Evelien Gans and Remco Ensel (eds.), ***The Holocaust, Israel and 'the Jew'. Histories of Antisemitism in Postwar Dutch Society*** (NIOD Studies on War, Holocaust, and Genocide; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016, 598 pp., ISBN 978 90 8964 848 8).

The historian Christian Gerlach has recently called attention to the fact that the level of anti-Semitism in a given society did not necessarily correlate with the number of Jews murdered during the Holocaust. Survival rates in Romania, where anti-Jewish hostility was ubiquitous, were higher than in Croatia, Slovakia and Hungary. France, too, was known for its long history of anti-Semitic prejudice, unlike countries such as Norway, Belgium or the Netherlands. Yet the survival rate was much higher in France than in the other Western European states. Gerlach has raised this point to argue that anti-Semitism itself was not a sufficient condition for the realisation of mass murder during the Second World War. Remco Ensel and Evelien Gans, by contrast, refer to the 'Dutch paradox' – 104,000 of its 140,000 Jews were murdered despite the country's 'reputation for tolerance' (22) – in order to question this reputation by focusing on anti-Semitism after 1945. In doing so, they have produced the definitive English-language work on the subject.

In her introductory essay, Gans suggests that scholars of anti-Semitism in the Netherlands face public disbelief and defensive reactions precisely because of the tenacity with which many people hold on to the Dutch paradox: the Holocaust, this version of events holds, was a German project, and anti-Semitism in the Netherlands before or after the occupation cannot have been more than a marginal phenomenon. While both the editors and their team of co-authors do not engage in comparative analyses of the relative prevalence of anti-Semitism in postwar Europe, the contributions in *The Holocaust, Israel and 'the Jew'* testify to the presence of anti-Jewish sentiment in Dutch society after 1945. In fact, historians will be able to draw parallels between manifestations of prejudice in the Netherlands and similar forms of bigotry elsewhere, especially in Germany. I shall briefly mention two areas which allow for such comparisons: strategies of denying guilt and the emergence of anti-Zionism.

The authors rely heavily on terms culled from German debates on post-war anti-Semitism, including *Schuldabwehrantisemitismus* (anti-Semitism as a defence against guilt) and secondary anti-Semitism. As they demonstrate in several articles, members of the Dutch public felt compelled to blame the Jews for reminding non-Jews of the horrific events that unfolded in the 1940s. Gans rightly remarks that it would be counter-intuitive to assume that the new frames of reference underlying anti-Jewish rhetoric would be absent from the Netherlands. Indeed, like its German counterpart, Dutch

Published by Royal Netherlands Historical Society | KNHG
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License
DOI: 10.18352/bmgn-lchr.10433 | www.bmgn-lchr.nl | e-ISSN 2211-2898 | print ISSN 0165-0505

secondary anti-Semitism engendered new stereotypes that built on older labels and categorizations. The notion of the 'ultimate Jewish victim' (whose moral authority stemmed from the Holocaust as the 'ultimate' crime) fed off older images of the 'resentful' and 'power-hungry Jew'. Anti-Semites also criticised Jewish calls for restitution. Instead of acting modestly and showing gratitude for the help they had received while in hiding, Jews were displaying their usual 'materialism', 'greed' and 'insolence', according to this common diatribe. Former Dutch National Socialists, moreover, not only emphasized the suffering they themselves had endured in Dutch internment camps after the war, but also compared Allied bombings to German 'abuses', a conflation which was popular in the Federal Republic as well, although here the attempt to minimise German crimes was not confined to erstwhile Nazis. This is an important difference.

As was true in Germany and Britain, the Dutch honeymoon with Israel ended in the late 1960s. In and of itself this development would have been hardly surprising, given the idealisation of Zionism before 1967 (amongst the left in Britain, the conservative right in West Germany and left and right alike in the Netherlands) and the subsequent Israeli occupation of foreign land at a time when anti-imperialism began to influence the public at large. But this rejection of Zionism often went hand in hand with anti-Semitic discourse. In the Netherlands, the utilisation of such imagery amongst the New Left was not as common as elsewhere. To take a prominent example: the Palestine Committee, founded in 1969, occasionally refused to collaborate with organisations which equated Israeli policy with the National Socialist persecution of European Jewry, a comparison often found in left-wing West German publications of the time. Even so, Dutch anti-Semites increasingly relied on the connection between Israel and Zionism on the one hand and Jews on the other – most spectacularly perhaps during football matches against Ajax Amsterdam. Ajax, whose stadium was until 1996 located in an area once heavily populated by the Jewish minority and some of whose chairmen belonged to the Jewish community, came to be associated both with the Jews as victims (references to gas and gas chambers being a favourite amongst fans from rival clubs) and the Jews as perpetrators (waving Palestinian flags in stadiums becoming equally fashionable from the 1980s onwards). *The Holocaust, Israel and 'the Jew'* illustrates that the canonisation of the Shoah in public memory can work both ways: either as a reminder of Dutch complicity, National Socialist degradation, and the importance of human rights, or as a form of secondary anti-Semitism which wishes to do away with the memory of Dutch involvement in the Holocaust. The latter, as Ensel and Gans explain in their discussion of the Dutch version of the *Historikerstreit*, has not been confined to football hooligans.

Even a project of this size cannot accommodate the wishes and expectations of all readers, including this one. If there is something to fault with, it is the rather cavalier treatment of methodological questions. To be

sure, there are brief references to psychoanalysis (projection, the unconscious, guilt), Klaus Holz (the Jew as the 'third party'), or Shulamit Volkov (anti-Semitism as a 'cultural code'), but the authors do not attempt to assess the explanatory potential and limitations of these models. Utilising all of them might be a pragmatic approach, but in light of the fact that Freud is not necessarily compatible with Holz and Holz not necessarily compatible with Volkov, the readers would have benefited from a more scrupulous engagement with the conceptual differences underlying the theories that are embraced in the volume. Still, this caveat should not detract from an otherwise impressive work.

Anthony D. Kauders, Keele University