

5 1933 to 1939: Clouds over Europe

Abstract

The Nazi takeover in Germany in early 1933 and the ever-worsening anti-Jewish campaign caused anxiety in Holland. Jewish and other (political) refugees tried to get asylum in Holland or enter the country illegally. Many assumed that Germany would not violate Holland's neutrality. The first Jewish refugee children arrived at the orphanage in Leiden in April 1933. In total some 30 refugee children were taken in by the orphanage in Leiden between 1933 and 1940. Those refugees who were still in Holland on 15th March 1940 found themselves caught under the same Nazi regime they had tried to escape from.

Keywords: Nazi takeover of Germany, Kristallnacht, refugees, Kindertransport, Truus Wijismuller

5.1 1933: Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany

Hitler rose to power on the back of frustration and anger following the German defeat in the First World War, the intolerable burden of debt and imposed penalties, the economic crisis in 1929, failing democracy of the Weimar Republic, and the fear of communism as unemployment rose and benefits were cut. The Nazi Party (National Socialist German Workers' Party, *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) grew from 107 seats in parliament to 230 seats (out of 608) in 1932. Having gained legitimate power in 1933, Hitler quickly converted his position into a dictatorship, using the various institutions of the Nazi Party built up over the preceding fourteen years. All the members of his powerful inner circle, such as Joseph Goebbels, Hermann Goering, and Heinrich Himmler, were already at his side.

The new regime moved fast. The Dachau and the Oranienburg concentration camps, the first such camps in Germany, were operational in March 1933, barely two months after the Nazis took power. Ever larger numbers of real and perceived opponents were locked up in camps all over Germany, usually without due process. As early as 1920, the Nazi Party had included in its programme the intention to

isolate and remove the Jews from German society. They set about implementing this programme without delay or hesitation. On 7th April 1933, a law came into effect to exclude Jewish and other “*politically unreliable*” civil servants and employees from state service. The law had a strong racial basis. For good measure, another law was issued in Hitler’s name on 15th September 1933 to “*protect German [i.e. Aryan] blood and German honour*”. Jewish enrolment in schools and colleges was restricted and Jewish participation in the medical and legal professions was curtailed. More than 400 such laws¹ were issued between 1933 and the outbreak of the war in 1939, many of them not issued by Hitler, but by lower level and local administrations which took their cue from him, without having to be told. The city of Berlin forbade Jewish lawyers and notaries from working on legal matters, the mayor of Munich disallowed Jewish doctors from treating non-Jewish patients, and the Bavarian Interior Ministry denied admission of Jewish students to medical school. Within a year of Hitler coming to power, it had become virtually impossible for Jews to earn a living from professional activities in Germany. By the end of 1933, some 40,000 Jews had left Germany, of which some 4000 had emigrated to the Netherlands.

In 1935 and 1937, German Jews had to declare all assets, at home or abroad: properties, savings, investments – a clear indication that the government was planning to expropriate them. Many Jews saw the signs on the wall and left the country, but at lower levels than in 1933 (on average around 25,000 per year from 1933 to 1937, with another peak after the introduction of the Nuremberg racial legislation in September 1935). Life for Jews had become “*difficult, but not impossible*” (J. Michman, 1987). But in 1938, after the *Anschluss* of Austria and the increasing occurrence of pogroms in Germany, emigration numbers started to rise again, particularly after *Kristallnacht* (Ch. 5.6). The cumulative effect was enormous (USHMM website). The number of Jews in Germany declined from some 523,000 in 1933 to 202,000 in 1939, a decrease of no less than 60%, and to 163,000 by October 1941, when emigration of Jews from Germany was no longer possible. Those who did not leave Germany may have been too old to do so. Others may have been reluctant to be uprooted, and leave their relatives or their possessions behind, believing it could not possibly get much worse, that it would eventually blow over, or they lacked the money, the knowledge, or the required presence of mind to emigrate. However, the most important and sinister barrier before one could leave was the need for an *entry permit to another country*. Many countries restricted the number of refugees they allowed in. Even the USA, being a pre-eminent immigration country, limited access for Jewish refugees from Europe, against overwhelming demand: in June 1939, 27,000 available places under the US

1 US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), Washington, DC.

quota system attracted 309,000 applications from Jews in Germany, Austria and (occupied) Czechoslovakia.²

In the Netherlands, the government also maintained a restrictive policy, quoting fears about unemployment and social disturbance as a reason. Nevertheless, from 1933 onwards a few thousand Jewish refugees had been allowed entry if they had valid papers and enough means of existence. Others, such as the family Gottschalk and the parents of Mindel Färber (Chs. 9.1 and 9.2) arrived by illegally crossing the border between Germany and the Netherlands. Gertrude van Tijn, who played an active role in assisting the refugees, concluded (Wasserstein, 2014) that compared to other Western European countries and the USA, the admission policy in Holland was surprisingly liberal until 1938 (Ch. 5.6). It was the last country to allow Jewish refugees to enter without visa. Between March 1933 and the end of 1937 some 22,000 Jews had moved to Holland, out of 127,000 registered Jewish emigrants (*ibidem*).

Catering for the needs of refugees, regardless of their denomination or status (legal or illegal), was not seen at the time as government business, but as the responsibility of private relief organizations, usually within the framework of the pillarized society. Several committees and other private initiatives to support Jewish refugees from Germany were established in the Netherlands as early as March 1933. The most important were the *Comité Bijzondere Joodsche Belangen* (Committee for Special Jewish Interests, CBJB), which was chaired by Abraham Asscher, a well-known diamond tycoon from Amsterdam,³ and the subordinate *Comité voor Joodsche Vluchtelingen* (Committee for Jewish Refugees, CJV), which was chaired by David Cohen, who was professor of classical languages and history first at Leiden and later at the University of Amsterdam. Both gentlemen were very keen to remain in good standing with the government and worked strictly within its constraints and policies, including the condition that the committee would arrange all funding required to take care of the refugees. Also part of the committee was L.E. Visser, who had been on the Dutch Supreme Court from 1915, becoming its president in 1939. During the German occupation, Asscher and Cohen would become co-chairmen of the *Joodse Raad*, the Jewish Council, which was established in February 1941 by order of the German administration. In that capacity they would maintain their reluctance to do anything which would upset the authorities, whether Dutch or German. It should be noted that such an attitude was displayed by the Dutch bourgeoisie in general, regardless of denomination or religion. But Visser took a

2 USHMM, see at <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org> the articles "german-jewish-refugees-1933-1939" and "united-states-immigration-and-refugee-law-1921-1980".

3 Abraham and Joseph Asscher came over to the UK at the behest of King Edward VII to take charge of the cutting of the 3106 carat Cullinan diamond. Abraham reputedly carried the raw stone in his pocket when they returned to Holland on the ferry.

more independent and courageous stand, as is evident from his communications with David Cohen (J. Melkman, 1974).

5.2 The first refugee children from the East arrive in Leiden

Among the refugees were also unaccompanied children. Many of these children had family or friends in Holland willing to take children into their homes. The Dutch government discouraged that, however, preferring the unaccompanied children to be taken in by institutions such as orphanages and children's homes in order to prevent the refugees from integrating into Dutch society, and hoping that most of the refugees would eventually move on to other countries. Thus, the Jewish and some non-Jewish orphanages in the Netherlands became involved with these refugee children. Moreover, the ministry often transferred the children from one institution to another after just about three months, thus uprooting them before they would be able to settle down.

The Jewish orphanages in the Netherlands provided care for orphans or half-orphans, or children in need of care for other reasons, from a socio-economic perspective. It was not considered self-evident that they would accept children who were fleeing Germany for political reasons, and who often had relatively affluent parents. But inevitably, as the persecution of Jews in Germany intensified, the number of refugee children which were taken into the care of Dutch Jewish institutions increased. The archives of the Jewish orphanage in The Hague show⁴ that the CJV was approached by the Jewish orphanage in Frankfurt am Main in the course of 1933, which asked whether the orphanages in the Netherlands would also accept children who were not orphans but refugees. When the CJV asked the orphanage in The Hague, it replied positively, and many refugee children arrived in The Hague for shorter or longer periods from 1933 onwards. Additional beds were acquired, the attic at the Pletterijstraat was transformed into a hall, and some children were housed with foster families. The largest number of refugee children were taken in by the Central Jewish Orphanage in Utrecht. This orphanage did not have space for so many children, but they had a villa available in nearby Den Dolder, which was used during the holidays. This villa was converted to accommodate the refugees (Crone, 2005).

Table 5.1 lists the refugee children who were taken in by the Jewish orphanage in Leiden.⁵ The children who left Holland before the war were not the focus of this

4 Haags Gemeentearchief, 0194-01; courtesy Miriam Keesing. The archives of the Jewish orphanage in The Hague were found in Moscow and returned to the Netherlands in 2003 (van Crefeld, 2004).

5 From March 1933; to the best of my knowledge.



Figure 5.1: April-June 1933. Marga Gurfinkel, the small girl on a tricycle, just three years old, and one of the first German refugee children to be accommodated by the orphanage in Leiden. From left: Mirjam Frenkel, Sally Montezinos (with autoped), Chellie Leeda, Corrie Frenkel (behind her), Esje van Santen, David Beem, unknown, Esther Appel holding Marga Gurfinkel, Annie Simons (back), and Betsy Wolff (front). Someone is looking out of a dining room window.

study, but information which was available at the time of writing is summarized below. Scope remains for further research.

The first refugees arrived on 6th April 1933, a month after the Nazi takeover in Germany. They were three Gurfinkel children: Rudi, Make and Benjamin, from Köln (Cologne), fourteen, twelve and eleven years old. They were followed ten days later by their three sisters, Esther (ten), Ida (eight) and Marga (three), who was included in a photograph (Fig. 5.1) shortly after arrival. The six Gurfinkels left again on 23rd June 1933 and (officially) became residents of Palestine on 24th December 1934.

Helga and Kurt Gottschalk were transferred from Leiden to the *Burgerweeshuis* in Amsterdam on 10th July 1939. They were still in Amsterdam on the day the Germans invaded, but they escaped four days later on the SS *Bodegraven* and survived the war. Their story is told in Chapter 9.1.

Inge Preuss may have survived the war. Ruth Familier had come to Holland from Spain, which in 1939 was devastated by the Civil War. Her brother Ernst also spent a short time in the Leiden orphanage. They returned to Spain before the German invasion of the Netherlands. Egon Lapidás returned to Germany with his family. He

Table 5.1 Refugee children taken in by the Jewish Orphanage in Leiden, 1933-1943. Listed by date of arrival in Leiden The list is probably not complete.

Name	Date of birth	Place of birth	Leiden Orphanage		Comments
			Arrival	years	
Gurfinkel, Rudi	04-03-1919	Hanau	06-04-1933	0.2	Survived
Gurfinkel, Make	03-09-1920	Köln	06-04-1933	0.2	Survived
Gurfinkel, Benjamin	26-10-1921	Köln	06-04-1933	0.2	Survived
Schipper, Heinrich	30-03-1921	Ex Köln	08-04-1933	0.2	15-9-1942, Auschwitz
Schipper, Klara	09-01-1925	Ex Köln	08-04-1933	0.2	Survived > USA
Schipper, Leon	20-10-1928	Ex Köln	08-04-1933	0.2	Survived > USA
Gurfinkel, Esther	01-05-1923	Köln	16-04-1933	0.2	Survived
Gurfinkel, Ida	28-08-1925	Köln	16-04-1933	0.2	Survived
Gurfinkel, Marga	28-01-1930	Köln	16-04-1933	0.2	Survived
Preuss, Inge	26-02-1928	Berlin	04-10-1933	0.9	Survived
Lapidas, Egon	13-01-1924	Treuburg	15-11-1933	0.2	5-12-1942, Łódź
Jacobsohn, Paula	03-04-1925	Hamburg	17-05-1934	2.5	28-2-1945, Stutthof
Brink, Inho ten	22-09-1932	Lingen	02-03-1936	6.4	6-10-1944 Auschwitz
Wygoda, Israel	25-10-1922	Fulda	13-09-1936	4.5	Survived > France
Protter, Ralph	10-05-1930	Köln	12-04-1937	5.9	26-03-1943, Sobibor
Günsberg, Fanny	15-01-1927	Gelsenkirchen	05-01-1938	5.2	26-03-1943, Sobibor
Günsberg, Lothar	22-04-1928	Gelsenkirchen	24-10-1938	4.4	26-03-1943, Sobibor
Familier, Ruth	08-12-1929	Köln	01-08-1939	0.5	Survived > Spain 1939
<i>Kristallnacht 9th/10th November 1938</i>					
Adler, Lotte	08-02-1925	Frankfurt a/M	22-11-1938	4.3	26-03-1943, Sobibor
Adler, Henny	23-07-1930	Frankfurt a/M	22-11-1938	4.3	26-03-1943, Sobibor
Strauss, Edith	03-06-1930	Buchen	22-11-1938	0.9	Survived > USA 1939
Liffmann, Ruth	16-11-1934	Beckrath?	?-04-1939	?	Survived > Belgium
Gottschalk, Helga	18-11-1932	Geilenkirchen	20-04-1939	0.2	Escaped SS <i>Bodegraven</i>
Gottschalk, Kurt	15-07-1937	Geilenkirchen	20-04-1939	0.2	Escaped SS <i>Bodegraven</i>
David, Bermann	09-05-1937	Köln	20-04-1939	0.2	17-09-1943, Auschwitz
Schlesinger, Anni	05-02-1934	Vienna	20-04-1939	0.2	06-10-1944, Auschwitz
Goldenberg, Greta	24-01-1936	Amsterdam	04-12-1939	2.3	05-03-1943, Sobibor
Färber, Mindel	05-04-1939	Düsseldorf	08-01-1941	2.2	Survived Palestine
Herskovits, Eva	08-03-1928	Hanover	18-06-1941	0.4	Survived > USA
Wahrhaftig, Gusta	31-10-1940	Den Haag	12-1-1943	?	30-3-1943 Sobibor
Total: 30					



Figure 5.2: Heinrich Schipper in Belgium, c. 1940? Courtesy Alg. Rijksarchief Brussels/Dienst Archief Oorlogsslachtoffers.

was deported on 24th October 1941 from Berlin to Łódź (Litzmannstadt), where he was killed, probably on or around 5th December 1942.

On 6th April 1933, three Schipper children arrived: Heinrich (twelve), Klara (eight), and Leon (four). They left Leiden after three months. They were stateless. At some stage, the family moved to Belgium. Heinrich was registered in the *Jodenregister* of Antwerp on 19th December 1940, the day after a German decree ordered Jews to register themselves. Contrary to Dutch Civil Registry, recording faith was unconstitutional in Belgium. Heinrich (Fig. 5.2) was caught in a razzia and incarcerated in Kazerne Dossin (see Ch. 8.4), his parents were arrested one and two weeks later. They were deported from Kazerne Dossin and killed in

Auschwitz on 14th and 28th September⁶. Klara (Claire) survived in onderduik. Leon was arrested but released from Dossin together with the other arrested children from the Wezembeek Orphanage near Brussels, following intervention by the Queen Mother Elizabeth⁷. Leon passed away on 16th January 2015, Claire on 3rd January 2018.

Bermann David (David is his family name), Anni Schlesinger, and Ruth Liffmann, had come from the Jewish orphanage in Rotterdam, and were transferred together to the orphanage in Leiden. Bermann and Anni spent the months of April to July 1939 in Leiden, just as Helga and Kurt Gottschalk, before being transferred to the *Burgerweeshuis* in Amsterdam.⁸ Anni and Bermann were transferred to Westerbork, respectively a month and just a week before the escape of so many *Burgerweeshuis* children on the SS *Bodegraven*, mentioned above and described in Chapter 9.1. Ruth Liffman joined her father in Brussels on 13th June 1939. Being four years old, she had to be accompanied on the train. Following some discussion with the Interior Ministry about who should pay the costs, the Vereeniging Centraal Israëlitisch Wees- en Doorgangshuis “Machseh Lajesoumiem” (the foundation behind the Jewish Ophanage in Leiden) covered the expense. The father came to Essen on the Dutch-Belgian border to collect his daughter.

6 Courtesy Mr. Gunter Vandeplas, Algemeen Rijksarchief Brussels.

7 Courtesy Mrs. B. Bikker. On Wezembeek: see Jacques Wynants in: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, tome 77, fasc. 4, 1999, and Schram & Styvel (www.vrt.be 25-8-2019).

8 See Dokin.nl.



Figure 5.3: Ruth (left) and Eva (right) Herskovits with parents and older sister Grete in Hanover, on 3rd January 1939, the day before the two girls were sent to Holland. Photo enhanced by K.J. Dijkstra; private collection Herskovits family, by permission.

Some others, like Ralph Protter and Fanny and Lothar Günsberg, remained in Leiden until the liquidation of the orphanage on 17th March 1943 (Ch. 7). It is not clear at this time why some refugees were kept on the move, while others were not.

The family of Eva Herskovits and her twin sister, Ruth, lived in Hanover, Germany. Ruth published an extensive biography of the family in German (2003) and English: *"A final reckoning: A Hannover family's life and death in the Shoah"* (Herskovits, 2002; Gutmann, 2013⁹). The parents, Samuel Herskovits and Helene Kiss, hoped to move to Britain. Leaving Germany became urgent after Kristallnacht (9th/10th November 1938). They decided to send the two girls to Holland on the *Kindertransport* of 4th January 1939, much against Eva's wish. A family photograph was taken (Fig. 5.3) the day before departure.

9 I am grateful to Mrs. B. Bikker *Stichting Herdenking Jodenvervolging Leiden*, who drew my attention to this book, shortly before the manuscript was finalized. It was too late to move this text to Chapter 9, where it would be better positioned. A Dutch summary of Ruth's book is available on www.herdenkingleiden.nl/. More information about the children mentioned in this chapter will be included in this website.

Ruth (Gutmann, 2013) recalled:

On January 3, 1939, our parents took Grete, Eva, and me to the photographer on Goethestrasse to document what would be our final day together. The next day we assembled with the other children at the railroad station. We joined a transport from Berlin. This was nothing like the vacation trips we used to take with our parents. The railroad station had lost its air of pleasurable anticipation. It was merely grimy and deserted that morning. Eva's protests had been to no avail. She and I were setting out alone. [...] I can still see their faces, especially my mother's. Her tears streamed down her face, but she made no effort to stop crying and to wipe them away. [...] Within days [after arrival in Holland] the first letter from our parents arrived. They sent us the photograph of our family taken the last day we were together. Eva's unhappiness, much more vocal than mine, was somewhat assuaged when she held the picture in her hands. It hurt me to see the grave expression in the eyes of Father and Grete. Our mother even sadder and resigned looked into the camera. Eva insisted that the picture be kept under her pillow, and she was relieved when I agreed to her demand. All I had to do to remember their faces was to close my eyes. Every night before I went to sleep, I saw them as clearly as if they were standing before me.

After quarantine they were initially placed in the *Emmahuis* in Beverwijk (on the coast), then in the *Burgerweeshuis* in Amsterdam.

Mid-May their sister Grete, then seventeen years old, passed by on her way to Britain with bad news. Ruth recalled:

Mrs. Wijsmuller, a senior official of the Refugee Committee who with her husband's occasional assistance supervised our group home, had arranged to give us a few hours of complete privacy for our reunion with Grete. We went to her home, located in a beautiful old house on Nassaugracht, one of the streets bordering on a canal. Her housekeeper, whom we also knew from her visits to the Burgerweeshuis, showed us into a dark, though highly polished, dining room. Lunch, set on a table by the window overlooking the water, consisted of white bread with chocolate spread, a favourite treat in Holland. As soon as we were alone, we began to question Grete about our mother. Haltingly she told us what had actually happened at home in Hannover. Our mother had died, [...] probably of pneumonia. The notes Father sent us from her were written in preparation for her stay in the hospital. By the time Father finally told us that she had undergone an operation, she was no longer alive.

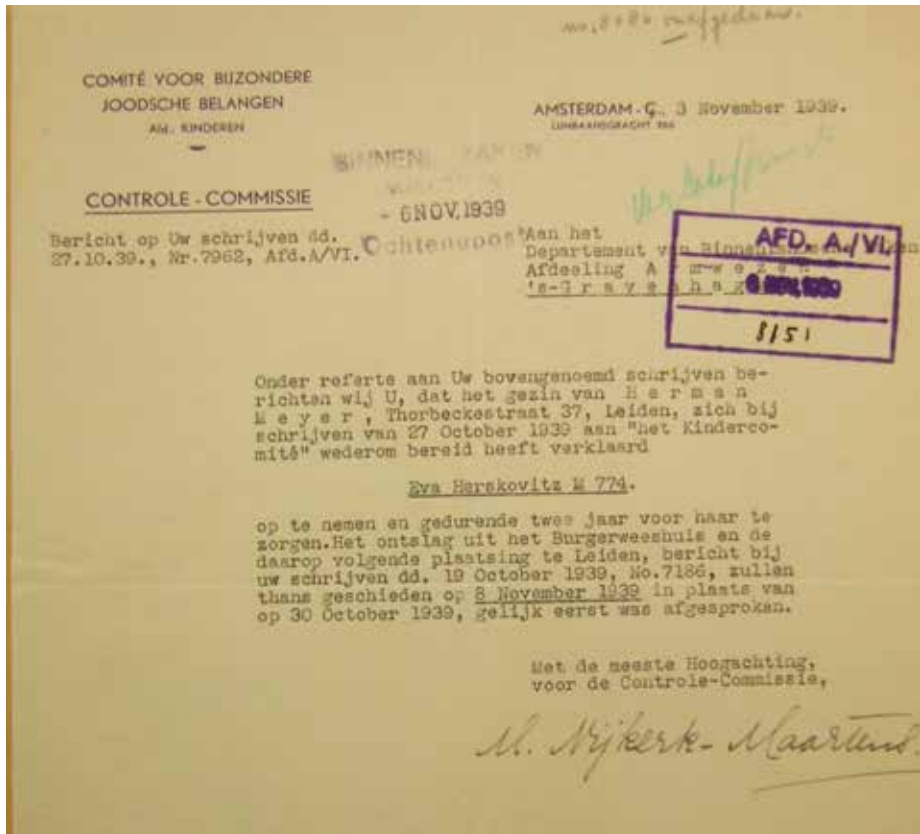


Figure 5.4: From CBJB to Interior Ministry, 3rd November 1939, confirming that Mr. Herman Meyer is prepared to accept Eva Herskovits in foster care for the coming two years, and that Eva can therefore be released by the Burgerweeshuis in Amsterdam as per 8th November 1939. Source: Dokin.nl, courtesy M. Keesing, 2016.

The preference of the Dutch government to place refugee children in institutions rather than with families was not an ironclad policy. Where possible the CBJB arranged for refugee children to transfer to foster families. They kept lists of families willing to accept refugee children throughout the country but needed to obtain permission from the Interior Ministry to place them. The CBJB tried to place Eva and Ruth as closely together as possible. In July 1939 they had found two foster families living close to each other in The Hague. But when one of these addresses, originally intended for Ruth, had to be allocated to another child, the CBJB cancelled the placement of Eva to prevent the girls being separated. Three months later, two new addresses were found, in Leiden, in the same street.

In November 1939 Eva was transferred (Fig. 5.4) from the *Burgerweeshuis* to the family of Herman Meijer, Thorbeckestraat no. 37, who had committed himself to take

care of her for two years. At the same time Ruth was going to the family of Victor Bloemkoper, Thorbeckestraat no. 17, no more than 200 metres away. There were other Jewish families living in this neighbourhood, and the Jewish orphanage was just another 170 metres away, around the corner. Everybody knew each other, playing in the streets, attending the same elementary school, going to the synagogue. But Eva was not happy with her foster family.¹⁰ The family Meijer had a very different background¹¹ compared with Ruth's foster family (Bloemkoper). They were above-average wary and assertive, and not easily intimidated by the German oppression. Daughter Gerda was active in the resistance (Meijer-Wijler, 1993), together with Emilie and Hijme Stoffels, who came to live in same neighbourhood in early 1942 (Ch. 6.5). The entire Meijer family survived the war in *onderduik*.

Eva left the Meijer family and was registered as resident of the Jewish orphanage on 18th June 1941.¹² Ruth stayed with the family Bloemkoper during this time. In late October 1941 the girls were unexpectedly ordered by their father to return to Hanover, and they joined their family again on 7th November 1941. His original idea had been that in Holland the girls would be “*closer to England*”, and Grete had in fact emigrated to Britain just weeks after Ruth and Eva went Holland, as mentioned above. But from September 1939 England had been at war with Germany and moving to the UK was no longer feasible. Instead, Samuel had been working on going to Cuba. But he was obviously not aware that the Nazis had decided, just about the time he recalled the girls to disallow Jews from leaving the Reich altogether (RSHA decree of 23rd October 1941), and they found themselves stuck in Hanover.

In 1944 the family was deported to Theresienstadt, and from there to Auschwitz where Eva and Ruth escaped death when they were selected by Joseph Mengele for his so called “*twin research*”. They were liberated in May 1945 after going through several other concentration camps and emigrated to the USA. But the war traumas did not leave Eva; she took her own life on 12th July 1973. Eva's daughter to Barbera Bikker,¹³ personal communication, 2020):

On the anniversary of her father's death at the hands of the Nazis in Auschwitz, I think it is important to tell the truth, even when it is sad. So many survivors were

10 There is no suggestion that the family Meijer was to blame for this.

11 There were many families Meijer in Leiden, three of which had been cattle dealers in Vlagtwedde in the far north-eastern part of the Netherlands. This may lead to confusion.

12 Ruth writes that Eva had moved to the orphanage before May 1940, but the move was only registered on 18th June 1941. It is highly unlikely that the orphanage would have failed to register her (with the town hall and the alien police) within a few days of her moving in.

13 Stichting Herdenking Jodenvervolging Leiden.

so wounded by the traumas they lived through that they eventually took their own lives. Unfortunately, my mother was one of those people.

The last pre-war national census (1930) registered 111,917 Jewish Dutchmen. The vast majority was born in the Netherlands, and practically all of them were Dutch citizens. By 1940, their number had increased by some 20,000 Jewish refugees from the East (de Jong, 1969-1994, vol. 5, p. 496; Presser, 1965, p. 418). Since the number of refugees which were allowed entry is estimated at approximately 40,000,¹⁴ it implies that about half of the immigrants moved on to other countries before the war, as the Dutch government had hoped. The attitude¹⁵ of the Dutch government may unwittingly have saved the lives of an unknown number of them, if they succeeded in leaving continental Europe in time. The refugees in Table 5.1 who were allowed to stay in Holland, such as Lotte and Henny Adler (Ch. 5.7), were overtaken by the German onslaught and found themselves caught again under the same Nazi regime which they tried to escape from when coming to Holland.

As mentioned above, Truus Wijsmuller facilitated the meeting of Ruth and Eva Herskovits with their sister Grete. Among the non-Jewish people who supported the refugees seeking to enter Holland, Truus (née Meijers, 1896-1978) stands out. She came from a liberal Protestant family in Alkmaar and became involved in refugee work soon after the First World War. After first engaging herself with aid for children in need in defeated Austria, she realized the growing predicament of Jews in Germany as early as 1933, becoming active in the relief activities for Jewish refugees. She made several trips to Germany to collect relatives of Jews in Holland and bring them safely across the border. She became well known to the members of the above-mentioned Jewish relief committees (particularly Gertrude van Tijn of the CJV), and their counterparts in the UK. When the British government agreed, after Kristallnacht (Ch. 5.6), to waive the most restrictive visa requirements for an unspecified number of Jewish children seeking asylum, the British relief organizations were at a loss how to put it into effect, and Truus was asked to assist in organizing an emigration programme. She travelled to Vienna in December 1938 to facilitate the release of children who could qualify for these special UK entry papers (Keesing, 2013). She managed to talk directly to Adolf Eichmann,¹⁶ who was

14 *Andere Tijden*, 7th October 2015; it is not clear if all illegal immigrants are included in this figure.

15 It should be noted that by 1939 there were also some 25,000 non-Jewish refugees in Holland, resulting from Nazi persecution of communists and other unwanted political movements (<http://www.volkstellingen.nl>). The Dutch government was not particularly happy to harbour too many of these refugees either.

16 Eichmann joined the SD HQ in Berlin in 1934, and played a role chasing many Jews out of Germany, and out of Austria after 1938 (where Truus met him). He became head of Section IVB4 in the RSHA in Berlin, where he was responsible for the efficient technical and logistical implementation of the "Final

stationed in Vienna at that time and was in charge of “Jewish Affairs” (Austria had become part of the German Reich due to the *Anschluss* in March 1938). Eichmann told her that she could take away 600 Jewish children *if she could do that within five days*. Reputedly, he did not expect her to achieve that. But she did, and on 10th December 1938 a train left Vienna with 600 children to Holland. Most of the children proceeded to the UK via Hoek van Holland, while some 100 remained in the Netherlands (*ibidem*). It was not the first, nor the last of her exceptional achievements. Her successful attempt to let some 74 refugee children (including Kurt and Helga Gottschalk) escape to the UK on the last day of the German invasion, one hour before the Dutch army capitulated on 14th May 1940 and while Rotterdam was burning, stands out as much as the deal she made with Eichmann. This part of the story is told in Chapter 9.1.

5.3 1934: Life goes on; another ceremonial photograph

Life in the orphanage in Leiden continued after 1933 much as before. More photographs were taken (Fig. 5.5). Most of the refugees (nine out of eleven) who had arrived in Leiden in 1933 had been transferred out again by the end of that year. After the initial peak in 1933, the number of Jewish refugees arriving in Holland from Germany remained relatively stable until 1938. In that same period seven new refugees were accepted by the orphanage in Leiden (Table 5.1). Five of those would become “permanent” residents in the orphanage: Inho ten Brink, Israel Wygoda, Ralph Protter, and Fanny and Lothar Günsberg.

Paula Jacobsohn (Fig. 5.5, no. 11) stayed in Leiden for two and a half years and moved to the orphanage in Utrecht in November 1936 (Crone, 2005). In February 1942 the refugee children in Utrecht were deported to Westerbork (see Ch. 7.2). She was deported to Theresienstadt on 18th January 1944, and from there to Auschwitz and Stutthof (near Danzig). She did not survive.

Herman Stofkooper and Lodi Cohen, also in Figure 5.5 (nos. 2 and 3), were related: Herman’s mother was Sophia Cohen, family of Lodi as well as Lies Cohen, the second wife of Director Italie.

In April 1934 another assembly photograph of all the orphanage inhabitants was taken (Fig. 5.6) just like the one from 1932 (Fig. 4.14). These two pictures are the only such photos known to date. No fewer than 49 people (out of 53) could be identified with confidence.

Solution” throughout occupied Europe. His capture and subsequent trial in Jerusalem (1960-1962) opened the eyes of the world to the immensity of the Holocaust.



Figure 5.5: Summer 1934. Photo taken by Mimi Weiman at the back of the building, in front of the half-round annex.

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Sientje Spiro | 8 Annie Simons ? | 15 Reina Segal |
| 2 Herman Stofkooper | 9 Mirjam Frenkel | 16 Jet van den Berg |
| 3 Lodi Cohen | 10 Sal Porcelijn | 17 Corrie Frenkel |
| 4 Ies Cohen | 11 Paula Jacobsohn | 18 Jetty Bobbe |
| 5 Esther Appel | 12 Leo Auerhaan | 19 Louis Limburg |
| 6 Joop Worms | 13 Marie van den Berg | 20 Harry Spier |
| 7 Henny Jansen (Behr) | 14 Didia Klein | 21 unidentified |

It may have irked Nathan Italie that he was not present for the first photo, due to his wife, Sara Schaap, being ill and her death just a few weeks later. That may have prompted him to order another one to be taken so soon after the first one. Nathan, now 44, had decided to marry again: with Lies Cohen (Ch. 5.5). The marriage took place on 23rd July 1934, three months after this photograph was taken. Two people (no. 12 and no. 40) remain unidentified, while no. 31 is probably Maurits Levie, and no. 46 may be Victor Wittenburg, but their identification could not be independently confirmed.

The orphanage in Leiden was a “transit institution”, and indeed from time to time children who reached age five or six were transferred to another orphanage. Some children were transferred to one of the institutions for special care (Table 1.3): Bergstichting in Laren, Rudelsheim in Hilversum, or Achisomov in Apeldoorn. Some



Figure 5.6: Assembly photograph, April 1934, photo taken by Mimi Weiman at the back of the building, in front of the half-round annex.

1	Bram Spiro	15	Ies Cohen	29	Rachel Bierschenk	43	Mieke Dagloonder
2	Jacq. Witteboom	16	Henny Jansen	30	Henriette van Pels	44	Sally Montezinos
3	Karel van Santen	17	David Beem	31	Maurits Levie (?)	45	Reina Segal
4	Jaap de Vries	18	Esther Appel	32	Louis Limburg	46	Victor Wittenburg (?)
5	Mimi Weiman	19	Joop Worms	33	Inge Preuss	47	Frieda Lichtenbaum
6	Herman Stofkooper	20	Judith Pront	34	Charles Kirchenbaum	48	Herman Rozeveld
7	Mien Beem	21	Leo Auerhaan	35	Mirjam Frenkel	49	Barend Ritmeester
8	Esther van Santen	22	Sientje Spiro	36	Jettie Bobbe	50	Salomon Ritmeester
9	Floor Altenberg	23	Betsie Wolff	37	Bram Degen	51	Harry Spier
10	Lodie Cohen	24	Mien Gobes	38	Marie van den Berg	52	Hans Porcelijn
11	Sal Porcelijn	25	Didia Klein	39	Jopie Beem	53	Hans Kloosterman
12	?	26	Jet de Leeuw	40	unidentified nanny		
13	Sal Weiman	27	Nathan Italie	41	Corrie Frenkel		
14	Hetty de Jong	28	Jet van den Berg	42	Hijman Cohen		

witness accounts suggest that one or two children were expelled for misconduct. But a surprising number of children never left the orphanage until they reached the regulatory maximum age of eighteen years. During the German occupation the rule became meaningless because Jews were not allowed to change their residence.

Mimi Weiman (Fig. 5.7) left the orphanage on 30th April 1935, two months before her eighteenth birthday. In her extensive interviews with L.P. Kasteleyn she tempered the rosy view one may have had about the orphanage. Her grandmother



Fig 5.7: Mimi Weiman, April 1935.

had brought her in January 1927 when she was nine years old. Upon arrival she had to relinquish her personal possessions: an earring and a gold watch which her grandmother had given her. She only got them back upon departure eight years later. After elementary school, she attended the *huishoudschool*, the standard vocational school for girls who were regarded as “future wives”. Ms. Bierschenk assisted her in using a sewing machine, Ms. de Leeuw with learning how to cook. For years Mimi did duty in the linen room on the top floor.

We lived in a straitjacket, had no say in anything. Degrading punishments were meted out, and – worse – often without any reasonable justification. Cancelling the holiday in case progress at school was deemed insufficient; being locked up alone in a small room, physical punishment.

Upon leaving, she received an outfit: underwear, two dresses, aprons, and a nurse’s uniform because she was going to work at a convalescence home on the coast (*JoZeBeKo*¹⁷). But she was not happy there and soon left. Returning to the orphanage was apparently a possibility, but she found the idea to go back “*abhorrent*”.

Schooling in this period also continued as before. Most children from age six attended one of the two Langebrug elementary schools (Fig. 5.8). From age twelve (if they had not repeated classes) they attended an intermediate-level secondary school, or a vocational training institute. Herman Stofkooper and Lodi Cohen were, by exception, attending higher secondary education. That privilege was not granted to Fanny Günsberg, Piet de Vries’ girlfriend, although Piet was certain that she would have done well. There may have been more pupils who would have done well in higher education, if they had been given the opportunity.

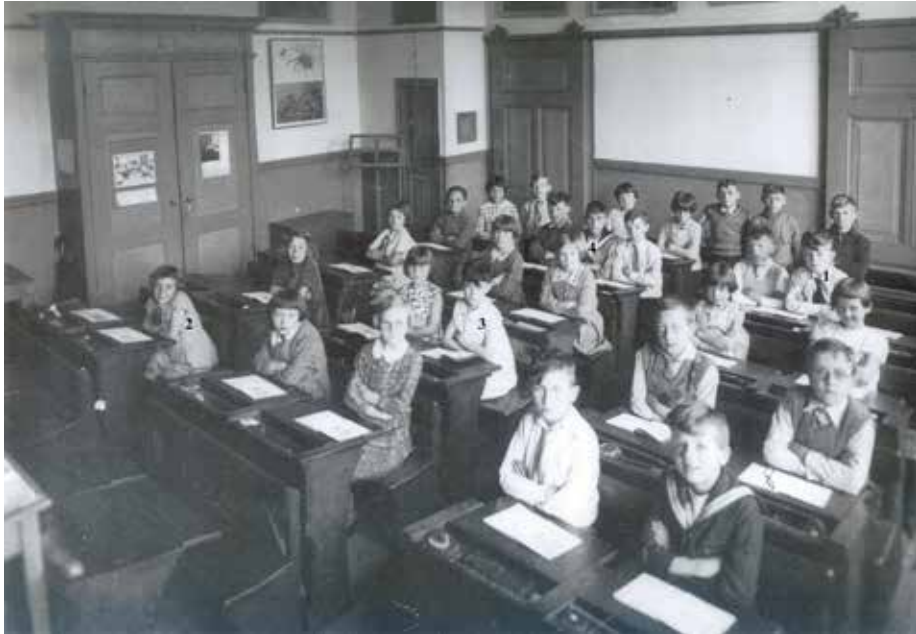


Figure 5.8: April 1936, grade 5, Langebrug bovenschool. Jan Voogt (1) had three Jewish classmates, all three from the orphanage: Jettie Bobbe (2), Jet van den Berg (3), and Louis Limburg (4, at the back). Photograph provided by Jan Voogt.

5.4 1935: Piet de Vries arrives, ten years old

Piet was born on 12th March 1925 in the *Nederlands Israëlitisch Ziekenhuis*, a Jewish hospital on the Nieuwe Keizersgracht 100-114 in Amsterdam. He was the son of a Jewish mother, Rebecca Franschman. His non-Jewish father, Wouter de Vries, was a *“bierbottelaars knecht”*, a worker in a beer bottling factory, who died on 21st February 1934, at age 33.

For Hans Kloosterman, who arrived at age two, the orphanage was everything, his home and his family; he had little else. He described his years in the orphanage as “the best of my life”. He emigrated to Australia after the war. Once contact with “Holland” was established in 2000 (arranged by L.P. Kasteleyn), he was very keen to also contact Piet de Vries and Bram Degen.

Piet (Fig. 5.9), who arrived in Leiden at age ten, and who maintained close contact with his mother, had a more distant view with respect to the orphanage. Nevertheless, even he, who had lived in Amsterdam under dreadful circumstances before coming to Leiden, concluded that: *“going home to our families, we fell from heaven to earth. Everything we needed was provided for [in Leiden] and we were free as birds in the sky.”* At the same time, the regime was not soft: *“If one the children*



Figure 5.9: November 1937. Piet de Vries (12) in front with the ball; his soccer friends behind him from left: Hans Porcelijn (12), Leo Auerhaan (15), Bram van Stratum (13) and Louis Limburg (14). Behind them the windows of the dining hall.



Figure 5.10: Hans Kloosterman, summer holiday, 1937. Behind him from left: Corrie Frenkel, Esther Appel, and Frieda Lichtenbaum. Esther had left the orphanage in 1936 when she was eighteen.

in the room began to cry at night, before you could do anything, half of them were crying as well. No staff came to have a look."

Children who still had family (most of them had one or even both parents) spent two weeks of the summer holiday with them, although in some cases the parent did not maintain contact with their child. Piet usually spent the summer holiday with his mother in Amsterdam. Having lived much of his early years in Amsterdam,



Figure 5.11: This photograph, taken in the early summer of 1936, only came to light in 2020. We could identify 18 (out of 25) people with certainty (courtesy Leonard and Martine Kasteleyn); the identity of 5 others is qualified by “probably” or “possibly”. These relaxed, impromptu group photographs tell us something about the special character of the Leiden orphanage: the mixture of children of all ages, the laughing faces, the many “hands-on-shoulders” (as noticed already in Ch. 4.3). Some children were barely two years old when they arrived, and many children spent an extraordinary long time together in the orphanage. As Hans Kloosterman wrote, “they were my brothers and sisters”. Photograph JHM F1635-6, courtesy Jewish Historical Museum, Amsterdam.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. Jettie Bobbe | 10. Hans Porcelijn | 19. Rita Arndt |
| 2. Louis Limburg | 11. Lenie (nanny) | 20. Betsy Wolff |
| 3. Mirjam Frenkel | 12. <i>probably</i> Willem v. Weddingen (<i>Semmie</i>) | 21. Piet de Vries |
| 4. <i>probably</i> Mary Konijn | 13. Esther Appel | 22. Corrie Frenkel |
| 5. Sally Montezinos | 14. <i>probably</i> Francina van Weddingen | 23. Paula Jacobsohn |
| 6. Frieda Lichtenbaum | 15. Herman Rozeveld (<i>Dikkie</i>) | 24. Hennie Feniger |
| 7. <i>possibly</i> Max Konijn | 16. unidentified | 25. unidentified |
| 8. <i>possibly</i> Willy Blog | 17. Juul Beem | |
| 9. Joop de Vries | 18. Reina Segal | |

he was a “native” of the city. His girlfriend in the orphanage during his final years there, Fanny Günsberg (she arrived in January 1938), usually spent the summer with her father in Weert (Limburg).

Children who had no family to go to, like Hans Kloosterman (Fig. 5.10; but his mother visited him in Leiden every few weeks), were entertained in Katwijk, or elsewhere on the North Sea coast not far from Leiden, for a summer holiday. The picture was probably taken at “*JoZeBoKo*”, a Jewish convalescence and holiday



Figure 5.12: Ms. Rachel Bierschenk in the dunes with some members of her “young ladies” social club. From left: Sientje Spiro, an unidentified nanny, behind her Jupie Pront, Mimi Weiman, Rachel Bierschenk, Esther van Santen, unidentified lady, Annie Simons (?).

institute in Wijk aan Zee. Esther Appel, in uniform, worked there. She had left the orphanage in September 1936 when she was eighteen years old. The four knew each other well; they had spent many years together in the orphanage in Leiden. Hans had been there for a week when Esther arrived on 10th December 1929.

Upon his arrival in Leiden, Ms. de Leeuw decided to give Piet a more Jewish-sounding name and called him Daniel. But he himself reverted to his original name soon after he was taken from Leiden to Westerbork in March 1943.

Director Italie maintained the basic orthodox religious rules and regulations. But he was remarkably liberal in many other aspects. The children, from age thirteen, were allowed to visit friends elsewhere in Leiden in the evening; friends were also welcome in the orphanage, which must have been a nice place to visit after 1929. Leiden before the war was not an affluent city,¹⁸ and for some visiting children the new orphanage was probably a place of unparalleled luxury. The liberty to make gentile friends suited some of the older children very well, such as Lotte Adler (Ch. 5.6).

Piet remembers the evenings in the orphanage as almost always enjoyable and cosy. That is to say: until Friday afternoon, when it was all over, and the religious

¹⁸ On the contrary, Leiden was reputed to be the second most impoverished city in Holland after Amsterdam.

norms were strictly imposed. Saturday morning the entire orphanage attended Sabbath service from 7:30 to 9:30 am, before taking breakfast. Another service was attended, by all, in the afternoon, and yet another in the evening. Two more visits to the synagogue had to be made during weekdays. Years later, Piet provoked the director's ire by shaving on sabbath. Perhaps surprisingly given his background, he was a member of a Zionist youth organization.¹⁹

Piet had arrived in Leiden with his brother Joop, who was two years younger (Fig. 5.11). He also had a sister, Marietje, who was born 2nd January 1924 and thus a year older than Piet. She was placed in the Ashkenazi girls' orphanage in Amsterdam. After leaving the orphanage she went to work at Het Apeldoornse Bos, a Jewish psychiatric institution. She wrote to Piet in Leiden; two important letters from 1943, the last ones she wrote, have been preserved (Ch. 7.3).

The photo in Figure 5.12 dates from 1934. All these years, Ms. Rachel Bierschenk (Fig. 6.16) ran a small social club in the orphanage. Members were asked to pay a minimal contribution. Her central position at the back and her smile seem to reflect her sense of proud ownership of the little club. The woman in the dark dress second from right may be the mother of the unidentified nanny, who probably was German.

In the previous chapter (Fig. 4.13) it was noted that the women of the "permanent staff", in this case Ms. Mien Gobes, appear on some of the photographs taken by (and with) the older girls. Ms. Gobes also appears in Figure 5.15.

5.5 The family of Director Italic

Nathan Italic became director of the Jewish orphanage in Leiden in 1922. He and Sara Schaap had no children of their own, which was in accordance with the regulations of the orphanage, which stipulated that the *"father and mother of the house, must be a properly married man and wife, without children of their own, of upright religious standing, and well versed in the demands of a strict Jewish orthodox household and the education of Israelite children"*. Sara's family had a butcher's shop in Rotterdam; when during the war, some ten years after Sara's death, it became virtually impossible to obtain kosher meat in Leiden, the orphanage was provisioned by Sara's family.

Nathan came from an orthodox family; he was the eldest of four boys and one girl. His brother Gabriel was teaching classical languages at the Tweede Stedelijk Gymnasium (later Maerlant Lyceum) in The Hague. He survived the war, the only one of the five siblings, in Theresienstadt, and left us a valuable daily journal covering his entire war period experiences (published by W.M. de Lang, 2009). Their brother Arthur had a son, Elchanan, who also survived the war, with the help of Hijme Stoffels (Ch. 9.9).

19 They had an assembly place behind Breestraat, along or close to Mosterdsteeg.



Figure 5.13: Nathan and Lies Italie-Cohen with Hanna and Elchanan, c. 1938, in the director's living quarters, also his office, on the ground floor.

Nathan had been in charge of a deaf-mute institution, before joining the orphanage in Leiden, and he could read lips. The children were aware of that, and watched their words, even if they were outside and the director was looking at them through the windows. He had a natural authority, without being an authoritarian: *"he was much too cultured to ever raise his voice"*. He also had a particular, solemn style in addressing the older children; letters arriving in Leiden from Piet's mother were handed down to him by the director with the words: *"Mister de Vries, here is a letter from Madame your Mother."*

After Sara had died in late 1932, aged 35, Nathan married again, on 23rd July 1934, with Elizabeth ("Lies") Cohen, the daughter of Hartog Cohen, who had been chazzan in Leiden until his death in 1930²⁰ and who lived on Wasstraat, just a few blocks away from the orphanage. On 11th May 1935, a daughter was born, Hanna Sara, and on 8th February 1937, a son, Elchanan Tsewie (Fig. 5.13). This event was of course not foreseen in the 1927 building plans, but a room on the first floor, above the large extension and playroom, was converted into a bedroom for the two children. The governors were very satisfied with Nathan being director and if they had any objection to the director having his own children in the orphanage, they were apparently not

20 His death probably caused Lodi and Izak (Ies) Cohen to end up in the orphanage in April 1930; see Chapter 9.6.

prepared to lose him for such a reason. Many photographs have survived showing one or both children together with other orphanage children. Clearly, they were accepted by them as part of the “family”, even though they had their own bedroom and took their meals in the director’s quarters (except on special occasions).

These years, 1935 to 1939, despite the ever-darkening clouds over Europe, may have been the happiest in Nathan’s life, not in the least because of the blessing of having his own children. He was equally dedicated to his wards in the orphanage, he had a strong staff team at his disposal, and a modern, well-equipped, building. With the memories of Stille Rijn behind him, he was probably well aware of his good fortune (Fig. 5.13).

5.6 1938: Kristallnacht (9th/10th November) and the Kindertransports

In early 1938 the refugee admission policy in the Netherlands (with respect to Jewish and other refugees) had become more restrictive. Carel Goseling, minister of justice (1937-1939) and a member of the Catholic State Party (*Roomsche-Katholieke Staatspartij*), purportedly concerned that immigrants would compete on the labour market, kept the border practically closed to refugees, unless they could prove that they would move on to another country. But moving on was very difficult because all other obvious countries to go to were also restricting immigration, even the USA. It should be noted that by 1939 there were also some 25,000 non-Jewish refugees in Holland, resulting from Nazi persecution of communists and members of other unwanted political movements. In one of his memos, Goseling described refugees from Germany as potentially “undesirable elements”. On 17th October 1938, his ministry issued instructions to the border police that refugees without valid papers should not be permitted to enter at all. This was a very cynical decision since it was known that many Jews in Germany were stateless or had lost their German citizenship and thus their papers. As a result, people smugglers were active getting refugees across the border illegally, and the border police did their best to catch them. Interestingly, however, as the situation in Germany worsened, Dutch public opinion became more sympathetic to the plight of the refugees, putting the government under pressure to relent.

Just before the border became practically closed to refugees, two more children were taken in by the orphanage in Leiden: Fanny (15th January 1927) and Lothar Günsberg (22nd April 1928); they were born in Gelsenkirchen (Germany). Fanny arrived in Leiden on 5th January, and Lothar on 24th October 1938.

A few weeks after Lothar’s arrival, on the night 9th to 10th November 1938, Jews and Jewish shops were attacked by organized mobs throughout Germany and Austria. Some 90 Jews were murdered and more than 200 synagogues went up in flames throughout the German Reich. Countless Jewish-owned shops had their windows

smashed and their interiors looted. In Vienna alone, some 4000 Jewish shops were destroyed. The many smashed shop windows gave rise to the name: Kristallnacht, the night of the [shattered] glass. Even the most optimistic person must have realized that there was no future for Jews in Germany, to say the least. Following 5 five years of relatively modest Jewish emigration from Germany, many more people tried to escape, if they had the necessary funds, contacts, entry visa to another country, family abroad, or the ability to illegally cross the border to a neighbouring country.

Under growing public pressure²¹ after Kristallnacht, the Dutch government relaxed its asylum policy. Between November 1938 and March 1939, some 8000 Jewish refugees from Germany were admitted into the country. A special category of immigrants were children who arrived in Holland by train, without their parents, by Kindertransport. Not much is known about these transports since few documents exist. Both Gertude van Tijn of the CJV and Truus Wijsmuller were involved in these transports. They predated the Kindertransports to the UK, which have been much better documented, and which were made possible when the UK government, provided between 9000 and 10,000 special entry visas (for the children, not for their parents). The earlier transports to Holland seem to have been mostly private initiatives, such as the one of 22nd November (Crone, 2005; Stam-van der Staay, 2003) which carried Lotte and Henny Adler and Edith Strauss from Frankfurt am Main to Amsterdam, and from there to the Leiden orphanage. In the UK as well as in the Netherlands, the government yielded to pressure from public opinion, but without much goodwill. In the UK, after September 1939, many refugee children of fifteen years and above were interned as enemy aliens. Some of them were deported (the term was actually used at the time) to Australia (papers in Hammel & Lewkowicz, 2012), where many were again interned as enemy aliens, even after the British government had realized the injustice of their deportation and asked the Australian government to release them.

The history of the Frankfurt Kindertransport of 22nd November goes back to early 1938, when the Jewish orphanage in Frankfurt discussed with the CJV the possibility of sending a number of its children to Holland. The exchanges between German and Dutch orphanages and/or the CJV illustrates how desperate the situation had become. The minutes of a meeting, on 17th November 1938, in the N.I. Boys' Orphanage in Amsterdam, has been preserved in the Rotterdam Municipal Archives (courtesy Miriam Keesing, 2016). All the eight Jewish orphanages and the Bergstichting (Tables 1.1 and 1.2) had sent a representative. After lobbying, Minister of Justice C. Goseling agreed to allow 24 (sic!) children to enter the country on 2nd November. Despite his consent,

21 The Dutch daily *Het Volksdagblad* argued on 17th November 1938 that the Dutch government should allow many more refugees from Germany entry into the Netherlands. It printed "*De grens moet open*" ("Open the border"). On 3rd December 1938 a national collection was held in aid of refugees. The prime minister publicly contributed but he did not change his mind.

his department staff²² raised further objections, and demanded that for each individual child an admission request would be submitted. In the meantime, Kristallnacht had changed the situation, and the orphanage in Frankfurt reported that the number of children in their care had increased almost overnight from 70 to 135. On 15th November, the Dutch orphanages considered taking more than the requested 24 children from Frankfurt, but after contact with David Cohen (chairman of the CJV) this proposal did not come to fruition. On 15th November lists of names were received, while the orphanage in Frankfurt reported that they were in serious difficulty because all the male personnel had been arrested and taken away. The Amsterdam meeting wanted to speed up the evacuation of the selected children, but they failed to reach the relevant civil servant to authorize their crossing the Dutch border. They considered requesting an audience with Justice Minister Goseling, by telegram to indicate the urgency of the matter. Other delegates were in favour of leaving it to the CJV, whose member R. Eitje was going to visit The Hague the following day. Most, but not all, of the delegates were aware that many children up for transport to Holland were not so much orphans but rather political refugees, from families which would not normally rely on social institutions for assistance. The delegates continued to deliberate over how to get the transport on the rails as quickly as possible. However, being aware of David Cohen's attitude, they were keen to prevent upsetting the government, a recurring theme in this book before the war, as well as during the occupation. Even a proposal to publish the proceedings of this meeting in the newspapers was rejected, because doing that could be regarded as an attempt to "*effect [...] pressure on the government*", something to be prevented at all costs.

Unfortunately, many archives have been lost, and no lists with names have been found of these early transports to Holland. But they can be partly reconstructed (Keesing, 2013; Keesing et al., 2019) from data in the Netherlands, such as card indexes at the Civil Registry, or the records of the Dutch alien police where all refugees had to report within 24 hours of arrival.

More transports took place from Berlin and other German cities in the week of 23rd November 1938 (Crone, 2005). The Kindertransports to the UK also began around that time (Harris & Oppenheimer, 2000; Fast, 2011; Hodge, 2011); the first arrived in Harwich on 2nd December 1938 with 196 children. Some of the children on these transports stayed in the Netherlands. Estimates of the number of unaccompanied refugee children who received asylum in Holland after Kristallnacht vary from 1500 (Crone, 2005) to 2000.²³

In Berlin, at Friedrichstrasse railway station, a monument (*Züge in das Leben; Züge in den Tod*) commemorates the Kindertransports.²⁴ It is hard to fathom the tragedy of

22 The head of the border police and alien registration.

23 H. Goekoop, "*De vlucht na Kristallnacht*", *Andere Tijden*, 24th April 2014.

24 "Trains to life; trains to death". Similar monuments exist in Hoek van Holland and Harwich, and some other cities.

parents who had the foresight and the courage to send away their children in those circumstances, or the loneliness of the children who may not have understood why they were abandoned by their own parents. It is estimated (Hammel & Lewkowicz, 2012) that more than half the number of children who survived the war thanks to a Kindertransport never saw their parents again.

However important the Kindertransports may have been, probably no more than some 12,000 children were able to escape continental Europe in this manner, less than 1% of the number of children who were murdered in the Holocaust. Crone (2005) provides a sad review of the unwillingness of governments to reach out to them, not to speak of the moral implications of helping the children to escape, but not allowing their parents to join them.²⁵

5.7 1938: Henny and Lotte Adler arrive, eight and thirteen years old

In the year 1938 Lotte (8th February 1925; see frontispiece) and Henny (23rd July 1930) Adler lived with their mother, Clara Braun, at Dominikanerplatz 12 in Frankfurt am Main (Fig. 5.14). Elsa Strauss and her daughter Edith were living in with them. Henny and Edith were about the same age. Before 1937, the two mothers and three girls at least once spent a summer holiday in Holland, on the beach at Zandvoort, while Herman Adler stayed behind in Frankfurt. When



Figure 5.14: Lotte and Henny Adler in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, 1935.

the situation for Jews deteriorated, the Adler's considered emigrating to America, where they had family, but Herman was arrested in 1937 on some pretext and incarcerated in Buchenwald concentration camp, near Weimar, where he perished on 3rd July 1938.

Lotte remembered Kristallnacht very well, she often talked about the frightening noises from marching and singing men in the street, and the sound of shattering glass (Stam-van der Staay, 2003).

On 20th November, their Uncle Louis came by to tell them that he had managed to include the three girls in a Kindertransport to Holland. This was, with reasonable certainty,²⁶ the transport

²⁵ See the website of the Kindertransports: <http://www.kindertransport.org/history.htm>.

²⁶ Both Mien van der Staay and Jopie Vos related in great detail what Lotte told them about the train journey, and Lotte was their only source of information on this subject.



Figure 5.15: Older and younger girls, and staff members, join for a photograph, first half of 1939. Front row from left: Henny Adler, Edith Strauss, Henny Feniger, unknown; middle row: Frieda Lichtenbaum (arms aside) and Mieke Dagloonder; back row from left: Reina Segal, Betsy Wolff, unidentified nanny, Didia Klein, chief nanny Mien Gobes, Corrie Frenkel, Jettie Bobbe. Photo from Lotte's own photo album, courtesy Mrs. Schröder-Vos.

of children from the Frankfurt orphanage described above. The mothers promised the girls they would collect them in Holland as soon as they received entry visas to the USA for the girls. Lotte's story of the train journey is identical to what survivors who were on this transport remembered. Mozes Frank, who was, like Lotte, thirteen years old, was also on that train. He remembered (Crone, 2005, p. 63) how the train was held up for hours at the German-Dutch border by German police and military: *"They were clearly trying to scare us, stamping through the train with their heavy boots. Most children, ten to fourteen years old, were crying."*

Lotte told her friend Mien that there were also dogs, and that they had to wait endlessly at the border, before the train moved on to Amsterdam. The children were distributed over several orphanages. Mozes went to Utrecht. Lotte, Henny and Edith to Leiden. They arrived at night and were received by Nathan Italie (who spoke to them in fluent German), and Jet de Leeuw. Once in bed in the dormitory, Lotte became acutely aware that from now on she was responsible for Henny, as she had promised her mother before leaving Frankfurt.



Figure 5.16: From left: Jopie Vos (later Mrs. Schröder), Mien van der Staay (later Mrs. Stam), and Israel Wygoda. Photos of Lotte's three best friends from her own photo album. Jopie and Mien were her classmates at the Haanstra school. Israel Wygoda lived with her in the orphanage. Photo's courtesy Mrs. Schröder-Vos.

A few weeks later, mothers Adler and Strauss received their papers and travelled to the USA, leaving the girls in the Leiden orphanage with a view to get them over to the USA as quickly as possible. Edith Strauss received her papers on 19th December 1938; she left the orphanage on her way to America on 27th October 1939. The papers for Lotte and Henny were not yet forthcoming (Ch. 10.1).

Lotte had to get used to sleeping in a dormitory, but she was happy with the positive atmosphere in the orphanage. It was "*gezellig*", another archetypal Dutch word combining cosy, pleasant, relaxed, easy going (Fig. 5.15). When walking with Ms. Gobes to the alien police in Leiden the next day, Lotte realized they could walk through the Plantsoen (a city park) without being stopped by signs prohibiting Jews to enter. Little did she realize that these same signs would appear in occupied Holland just two years later.

Lotte entered the Haanstra Kweekschool (a teacher training college) on the Rapenburg/Vliet in November 1938. She became friends with Mien van der Staay (later Stam) and Jopie Vos (later Schröder), who both lived in Leiden (Fig. 5.16). Mien published a memorial booklet for Lotte (Stam-van der Staay, 2003), while Jopie shared her memories of Lotte when the documentary "*Bagage van Leiden*" was made (NMG Productions, 2010). Most importantly, Jopie preserved the photo album which Lotte left with her for safekeeping in March 1943. Lotte had a natural affinity for small children and loved the practical lessons (Fig. 5.17) which were part of the curriculum. Many photos in this book came from her own photo album, which now resides at the Westerbork Memorial site.

Many questions remain unanswered. How did Uncle Louis manage to get the three girls on this train, while there were so many children in the Frankfurt



Figure 5.17: Lotte (left-centre) during her period at the Haanstra vocational institute in Leiden.

orphanage who were not allowed to join this transport? Why were the mothers granted entry visas to the USA without simultaneously receiving visas for their children? Why did Else Strauss obtain a visa for Edith so much earlier (late 1938) than Clara Adler, who obtained visas for Lotte and Henny only in 1941? Why were the three children allowed to settle in the orphanage, while other refugee minors (such as Kurt and Helga Gottschalk) were moved around?

In the archives of the (USA-based) *German-Jewish Children's Aid Foundation*, now included in the archives of the Joint Distribution Committee,²⁷ are the letters sent by Gertrude van Tijn of the Committee for Jewish Refugees²⁸ (CJV) in November 1940 (i.e. well into the German occupation of Holland) with lists of German refugee children in Holland with US family connections. The CJV urged them to expedite the paperwork necessary to send the children to the USA (which was still a neutral country at that time). The lists contain the names of 272 children, divided in six categories. Lotte and Henny are not included in these lists, although both would have been in the first category, with the best chances of gaining entry to the USA because their mother was already there.

²⁷ Search <https://archives.jdc.org/>.

²⁸ Gertrude van Tijn-Cohn played a key role in the committee as well as in the Joodse Raad (Wasserstein, 2014). She escaped in 1944 to Palestine via Bergen-Belsen on the same train as Mindel Färber (Ch. 9.3), and Serina de Paauw, the mother of Aron Wolff (Ch. 9.4).



Figure 5.18: Probably 1940; back row from left to right: Benno Redish held by Mieke Dagloonder, Hanna and Elchanan Italie, and Lotte Adler. In front: the Fleurima twins. Note the sticky tape on the windows. From Lotte Adler's album, 1940. Courtesy Mrs. Schröder-Vos, 2009.

I do not know why they were not included in this list. The attempt was in any case not successful. The bureaucracy took too long, it rapidly became more difficult and then impossible for Jews to leave occupied Holland, and in December 1941 the USA was drawn into the war, losing its status as a neutral country. For many children who escaped from Germany by Kindertransport, applications for a US visa had been made prior to their departure from Germany. Some had to wait for ten years before such a visa was approved (Hammel & Lewkowicz, 2012). Probably (subject to further research) very few of the children (if any) on van Tijn's list did indeed escape to the USA.

5.8 1938: A photo album for Governor Levisson

On the occasion of the 60th birthday of L. Levisson, the prominent administrator in the "1919" board of governors (Fig. 2.7) of the orphanage, an album was prepared for him with photographs and personal messages from the staff and those children who could write. Most if not all of the photos were taken specifically for this album and



Figure 5.19: Selected photographs from the Levisson Album, 1938. Names: see next page.

Names by row, from top-left to lowest-right:

Rita Arndt	Leo Auerhaan	Juul Beem	Jettie Bobbe	Frieda Lichtenbaum
Ies Cohen	Hans Porcelijn	Bram Degen	Sam. Engelschman	Ch. Kirschenbaum
Herman Rozeveld	Reina Segal	Harry Spier	Joop Worms	Didia Klein
Louis Limburg	Sally Montezinos	Ralph Protter	Salomon Ritmeester	Fanny Günsberg
Betsy Wolff	Israel Wygoda	Hans Kloosterman	Mieke Dagloonder	Corrie & Mirjam Frenkel
Piet & Joop de Vries	Max & Bram v Stratum	Joop & David Beem	Harry & Henny Feniger	

have the same style and background, so that both the identity of the children and the date of the photograph is beyond doubt. Thus, the photographs in the album helped to confirm the identity of children in the many other photographs that have survived. The photos in Figure 5.19 are a selection; for some (such as Rita Arndt), the photograph in the album is the only one of reasonable quality that exists. For others, it fills an age gap – for example, in 1938 Herman Rozeveld was five years older than he was in his other photograph, from 1933 (Fig. 4.15). Brothers and sisters posed together for this occasion. All the children who could write added a note to congratulate Levisson. Fanny Günsberg apologized that she could not write it in Dutch yet; she had arrived just three months before. Many wished him a long and happy life and health. Rita Arndt, Bram Degen, Joop de Vries, and Mieke Dagloonder wished him above all *“lots of presents”*.



Figure 5.20: Ms. Broeksema with six unidentified children. Levisson album, 1938.

Ms. B. Broeksema, who worked as a nanny in the orphanage in 1938, wrote a congratulatory note on behalf of six small children who could not yet write. She probably was not Jewish (van Zegveld, 1993). She added a photograph (Fig. 5.20), but unfortunately without mentioning the names of the children, who could not be identified. It was also not possible to select a group of children who could be in this photograph on the basis of their age in 1938 (by selecting children born after 1932 who were in the orphanage during 1937-1938). It is therefore possible that the list (at the end of the book) is not complete.

The tableau of children and staff as contained in the Levisson album serves as a landmark before we turn to the next chapter. Not long after Levisson celebrated his 60th birthday, the political situation in Europe became worse. German military power was growing for everybody to see. In September 1938 the Sudetenland was given to Hitler, who soon thereafter proceeded to annex the rest of Czechoslovakia against the agreement he made with the UK and France; attacks against the Jews culminated in Kristallnacht; German rhetoric against Poland forbode a future attack.

Holland mobilized at the end of August 1939, a week before the German invasion of Poland. Some of the older boys from the orphanage, such as Karel van Santen (Ch. 8.1) and Herman Stofkooper (Ch. 9.7), appeared in Leiden in uniform as tensions increased. Figure 5.18 shows the windows of the dining room being taped, to prevent the glass from shattering during a possible bombardment, either during the German invasion in May 1940, or more likely during the Blitz on London later that year.

More than once, the Dutch government was warned that a German invasion was imminent in late 1939 and early 1940. But each time it did not happen, as we now know because Hitler decided to postpone the attack. As a result, some people assumed that the warnings were not based on a real threat.

On 8th April 1940, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway; in Holland, people were holding their breath.

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