



“One heartbeat, one pulse.” The Dutch Volunteers in Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War

Matthijs van der Beek MA

Name: Matthijs van der Beek
Student number: 911617181
E-mail: matthijsvanderbeek@gmail.com
Course: The Arab-Israeli Conflict: History and Diplomacy
Teacher: Dr. Zach Levey
Date: 20 January 2017

Introduction

When war was imminent between the State of Israel and the surrounding Arab states in mid-May 1967, thousands of young students and professionals abroad, mostly Jewish, began to register for volunteering in Israel. Those 7,500 foreign volunteers who were accepted by local emergency committees and hence traveled to Israel in the six months afterwards became known as the ‘overseas volunteer movement.’¹ They came from thirty-eight different countries and they all had very different backgrounds, motives and expectations. Yet they were all united in their determination to help Israel through this time of emergency. A propaganda film produced by the Youth and Pioneer Department of the Jewish Agency in 1967, that presented a quite rosy picture of the young volunteers working on the *kibbutzim*, described their common kinship to Israel as “one heartbeat, one pulse.”² The Jewish Agency sent the volunteers to kibbutzim and civilian programs across the country to replace the mobilized Israeli soldiers, while they were not recruited for military service. Much sooner than expected the Six-Day War ended on June 10, 1967, causing most volunteers to return home within a few months to one year, while a large minority decided to stay in Israel.³

One of the contributing countries was the Netherlands, where since the early 1950s sympathy and identification with Israel was particularly strong. About one hundred volunteers, only half of them Jewish, went to Israel, while a large-scale national relief campaign was set up for financial aid, medical goods and blood donations. According to a public survey from June 1967, two-third of the Dutch people supported Israel. Even the Dutch parliament rallied behind the spontaneous grassroots initiatives, while Queen Juliana almost caused a constitutional crisis because of her open pro-Israel stance.⁴ Nevertheless, the case of the Dutch volunteers during the Six-Day War and its aftermath has received very little attention. The Dutch journalist Frans Peeters completely ignored the volunteers in his book about the Dutch-Israeli alliance, whereas his main focus was on Dutch military assistance during Israel’s wars. Only in 2013, the Dutch Liberal-Protestant (VPRO) radio station broadcasted a two-part series made by Michal Citroen about the Dutch volunteers that went to Israel, in which some of them were interviewed about

¹ Moshe Naor, ‘Israeli Mobilization and the Overseas Volunteers in the Six-Day War’, *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 13:3 (2014) 443-4, 448.

² *The Volunteers*, directed by Ofnan Tzafir, 1967. The film can be viewed in the Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHEb7ptJIDg> (accessed on 3 October 2016).

³ Naor, ‘Israeli Mobilization and the Overseas Volunteers in the Six-Day War’, 452-3.

⁴ Frans Peeters, *Gezwoeren vrienden: Het geheime bondgenootschap tussen Nederland en Israël* (Amsterdam and Antwerp, 1997) 144-8.

their motives and experiences.⁵ Their experiences are of our interest because they can help to explain the origins of this loyalty to Israel. This is even more relevant since over the last decades the Dutch society has become very polarized on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the public opinion has changed accordingly.

Quite recently, the Israeli historian Moshe Naor published the first study on the overseas volunteer movement during the Six-Day War which examined the role of the Israeli institutions in the absorption process of the volunteers. His research concluded that the volunteer movement was used for their Zionist agenda to promote Jewish immigration and to strengthen the ties between the Israeli youth and the westernized Jewish diaspora.⁶ Although Naor offered new insights into the Israeli policy regarding the volunteers, his institutional perspective does not explain how the worldwide solidarity with Israel suddenly emerged or how the volunteers themselves were influenced by the time they spent in Israel. Therefore, this essay aims to broaden the current scope of research about the overseas volunteer movement by turning the focus to one of the supportive countries, in this case the Netherlands. This might help us to better understand the effects of the Six-Day War on the Dutch society and to learn about the experiences of the young Dutch volunteers who went to Israel. The first part briefly explains the emergence of the special alliance between Israel and the Netherlands since the early 1950s. The second part shows how the Dutch solidarity campaign and recruitment process of volunteers for Israel was organized. The final part compares the motives and experiences of the volunteers based on interviews and newspaper articles.

The special alliance between the Netherlands and Israel

The rise of ‘pro-Israelism’ in the Dutch society was a gradual process that began in the early 1950s when political, economic and military cooperation with the State of Israel developed under the social-democratic governments led by Prime Minister Willem Drees. Although the Dutch government only recognized Israel *de jure* in January 1950 due to the colonial war in the Dutch Indies (1945-49) and the existing fears that such a decision would provoke the large Muslim-Indonesian population, in the decades to follow the Netherlands and Israel became close allies. The driving force behind this special alliance was the Labor Party leader Drees who

⁵ The two radio items of the VPRO by Michal Citroen about the Dutch volunteers in the Six-Day are available at the website of the Dutch Public TV Broadcast (NPO) Historical Channel. OVT, *Het Spoor Terug: Zesdaagse Oorlog*, August 2013 (accessed on 3 October 2016):

http://www.npogeschiedenis.nl/speler.POMS_VPRO_365867.html (part 1)

http://www.npogeschiedenis.nl/speler.POMS_VPRO_368025.html (part 2)

⁶ Naor, ‘Israeli Mobilization and the Overseas Volunteers in the Six-Day War’, 453-4.

was the Dutch Prime Minister between 1948 and 1958. While Drees was born to an Orthodox Christian family, he grew up in a predominantly Jewish environment in Amsterdam and at a very young age he joined the socialist movement, in which the influential Jewish labor union leader Henri Polak was a great example to him. Five months after Nazi-Germany occupied the Netherlands in May 1940, Drees was arrested by the Nazis and sent to camp Buchenwald where he witnessed the arrival of 389 Amsterdam Jews the following year. Through his personal background and war experiences it was not surprising that he became a strong advocate for the Zionist project to establish an independent Jewish state in the British Mandate of Palestine. Once the State of Israel was established in May 1948, Drees developed an intimate friendship with Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, with whom he shared his socialist ideals and interest in the Bible. According to Peeters, the verbal agreement both state leaders concluded, that secured unconditional Dutch support for Israel in times of trouble, laid the basis for the special Dutch-Israeli alliance. This loyalty was first shown when under strong socialist pressure the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs accepted the request of the Israeli government to serve its interests in Moscow after the temporal severance of Soviet-Israeli diplomatic relations from February until July 1953.⁷ Meanwhile, the Netherlands became an important supplier of military equipment to Israel, even though this could damage the Dutch economic interests in the Arab world. The secret arms supplies even continued during the Suez Crisis in 1956 when the Dutch government firmly supported the Israeli military invasion in the Sinai Desert because of the great threat of the Arab states, and Egypt in particular.⁸

The growing public support for Drees' friendly policy towards Israel largely stemmed from the rise of pro-Israelism among different streams in the Dutch society, the process in which political parties and church institutions played dominant roles. At the forefront of promoting cooperation with the young Jewish state stood the Labor Party (PvdA) and the (Protestant) Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), while the Catholic People's Party (KVP) was much more reserved. These first two parties represented the traditional pillars in the Dutch society of the Socialists and Protestant Christians that were both generally supportive of Israel for various reasons. The

⁷ The Kremlin used a small bomb attack near the Soviet Legation in Tel Aviv on February 9, 1953, for which the Israeli government was held responsible, as pretext to breach the diplomatic relations with Israel. This happened during the time that the Soviet policy towards the Middle East drastically changed in favor of the Arab states and when Soviet Jews faced strong oppression and persecution. See for more information: Yosef Govrin, *Israeli-Soviet relations, 1953-1967: From Confrontation to Disruption* (London and Portland, 1998) 1-23.

⁸ Peeters, *Gezwoenen vrienden*, 36-40, 62-93; Olaf Buitelaar, *De houding van de Nederlandse regering en Tweede Kamer ten opzichte van acht Arabisch-Israëlische conflicten* (Master's thesis, Leiden University, 2013) 11-7. As Peeters described, the Dutch weapon supplies to Israel were under the exclusive responsibility of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Defense, and were generally kept secret from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Second Chamber. This did not mean however that the Arab states knew nothing of the deliveries.

Dutch Socialists obviously supported the fact that the State of Israel embraced and implemented the ideals of socialism to create an egalitarian society, whereas the Reformed Christians saw the establishment of the Jewish state in May 1948 as the prophetic fulfillment of their Christian Zionist beliefs.⁹ The return of the exiled Jews to the Holy Land heralded in their messianic convictions the second coming of Jesus Christ to earth. The General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, respectively, declared in its study *Israel and the Church* (1959) that the reemergence of Israel was a sign of God, where Europe had failed to protect the Jews during the Holocaust.¹⁰ This highlighted the collective feeling of guilt and shame in the Dutch society towards the Jewish community of whom the large majority was murdered by the Nazis. After the Second World War had come to an end, the Protestant church leaders called for a continuous dialogue with Israel and the Jewish people and established for this purpose the Inter-Church Contact Israel (ICI) in 1946. The ICI provided the Protestant member churches a discussion platform to become better acquainted with Israel and Jewish thinking. In addition, local Israel committees were set up by the main Protestant churches. Many Dutch Protestants were hence inspired to make pilgrimages to Israel which further strengthened their feelings of solidarity with the young Jewish state. The best example of solidarity perhaps was the Dutch initiative to establish the Christian settlement Nes Ammim in the Upper Galilee in April 1963, whose Christian members wanted to stimulate the interreligious dialogue with the Israeli Jews, while they refrained from any missionary activities in order to avoid possible tensions.¹¹

This emotional attachment to Israel was absent among most Dutch Catholics who tended to be more ambiguous in their views of the Jewish state that until now has never been recognized by the Vatican. The large impact of the Holocaust let some Catholic groups reconsider however their relations and controversial theological dogmas towards Judaism and the decimated Dutch Jewish community, which led to the founding of the Catholic Council for Israel (KRI) in 1951. The KRI mirrored in fact the Protestant ecumenical initiative, but the challenges to change

⁹ Dorien de Vos, *Van nationaal naar Europees. De ontwikkeling van het buitenlands beleid van Nederland ten aanzien van het Arabisch-Israëliësch conflict, 1967-1980* (Master's thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2011) 26-9; Jan Dirk Snel, 'Nederland en de band met Israël. Sympathie voor een jonge staat', *Historisch Nieuwsblad* 5 (2008): <http://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/nl/artikel/10671/nederland-en-de-band-met-israel.html> (accessed on 3 October 2016).

¹⁰ The General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, *Israël en de Kerk: een studie* (Hilversum, 1959) 40-6.

¹¹ Gert van Klinken, *Christelijke stemmen over het Jodendom: Zestig jaar Interkerkelijk Contact Israël, 1946-2006* (Delft, 2009) 35-53; Gert van Klinken, 'Dutch Jews as Perceived by Dutch Protestants, 1860-1960', in: Chaya Brasz and Jozef Kaplan, *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others: Proceedings of the Eight Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands* (Leiden, Boston and Köln, 2001) 127-34; Johan Pilon, 'Motivering, geschiedenis en organisatie van Nes Ammim', Autumn 1970: <http://www.nesammim.nl/files/316tzx06.pdf> (accessed on 3 October 2016); Simon Schoon, *Nes Ammim: Een christelijk experiment in Israël* (Wageningen, 1976) 19-37. The name 'Nes Ammim' was taken from the Bible, Isaiah 10:11, and means 'Banner of the Nations.'

attitudes towards Judaism were much greater within the Catholic Church. For centuries the Catholics had believed that Jews were the murderers of Christ and that their exile to the diaspora and mass persecutions were God's punishments. According to the substitution theology, many believers were convinced that the Catholic Church had replaced the chosen Jewish people as the 'new Israel' and that Jews could only be saved by conversion to Christianity.¹² The Dutch theologian Theo Salemink claimed that the majority of Dutch Catholics combined this so-called theological anti-Semitism with a social-political form of anti-Semitism, which perceived Jews as outsiders or enemies of the Dutch society. Such views gradually changed after the war due to the destruction of Dutch Jewry, the pioneering work of the KRI and the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). The KRI president Toon Ramselaar was the first to call for a Christian-Jewish dialogue and started to publish the journal entitled *Christ and Israel* (1957-72) to raise knowledge about Israel and the Jewish roots of Christianity. By the early 1960s, it seems that Dutch Catholics had become more familiarized with the Jewish state and held much more favorable views of Jews. This was certainly the case after the *Nostrae Aetate* declaration in 1965, by which the Roman Catholic Church officially rejected its traditional anti-Judaist dogmas. Another contributing factor for this rapprochement was the publication of Jacques Presser's *The Destruction of the Dutch Jews* that caused an intense public debate about the Dutch passivity during the Holocaust.¹³ In conclusion, the impact of the war years, the political campaigns and clerical initiatives were pivotal in generating tremendous interest in Israel and its position in the Middle East, which explains the massive public support at the time the Six-Day War broke out in June 1967.

The Dutch solidarity campaign for Israel during the 1967 War

The Dutch media coverage of the heightening tensions in the Middle East in May 1967 evoked extraordinary emotions of fear and anxiety among the Dutch society for the survival of the Jewish state. The advance of the Egyptian army through the Sinai Peninsula after the with-

¹² Since the late nineteenth century, the main Protestant churches were also aimed at converting Dutch Jewry to Protestantism out of their eschatological convictions. The mass persecutions between 1942 and 1945 led to a reversal of this approach; the mission of Jewish conversion could no longer be a priority when the Jews were in mortal danger. The Dutch Reformed Church was the first Protestant church to abandon the idea of the Jewish Mission in the early 1950s.

¹³ John van Schaik, *Vertrouwde vreemden : betrekkingen tussen katholieken en joden in Nederland, 1930-1990* (Kampen, 1992) 54-68, 78-112; Theo Salemink, 'Catholic Views of Jews in the Netherlands', in: Brasz and Kaplan, *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others*, 111-23; Jeroen Dewulf, *The Spirit of Resistance : Dutch Clandestine Literature during the Nazi Occupation* (Rochester, 2010) 211-2; Please note that Presser's book was originally published under the Dutch title *Ondergang : De vervolging en verdelging van het Nederlandse Jodendom, 1940-1945* (The Hague, 1965) and translated into English in 1969.

drawal of the peacekeeping United Nations Emergency Forces (UNEF), the war rhetoric of the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, and the closure of the Straits of Tiran for Israeli ships left no doubt that a new Arab-Israeli war was imminent. The leading Dutch newspapers and magazines tended to emphasize the underdog position of the small Jewish state compared to the surrounding Arab enemies, whose armies, tanks and fighter planes outnumbered those of Israel.¹⁴ Students brought transistor radios with them to school to follow the latest news about the conflict. This reinforced the impression in the Dutch society that the very existence of Israel was in grave danger if the situation would really escalate into war. Consequently, in the weeks prior to the outbreak of the war many spontaneous grassroots initiatives were launched and various demonstrations were held in the major cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague to show solidarity with the Israeli people. This was not limited to certain segments of the Dutch society, in fact support came from almost every direction.¹⁵

On May 29, 1967, the Dutch Zionist Organization (NZB) and the Jewish denominations organized the first mass gathering in Amsterdam. This public meeting drew about 10,000 people, including politicians from the major political parties, while only some minor opposition parties were not represented. The Jewish NZB secretary Rosetta C. Musaph-Andriessse declared that the Dutch Communist Party (CPN) and the Pacifist-Socialist Party (PSP) were not invited due to their dissenting opinions on Israel. During the rally the Jewish representatives and politicians held speeches to underline their support for Israel and the dangers of the rising tensions in the Middle East. One of the most fiery speeches was delivered by Joop den Uyl (PvdA) who said to the audience that “[t]his is Amsterdam that stands up for Jerusalem.” He stated that the aggression of the Arab states was an attack on Israel and world peace. Den Uyl was very disappointed about the UN withdrawal and claimed that the Dutch people would defend Israel’s right of existence with or without the support of this organization. The NZB president Jozef van der Hal (see figure 1) similarly declared that Israel’s intentions were exclusively peaceful and that it was the world’s duty to defend the Jewish future. Therefore, Israel should not be “sold and betrayed” nor should a “second Munich”¹⁶ be allowed to happen. The Dutch Rabbi Jacob Soetendorp added in the same vein that “Israel is the touchstone for

¹⁴ The Dutch newspaper *De Tijd* was more balanced in its analysis of the military power relations between Israel and the Arab states. It emphasized that the strength of the Israeli army was not just based on its impressive armament, but rather on its discipline, morale, and organization. See: ‘Israëliërs niet bang voor legers Arabische landen’, *De Tijd*, 20 May 1967.

¹⁵ ‘In hele land pro-Israëliëse acties’, *Het Parool*, 6 June 1967.

¹⁶ Van der Hal’s historical analogy referred to the disastrous appeasement policy towards the Nazi regime at the Munich Conference on 3 October 1938, when France, Britain and Italy allowed Adolf Hitler the annexation of Sudetenland (Czechoslovakia).

human justice and morality.” An important result of the gathering was the adoption of the resolution which read out that the Dutch government considered the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba as an act of aggression and would do everything within its power to restore free passage for Israel and to prevent war.¹⁷ This included full support from the Dutch parliament for the supply of military equipment to Israel, mainly components for Israeli fighter planes and tanks, despite the French weapon embargo. Additionally, the different parties at the meeting decided to launch a fundraising campaign for Israel, which already suffered great financial losses during what became known as ‘the waiting period’ (‘Ha-Hamtana’ in Hebrew) – the three-week period from May 14, 1967, when Egyptian troops first entered the Sinai, until the actual outbreak of the war on June 5. This was the start of the national relief campaign ‘Collective Israel Action’ (*Collectieve Israël Actie*), which was supervised by the NZB in Amsterdam.¹⁸



Figure 1. Speech of Van der Hal (NZB) in Amsterdam, May 29, 1967. Source: Dutch National Archives/Anefo.

¹⁷ M. Kopuit, ‘Politieke leiders van Nederland beloven steun aan Israël’, *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad (NIW)*, 2 June 1967. This Dutch Jewish journal is referred to in the text as ‘*New Jewish Weekly*’ (NIW).

¹⁸ Peeters, *Gezwoven vrienden*, 144-5, 149-58; Michael B. Oren, *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York and Toronto, 2003) 75-82.

The Collective Israel Action demonstrated the widespread support for Israel in the Netherlands. Within only a few weeks the fundraising campaign raised a total of 18 million guilders for Israel, of which the first five million came from the Jewish community. Apart from the thousands of Dutch citizens who made donations, many parishes, social organizations and companies also contributed generously to the relief fund.¹⁹ The Dutch Ministry of Finance even promised fiscal compensation for donators. Some of the largest Dutch companies such as KLM, Unilever and Philips refused however to join the relief campaign out of fears for an Arab boycott. Nevertheless, by June 18, 1967, twelve European countries, including the Netherlands, had already transferred about 250 million guilders to Israel.²⁰ But the Dutch relief campaign was not just confined to financial support. Upon the request of the Israeli Embassy the NZB set up a medical aid committee, headed by the Jewish doctor Ben Sajet, on the first day of the war. Within twenty-four hours the committee delivered twenty tons of medical goods at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport for transportation to Israel. Moreover, some nine thousand people reacted positively to the Israeli request to donate blood for wounded soldiers. Throughout the Six-Day War the Israeli El Al Airlines flew three times from Amsterdam to Tel Aviv to transfer all the medical goods, blood plasma units and transfusion sets that were collected by the Dutch medical aid committee. The swift response to the emergency situation in Israel received much attention from the Dutch media. National and local newspapers reported daily about the progress of the grassroots initiatives for Israel and published advertisements for people to ask for their support. There was even explicit royal interest in the relief campaign for Israel. On June 16, Queen Juliana welcomed the representatives of the Collective Israel Action at Soestdijk Palace to inform her about the latest developments (see figure 2). She was very concerned about the fate of Israel in these days and had almost caused a constitutional crisis. Against the protocols of the Royal House she wanted to make a public statement to criticize Nasser's policy and to pray for Israel's victory when the war broke out. The Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Luns changed her mind after explaining her that this was truly inappropriate in her position.²¹

The most challenging task for the NZB was the selection and registration process of volunteers for temporary work, meaning civil duties, in Israel. According to Naor, the numerous overseas requests to volunteer were "spontaneous gestures of support for Israel" that required close coordination between the Jewish Agency and the Jewish/Zionist organizations around the

¹⁹ 'Nederlandse acties ten bate van Israël', *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 9 June 1967.

²⁰ Peeters, *Gezworen vrienden*, 145-6.

²¹ M. Kopuit, 'NZB-secretaresse vertelt...', *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 23 June 1967; 'Alom hulp voor Israël. Medisch hulpcomité stuurt medicamenten', *Het Vrije Volk*, 5 June 1967; 'Al 800 mensen willen bloed geven', *Het Parool*, 6 June 1967; Peeters, *Gezworen vrienden*, 146.

world in order to organize this overseas volunteer movement.²² The situation in the Netherlands was not different in this aspect. The small Coordination Committee Jewish Youth was after the mass gathering in Amsterdam unable to manage the flood of requests for volunteering from both Jewish and non-Jewish youth. Therefore, the better equipped NZB stepped in to coordinate the selection and registration of the volunteers. The NZB secretary Musaph-Andriessse admitted that the expectations in the Dutch society for a long period of mobilization of the Israeli army contributed to the large number of 2,000 applications for volunteering that her organization received. The NZB was instructed by the Jewish Agency to prioritize professionals, singles or married couples without children, preferably Jewish youth between the age of 18 and 35. This clear preference for Jewish volunteers caused great disappointment among the many non-Jewish applicants. Musaph-Andriessse publicly acknowledged that she was also embarrassed by this restriction since there were even people that resigned from their jobs to volunteer in Israel.²³

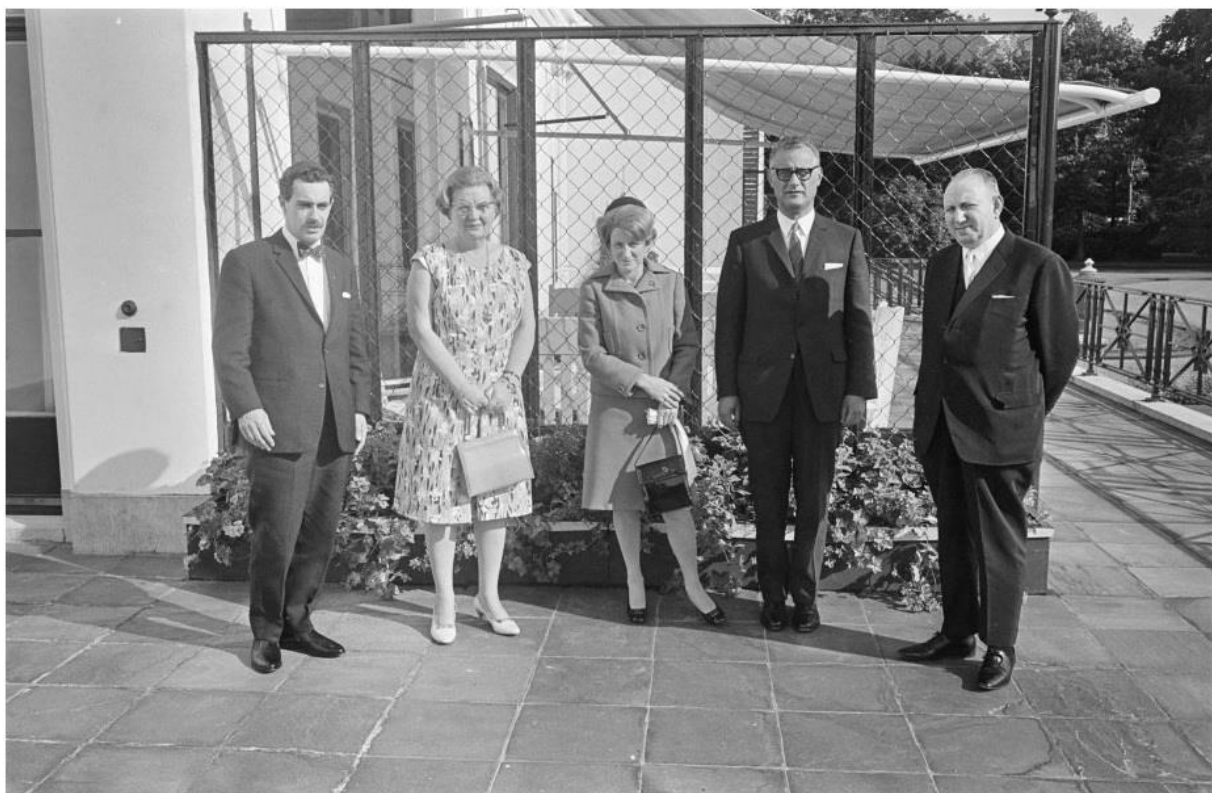


Figure 2. An audience with Queen Juliana, June 16, 1967. From left to right: Leo Palache (director of the Collective Israel Action), Queen Juliana, Musaph-Andriessse, Van der Hal and Rabbi Soetendorp. Source: Dutch National Archives/Anefo.

²² Naor, 'Israeli Mobilization and the Overseas Volunteers in the Six-Day War', 447.

²³ M. Kopuit, 'NZB-secretaresse vertelt...', *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 23 June 1967.

Of course, the Israeli government and Jewish Agency wanted to promote Jewish immigration or *Aliyah* in the Jewish diaspora, but under pressure from the emergency committees abroad non-Jewish volunteers were eventually also welcomed in Israel. Though members of the Jewish youth movements had better chances to be selected by the NZB selection committee, since they had been in Israel before, wanted to make *Aliyah* and/or spoke Hebrew, forty of the ninety-three volunteers were non-Jews. Among the volunteers were nine doctors, twenty-six nurses, and fifty-eight regular volunteers, of whom thirty students and the rest mostly technicians. The decision to stop sending more Dutch volunteers was taken by the NZB because of the large numbers of volunteers that had already arrived in Israel from other countries and due to the abrupt end of the war.²⁴ It was simply too difficult for Israel to absorb in this tumultuous time the thousands of volunteers. This explains the relatively small number of Dutch volunteers compared to other contributing countries, such as England (1,900), South-Africa (850), France (800) or the United States (750). The Six-Day War volunteer movement brought about 7,500 foreign volunteers to Israel of whom seventy-five percent arrived in Israel before July 1967, while the remainder arrived in a second wave from August to October.²⁵ The Dutch volunteers arrived in Israel during or shortly after the war not knowing what they would encounter, but eager to make a fair contribution.

The motives and experiences of the Dutch volunteers in Israel

The great enthusiasm for volunteering in Israel made it necessary for the NZB to apply strict selection criteria in order to select only the best candidates. For this purpose, all applicants were interviewed and medically tested by a staff of specialists, headed by the Jewish psychiatrist Herman Musaph, at the Central Israeli Hospital (*Centrale Israëlietische Ziekenverpleging, CIZ*) in Amsterdam. The staff members asked them for their motivations, studies and/or occupation, and personal affiliation to Israel, but they also pointed out the possible negative consequences of their participation in the volunteering movement, such as study delay or work dismissal.²⁶ This meant that the dozens of volunteers who were selected by the NZB committee were highly motivated and regarded as strong assets for Israel in this time of emergency. The first group of nine volunteers (see figure 3) that was sent to Israel was made up of exclusively young Jewish students, who felt closely connected to Israel and had already family living there. Among this

²⁴ Rosetta C. Musaph-Andriess, 'Hoe ging het de vrijwilligers?', *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 13 October 1967.

²⁵ Naor, 'Israeli Mobilization and the Overseas Volunteers in the Six-Day War', 448.

²⁶ Herman Musaph, 'Het is de klaagmuur niet, het zijn de joden', *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 11 August 1967.

group was the 19-year-old nurse Esther van Gelder, who had spent her early childhood in Israel and remembered that her father helped to build up the land before her family moved back to the Netherlands.²⁷ She was convinced that as a nursing student her help was needed and she deeply feared that Israel would not survive this war as the Arab countries were committed to destroy the Jewish state. One of her fellow travelers, the 23-year-old Economy student Max Hasfeld, found that it was “the plight of every Jewish boy to go to Israel,” because “the fate of Israel was the fate of every Jew.” Since he had grown up in a Jewish-Orthodox family, he claimed that it was his religious education and sympathy for Israel that motivated him to volunteer.²⁸

For the 20-year-old technical student Bernard Hammelburg there was no doubt either. His father Isaac Hammelburg, a former rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Community in Amsterdam (1946-47) whose family had been murdered in Auschwitz, even encouraged him to volunteer since the future of his children laid in Israel. As a member of the Jewish Labor-Zionist youth movement Habonim, Bernard similarly declared that Jews had “two fatherlands” and that “if Israel would ceased to exist, the [Jewish] life would actually vanish.”²⁹ The motive of the 21-year-old psychiatric nurse Joost Albert van Krimpen was different. He did not receive a typical Jewish education at home, but grew up in the strong conservative Christian village of Garderen that was very Israel-minded.³⁰ His spontaneous decision to sign up for volunteering was related to his great admiration for the Jewish state and the widespread idealism of the young generation in Israel.³¹ Likewise, André Boers, an 18-year-old Amsterdam high school student, recalled that despite his secular education he was consciously Jewish. During his travels to Israel in the mid-1960s he developed a great love for the country and appreciation for the open attitude of the Israeli people, which was very different from the closed Calvinist mentality in the Netherlands. His decision to volunteer in Israel and thereafter to make *Aliyah* stemmed from his search for freedom, adventure and belonging. For a young Jew like Boers it was hard to fit into the Dutch society and Israel seemed like the best alternative.³²

This kinship to Israel was probably much stronger among the Jewish volunteers than among the non-Jews. Among the latter group was Toos Bloot, a 27-year-old nurse, who came from a Reformed-Christian family. She joined a group of twelve Dutch nurses to Israel towards

²⁷ Han Mulder, ‘Op weg naar Tel Aviv’, *Het Parool*, 6 June 1967.

²⁸ OVT, *Het Spoor Terug: Zesdaagse Oorlog* (part 1), August 2013.

²⁹ Han Mulder, ‘Vrijwilliger voor Israël’, *Het Parool*, 3 June 1967.

³⁰ Garderen is located in the so-called ‘Bible Belt’ of the Netherlands, which is a strip of land with the highest concentration of conservative Protestants in the country, that stretches from Zeeland in the southwest, through the West-Betuwe and Veluwe, to the eastern province of Overijssel.

³¹ Interview of author with Joost van Krimpen in Amersfoort, 27 September 2016.

³² Interview of author with André Boers in Zichron Yaakov, 20 December 2016.

the end of the war after she had attended the mass gathering in Amsterdam. Her inner motivation to volunteer in Israel had nothing to do with her Christian background she admitted, but rather with the impact of the Second World War. Bloot recalled in my interview with her that during the war her family took care of a Jewish girl who hid from the Nazis. Her awareness of the Jewish suffering during the Holocaust as well as her childhood memories of the German occupation influenced her decision.³³ Although the personal motives differed among the Dutch volunteers,



Figure 3. Jewish volunteers at the Amsterdam railway station are about to depart to Paris for their flight to Israel, June 5, 1967. Among this first group were Esther van Gelder, Jacob Winnink, Joost van Krimpen, Bert Reens, Max Hasfeld, Aron Hollander, Paul Spier and Theo Sanders. Source: Dutch National Archives/Anefo.

it is safe to argue that the Six-Day War reinforced their identification with Israel. Naor attributed this transformation to intergenerational tensions and the identity crisis among the Jewish youth living in the diaspora. For the group of Dutch Jewish volunteers there is no clear evidence that these particular factors influenced their decision; for the volunteers mentioned here their Jewish identity was important, even though they grew up in the so-called “roaring Sixties.” The effects of the cultural revolution of the 1960s on Jewish identity seemed to have been much greater in countries such as the United States, where most of the young American Jewry was already

³³ Interview of author with Toos Bloot in Ede, 26 September 2015.

merged into the new youth cultures, than in the Netherlands.³⁴ The Dutch historian Paul van Trigt argued that despite the increased secularization in this period among the Dutch Jewish baby boomers, there were more opportunities open to them to identify with Judaism outside the traditional religious communities. Hundreds of young Jews asserted their sense of Jewishness, for instance, through their participation in the Jewish youth movements, such as Haboniem, Bnei Akiva, Hashalshélet and Hashomer Hatzair.³⁵

The main challenge for the Jewish Agency in Israel was the absorption of the unexpected large flow of thousands of overseas volunteers. The Absorption Department (and later the Youth and Pioneer Department) encountered many organizational difficulties due to the lack of any previous experience with such large-scale operations and the chaotic situation during the war. Upon arrival the volunteers were expected to register themselves at the Agency's office in Herzliya where they were informed about which work they were allocated. Depending on the skills of the volunteers in question, it was often unclear to which places the volunteers should be brought. For example, it happened that groups of volunteers were sent to the same place or that volunteers heard that there was no work available for them. The majority of the volunteers, about 4,700, eventually went to the kibbutzim, which were regarded as the only places in the country that could absorb so many volunteers for a longer period of time. The second largest group of some 1,200 volunteers were sent to work in civilian ancillary corps operated by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) while they were not enlisted in military units. The remaining groups of volunteers were largely employed in unskilled physical labor, including work in the farming settlements or *moshavim*, building construction, forestry and land preparation projects, while others assisted in archeological excavations, undertook educational work in communities, and those qualified were employed in hospitals. Although the Jewish Agency managed to

³⁴ Naor, 'Israeli Mobilization and the Overseas Volunteers in the Six-Day War', 451-2; Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, 2004) 306-19. For the response of the American Jewish community to the Six-Day War see: Lucy S. Dawidowicz, 'American Public Opinion', in: American Jewish Committee, *American Jewish Year Book Vol. 69* (Philadelphia, 1968) 203-18; Menahem Kaufman, 'From Philanthropy to Commitment: The Six Day War and the United Jewish Appeal', *Journal of Israeli History* 15:2 (1994) 161-91.

³⁵ Bart Wallet, 'De laatste eenheidsgemeente van Europa. Identiteit en ideologie van een orthodoxe kehilla', in: Bart Wallet, Paul van Trigt and Hans Polak (eds.), *Se-heheyanu = Die ons heeft laten leven: De geschiedenis van de Joodse Gemeente Amsterdam (NIHS) van 1945 tot 2010* (Amsterdam, 2011) 32-9; Paul van Trigt, 'Een religieuze crisis? Secularisatie, religie en de Nederlandse joden in de lange jaren zestig', in: Hetty Berg and Bart Wallet (eds.), *Wie niet weg is, is gezien. Joods Nederland na 1945* (Zwolle and Amsterdam, 2010) 191-9. The secularization was particularly strong in Amsterdam, where most Jews lived after the Holocaust. The number of members of the Dutch Israelite Head Synagogue (*Nederlands-Israëlietische Hoofdsynagoge Amsterdam*, NIHS), the largest religious community, dropped from about 10,500 in 1960 to 8,500 in 1975. The Dutch historian Bart Wallet argued, however, that by comparison the Holocaust has been far more devastating for the Dutch Jewish religious communities and the Jewish cultural life – in terms of secularization and assimilation – than the cultural revolution of the 1960s.

employ most volunteers for at least a couple of months to replace the soldiers in reserve duty, many of them were unsatisfied with the work they were allotted or their inadequate living conditions. Hasfeld found that the Jewish Agency should have stopped the incoming flow of volunteers much earlier. The volunteer movement was in his opinion used for the publicity to boost the morale of the Israeli people as well as for promoting Jewish immigration. Already during the war, the Israeli Foreign Ministry stopped to finance flights for volunteers however, except for Jews willing to spend at least four months in Israel, and begged embassies to stop sending more volunteers. These measures were everything but effective; the volunteers simply kept coming – many on their own initiative – in even larger numbers after the war was over. Considering the fact that about 39,000 Israelis were unemployed at this time, the *New Jewish Weekly (NIW)* claimed that the volunteers were not really needed. The kibbutzim that were charged with the task to absorb the majority of volunteers were not prepared either to receive and employ so many volunteers. Yet it took time after the war before the large numbers of reserve duty soldiers (200,000 in total) returned home from the front, and from this perspective the thousands of volunteers could replace them.³⁶

The great optimism and excitement of the young overseas volunteers, of whom the majority had never been in Israel before, made it nonetheless easier for them to adapt to the unexpected reality of not being part of some rescue mission and to cope with certain problems or disappointments. The soon ending of the war allowed many volunteers to learn to know the Israeli society, to become part of the socialist life in the kibbutzim, and to explore the country. The experiences of the Dutch volunteers largely depended on their own expectations and attitudes, social skills and their very abilities to adapt to new circumstances. The first groups of Dutch volunteers arrived in Israel during the last days of the war when the Lod Airport in Tel Aviv was reopened to civilian traffic after the same airport had been under Jordanian artillery fire and Iraqi air raids had hit the Netanya district.³⁷ Boers and Hasfeld were among the first arrivals and were both sent by the Jewish Agency to moshav Lakhish, located in the Northern Negev. Lacking any previous work experience, Boers was for his entire volunteering period of three months entrusted to work as shepherd and managed to always bring back all the sheep. Hasfeld started to work in the cucumber yards of Lakhish, but was later sent to Jerusalem to

³⁶ Naor, 'Israeli Mobilization and the Overseas Volunteers in the Six-Day War', 448-50; Tom Segev, *1967, Israel, the War and the Year that Transformed the Middle East* (New York, 2007) 557-8; Tom de Bruin, 'De redders moeten pruimen plukken', *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 18 August 1967; Tom de Bruin, 'Indrukken van een vrijwilliger', *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 25 August 1967.

³⁷ Mulder, 'Op weg naar Tel Aviv', *Het Parool*, 6 June 1967; 'Nasser Defies U.N. Call for Cease-Fire in Israeli War', *Chicago Tribune*, 7 June 1967.

clean the amphitheater and botanic garden at Mount Scopus. Despite his fierce criticism of the Jewish Agency he enjoyed from his civil duties. His most interesting duty was his work in a civilian ancillary unit of the IDF at El-Arish, a coastal town near the Gaza Strip, which consisted of sorting captured weapons from the Egyptian army. Hasfeld told the *NW*: “The unique thing of this work was to cooperate with the soldiers. This was an amazing experience. You were directly admitted into their midst, the soldiers were amical, they helped you with everything. I found it an honor to work together with them. We were received as we formed one group while we were actually strangers.”³⁸ This feeling of togetherness and companionship as well as the opportunity to work with those that had fought for Israel made this a wonderful experience for him.

The demand for nurses and physicians was much higher in Israel than for any other group of young professionals. As the only graduated surgeon the NZB welcomed for that reason the application of the 37-year-old plastic surgeon Philip Lamaker, who temporarily left his clinic in Amsterdam to volunteer in the Hadassa Hospital in Jerusalem. His assistance was very useful at the “front hospital” that was located on the border with Jordan. Lamaker recalled that since it was not expected that Israel would be attacked by the Jordanian army, many nurses and specialists had left the hospital to the medical posts near the front lines. The first week was extremely busy for the plastic surgeon. Every day Lamaker spent eleven hours in the operation room to operate wounded soldiers, of whom many needed amputations, while another dedicated Dutch volunteer, the 34-year-old anesthetist K.H. Dijk, assisted him. “There were days of over eighty operations,” Lamaker told the Dutch media, while some of his colleagues barely had time to sleep. Despite the long working days he found his time as volunteer an unforgettable experience, not least because of the great working atmosphere and the fact that almost all operations succeeded. He was very much impressed by the strong will to survive among his patients and the excellent medical preparations that had been made by the Israelis prior to the war. Due to the fact that the Israeli specialists returned to the Hadassa Hospital quite soon after the war, Lamaker was one of the first Dutch volunteers who traveled back to the Netherlands, where he was received as a hero at Schiphol Airport.³⁹

The young nurse Bloot worked instead for three months in the same hospital at the recovery department. She took care of the bed-bound patients, meaning wounded and paralyzed

³⁸ De Bruin, ‘Indrukken van een vrijwilliger’, *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 25 August 1967.

³⁹ André de Kromme, ‘Chirurgen stonden dag en nacht aan de operatietafel’, *Telegraaf*, 27 June 1967; ‘Voor vrijwilligers geen werk meer in Israël’, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 27 June 1967; Marjolijn in ‘t Hout and Daphne Meijer, ‘Jonge vrijwilligers onthaald als helden’, *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 5 June 1987.

soldiers, whom she needed to turn over in bed multiple times a day. Like Lamaker she was amazed by the optimism of her patients, who were later transferred to rehabilitation centers, and found her intensive work rewarding. The famous American-Jewish comedian and singer Danny Kaye even came to visit the hospital to entertain the wounded Israeli soldiers. Bloot remembered well the celebrations and elated atmosphere in the liberated city of Jerusalem, the ancient Jewish capital.⁴⁰ Most special was the scene at the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks. On the morning of June 14, 1967, only six days after the city's liberation, the Old City was opened to the Israeli public. About a quarter million Israelis came to see the Western Wall during Shavuot, almost every section of the Israeli population was represented. People prayed, danced and kissed the stones; for once the Kotel was the symbol of the Israeli conquest. Tom Segev rightly called this manifestation a mixture of traditional pilgrimage and victory celebration.⁴¹ The young Jewish volunteer Boers also traveled to Jerusalem during Shavuot, and realized in front of the Western Wall that he was the first descendant of his family to have the unique opportunity to visit the holiest site for Jews. At the Amsterdam Lyceum the curious student had got private lessons from Rabbi Soetendorp, who taught him about Jewish history and the Bible, of which Boers almost knew nothing. This probably had raised his historical consciousness of the Jewish holy places. He later visited Hebron, and the Machpelah, the Tomb of the Patriarchs, that due to the conquest of the West-Bank in the Six-Day War had also become accessible again for Jews after the Jewish expulsion in 1929. He acknowledged that these were emotional moments for him, since he went back to the roots of Judaism.⁴² The successes of the Six-Day War made it thus possible for the young Dutch volunteers to follow into the footsteps of many Israelis and to explore the newly conquered territories and holy places.

Another young Jewish nurse, Michael Barak, was sent to a hospital in Safed, where his skills were soon notified. As the border skirmishes continued after the war, the casualties kept coming to his hospital. Barak found the loss of the Israeli soldiers most difficult to deal with. Despite this, he was very grateful for the time he had spent as a volunteer, which allowed him to share in the proud of the Israeli people. In March 1968, Barak emigrated to Israel to complete his studies in nursing.⁴³ The memories of Van Krimpen (see figure 4) were similarly positive of his time as medical volunteer. As a recent graduate in psychiatric nursery, he worked for more than six months, from June until the end of December 1967, in the Government

⁴⁰ Interview of author with Toos Bloot in Ede, 26 September 2015.

⁴¹ Segev, *1967, Israel, the War and the Year that Transformed the Middle East*, 432-3.

⁴² Interview of author with André Boers in Zichron Yaakov, 20 December 2016.

⁴³ OVT, *Het Spoor Terug: Zesdaagse Oorlog* (part 2), August 2013.

Psychiatric Hospital in the Yemenite village of Pardesiya near Netanya. The tall, blond and pipe-smoking Dutchman was as the only foreign volunteer in this hospital an anomaly among his Israeli colleagues. He communicated with them mostly in English and German, though he partly understood Yiddish – that was generally spoken by the personnel – as well. Van Krimpen performed simply every kind of task in the care of the chronic psychiatric patients, including the treatment of suicidal patients, which exemplified the great trust they put in him. Through his work and life in Pardesiya he learned to know the Jewish-Yemenite culture and kitchen, as local families often invited him for dinner or to celebrate the Jewish holidays. He remembered that the Israeli Ministry of Health took the Dutch medical volunteers once on a special roundtrip through Israel to places like the Dead Sea and Safed.⁴⁴ This showed that they were seen as a distinct group of volunteers whose voluntary work was highly appreciated. They were able to perform their own profession in the Israeli hospitals when there was an urgent need for extra help. This was in sharp contrast with those volunteers that were sent to one of the hundreds of kibbutzim.

The decision to direct the majority of war volunteers to the kibbutzim reflected both organizational and ideological considerations. From an organizational perspective, the overseas volunteer movement was seen as a major source of temporary manpower for the kibbutzim in Israel. Since the 1950s, the kibbutzim encountered problems to recruit sufficient workers due to the high requirements that communal leaders set for new kibbutz members. The need for extra workforce was even greater in the wake of the Six-Day War because of the high proportion of kibbutzniks that served in the IDF. The thousands of volunteers that were hence referred to the kibbutzim exceeded the demand by far however. Many kibbutzim, especially in the south, were unprepared to host them. In this light, the ideological motives behind the decision were probably more important. The Israeli government and Jewish Agency wanted to reinforce the social status of the kibbutzim and to expand the scope of Jewish immigration. Since voluntarism had always been deeply embedded in the kibbutz culture, the political leaders considered the kibbutzim to be the ideal channel to bind potential immigrants. At the same time, the volunteers were seen by elder kibbutzniks as a cultural threat to their traditional kibbutz life and socialist ideology. The kibbutz youngsters came into daily contact with volunteers from all around the world, whose modern permissive lifestyle was attractive to them. The fact that voluntary workers eventually became a vast component of the workforce of every kibbutz in the following decades indicates however that pragmatism overcame those initial fears. One should not over-

⁴⁴ Interview of author with Joost van Krimpen in Amersfoort, 27 September 2016.



Figure 4. The medical personnel of the Government Psychiatric Hospital in Pardesiya. Photo of Joost van Krimpen.

look either the fact that the overseas volunteers were influenced as well by the time they spent working on the kibbutzim. Through the different communal duties the volunteers performed and the social exchange of particular values, they learned to know the kibbutz lifestyle and were taught the real essence of what membership of a kibbutz actually meant in practice. They were often given the opportunity to learn the Hebrew language in *ulpanim* and to travel across the country during the weekends.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the experiences of the Dutch volunteers really depended on the specific circumstances in the kibbutzim that absorbed them. The *NIW* reported in an article entitled “The rescuers have to pick plums” from August 1967 that many kibbutz volunteers were disappointed of the so-called ‘constructive duties’ they were allocated. The critical question was raised whether it was really necessary for them to give up a year of study to pick fruit or to do gardening, which in the latter case was work that was usually done during the winter.⁴⁶

The negative imaging in the Dutch media did not always correspond to the reality. The emphasis on productive labor rather than on individual job satisfaction, which stemmed from

⁴⁵ Naor, ‘Israeli Mobilization and the Overseas Volunteers in the Six-Day War’, 449-50; David Mittelberg, *Strangers in Paradise: The Israeli Kibbutz Experience* (New Brunswick, 1988) 51-6; Henry Near, *The Kibbutz Movement: Crisis and Achievement, 1939-1995* (Oxford, 1997) 266-78; Bobbie Turniansky and Julie Cwikel, ‘Volunteering in a voluntary community: Kibbutz members and voluntarism’, *Voluntas* 7:3 (1996) 300-3.

⁴⁶ De Bruin, ‘De redders moeten pruimen plukken’, *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 18 August 1967.

the ideal to create an egalitarian productive society, was certainly an aspect of the kibbutz way of life volunteers needed to adjust themselves to. Yet some of the Dutch volunteers were excited to become part of the kibbutz community and found their duties meaningful. After Bloot finished her voluntary work in the Hadassa Hospital, she was recommended by her host family in Jerusalem to go to the typical socialist kibbutz of Gan Shmuel near Hadera. This kibbutz already hosted some dozens of young volunteers from France, Germany, Britain, Canada and Brazil, and had apparently built a good reputation. Bloot was warmly welcomed and she was free to choose the work she liked. For a couple of months she worked under supervision of the kibbutzniks with pleasure on the land picking apples, citrus fruits and avocados, while she also enjoyed from the daily Hebrew lessons that were offered. In her leisure time she attended the dance nights and social activities at the kibbutz, made walking tours or traveled with Israeli friends and other volunteers across the country.⁴⁷ It was very easy these days for the volunteers to hitchhike, even to far destinations like the Dead Sea and Eilat, and Israelis regularly invited them to their homes to express their genuine gratitude. Van Krimpen affirmed that this kindness and hospitality towards the Dutch volunteers also stemmed from the fact that the Netherlands were very popular in Israel at that time; the Israeli radio even broadcasted Dutch music and short language sessions. He claimed from his own experience as an immigrant in the early 1970s that this open attitude of the Israeli people would rapidly change after the Six-Day War. The euphoria of the impressive victory and hopes for a long-lasting peace vanished soon during the War of Attrition (1969-70) and the (almost) catastrophic Yom Kippur War (October 1973), and changed the mentality accordingly.⁴⁸

Not for every kibbutz or moshav volunteer the experience was that positive as stated above. Lex Swaan was sent with some friends to the religious kibbutz Nir Etzion, located at the foot of the Carmel, where he worked for four months. The female kibbutz members were glad with their help since the harvest had to be urgently brought in, while all the men were still mobilized. The demobilization took time after the war, what made the volunteers indispensable. For Swaan it was a difficult time though, since the agricultural work on the land was really tough and because several soldiers from Nir Etzion had not survived the war. The kibbutz was plunged into mourning by this sad news, an atmosphere that the young volunteer strongly felt. The young traumatized soldiers that returned to the kibbutz deeply impressed him as well; the

⁴⁷ Interview of author with Toos Bloot in Ede, 26 September 2015.

⁴⁸ Interview of author with Joost van Krimpen in Amersfoort, 27 September 2016.

real impact of the war became suddenly clear.⁴⁹ Boers, respectively, even visited the families in Lakhish of whom family members had died in the war, which shows the strong social ties present within the small agricultural communities. The mourning processes remembered him of his family situation in the Netherlands after the Holocaust.⁵⁰ Most soldiers that returned alive were generally not able to share their stories, because they instantly had to resume their work and/or struggled with their traumas.⁵¹ In a different way, Harry Hess experienced the reality of the war in kibbutz Kisofim near the Gaza Strip, where there were still fire exchanges between the IDF and the Egyptian army when he arrived. Hess stayed on this kibbutz for two months and performed duties like injecting cows and picking fruit. For him this period was a true waste of his time, especially because the kibbutz members did not give him the feeling that his help was so needed. Due to his great disappointment, Hess rejected later an offer to help picking fruit in Tel Aviv and went back instead to the Netherlands, while he repressed his memories of his time as volunteer ever since.⁵² This example shows that not all kibbutz volunteers fitted into the collective agricultural micro-society of the kibbutz. They lacked the willingness to carry out any kind of task for the sake of the community, which was at the core of the kibbutz ideology, while they suffered from intellectual boredom, social isolation or lack of appreciation.

Musaph-Andriess concluded in her final report in the *NIW* in mid-October 1967 that with respect to the Dutch volunteers, of whom the majority had returned to the Netherlands by then, the disappointment was greater among the unorganized youth than among those that were members of a Jewish/Zionist association. Her reasoning was that the volunteers from the Jewish youth movements were much better acquainted with the circumstances in Israel and, therefore, better able to adapt themselves and accept particular duties than their companions that lacked such knowledge. Among the unorganized youth the personal expectations had been so high before departure, that it was almost impossible to satisfy them with the work that awaited them in Israel. There were volunteers within this group who had expected that they could play

⁴⁹ Marjolijn in 't Hout and Daphne Meijer, 'Jonge vrijwilligers onthaald als helden', *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 5 June 1987; Anita Shapira, *Israel: A History* (London, 2014) 312-7. Approximately one quarter of the Israeli war victims were kibbutz members, five times their proportion of the Israeli population.

⁵⁰ Interview of author with André Boers in *Zichron Yaakov*, 20 December 2016.

⁵¹ Shortly after the war, the Israeli historian Avraham Shapira embarked on a project to collect testimonies from kibbutz members that had fought in the Six-Day War. A censored compilation entitled *The Seventh Day* was published in October 1967, but it stood in stark contrast of the many victory albums and heroic stories that pervaded the Israeli society. Quite recently, Mor Loushy used the recorded testimonies to produce the documentary *Censored Voices*, which was first broadcasted in Israel in the summer of 2015. Her documentary included the recordings with soldiers that told freely about their feelings after the war or even made confessions about their mistreatment of the enemy. See: http://www.npo.nl/2doc/27-04-2016/VPWON_1209453 (accessed on 3 October 2016).

⁵² OVT, *Het Spoor Terug: Zesdaagse Oorlog* (part 2), August 2013.

spectacular roles in semi-military duties or other activities that were close to the war scenes. For them it was most difficult to accept civil duties like seasonal work in the kibbutzim. The criticism against the Jewish Agency was much stronger among the Jewish volunteers than among the non-Jews, probably because their decision to volunteer was rather based on emotions than on rationalism. Despite the fact that disappointment was inevitable amidst the chaos of the war, Musaph-Andriessse claimed that the majority of the Dutch volunteers had succeeded to make their volunteering period meaningful, even though they mostly performed regular duties, while only a small minority made their stay in Israel a pleasure trip. About a quarter of the total group of volunteers even made plans to emigrate to Israel or to complete their studies there, which highlighted the positive impact the volunteering experience had made on them.⁵³

Conclusion

The Six-Day War of June 1967 further strengthened the intense relations between the State of Israel and the Netherlands, which since the early 1950s had become close allies. Since the three-week waiting period the prevailing fears of destruction of the young Jewish state among the Dutch society generated unprecedented support for Israel. Many grassroots initiatives were taken to show solidarity with the Israeli people, including mass demonstrations and fundraising actions, which led to the Collective Israel Action, a nationwide campaign that was initially set up for financial and medical aid to Israel. While tensions escalated in the Middle East, a mass gathering was held in Amsterdam and thereafter some thousands of young Dutch professionals, Jews and non-Jews alike, began to register for volunteering in Israel like their contemporaries in other countries. As a result, the campaign expanded to this direct form of voluntary support and the Dutch Zionist Organization (NZB) was charged to select only the best candidates. Due to the rapid conclusion of the war, the NZB followed the advice of the Israeli embassy to stop sending more volunteers. A relatively small group of ninety-three Dutch volunteers, more than half of them were Jewish, hence embarked on their journey to Israel and became part of the overseas volunteer movement. This essay analyzed the motives, experiences and contributions of the Dutch volunteers in the Six-Day War, a group that has been mostly forgotten.

Most volunteers spontaneously decided to volunteer in Israel during the war crisis, even though each of them had their own motives. There was generally a strong sense of responsibility and commitment towards the Jewish state, whether they were Jewish or Christian. Though identification with Israel was much stronger among the Jewish volunteers, throughout the 1950s

⁵³ Musaph-Andriessse, 'Hoe ging het de vrijwilligers?', *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, 13 October 1967.

and 1960s Dutch Christians also developed a sincere interest into the Jewish state. For the non-Jewish volunteers the collective memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust also influenced their decision to volunteer. This was the ultimate opportunity for them to stand up for the Jewish people that in their views faced annihilation once again. The Dutch volunteers expected to become part of a rescue mission, but due to the soon ending of the war the overseas volunteer movement became actually a burden for the Israeli society. The Jewish Agency sent the majority of volunteers to the kibbutzim, the only places that could absorb them for a longer period of time. This did not mean that the volunteers were completely useless or served no real purpose. After the war was over it took some time before the large numbers of Israeli reserves returned home and could go back to work. In the meantime, the thousands of volunteers that generally stayed for a couple of months filled the gap in the Israeli economy.

The most appreciated group of young professionals among the Dutch volunteers were definitely the medical volunteers, who were able to assist the Israeli hospitals when there was an urgent need for extra help. Other volunteers were willing to work without much complain on the kibbutzim or in civilian programs and were grateful for the time they had spent as a volunteer in Israel. Only a small minority returned home to the Netherlands disappointed. The different stories of the Dutch volunteers suggest that apart from the specific kind of duties they were allotted, there were other factors as well that influenced their voluntary period in Israel. The NZB pointed at their background and concluded that the volunteers that were active in the Jewish youth movements had been better able to adapt themselves to the circumstances in Israel. This justified of course the organization's preference for Jewish volunteers. However, most of the young volunteers, Jews and non-Jews alike, enjoyed from the fact that they could make a small contribution to the Israeli society, while they got the chances to build new friendships, to share in the joy of the miraculous victory, or to explore the country and its rich cultural life. They not only remembered their voluntary period in Israel as a positive experience, but it also shaped their own character and their future life path.

Bibliography

Buitelaar, Olaf, *De houding van de Nederlandse regering en Tweede Kamer ten opzichte van acht Arabisch-Israëliëse conflicten* (Master's thesis, Leiden University, 2013).

Dawidowicz, Lucy S. , 'American Public Opinion', in: American Jewish Committee, *American Jewish Year Book Vol. 69* (Philadelphia, 1968) 198-229.

Dewulf, Jeroen, *The Spirit of Resistance: Dutch Clandestine Literature during the Nazi Occupation* (Rochester, 2010).

Govrin, Yosef, *Israeli-Soviet relations, 1953-1967 : From Confrontation to Disruption* (London and Portland, 1998).

Kaufman, Menahem, 'From Philanthropy to Commitment: The Six Day War and the United Jewish Appeal', *Journal of Israeli History* 15:2 (1994) 161–91.

Klinken, Gert van, *Christelijke stemmen over het Jodendom: Zestig jaar Interkerkelijk Contact Israël, 1946-2006* (Delft, 2009).

Klinken, Gert van, 'Dutch Jews as Perceived by Dutch Protestants, 1860-1960', in: Chaya Brasz and Jozef Kaplan, *Dutch Jews as Perceived by Themselves and by Others: Proceedings of the Eight Symposium on the History of the Jews in the Netherlands* (Leiden, Boston and Köln, 2001) 125-34.

Mittelberg, David, *Strangers in Paradise: The Israeli Kibbutz Experience* (New Brunswick, 1988).

Naor, Moshe, 'Israeli Mobilization and the Overseas Volunteers in the Six-Day War', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 13:3 (2014) 442-458.

Near, Henry, *The Kibbutz Movement : Crisis and Achievement, 1939-1995* (Oxford, 1997).

Oren, Michael B., *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New York and Toronto, 2003).

Peeters, Frans, *Gezwoeren vrienden: Het geheime bondgenootschap tussen Nederland en Israël* (Amsterdam and Antwerp, 1997).

Pilon, Johan, 'Motivering, geschiedenis en organisatie van Nes Ammim', Autumn 1970: <http://www.nesammim.nl/files/316tzz06.pdf> (accessed on 3 October 2016).

Sarna, Jonathan, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, 2004).

Schaik, John van, *Vertrouwde vreemden: betrekkingen tussen katholieken en joden in Nederland, 1930-1990* (Kampen, 1992).

Schoon, Simon, *Nes Ammim : Een christelijk experiment in Israël* (Wageningen, 1976).

Segev, Tom, *1967, Israel, the War and the Year that Transformed the Middle East* (New York, 2007).

Shapira, Anita, *Israel: A History* (London, 2014).

Snel, Jan Dirk, 'Nederland en de band met Israël. Sympathie voor een jonge staat', *Historisch Nieuwsblad* 5 (2008): <http://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/nl/artikel/10671/nederland-en-de-band-met-israel.html> (accessed on 3 October 2016).

The General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, *Israël en de Kerk: een studie* (Hilversum, 1959).

Trigt, Paul van, 'Een religieuze crisis? Secularisatie, religie en de Nederlandse joden in de lange jaren zestig', in: Hetty Berg and Bart Wallet (eds.), *Wie niet weg is, is gezien. Joods Nederland na 1945* (Zwolle and Amsterdam, 2010) 188-201.

Turniansky, Bobbie, and Julie Cwikel, 'Volunteering in a voluntary community: Kibbutz members and voluntarism', *Voluntas* 7:3 (1996) 300-17.

Vos, Dorien de, *Van nationaal naar Europees. De ontwikkeling van het buitenlands beleid van Nederland ten aanzien van het Arabisch-Israëliësch conflict, 1967-1980* (Master's thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2011).

Wallet, Bart, 'De laatste eenheidsgemeente van Europa. Identiteit en ideologie van een orthodoxe kehilla', in: Bart Wallet, Paul van Trigt and Hans Polak (eds.), *Se-heheyanu = Die ons heeft laten leven: De geschiedenis van de Joodse Gemeente Amsterdam (NIHS) van 1945 tot 2010* (Amsterdam, 2011) 20-49.