

“Naturally, many things were strange
but I could adapt”:
Women Emigrés in the Netherlands

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I

Of the 534 persons¹ mentioned by name as émigrés to the Netherlands in the three-volume *International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Emigrés, 1933–1945*² only thirty-four are female.³ There were, however, many more women who are not listed. The biographies of the thirty-four women

- 1 In addition to the references given in the footnotes, this chapter is also based on talks, interviews, letters, and a recent survey whose participants will remain anonymous. I am grateful to all the women, some who are now deceased. I would especially like to thank Elisabeth Augustin (Amsterdam), Anne Basch (Cologne), Nelly and Co Dankert (Amsterdam), Gerty Hanemann-Kelemen (Amsterdam), Marianne van Heereman (Amsterdam), Elisabeth Meter (Amsterdam), Laureen Nussbaum (Portland, Oregon), Friedel and Rudi Quast (Bochum), and my younger colleague, historian Barbara Henkes (Groningen). I also listened to Ilse Blumenthal-Weiss and Grete Weil when they gave lectures in Amsterdam and answered questions. Furthermore, I took advantage of Kiki Amsberg, *Naturalisatie Duitschers in Nederland*, radio program in the series “Het Spoor” of the Dutch broadcasting station VPRO, Nov. 6, 1988; Jacob Boas, *Boulevard des Misères: Het verhaal van doorgangskamp Westerbork* (Utrecht, 1988); Miep Gies and Alison Leslie Gold, *Anne Frank Remembered* (New York, 1987); Beatrix Herlemann, *Wilhelm Knoechel* (documentary video film, with Cilly Hansmann, for a West German television station, ca. 1985); Barbara Meter: *De afstand van dichterbij* (movie; Amsterdam, ca. 1985); Eva Schloss, *Herinneringen van een joods meisje, 1938–1945* (Nijmegen, 1989), this was originally called *Eva’s Story. A Survivor’s Tale by the Step-Sister of Anne Frank* (London, 1988); Heinz Umrath, *Aufs neue Beginnen. Vom Grossbetrieb zur Gewerkschaft*, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1986 and 1987); and Louis de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de tweede wereldoorlog*, 14 vols. (The Hague, 1969–[1991]).
- 2 *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933. International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Emigrés 1933–1945*, a project sponsored by Research Foundation for Jewish Immigration, Inc., New York, and the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich, and directed by Herbert A. Strauss and Werner Röder, vol. 1: *Politik, Wirtschaft, Öffentliches Leben*; vol. 2: *The Arts, Sciences, and Literature*; vol. 3: *Index* (Munich, 1980–83).
- 3 One of these thirty-four women, however, Marie Arning, a former textile worker and member of the *Reichstag* faction of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), apparently lived in Belgium. See Gaby Ullmann, “Ein Leben als SPD-Parteisekretärin und Reichstagsabgeordnete. Die Politikerin Marie Arning,” unpublished as part of Projektbericht zum Forschungsprojekt “Exil und Nationalsozialismus,” led by Prof. Dr. Heinrich Mohr (Universität Osnabrück, Fachbereich Sprache und Literatur, 1988).

émigrés given in the first two volumes indicate that there were another eighteen women who fled to the Netherlands: their mothers and sisters. When I checked the first sixty-two names of the 500 male émigrés mentioned in the dictionary, I found thirty-four men whose mothers, sisters, wives, or daughters – fifty-four women in total – had also emigrated to the Netherlands. For example, the Social Democrat Karl Kautsky and his wife Luise, who is listed under his name, were followed in the summer of 1938 by the wife of their son Benedikt, who had been interned, and their two daughters. None of these family members appear in the dictionary. Quite another example is that of the historian and social scientist Henry Ehrmann, who emigrated via Czechoslovakia to Paris and then to the United States in 1940. His biography shows that his wife Claire Sachs had lived as an émigré in the Netherlands between 1935 and 1937. She is not listed separately.

In the absence of precise facts, I estimate that of the approximately 30,000 émigrés who set foot in the Netherlands after 1933, and who stayed there for at least two weeks, more than half were female. This approximation is based upon official statistics of refugees, as well as other considerations.⁴ Until 1936–37 few serious difficulties had existed for children and younger or older women legally to join their relatives who had fled Germany earlier. But they had to show that the latter were recognized as refugees from Germany, that they received some aid, or that they had managed to establish some sort of living. After the so-called *Anschluss* of Austria to Germany in March 1938, 500 of the estimated 800 émigrés from Austria and Czechoslovakia, who obtained permission to come to the Netherlands despite the official closing of the frontier, were women. Most of these were “human-

4 For statistics, see Dan Michman, “Die Jüdische Emigration und die niederländische Reaktion zwischen 1933 und 1940,” in Kathinka Dittrich and Hans Würzner, eds., *Die Niederlande und das deutsche Exil 1933–1940* (Königstein, 1982), 73–87, 74. Ursula Langkau-Alex, *Die Aufnahme der Flüchtlinge aus Deutschland und den deutschsprachigen Gebieten Mitteleuropas in den Niederlanden* (Amsterdam, 1983), manuscript located in Deutsche Bibliothek (Frankfurt/Main), Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (Amsterdam) and other libraries; for the Dutch version, see Heinz Schneeweiss, ed., *Kun je woorden verbranden?, redactie en samenstelling* (Rotterdam, 1985), 44–75. Ursula Langkau-Alex, “Karl Kautsky in den Niederlanden,” in Hans Würzner, ed., *Österreichische Exilliteratur in den Niederlanden 1934–1940* (Amsterdam, 1986), 39–65. Barbara Henkes, “‘Das Deutschtum in Gefahr’: Deutsche Dienstmädchen in den Niederlanden, 1920–1940,” in Monika Blaschke and Christiane Harzig, eds., *Frauen wandern aus: Deutsche Emigrantinnen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Bremen, 1990), 51–63, 59. Barbara Henkes, “Changing Images of German Maids During the Inter-War Period in the Netherlands. From Trusted Help to Traitor in the Nest,” in Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, eds., *The Myths We Live By* (London and New York, 1990), 225–38, 226. Horst Lademacher, *Geschichte der Niederlande: Politik–Verfassung–Wirtschaft* (Darmstadt, 1983), 417.

itarian cases,” that is, their parents, husbands, or fiancés already lived in the Netherlands as distinguished foreign businessmen or even as Dutch citizens. The same phenomenon recurred, though the numbers may have been lower, following the signing of the Four Power Pact in Munich at the end of September 1938, after the occupation of what remained of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, and after the outbreak of World War II. But then, the refugees of German nationality (including, since March 1938, the Austrians) needed a visa. Early in September 1939, the Dutch government repealed their obligation to furnish visas, even if applicants wanted only to go abroad to other, third countries. In all the foregoing cases, the official granting of refuge or transit depended upon funds that the emigrant(s) had to bring into the country or that relatives or friends in the Netherlands already possessed. In the first years after 1933, even the “political” refugees, who often had carried only a handbag due to the urgency of their escape, had to demonstrate to the Dutch authorities that they had enough money on which to live.

Before 1933, women had come to the Netherlands for professional reasons – for example, as artists of various kinds and, above all, as housemaids who did not want to return to (Greater) Germany. Domestic servants were allowed to immigrate until 1934. In 1939 between 1,500 and 2,000 maids resisted Nazi campaigns to send them home and attempts by the Dutch authorities to send them back in order to find jobs for unemployed, unmarried Dutch women. Despite laws restricting foreign workers, the Ministry of Social Affairs permitted sixty young Jewish women to enter the country in 1938–39 to work in Jewish homes. It is unknown whether these women were trained like those young women of good Jewish families who soon after the *Anschluss* followed the lessons of an Austrian count to qualify as parlor maids in distinguished (Jewish) homes in England.

The category of hidden refugees should be expanded to include women who in the 1920s had come to the Netherlands as children to recover from the postwar misery and famine in Germany and Austria and who had stayed. One example is that of Miep Santrouschitz, who as Miep Gies (she married the Dutchman Jan Gies in 1941) became well known as the preserver of the diaries of Anne Frank, the most famous woman émigré in the Netherlands. This category should also include women who crossed the border illegally or who came as tourists or visited relatives and then stayed on without ever registering with the authorities. Members of the Communist Party and especially women (and men) who worked with the German resistance movement did not legalize their stay for fear of being interned in

a Dutch camp or – what would have been even worse – expelled and sent back to Germany. There was one exception: Adelheid Torhorst entered into a fake marriage with a Dutchman and lived in the Netherlands legally. This greatly improved her chances of doing illegal work because foreign communists were persecuted especially harshly by the authorities. Her sister Marie, however, remained in the country illegally.

After the burning of the synagogues and the plundering of houses and businesses belonging to German–Jewish citizens on the night of November 9, 1938, the so-called Crystal Night (*Reichskristallnacht*) and the internment of at least 30,000 Jewish men, 8,000 individuals were granted permission to enter the Netherlands. Jewish parents, mothers whose husbands had been interned, and grandparents often sent their children or grandchildren into the Netherlands in the middle of the night; the *Alijah* Youth Movement and the *Hechaluz* took care of them. These children gathered in special camps where they trained for a future life in Palestine. During the day – even after the occupation – they worked with the Christian peasants in the neighborhood, so long as there was no acute risk of being arrested.

Dutch Jewish organizations obtained permission to organize transports of some 1,000 children, many of them orphans, who came out of Greater Germany. Most of them were transported to England until shortly after the outbreak of the war when the frontiers were closed and transit visas were needed. The last ship sailed to England with seventy-five orphans on May 14, 1940. Seven hundred orphans were placed with Dutch families, most of them Jewish but also Catholic and Protestant families, and in homes where émigré women helped take care of them.⁵ In addition, more than 2,000 women and children crossed the Dutch borders illegally, as did 100 men in the following months. All of them got at least a temporary sojourner's permit.

The masses of new refugees were sent to special camps along the coast. There were camps for Protestants, camps for Jews who had been baptized Catholic, camps for mixed Jewish and non-Jewish families, and camps for Orthodox Jews. Men without families were among the first sent in October 1939 to Westerbork, fifty kilometers from the German border. The Dutch government had decreed in February of that year the establishment of this central camp for the growing number of Jewish refugees. Little by little the Dutch police, at first on their own initiative and then on the orders of the

5 Gustel and Heinz Moses, “‘Im Schatten der Feuersäule,’ vom Kampf des holländischen Hechaluz,” lecture, 1983, in possession of the author of the present chapter. D. Cohen, *Zwervend en dolend. De Joodsche vluchtelingen in Nederland in de jaren 1933–1940. Met een inleiding over de jaren 1900–1933* (Haarlem, 1955), 232–54.

occupying Germans, moved people from the various camps along the coast to Westerbork. Cities and towns were evacuated last, with Amsterdam at the end of the list.

Two further points need to be added to this statistical survey:

1. The Netherlands was a country of transit, although not usually in a positive sense. Of the 30,000 émigrés mentioned, about 26,000 to 27,000 passed through the country. By “passing through” I do not mean only those who voluntarily went to other countries or returned to Germany for family reasons or with the purpose of reinforcing the German resistance movement. I also think of those who were expelled and those who died in the Netherlands. When the German troops invaded the country in May 1940, a considerable number of people committed suicide. I think also of those who were arrested and brought to trial in Germany, who were deported to the concentration and the extermination camps. During this time, about 20,000 émigrés were caught in the Dutch trap. Only about 3,000 refugees came back after the war, and most of them were women. They came out of the Underground as well as from the camps. Some had resided in the country legally, though they lived much of the time in fear or even in real danger.

After the end of the war, however, a new migration began. Several hundred émigrés left the Netherlands forever. They looked for a new life, for better chances overseas, in the United States or in Palestine. Emigrés who had fled for political reasons, democrats, but most especially socialists and communists, went back to Germany to help construct a new society. Wives (sometimes with young children) accompanied their husbands. Some women now crossed the border in an easterly direction to join their husbands who, after having been drafted by the German administration in the Netherlands or picked up in the streets by the *Sicherheitspolizei* (Security Police, called the *Grüne Polizei*, because of their green uniforms) had been forced to join the *Wehrmacht* or even, when deprived of their German citizenship, the *Waffen-SS*. (Jewish men or men who were discovered to be involved in anti-Nazi activities were first sent to camps in the Netherlands and then to concentration and extermination camps – for instance, Mauthausen or Auschwitz. Emigrés who in the years before 1940 had acted against the Nazis but whose activities had remained secret were included among those forced to join the German military.) Still other women followed the wives and children of these involuntary soldiers who had gone back to their parents or other relatives already during the war. Other women could at last exercise their professions in Germany – for instance, teach-

ing. The previously mentioned Adelheid Torhorst advised in the construction of a new school system in the Soviet zone of occupation. Her sister Marie, who had assisted her in the antifascist resistance, became minister of culture and education in Thuringia. The Social Democrat Liesbeth Hennig resumed her municipal work in Gelsenkirchen, from which she had been removed by the National Socialist regime in 1933.⁶

There were other motives for going back to Germany. Much later, the author Grete Weil, whose novel *Tramhalte Beethovenstraat* gives a literary impression of the life and fortunes of the mostly Jewish émigrés who inhabited this new quarter of Amsterdam Zuid (south), expressed not only her own feelings when she explained why she had returned: "I was crushed. Germany was crushed. We belonged together."⁷ Her husband had been arrested in Amsterdam and was murdered in 1941 in the Mauthausen concentration camp. Grete Weil herself had spent the years 1943 to 1945 in the Underground.

2. Approximately 23,000 of the 30,000 émigrés who came to the Netherlands had fled Greater Germany because of the Nazi regime's racial policies and the climate of race hatred. In 1941, 15,174 of them were still in the country, a figure that represented more than 10 percent of the entire Jewish population. Another 5 percent of all Jews in the Netherlands had come from countries other than Germany. But quite a few of those who had been persecuted for political or trade union activities were also of Jewish descent. During the German occupation of the Netherlands, they ran a double risk.

Returning to the thirty-four women listed in the *International Biographical Dictionary*, we need to discuss two general problems of method that are not easily resolved. First, the women listed represent only a minority of émigrés: They are the exceptions. They have a name because of their professions, their careers, or because of their extraordinary political or social activities. The average woman émigré is more likely to be found under the names of the men – husbands, fathers, brothers, sons. Second, the list includes women who at the time of their emigration to the Netherlands were children or teenagers. They became known only after they had left the country, through the establishment of careers following studies or some other training. This was the case primarily for women who went to the

6 Rudolf Quast, "Zwischen Amsterdam und Bochum," *Jahrbuch der Ruhr-Universität Bochum* (Bochum, 1974): 83–128, 115.

7 Grete Weil, in reply to the reproach by Konrad Merz, a Dutch-naturalized German emigrant, at the end of a lecture she had given in Amsterdam in 1983. Grete Weil, *Tramhalte Beethovenstraat* (Wiesbaden, 1963).

United States.⁸ Nevertheless, because I am convinced that their character and intellect were formed mainly in exile, that is, before arriving in the United States or another permanent home, I am disposed to count all children born between 1918 and 1930 as adults.⁹

II

The following discussion deals with the situation in general and with specific problems that women émigrés from Germany and other parts of Central Europe confronted in the Netherlands. Because no serious research on the subject has been done, my observations are necessarily impressionistic. I concentrate on those problems that émigrés who lived in the Netherlands for a longer period had in common and give examples that emphasize various perspectives or simply highlight individual or social differences. Artists such as Erika Mann and Therese Giese, among others, who came and stayed mainly to tour the country and make public appearances are of no interest here. In comparison with the years before 1933, however, they were now confronted with changed tastes and official admonitions not to insult a certain “friendly statesman.” They did not really experience what it was like for the average refugee who wished to settle in the Netherlands at least for a while.¹⁰

8 Thus, in the third volume of the *International Biographical Dictionary* their names also figure under the United States of America, or one of the other “Countries of Immediate Emigration and Final Settlement.”

9 Remarks on discussions during the Washington conference on “Women in the Emigration after 1933,” a discussion I had afterward in the Netherlands, and some letters I received made me understand that the age of the émigré and especially the age of the children was much more determinant for the experience of the emigration period and the personal and professional development later on than was gender. So it could happen that three sisters aged six, nine, and twelve when coming to the Netherlands in 1936, developed totally different attitudes and reminiscences. The oldest had great difficulties in becoming a self-confident young woman after being separated from her close friends in Germany and was sent back two classes in school in her new country. The youngest had few difficulties with the new environment: School had just started for her and she became totally acculturated to the new society. The second of the girls, however, adapted herself without totally losing her background. Later on, in the United States, she became a professor of German and Dutch language and philology. (She does not appear at all in the *International Biographical Dictionary*.) Differences in adaptation and acculturation between sisters of different age are also to be seen in the diaries of Anne Frank. Here, I quote from the official revised edition: Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, *De dagboeken van Anne Frank* (The Hague, 1986), 195–713.

10 As the references in these notes make clear, studies exist only on intellectual, learned, and artistic individuals, the professions, and on some political organizations and persons. For the artists, whether they undertook promotional tours or tried to stay permanently, see the articles in the chapter “Culturele en kunstzinnige wisselwerkingen,” in Kathinka Dittrich, Paul Blom, and Flip Bool, eds., *Berlijn – Amsterdam 1920–1940. Wisselwerkingen* (Amsterdam, 1982), and the communications of Walter Huder, Jacques Kloeters, Kathinka Dittrich, Nico Bredero, Marius Flothuis, and Hans Jaffé, in Dittrich and Würzner, eds., *Die Niederlande und das deutsche Exil*; and Kathinka Dittrich, *Achter het doek. Duitse emigranten in de Nederlandse speelfilm in de jaren dertig* (Munich, 1987).

What were the Netherlands like in the 1930s? The country was (and remains) a constitutional monarchy that since 1890 has been headed by women. The feminist movements succeeded in introducing the eligibility of women in 1918 and women's right to vote in 1919.¹¹ In spite of those facts, the Netherlands was a country of deep conservatism and male chauvinism. From May 1933 to August 1939 the country was ruled by coalitions of three religious parties: one Roman Catholic and two Protestant. Throughout the period the prime minister was the authoritarian, somewhat aristocratically mannered Hendrik Colijn of the leading Reformed Anti-Revolutionary Party (*gereformeerde Antirevolutionaire Partij*).

Colijn's cabinets promoted bourgeois policies that were not only anti-socialist but also established a very thin social security net during the years of economic crisis. In the Netherlands, the economic crisis became serious in the summer of 1931, and it reached its climax in 1933–34, later than in Germany. But the worldwide depression struck the Netherlands even harder and lasted longer than in many other countries. In foreign affairs, the Netherlands traditionally cultivated a policy of strict neutrality; yet its most important trading partner was Germany.¹²

Official policy toward the refugees was determined by some contradictory factors.¹³ Because the Dutch at the time maintained deeply rooted appreciation of law and order, they at first welcomed Hitler as the savior of a rotten, anarchic, and Bolshevik Germany. Thus, the "political" refugees were consistently regarded as potential troublemakers. But the fear of a strong, threatening neighbor, namely, Germany, was also growing, especially in light of the growing Dutch National Socialist movement. In the provincial elections of 1935, the National Socialist Movement (*Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging*, or NSB) got nearly 8 percent of the vote. Consequently, the government prohibited émigré political activities, especially

- 11 The first and only woman elected in 1918 was a Social Democrat; in 1921 she was joined by a Liberal; in 1922 seven women were elected; later in the 1920s there were eight women in parliament. They represented the Social Democrats (*Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij* or SDAP), the Roman Catholic Party (*Rooms-Katholieke Staatspartij*), the Liberal Party, the Liberal Democrats (*Vrijzinnig-Democraten*), and one of the Protestant Reformed Protestant parties, the *Christelijke Historische Unie*. In the 1937 elections, only four women were voted into parliament. See A. E. J. de Vries-Bruins, "Op de politieke bron," in M. G. Schenk, ed., *Vrouwen van Nederland 1898–1948. De vrouw tijdens de regering van Koningin Wilhelmina*, met een woord van hulde door Eleanor Roosevelt (Amsterdam, 1948), 274.
- 12 Lademacher, *Geschiede der Niederlande*, 324–404. J. L. van Zanden and R. T. Griffiths, *Economische Geschiedenis van Nederland in de 20e eeuw* (Utrecht, 1989), 129–65.
- 13 Dittrich and Würzner, eds., *Die Niederlande und das deutsche Exil*, here especially Dan Michman and Ursula Langkau-Alex, "Chronologische Uebersicht wichtiger Fakten zur niederländischen Flüchtlingspolitik 1933–1940," 87–90. Bob Moore, *Refugees from Nazi Germany in the Netherlands* (Dordrecht, 1986).

those of socialists and communists. Furthermore, there was the apprehension that, on the one hand, immigrants would enlarge the army of the unemployed, or on the other hand, that they might take the few available jobs. There was even the fear of *Überfremdung* (that is, excessive foreign influence on Dutch society) in light of the many Jewish people coming to the Netherlands. But some Christian mercy remained, for instance, when Prime Minister Colijn, in a radio speech on December 1, 1938, called on the Dutch people to contribute to the national collection for the refugees from Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland (Czechoslovakia). The new Dutch government, consisting since August 1939 of the *hervormd* Protestant Party (*Christelijk Historische Unie*), the Roman Catholic Party (*Rooms-Katholieke Staatspartij*), and – for the first time – the Social Democratic Party (*Sociaal-democratische Arbeiderspartij*), followed the queen and the royal family to England after the German troops overran the Netherlands in May 1940. Hitler himself installed the Austrian National Socialist Seyss-Inquart as *Reichskommissar der Niederlande* (Reich commissioner of the Netherlands), alongside the military occupying authorities. Within two years, the National Socialists took command of all branches of military, police, and civil administration. The Netherlands were finally coordinated (*gleichgeschaltet*) when the systematic deportation of the Jews in the country began in July 1942. On July 1, 1942, the SS took over the Westerbork camp from Dutch authorities; Westerbork became the “police transit camp” (*polizeiliches Durchgangslager*) for Jews. With Seyss-Inquart’s permission, politicians from various political parties had founded the Union of the Netherlands (*Nederlandsche Unie*) in July 1940 in an attempt to overcome the “pillared” (*verzuilde*) structure of Dutch society as well as to find both a new national identity and some political autonomy under the occupation. However, German authorities prohibited the union in December 1941.¹⁴ Only the Jewish Council (*Joodsche Raad*), installed in early February 1941 by order of the occupant authorities to administer the so-called *Arbeitseinsatz* (labor service) of the Jews, remained in operation through October 1943.¹⁵ Until the beginning of the systematic deportations, the Jewish Council tried to save specific Jewish traditions by stimulating new activities in the fields of

14 The best English translations of the Dutch terms “zuil(en),” “verzuiling,” and “verzuild” are “pillar(s),” “pillared structure,” and “pillared,” respectively. These terms reflect the structure of the Dutch state, which much like a building was held up by independent societal pillars. Each pillar was hierarchically organized, with its own ideological, religious, and cultural identity as well as means for social control. There was almost no communication among the pillars in between the basement (national territory) and the roof (government, bureaucracy, economy).

15 The role of the *Joodsche Raad* in the deportation of the Jews still is a matter of debate in the Netherlands.

literature, theater, and the sciences. Grete Weil was one of several other émigré men and women who temporarily, until she joined the Underground, was active in it.

This phenomenon of *verzuiling* (pillared structure) has to be explained because it was unique to the Netherlands and did not exist in other countries. Since the end of the nineteenth century, Dutch society had been organized into several “pillars”: the Protestant, the Catholic, and, finally, the socialist (social democratic) pillars. In addition to their distinct beliefs or ideologies, they had their own political parties and trade unions, their social, cultural, and even sporting organizations. Each pillar had its own schools, publishing houses, newspapers, and radio stations.¹⁶ Apart from business matters and the political necessities of democracy, very little communication among the pillars was possible. Perhaps one could add another, smaller pillar with a different ethnic as well as religious and cultural character: the Dutch Jews. But there never existed a Jewish political party or a Jewish general school system. Politically, Jewish workers tended to align themselves with the socialists, and the upper-class and middle-class Jews favored the liberals, who had no subcultural organizations.¹⁷

How were the émigrés received by the Dutch people? How did women and girls experience the country and its society? Furthermore, we need to know what the political and social lives of the émigrés looked like. To this end, a little anecdote, which I read in the memoirs of Elisabeth Augustin, yields an impression of some typical Dutch frames of mind. (This excellent novelist, poet, essayist, and author of radio plays, who writes both in German and in Dutch, unfortunately does not appear in the *Biographical Dictionary*.) Augustin came from a Jewish family. At the end of the 1920s, she joined a local social democratic organization. She left Germany in 1933 at the age of thirty. Her husband, who was half Dutch, half German, had preceded her to the Netherlands to find a house and a source of income.

16 The population of Amsterdam, where most of the émigrés lived until 1938, consisted of 30 percent Catholics, 30 percent Protestants, 10 percent Jews, and 30 percent atheists. In general, children of socialist and other non-Christian, “liberal” parents attended the so-called *openbare scholen* (i.e., schools not bound to any church). The pillared structure of the Dutch society lasted until the 1970s, but even nowadays the school and the media system still exist, though these are much more flexible and transparent. Because the socialists had no schools of their own and because in the 1930s the SDAP opened itself up to Catholics as well as to Protestants, some historians speak of the socialist pillar as an “open” one. See C. H. Wiedijk, *Koos Vormink. Gezinheid, Veralgemening, Integratie. Een biografische studie (1891–1940)* (Groningen, 1986), esp. 524. Van Zanden and Griffiths, *Economische geschiedenis*, 9–15.

17 The following characterizes Dutch society in the 1930s very well: “A society based on mutual respect but without too much contact or cordiality – that was the Dutch recipe, and the Jews readily conformed.” From Herman Vuijsje, “Vermoorde onschuld. Joden in vooroorlogs Nederland,” *HP – Haagse Post* (Amsterdam), 1983, 18, 22–31, 24. Translation by the author.

When Augustin first stepped onto Dutch soil at Amsterdam's central train station in early summer 1933, she noticed that some people looked disapprovingly at her and her two little children who excitedly chattered in German. When they stepped into a cab, an elderly lady intentionally passed by, uttering audibly and contemptuously: "Moffen!"¹⁸ *Mof* (*Moffen* is the plural) was, and still is, the abusive name for a German. When the German army violated the neutrality of Belgium and was likely to do the same to the Netherlands during World War I, what had for nearly a century been a nickname or general expression of dislike of German migrant laborers – for instance, peat-cutters from Westphalia – also took on a moral and a political dimension.

The incident at the central train station may be taken as an example of a mixture of prejudice, ignorance, and arrogance on the part of average Dutch men and women in the early 1930s. Of course, there were innumerable examples of friendliness. But until 1941, real solidarity and friendship between Dutch people and émigrés usually happened within a particular pillar. The signatures at the bottom of a letter of congratulation for the first émigré couple to marry in Amsterdam (September 1934) testifies to the existence of friendships between Dutch and German émigrés within the socialist pillar.¹⁹

Those émigrés who came to the Netherlands in the later 1930s often had the advantage of joining relatives or friends already there. Yet it has to be added that even within the Dutch–Jewish community there was a palpable aversion to their poor sisters and brothers from Eastern Europe. People were afraid of undermining their own economic and social standing and prompting an outbreak of (latent) anti-Semitism. Furthermore, nearly all eyewitness accounts tell of the unwilling, even rude attitude of the Dutch police toward the refugees.

When trying to tell the story of how women émigrés experienced life in the Netherlands, it is important to distinguish between 1933 to May 1940, or even to the end of 1940 and the years after 1941 – when all Jews were registered – to 1945, or even until 1947. As for the period of 1940 to 1941, women's experiences depended upon the way they looked at their personal situation, as well as a few external factors: whether the women, alone or with family, focused on a new life in the Netherlands or overseas or looked toward a return to Germany as soon as National Socialism was over-

18 Elisabeth Augustin, *Het patron. Herinneringen* (Amsterdam, 1990), 97.

19 I would like to thank Dr. Rudi Quast and his wife, Friedel, of Bochum, Germany, for sending me a copy of the letter.

thrown.²⁰ Most of the politically minded refugees belonged to the latter group.

Nevertheless, only a few women found a way to work on or try to work on the undermining of the regime. Whereas we know the names of at least six female members of the Communist Party who worked for the Red Help or served as couriers between émigré and Dutch organizations and resistance circles in Germany, we know little about socialist women.²¹

“Our Dutch female friends were much more involved in political activities than the majority of the wives of our German [social democratic] comrades,” writes one of the women I interviewed. In fact, no female émigré appears to have been an active member of the clandestine social democratic groups or of the nonpartisan Central Association of German Emigrants (*Zentralvereinigung deutscher Emigranten*) founded in Amsterdam in early 1937. Prohibited some months later, this organization attempted to assemble the heterogeneous émigrés in order to stimulate solidarity and to function as their united legal representation vis-à-vis the Dutch authorities.²² Neither Liesbeth Henning, mentioned earlier, nor Martha Tausk, the former International Women’s Secretary of the Labor and Socialist International, undertook clandestine activities.

Three observations, however, may explain women’s lack of participation. First, most of the wives, fiancées, and girlfriends who followed male social democratic and trade union émigrés to the Netherlands voted for the Social Democratic Party (SPD) but had not officially joined the party. Few active female members of the SPD actually emigrated to the Netherlands. Most of those who wanted to do political work went to countries where such activities were not totally prohibited: Czechoslovakia, France, England, or Sweden. The socialist Irmgard Enderle and her husband, for example, went on to Sweden after having been expelled from the Netherlands in November 1933 because of their political activities.

Second, those few younger women who belonged to the SPD’s leftist group, New Beginning (*Neu Beginnen*), worked separately from the social

20 It has been suggested that we call the first category “emigrants” and the second “exiles.” Since the use or the meaning of these terms differs from country to country (for example, the Dutch language follows the French meaning), I am unable to lend greater precision to these terms here. Both groups have in common the fact that they left Greater Germany – or refused to return – because of the National Socialist regime.

21 Hilde Erxleben, Cilly Hansmann, Jenny Matern, Clara Muth, Adelheid Torhorst, Marie Torhorst. See *International Biographical Dictionary*; Beatrix Herlemann, *Auf verlorenem Posten. Kommunistischer Widerstand im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Die Knöchel-Organisation* (Bonn, 1986).

22 Ursula Langkau-Alex, “Die deutsche sozialdemokratische Emigration in den Niederlanden nach 1933 – Ein Überblick am Beispiel der Stadt Amsterdam,” in Dittrich and Würzner, eds., *Die Niederlande und das deutsche Exil*, 90–106, 100–01.

democratic and other socialist circles. They reduced or altogether stopped their courier activities in about 1936–37 because of the many arrests made by the Gestapo. Third, well-known social democratic women generally belonged to an older generation. In 1939 Martha Tausk was already seventy years old when she fled Austria following persecution by the police and the Gestapo, and joined her son in Nijmegen. She contacted, however, old Dutch friends whom she knew from her work, as well as German and Austrian women émigrés. One of her friends was Luise Kautsky, with whom she met regularly.

The even older Luise Kautsky continued to support her husband by writing down his thoughts and memories, conducting research for him in the library, renewing old and fostering new friendships with socialist women and men either through personal contact in Amsterdam or through correspondence. After the death of Karl Kautsky in October 1938, she started to organize his archives in the International Institute of Social History (IISH) and the family documents in her possession. She also prepared Rosa Luxemburg's letters for publication. The loss of the family documents and of the letters of her beloved friend Luxemburg as the result of confiscation by the security police in 1943 grieved Kautsky deeply. She could not foresee that five years later her son Benedikt, who was forced to labor at Auschwitz's Buna-Werke while in December 1944 his mother Luise died five kilometers away at Auschwitz-Birkenau of weakness and a broken heart, would discover both collections among other archive materials of the IISH on two barges near Hanover, Germany.²³

Apparently, most of the political women did only "female" work: They typed the minutes and the articles written by men and, if needed, did translations; they made coffee and cleaned the meeting room, which in most cases was someone's living room. Naturally, most of these women also listened to what the men discussed and sometimes would take part in the debates.

With this last point, we have already touched upon the external factors alluded to earlier. Two of these concerned the "political" and the "unpolitical" women and men émigrés, especially in the cities. Of course, everybody experienced emigration to the Netherlands individually,²⁴ but the

23 Ursula Langkau-Alex, "Karl Kautsky in den Niederlanden," in Hans Würzner, ed., *Österreichische Exilliteratur in den Niederlanden 1934–1940*, 49–52.

24 The widowed German writer Georg Hermann took refuge in his beloved Holland in 1933. Hermann, sixty-three years old, was accompanied by his daughter, who was nearly fourteen years old at the time. In light of the political, economic, and social peculiarities of the Netherlands and his own experiences and observations, he generalized in 1937 that only children and teenagers would be able to adapt: "People beyond the age of 20 already have difficulties. For people older than 50

statement of one of my female interviewees covers the general experience of women émigrés whom I either personally met, know through correspondence, or whose reminiscences I have read (although I must confess that their number is not so great): “Naturally, many things were strange, but I could adapt.”²⁵

First, there were the different customs and ways of daily family life. A characteristic custom all émigrés (including myself, a “semigrant” since 1966) tell about is that when you are invited for tea or coffee, the lady of the house will take your cup, pour the liquid in, add sugar and/or milk, then she will take a painted tin box out of the cupboard, open it, offer you a *koekje* (cookie; in German, *Plätzchen*), say “please, take one,” then shut the box and put it back into the cupboard. This mixture of hospitality and typical Dutch thrift has often been misunderstood as a gesture of reserve or even unfriendliness.

A further source of irritation was the habit of Dutch citizens to feel bound to correct foreigners who wanted to settle in the Netherlands in everything that did not correspond to given rules. On the one hand, this repressive tolerance (as we might call it) furthered a willingness on the part of the newcomers to adapt to the new country. On the other hand, expectations that the immigrant must conform to the standards of the host country as soon as possible often met with the stubborn: “Bei uns zu Hause . . .” (“Where we come from . . .”).

Another, quite different example of the clash of customs had to do with dinnertime and playtime. In the Netherlands dinner takes place at 6:00 P.M., Dutch children stay inside from about half past five till about half past six or even seven o’clock, depriving emigrant children of their playmates. Emigrant mothers were used to preparing dinner for noon or 1:00 P.M. and called in their children for supper and bedtime at about the time Dutch children would come out again. But these mothers adapted to the changed circumstances as soon as their children had to attend school, for school lasted from nine o’clock in the morning till four o’clock in the afternoon, with only an hour or an hour and a half break in between. Even if the school

it will be rather impossible to grow into a new environment. Old people become entirely lonesome” (*alte Leute verwaisen vollkommen*). Paraphrased and translated by the author. Cited in Laureen Nussbaum, “Verliebt in Holland: Ein wichtiges und wechselndes Verhältnis in Georg Hermanns reifen Jahren,” in Sjaak Onderdelinden, ed., *Interbellum und Exil. Liber Amicorum für Hans Würzner. Abschied von der Rijksuniversiteit Leiden* (Amsterdam, 1991), 181–98, 189.

25 Original: “Natürlich war vieles fremd, aber ich war anpassungsfähig.” This quotation comes from a response to a questionnaire I distributed to several women who had emigrated to the Netherlands after 1933.

was close by, there was only enough time for a sandwich between morning and afternoon lessons.

During the initial phase, surely many a girl (I never heard of boys) shed bitter tears when their little Dutch school friends did not appear at birthday parties. They had been invited, but their parents – and we may suppose that the mothers were the driving force – did not allow such visits. In general, Dutch and émigré children met only in school and played together on the streets. Because whole newly built blocks of apartments were occupied by emigrants, Dutch families did not always live in the neighborhood. At least this was the case in Amsterdam, where until 1938 most of the emigrants lived. It was very difficult for émigré children to be accepted in Dutch homes. For their part, many girls did not dare accept an invitation to a Dutch birthday party because they felt awkward not yet speaking the language, dressing “German” (for example, wearing a Berchtesgaden-style cardigan), and generally being alien.

Second, for women from abroad the possibilities of finding a job or of developing professional activities were extremely limited. The economic crisis forced the government to cut Dutch women employees from employment rolls as much as possible to maximize places for men. When they married, women had to quit their jobs. The handful of married female teachers and postal and other officials who were still employed were dismissed in the mid-1930s. In those years only 2 percent of married Dutch women practiced a profession or held a paid job outside the house and independently of their husbands’ job. Nevertheless, the restrictive measures meshed well with the general middle- and upper-class opinion that women should confine themselves to service jobs such as nursing and housekeeping. It was felt that married women ought to concentrate on their husbands and their children.

In May 1934 a new decree prohibited newly arrived émigrés from Germany from getting a job or from following a technical course of study. Emigré students, especially female students, who had already begun their professional training were forced to abandon their plans. As a result, only women émigrés trained or self-schooled in rare professions (and who were unmarried by choice) had a chance to find legal employment or to be self-employed. Such legal occupations included specialized nurses, physiotherapists, writers, journalists, and translators (for example, Ilse Blumenthal-Weiss), photographers, and artisans.

Erika Oppenheimer, a clinical psychologist, worked as a research assistant at the Wilhelmina Gasthuis in Amsterdam in 1934–35; between 1935 and

1938, she served as the director of the Netherlands' first psychological laboratory, Het Apeldoornsche Bos. Throughout this time she needed additional financial assistance from friends. Women in general received half of what men earned, and émigrés were paid a fraction of what their Dutch colleagues were paid.²⁶ In 1938 Erika Oppenheimer left the Netherlands and went with her fiancé to the United States, where they were married and where she became the renowned psychologist, Erika Fromm.

The child analyst and psychoanalyst Anny Angel fled Vienna for the Netherlands in 1936. In the following year she married a Dutch colleague, Maurits Katan. Now a Dutch citizen, she trained other analysts at the Psychoanalytic Institute in The Hague, where she remained until 1946. During this time, she served as director of the Child Guidance Clinic. That same year she left with her husband, who as a Jew had lived in the Underground during the time of the deportations, for the United States.²⁷

A former teacher told me that an employment bureau had found her a position with a private school run by the Soviet Union's trade mission in the Netherlands. After a year, however, the Dutch government would not extend her work permit because she was not a citizen. She had no choice but to work illegally in order to make a living.

Single women who were not Jewish, Protestant, or Catholic, who did not belong to the SPD or another socialist party or to the KPD (German Communist Party) did not receive a penny from the individual refugee aid committees. As a result, they had to take any illegal job they could find. They worked in textile factories and in laundries. In most cases, they did housekeeping jobs of all kinds. Between 1934 and the end of 1936, approximately 18,000 domestic servants, most of them of German nationality, returned to their native country. Many Dutch households no longer could afford them. Furthermore, in June 1936 the Dutch government outlawed the employment of servants from abroad without permission. Some women quit working because they had married a Dutch citizen. Other émigrés were hired illegally as replacements for the departed German maids. The fact that they were illegal often led employers to lower wages in order to save money.

26 By intervention of the SDAP, Hugo Sinzheimer, a well-known professor of labor law and sociology at the University of Frankfurt/Main until 1933, was appointed professor at the University of Amsterdam. His salary, however, was beneath subsistence level. See Ursula P., "In memoriam Hugo Sinzheimer," in Volker Jacob and Annet van der Voort, eds., *Anne Frank war nicht allein. Lebensgeschichten deutscher Juden in den Niederlanden* (Berlin and Bonn, 1988), 210–20. Langkau-Alex, "Emigration in den Niederlanden nach 1933," in Dittrich and Würzner, eds., *Die Niederlande und das deutsche Exil*, 96.

27 See *International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Emigrés*, 2:345–6 (Erica Fromm), 598 (Anny Katan).

Unemployed émigrés who belonged to one of the community or party organizations – in the latter case, as we have seen, these were mainly men – received six guilders a week for themselves but nothing for their spouses. The aid committees were obliged to treat the émigrés according to the Dutch law of unemployment which, naturally, covered only Dutch citizens. Communists, as far as they did not carry out party functions, got only some pocket money. Most of the weekly sum was paid to the families of Dutch communists who took care of these illegal individuals.

Six guilders a week, however, was not sufficient for a couple to live on, even if they rented the most humble loft and lived very simply. As a result, the women looked for extra work in a system that offered more illegal positions for women than for men. The male partner became a househusband, discussed politics with other émigrés and Dutch friends, and, incidentally, learned Dutch. The Central Organization of German Emigrés offered Dutch courses that were attended it seems mainly by men; no woman I asked had ever heard of it.

Only a few of the highly educated women forced to work illegally had the chance to work privately as a secretary or to work at any other job that somewhat corresponded to their previous training. The teacher I mentioned earlier worked as a housemaid in the homes of middle- and upper-class Dutch and Jewish émigrés. Aside from the fact that the work was hard and monotonous, in the Dutch homes even more than in the émigré ones, she felt humiliated. Their employers had to be addressed as “Madam” (*Mevrouw* or *Gnädige Frau*, respectively), but the housemaids were themselves called by their given names and the informal “you” as if they were stupid little girls. Only at one émigré home was she allowed to join the family at the dinner table, after she had complained of having to take her meal alone in the kitchen, which was located in the basement. After changing homes five or six times, the teacher got an ironing job in a laundry, where she learned to speak Dutch fluently – and even some slang.²⁸

A few women émigrés worked in the boardinghouses, the refugee homes, and the vegetarian restaurants managed by their husbands, fiancés, and political friends. Some women naturally helped with the business when their husbands owned the capital resources (or were at times in partnership with a Dutch citizen). Jewish men were often able to get permission to run little shops that sold, for instance, Schachemayer wool or accessories (*Galanteriewaren*); or to operate a wholesale company for

28 Friedel Quast, *Die wirtschaftliche und soziale Lage der Frauen im Exil in den Niederlanden nach 1933* (Bochum, 1991), manuscript, 4.

chemicals, medicaments, and materials (as Otto Frank did); or to open a little factory that made, for instance, special paints and lacquers, lady's silk underwear and stockings, or hats. Luxuries were scarcely produced by the sober Dutchmen, yet they were dreamed of by middle- and upper-middle-class Dutch women and men. In the spring of 1937 the Dutch government limited the trading and manufacturing activities of all resident aliens; this measure affected Jewish émigrés above all. Only if they did not compete directly with Dutch businesses and if they promised to employ Dutch citizens did the government grant permission for these enterprises to operate.²⁹

During the war, however, when Jewish or politically active husbands were in danger or had already been arrested, did middle- and upper-middle-class non-Jewish wives run a business, provided that no non-Jewish Dutchman could take over. In general, for most women émigrés of the German-Jewish middle and upper classes, the position of being only a housewife was not a problem. They continued – or tried to continue – their earlier life amidst the German and Dutch relatives and friends of their social standing. Middle-class families like the Franks lived in Amsterdam's Rivierenbuurt, a new quarter in the south where all streets were named after rivers. Upper-class émigrés lived in the vicinity of the Beethovenstraat, where the surrounding streets in this new quarter of south Amsterdam were named after composers. The houses had not been built especially for the émigrés, but most Dutch could not afford them in view of the economic recession.

Whereas most male émigrés of the Jewish middle and upper classes became acquainted with the Dutch language in the course of business, their wives picked up phrases from their Dutch maids. They usually stayed at home or visited with friends. Moreover, they missed their former live-in servants in Germany; Dutch servants, besides being only day-maids, generally had a different attitude, lacking the assiduousness (*Beflissenheit*) of their German counterparts.³⁰ The Parish of the Liberal Jewish Community (*Kerkgenootschap Liberal Joodsche Gemeente*), founded by the émigrés themselves, gave a feeling of solidarity to non-Orthodox Jewish women and men. The Jewish Women's Committee (*Joodsche Vrouwencomité*), a sister organization of the Jewish Refugee Committee (*Joodsche Vluchtelingen Comité*) in Amsterdam, tried to give social and psychological help. The former Cologne

29 For the Dutch laws and measures concerning enterprises of foreigners, see D. Cohen, *Zwervend en dolend*, 272–8.

30 A Dutch maid, for instance, never held the coat of her employer when she (or he) was about to go out. See Barbara Henkes, "Changing images of German maids," in Samuel and Thompson, eds., *Myths We Live By*, 235.

social worker Margaret Tietz was a member of the boards of both organizations from 1934 until her departure for Palestine in 1940.³¹

Most of the émigré children learned Dutch rather quickly in the streets and at school, where special courses for the older ones were organized. They often felt superior to their parents and simultaneously ashamed of their parents', especially their mothers', poor Dutch. It was only after the war that most of those Jewish émigré women really learned Dutch, as they settled down and became naturalized citizens. In Amsterdam, the typical *Beethovenstraat* accent and look – as we called it – is now dying out.

For a woman like Elisabeth Augustin, a totally new life began in 1933, because she did not live among the German émigrés. Moreover, she immediately began to write in Dutch. Although she successfully published novels and essays and she and her husband made friends among the Dutch literary and artistic circles, she remembers:

My first seven years in the Netherlands were years of more or less difficult accommodation, years of silly overestimation of my still poor Dutch, years of fits of desperation and uncertainty.³²

Surely, the women and men who in 1938–39 took refuge in the Netherlands and were gathered early on in camps hardly were likely to think of accommodation. For example, a young female student of languages, who joined her parents and friends in late 1939, fell in love with a Dutchman a few days after her arrival, married him some time later, and had a child in 1942, experienced being an émigré to the Netherlands in yet another way. Moreover, the war, the occupation, and the persecution of the Jews did not leave her any time to think about being an alien among the Dutch Jews.

III

The war period, especially the time of the persecution after 1941 and the systematic deportations of Jews beginning in July 1942, obscured some of the distinctions among emigrated women but much less those between themselves and the Dutch-born Jews.

After the country had been occupied, Dutch and émigré Jewish women of the middle and upper classes, at least in Amsterdam, arranged private lectures and theatrical performances of Jewish émigré artists and intellectuals in their houses.

31 *International Biographical Dictionary*, 1:763.

32 Augustin, *Het patroon*, 97. Translation by the author.

That women émigrés took charge of the family business when their Jewish husbands were arrested or had gone underground has already been noted. Until the general prohibition of August 1942, the wife of the Protestant pastor Bruno Benfey, a pastor in her own right, took charge of the baptized Jews at Westerbork after he was prohibited from doing so on account of his Jewish descent.³³ Although émigré women and men worked courageously with Dutch resistance groups (for example, transporting illegal messages and newspapers or even guns and explosives, perhaps in disguise), in general it was too risky because of their imperfect mastery of the language. In her antifascist activities, Anny Katan, mentioned earlier, took advantage of her position at the clinic in The Hague.

In the late spring 1943, the Nazis decreed that Jewish women and men who were married to non-Jews could be exempted from wearing the Star of David (*Judenstern*) and from deportation if they were infertile or willing to be sterilized. This decree concerned Dutch and émigrés alike. In general, women above the age of forty-five could be exempted without having to undergo the operation. Thus, the seventy-nine-year-old Luise Kautsky was permitted the right to sit where signboards said, "Prohibited for Jews." It is not known how many Dutch and émigré women and men hopefully – and in most cases, ultimately in vain – grasped at that straw. But it is said that "sterilization" became a normal word even in children's conversations.³⁴

At the beginning, Jewish wives and their children from a marriage with a non-Jew were spared deportation. This, too, affected both Dutch and émigré women. Also, the experience of going to and living in the Underground was, generally, quite similar for both groups: the fear of getting discovered, the confinement, the necessity of remaining quiet, the conflicts between family members and fellow-lodgers (so directly described by Anne Frank), and the loneliness.³⁵ Naturally, one needed money to survive in the Underground; fortunately, most of the helpers were able to nourish the hidden guest(s) for quite a long period. In the winter of 1944–45, when

33 *International Biographical Dictionary*, 1:50. Langkau-Alex, *Die Aufnahme der Flüchtlinge*, 25–6.

34 J. Presser, *Ondergang. De vervolging en verdelging van het Nederlandse Jodendom 1940–1945*, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1965), 1:357–66. On page 366, one document said that until June 15, 1944, of the 8,610 Jewish partners in mixed marriages, 2,562 had taken the promised advantages out of the decree; 1,146 men, most of them after a surgical sterilization, and 1,416 women, most of them because of their age. For Luise Kautsky who on August 24, 1944, was arrested by the "Grüne Polizei" and in early September was deported from Westerbork via Theresienstadt to Auschwitz. See Langkau-Alex, "Karl Kautsky in den Niederlanden," in Würzner, ed., *Österreichische Exilliteratur*, 47–50.

35 See also Helga B., "Untergetaucht," in Volker Jacob and Annet van der Voort, eds., *Anne Frank war nicht allein*, 239–45. Almar Tjepkema and Jaap Walvis, eds., "*Ondergedoken.*" *Het ondergrondse leven in Nederland tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Weesp, 1985).

nearly all people in the occupied Netherlands were starving, the people of the Underground suffered most. It seems that more women than men lost their nerve. They wanted to see the blue sky, to breathe some fresh air, to buy some flowers – and were caught by the police when they came out of hiding.³⁶

It is likely that Dutch people had more chances to slip away from being arrested, to find a hiding-place and perhaps a separate one for their children than did émigrés. One reason was their superior knowledge of the country, of its people, the language, and how the society was organized (recall the “pillars”). Nevertheless, Dutch resistance movements and private individuals helped émigrés as much as Dutch citizens (and English soldiers who had been dropped by parachute or whose planes had been shot down over the Netherlands). I even know of one case when a Jewish émigré mother and her baby, born in 1943 (the husband had already been arrested and deported), were hidden by a German woman who had come to the Netherlands with the *Wehrmacht*.³⁷

A nunnery, in contrast, was by no means a safe haven, as we know from the fate of the German philosopher and anti-National Socialist Edith Stein. In April 1938 Stein, a descendant of Jews, became Sister Teresia Benedicta a Cruce; after the pogrom of November 1938 she fled from Cologne to the Carmelite Convent Ech in the Netherlands. In August 1942 she was arrested, brought to Westerbork, and some time later deported with her sister Rosa to Auschwitz.³⁸

Let me add some remarks on the children entrusted to friends or, as in most cases, to unknown people in the hope of saving their lives. Non-Jewish foster parents were found in all social groups and in all religious and ideological communities. The austere Reformed Protestant peasants proved to be the most generous in this regard. They believed that the Jews were God’s chosen people. The most pious foster parents, nonetheless, often tried to educate or to convert the children to their own faith. Yet, it has to be admitted that the boundary between trying to convert and instruction in what was necessary for survival – perhaps a new name and becoming recognized as an authentic member of the family – was rather thin. Great problems often arose when the natural parents and siblings – mostly sisters who had been separated for reasons of security – were reunited after the

36 Franz Loeser, *Sag nicht, du gehst den letzten Weg. Ein deutsches Leben* (Cologne, 1986), 49. Konrad Merz, “Een uur Esther,” in Konrad Merz, *De man die niet op Hitler schoot* (Utrecht and Antwerpen, 1979), 29–34.

37 For a story on the difficulties of hiding a baby, see Hans B., “Nachwuchs zu unrechter Zeit,” in Jacob and van der Voort, eds., *Anne Frank war nicht allein*, 121–8.

38 *International Biographical Dictionary*, 2:1110.

war: alienation, crises of identity, legal and religious claims.³⁹ Although I cannot prove it, I believe that in general émigré parents and especially mothers had more difficulties when they were reunited with their children than the Dutch did.

In the first months of the deportations, the émigrés at Westerbork, in comparison with the Dutch people interned, were “privileged,” insofar as a number of them had been charged with official functions since the opening of the camp in October 1939. Most of them were men and over time interned Dutchmen were also given official duties; it is hardly surprising, then, that of the 876 survivors who were freed by British troops in April 1945, 464 were male, 309 were female, and 103 were children. In total, only 209 people were from Greater Germany, among them Gerda Kautsky, the daughter-in-law of Karl and Luise Kautsky, and one of Gerda’s daughters. Gerda Kautsky’s other daughter had survived at the Community of the Society of Friends at Ommen. She had escaped imprisonment after all three had been discovered in January 1945 in the place where they had been hiding since April 1943. But Gerda and her daughter as well as all other non-Dutch persons at Westerbork had to stay at the camp for several more months. Like all Jews, they had been deprived of their citizenship by the Nazis in 1941, and the Dutch government would recognize only its own former citizens. Finally, Gerda Kautsky and her daughters received a permit to go to Switzerland, where they joined Benedikt, the husband and father who had returned, via Buchenwald, from Auschwitz. They left together for the United States.⁴⁰

Most of the émigré women who survived in the Netherlands and those who came back after the war stayed in the country and became naturalized. All these women, including those who returned to their native land or found a new home overseas, feel very much obliged to the Dutch people, but feelings of gratitude are accompanied by critical, even bitter memories.

The direct, personal experience of the Holocaust built at least an inner, silent wall between the survivors of the Underground and the extermination camps and all the others. All survivors were confronted with hate and anti-Semitism on the part of a great many of the Dutch people.⁴¹ The émigrés,

39 Elma Verhey, *Om het joodse kind* (Utrecht, 1991). Max Arian, “Hollands Dagboek” [a week’s diary on The First International Gathering of Children Hidden During World War II in New York], in *NRC Handelsblad* (Rotterdam), June 1, 1991, Zaterdag Bijvoegsel, 7. On orphans, see Hans Keilson, unter Mitarbeit von Herman R. Sarphatie, *Sequentielle Traumatisierung bei Kindern. Deskriptiv-klinische und quantifizierend-statistische follow-up Untersuchung zum Schicksal der jüdischen Kriegswaisen in den Niederlanden* (Stuttgart, 1979).

40 Langkau-Alex, “Karl Kautsky in den Niederlanden,” in Würzner, ed., *Oesterreichische Exilliteratur*, 51.

41 Dienke Hondius, *Tenuekeer. Antisemitisme in Nederland rond de bevrijding* (The Hague, 1990).

moreover, were told that, now that it was all over, they should leave and go back to where they had come from. A passage in a letter an Austrian émigré wrote to friends in Palestine in November 1945 illustrates some of those elements that constitute the wall of silence:

Here in Holland where I have felt very happy till the deportation, I now feel very alien. All feel alike. The intensified anti-Semitism, the general mood of discontent because of the trying circumstances and shortage are oppressing. I live as if I were on some sort of island with other islanders, and I should like best to withdraw to a less worldly atmosphere. . . . Have you never met a person who has come back from Bergen-Belsen?⁴²

Despite these experiences and feelings after the war, most of the Jewish émigrés did not return to what was left of Greater Germany – and to the people there who had let happen the crimes or even had assisted in their commission. Yet the older they become, the more the women émigrés I know long for their native language, for German-speaking theater, for the old places, and for the cooking. One of them wrote to me the following sentence, which seems to speak for the majority: “I went back to see my native place, I love it as ever. But my home is here.”

42 Gerty Hanemann-Kelemen to Grete and Leo Perutz, Nov. 8, 1945, in *Leo Perutz 1882–1957. Eine Ausstellung der deutschen Bibliothek Frankfurt am Main* (Vienna and Darmstadt, 1989), 303–5. Translation by the author.

