

Holocaust representation in Dutch history textbooks 1960-2010

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Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte has been head of government since October 2010 and is leader of the main liberal party in the Netherlands. He previously served as a State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science. Rutte is an historian and graduated from the oldest university in the Netherlands: Leyden University, established 1575. Every Friday, he teaches history and politics at a secondary school in The Hague.

At a press conference in April 2012, a Jewish journalist asked prime minister Rutte whether he knew the *Hollandsche Schouwburg*. This former theatre in Amsterdam, located in the heart of the old Jewish quarter of the city and a war monument since 1958, was used by the Nazi's in 1942 and 1943 to gather Jews from all over the country from which they were deported to transit Camp Westerbork and from there to Sobibor and Auschwitz. Few people survived: 104,000 Dutch Jews were murdered in the death camps in eastern Europe. In 2011 a Dutch feature film was released on the dramatic events in this Dutch Theater.¹ Prime minister Rutte however, appeared to be unfamiliar with the monument and had to admit that he didn't know what the *Hollandsche Schouwburg* stood for.

How is it possible that a leading politician, a teacher and a historian withal, can be unaware of the historical significance of one of three or four most important places of interest in the Netherlands - next to the Anne Frank House and Camp Westerbork - with regard to the persecution of the Jews during World War Two? And if the prime minister is ignorant of the matter, what can we expect of the general public to know?

The Persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands

The history of the persecution of the Dutch Jews contains difficult and controversial aspects. In the Netherlands, over 75% of all Jews living in the Netherlands were deported and killed, being by far the highest percentage of Jewish victims in western Europe. Only 5,000 Dutch deportees survived the war. There have been many scholarly debates on this issue: how had it been possible that in this relatively modern and democratic society so many well assimilated Jews

¹ <http://www.hollandscheschouwburg.nl/> (last consulted 25-11-15).

were eradicated from Dutch society. In 1940 some 160,000 Jews lived in the Netherlands, of whom 140,000 had Dutch nationality. The other were refugees, mainly from Germany (16,000) and Poland (2,000). Over half of all Jews lived in Amsterdam, twenty thousand in The Hague, and the rest was scattered all over the country. The Dutch army capitulated to the Germans in May 1940, after which the Nazi's installed a civilian administration headed by the former Austrian Arthur Seyss-Inquart. In October 1940 the first anti-Jewish measures were taken; over two hundred thousand Dutch civil servants were forced to declare whether they were Jewish or not through a so-called 'Aryan declaration'. Only 0,01% of all civil servants refused to sign; all Jewish civil servants were subsequently fired. In 1941 Jews were banned from parts of public life: cinemas, universities, markets, parks, swimming pools, cafés. All Jews had to register at their local council; in October 1941 140,001 'full-Jews' were registered and 20,885 'half'- and 'quarter-Jews'². On 12 February 1941 the Jewish quarter of Amsterdam was sealed off with barbed wire. On the 22nd and 23rd of that month the first raids took place in Amsterdam, after a clash between members of the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) and Dutch fascists with Jewish youngsters. 427 Jews were deported to Buchenwald and Mauthausen, where they eventually perished. Some protested against these brutalities: a strike ('February Strike') was called by the Communist Party in Amsterdam and other cities like Haarlem and Utrecht. The strikers also demanded higher wages and higher unemployment benefits. The strike lasted over a day and was crushed by the German authorities³. In that month, the Germans installed a 'Jewish Council' in Amsterdam. In January 1942 Jewish men were summoned for employment in work camps in the north of the Netherlands (and later that year in German camps). In April 1942 Jews were forced to wear yellow stars. Later that year, Jews were being deported to the former refugee camp of Westerbork in Drenthe and SS-concentration camp Vught⁴ in the south. On 15 July 1942 the first transport from Westerbork to Auschwitz took place; in total almost 107,000 people were deported through 97 transports, mostly to Auschwitz and Sobibor. Some of the trains went to Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt. The last transport left Westerbork on 13 September 1944. Dutch police forces guarded the transports and controlled the clearances of Jewish dwellings. Friedländer has claimed that the helpfulness of the Dutch police 'surpassed German expectations': in May 1942 a volunteer unit of 2,000 Dutch policemen was formed to assist the Germans in raids on Jews.⁵ Some Dutchmen denounced Jews for money: in 1943 a group

² Peter Tammes, 'Het Belang van Jodenregistratie voor de Vernietiging van Joden tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog' in *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* 6 [2009] nr. 2, p. 55.

³ Werner Warmbrunn, *De Nederlanders onder Duitse Bezetting 1940-1945* (Amsterdam 1963), 106-109.

⁴ Officially called *Konzentrationslager Herzogenbusch* (see <http://www.nmkampvught.nl/historische-informatie/> (last consulted 21-10-2015).

⁵ Saul Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden 1933-1945* (München 2015), 345-350.

of more than fifty Dutch police men searched the country for Jews who had tried to save their lives by going into hiding. Those who fell into the hands of this *Colonne-Henneicke* were not only handed over to the Germans, but also often taunted, robbed, extorted, mistreated and even sometimes sexually abused. Dutch journalist Ad van Liempt estimated that some 8,500 Jews became victim to this squad.⁶ Many Dutch Jews tried to go into hiding; hundreds of Jewish children were saved and accommodated with foster families. Adults had more difficulties in obtaining shelter; it was of course a dangerous undertaking. Furthermore, many Dutch people were reluctant to lodge Jews because of traditional sentiments of antisemitism or 'bourgeois civic compliance'.⁷ Nevertheless, some 25,000 Jews went into hiding, one third of whom were apprehended⁸. Overall, some 5,000 Jewish deportees from the Netherlands survived the war.

It is now widely accepted among scholars that antisemitism seemed to be more or less tangible in Dutch society before, during and after the war.⁹ Especially among confessional groups as well as in certain liberal and social-democratic factions, anti-Jewish attitudes were visible. Jews were treated differently, were seen as 'strangers' in Dutch society, not in a racial connotation but in social and cultural attitudes. Some elitist bastions were not accessible for Jews, like diplomatic services or student societies. This can partly be explained through the compartmentalization or 'pillarization' of Dutch society before the Second World War, a so-called politico-denominational segregation¹⁰. Society was 'vertically' divided into several segments according to different religions or ideologies. The best-known examples of these are Catholics, Protestants, socialists and liberals. These pillars all had their own social institutions: their own newspapers, broadcasting organizations, political parties, trade unions, banks, schools, hospitals, universities and sports clubs. This led to a situation where many people had no personal contact with people from another pillar. The Jewish community was not strongly organized in this pillarized society. There was Jewish health care and a modest Jewish press, but there were no political organizations or educational infrastructure. The Jewish community was small as well as divided; through assimilation and

⁶ See Ad van Liempt, *Kopgeld. Nederlandse Premiejagers Op Zoek Naar Joden* (Amsterdam 2002).

⁷ Saul Friedländer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden 1933-1945* (München 2015), 349.

⁸ Jolande Withuis & Annet Mooij (eds.), *The Politics of War Trauma. The Aftermath of World War II in Eleven European Countries* (Amsterdam 2010), 194.

⁹ See eg. Jolande Withuis & Annet Mooij (eds.), *The Politics of War Trauma. The Aftermath of World War II in Eleven European Countries* (Amsterdam 2010), Bart van der Boom, 'Wij weten niets van hun lot'. *Gewone Nederlanders en de Holocaust* (Amsterdam 2012), Ies Vuijsje, *Tegen Beter Weten In. Zelfbedrog en Ontkenning in de Nederlandse Geschiedschrijving over de Jodenvervolgning* (Amsterdam 2006), F. Bovenkerk, 'The Other Side of the Anne Frank Story; the Dutch Role in the Persecution of the Jews in World War Two in *Crime, Law and Social Change* 34, 3 (2000) 237-258.

¹⁰ Bart van der Boom, 'Wij weten niets van hun lot'. *Gewone Nederlanders en de Holocaust* (Amsterdam 2012), 9-18 and 91-100.

secularization Jews became more or less 'invisible', but continued to be on the sideline of Dutch society. So, although the situation in the Netherlands was considered to be relatively favorable compared to life in Germany, France or Eastern Europe, that doesn't mean that antisemitism was absent.

Dutch National Narratives on World War Two

Many believe that nations should incorporate homogeneous cultural communities, and that social cohesion and cultural unity of the nation is being endangered through processes of migration or globalization¹¹. The encouragement of loyal citizenship through mandatory history schooling, central examinations, institutions such as museums and commemorative organizations, and the offering of an official version of history seems to have become ubiquitous¹². Through history education states try to establish or strengthen national identity and loyal citizenship. Historical canons have emerged in numerous countries, regions and cities, where history education is not connected with contested views or multiperspectivity.¹³ In the Netherlands, the main topics of 'our' national past mainly deal with our Golden Age, maritime history, the Dutch East-Indies, but most of all with the Second World War. Until the 1960's the national narrative about this war recounted the ant-fascist attitudes, bravery and perseverance of the majority of the Dutch nation under siege. A narrative we now call the 'resistance-myth'. The Holocaust played a minor role in this narrative. During the years of the Cold War, World War Two was remembered within the context of national sovereignty, freedom and democracy. Human rights and racism were not an essential part of that narrative. For decades, Jews were not recognized by the governments or by former (Dutch) resistance movements as a specific group of victims. Until early 1970's, there were only two monuments dedicated to the Jews in the Netherlands, one of which was a gift by the 'Jewish community', thanking the population of Amsterdam for its help. In this sense, one seems to witness a continuity of marginalization of Jews in Dutch society during the twentieth century. The traumatic experiences of the war has led to suppression of the events as well as of the suffering of the Jewish people. It was not until the broadcast of the NBC-series *Holocaust* in 1979 that a certain awareness and consciousness emerged about the outcome and scale of the tragedy.

Younger generations tried to picture a different story: the 'resistance-myth' was to be reassessed, since many Dutchmen worked in the German war-effort, civil servants complied with German orders, most people continued with their

¹¹ Maria Grever, 'Fear of plurality. Historical culture and historiographical canonization in Western Europe', in Angelika Epple en Angelika Schaser ed., *Gendering historiography; beyond national canons* (Frankfurt/New York 2009) 45.

¹² James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge 2002), 68-69.

¹³ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/jingoistic-and-illegal--what-teachers-think-of-michael-goves-national-curriculum-reforms-8656120.html>.

lives. After the Eichmann Trial in 1961 and the publication of several historical studies¹⁴ things changed. Nowadays the general image is that the Dutch were mostly passive bystanders and that some were actively engaged in the persecution of the Jews. The Netherlands has been 'a country of deportations', antisemitism existed before the war, people were largely indifferent to the fate of the Jews, had looked the other way, were the 'best student in the Germanic class'. So a 'shift in memory' has taken place: the myth of collective heroism has been replaced by another myth: that of the guilty bystander. Now, the Dutch need to face the darker sides of their national history through admitting 'failure' instead of achieving national self-consciousness or pride. Whether this increases our insight in the historical reality however, is another matter¹⁵.

Expressing these collective feelings in Dutch society, popular and populist politician and MP Geert Wilders demanded in 2012 that the Dutch government in that year apologize for the 'cowardly manner' in which the government in exile during the Second World War had dealt with and responded to the persecution of the Dutch Jews. Wilders, although often ridiculed by his fellow parliament members and often regarded in my country as being unilaterally pro-Israeli, in this case was met with much acclaim. Many people did feel that the Dutch (government, officials, and population) with regard to the increasing discrimination of the Jewish population had behaved too passive, absent or downright antisemitic in the years leading up to World War Two and during the occupation of the country¹⁶.

The Holocaust in Dutch Textbooks 1960-2010

So in collective memory, the experiences of and consequences for the victims of war and the Holocaust have become more important. In history textbooks however, this is a completely different matter. In 2003 Homan and Van Praag analyzed World War Two and the persecution of the Jews in history textbooks¹⁷. They indignantly pinpointed at the fact that in the textbooks Jews seemed to be excluded from 'normal' Dutch society, that generalizations were common and that Nazi illustrations and terminology were used in the textbooks. In some textbooks even, the Nazi concept of a 'Jewish race' was used without

¹⁴ Some examples: S. de Wolff, *Geschiedenis van de Joden in Nederland. Laatste bedrijf* (1946), H. Wielek, *De oorlog die Hitler won* (1947), A. Herzberg, *Kroniek der Jodenvervolgung* (1950), H. Mulisch, *De Zaak 40/61* (1962), J. Presser, *Ondergang* (1965), L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (after 1969).

¹⁵ Bart van der Boom, 'Wij weten niets van hun lot'. *Gewone Nederlanders en de Holocaust* (Amsterdam 2012), 9-11.

¹⁶ <http://www.nu.nl/politiek/2706985/pvv-wil-excuses-regering-negeren-holocaust.html> (last consulted 26-11-2015)

¹⁷ Theo van Praag and Han Homan, *Tijd voor kwaliteit. De Tweede Wereldoorlog in de schoolboeken* (Heemstede 2004).

further explanations¹⁸. Topics like the role of the Dutch fascist party NSB, the deeper analysis of perpetrators, betrayal, assistance and collaboration of various groups and organization in Dutch society have been researched intensively over the last two decades; these issues remain underdeveloped in Dutch history textbooks¹⁹. The post-war history of Germany hardly appears in Dutch history textbooks, whereas the period between 1933 and 1945 is over-represented in the history curriculum. A striking example in recent years is the determination of one of the 2015 examination topics for history in secondary education: Germany between 1871 and 1945²⁰. Furthermore, information on German history presented in Dutch textbooks is often considered to be 'unilateral and over-simplified'. As one historian has put it, 'Dutch identity remains connected to notions of proximity and distance towards Germany'. Many believe that Dutch national identity is at risk if we would let go of our anti-German sentiments²¹.

In 2010 a survey was held by a Dutch weekly magazine *Elsevier* and by ResearchNed among 339 history teachers. Eighty-one percent of the interviewed indicated that their students believed that World War Two was the 'most interesting subject of all history lessons'. Within this context, 74 percent claimed the Holocaust was the 'most interesting aspect' of the history of World War Two. The researchers were satisfied with the quality of the textbooks, although they stated that the Holocaust 'gets a lot of attention'. Twenty-two percent of the interviewed teachers (working in the four largest cities in the Netherlands) however claimed that it had become increasingly difficult to teach about the Holocaust. Some multicultural problems occurred in class room context when dealing with this topic; some students refused to listen to the teacher, denied (aspects of) the Holocaust or implied parallels with Israeli politics towards Palestinians²².

I have analyzed nineteen history textbooks with regard to Holocaust representation, all of which are published and used in secondary schools (age groups 15-18 years) in the Netherlands between 1960 and 2010. These textbooks of course vary enormously: at first there were only textbooks with little illustrations and no exercises for students, nowadays textbooks are hybrid materials with teacher's guides, elaborate exercises in separate books, colorfully illustrated, with internet-based support, etc. The Dutch textbooks in this sample have been selected on denominations, publishing companies and estimated shares of users. In the Dutch textbook market, it is unclear what and how many schools use which textbooks. Publishing houses do not (or are unable to) provide any information on relative shares of market shares.

¹⁸ Theo van Praag and Han Homan, *Tijd voor kwaliteit. De Tweede Wereldoorlog in de schoolboeken* (Heemstede 2004) 36-37.

¹⁹ Diennek Hondius, *Oorlogslessen. Onderwijs over de oorlog sinds 1945* (Amsterdam 2010) 264.

²⁰ <http://www.slo.nl/downloads/documenten/het-geschiedenisexamen-in-2015.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2844/Archief/archief/article/detail/447920/1998/10/28/Duitsland-als-Nederlands-probleem.dhtml> (last consulted 29 June 2013).

²² http://www.researchned.nl/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/ELS017_016-OORLOGSONDERW.pdf (last consulted 1-7-2015).

From tables 1 and 2 (below) it shows that although attention for the Holocaust in Dutch textbooks has increased over the years (including more visual representations and primary sources), this has hardly led to more focus on the persecutions in the Netherlands. In this sense, the alleged separation between Jews and Dutch seems to be reflected in Dutch history textbooks. The Holocaust is presented as a matter between the Germans and the Jews, and sometimes portrayed as part of German history, not Dutch. In most textbooks the Dutch are still displayed either as heroes of the resistance or as innocent bystanders. Not much information is attended to the persecution of the Jews, except in relation to stressing patriotism: the February Strike in 1941 and Anne Frank function as examples of how the Dutch dealt with the 'injustices'. Some textbooks state that the Dutch people saw that the Jews were being 'driven together in ghettos', but that 'nobody knew exactly what was going to happen to them'. According to some textbooks, in the Netherlands all civil servants had to sign the non-Aryan statement, Jews were banned from public life, deported and killed in the gas chambers. That Dutch officials could have had something to do with that is basically thoroughly neglected in the textbooks. The most striking example of this relative 'nonattendance' of Dutch perpetrators or bystanders in Holocaust representations is a quote from Dutch historian E.H. Kossmann in one of the textbooks: "the Jewish council... itself has registered the Jews and accompanied them with parental care and deep seriousness on their way towards the end". The contribution of the Jewish council to all of these measures was, as the textbook states, 'very cynical'. The disturbing nature of this comment is that it immediately follows a glorifying account of the spontaneous strike by Dutch workers and civil servants in Amsterdam in February 1941, aimed at resisting anti-Jewish measures taken by the Germans.²³ In all textbooks, non-Jewish Dutchmen are portrayed (if at all) as uninterested bystanders. Attitudes or measures taken by the Dutch government or civil servants are not mentioned, let alone analyzed or discussed. From the textbooks one seems to get the impression that, even in retrospect, the persecution of the Jews during World War Two still is a 'Jewish matter', about Jewish or German history, seen and witnessed by non-Jews from a distance.²⁴

All of the Dutch textbooks describe the discriminatory measures taken against the Jews in Germany before 1939 in chapters or paragraphs dedicated to the rise of Hitler and national socialism. The outcome of this process is described by mentioning that millions of Jews died in concentration or annihilation camps. With regard to the situation in the Netherlands, textbooks generally stress German antisemitism, which seems to make the Nazi's solely responsible for the measures against the Jews in the Netherlands. The Dutch

²³ *Geschiedenis in Onderwerpen* 1979, 395-396.

²⁴ See also Ido De Haan, *Na de ondergang. De herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging in Nederland 1945-1995* (Den Haag 1997), 32-33 and 41-45.

TB	Pages on National Socialism and WW2	Pages on Holocaust (general)	Pages on persecutions in the NL	Illustrations on Holocaust	Number of primary sources on the Holocaust
A	24 (6,9%)	0,25 (1%)	0	0	0
B	33 (8%)	0,25 (0,75%)	0,25	0	0
C	20 (6,8%)	1 (5%)	0,25	0	0
D	14 (5%)	0,25 (1,8%)	0	1	0
E	56 (8,7%)	1,5 (2,7%)	0,5	2	2
F	30 (10,1%)	2,5 (3,3%)	1,5	0	3
G	54 (8,5%)	3 (5,6%)	2	1	2
H	55 (14,1%)	1 (1,8%)	0,5	2	3
I	36 (8,6%)	1 (3,3%)	0	0	3
Average	8,5%	2,8%	0,3	0,7	1,4

Table 1: Quantitative information in Dutch textbooks 1960-1980

population is regarded as unable to oppose these policies because of the ‘cunning’, ‘ruthless’, ‘violent’, ‘terrorist’ or ‘totalitarian’ character of the German occupation²⁵. Only one of the Dutch textbooks (2009) mentions the participation of Dutch policemen in the deportation of Jews. On average, in the sample of the nineteen Dutch textbooks that were published between 1960-2010, eight lines per book are dedicated to the persecution of Jews in the Netherlands. In general, the fate of the Dutch Jews is hardly mentioned at all. If there is any reference being made to the deportations or other anti-Jewish regulations, it is through highlighting Dutch resistance against these measures. It seems that in the textbooks Dutch history prevails over Jewish suffering: instead of discussing what actually happened to the Jews in the Netherlands after 1941, seventeen out of twenty textbooks seize the opportunity to demonstrate national concordance by referring to three major strikes during the war, protests from students and teachers from Leyden University, or the condemnations by the churches.²⁶ The persecution of the Jews, as one of the textbooks put it, ‘was not so much about the Jews, but here the centuries long tradition of tolerance

²⁵ *Schakels* 251, *De Mens* 190-192, *Mensen en Machten* 1971 and 1974, 176.

²⁶ See e.g. *Schakels* 1960, 280, *De Mens* 1968, 190-192, *Mensen en Machten* 1971, 176 and 1974, 175, *Geschiedenis in Onderwerpen* 1979, 396.

HOLOCAUST REPRESENTATION IN DUTCH HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

TB	Pages on National Socialism and WW2	Pages on Holocaust	Pages on the persecutions in the NL	Illustrations on Holocaust	Number of primary sources on the Holocaust
A	54 (15,5%)	7 (13%)	1,5	8	3
B	44 (12,3%)	2 (4,5%)	0,5	1	4
C	32 (9,8%)	6,5 (20,3%)	1	14/7	3/2
D	41 (12%)	2,5 (6,1%)	1	4	0
E	27 (8,6%)	20 (74%)	0	27	19
F	17 (6,9%)	1 (5,9%)	0	1/1	2
G	34 (7,9%)	1,5 (4,4%)	0,25	4	0
H	47 (11,3%)	3,5 (7,4%)	1	4	0/8
I	24 (6,4%)	2 (8,3%)	0,5	3/4	2/9
J	25 (7,9%)	3,5 (14%)	0,5	7	0/16
Average	9,9%²⁶	9,3%	0,9	4,8	3,8

Table 2: Quantitative information in Dutch textbooks 1980-2010

was at stake²⁷. The Holocaust was thus not portrayed as a crime to the Jewish population, but as a stain on the reputation of non-Jewish Dutchmen²⁸.

In Dutch textbooks, antisemitism is perceived exclusively as a German phenomenon. It was as if Hitler, in setting out his racial doctrines in *Mein Kampf*, pursued an already existing and exclusively German tradition of antisemitism. One textbook states that the Germans have known to be “*judenfeindlich*” for centuries²⁹. In another, antisemitism is connected with a ‘strange religion’: the Germanic paganism of Wodan and Thor. This ‘religion’ didn’t seem to reflect Hitler’s personal beliefs (‘he was not religious at all’), but came from some of his followers who hated Christianity, because of its ‘Jewish origin’. The hidden message here seems to be that it apparently is better to be atheist (even if it concerns Hitler himself!) than pagan, and that deep down inside the Germans are true Christians, except for some Germanic criminals. Because Christianity was ‘too deeply rooted in the German people’, the Nazi’s therefore had to persuade the people by using doubtful scientific theories on the alleged superiority of the Aryans in relation to the inferiority of the Jews³⁰. In a 1979 textbook, antisemitism after Hitler’s take-over, meant a ‘step-by-

²⁷ *Wereld in Wording* 1972, 146.

²⁸ De Haan 1997, 156.

²⁹ *Schakels* 1960, 251.

³⁰ *De Wereld* 1960, 302.

step isolation of Jews from public life in Germany'. Goering is quoted: "...I wouldn't want to be a Jew in Germany". All this was 'leading to the ... mass murder of the Jews during World War Two. Apparently hardly anyone resisted or protested against these inhuman activities, because of the existing 'strong anti-Jewish sentiment' in Germany³¹.

In relation to responsibility for the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands, the used language in the textbooks is often passive: Jews *were* isolated, they *were* forced to wear the yellow star of David, they *were* expelled from public life. Therefore it is not clear who was actually responsible for these crimes. So the basic questions are not being answered in Dutch textbooks: who had been responsible for the deportations and mass murder, why did so many people decide to do nothing, in what circumstances did the victims live their last days? It is striking that the process of discrimination, segregation and deportation of the Jews since 1933 in Germany is being elaborately described, leading up to the mass murders in the camps. How the genocide took place, what life was like in the camps, how people actually felt and tried to live their lives before or after being deported, how life was for the survivors: it is basically all omitted from the textbooks. In general, textbooks don't provide any information on what actually happened, where it happened, or how it happened. Auschwitz-Birkenau is the central frame of reference; other camps are more or less neglected. This is in more than one reason problematic. First of all, over 34,000 Dutch Jews were murdered in Sobibór.³² Furthermore, through focusing on Auschwitz-Birkenau as the symbolic place of remembrance for the genocide on European Jews, textbooks in the Netherlands (and elsewhere) present an historical image that is strongly reflecting the western perspective on the Holocaust. Most of the victims however were Jews from Eastern Europe. Only five textbooks from this sample mention the mass shootings by the *Einsatzgruppen*, but without explaining the historical context of these events (like roots of antisemitism in Eastern Europe, the ghetto's in Poland, *Aktion Reinhardt*, *Nazi-Lebensraumpolitik*, relations between 'ordinary' Wehrmacht soldiers and SS-men). In the textbooks, these mass shootings are depicted as a kind of experiment and not as the beginning of the Holocaust. How the actual victims felt and what they experienced is hardly included in the textbooks. Instead, stereotypical descriptions of events and main perpetrators are portrayed: e.g. Himmler ('the headmaster dressed in the uniform of the *Reichsführer*') and 'his most important henchman Richard Heydrich' [sic: Reinhardt], and the Holocaust as a logical outcome of the 'reared racial delusions' of the SS.³³ Other victims are mentioned, but again not contextualized at all. In all textbooks that I have analyzed, there is only one textbook (published in 2009) that raises the question how these crimes could have been committed in Europe in the first place. In the activity-book the au-

³¹ *Geschiedenis in Onderwerpen* 1979, 107-108.

³² Jules Schelvis, *Vernietigingskamp Sobibor* (Amsterdam 2008).

³³ *Geschiedenis van Gisteren* 1981, 44.

thors display a number of sources on historic examples of antisemitism, varying from examples of pogroms in the German town of Fulda in 1235, to the Nazi-propaganda film *Jud Süß*). Only one non-German antisemitic example is mentioned: the *Dreyfuss-affair*. In this textbook, it is written that antisemitism was not a Nazi-invention. It had existed for centuries almost everywhere in Europe, when people sought scapegoats in difficult times. In all other textbooks, the reasons behind antisemitism or elucidations on the Holocaust are omitted. Antisemitism in the Netherlands is not mentioned at all.

Dutch textbooks published between 1960 and 2010 only very slightly touch upon issues of individual or collective responsibility in their portrayal of World War Two and the Holocaust. In general, one could argue that the national myth of a nation resisting the German oppressors neatly remained within its frame. The persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands is either not or only briefly discussed, it is attached to brave acts of resistance or downplayed. Still, fourteen out of the nineteen textbooks persevere in their claim that Dutch civil servants 'were forced' to declare their non-Jewish origins in 1940, and only two textbooks openly display the fact that although this was a difficult decision, 99% of Dutch officials complied with the non-Aryan declaration because they were afraid of losing their jobs. As one of the textbooks put it: 'in a totalitarian state apparently everything is possible; in a short period of time people can become inhuman'³⁴.

Illustrations

In table 3 it is shown through what images the textbooks illustrate the process of discrimination, antisemitism, racism and genocide in Europe between 1933 and 1945. I have classified the illustrations in thirteen categories, more or less in chronological order. Some comments on the categories:

- Boycott: mostly of Jewish economic life in Germany but also including Jews wearing yellow stars;
- *Kristallnacht*: burning synagogues and Jewish shops;
- Propaganda: mostly illustrations from *Der Stürmer* or children's books like *Der Giftpilz*;
- Deportations: actually showing people being moved from a camp or city to a train station;
- *Einsatzgruppen*: harassing or shooting of Jews and communists in Eastern Europe;
- Ghetto: mostly photos from Warsaw, some are from Lodz;
- Camp Life: depicting life in the barracks or working conditions;
- Maps: mostly maps of Europe or 'Greater Germany', with concentration camps and death camps;
- Individual perpetrators: where a perpetrator is visibly at the center of the image (e.g. Himmler visiting a camp);

³⁴ *Geschiedenis van Gisteren* 1981, 116.

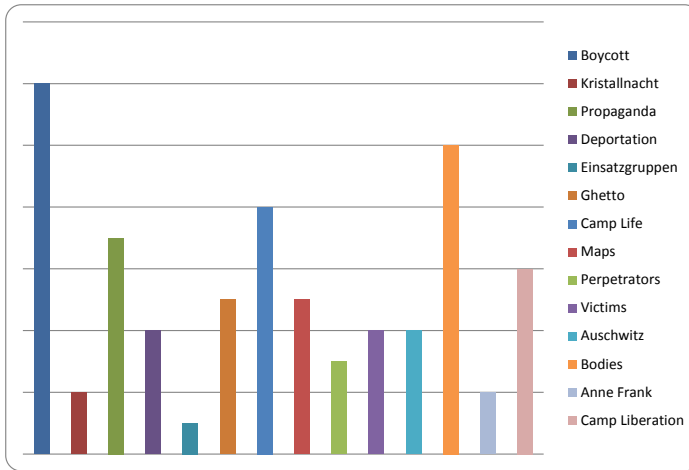


Table 3: Subjects of Illustrations on Antisemitism and Holocaust in Dutch textbooks 1960-2010

- Individual victims: where the illustration is showing individual hardship or suffering;
- Auschwitz: mainly photos from the entrance gate of Auschwitz I or the ‘Auschwitz Album’ (see below): the arrival of Hungarian Jews during the summer of 1944;
- Bodies: mass graves or German civilians burying corpses;
- Anne Frank: mainly a portrait picture;
- Camp liberation: mostly showing dead or severely weakened inmates after being liberated, some monuments too.

There are some interesting results to be seen from this overview. Firstly, Dutch textbooks more or less neglect the ‘Holocaust by Bullets’ from a visual perspective. The fact that *Einsatzkommandos* have killed over two million people in Eastern Europe is hardly shown through illustrations. Secondly, only nine out of 73 illustrations specifically deal with the persecution of the Dutch Jews (12,3%), mostly showing Jews in or from Amsterdam or pictures from transit camp Westerbork. Thirdly, in the Dutch textbooks, on none of the maps of concentration camps Dutch sites are listed. This seems to reflect the general lack of focus Dutch textbooks have for the persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands.

Iconographical portrayal of the Holocaust is overwhelmingly done from the perspectives of the perpetrators. This can never be self-evident, but has to be explained and documented, otherwise it might reinforce negative stereotypes, discrimination and prejudices.³⁵ The victims still are portrayed as defenseless and helpless people. The vast majority of these photos have been made on instigation of the German authorities. Yet the picture of the little boy in Warsaw as well as some photos from the so-called *Auschwitz Album* have become iconic. Most of

³⁵ see E. Kolinsky, ‘Geschichte gegen den Strom. Zur Darstellung des Holocaust in neuen Schulgeschichtsbüchern’ in: *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 13 (1991) 121-145.

the photos of the arrival of Hungarian Jews in Auschwitz were taken by a German SS photographer, probably on 17 May 1944.³⁶ In fact, the only photos that have remained from Auschwitz that show transport, arrival and selection of Jews at the Birkenau platform, are the pictures taken by the SS during two months in the spring of 1944. This 'Auschwitz Album' was first published in 1980; it consists of fifty-six pages and contains 193 photos. The album was miraculously discovered by an Auschwitz survivor, the then eighteen year old Lily Jacob. As part of the Hungarian transport, she was later moved to Dora concentration camp, some six hundred miles from Auschwitz. There she found this photo album, from which she recognized her rabbi from Hungary. While turning the pages, she discovered that it also contained pictures of her, her family and her friends. Lily Jacob held on to the book until she decided to donate it to Yad Vashem in the 1980's. We don't know exactly who made these photos in Auschwitz, and for what purposes.³⁷ But we do know that we are looking through the lenses of the perpetrators. Besides, the Auschwitz photos derive from 1944, depicting the ultimate phase of the Holocaust. The railway track had only been constructed that year. These photos therefore do not represent the entire Holocaust, but only its last gruesome episode³⁸.

The basis equipment of the examined textbooks show similar pictures: the boycott of Jewish stores and burning of synagogues in 1938, antisemitic hatred pictures from *Der Stürmer* or *Die Ewige Jude*, Jews in camps, the little boy in Warsaw, Hungarian Jews in Birkenau, inmates behind barbed wire during the liberation of the camps. There is no information on the context of the pictures or images, their function, use, application, reception or correlation with other pictures or texts in the book. This proves of a lacking historical and didactical thoroughness. How can students evaluate and critically 'know' about the perspective of the perpetrators?³⁹ Using shocking Nazi-images of death, dying, murder and dehumanization should be done within a pedagogical framework. Without that, it can be both emotionally disturbing for students and providing them the awesome perspective of the perpetrator. Furthermore, it might reinforce the image students have of Jews (and others) as victims, not as real people who had lives and families before this all happened⁴⁰.

As many scholars⁴¹ have stated, the phenomenon of the Holocaust can best be taught through the context of Jewish life in Europe and the history of anti-

³⁶ http://collections.yadvashem.org/photosarchive/en-us/97836_34303.html ((last consulted 26-11-2015).

³⁷ More on the Auschwitz Album see: Israel Gutman and Bella Guterman, *The Auschwitz Album: The Story of a Transport* (Jerusalem 2002).

³⁸ Sandkühler, Thomas, 'Nach Stockholm: Holocaust-Geschichte und Historische Erinnerung im neueren Schulgeschichtsbuch für die Sekundarstufen I und II', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtsdidaktik*, Heft 11 (2012) 70-71.

³⁹ Susanne Popp, *Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Schulbuch 2010*, 106.

⁴⁰ Foster *Selection, Limitation and Challenge: Portrayals of the Holocaust in English Secondary School Textbooks* (draft), London 2011, 25-26.

⁴¹ S.J. Foster, 'Teaching About the Holocaust in English Schools: Challenges and Possibilities' in *Journal of Intercultural Education* (in press 2015).

semitism in order to provide students a perspective on precedential and circumstantial events and processes that contributed to the persecution of the Jews. This is confirmed by teaching guidelines issued by The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)⁴². Two important advises are related to the matter of teaching the Holocaust. First, Jewish people should not be defined “solely in terms of the Holocaust.” In order to understand what many societies looked like before the war, the IHRA argues that it is recommendable to contextualize Jewish culture before and after the war ‘in order to make it clear that the Jewish people have a long history and rich cultural heritage’. With this contextualization it becomes clear that antisemitism was not exclusively a German phenomenon, and that it was not confined to the period between 1933 and 1945. Secondly, ‘young people should be aware of the enormous loss to contemporary world culture that resulted from the destruction of rich and vibrant Jewish communities in Europe’. It seems vital that students and teachers ‘recognize that antisemitism is a worldwide and centuries-old phenomenon’. Many stereotypical references to the wealth and significant position of Jewish people in pre-war Europe derive from poor contextualization: many Jews (especially in Eastern Europe) were poor and powerless; others considered to be fully assimilated. Also, before the war less than 1% of the German population was Jewish. Likewise it seems vital for students to understand that terrible things often happen through decisions made by individuals, groups or nations. The Holocaust was not ‘inevitable’; by emphasizing those decisions one enhances critical thinking⁴³.

In none of the Dutch textbooks published between 1960 and 2010 however, there is any observation of pre- or postwar Jewish life. ‘Jews’ appear in a consistent and uniform dimension, namely almost exclusively as a collective group. This group is thematically connected to only one event: the Holocaust. From the textbooks therefore, students get the impression that Jews are a homogeneous group of victims and not real ‘people’ with lives, families, history and culture. The persecution and destruction of the Jews thus has become the only thing that students learn from the textbooks on Jews and Judaism. The role and contribution of Jews and Judaism in pre- and postwar European cultural, political and economic life is therefore strongly trivialized or ignored completely. In a 2006 publication on ‘Education on the Holocaust and on Antisemitism’, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe OSCE (through the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights ODIHR) offers an overview on Holocaust education including recommendations: ‘In general, images of national, ethnic, and religious homogeneity are a consequence of the underexposure given to contemporary and past histories of Jews and other minorities. Despite the message conveyed by national descriptions of history, the OSCE region throughout its history has in fact never

⁴² <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/educate/teaching-guidelines> (last consulted 26-11-15).

⁴³ <http://www.holocaustremembrance.com/node/319> (last consulted 20 November 2015).

been homogeneous. Migration, multiculturalism, and multi-faith communities are both current and historical facts that should be taught in schools'.⁴⁴ The unilateral image of Jews as victims of National Socialism, as stated earlier, dominates the textbooks, and is most of the time supported by pictures and illustrations of these Holocaust victims.

Textbooks in the Netherlands represent the Holocaust mainly from an intentionalist point of view, claiming that Hitler and a small group within the Third Reich willingly planned the mass murder of European Jewry. Fourteen textbooks explicitly state that it was Hitler who initiated the Holocaust (although the SS, Himmler and Heydrich are becoming increasingly present in the textbooks), but also that it was a premeditated and long-term operation. In this context, the image of the 'almighty, angry, irresponsible and sometimes insane *Führer*'⁴⁵ frequently pops up. One textbook e.g. states that Hitler had become antisemitic in Vienna (followed by anti-Jewish extracts from *Mein Kampf*), but his ideas 'were not taken seriously for a long time, people didn't think he actually meant all of this'.⁴⁶ Press campaigns, sharp accusations on political gatherings and a number of anti-Jewish measures had to convince the German people that the 'Jewish problem' could only be solved by extermination [sic]. The 'Nuremberg Laws and *Reichskristallnacht* were sinister preludes of what was about to come'. The book continues in outlining that Hitler believed that his plans for the '*Endlösung der Judenfrage*' could only be executed through war. The organization of this was entrusted to Adolf Eichmann, 'a colorless gas fitter', as described by a Dutch novelist.⁴⁷ The textbooks seem to witness a linear path from discrimination, maltreatments and persecution to the last stadium: *extermination*.⁴⁸ Textbook D adds another dimension to the demonization of Hitler: he had become a social misfit in Vienna, failing to establish a artistic career and staying in residences for the homeless. Through these experiences 'he developed an aggressive and extreme nationalistic view upon the world'. The *Bierhalleputsch* of November 1923 was a 'complete failure'. During the short skirmishes Hitler had 'behaved cowardly', ran away and was arrested. In prison he wrote *Mein Kampf*, a 'confusing book'. Almost nobody outside the NSDAP 'took it seriously', but during his dictatorship it appeared that for Hitler himself it was 'significant enough to execute many of his ideas, one of which was his *Endlösung der Judenfrage*'.⁴⁹ Hitler is seen as the architect of the Final Solution, which 'gave some Nazi's the motives for one of the most gruesome assassinations in history'⁵⁰.

⁴⁴ Education on the Holocaust and on Antisemitism: An Overview and Analysis of Educational Approaches (OSCE/ODIHR), Warsaw 2006, 168.

⁴⁵ Susanne Popp, *Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Schulbuch* 2010, 102-103.

⁴⁶ *Geschiedenis van Gisteren* 1981, 36-37.

⁴⁷ *Geschiedenis van Gisteren* 1981, 118.

⁴⁸ *Beeld van de Twintigste Eeuw* 1984, 95 and *Vragen aan de Geschiedenis* TB 1989, 192-193.

⁴⁹ *Op weg naar 2000* TB 1994, 101 and 167.

⁵⁰ *Op weg naar 2000* 1994 TB, 156.



The irresponsible *Führer* (capture: *Visiting a farmer's family in Eastern Prussia. Hitler hand in hand with child!*)⁵¹

In a 1998 textbook Hitler 'made clear from the beginning that the Jews were the greatest racial poisoners of all times', and that he would take care of them once obtaining state control. During a speech in the *Reichstag* on January 30 1939 Hitler claimed that 'the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe' would be the consequence of 'them again dragging nations into another world war'.⁵² But: the Holocaust was predominantly the work of the SS, and Himmler, as head of the SS, was 'responsible for the Final Solution of the Jewish question'.⁵³ Some other examples: in a textbook from 2000 it says that 'Hitler and Himmler ordered the mass shootings in the Soviet Union'.⁵⁴ A 2001 textbook states that Hitler knew that the 'German people had to be convinced that there was such a thing as a 'Jewish problem''. This problem could only be solved by removing Jews from society. Hitler believed that this removal had to be permanent. That meant: he believed Jews had to be exterminated. This *Endlösung der Judenfrage*, so he thought, could only be fulfilled during a war.⁵⁵ And a textbook from the year 2004 claims that because 'all Jews and other national minorities would have to be eliminated from Germany, World War Two broke out'. According to a 'well-conceived plan they were caught and deported to concentration camps that were specially developed for murdering them in large numbers'.⁵⁶

⁵¹ *Op weg naar 2000* TB 1994, 103.

⁵² *Pharos* TB 1998, 200-201.

⁵³ *Pharos* TB 1998, 201.

⁵⁴ *Sprekend Verleden* 2000, 35-36.

⁵⁵ *Memo* 2001, 187.

⁵⁶ *MeMo* TB 2004, 151 and 339.

There is only one textbook that delivers opposing views. By citing the German essayist Sebastian Haffner – who claimed that in 1941 Hitler pursued the destruction of European Jewry even while it meant the total defeat of Germany – and Swiss historian Burrin who stressed the uncoordinated functioning of the Nazi-regime as well as an uncontrollable situation during the war as possible causes of the genocide in Europe⁵⁷. But, as the same textbook states: the decision to proceed towards the Final Solution was made by Hitler and Himmler in June 1941⁵⁸.

In all of the Dutch textbooks from this sample, the perpetrators have a ‘face’, but the victims haven’t. This seems to reflect the marginality of Jewish victimhood in Dutch post-war political and public debates. In many textbooks it is said that the ‘Dutch suffered tremendously: under German rule economic deprivation and oppression were horrendous, as well as the hunger winter of 1944’. No real victims are portrayed, except for some eye witness accounts in primary sources. The only Jewish victim that is present as a person throughout the period of fifty years is Anne Frank. She continues to be the personification of Jewish victimhood in history textbooks. After World War Two, the traumatic experiences of the Jewish people were hardly recognized by the larger public in the Netherlands. When in 1947 parliament approved the *Wet Buitengewoon Pensioen* (‘Exceptional Pensions Act’), surviving Jewish deportees were excluded from benefits because they had not been participating in ‘resistance activities’⁵⁹. The Association of Ex-Political Prisoners *Expogé* (founded in September 1945) considered itself as the exclusive heir to Dutch resistance, therefore rejecting cooperation with other organizations and distinguishing between resistance and oppression: Jews who had not been in the resistance, therefore, could not join⁶⁰.

With regard to the vast majority of the people in the Netherlands, the bystanders, those who did not openly persecute the Jews but did not actively help them either, textbooks remain more or less silent. ‘The Jew’ was and in a certain sense herewith remains the ‘other’, even if this ‘other’ was a neighbor, partner or fellow countryman. In Dutch textbooks, perpetrators continue to be a small ideological elite within the SS or other Nazi-organizations. The complicity of the German *Wehrmacht* and police forces in the occupied countries, moderate National Socialists and even ordinary Germans has been demonstrated a long time ago. And there were many bystanders, in every country. Ordinary Frenchmen or Poles who witnessed their Jewish neighbors being transported to elsewhere. Sometimes politicians, who did nothing to prevent this crime, were considered accomplices. According to the first

⁵⁷ Sprekend Verleden EB 2009, 119.

⁵⁸ Sprekend Verleden, TB 2009, 143.

⁵⁹ Jolande Withuis & Annet Mooij (eds.), *The Politics of War Trauma. The Aftermath of World War II in Eleven European Countries* (Amsterdam 2010), 196.

⁶⁰ <http://www.oorlogsgetroffenen.nl/archiefvormer/Expoge> (last consulted 28-9-2015).

director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the most important lesson of his museum is the failure of the bystanders: they could have prevented or stopped the crime, but became accomplices through their passivity⁶¹. In this context also, Dutch history textbooks have yet brought up to standards.

In Dutch textbooks, the Holocaust is reduced to antisemitism in a broad context. In general, Dutch textbooks have difficulties in positioning the Holocaust within the context of European history. Antisemitism is portrayed mainly as a national-socialist invention. The protracted antisemitic tradition in Europe or cyclical fluctuations in the social relations between Jews and gentiles, as well as the increasing nationalistic and racial character of national socialist antisemitism, do not seem to be of much importance for Dutch textbook authors. This seems to reflect the relative distance of Dutch textbook authors to (recent) historical debates. Through the analyzed textbooks, students cannot even begin to comprehend the circumstances that encouraged or discouraged particular actions or events regarding the Holocaust. That means that textbooks predominantly demonstrate Nazi-activities and consider Jews and other victims as objects of those actions, rather than as subjects for further study. Furthermore, the events in Eastern Europe do not play a significant part in the image presented. Textbooks continue to focus heavily on Auschwitz-Birkenau, for them being the ultimate symbol of the Holocaust. Dutch textbooks hardly ever deal with contextualization, with Jewish life before and after the war, with multiple perspectives, with the other death camps, the *Einsatzgruppen* or Operation *Reinhard*.⁶² The iconographic sources in Dutch textbooks reproduce Nazi-imagery in order to illustrate antisemitism, but without providing these racist perspectives with a critical and historical introduction, context or deconstruction. The danger is that students unwillingly come to think of these kinds of discriminatory and stereotypical portrayals of Jews as being historically acceptable. Instead of referring to Jews as a people with rich cultural backgrounds who were loyal and of considerable importance to (German) pre-war society, in the analyzed textbooks Jews have become a “faceless mass of victims”, “dehumanized and degraded” by the Nazi’s⁶³.

In short, Dutch textbooks continue to opt for a one-sided view of the Holocaust, of the history of the Netherlands during World War Two as well as of twentieth century Jewish history. Exactly this absence of multiperspectivity and contextualization, as well as the focus on ‘perpetrator-narratives’ seem to enhance rather than diminish teachers’ difficulties with regard to teaching about the Holocaust in the Netherlands. Curricula and textbooks in this con-

⁶¹ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York 2000), 245.

⁶² See also: Stuart Foster *Selection, Limitation and Challenge: Portrayals of the Holocaust in English Secondary School Textbooks* (draft), London 2011, 10-11

⁶³ Stuart Foster *Selection, Limitation and Challenge: Portrayals of the Holocaust in English Secondary School Textbooks* (draft), London 2011, 17-18.

text, therefore can be compared to museums: they convey national narratives, serving as ‘temples’ for the collective instead of offering students multiple perspectives and conflicting opinions through close relationships with academic research, as through deconstructing national narratives. So if prime minister Mark Rutte had been taught about World War Two and the Netherlands from multiple perspectives including the Jewish context, and if he had been able to identify the difference between history and memory, he would have had appropriated this ambiguous past and turned it into a meaningful event. In those circumstances, the historical significance of the *Hollandsche Schouwburg* would probably not have remained unnoticed.

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