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THE DUTCHNES OF DUTCH RESCUERS: 
THE NATIONAL DIMENSION OF ALTRUISM

Lawrence Baron

Shortly before her arrest in 1944, Anne Frank reacted to rumors about Dutch gentiles turning against the Jews by writing the following entry in her diary: "I hope one thing only, and that is that this hatred of the Jews will be a passing thing, that the Dutch will show what they are after all, and that they will never totter and lose their sense of right."¹ The minority of Dutch men and women who rescued Jews like the Franks clearly lived up to the high expectations Anne had for her fellow citizens. Yet was their moral courage derived from something distinctive in Dutch culture and history that prevented them from condoning Nazi anti-Semitism and prompted them to save Jews from deportation and death? Or did it stem primarily from idiosyncratic factors in the backgrounds, personalities, traits, and values of the rescuers themselves?

The existing literature on the rescue and rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust has not provided answers to these questions. Although historians have analyzed specific national conditions and traditions to explain why mass Jewish rescue occurred in countries like Bulgaria, Denmark, and Italy, they have avoided speculating about the motivations of individual rescuers because the documentary evidence on which their research is based does not reveal such personal information.² Conversely, psychologists and sociologists who have conducted systematic interviews of surviving rescuers have focused on identifying the recurring patterns of psychosocial variables that fostered and sustained their decisions
to help persecuted Jews. This second kind of approach understandably has not examined the interaction between the subjective determinants of the rescuers' behavior and the objective cultural and political context that influenced it.

In this chapter I will narrate and analyze several case studies of Dutch rescuers who were interviewed for the Altruistic Personality Project by me or other members of its research team. Drawing on the project's database both for Holland and Poland, as well as on other scholarly works about the rescue and rescuers of Jews in various countries, I will delineate how the themes raised in their interviews typified political, religious, and social forces that shaped the history of the Netherlands before and during the German occupation. By doing so, I will identify some of the connections between public milieu and private motivations that inspired Dutch gentiles to shield Jews from the Nazis and native collaborators during World War II at the risk of their own lives.

To place the actions and attitudes of the Dutch rescuers in a broader perspective, let me begin with an overview of the history of Jewish-Christian relations and the course of the Holocaust in the Netherlands. The near annihilation of Dutch Jewry by the Nazis appears to be a paradox in light of Holland's long national tradition of religious tolerance and civic equality. The Dutch war of independence against Spain in the 1560s and 1570s inaugurated this tradition through its rejection of the introduction of the Catholic Inquisition in Holland and the weakening of both state and religious authority during that struggle. The permission to settle and worship that many Dutch cities granted to Jewish immigrants in the following century represented a byproduct of efforts to avert further intra-Christian bloodshed, as well as an economic decision to enhance local mercantile growth. From then on, Dutch Jews never became the target of the sort of anti-Semitic riots that sporadically erupted throughout Europe. In 1796 the French Revolutionary Army invaded Holland and granted equal rights to all citizens regardless of their religious affiliation. After the defeat of Napoleon, the Netherlands retained this principle in its constitution in contrast to the revocation of Jewish emancipation by other nations that had been conquered by France. This enabled Dutch Jews to gain entry and acceptance into most sectors of the economic and political life of Holland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Although the Dutch population was not immune to fascist and
anti-Semitic ideas in the 1930s, their popular appeal remained limited to a small minority. The precipitous drop in the volume of foreign trade and industrial production and the resulting sharp rise in unemployment provided the tinder for extremist firebrands like Anton Mussert of the National Socialist Movement of the Netherlands (hereafter, abbreviated as the NSB). Mussert attacked the inefficiency of parliamentary government and the divisive parochialism of Dutch political parties for causing the economic crisis and failing to surmount it. His call for an authoritarian corporate state and an imperialistic foreign policy attracted almost 8 percent of the votes in the provincial elections of 1935. Initially, Mussert distinguished between "nationally minded Dutchmen of Jewish race," who even qualified for membership in the NSB, and unassimilated orthodox and East European Jews, who never could be Dutch citizens. In the wake of Germany's diplomatic successes between 1936 and 1939, elements within the NSB led by Rost van Tonningen advocated Nazi ideology and racist anti-Semitism. Faced with pressure from the pro-Nazi wing of his party, Mussert drafted a proposal in 1938 for establishing a Jewish "homeland" in South America where European Jews would be resettled. The NSB's closer identification with the Third Reich and anti-Semitism diminished its electoral support. By 1939, the party received less than 4 percent of the votes in the provincial elections. Nevertheless, the influx of twenty-five thousand Jewish refugees from Austria, Germany, and Poland during the 1930s generated some anti-Semitic resentment among the Dutch. While Dutch Jews remained unscathed by this development, it led to a government decision in 1939 to intern German Jewish refugees at Westerbork who had entered the country illegally or could not support themselves, rather than granting them permanent asylum.

The rapid German victory over the Netherlands in May of 1940 transformed what had seemed like a secure haven for Jews into a perilous hell. Bordering on heavily patrolled waters, other occupied countries, and Germany itself, the location of Holland made escape difficult and dangerous. The easily blocked network of bridges and canals, the flat terrain, the lack of forests, and the high population density handicapped the attempts of those trying to evade or resist the Nazis. The concentration of 60 percent of Dutch Jewry in Amsterdam facilitated the enforcement of Nazi anti-Semitic policies, especially the deportations of Jews. As Raul Hil-
berg has observed, "It was as though the Dutch Jews had already been placed in a natural trap."10

Since Hitler valued Holland for economic, military, and racial reasons, he subjected it to tighter SS and Nazi party control than other occupied Western European countries. He viewed the Dutch as fellow Aryans whose state would someday be absorbed into Germany once it was purified of Jewish and other harmful influences. Moreover, Holland's location at the mouths of the Rhine and Maas Rivers, its fertile farmlands, fine harbors, and North Sea coastline that could serve as a jumping-off point for invading England made the country economically and strategically crucial to Germany's war effort. Thus, Hitler decided against putting Holland under military rule and instead appointed SS General Artur Seyss-Inquart as Reichskommissar to head a civilian administration similar to the one Germany had installed in Norway. Hanns Rauter, the SS security and police chief, took his orders directly from Himmler. The Nazi party exerted its ideological influence over Holland through Special Affairs Commissioner Fritz Schmidt, who was in charge of propaganda and political education.11 To gain some perspective on the extent of Nazi power in Holland, it should be noted that five thousand German police were stationed there compared to three thousand in France, even though the latter was much bigger in size and population and harbored twice as many Jews.12

Breaking initial promises that Nazi ideology would not be imposed on Holland, Germany disenfranchised, impoverished, and registered Dutch Jewry by enacting increasingly restrictive discriminatory measures against the Jews during the first two years of the occupation. Relying primarily on bureaucratic and legal means rather than on force, the Nazis hoped to avoid offending Dutch sensibilities and provoking resistance. Since this phase of anti-Semitic measures occurred when German rule was still relatively tolerable for most Dutch gentiles, they tended to dissociate themselves from the ordeal that the Jews were undergoing. In the autumn of 1940, Dutch civil servants were ordered to fill out forms indicating if their grandparents were Jewish or Aryan. This "Aryan attestation" served as the basis for dismissing all Jews holding government positions in November. Around the same time Jewish-owned businesses were identified for eventual transfer to German owners. In January of 1941 Jews were ordered to register
with the authorities. This information enabled the government to bar them from most public places, jobs, and social activities. The marking of the Jews climaxed in April 1942 when they were compelled to wear a yellow star inscribed with "Jood" (Jew) on their outer clothing.\textsuperscript{13}

The bureaucratic identification of the Jews and their economic and political exclusion from Dutch society expedited their subsequent concentration and deportation. This process began in early 1942 when unemployed Jews were ordered to report to labor camps and Dutch Jews living in the provinces were evacuated to Jewish neighborhoods in Amsterdam. Then groups of Jews were relocated to the transit camps at Vught and Westerbork. From there, the first trains loaded with Jews departed in mid-July for the extermination camps of Auschwitz and Sobibor. Within a year, seventy-seven thousand Jews had been deported. By the time the transports were halted in September of 1944, an additional thirty thousand Jews had been taken to those death camps or to Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt. Only fifty-two hundred of all of the deported Jews managed to survive their ordeal. Another eight thousand Jews, who had tried to hide in Holland, were apprehended and executed by the Germans during the occupation. All told, almost 80 percent of Holland's 140,000 Jews perished in the Holocaust. Thus, it sustained a greater loss of Jewish lives both numerically and proportionally than any other occupied country in Western Europe!\textsuperscript{14}

Although the primary blame for this catastrophe rests with Germany, some responsibility for it lies directly with Dutch collaborators. Following Holland's defeat, the two wings of the NSB competed for the favor of the Nazi authorities. Mussert believed Dutch support for Germany's war effort would be paid back by the establishment of an enlarged sovereign Dutch state led by him and closely allied with a Nazi-dominated "League of Germanic Peoples." Van Tonningen conversely shared the SS goal of integrating a racially purified Holland into the "Greater German Reich." This split in the NSB weakened its leverage with the Germans, who played one faction against the other to ensure its complicity. The lure of power swelled the NSB's membership to one hundred thousand people. From its ranks, Germany recruited about one-third of Holland's mayors and municipal civil servants to enforce Nazi policies at the local level. Over twenty-two thousand Dutchmen enlisted in the Waffen-SS to fight for Germany abroad, and twelve thousand joined the WA, the Dutch stormtroopers who terrorized
and informed on political and racial enemies at home. Nevertheless, no more than 1.25 percent of the Dutch population belonged to the NSB. Its acts of treason discredited it in the eyes of most Dutch citizens.\textsuperscript{15}

Until Germany's military hold on the European continent began to weaken in early 1943, a broad segment of the Dutch population and civil service engaged in more acceptable forms of accommodation to Nazi power. In the immediate wake of Holland's defeat, several respected Dutch leaders created the Netherlands Union to rally the nation's political parties behind a program of national corporative reconstruction and loyal relations towards Germany. Although Seyss-Inquart banned this organization in late 1941, the Netherlands Union attracted eight hundred thousand members, nearly one-sixth of the adult population, with its timid attempt to reassert Dutch sovereignty while simultaneously deferring to foreign domination.\textsuperscript{16} The secretaries-general, the senior Dutch officials who remained at their posts when the Dutch queen and cabinet went into exile, administered Nazi policies, fearing the drastic consequences of disobedience. Under the provisions of a 1937 government directive, these functionaries were expected to cooperate with an occupying power if they believed that doing so brought more benefits than harm to the general welfare of their country. Offended by the harshness of Nazi laws against the Jews, the secretaries-general often lodged formal protests, but then agreed to implement these laws to avoid German reprisals against the Dutch people and the Nazification of the bureaucracy. It was not until May of 1943 that the government-in-exile explicitly prohibited "all cooperation" in the enforcement of anti-Jewish measures. By then, the efficient participation of Dutch officials in the expatriation, expropriation, and expulsion of Dutch Jewry had aided the Germans substantially and had lent a semblance of legitimacy to blatantly discriminatory policies.\textsuperscript{17}

The Jewish Council pursued a similar strategy of defensive acquiescence. Appointed by the Germans in February 1941 to disarm Jews who had defended themselves against WA stormtroopers, the council consisted of prominent Dutch Jews who served as the official conduit between the regime and the Jewish community. Its members felt that Jewish compliance with Nazi decrees might mitigate the severity of future policies and justify the retention of deportation exemptions for Jews employed by the council or the Germans. By publishing a newspaper informing the Jews about
each anti-Semitic decree, the council, in effect, insulated Dutch gentiles from these alarming developments.\textsuperscript{18} Moreover, the apparent willingness of the council to preside over the segregation of its own community may not have seemed so unusual to Dutch gentiles accustomed to the *verzuiling*, or "pillarization" of Dutch society into separate political and social subcultures based on a person's affiliation with a particular Christian denomination or with secular liberal and Socialist movements.\textsuperscript{19} The Jewish Council also inadvertently helped select which Jews were sent to Westerbork by determining who received exemption permits for working on behalf of the Germans. Although the number of these permits steadily dwindled from thirty-five thousand in July 1942 to none by September 1943, the competitive scramble to obtain them preserved the illusion that the Germans would not deport all the Jews.\textsuperscript{20} Once the deportations began, the credibility of the council declined. Thereafter, 80 percent of the Jews refused to report for internment at Westerbork, necessitating the dispatch of special police squads to capture them.\textsuperscript{21}

The first overt demonstration of Dutch solidarity with the Jews came too early to help them. At the end of February of 1941, Communist-led workers in Amsterdam mounted a general strike to protest the brutal arrest of 425 Jews whom the Germans deported to Mauthausen in retaliation for the murder of an NSB storm-trooper. This impressive demonstration of support for the Jews prompted the Germans to impose a state of siege, kill several strikers, and imprison one hundred strike leaders. The ruthless suppression of the strike dealt a severe blow to the nascent Communist resistance movement and symbolized a graphic warning to less politicized Dutch citizens about the fate of those who opposed Nazism. Its chilling effect on underground activity in the next two years was reinforced by the German practice of taking and frequently executing Dutch hostages to quell any native discontent with specific occupation policies.\textsuperscript{22}

When the deportations of Jews began in mid-1942, Germany's exploitation of Holland's economy and labor force remained at a relatively tolerable level for the rest of the population. Suffering the strains of defeats at Stalingrad and North Africa in the winter of 1942/1943, Germany tightened its control over Holland in the first half of 1943 by ordering male university students to sign loyalty oaths and agree to work six months in Germany after graduating, attempting to intern three hundred thousand Dutch army
veterans, and requiring all men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five to register for forced labor in Germany. This triggered a series of Dutch strikes in April and May of that year. The need to assist all those refusing to comply with new demands enlarged and eventually unified the local groups that had started to emerge in the previous year to aid both gentile and Jewish "divers," as such fugitives were called. The National Organization for Assistance to Divers, known as the LO, did not amalgamate these ideologically and religiously diverse groups into a national rescue network until August 1943. By then over eighty thousand Jews had been deported. Of the three hundred thousand people hidden by the LO, twenty-four thousand were Jews, and sixteen thousand of them survived the war without falling into German hands. The rescue of this remnant was a significant accomplishment considering the deprivation and repression of the Dutch during the last two years of the war, particularly in the "hunger winter" of 1944–1945, when thousands died from the food embargo that Germany imposed on Western Holland to break a Dutch railroad strike. Nevertheless, the chances of a Jew finding a family to hide him or her were worse than those of a Dutch gentile.23

The experience of the LO, however, indicates that anti-Nazi resistance often translated into assistance for the Jews. People angered by German oppression found one outlet for their resentment in Jewish relief work. Such resistance followed a timetable set by the evolution of the harshness of German measures against Dutch citizens as a whole. Thus, it tragically lagged behind the Nazi schedule for the deportation of the Jews.

This gradual transition from initial resignation to German rule to active opposition against it and its anti-Semitic policies is typified by the story of the van Lennep family. They resented German rule from the beginning of the occupation and knew about Nazi persecution of the Jews through experiences that their son Nicholas had. When he visited Germany just after Kristallnacht, he had been shocked by what he heard and saw there. In 1942, he returned to the student boarding house where he was living in Amsterdam to discover that it had been sealed off and its Jewish owners had been arrested. To get back his confiscated belongings, Nicholas had to undergo Gestapo interrogation about why he had chosen to rent a room from Jews. The next year Nicholas refused to sign the student oath of obedience to German law and its accompanying pledge to work six months in Germany following his graduation. Since the
punishment for not signing was immediate conscription for such labor, he joined the underground, where he served as a courier for the Allies and a distributor of food ration stamps and false identity papers to other fugitives from Nazism. Several months later, he returned home to learn that his parents had built a hiding place for him in a crawl space under a closet. When a friend subsequently asked Mrs. van Lennep to hide her Jewish husband, Mrs. van Lennep consented to the request. For the remainder of the war, the Jewish man resided with the family, retreating to the crawl space whenever there was any threat of being caught.²⁴

Despite their dislike of the occupation and their awareness of the plight of the Jews, the van Lenneps refrained from taking any action until Nazi rule threatened to harm their son. By aiding him, these law-abiding citizens crossed the mental threshold separating passive discontent from active opposition. Their first venture into clandestine activity gave them the courage to rescue the Jewish man and made sheltering him more feasible because they now had a hiding place and could procure additional food and advance warnings about imminent police raids on their home through their son's contacts with the underground.

Resistance-rescuers like the van Lenneps recognized that the Dutch struggle against the Germans included saving the Jews. Such rescuers tend to cite German crimes like the bombing of Rotterdam, reprisal executions of members of the underground, and the conscription of Dutch men for forced labor, in addition to Nazi anti-Semitism, as reasons why they helped Jews. Their grievances against the occupation predisposed them to accede to underground or individual requests to aid Jewish fugitives. Forty-two percent of the Dutch rescuers in the Altruistic Personality Project's sample belonged to resistance groups whose political orientation covered the ideological spectrum from religious conservatives to Marxist radicals. This indicates that there was a broad consensus within the Dutch resistance to save Jews as part of the national struggle against Germany.²⁵

To be sure, this linkage of resistance to rescue was not confined to Holland. In Denmark, where the attempt to deport the Jews followed after the Nazi imposition of a state of emergency in 1943, the collective rescue of almost all the Jews residing there was synchronized and synonymous with the general rebellion against Germany.²⁶ The French reaction to the persecution of the Jews
paralleled that of the Dutch. During the first two years of the occupation, the majority of the population either endorsed or tolerated Vichy’s anti-Semitic policies, anticipating that its collaboration would keep Germany from occupying Southern France and thus shield the French from direct Nazi rule. When this hope was dashed by the German takeover of the South in November of 1942 and the conscription of French labor in 1943, resistance against the Nazis and support for the Jews became more common.27

On the other hand, the solidarity of anti-German resistance movements with Jews was not axiomatic in countries where political anti-Semitism had been strong before the war. In her book on Polish rescuers, Nechama Tec reports that 50 percent of the rescuers in her sample participated in the underground and 55 percent considered their efforts to save Jews a protest against Germany. Though she cites several instances of anti-Semites and right-wingers who helped Jews, she notes that most of the rescuers adhering to particular political ideologies were Socialists or Communists.28 In contrast to countries where the civic equality of the Jews was widely accepted before the outbreak of World War II, the debate over whether to extend support to the Jews as part of the resistance against the Germans was an issue that divided, rather than united, the Polish underground.29

A second category of Dutch rescuers was motivated primarily by bonds of affection, friendship, or loyalty to the Jew or Jews they saved. Louisa Scholten was a housewife in the city of Groningen. Although her husband worked for the underground locating hiding places for Jews, he never involved her in this risky undertaking. But Louisa was drawn into similar covert activities by her concern for a Jewish man who rented a room in her home. When he was ordered to report to a German labor camp in 1941, she tried in vain to convince him not to comply and to remain at her house. A year later she became more alarmed about his safety when she went to Westerbork Transit Camp to bring clothing to relatives of his who had been interned there. Meanwhile, the Jewish man escaped from the Germans and belatedly accepted Louisa’s offer of sanctuary. He then invited one of his brothers to join him and live in the secure hiding place the Scholtens had built in their house by installing a false wall in an upstairs bedroom. In the course of the war, two other Jews found refuge behind this phony wall. Three months before the end of the war, the SS raided the Scholtens’
residence and killed Louisa's husband and Jewish friend. In the tumult Louisa fled on foot and went into hiding for the rest of the war.

Louisa's story illustrates how positive personal relationships with Jews predisposed some gentiles to help these Jews. Her case is remarkable because her adult experiences with Jews enabled her to overcome a childhood aversion to them. Her father had been embittered by what he perceived as unscrupulous business transactions on the part of Jewish competitors and taught his daughter that all Jews were greedy materialists. During the Depression, Louisa had trouble finding a job and in desperation applied for a secretarial position for which she was unqualified. The Jewish owner of the company hired her with the stipulation that she learn shorthand within three months. She worked for him for eleven years and always was well treated. After the German invasion, she quit her job to protest the Aryanization of his company. Her former employer generously granted her three months' severance pay. Louisa's wartime protection of Jews originated from the gratitude she felt towards a group of people who had been kind to her in the past and whose persecution seemed unwarranted in the present. Throughout her interview, she made comments that revealed this sort of reasoning: "All my life has been crossed with Jewish people. I don't know why. That's the way it is sometimes." "I couldn't say no when Jews asked me to help." Louisa's case also demonstrates that the decision to rescue Jews often was a cumulative process, beginning with aiding a friend and subsequently extending protection to his or her relatives and friends, and even to strangers.

It should come as no surprise that feelings of mutual appreciation, friendship, love, and responsibility sometimes withstood the Nazi campaign to break the bonds between gentiles and Jews. People are more likely to help others they already have an attachment to than total strangers. The Altruistic Personality Project's overall sample of rescuers indicates that around twice as many rescuers as bystanders had Jewish coworkers, employees, employers, or friends before the war. Attachment rescuers from Holland rarely explain their actions in terms of the protection of the constitutional rights of Dutch nationals. Instead, abstract principles of law usually appear to have mattered less to them than the personal relationships they had developed with Jews. Of course, the frequency of these relationships was a byproduct of Jewish social
integration, which, in turn, had been fostered by Dutch democratic values. When the Altruistic Personality Project begins to analyze its data on a comparative national basis, I suspect that the national incidence of rescuers who cite previous personal attachments to Jews as their reason for initially helping Jews will be correlated directly to the degree of acceptance Jews had achieved in each country. For example, the percentage of Dutch rescuers attributing their rescue of Jews to friendship appears to be considerably higher than among the Polish rescuers in the project’s interview pool or Nechama Tec’s study.\(^{32}\)

In this regard, it is worth remembering that the story of Anne Frank and her family is a story of friendships that endured the strain of Nazi terror. Miep Gies’s recent memoir depicts a scenario of rescue that is similar in some respects to the tale told by Louisa Scholten. Miep also had been unemployed during the Depression and appreciated the chance to work that Otto Frank had given her then. She soon became both his trusted employee and close friend and regularly socialized with his family and the German Jewish emigrants who often gathered at the Frank home. Thus, Miep gladly joined Frank’s other friends and colleagues, Koophuis and Kraler, in creating a haven in the attic of the building that housed Frank’s business. Included among those who found sanctuary there were Mr. van Dann, her coworker from Frank’s company, and Mr. Dussel, a refugee she met through the Franks who had become her dentist. Furthermore, Miep and her husband also felt obliged to locate hiding places for their Jewish landlady and her two grandchildren.\(^{33}\)

The third, and most distinctively Dutch category of rescuer consists of pious Dutch Calvinists who helped Jews primarily for theological reasons. Let me draw on two such cases that epitomize this type of devout activism. In early 1942 a friend beseeched Theresa Wytema to hide a four-year-old Jewish girl who had been abandoned by her mother. Theresa persuaded her husband Martin to hide the child by reminding him of the parable of the good Samaritan. Soon the Wytemas’ home became a temporary haven for anyone hunted by the Germans. On most nights, there were twelve strangers in addition to the Wytemas’ own six children sleeping in their six-room house. Martin and Theresa insisted that only people who would be difficult to place in other safe houses, like pregnant women and handicapped individuals, could stay with
them for prolonged periods or the duration of the war. During the occupation, the Wytemas harbored approximately 450 persons, the majority of whom were Jews.34

Arie van Mansum was a twenty-year-old who lived with his parents in Maastricht in 1940. During the 1930s, he had met German Jewish refugees who had been helped by his church. By 1942, his church youth group transformed itself into a secret placement agency for Jews trying to evade the Nazis. As a traveling salesman, Arie had a credible alibi for traversing the countryside to identify and persuade trustworthy local families to hide Jews. Once when a Dutch couple agreed to hide a Jewish widow, but not her baby son, Arie decided to keep the child in his own home. Several months later the same scenario was repeated with another Jewish infant. The Germans arrested Arie and imprisoned him for the last eighteen months of the war. Fortunately, his sister carried on his work, and both have been honored as “Righteous Gentiles” by Yad Vashem.35

When probed about their motives, rescuers like Theresa and Arie attribute their decisions to hide Jews primarily to their Dutch Calvinist upbringing and faith. Theresa fondly reminisced about how her father had inspired her own faith through both his words and deeds. His emphasis on living an ethical life had been gleaned from the Jewish and Christian bibles. True to his credo, he also housed Jews when Theresa’s home was under surveillance. Theresa constantly quoted scripture to justify her participation in such dangerous activities. An analysis of her testimony reveals three prominent themes. First, she repeatedly stressed that Christians had an obligation to save God’s chosen people with comments like this: “I think it is one of the privileges that I have to tell others the faithfulness of my Father in Heaven who protects his people. God wanted to protect Israel in the first place.” In the same vein, she remembered telling the first Jewish girl whom she saved that “God will never destroy the Jewish people, and nobody on earth ever will do that because God made that promise. We have accepted our Messiah—Jesus Christ. Your father Isaac is my father Isaac. Your father Abraham is my father Abraham.” Second, Theresa considered it her Christian duty to minister to the needs of the persecuted as Jesus had done. As she put it, “When you are a Christian, you see the world differently. You see it like Jesus sees it. You see the need. The Jews were his people, and his people were
in need." Finally, her Calvinist stress on predestination inclined her to view every opportunity to rescue Jews as divinely ordained. This imbued her with courage in the most harrowing circumstances. When she learned that the mother of the abandoned Jewish girl had assured her child that "Christians would help her," Theresa felt that she had been destined to fulfill this mission of mercy. She and her husband countered their fears of the risks they ran by reciting the ninety-first psalm: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ...Under his wings shalt thou trust."

Arie highlighted similar themes in his interview. He remembered the piety of his parents and especially the biblical lessons they had taught him. The prominence of the Old Testament in their household was evidenced by Arie's pronounced philo-Semitism. Several times he noted that the Jews were God's chosen people, and that without Judaism, there could be no Christianity. Arie also disputed the infamous charge that the Jews had been guilty of killing Christ. To him, Christ clearly had died for everybody's sins, and blaming the Jews was a convenient way for many Christians to evade the evil within themselves. Although Arie admitted that he was scared to death of the Germans, he persisted in his activities out of the consciousness that it was the Christian thing to do. Biblical analogies to the plight of the Jews strengthened this conviction. For example, when the danger arose that members of his congregation were not secretive enough about the Jewish rescue ring, the pastor preached a sermon about what the consequences would have been if the handmaidens of Pharaoh's daughter had revealed that she had adopted the Jewish baby who had been plucked from the bulrushes.

The religious reasoning evidenced by Arie and Theresa bears the distinct imprint of Dutch Calvinism. The Dutch Reformed Church originally had been forged in the independence struggle against Spanish and Catholic domination in the sixteenth century. As a result, it had developed a theological justification for revolt against sacrilegious tyranny that became an article of faith in its earliest confession of beliefs. The fusion of conservative Calvinist values and Dutch nationalism was formalized in the nineteenth century with the creation of the Antirevolutionary party and the Christian Historical Union, both of which opposed liberal secularism, Socialist radicalism, and Catholic sectarianism. Most of the religious
rescuers I have interviewed were members of one of these two parties and associated their religious convictions with political action.  

The Protestant theologian Clark Williamson has observed that Calvinism has tended to take a "more benevolent attitude toward Jews, owing to its higher view of the Hebrew bible and the place of Law in Christian life, and to Calvin's claim that the old and new covenants are identical in substance, differing only in form." To be sure, the Calvinist tradition also propagated the negative Christian views of the Jews and Judaism. The biblical literalism of the Dutch Reformed tradition did perpetuate the anti-Judaic themes of the New Testament, providing a religious rationalization for not helping the Jews during the Holocaust. The conservatism of Dutch Calvinist political parties often associated the Jews with the hated secularizing movements of Marxism and liberalism and justified the alignment of Dutch civic and social life along Christian lines. Moreover, the doctrine of predestination just as easily could be invoked to rationalize passivity, on the assumption that the persecution of the Jews was their divine punishment. Yet the strong Calvinist identification with the Jews as the "Chosen People" and their role in fulfilling God's purpose in history could provide a countervailing positive image of the Jews. As one Calvinist rescuer told me, "We have a special feeling for the Jewish people." In this regard, it is theologically significant that approximately one-third of the rescuers in the Altruistic Personality Project sample belonged to the more traditional Christian Reformed Churches that had seceded from the Dutch Reformed Church in the nineteenth century as a protest against its progressive liberalization. Even though members of these schismatic churches constituted only 8 percent of the Dutch population, they accounted for 25 percent of the rescues of Jews in Holland, according to the estimates of most scholars. The disproportionate representation of congregants from these churches in Jewish rescue efforts and the motivations such rescuers ascribe to their activities serve as graphic testimony to the power of their Dutch Calvinist piety and faith.

An analysis of the lives of such religious rescuers also clarifies the mutual interaction between personality development and social environment. These people derived their morality and habits of helping others from their parents and congregations. They grew up in close, strict families that were deeply involved in their
churches. Thus, their religious subculture reinforced the beliefs and behaviors taught by their parents. During the occupation, these local congregations often became centers of rescue and resistance, providing a support network that facilitated individual participation in activities that may have otherwise appeared too risky. Sometimes, lay people led these movements; at other times ministers organized reluctant and scared congregants. The results of organized religious rescue networks could be impressive. In Nieuwlande, hundreds of Jews were saved when a Calvinist activist named Johannes Post mobilized the villagers to operate a rescue ring out of the town church. Interestingly, Post had overcome his own prejudices against Jews for the sake of defending higher patriotic and religious ideals. Yad Vashem has taken the unprecedented step of honoring the entire town collectively, as well as individually recognizing its 202 residents as “Righteous Gentiles.”

The Calvinist rescuers often cite clergymen or Christian politicians as role models who stiffened their own determination to oppose the Nazis. Theresa, for example, greatly admired such underground leaders and professed her steadfast adherence to the principles of her political party, the Christian Historical Union, by declaring, “They followed the bible; they followed the scripture; and for us that was enough.” Like the majority of the Dutch population, the leadership of the Calvinist churches initially tried to reach an accommodation with the Germans, but then started issuing protests that became stronger as Nazi policies increasingly infringed on their beliefs. Furthermore, they were pressured by the dissident Calvinist theologians who formed the Lunteren Group to take a more forthright stand against the Germans. In July of 1942 the Inter-Church Consultation, an alliance of Dutch Protestant and Catholic churches, threatened to read from their pulpits a statement denouncing the Jewish deportations if the Germans did not desist from this policy. The Nazis responded by offering to spare Jewish converts to Christianity if the protest would not be read. Although the mainstream Dutch Reformed Church accepted this bargain, the Christian Reformed Churches and Catholic Church refused to do so. One hundred Jewish Catholics were immediately deported to Auschwitz as a reprisal. The interviews with Calvinist rescuers demonstrate that they felt they had the blessings of their church leaders, even when this was not always the case. Regrettably, there are too few Dutch Catholics in the Altruistic Personality
Project's interview pool to provide a meaningful comparison with their Calvinist counterparts.

Comparing religiously motivated Dutch rescuers, however, with Polish rescuers motivated by Catholic beliefs reveals striking national religious differences. Such Polish Catholics ascribe their behavior to the more general Christian ethical commandment to "love thy neighbor" rather than to a respect for God's chosen people, the ethics of the prophets, or the approval of their national religious leaders.49 Ewa Kurek-Lesik's recent study of Polish nuns who saved Jewish children shows that they often were following the orders of their superiors, who conceived of monastic service as helping all of humankind in the quest to deserve eternal salvation. In this case, however, the head of each convent was acting on her own moral decisions rather than obeying a policy set by the church hierarchy.50 According to Nechama Tec, most Polish Catholic rescuers of Jews operated without any directive from their clergymen and responded to their own independent interpretation of what Catholicism required them to do in this situation.51

Many of the Dutch who failed to aid Jews during the German occupation probably had backgrounds and personality profiles similar to those of the rescuers I have analyzed here. I surmise that concern for their families, fear of Nazi reprisals, and personal pragmatism, among other reasons, inhibited people who initially may have sympathized with the plight of the Jews from acting on those feelings. As one Dutch historian observed after the war, "One felt sorry for the Jews and congratulated oneself on not being one of them. People gradually got used to Jews having the worst of it."52

Thus, it was left to their more courageous counterparts to pay homage to what was best in Holland's heritage. It is telling that so few of the Dutch rescuers can be classified as socially marginal like the Polish rescuers in Nechama Tec's sample.53 Since positive attitudes towards Jews represented a prewar consensus in Dutch public opinion, the rescuers of Jews stemmed more from the mainstream of Dutch society than from its margins. Their aid to the Jews represented a normative altruism in keeping with typical Dutch values and was akin to the sort of altruism exhibited by the Danes and the Italians.54 For the resistance-rescuers, the past integration of Dutch Jewry made it imperative to save Jews since they were an integral part of the national community. Others felt personally compelled to shield Jewish acquaintances and friends from harm's way. The Calvinist rescuers acted on beliefs and
through organizations that had deep roots in the soil of Dutch history. None of them ever tottered or lost their sense of right, as Anne Frank had feared. No one portrayed their humane legacy better than Anne herself when she noted, "Although others may show heroism in the war or against the Germans, our helpers display heroism in their cheerfulness and affection."\textsuperscript{55}

NOTES

2. For example, see Frederick Barry Chary, \textit{The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution, 1940–1944} (Pittsburgh, 1972); Leni Yahil, \textit{The Rescue of Danish Jewry} (Philadelphia, 1969); Susan Zucchiotti, \textit{The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, and Survival} (New York, 1987).
Western European Perspective," European History Quarterly, XIX:3 (July 1989), pp. 338–39. Blom's more nuanced explanation for the extent of Jewish victimization in Holland is more factually correct and convincing than the accusatory one of Judith Miller, One, by One, by One (New York, 1990), pp. 93–111.


15. Hirschfeld, pp. 266–310; for a depiction of the ostracism of NSB members during the occupation, see the novel by Evert Hartman, War without Friends, trans. Patricia Crampton (New York, 1982).


24. Interview of Nicholas van Lennep by Lawrence Baron and Theodore Linn, January 13, 1984. The transcripts of these interviews are on file with the Altruistic Personality Project, Department of Sociology, Humboldt State University. The rescuers' names have been changed here to protect their confidentiality.

25. Altruistic Personality Project Data Base, VE 15, VE 15A. Themes of resistance...
are often mixed with other motivations. See Interview of Gretje D. by Lawrence Baron, October 30, 1984; Interview of Louisa S. by Ellen Land-Weber, July 2, 1984.


28. Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescuers of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (New York, 1986), pp. 120–28, 226. Sixty percent of the Polish rescuers who expressed a political preference were Communists and Socialists; another 30 percent identified with the Social Democrats or Peasants’ party.


32. Tec, pp. 129–36, 187–88, 227, 233; Altruistic Personality Project Data Base, VE18. An initial screening of the Altruistic Personality Project’s data on Dutch rescuers yields only fragmentary results on this issue. Only 17 percent of the sample indicated whether they rescued Jewish friends or not. Of those, however, 57 percent said they helped rescue close Jewish friends. Only 37 percent of the Polish rescuers in Tec’s sample listed friendship as their motivation for helping Jews.


35. Interview with Arie van Mansum by Lawrence Baron and Theodore Linn, October 22, 1983.

36. Theresa Wytema Interview.

37. Arie van Mansum Interview.


Lawrence Baron


42. Interview of Ruth de J. by Lawrence Baron and Theodore Linn, Sept. 18, 1985.

43. Altruistic Personality Project Data Base, VB18, VB18A, VB28, VB28A, VC8, VC8A. Since the tables for the religious affiliation of the rescuers are incomplete, my estimate is based on the religious affiliation of the rescuers' parents. This finding may confirm the curvilinear relationship between religious beliefs, the degree of one's church commitment, and the extent of one's prejudice towards outsiders. See Rob Eisinga, Albert Felling, and Jan Peters, "Religious Belief, Church Involvement, and Ethnocentrism in the Netherlands," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, XXIX:1 (March 1990), pp. 54–75.


47. Interview of Theresa Wytema.

49. See the article by Zusanna Smolenska in this volume.
51. Tec, pp. 137–49.
52. R. Rijksen quoted in Presser, p. 325.
53. Tec, 150–54.
54. Zuccotti, p. 323. Zuccotti questions whether the marginality theory can be applied to Italian rescuers.
55. Frank, p. 130.