

Ordinary Dutchmen and the Holocaust: a critical review

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Evelien Gans and Remco Ensel have critically reviewed the historical study 'Wij weten niets van hun lot.' Gewone Nederlanders en de Holocaust ('We know nothing about their fate.' Ordinary Dutchmen and the Holocaust', 2012) by Bart van der Boom. Based on the reading of Jewish and non-Jewish war diaries, the Dutch historian Van der Boom claims bystanders and accomplices were not indifferent to the fate of Jews. They were just as obedient or cooperative as Jews because they were unaware of the unfolding Holocaust. According to Van der Boom the 'guilty bystander' does not exist. In their article, published in the weekly *De Groene Amsterdammer* in December 2012, Gans and Ensel criticize the argument of Van der Boom and particularly go against the tendency in the book to equate the situation of Jews with that of the non-Jewish population. They also oppose his dismissal of the factor of antisemitism. The article has launched an intense historical debate on the book and on questions concerning the role of bystanders and accomplices in the mass murder of the Jews in the Netherlands.