

## A TRUE STORY

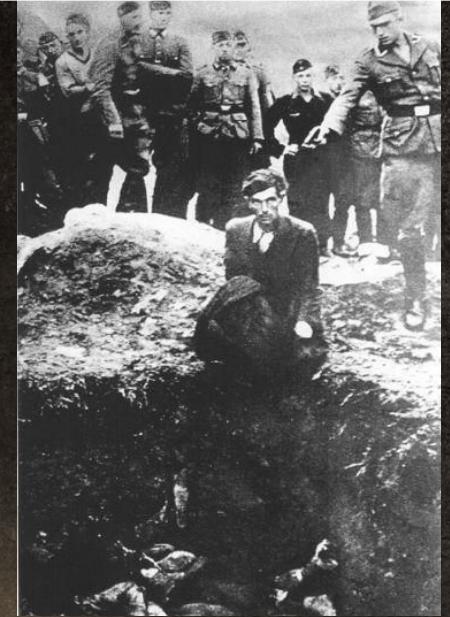
It is September 1948 when a special meeting takes place between a victim and perpetrator of the Holocaust in the Assen prison. To his great surprise, Jewish Holocaust survivor Mauritz Frankenhuis receives permission to submit the former camp commander of Westerbork—German Albert Konrad Gemmeker—to hours of questioning. Under Gemmeker's rule, over 80,000 Jews were deported to various extermination camps. This included Mauritz Frankenhuis, who was transported from camp Westerbork in the Netherlands. This was a truly degrading journey. After the war, Gemmeker is arrested and imprisoned in the Netherlands. From day one, he claims he had no idea the death camps existed. Out of the 107,000 Jews who were deported from the Netherlands, only 5,000 survived.

Mauritz Frankenhuis (54) has many questions he wants Albert Gemmeker (41) to answer that day. The unique and poignant conversation is led by Schoenmaker, an investigator from Drenthe. Emotions frequently run high. Even though Frankenhuis presents

countless pieces of evidence and photos, Gemmeker ferociously continues to deny any knowledge of the atrocities that occurred in the camps where he sent tens of thousands of Jews. Frankenhuis also cites a journal he kept during his stay in Westerbork. It is filled with gripping descriptions of the deportations. They were truly horrible. He also describes the screaming and yelling that broke out whenever Gemmeker started indicating who was and wasn't selected for transport. A weekly recurring and extremely traumatic event. Gemmeker feels he's being falsely accused and says he was only acting by order of his superiors.

Compared to his fellow camp commanders, Gemmeker's eventual punishment was particularly lenient. The prosecutors were unable to prove that Gemmeker was aware of the fate of the Jews after deportation from Camp Westerbork. Gemmeker has always denied any knowledge of the mass murder of the Jews. He was released for good behaviour after just six years! Afterwards, he left for Germany. Here he died in 1982.





ALBERT KONRAD GEMMEKER:  
"ICH HABE ES NICHT GEWUSST"



## THE FILM PROJECT

The historical, disconcerting and unique ‘interrogation’ (which was published as a book in 1948) between Frankenhuis and Gemmeker shall serve as the basis for a short, dramatic film (20-25 minutes), featuring great actors (including a German actor) and interspersed with real historical footage. This footage will be taken from the documentary that was shot by Jewish prisoner Rudolf Breslauer of Camp Westerbork by order of Gemmeker himself. The material is currently managed by Beeld & Geluid and has been placed on the World Heritage List by UNESCO.

Part of this rare material (five minutes) will be enhanced using the latest digital technology, similar to how Peter Jackson did with 600 hours of material from WO I in the gripping documentary *They Shall Not Grow Old*. Particularly the Westerbork footage of the arriving and departing transports will be restored. In this now infamous footage, it is clear to see how ‘intricately organised’ the deportations were under Gemmeker’s supervision. But also how people were being cruelly deported in cattle wagons. It also includes perhaps the most iconic image of the deportations: *the girl with the headscarf who looks straight into the camera*.

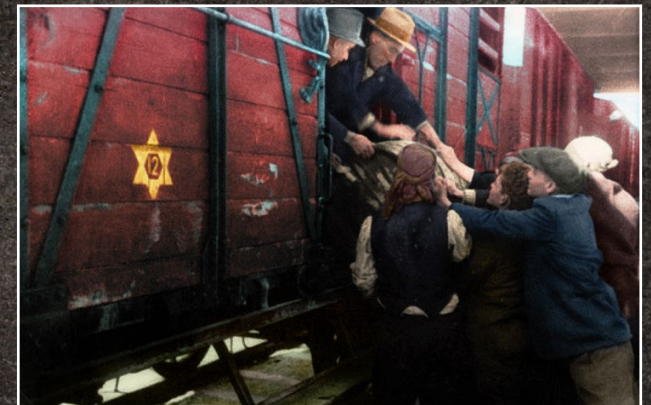
The digital restoration entails: drastically enhancing image quality, applying digital colours, making the footage widescreen compatible, and providing audio. Thorough research will be conducted to ensure that the right colours and audio are applied. Thus turning the enhanced material into poignant illustration material during the conversation between Frankenhuis and Gemmeker.

The meeting between the two men and the enhanced footage of the transportation from Westerbork will supplement each other perfectly. This will result in a short, but powerful dramatic film—based on a true tale. A Holocaust survivor who is after a confession of guilt from his former camp commander and confronts the man who deported 80,000 Jews.

The gripping tale in combination with the enhanced historical material will have significant impact on viewers. At the same time, it will also reach new generations. In short, an important film about the denial of incomprehensible war crimes, in which the main person responsible for the inhuman deportations of Jews managed to get away with minimal punishment. Purely because he continued to stick to the same familiar line... *‘Ich habe es nicht gewußt!’*



HISTORICAL FOOTAGE IN COLOUR





## GOALS

Gemmeker is a psychological drama in which it becomes clear that evil doesn't necessarily have the appearance of evil. Albert Gemmeker was a vain gentleman commander. A righteous and charismatic man, but at the same time a cold-blooded Jew hater. Controlled, balanced, and set on his task. A man who had organised the Jewish deportations to perfection. And all this from a Dutch camp, with strict order and even time for amusement for the Jewish prisoners. Perhaps this is exactly why he had a documentary made about camp Westerbork. He even allowed the deportations to be filmed, possibly to make an impression on other important executors of Hitler's 'master plan'.

'An actor', that's how Gemmeker has often been characterised, who knew exactly how he had to act or communicate with others. Even following his arrest. At the time, he was submitted to extensive interrogation. And he always continued to adamantly deny that he was aware of the death camps. People have never been able to prove that he knew the Jews would be killed upon their arrival in Poland. According to important historians, however, there's no doubt about it: 'Gemmeker knew exactly what fate awaited the Jews'.

The film will demonstrate how important figures from Hitler's stronghold can't always be depicted one-dimensionally. And this is perhaps where the biggest danger lies. A man who was relatively polite to his prisoners, but simultaneously had young children and the sick and elderly deported in spartan wagons. The film will also depict how important pawns of the genocide got away with minimal punishment or were even released early for good behaviour.

September 2019 will mark 75 years since the last transports that departed from Westerbork. It is at this time that we wish to release the film. First at (international) film festivals and subsequently on TV or (a) online platform(s). The film will eventually also be screened at Herdenkingscentrum Westerbork, which attracts 200,000 visitors annually, including tens of thousands of students. The film may also be included as part of study materials in schools.







## NARRATIVE FORM

The film will mainly play out in one location: an interrogation room. Two completely different men sit at a table and have a very intense conversation. An investigator of the Drentse police acts as an 'arbitrator'. Everything revolves around the actors' interaction. Holocaust survivor Frankenhuis aims to be proven right. He has brought countless pieces of evidence and aims for a confession. To this end, he gives it his all: charm, reason, emotion, anger, and humour. Although the refined and gallant Gemmeker knows exactly how to play this game, he gets carried away by Frankenhuis's critical questions and allegations. Ex-camp commander Gemmeker's confidence is completely shook. This will make the viewer think: 'Will he confess after all...?'

The meeting is shot in an oppressive, yet approachable style with many poignant close-ups. What can we read in Gemmeker's eyes? Is he lying? Or is he in fact telling the truth? How does he respond to the atrocities he was (partly) responsible for? What does his body language say? And how does Frankenhuis maintain his composure in front of the man who determined the fate of both him and his family? The man who, according to Frankenhuis, knowingly sent 80,000 Jews to their death. And in doing so was an important pawn in the biggest genocide in history.

When the dialogue turns to the subject of the deportations, we see the actual footage—in colour and fully restored. This makes the footage all the more intense. Not only because it feels more

realistic, crystal-clear and in colour, but also because we can simultaneously hear the commissioner of the documentary footage and the executor of the deportations talk about the events. We'll hear words that were in fact spoken by Gemmeker himself. When Gemmeker adamantly claims he had tried to arrange for proper trains, we see the images of people being stuffed into cattle wagons.

The diary passages about the deportations also play an important role in the film. When Mauritz Frankenhuis reads from his diary, we hear sounds that match the content. We hear panic, train engines, shots, marching soldiers, etc. By supplementing the reading with indirect audio drama, the events will be experienced even more intensely.

The film ends with real footage of Gemmeker. Ten years after his release, he is filmed by a German camera crew. We see a relaxed man who chooses his words skilfully. His view of the Jewish people might be more nuanced now, he admits. However, he is then presented with one of the most frequent questions asked to him: 'Did you know about the large-scale killing of Jews at the locations you had them transported to? Nein, ich habe es nicht gewußt!', he answers.