

*Der Stürmer*, June 1940: article containing a German soldier's initial impressions of Amsterdam<sup>1</sup>

*In Amsterdam*

*What a German soldier experienced with Jews*

Dear *Stürmer*,<sup>2</sup>

I am writing to you from Amsterdam. Although we have difficult, but also eventful, days behind us, I have to report to you at once. The fact is that my experience in Amsterdam is similar to that in Poland. I see Jews everywhere, and now I really don't know whether *we* are persecuting the Jews or the Jews are persecuting *us*.

I have made comparisons as to where the Jews seem more terrible, over there in Poland or here. Although one probably encounters Jewry in greater numbers in Poland than anywhere else, the impression in Amsterdam is nonetheless more monstrous. In Poland even the non-Jew was filthy and slovenly. But in Holland, with the proverbial tidiness of the Dutch, Jewry in the centre of Amsterdam is *twice* as conspicuous. The contrast between the Dutch cleanliness and the Jewish filth is indescribable!

But first I must tell you, dear *Stürmer*, about how I immediately came into contact with the Amsterdam Jews. It was like this:

*This is how they do business*

My first time out on a pass took me to *Calver Straat*,<sup>3</sup> a long, beautiful, relatively narrow but extremely good shopping street in Amsterdam, much like Hohe Straße in Cologne. I was having a look at the shops, the goods, and the prices when I was suddenly addressed by a man speaking broken German. I understood him to be saying that he had a gold watch that he wanted to sell cheaply. I have never concluded such a deal in the street and naturally did not intend to do so. But apparently the man misinterpreted my hesitation. He continued to pester me, urging me to purchase the watch, and said: 'Watch very cheap, will be searched on ship and watch must not be found on ship.'

I now realized that the watch was stolen and that the thief wanted to sell it on quickly. Now I became curious and took a closer look at this man, who spoke relatively good German. What should I tell you: *you could see from his face that he was a Jew!!* Now things got interesting, and I *pretended* to respond to his offer but told him that I was not interested in a pocket watch. At that, he immediately pulled out a gold wristwatch, implored me not to attract attention, and assured me that this watch too was very cheap. He was asking only 60 guilders for it, he said. When I pointed out that, as a soldier, I did not have that much money and in particular had no guilders, he gradually dropped the price until he finally was asking for only 7 *guilders*. He interpreted my continued hesitation as mistrust and shoved the watch into my pocket, saying that I should have its value checked myself. I must repeat that the Jew was extraordinarily skilled at acting

1 *Der Stürmer*, vol. 18, no. 23, enclosure, '25 Jahre jüdischer Krieg vom Juni 1940', p. 8. The antisemitic weekly, edited by Julius Streicher, was published in Nuremberg from 1923 to 1945 and in 1940 had a circulation of around 500,000 copies. This document has been translated from German.

2 *Der Stürmer* often published articles by its own staff in the form of supposed letters to the editor.

3 Correctly: Kalverstraat, today still the major shopping street in Amsterdam's city centre.

the part of a fearful man who was forced to sell an item of great value here at a ridiculous price because he was in dire straits.

### *The great scam*

Luckily I saw a policeman right at the next street corner. (Here one calls him a bobby.<sup>4</sup>) I quickly filled him in and asked him to arrest the thief. At that, the Jew took to his heels. I wanted to go after him, but the policeman laughed with all his might, so that I was uncertain at that moment whether to be more surprised at the strange behaviour of the policeman or at the flight of the watch thief. The explanation given to me by the policeman was very interesting indeed. In fact, the watches were not stolen at all. *They were worthless trinkets and barely kept correct time for a day.* Naturally, the 'gold' was just varnish. By looking at the watch in my pocket, I was able to satisfy myself that it was just cheap, shoddy stuff.

I now learned that the Jews try this trick *on every stranger* and maintain an entire organization that immediately spots every stranger and tries to cheat him in this manner. So, typically Jewish: *the Jew would rather pose as a thief, simply to give the impression that one really can buy an expensive item from him.* I've been told that thousands of strangers who came to Amsterdam have fallen for this con.

### *Jews everywhere!*

After this practical example of Jewish trickery in Amsterdam, I took a further interest in how things look in Amsterdam.

Amsterdam has *300,000 Jews!*<sup>5</sup> The number is so overwhelmingly high that a Jewish proletariat and Jewish workers also exist there, as in Poland. Of course, somehow these Jews too have a sideline, namely their '*little deals*'.

In Amsterdam there is still a real *ghetto*<sup>6</sup> right between canals that run through the old town and are known as grachten. Even a few streets away, one can tell from the typically Jewish odour that one is approaching the Jewish neighbourhood. *And all the things one sees here!*

Gesticulating Jews in caftans, with sidelocks! Jewish women and Jewish brats are gathered in the narrow streets and are either defrauding another goy or swindling one another. Given the large numbers of Jews residing here, the fact is that the Jew can no longer refrain from fleecing other Jews within his own race.

In addition to all kinds of garments which were the main object of the trading and bartering, I saw uniforms from every country, every branch of service, every military rank. The uniform of a Bavarian postal official from the days of the Prince of Thurn and Taxis<sup>7</sup> can be bought there just as readily as the uniform of an English general of today. The latter no longer has much market value, however.

4 As in the original. In Britain a policeman is known colloquially as a 'bobby', but in the Netherlands as a 'flik'.

5 Of the approximately 750,000 residents of Amsterdam in 1940, around 80,000 were Jews.

6 'Ghetto' here refers to the traditional meaning of the term – a densely populated poor Jewish neighbourhood. In Amsterdam, the term was used, also by Jews, for the area around Waterlooplein (Waterloo Square), where many Jews had settled and many synagogues were located.

7 The noble house of Thurn and Taxis established and operated postal systems in Western and Central Europe from the fifteenth to the late nineteenth century.

Yet with horror I also observed the many Jewish children, swarming around like ants. They grow up here in packs with no supervision and from an early stage seek to become involved in trading and making money. *Everything about all these children already said 'Jew'*.

*From iron nail to paraffin lamp!*

Then I came to a market square.<sup>8</sup> Here I was most surprised, and not only at the Jew but also at the *Dutchman*. The entire square was crowded *with Jewish dealers*, as at fairs in our country. But while our German market traders have a proper stand with an awning and attractive displays, here at this market in Amsterdam's ghetto one finds nothing but, at most, a tattered, dirty, and often torn unstitched *coal sack* serving as a rug and underlay for the goods spread out on it. But these 'goods'! All the things that were being offered and actually sold here! I observed, and this is no isolated case, that one can buy every imaginable type of dross here, from a rusty, bent nail to an old paraffin lamp. A truly new item that could be used in a household or for a trade is only rarely to be found. Much of what is offered for sale at this market is found in our country at most in the *rubbish bin*.

For these reasons I was surprised that these Jews can do any business at all with the Dutch. And then again throughout the entire square there was a furious clamour and a great deal of shouting. In short, it was a real 'Judenschule'.<sup>9</sup>

*A memory of earlier times*

I had now had enough of my first walk through the Amsterdam ghetto, however. I walked back into the city with its elegant, metropolitan character, but here too I saw that all the names of the businesses were just as we once knew them *in our country*. All the Kohns, Levis, Hirschmanns, and Samuels were to be found there again, and I, as a German and as someone enlightened by you, was naturally aware: this is not a Dutch shop but rather a *Jewish* one.

The ghetto in Amsterdam is the cradle of Dutch Jewry. The first experiences with cheating the goy were gained at the markets. With the *revekh*<sup>10</sup> he made, the Jew could then open a shop, first in the outer districts and then, after repeated failures, in the expensive neighbourhoods.

More about my other impressions another time! Then I will tell you, above all, *what the Dutch think about the Jews*. Indeed, they have now experienced first-hand that the *Jew* brought them misfortune.

Heil Hitler!

Wilhelmi.

<sup>8</sup> Presumably the Waterlooplein, where an antiques and flea market is still held every day.

<sup>9</sup> Literally 'Jew school': here meaning 'disorderly crowd'.

<sup>10</sup> Yiddish form of the Hebrew word *revach*: 'gain' or 'profit'.