges, but also novelists, documentary filmmakers, and playwrights.¹³ Therefore, the first two sections of this chapter focus on the memory of rescue as a source of shame and pride, emerging from the interaction among Dutch professionals, politicians, as well as other Jewish and non-Jewish memory activists, as reflected in key publications and debates in postwar Netherlands.¹⁴

Yet another way to overcome methodological nationalism is to locate the memory of the rescue of Dutch Jews in a transnational context. In contrast to studies on the globalization of Holocaust memory, emphasizing its deterritorialization and universalization, the following account of the memory of rescue in the Netherlands underlines the relevance of reterritorialization.¹⁵ The final section of the chapter demonstrates that Dutch Jewish immigrants in Israel played a crucial role in the high number of Dutch citizens recognized as Righteous Among the Nations.

The Failure of Rescue

The first issue to address is how Dutch society dealt with the high percentage of Jewish victims from the Netherlands. In 1940, around 140,000 Jews were living in the Netherlands. Some 107,000 were deported, of whom only about 5,200 survived. All in all, fewer than 30 percent of Dutch Jewry survived the Holocaust, and this stands in sharp contrast to the 75 percent of the French Jews who survived, or the 60 percent of Belgian Jewish survivors. Indeed, in the Netherlands the death rate in the Holocaust approaches the number of victims in Eastern Europe—the heartland of the destruction.¹⁶

Although comparative research aiming to explain the widely divergent percentage of Jewish victims in Western European countries began only in the 1980s, the failure to come to the rescue of the Dutch Jews had already become an issue of public awareness in the immediate postwar years. At the time, many members of the former resistance and of the postwar political elite were concerned about the high level of antisemitism among large sections of the Dutch population. Some commentators even argued that antisemitism was more widespread in the country after the German occupation than before.¹⁷ In an attempt

to explain this, Hilda Verwey-Jonker, one of the most influential social democratic intellectuals of the immediate postwar years, suggested that there was a link between the guilt over failing to help the Jews and the rise of antisemitism. She wrote in November 1945: “The great majority of the Dutch people are very well aware that their behavior towards their Jewish fellow citizens was utterly miserable. They try to justify this in hindsight and find such justification in a critique of the Jews. At this point, antisemitism thus fulfils the same role as the exuberant national joy that fills our streets: a compensation for a lack of national pride demonstrated during the occupation.”¹⁸

Such failure was documented, for example, in a well-known collection of war diaries published in 1954 by the Dutch National Institute of War Documentation (NIOD), for a long time the most influential guardian of the memory of World War II in the Netherlands. In one of the accounts, a man described his response to a police raid that occurred on June 20, 1943, while he was looking forward to a family outing: “There goes a fine day,” he writes. “I can already imagine the long faces of my wife and kid.” When he reached the train station, he reflected on the Jews he saw: “Herded together, carried off like cattle. . . . They might not be a pleasant people. But they are still human beings. How can our good Lord tolerate this?”¹⁹

In the 1950s several literary accounts addressed the failure to provide help, as well as the mixed feelings this failure engendered. An important example is Adriaan van der Veen’s *Het wilde feest* (The wild party [1952]), which opens with an epigraph: “the thought of it filled him with that sort of impersonal but unbearable shame with which we are filled, for instance, by the notion of physical torture, of something that humiliates humanity.” While the book demonstrated a deeply felt concern for the fate of the Jews, the story about the attempts of the main character, a non-Jewish man, to win the heart of a Jewish woman “by fully identifying with the fate of the Jewish people” also illustrated how such empathy was mixed with the author’s exoticizing fascination with Jews.²⁰ The motivations behind identifying with the fate of the Jews were also questioned by Willem van Maanen in *Al lang geleden* (Long ago [1956]): “You only love me because I am Jewish, not because I am Mirjam.”²¹ Other authors testify about the feeling of powerlessness with regard to the fate of the Jews. In a popular novel intended “for the older girl,” *Een baantje bij de krant* (A job at the newspaper [1963]), Martje witnessed the arrest of Jews and noted: “And there we stood powerless before the window, safe in our own house; we were [safe], but they were not.”²² The same sentiment was expressed in the popular novel by Willy Corsari, *Die van ons* (One of us [1945]), which sold seventy thousand copies (thereby saving the former resistance publishing house De Bezige Bij

from bankruptcy).²³ A more highbrow example is the first publication of one of the most successful Dutch authors of the twentieth century, Gerard Reve. In *De ondergang van de familie Boslowits* (The demise of the Boslowits family [1946]), he documented in a seemingly detached but ultimately chilling way the fate of the titular family from the perspective of a young, passive neighbor.²⁴

Recollections of Dutch indifference and failure to rescue Jews also played a role in the first systematic historical study of the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands, written by the Dutch Jewish lawyer Abel Herzberg, *Kroniek van de Jodenvervolgving 1940–1945* (Chronicle of the persecution of the Jews, 1940–1945 [1950]). In his account of one of the largest police raids in Amsterdam, which took place on June 20, 1943, and led to the arrest of 5,700 people, he remarks: “One of the assembly places during the police raid was the Olympiaplein. The weather was beautiful that day, and the usual games were played on the sports field. The Jews waiting there were witnessing this loud and clear. These were no NSB [National Socialist movement] members playing there. These were not men from the resistance. It was the majority of the Dutch people. One had grown accustomed to so much.”²⁵

An important impetus in the growing public awareness of the failure to rescue Dutch Jews was the disappointment of former resistance members over the swift return of collaborators to prominent positions in society, as a result of which many former resistance members were left feeling their efforts to fight Nazism had been futile. An influential example was the work of criminologist Willem Nagel. In 1953, under his resistance alias, J. B. Charles, he published the book *Volg het spoor terug* (Follow the trace), in which he criticized Dutch society for its cowardly attitude in the face of the Nazi regime, lambasted the tendency to forgive and forget, and warned against a reemergence of fascism and its most heinous aspect—the racist persecutions. His book was an immediate success, partly because it provoked fierce criticism, which became even stronger after *Volg het spoor terug* was awarded the literary prize of the Jan Campert Foundation—named after another resistance icon. In the end, ironically, Nagel received the prize from the hands of the mayor of The Hague, Frans Schokking, who was about to play a prominent role in the political scandal sketched earlier in this chapter.²⁶

The downfall of Schokking underlined the continued influence of former resistance members on the memory of rescue in postwar Dutch society. Their impact was reinforced by a series of newspapers that had initially been established as underground publications but continued to appear after 1945, attracting a large readership: the daily *Het Parool* with a social-democratic leaning (and a series of affiliated local newspapers, including *Het Haagsch Dagblad*); *Trouw*

(neo-Calvinist); *De Waarheid* (communist); and the weekly progressive journal *Vrij Nederland*, founded and edited by Henk van Randwijk. In 1960 Van Randwijk began writing a series of reflections on life in the Netherlands during the German occupation, “In the Shadow of Yesterday,” which was published under his resistance alias, Sjoerd van Vliet. In 1970 his articles appeared again in one volume, which was distributed in hundreds of thousands of copies among the Dutch youth by the national committee to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the liberation (Nationaal Comité, 25 jaar bevrijding—5 mei 1970).²⁷ It created a platform for a deeply pessimistic account of the unwillingness of the Dutch to rescue the Jews: “You who read this, did you belong to those who, by so many pretexts, refused to hide Jews? I advise the youth who read this to ask their parents, their teachers, their minister or priest about this. Not to set them up against the authorities or to let them take all these pretexts at face value [. . .] but to temper their expectations with regard to human nature and human solidarity in German-occupied territory.”²⁸

The failure of rescue became an even more prominent theme after the publication of Jacques Presser’s history of the Holocaust in the Netherlands, *Ondergang: De vervolging en verdelging van het Nederlandse jodendom (1940–1945)* (Downfall: The persecution and destruction of Dutch Jewry [1940–1945]; 1965). On the one hand, Presser described the persecution of the Jews as a cat-and-mouse game between Germans and Jews in which Dutch non-Jews played no role. In other parts of his account, however, he emphasized that the latter fell short of the solidarity that ideally would have been required of anyone aware of the injustice done to Jews. In reality many were less determined to assist, although their attitude was more varied than could be expressed by the simple terms of right and wrong, “goed en fout”: “almost unwieldy simplifications,” according to Presser.²⁹ Some were too eagerly misled by German evasions, but many more felt excused for their failure to help Jews due to the similar failure of Dutch officials. In this way, Presser drew attention to the attitudes of the Dutch government in exile, the secretaries-general (the Dutch civil servants in charge of the ministries after the government had gone into exile), police officials, and people from many other sectors of Dutch society, who had all tried to accommodate the German demands. Some argued that collaboration was justified because it prevented a far worse outcome; but in other cases their accommodation was carried out to profit from the opportunities the German occupation offered. This attitude also characterized the leadership of the Jewish Council, which according to Presser demonstrated the same misguided utilitarianism as the non-Jewish establishment.³⁰

Just like Van Randwijk’s critique, Presser’s condemnation of the political establishment set the tone for a public debate over whether the failure to save

the Jews was a symptom of a fundamental flaw in Dutch society. In this context, the comparatively high number of casualties among Dutch Jews played a pivotal role. From the middle of the 1980s, the scholarly discussion of this issue was framed in terms of the “Dutch paradox,” and interpreted as the mirror image of the Belgian and French paradoxes.³¹ While Jews in Belgium were more isolated, and prewar antisemitism was stronger in France than in most other parts of Europe, more Jews were deported from the Netherlands than from any other part of Western Europe, both in absolute and relative numbers. As Hans Blom, the historian and, later, director of the NIOD, argued in 1987, this happened despite the fact that no successful antisemitic political mobilization had occurred in prewar Dutch society, even if anti-Jewish stereotypes were widespread. Until the German invasion of May 1940, Dutch Jews generally seemed to have lived peacefully among other Netherlanders. Geographical explanations were deemed equally unconvincing: The argument that the Netherlands was such a flat country that Jews were unable to find a place to hide was belied by the fact that 300,000 non-Jewish Dutch men had successfully avoided German attempts to deploy them as forced laborers in Germany.³²

Echoing Presser’s arguments, the journalist and historian Nanda van der Zee ascribed the failure of rescue primarily to the Dutch political elite, especially Queen Wilhelmina. In a widely read yet critically received study, Van der Zee argued in 1997 that the flight of Wilhelmina and the government to London in the first days after the German invasion had demoralized the Dutch people and created an opportunity for the Germans to install a civil authority with a much wider reach than the military occupying regimes established in France and Belgium. In addition, Van der Zee held the Dutch civil service responsible for the implementation of German policies: They had developed a formalistic and subservient attitude, legitimized by a prewar administrative ruling that, in the event of a foreign occupation, all civil servants should remain at their posts to mitigate and distribute the burden of occupation evenly. The willingness to accommodate increasingly harsh measures against Jews was thus legitimized as an attempt to prevent the worst outcome. The failure to understand that this meant Dutch Jews were sacrificed was exacerbated by the lack of interest in their fate.³³ In a more structural argument, Hans Blom suggested that the willingness to accommodate the German demands resulted from a deeply ingrained deference to authority and general predilection to mitigate between conflicting positions, stemming from an age-old Dutch political culture of mutual tolerance and organizational entrenchment (*verzuiling*) of confessional differences—an attitude that, due to the high level of assimilation, also characterized the Jewish population.³⁴

These critical accounts of the role of the Dutch were concisely summarized in the title of Max Arian's article, published in 1992: "Nederland Deportatieland" (The Netherlands: Land of deportation).³⁵ It expressed a widespread national consensus that is still to a large extent in place, about the lack of help offered to the Jews during the occupation of the Netherlands. Telling examples of this consensus are two speeches given by Queen Beatrix in 1995. Fifty years after the end of World War II, she addressed the Israeli Knesset and the Dutch Parliament, and stated that the memory of the "most gruesome genocide in history" was a cause for "a deep feeling of shame" about the fact that the "courageous resistance" of a few "could not prevent the destruction of their Jewish fellow citizens," because many other Dutchmen had remained "passive" or had even given "active support to the occupier."³⁶ Recently, this consensus was reinforced by formal apologies by the Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte for the failure of the Dutch government: "Certainly, there were individual cases of resistance within the government, but too many Dutch officials carried out what the occupiers demanded of them. Others endured the great evil in hope of being able to do something good—which sometimes worked, but much more often it did not. And the bitter consequences of registration and deportation were not recognized in time and were not recognized sufficiently."³⁷

Despite the widespread agreement that the Dutch failed to rescue their Jewish compatriots, the explanation of that failure has remained a topic of continuous debate in recent years. Much of the disagreement concerns the question of knowledge about the fate of the Jews. For instance, the writer Ies Vuijsje has argued that many members of the elite had actually been aware of the plight of the Dutch Jews but had failed to pay proper attention to it. The main culprit in his story is Loe de Jong, whose career as reporter for Radio Oranje, the radio station of the Dutch government in exile in London, continued when he established the Rijksbureau voor Oorlogsdocumentatie on May 5, 1945 (later renamed Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, and after 1999, Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie [NIOD]), and served as its director. He was also the author of the canonical work, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (The kingdom of the Netherlands in the Second World War), published between 1969 and 1988.³⁸ According to Vuijsje, during and after the war, De Jong deliberately ignored information about the annihilation of the Jews. Vuijsje ascribed this attitude less to antisemitism than to a psychological tendency to repress the horrifying news about the fate of the Jews.³⁹ While Vuijsje emphasized the repression of knowledge as the motive for inaction, the historian Bart van der Boom explained the failure to assist Jews, but also the limited attempts of Jews to find refuge, as resulting from an incomplete

understanding of the murderous nature of Nazi anti-Jewish policies. Although most people were convinced that the deportations spelled disaster, only a few believed all Jews would actually be killed. Most, including the majority of Jews, therefore made a seemingly rational calculation that resistance to the arrests and deportation of Jews would be more harmful than accommodating the German demands.⁴⁰ Both publications led to further and extensive public as well as scholarly debate, in which Vuijsje's accusatory perspective was rejected by some as too one-sided, while Van der Boom's exculpatory approach was seen as an attempt to whitewash the reputation of Dutch society for its failure to rescue its Jewish population.⁴¹

The Pride of Rescuers

In contrast to the apparent consensus on the notion that Dutch society was practically and morally responsible for the failure to assist its Jewish citizens during the German occupation, there has always been an alternative recollection of the Holocaust, which emphasized that the Dutch demonstrated remarkable courage in their attempts to rescue the Jews.⁴² This image consisted of two parts: nationalization of the rescue and the focus on individual acts of heroism. On the one hand, solidarity with the Jews was seen as an expression of a collective or even national spirit of resistance. The main expression of this nationalization and incorporation of the memory of rescue into the memory of resistance was the commemoration of the strike of February 1941. After the German authorities arrested 427 Jewish men in Amsterdam on February 22 and 23, 1941, communist resistance groups called for a general strike to express solidarity with the Jews. After just two days, this strike was violently suppressed, on February 26, 1941. The commemoration of the strike as a collective rescue effort was contested during the early years of the Cold War, but it became consolidated in the 1960s. On the other hand, it was emphasized that the rescue of Jews resulted from individual courageous acts of gentiles, mainly by providing shelter to Jews. A crucial source for this aspect of heroic memory of rescue was the diary of Anne Frank and the history of the Franks' secret annex. Equally telling was the very high number of individual rescuers from the Netherlands who were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem.

The commemoration of the strike of February 1941 has long occupied a central place in the memory of rescue. During the first national commemoration of the strike, on February 25, 1946, fifty thousand people attended a ceremony where Queen Wilhelmina—herself seen as the “mother of the resistance”—bestowed an honor on the city of Amsterdam by adding the motto “Valiant,

Steadfast, Compassionate” to the city’s coat of arms. Since then, the yearly commemoration has served as a constant affirmation. In 1948 the sculptor Mari Andriessen was commissioned to design a statue in tribute to the strike. He sculpted an Amsterdam dockworker, to express his admiration for the fact that “for the first time in history Christians had tried to protect Jews.”⁴³ The monument itself became an icon of the Dutch “spirit of resistance,” displayed in countless schoolbooks and commemorative volumes and on posters devoted to the period of the Nazi occupation. International recognition came in 1960, when the mayor of Amsterdam, Gijs van Hall, planted a tree on the Mount of Remembrance at Yad Vashem to commemorate the strike—one of five trees planted at Yad Vashem to honor collective rescue efforts.⁴⁴

Despite its aim to express solidarity with the Jews, the commemoration of the strike of February 1941 turned out to be very divisive. In the context of the Cold War, the working-class nature of the strike and the prominent role of its communist organizers made the memory of the strike a heavily contested event. Between 1951 and 1966, two competing ceremonies were held each year on the same day: In the morning a “national” commemoration took place, followed by another, generally much larger event organized by the communists, with up to thirty thousand people attending the ceremony. The unveiling of the statue of the *Dokwerker* happened on a “neutral” date in December 1952. The fierce contestation of the memory of the strike of February 1941 undermined the unitary, national nature of this aspect of collective memory. At the same time, however, it made the status of the strike of February an even more prominent symbol of collective pride.⁴⁵

In 1966 the national and communist commemorations of the strike were reconciled again in a joint commemoration, indicating that the 1960s, frequently characterized as an era of increased contestation, represented a time when the national imagery of Dutch efforts to rescue the Jews became consolidated. A crucial role in the emergence of this national perspective was played by Loe de Jong, who had made the NIOD into a national repository of knowledge regarding World War II and had himself become the conscience of the nation with regard to the period of war, occupation, and persecution. Between 1960 and 1965, De Jong presented a series of television documentaries, *De Bezetting* (The occupation), in which the heroic attempts to rescue the Jews were emphasized in the final scenes of each of the twenty-one episodes. Each final scene showed the *Dokwerker*, accompanied by a soundtrack of “Merck toch hoe sterck” (See how strong), a seventeenth-century popular song celebrating Dutch resistance to Spanish rule in the Low Countries.⁴⁶

The outline of the TV series was also the framework for De Jong's history of the Netherlands under German occupation. Published between 1969 and 1988 in twenty-seven hefty volumes, De Jong's work painted an image of a quickly growing popular resistance against Nazi rule: "From month to month, feelings of irritation and indignation were growing among the public at large."⁴⁷ This public resistance also included protests against anti-Jewish measures: first of all, of course, the strike of February 1941, but also the distribution of leaflets (entitled "Jew and Non-Jew Are One") from the roof of the Amsterdam department store De Bijenkorf, in protest of the May 1, 1942, order that Jews must wear a yellow star.⁴⁸ According to De Jong, the Nazi terror sometimes made it too dangerous to voice this kind of protest in public. Still, De Jong argued: "What could not be voiced publicly in occupied territory was stated with clarity by Queen Wilhelmina" in her speeches for Radio Oranje, thus making her majesty's voice the mouthpiece of the general mood of the Dutch public.⁴⁹

In the context of the nationalization of the memory of rescue, the perspective and contributions of Jews were marginalized. In 1946 the Amsterdam city council turned down a request from the Nederlands-Israëlietische Hoofdsynagoge Amsterdam (the Netherlands' Israelite Main Synagogue Amsterdam, the governing body of the Amsterdam Ashkenazi Jewish community) to build a memorial to the Jewish victims in the city center. The council argued that the commemoration of victims needed to take place in a national context, which did not allow for a separate treatment of different minorities. Moreover, the location at the Jonas Daniël Meyerplein, between the main synagogues, was deemed unfit for the purpose—although it was assigned two years later as the location for the erection of *De Dokwerker*.⁵⁰ And in 1950, a couple of hundred meters down the road, the *Monument van Joodse Erkentelijkheid* (Monument of Jewish gratitude) was unveiled. The initiator of the monument was a member of the Amsterdam city council, Maurits de Hartogh, who had survived the war due to the special protection of the Dutch secretaries-general Karel Johannes Frederiks and Jan van Dam. Having being interned in the Netherlands from 1942 until September 1944 among other "prominent" Jews, De Hartogh was then deported to Theresienstadt, where he survived the Holocaust. Addressing the Amsterdam city council, De Hartogh explained that "certainly, our people were not able to prevent the majority of Dutch Jews from being taken abroad, from where regrettably only a small portion returned." Yet the aim of the monument was to express "the deep gratitude which fills the hearts of the Jews in the Netherlands for the fact that in these five frightful years, they were considered to be Netherlanders, with whom solidarity was declared."⁵¹ According to the sculptor of

the monument, Jobs Wertheim—also a survivor of Theresienstadt—it conveyed among other things:

Resignation: The characteristic attitude of the specifically persecuted group of Jews, who saw no way out. [. . .] Protection: The love of the non-Jew for his fellow man, the particularly hard-hit Jew, expressing himself in hiding, assistance with escaping, care of hidden ones etc. Resistance: The moral support given to the Jew by the non-Jew, his resistance and combative spirit in the active struggle against the occupier. Mourning: The mourning by the non-Jew and Jew for the dead and the suffering in the jointly borne ordeal of the Fatherland in the war years.⁵²

In contrast to this rather one-sided division of roles between resigned and passive Jews and actively resisting non-Jews, Amsterdam mayor Arnold d'Ailly voiced a more nuanced view. At the unveiling on February 23, 1950, he expressed not only pride in the honor bestowed on the Dutch people but also shame, “because even though there was much resistance, very many failed.”⁵³ The latter sentiment apparently prevailed among a substantial part of the Jewish community and its religious leaders, most of whom declined to attend the ceremony. As Jo Melkman, the chief editor of the Jewish journal *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad*, declared ironically in his editorial about the ceremony, the Dutch Jews “serve only to glorify the Dutch national consciousness. They are nothing more than an opportunity to present a noble deed, worthy to be written down in the annals of a great liberation struggle.”⁵⁴

An additional source of frustration was that the contribution of Jews to their own rescue was largely ignored. In fact, Jacques Presser, in the aforementioned book *Ondergang*, was the first to emphasize that, in relative terms, more Jews participated in the resistance movement than non-Jews.⁵⁵ He also contrasted the collaboration of the Dutch and Jewish leadership with the example of the Jewish economist and mystic Friedrich Weinreb, who had led Jews in Southern Holland to believe he could rescue them through his connections with the German authorities; in the end he was forced by these same authorities to hand over his Jewish contacts. Weinreb was convicted in 1946 by the Dutch Special Court of Justice for the betrayal of Jews to the Germans—and in 1948 in cassation to an even higher sentence of six years. However, according to Presser and the accused’s defenders, Weinreb had deployed creative yet ultimately highly risky methods to save Jews, which demonstrated his persistent ingenuity in resisting and deluding the German authorities. Weinreb thus was

seen by some as a quixotic but nevertheless positive example of *Zivildcourage*, inspiring resistance against injustice in postwar society as well. The novelist Harry Mulisch argued that Weinreb was the “Che Guevara of bureaucracy” who fought an “administrative guerrilla action” against a system that remained in place.⁵⁶ Presser was less concerned about the revolution than with the abandonment of the Jews when he described Weinreb’s postwar conviction for betrayal as turning “the Jew Weinreb into a scapegoat, who paid for the failure of so many non-Jews. He must have failed, also failed, because they had failed.”⁵⁷ In the end, the debate between Weinreb’s supporters, who claimed he had rescued several hundred Jews, and those who argued that Weinreb had deluded these Jews and contributed to their demise to save his own skin, was decided in favor of the latter.⁵⁸ Yet Presser’s plea for the recognition of Jewish resistance led to a modest but steady stream of research.⁵⁹ But the image of perceived Jewish passivity persisted. Only in 1988 was the first monument dedicated to Jewish resistance unveiled, on the occasion of which the mayor of Amsterdam, Ed van Thijn, deplored the prejudicial notion that “Jews went like sheep to the slaughter.”⁶⁰

The memorialization of individual rescuers focused primarily on people who had provided opportunities for *onderduiken* (diving under), as hiding from the German authorities was referred to in Dutch. This focus was by no means self-evident. As Bob Moore has demonstrated in his detailed study, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe*, rescue attempts involved public and private protests, assistance in escaping abroad, the forging of identity cards and food stamps, the manipulation of the process by which people were identified as Jews, and outright acts of sabotage, such as the torching of the Amsterdam civil registry office on March 28, 1943.⁶¹ One possible explanation for the fact that, despite this diversity of rescue efforts, *de onderduik* became the central component of the memory of rescue is the impact of the diary of Anne Frank. The secret annex where the Frank and Van der Pels families were hidden has become an iconic place for the commemoration of the Holocaust, currently attracting around 1.3 million visitors a year, while Anne Frank’s diary and its many adaptations—as plays, graphic novels, movies, and even a musical—have reached one of the widest audiences any book has ever achieved.⁶² Some of the people who helped those hiding in the secret annex, notably Miep Gies, who found and saved the diary, were important spokespersons for the memory of Anne Frank and the attempt to rescue the Frank family. As Gies declared in the opening lines of her memoir, *Anne Frank Remembered*: “I am not a hero. I stand at the end of a long, long line of good Dutch people who did what I did or more—much more—during those dark and terrible times many years ago.”⁶³

Yet another reason why *de onderduik* played such a central role is that it was seen as a distinctively Dutch type of rescue. In the chapter “Het onderduiken” in the commemorative book series *Onderdrukking en verzet* (Repression and resistance; published in four volumes between 1949 and 1954 by an editorial board of prominent figures from all political and cultural sections of Dutch society), Hendrik van Riessen, one of the leading figures in the National Organization for Help to People in Hiding (Landelijke Organisatie voor hulp aan onderduikers, or LO), set the tone by arguing that in the Netherlands more than anywhere else, “providing shelter had developed into a mighty movement for the protection of Dutch citizens against German measures.” The reasons for this exceptional strength of “shelter work” (*onderduikerswerk*) were “the mental disposition of our people, on which Christianity has not yet lost its hold,” as well as “a sense of order and awareness of responsibility, which generally characterized the Dutch.”⁶⁴ But the chapter paid only limited attention to the hiding of Jews and focused mainly on non-Jewish men evading the German actions to round up men for forced labor. As Presser noted in 1965, in the introduction to his lengthy chapter about “De onderduik,” there was a growing awareness in the Netherlands that “the Jews who most needed the support of organizations for shelter [*onderduikorganisaties*] and the hospitality of families who gave shelter [*onderduik-verlenende gezinnen*] [...] received it by far the least.”⁶⁵ He discussed estimates of some 20,000 to 30,000 Jews who had been hidden, out of whom some 8,000 to 10,000 were captured, only to conclude that precise information was lacking. More recently Bert Jan Flim, a researcher for Yad Vashem, has estimated that there were only 15,900 Jews in hiding; 700 of these had only one Jewish parent, while 700 were in mixed marriages. According to Flim, the limited numbers are explained by the fact that the National Organization for Help to People in Hiding started operating only in 1942, when the first deportations began, at a moment when it was already very difficult for Jews to travel. However from 1943 onward, the successful attempts to hide some 300,000 men who were attempting to evade forced labor, as well as tens of thousands of strikers after the railway strike of September 1944, indicate that the potential to hide Jews was never fully realized.⁶⁶

Remembering rescue offered an opportunity not only to sing the praises of the Dutch spirit of resistance but also to comment on the behavior of Jews in hiding. In *Het Grote Gebod* (The great command, 1951), the commemorative volume of the National Organization for Help to People in Hiding, the author and journalist Klaas Norel presented a number of examples of “remarkable resignation by which Jews subjected themselves to the German measures,” suggesting that “to accept their fate seemed to most Jews preferable to an attempt

to avoid the control of the Nazis, as that would entail the risk of very cruel punishment if they were to be found.”⁶⁷ He likewise made the following observation:

Hiding was no fun, neither for Jews, nor for those who offered shelter. There were reproaches from both sides. “We are plundered and abused,” was sometimes a legitimate complaint from the Jews, since there were actually “helpers” who pinched from their guests. Unruly, disobedient and always creating problems, many hosts would argue [about their guests], who then wanted to get rid of them. Of course, some Jews will have been difficult, but bear in mind under what circumstances and with which psychological burden they had to live for years.⁶⁸

Norel’s remarks were echoed in later accounts, and they were not dissimilar from the comments made about the Pino family in the Schokking affair, five years after the publication of Norel’s article. The reason Schokking’s opponents reacted with such vehemence to his line of defense might have stemmed from the suspicion that such comments were inspired by anti-Jewish sentiment. Neither was Norel beyond reproach in this respect. In another article published in 1947, he had argued that the passivity of Jews ended only when their property was at stake: “And then, with a vengeance, with great cunning, they hid millions from the enemy. But this could not be accomplished by cunning alone. They needed help. And help was generously offered, by the Dutch.”⁶⁹ The remarks led to a legal complaint filed by the Jewish lawyer Hans Warendorf, who argued that Jews had actually actively resisted the persecution. Nevertheless, Norel was acquitted by a judge who claimed that Norel had demonstrated a “lack of tact” but had not intended any “deliberate insult.”⁷⁰

Positive accounts of the rescue of Dutch Jews created a connection between the national spirit of resistance and the fate of the Jews. However, this was often to the detriment of the memory of the Jews and their fate during the Holocaust, not only because of the instrumentalization of their suffering for buttressing a sense of Dutch national pride, but also because of the sometimes forceful marginalization of their experiences and concerns. In the first decades after the war, when the rescue of Jews was a source of national pride, it was very hard to address the aggression Jews were subjected to as a result of their victimization and the trauma they experienced, not just by the Nazis, but also as a result of their dependency on rescuers who took advantage—in terms of money, labor, service, or sex—of the Jews in their care.⁷¹ This changed only in the late 1970s, when the traumatic effects of persecution, and also the impact of the Shoah on

children and later generations, became topics of concern.⁷² The psychological discourse offered a new vocabulary for discussing the experience of persecution and rescue, yet at the risk of turning it into an individual trauma that had to compete with many other kinds of hurtful experiences, likewise engendering a competition between victim groups.⁷³

A Nation of Righteous Gentiles

As Bob Moore remarked, the centrality of acts of rescue by non-Jewish helpers providing shelter for Jewish *onderduikers* might also be an artifact of the requirements for the recognition of people as Righteous Among the Nations, which require survivor testimony about individual acts of rescue.⁷⁴ The recognition of saviors as Righteous Among the Nations plays a significant and also puzzling role in the memory of rescue in the Netherlands. In 1962, the Israeli Memorial Authority of Yad Vashem established the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous. The commission drafted the criteria for recognition and from 1963 awarded the first certificates to non-Jews who provided help to Jews at the risk of their own lives, without reward, for primarily humanitarian motives, and without otherwise having harmed Jews.⁷⁵ From the beginning of this program until 2019, 27,362 persons have been recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. As the Israeli historian and director of research at Yad Vashem Dan Michman once stated, the title of the Righteous “has become a kind of Nobel Prize for Humanitarianism.”⁷⁶

The designation of the Righteous Among the Nations has become an important asset in both international and domestic Dutch politics. The relevance for foreign policy became evident, for instance, in the speech the Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte gave during his official visit to Israel in 2013. He celebrated “the natural—and at the same time emotional—bond between the Netherlands and Israel. I really felt that bond this morning when I visited Yad Vashem. This impressive memorial also commemorates the many Dutch Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust. What’s more, Yad Vashem honors 5,269 Dutch nationals as ‘Righteous Among the Nations,’ for their efforts to help the Jews in their hour of need.”⁷⁷ Yet also domestically, the conferral of the Righteous Among the Nations honorific has become an important aspect of national commemorative practices. The ceremony where rescuers or their families receive the certificate takes place in the local synagogue or town hall, at the ministry of foreign affairs, or at the Israeli embassy in The Hague, generally in the presence of the Israeli ambassador, the Dutch mayor, the secretary of state, or some other official.⁷⁸

It is not just the high symbolic value, but even more the sheer number of Righteous Among the Nations from the Netherlands that is remarkable. In early 2019, there were 5,778 Dutch citizens who were acknowledged as Righteous Among the Nations. For a considerable time in the 1970s and 1980s, the Dutch Righteous were the largest group in absolute numbers. The Dutch are still in second place after Poland, which has 6,992 Righteous officially acknowledged. In relative terms, the Dutch number is exceptionally high, both in comparison to the size of the country and its population, as well as in comparison to the number of Jewish victims and the number of survivors. In the 1940s the Dutch population was around 9 million; some 36,000 Jews survived. Given that one in every 1,500 Dutch citizens was designated as Righteous, there was one Righteous for every six Jewish survivors. In France, which had an overall 1940 population of roughly 40 million people, and a Jewish population of 320,000 people, some 77,000 Jews perished. France has 4,099 citizens designated Righteous, thus one in every 10,000 French was designated Righteous, or one Righteous for every 20 survivors. Hungary, with 550,000 Jewish victims and around 255,000 Jewish survivors, has 867 Righteous. In Bulgaria, where most of its 50,000 Jewish citizens were saved, there are only 20 Righteous.⁷⁹

It is not easy to explain why there are so many Dutch Righteous Among the Nations, and why this number does not correlate with either the size of the population or the number of Jewish victims and survivors. There seem to be two main lines of argument to explain the discrepancy: one referencing the conditions of rescue under the Nazi occupation and the other pointing to varying conditions in the postwar remembrance of rescue. The first line of argument presupposes that the context of the persecution, and therefore the opportunities for rescue, differed in the various countries. According to the Dutch-Jewish historian Joseph Michman (previously known as Josef Melkman—the chief editor of the *Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad* mentioned earlier—until his *aliyah* in 1957), the long-time director of research at Yad Vashem and member of the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous, the high number of Dutch Righteous can be explained by two key factors:

the extremely cruel nature of the wartime persecution of Jews in the Netherlands, and the protracted reign of its occupying regime. The character of the German regime and its tremendous efficiency made it more dangerous to rescue Jews in Holland than in Belgium or France. Anyone caught helping Jews in the latter countries would suffer a relatively mild punishment, but in Holland he or she was likely to be executed or sent to a concentration camp, where the chances of survival were very slim.⁸⁰

The argument would then be that Dutch rescuers ran a higher risk than rescuers in other countries—for which they were acknowledged by their recognition as Righteous. However, there is little evidence to support this claim. Actually, it seems hard to deny that the Nazi regime was much more lethal in the “bloodlands” in Eastern and southeastern Europe than in the West, not only for Jews, but also for non-Jews.⁸¹ Moreover, the violence of German repression does not explain the case of France, for instance. During World War II, some 250,000 Dutch citizens died from violent causes—2.7 percent of the total population—of which approximately 40 percent were victims of the Holocaust. Around 2,000 of those died in retaliation for acts of resistance, which included providing shelter for Jews, although their exact number is unknown.⁸² That is also the case in France, yet there around 54,000 people died in retaliation for acts of resistance, in the repression of armed partisans, and as deportees to German concentration camps (apart from Jewish deportees).⁸³ If the level of violence and risk had been decisive, there would have to be more French Righteous than there actually are.

Another argument to explain the variation in Righteous gentiles related to the specific conditions of rescue can be derived from Bob Moore’s study, *Survivors*. He argues that in France and Belgium the rescue of Jews was, to a much larger degree than in the Netherlands, embedded in strong social and economic networks, both of Jews and non-Jews. As a result, rescue was often a byproduct of social and economic interdependencies, stemming less from altruistic motives. A consequence might be that fewer rescue efforts qualified for recognition by the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous, which requires purely humanitarian motives and individual agency. There are, in principle, no collective forms of recognition, with three important exceptions: (1) The Danish resistance presented its remarkable evacuation of 7,220 of Denmark’s 7,800 Jews as a collective act, and it was recognized as such; (2) the Dutch community of Nieuwelande received collective recognition in 1983, along with 202 of its inhabitants who were also individually acknowledged; (3) following the precedent set by Nieuwelande, the French community of Chambon-sur-Lignon in France received collective recognition in 1990 (along with 40 individual recognitions).⁸⁴ The Dutch rescuers much better fit the criterion that help should have been motivated by humanitarian motives: Not only were many more rescuers operating individually, but the networks were also more often linked to churches or other denominational or ideological organizations, which inspired the “altruistic personality” the commission deemed essential for the recognition of the Righteous Among the Nations. However, Moore is the first to warn against “glib categorizations of religious or humanitarian motivations or the stereotyping of national reactions towards the persecution of Jews [which] have dominated

popular literature on the subject for too long.” In the end, the opportunity and actuality of rescue are determined by more complex factors, as they are “conditioned by both national and local circumstances and social structures.”⁸⁵

A third argument involving the conditions of rescue to explain the high number of Righteous focuses on the intensity and duration of the relations between rescuers and the Jews they hid. As Joseph Michman argued, “The fear and hope that accompanied the Jews in hiding created many cases of strong bonds between rescuers and survivors.”⁸⁶ There are reasons to believe this is at least a partial explanation. Most Dutch Jews who went into hiding did so in the summer of 1942, and remained hidden until May 1945. In some parts of Europe, the period in which Jews were in hiding did not last that long, because the Jews were persecuted more brutally and were captured before they had been able to find a place to hide (which might be the case in the Baltic states). Another possibility is that they were threatened with deportation at a later period in the war, as was the case for Hungarian and Greek Jews. Or the German occupation ended earlier, as in France and Belgium. Combined with a more individualized form of rescue, the Dutch circumstances might have contributed to closer relations between rescuers and survivors, and to the remarkable tokens of gratitude Dutch Jews displayed both collectively and individually after the liberation, including the monument of Jewish gratitude discussed earlier. Similar motives might have played an important role in Dutch Jewish survivors’ requests to Yad Vashem to recognize their helpers as Righteous Among the Nations. Yet the argument centered on the duration of assistance also has weaknesses: In many parts of Poland, Ukraine, and Belarus, the persecution took place over an extended period—in this respect, not fundamentally different from the period of persecution in the Netherlands. Also, this argument assumes that Jews were hidden by the same people over an extended period. But Dutch Jews in hiding often stayed at several addresses—ranging from two or three up to twenty-five and more—limiting the possibilities for forging a lasting connection with their rescuers.⁸⁷

Another line of explanation for the high number of Dutch Righteous Among the Nations suggests it is an artifact of the circumstances conditioning its recognition by Yad Vashem, rather than a reflection of the circumstances of rescue. This perspective was first emphasized by the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous itself, which rightly argued that “the numbers of Righteous recognized do not reflect the full extent of help given by non-Jews to Jews during the Holocaust; they are rather based on the material and documentation that was made available to Yad Vashem.”⁸⁸ The commission argued that the recognition depends on “requests made by the rescued Jews,” who might

refrain from doing so because of “the difficulty of grappling with the painful past,” or because they were unaware of the program, or unable to do so. This was especially the case for “people who lived behind the Iron Curtain during the years of the Communist regime in Eastern Europe.”⁸⁹ The latter argument might explain some of the variance between Western and Eastern European countries, but it definitely fails to account for the difference between, say, Poland and Hungary. More important, the factors addressed by the commission fail to explain the differences between, for instance, France and the Netherlands: Jews from every country had difficulties in facing the past.

A more promising line of argument related to the conditions of recognition is to determine whether the creation of the program recognizing and recording the deeds of the Righteous Among the Nations and the procedures that were established for the recognition of rescuers of Jews might have led to a Dutch overrepresentation. As Irena Steinfeldt, director of the Department of the Righteous at Yad Vashem, demonstrated, the initiative for the program was taken in 1955 by Rachela (Rachel) Auerbach, who worked on survivor testimonies and had represented Yad Vashem in a meeting to commemorate Joop Westerweel. As happened frequently on all kinds of celebratory and commemorative occasions in Israel, a tree was planted, in this instance in memory of Westerweel’s efforts to rescue members of the Chalutz movement in the Netherlands and his death at the hands of the Nazis in 1944.⁹⁰ Auerbach suggested that the commemoration of Westerweel should serve as a template for the Righteous Among the Nations program, and several individuals in the group around Westerweel were among the first to be acknowledged as Righteous Among the Nations. In the first year of the program, Joop and Wilhelmina Westerweel were recognized as Righteous, and the year after most of the twenty-three newly awarded Netherlanders belonged to the group posthumously named the Westerweel Group. It was a mixed group of Jews and non-Jews; many of the Jewish members were Zionists who migrated to Israel after the war. Their collective efforts to have Westerweel and his non-Jewish collaborators acknowledged as Righteous Among the Nations paid off, and moreover created an example for other Dutch Jewish immigrants to Israel.⁹¹

This tendency might have been reinforced by the strong ties among Dutch immigrants (or their difficulty in becoming integrated in Israeli society), who stayed in touch through the Irgun Olei Holland (Organization of Immigrants from the Netherlands). This was established in 1943 to serve the interests of Dutch Jews in Palestine and later Israel, and today it still counts among its members almost 20 percent of all Jews of Dutch descent in Israel.⁹² As Joseph Michman declared: “Many of the Jews who survived in the Netherlands immigrated to Israel

and recognized Yad Vashem and its work at a time when the institution was still unfamiliar in Europe.”⁹³ A confirmation of this analysis can be found in the reverse situation in France. It was one of the main French initiators for the recognition of French Righteous, Jacques Pulver, who deplored the lack of awareness of the honor these rescuers could have, and should have, received through an application to Yad Vashem. In 1990 he “noted the shameful slowness of France compared to Holland, and even Poland. We shall not catch up, since in Holland 2200 people were recognized at the end of [19]89, in France 680. But we do our best.”⁹⁴

An additional factor might also be that Joseph Michman was for a long time a member of the Commission for the Designation of the Righteous. As his son Dan Michman declared, “The prominent position of my father may have played a role. [. . .] Dutch Jews were well aware of Yad Vashem and told each other there was an award for the Righteous.”⁹⁵ The activism of Michman and the group of Dutch Jews in Israel might very well explain the remarkable rise, and especially the boom, of Dutch applications and recognitions from the end of the 1970s until the late 1980s, when Michman was active in the commission. The impact of the Dutch migrant community in Israel on the Dutch memory of rescue poses an ironic reversal of the argument that Holocaust memory has become diasporic in nature, creating an “elective affinity between Jewish memory and newly emerging forms (and practices) of memory in Second Modernity.”⁹⁶ In this case, it is not the Jewish diaspora but the Dutch diaspora in Israel that plays a pivotal role in Holocaust memory.

Shame and Pride and the Drive for Recognition

Although such situational explanations go a long way toward clarifying the remarkably high number of Dutch Righteous Among the Nations, a more fundamental reason why the Dutch applications snowballed in this way, might—in the end—also have much to do with two other factors that lead us back to the remarkable tension between the sense of collective shame and pride in the Dutch memory of rescue. In a way, the applications Dutch Jews filed for the acknowledgment of the courage of their rescuers might be motivated by the same anger with which Presser defended Friedrich Weinreb in the 1960s. Weinreb was considered one of the few who had actually dared to resist the Nazis and to come to the rescue of the Jews. In the same manner, Jews applying for the recognition of their rescuers might send the message that their humanitarian help was so much appreciated because so many others failed to offer it.

In a similar way, many of the rescuers might have been keen on gaining recognition as a Righteous gentile. Not only was their courage a scarce commodity

during the war, but they shared the feelings of disappointment of many other former members of the resistance about the unsuccessful purge of collaborators and their return to high places in postwar Dutch society. Moreover, the national ideology of a widespread “spirit of resistance” among the Dutch public, contrasting so starkly with the reverse image of blatant failure, might have contributed to the need for a more individual form of recognition, which the Jews they had saved were very willing to provide. Finally, the abundant recognition of these scattered, individual rescue efforts might be important for the Dutch population at large, which has permanently vacillated between deep-felt shame and wavering pride. It is through this tension of shame and pride that the Righteous Among the Nations could become such a crucial category in the Dutch memory of the rescue of the Jews.

Notes

- 1 “Nota naar aanleiding van de publikaties in verschillende bladen betreffende de burgemeester der gemeente ‘s-Gravenhage.” *Verslag der Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal Zitting 1955–1956*, no. 4271.1 (The Hague: Staatsdrukkerij, 1956). In Dutch, the highly unusual expression *difficulteerde* was used—meaning “considering something strenuously and at length.” The verb *difficulteerde* is used very infrequently and only in a political context; see <https://www.neerlandistiek.nl/2018/06/taalkundige-fact-check-wie-gebruikt-het-werkwoord-difficulteren/>, accessed July 1, 2019.
- 2 For a detailed analysis of the Schokking affair, see Ido de Haan, *Na de ondergang. De herinnering aan de Jodenvervolgving in Nederland 1945–1995* (The Hague: SDU, 1997), 106–16.
- 3 “Het zij genoeg geweest,” *De Volkskrant*, March 10, 1956.
- 4 *Verslag der Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal Zitting 1955–1956*, July 5, 1956, p. 2009.
- 5 *Verslag der Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal Zitting 1955–1956*, July 5, 1956, p. 2021.
- 6 *Verslag der Handelingen van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal Zitting 1955–1956*, July 5, 1956, p. 2015.
- 7 Ido de Haan, “Failures and Mistakes: Images of Collaboration in Postwar Dutch Society,” in *Collaboration with the Nazis: Public Discourse after the Holocaust*, ed. Roni Stauber (London: Routledge 2010), 71–90.
- 8 The assumption that the failure to rescue the Jews of Europe has been ignored and repressed is central to books like Judith Miller, *One by One*,

- by *One: Facing the Holocaust* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1990), and Géraldine Schwarz, *Les Amnésiaques* (Paris: Flammarion, 2017).
- 9 Michael Rothberg, *The Implicated Subject: Beyond Victims and Perpetrators* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019); see also Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
 - 10 See Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, trans. Assenka Oksiloff (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 59–63, 188–90.
 - 11 Astrid Erll, “Travelling Memory,” *Parallax* 17, no. 4 (2011): 4–18, at 4.
 - 12 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).
 - 13 Astrid Erll has conceptualized this as memory “travelling” between genres; see Erll, “Travelling Memory,” 12–15.
 - 14 For the wider context of this analysis, see De Haan, *Na de ondergang*. Some of the complexity of studying the memory of rescue becomes apparent in the discussion of the French case by Renée Poznanski, “Rescue of the Jews and the Resistance in France: From History to Historiography,” in “The Rescue of Jews in France and Its Empires during World War II: History and Memory,” special issue, *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 30, no. 2 (2012): 8–32.
 - 15 Aleida Assmann, “The Holocaust—A Global Memory? Extensions and Limits of a New Memory Community,” in *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, ed. Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 97–117; Levy and Sznajder, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*.
 - 16 See United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “Jewish Losses during the Holocaust: By Country,” in *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-losses-during-the-holocaust-by-country>, accessed July 1, 2019.
 - 17 Dienne Hondius, *Return: Holocaust Survivors and Dutch Antisemitism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).
 - 18 Hilda Verwey-Jonker, “Kijk NIET naar zijn neus,” *Vrij Nederland*, November 24, 1945, as quoted in Martin Bossenbroek, *De meelstreep. Terugkeer en opvang na de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2001), 266.
 - 19 T. M. Sjenitzer-van Leening, ed., *Dagboekfragmenten 1940–1945* (Utrecht: Veen, 1985 [1954]), 305.

- 20 Adriaan van der Veen, *Het wilde feest* (Amsterdam: Amber, 1952), 51. The epigraph is from G. K. Chesterton, *Dickens* (1906). See Hans Anten, “Adriaan van der Veen. Het wilde feest,” in *Lexicon van literaire werken* 38, ed. Ton Anbeek, Jaap Goedegebuure, and Bart Vervaeck (Groningen/Antwerp: Wolters-Noordhoff/Garant-Uitgevers, 1998), 1–11; Van Veen’s story dealt with Dutch Jews, yet was set in the United States and heavily influenced by similar stories, including Arthur Miller, *Focus* (1945); L. Z. Hobson, *Gentleman’s Agreement* (1946), and Saul Bellow, *The Victim* (1947). Cf. Sidra Ezrahi, *By Words Alone: The Holocaust in Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 192.
- 21 Quoted from Joseph Melkman, *Geliefde vijand. Het beeld van de Jood in de naoorlogse Nederlandse literatuur* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1964), 54.
- 22 Annie Winkler-Vonk, *Een baantje bij de krant* (Amsterdam: Ploegsma, 1963), 93.
- 23 Willy Corsari, *Die van ons* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1945); see Xandra Schutte, “Willy Corsari,” *De Groene Amsterdammer* 122, no. 21, May 20, 1998.
- 24 Simon [Gerard] van het Reve, “De ondergang van de familie Boslowits,” *Criterium* 1, no. 15 (December 1946): 788–813. The young boy observing the demise of the family Boslowits is called Simon, which was also the alias used by the author, Gerard van het Reve, when he published the novella.
- 25 Abel Herzberg, *Kroniek van de Jodenvervolgving 1940–1945* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1985), 154. Herzberg’s chronicle was first published as part of a four-volume history on the Netherlands under German Occupation: J. Bolhuis, C. D. J. Brandt, H. M. van Randwijk, and B. C. Slotemaker, eds., *Onderdrukking en verzet. Nederland in oorlogstijd*, vol. 3 (Arnhem/Amsterdam: Van Loghum Slaterus/J.M. Meulenhoff [1949–54]), 7–256.
- 26 J. B. Charles, *Volg het spoor terug* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1953); Kees Schuyt, *Het spoor terug. J.B. Charles/W.H. Nagel 1910–1983* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2010), 269.
- 27 Gerard Mulder and Paul Koedijk, *H.M. van Randwijk. Een biografie* (Amsterdam: Nijgh & van Ditmar, 1988), 712.
- 28 H. M. van Randwijk, *In de schaduw van gisteren. Kroniek van het verzet 1940–1945* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1967), 197.
- 29 Jacques Presser, *Ondergang: De vervolging en verdelging van het Nederlandse jodendom (1940–1945)*, vol. 2 (The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1965), 126; an incomplete English translation was published under the

- title *Ashes in the Wind: The Destruction of Dutch Jewry*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (London: Souvenir Press, 1968).
- 30 See Conny Kristel, *Geschiedschrijving als opdracht. Abel Herzberg, Jacques Presser en Loe de Jong over de jodenvervolgning* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1998).
- 31 Wout Ultee and Henk Flap, “De Nederlandse paradox. Waarom overleefden zoveel Nederlandse joden de Tweede Wereldoorlog niet?” in *Verklarende sociologie. Opstellen voor Reinhard Wippler*, ed. Harry Ganzeboom and Siegwart Lindenberg (Amsterdam: Thesis, 1996), 185–97; Maxime Steinberg, “Le paradoxe xénophobe dans la solution finale en Belgique occupée,” *Revue du Nord*, 2, vol. 2, Special Issue: *L’occupation en France et en Belgique, 1940–1944*, ed. Etienne Dejonghe (1988): 653–64. Maxime Steinberg, “Le paradoxe français dans la Solution Finale à l’Ouest,” *Annales. Économies, société, civilisations*, 48 (1993): 583–94; Ido de Haan, “The Paradoxes of Dutch History: Historiography of the Holocaust in the Netherlands,” in *Holocaust Historiography in Context: Emergence, Challenges, Polemics and Achievements*, ed. David Bankier and Dan Michman (Jerusalem/New York: Yad Vashem/Berghahn, 2008), 355–76.
- 32 Hans Blom, “The Persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands: A Comparative Western European Perspective,” *European History Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1989): 333–51.
- 33 Nanda van der Zee, *Om erger te voorkomen. De voorbereiding en uitvoering van de vernietiging van het Nederlandse jodendom tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1997). The general attitude toward the book is expressed in the title of a review by the then director of the Dutch Institute of War Documentation (NIOD): Hans Blom, “Een droevig boek” (A sad book), *Historisch Nieuwsblad* 6, no. 2 (1997): 4–5, and even more vocally by Jan Kuyk, “Een indrukwekkend monument van incompetentie en dilettaantisme” (An impressive monument of incompetence and dilettaantism), *Trouw*, April 11, 1997. The violent response to the book is documented in René Zwaap, “Nanda van der Zee veegt de stoep goed schoon,” *De Groene Amsterdammer* 121, no. 16, April 16, 1997, who explained the reaction as a defense of elite interests against Van der Zee’s challenge to their reputation.
- 34 Blom, “The Persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands.”
- 35 Max Arian, “Nederland deportatieland,” *De Groene Amsterdammer* 116, no. 49, December 2, 1992. The article was written by Max Arian, who as a Jewish child had been hidden by the rescuers of the “NV-groep.” The group was established in July 1942, immediately after the first larger

- deportations started, to hide Jews from Amsterdam with families in the south and east of the Netherlands.
- 36 Queen Beatrix, “Toespraak tijdens de herdenkingsbijeenkomst in de Ridderzaal Den Haag, 5 mei 1995,” in *Koningin Beatrix aan het woord. 25 jaar troonredes, officiële redevoeringen en kersttoespraken*, ed. Carla van Baalen et al. (The Hague: SDU, 2005), 382–88, at 384.
 - 37 *Toespraak van minister-president Mark Rutte bij de Nationale Holocaust Herdenking, Amsterdam* (January 26, 2020), <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/toespraken/2020/01/26/toespraak-van-minister-president-mark-rutte-bij-de-nationale-auschwitzherdenking-amsterdam>, accessed March 2, 2020.
 - 38 For De Jong, see Boudewijn Smits, *Loe de Jong 1914–2005. Historicus met een missie* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2014); Conny Kristel, *Geschiedschrijving als opdracht*.
 - 39 Ies Vuijsje, *Tegen beter weten in: Zelfbedrog en ontkenning in de Nederlandse geschiedschrijving over de Jodenvervolging* (Antwerp: Uitgeverij Augustus, 2006). Like the response to Nanda van der Zee, Vuijsje’s work was also very critically received by professional historians, demonstrating a large divide between them and the wider public. See Hella Rottenberg, “Voor de gemoedrust van de natie,” *Trouw*, June 24, 2006; Nelleke Noordervliet, “Barmhartige leugen,” *Historisch Nieuwsblad* 15 no. (2006).
 - 40 Bart van der Boom, *Wij weten niets van hun lot. Gewone Nederlanders en de Holocaust* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2012).
 - 41 For a critique see, for instance, Evelien Gans, “Disowning Responsibility: The Stereotype of the Passive Jew as a Legitimizing Factor in Dutch Remembrance of the Shoah,” in *The Jew as Legitimation: Jewish-Gentile Relations beyond Antisemitism and Philosemitism*, ed. David Wertheim (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 173–95; Pinchas Bar-Efrat, *Denunciation and Rescue: Dutch Society and the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2017), 43–49. An analysis of the debate is presented by Krijn Thijs, “Ordinary, Ignorant, and Noninvolved? The Figure of the Bystander in Dutch Research and Controversy,” in *Probing the Limits of Categorization: The Bystander in Holocaust History*, ed. Christina Morina and Krijn Thijs (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019), 247–65.
 - 42 See Frank van Vree, *In de schaduw van Auschwitz: Herinneringen, beelden, geschiedenis* (Groningen: Historische Uitgeverij, 1995); Rob van Ginkel, *Rondom de stilte. Herdenkingscultuur in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2011).

- 43 Quoted in Annet Mooij, *De strijd om de Februaristaking* (Amsterdam: Balans, 2006), 29.
- 44 <https://www.amsterdam.nl/stadsarchief/stukken/beroemd/burgemeester-israel/>, accessed July 1, 2019, and <https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/about-the-righteous/related-sites.html>, accessed July 1, 2019.
- 45 For further details, see Mooij, *De strijd om de Februaristaking*.
- 46 For discussions of *De Bezetting*, see Van Vree, *In de schaduw van Auschwitz*; Chris Vos, *Televisie en bezetting. Een onderzoek naar de documentaire verbeelding van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Nederland* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995); Chris van der Heijden, *Dat nooit meer: De nasleep van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Contact, 2011). The national impact of *De Bezetting* was also considerable because until 1964 there was only one television channel in the Netherlands.
- 47 Loe de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel 4 mei '40–maart '41. Tweede helft* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), 844.
- 48 Loe de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel 5 maart '41–juli '42. Tweede helft* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 1092.
- 49 Loe de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel 5 maart '41–juli '42. Eerste helft* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 22.
- 50 Bianca Stigter, “Beelden om nooit te vergeten. Monumenten ter nagedachtenis aan de Tweede Wereldoorlog in Amsterdam 1945–1991,” *Kunst en beleid in Nederland* 6 (1993): 13–62, at 41–42; David A. Duindam, “Signs of the Shoah: The Hollandsche Schouwburg as a Site of Memory,” PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2016, 44–46.
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- 52 Quoted in Hijink and Vermeer, “Het monument van Joodse erkentelijkheid,” 60.
- 53 Quoted in Hijink and Vermeer, “Het monument van Joodse erkentelijkheid,” 58.
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- 55 Presser, *Ondergang*, vol. 2, 3–7.

- 56 Harry Mulisch in *Vrij Nederland*, March 6, 1971, quoted by Regina Grüter, *Een fantast schrijft geschiedenis. De affaires rond Friedrich Weinreb* (Amsterdam: Balans, 1997), 277.
- 57 Presser, *Ondergang*, vol. 2, 109–10.
- 58 Grüter, *Een fantast schrijft geschiedenis*.
- 59 Jac. van de Kar, *Joods verzet: terugblik op de periode rond de Tweede Wereldoorlog*. Tweede herziene druk (Amsterdam: Stadsdrukkerij Van Amsterdam, 1984); Ben M. Braber, *Passage naar vrijheid: joods verzet in Nederland 1940–1945* (Amsterdam: Balans, 1987); Bill Minco, *Koude voeten: begenadigd tot levenslang. Het relaas van een joodse scholier uit het Geuzenverzet: Oranjehotel, Untermassfeld, Mauthausen, Auschwitz, Dachau*, Tweede druk (Nijmegen: SUN, 1997). Bob Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Bernard Wasserstein, *The Ambiguity of Virtue: Gertrude van Tijn and the Fate of the Dutch Jews* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), Richter Roegholt and Hans Wiedema, *Walter Süskind en de Hollandse Schouwburg: De geschiedenis van de redding van joodse kinderen 1942–1943* (Amsterdam: Walter Süskind Stichting, 1992); Mark Schellekens, *Walter Süskind: Hoe een zakenman honderden joodse kinderen uit handen van de nazi's redde* (Amsterdam: Atheneaeum–Polak & Van Genneep, 2012).
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- 61 See Moore, *Survivors*.
- 62 For analyses of the “Anne Frank phenomenon,” see Gerrold van der Stroom, ed., *De vele gezichten van Anne Frank. Visies op een fenomeen* (Amsterdam: De Prom, 2003); Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jeffrey Shandler, eds., *Anne Frank Unbound: Media, Imagination, Memory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012); David Barnouw, *The Phenomenon of Anne Frank*, trans. Jeannette K. Ringold (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).
- 63 Miep Gies and Alison Leslie Gold, *Anne Frank Remembered: The Story of the Woman Who Helped to Hide the Frank Family* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) 11. The documentary based on the book, *Anne Frank Remembered*, by Jon Blair (1995), received an Academy Award and an Emmy Award.
- 64 Hendrik van Riessen, “Het onderduiken,” in *Onderdrukking en verzet*, vol. 3, ed. J. Bolhuis et al., 689–721, at 689.
- 65 Presser, *Ondergang*, vol. 2, 244.

- 66 Bert Jan Flim, "Opportunities for Dutch Jews to Hide from the Nazis, 1942–1945," in *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others*, ed. Chaya Brasz and Yosef Kaplan (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 289–305; Bert Jan Flim, "Joodse onderduikers en de drievoudige tragedie van de onderduikorganisaties," in *Wat toeval leek te zijn maar het niet was. De organisatie van de jodenvervolgving in Nederland*, ed. Henk Flap and Marnix Croes, eds. (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2001), 145–60; Bert Jan Flim, "De Holocaust in Nederland," in *Rechtvaardigen onder de Volkeren. Nederlanders met een Yad Vashem onderscheiding voor hulp aan joden*, ed. Israel Gutman et al. (Amsterdam/Antwerp L.J. Veen/NIOD, 2004), 26–44.
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