

INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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INTRODUCTION

The first issue of the International Bulletin appeared in the fall of 1995 and was sent to 22 individuals and organisations involved in working through the aftermath of the Second World War. The mailing list of this sixth issue contains 63 addresses. This shows me that the bulletin is meeting the expectations and the needs of the readers. For those who like statistics: in Germany 20 persons or organisations receive the International Bulletin, in The Netherlands 16, in the U.S.A 10, in France 5, in Norway 4, in Israel 3 and 1 in England, Canada, Belgium, Austria and Sweden.

In this issue Els Staal, a member of the Organisation Herkenning (for self-help of Dutch children of collaborators), tells her personal story and adds some remarks about the problems of the third generation in general.

Trijneke Blom-Post, a member of the Dutch Organisation Kombi (for self-help of children of war, belonging to different backgrounds) describes how the fact that her father was a famous Dutch resistance fighter influenced her life.

Maria Marchetta and Karl Fallend told us in the fifth issue how their peoples, respectively the Swiss and the Austrians, denied their roles in the past or modified it for their own profit. In the past few years the myth of 'the good Dutch' came under heavy attack. In this issue we learn about the attitude of the French toward their past. The journalist Thijs Berman wrote an interesting analysis of the lawsuit against Maurice Papon in October. We wonder if, 6 months later, the French indeed took the occasion to come to grips with their past. What was actually the subject of the suit: the personal activities of Papon or the role of the Vichy regime, as well as even the role of France as a whole?

One of the themes in 'The Sunflower' of Simon Wiesenthal is the dilemma of the human being in a situation of existential importance: does he/she feel free to follow his/her personal insights or does belonging to a group dictates his/her behavior and choices? I present you with a review of this book which was lately re-edited in Dutch and English.

The book 'The Twins', written by the Dutch author Tessa de Loo, is, alas, not yet published in English. The editor is looking for an English or American publisher. I wrote the review only in German.

I have to thank Uta Allers, Jürgen Bartelheimer and Jan Staal for their help. They corrected the articles I translated and 'transformed' them into texts written in 'real' English or German.

I hope you will like this issue. Please show it to others who may be interested.
All the best,

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

GRANDCHILD OF A COLLABORATOR

My father was a difficult man. He was always right, didn't accept criticism, and controlled his family in a dictatorial manner. My mother wasn't able to protect my brother and me from his outbursts of anger, his severe punishments. My parents spent a lot of time quarrelling, their disputes left very little time for attention for their children, affection was almost non-existent. At elementary school I usually isolated myself from the other children. I wasn't comfortable with groups. I didn't have friends at secondary school. My negative way of asking for attention by being extremely loud had the opposite effect of what I longed for: contact and recognition. My parents were fighting more than ever and I remember my adolescence as dark and depressing. My brother tried to get attention by adopting the role of a clown. Nevertheless other children teased him severely throughout school. He attempted suicide when he was 19, fortunately unsuccessfully. At 18 I moved away. Conflicts between my father and me had become unbearable. At the age of 25 I went through a first period of unexplained depression, but grew out of it through wonderful experiences of affection and help, qualities that I finally started to receive through true friendships I was slowly getting, for the first time in my life.

My father never talked about his parents, who both died in the fifties, before I was born. He never mentioned them, never referred to them. When I was 28 I started to become interested in the history of the families from both my parents' sides, and I asked him one day: 'But is there really nothing you can tell me about your parents?' He uttered one phrase on each of them, and then, in an innocent way that had to signify the unimportance of his remark, my father mentioned their membership of the NSB (the Dutch Nazi Party). It worked, in the sense that it took me 8 more years to realize the effect of this fact for my own life.

My brother and I both moved, and are still living, abroad. He married a German woman, and divorced. His little daughter is an anxious child with social problems. I travelled around the world, studied, worked, had relationships, but didn't seem to be able to find a spot, somewhere, where I felt at ease. I had repeated conflicts with employers. Despite the determined and strong impression I was able to give on the outside, deep down inside I was struggling with anxiety, restlessness, with fear of being rejected, frustration, and a growing lack of self-confidence. Three years ago, at the age of 35, I slid into a deep depression, as dark and painful as they can be. Everything seemed to go very wrong, but why?

I started psychoanalysis in the late summer of '96, and discovered a heap of pain, anger and hate, still burried from the period of my youth that I had tried to run away from for half of my life. After 15 months, I felt that I had discovered a lot, but that I wasn't going anywhere, and stopped the analysis. I decided I wanted to know more about the aspects linked to the fact that my father was so badly hurt from the age of 9 on, that he didn't dare talk or think about it for 47 years.

I went to a newcomers' day of Herkenning in September '97. My mouth fell open in amazement. There were six 3rd-generation members, and for the first time we formed a separate group. I was struck by the similarities of our stories. 'Herkenning' means 'recognition', and that day I discovered that there could not have been a better word to describe my emotions at that first meeting.

This is perhaps a somewhat long introduction to a text Gonda asked me to write on the subjects that concern third generation members of the Werkgroep Herkenning; about the problems that grandchildren of traumatised NSB-families encounter in their professional and personal lives, and how we can help each other. I have tried to illustrate how my brother and I had been affected, and still are to a certain extent, by something that had remained hidden, and that we only learned about in our late twenties. I was an isolated child, with an exaggerated sense of guilt, and my brother was bullied and teased at about the same age as my father had been: unspoken history was repeating itself, in a most literal way. And when I look at my little niece, not much has changed for this member of the 4th generation. However good our parents' intentions were in raising us, they hadn't digested the pain of their own youth, and passed the full package of traumas onto their children. A child is extremely sensitive, he or she picks up all the signals the parents emit, and copies them: social patterns, tactics to survive, to communicate, but also signals of unease, of anxiety, of guilt.

I would like to list some of the recurring problems that came up during meetings with fellow-third-generation members:

- feelings of guilt, victim-behaviour, defensive behaviour
- insecurity, fear of taking responsibility, feeling continually judged, conflict with authority
- being tense, difficulty concentrating
- confusion: do I have the right to exist?
- anger, extreme feelings of anger or hate, fear of expressions of anger by others
- isolation, problems in making social contacts, loneliness
- anxiety, fear of being abandoned, fear of exclusion
- depression and psychosomatic problems

A common denominator is often that we have been emotionally and affectively neglected in our youth. Our parents had trouble enough, and often still have nowadays, to struggle through their own life. We have been raised with an enormous feeling of guilt (for something we didn't do), in families that were socially poorly structured, isolated. We have not been taught that we have the right to claim a space of our own, that we have a right to exist. We lack a big chunk of basic fundamentals. The same might probably be said for our parents.

I still have problems with my parents. As soon as I talk about my pain, about the injustice that has been done to me, they come up with what happened to them. I don't feel heard. My father still tries to control our contact according to his principles, and when I try to lead a private life of my own, my mother feels rejected. Many of us have problematic relationships with our parents.

Fortunately most people of my generation are more familiar with professional help than our parents were at our age. In our group, most people have sought professional help, for anywhere from 2 to 13 years. This doesn't mean that the first step is easy. It always hurts. Besides, if you don't know the cause of your problems, you might have more trouble getting out of them. Also, therapists might underestimate the specific problems of our families. Fellow-members of Herkenning have helped me enormously in analyzing the real roots of my trouble, and in

recognizing my own pain. I joined a self-help group a year ago. We met 10 times. Although 2nd and 3rd generations were mixed, I would jokingly want to call the participants, 'the group of the nodding heads'; whenever one of us would talk about his or her difficulties, the rest would nod, in understanding and recognition. A wonderful experience. In the meantime a network of 3rd generation members has been started within the Werkgroep Herkenning, and in less than 2 years the list of our generation has grown from 6 to 34! We meet at least 4 times a year, and we hope that a self-help group, specifically 3rd generation, will be started soon.

Through Herkenning I had come closer to the core of things, but I was still sliding back into old patterns, and needed more help. I searched and found a Dutch behavioural psychologist in Paris where I live. There is still a lot of work to be done, but I start to see solutions, I start to enjoy my life again. Finally.

A few months ago it came as a shock to me that my parents might never fully understand or accept me, even though they try, and that the solution might be-in me! For 38 years now, I have tried to be the good girl, I have never really dared to say no, out of fear of being rejected again, of not being loved. I now have to nurture myself, claim a spot of my own, dare to live my own life. It seems so logical, but I never did. After a period of anger, I arrived at my soft spot, my vulnerability. Because, still, after 38 years, every negation of me from my parents'side comes as a hard blow. It is this state that has prevented me from contacting my parents for more than a year now, a painful situation for both sides. It is a temporary phase, necessary for my healing process, allowing me to become, better late than never, an adult, hopefully learning to accept not only myself, but also my parents, for who they are. I cannot endlessly blame them for my misfortune. I shall have to open up too.

Herkenning filled up a missing link in my personal search, but I only found it because my father dared to mention the cause 10 years ago, and through that timid act, he showed me an irreplaceable opening. Parents: by talking to your children, you are helping them in the best way you ever can.

Els Staal,
France

The Story of My Live

I was almost 7 years old and lived at a farm in the north-east of the Netherlands, when our country was dragged into the war. I remember this day in May 1940 very well. All around us was a tension that lasted till the end of the war.

My father could not accept that a foreign regime would rule in the Netherlands. As alderman in the village council and as citizen he was more and more confronted with the Occupation. Shortly after the taking over he refused to do things of which he was sure they would damage Dutch interests. That was the beginning of his resistance against the German regime. When the German influence grew more and deeper, he became a resistance fighter. The situation deteriorated: Dutch men were ordered to report to the authorities for being sent as labourers to Germany. Fairly soon the Jews were summoned to give themselves up to their Council, for being sent to Westerbork, the internment camp for Jews, from which - as it was revealed later on -

the trains set off to the concentration- and death camps.

We, as children (I am the second of eight) were aware of what took place at our farm. Nobody spoke about it, but we witnessed the persons who came to speak with our father, noticed that some stayed in our home for several days. We understood that all those events entailed danger. We were told to keep silent.

In the Summer of 1943 someone betrayed my father, he was arrested. Some days later someone liberated him out of his cell in the police office. From that day on, we too, as members of the family, were not safe any longer. Without preparation and explanation we were brought to different addresses. My mother joined my father, became herself a member of the resistance movement. They travelled from place to place, uprooted people.

In hiding I stayed in three different houses. People took care of me very well, but I missed my home, my parents, my sisters and brothers. At the first address I was not the only person in hiding. Resistance fighters came and went away. My parents visited me several times; that enabled them also to take some rest, to get some fresh air.

In the Summer of 1944 my father led an attack on the jail of the Weteringschans in Amsterdam. The raid failed, the attackers and the men whom they intended to liberate were put to death. When people told me that my father was dead, I could not form an idea of what that could mean. In those last years I had seen him only some times. He did not play an important role in my life of every day. I remember that I thought: 'When your father is dead, you have to weep.' And I wept, not so much for myself as for the people around me. I was not downright sad.

Some time after his death I fell severely ill. Fortunately my mother was with me, she took care of me, till the house where we stayed was attacked. My mother fled and we followed some days later. At the second address I stayed till January 1945, till I had recovered sufficiently to be able to make a long trip by bicycle. During that trip they fired at us and those shellings continued till the end of the war.

In May 1945 the Germans capitulated, the Netherlands were free again, but I was not happy. I concealed my feelings deep inside. We returned to our farm, lived there for some time, then moved to the west of the Netherlands.

It did not take long before it dawned upon us, that the resistance activities of my father would have important consequences for our life. After the war the government decided to put some outstanding resistance fighters in the centre and to honour in them also the others. My father became a symbol. A roman about my father's life was published; this developed the mythologization of his person.

My mother received many marks of honour for my father, from Dutch organisations and from abroad. We did not mourn him. This was impossible, as he lived on as a dead hero. Our mother stressed always the fact that others suffered more than we did. She needed the hierarchy of suffering for her survival. However, the attention we received was not the attention we needed. As a result I denied to have any problem related to the war.

In Rijnsburg where we lived after the war, I met the man I would marry some years later. He was a Jew, who as a child had found a hiding place when it was evident that his parents were put to death. We felt safe with each other, because we both had learned not to speak about all what happened to us in the war. We have four children, three daughters and one son and we are happy to have five grandchildren.

In my marriage I put my experiences and pain aside. My husband lost everything in the war, I did not. He had closed the door to the past hermetically. We lived as if there never had been a war. Of course we did not speak with our children about this subject. Occasionally, however, they participated in ceremonies in which my father was honoured posthumously.

I worked as a volunteer in several organisations. The work gave me satisfaction and enabled me to avoid the confrontation with myself.

In 1984 my husband was seriously injured in a road accident. After his recovery we were not able to reach each other emotionally any longer, thus we looked for therapeutic help. It seemed to me as if all that had been important to me, that had given me a hold in my life, for instance, my Christian faith, had disappeared. I had no ground under my feet, the light was extinguished and in fact I did not want to live any longer. Fortunately I decided, though, to stay alive.

I stopped therapy after 4 years, the therapist could not help me to come further ahead. We never spoke about the war and its aftermath. I had enough self confidence to leave therapy. I knew there were some problems I did not work through. At the time, however, I lacked the energy to cope with them. I was convinced that something would lead me to the next step at the moment that I would be strong enough to do so.

In 1991 my mother died and when preparing the funeral speech I realized that we never had buried our father. He had been buried at the Cemetery of Honour in Overloon, in his capacity as a resistance fighter. But we, as family, we never were given the occasion to say goodbye to him. At my mother's funeral we buried symbolically my father as well. That gave relief. Gradually some repressed feelings began entering my consciousness, although I was not actually aware of the process. I still could not behave spontaneously.

More than one year later I had again psychical problems caused by my work as a volunteer. I took up therapy once again. In the anamnesis the psychologist explained to me that I needed special help, because my problems were related to the war. I was speechless: did I have a war trauma? When I realized she was right, I knew immediately where I could get help. One year ago I had read an article about the Foundation Kombi. Their aim was of interest to me, I had kept the text. In Kombi children of war meet each other, share their grief and pain, notwithstanding their different backgrounds.

I had learned to see, that I could not take a pride in the heroic acts of my parents. If this was true for me, it was applicable for all other children of the war. One cannot hold the children responsible for the choices of their parents.

I contacted the Foundation Kombi. To start with, I participated in two weekends. It was evident that I needed more help. As a consequence I became a member of a little self help group. We told our stories of life by turn. When it was my turn, I still wondered whether my experiences were important enough to be told. Others suffered far more than I did, didn't they? I still denied my problems. I preferred listening to the others, telling my own story was not easy; was it right to attract the attention of the others to my problems? Like my mother I had accepted as a matter of fact the hierarchy of suffering. It is very likely that my Calvinist upbringing played its role in this view.

After the group stopped, I participated in weekends organised by Kombi. I liked to work on the issues time and again. In 1994 the IKON (Oecumenical Broadcasting Company of the Netherlands) intended to make a documentary film in which the stories of children of the war with different backgrounds would be presented. They were looking for four children who would agree to being filmed during the year of the commemoration ceremonies of the Liberation. Kombi suggested me to engage myself. I did, together with a collaborator's daughter, with a daughter of a Jewish family and a man, who, as a child, passed the war in a Japanese internment camp in Indonesia. The documentary film, entitled 'One year later', was broadcasted in the Spring of 1996.

Participating in this programme aroused many emotions. We went back to the village where I was born and that I did not visit since the forties. We did not only go back, physically, with the cameras, I returned also psychologically to the pain of the past. The most important was, that 50 years after the war, not longer the parents, but the child was at the centre of interest. Finally I was given the permission to exist with my pain and my sorrow. My role in this programme helped me a lot, some of my repressed feelings came up and I could work through them. It liberated me, but most of my sisters and brothers experienced it in a totally different way. Some of them took it ill of me having put to the front the consequences of the choice of our parents for us, their children. Some former resistance fighters reacted negatively: I did not understand well.... Fortunately I received also positive reactions on the part of this group.

In the Fall of 1996 a biography about my father's life appeared. Some years earlier I met the man who would write this book. We attended a meeting where Professor De Levita lectured on the aftermath of the war in the lives of children. In the interval he asked me about the consequences of the fact that my father was so well known in the country. My answer was one of the reasons that led him to the writing of this biography about my father, Johannes Post. Although my father had been executed, he was still 'alive', as a dead hero. Mythologization of my father was well spread. The first copy of this book was presented to me in the barracks named after my father. Now I had the honour to be at the centre of the ceremony, a position I was not used to; mostly I prefer the background. In my speech I expressed my happiness, this book doing justice to my father. He appears as an ordinary man, with good and with less good qualities, as a man who could make mistakes. All the attention people had given to him, had been a barrier between him and me. This book helped me to come closer to him, as a person, as a father. It enabled me to bid him, finally, a farewell. Now where the past is not dictating my life today so intensely, I can face the future.

Trijneke Blom-Post

The Sunflower by Simon Wiesenthal

One of the best books I ever read concerning the war and the Holocaust is 'The Sunflower'. Years ago I read the Dutch edition and bought the American one. I was glad to hear that reeditions in English and Dutch were published in 1997.

Why is this book so dear to me? The story is very simple: Simon Wiesenthal and other prisoners are working in the court of the former Technical High School where Simon studied and which is transformed now into a hospital. A nurse calls him in and leads him to a young wounded SS man, Karl, who, before dying, wants to tell about an awful event, an action in which he participated and a hundred Jews were killed. Simon sits down, listens to Karl, allows him to take his hand in his dying hand, he chases a fly, but when the young SS man asks for forgiveness, Simon leaves the room without saying a word.

In the evening he asks the opinion of his comrades. Their answers are different: 'We don't have the time and the luxury to speak about forgiveness now' and 'You could not forgive him, because he did not hurt you, but others'. Later another friend gives another opinion: 'He confessed his guilt, he was honest, you should have forgiven him.'

The next day the nurse gives him a parcel containing some belongings of Karl, but Simon refuses it. After the war he remembers the address on the parcel and he visits Karl's mother. She tells about her 'good boy' and Simon decides to tell her nothing about the confession of her son. He leaves in silence.

The events haunted Simon for years and 30 years later he asked a number of prominent persons to answer the question: 'Did I handle the situation the right way or not and what would you have done?'

It is obvious that he gets answers which range from: 'Let him go to hell' to 'My instinct is focused at forgiveness'. The central theme **forgiveness** is soon accompanied by many other questions. What is the relationship between justice, righteousness and forgiveness? Is it possible to forgive in the place of others? If one cannot forgive murder, can one at least forgive the murderer? Is it only God who can forgive, because he knows all the circumstances? Is repentance the only ground for forgiveness, can one forgive, should one forgive, is one allowed to forgive?

Why is Simon still plagued by the events, does he feel guilty about his refusal to forgive?

Some are furious about the misuse of a Jew: how did the SS man dare to have a Jew brought to him to listen to that awful story, all for his own benefit?

Was the dying boy only a SS man - as most respondents call him - or was he still Karl, a boy corrupted by a criminal regime, rediscovering his humanity by the insight he got in his crimes at his deathbed?

Two different worlds touch each other and the two men are persons belonging to those different worlds, but at the same time individuals, who can share emotions. How to act, as the 'member of the group' or as the individual? Had Simon forgiven the dying boy, would that have meant betrayal of the victims?

Some bring to the fore, that Simon in fact solved the dilemma by staying at the bedside, by listening, by allowing the soldier to hold his hand, by chasing the fly. He DID forgiveness, his silence was more eloquent than words. Simon showed his humanity where others would have uttered accusations or would have reacted with hatred. He did far more than he was obliged to do, far more than could be expected from a prisoner uncertain how long he would live. He visited the mother out of free will, this time he consciously remained silent; he did not want to take away the last

thing she had in this life, the memories of her beloved son.

And, of course, there are far more themes put on the table for discussion. We, as readers, will find in their answers elements with which we can find our own answers on those existential questions.

GSB

BLACK PAGES

From the Vichy regime till the war of Algeria; the lawsuit against Papon touches the French on the raw.

The suit against Maurice Papon can last a long time. The suspect has to be present at the sessions before the French Court of Assises. If not, the proceedings are postponed. Papon (87) who is accused of the deportation of 1600 Jews in his function as secretary-general of the prefecture of the Gironde during the second World War and who, in this function, was responsible for the action, has a good lawyer. This man knows that only illness can block the lawsuit. That is, at least, what the Jewish victims presume. At the very day that Papon's role in the 'Endlösung' of the 'Jewish problem' would be presented for the Court and the proper proceedings would start, Papon was hospitalized. It was a case of 'providenced' bronchitis. The lawsuit was already hold up for some days. If this continues, the trial will be broken off prematurely, because the old and ill Papon can not be present any longer. That would be a frustrating event to the (children of the) victims. It would give France a bad press as well. These proceedings revealed some black pages of the history of France and ripped up old wounds.

For a long time the official history writing considered the Vichy regime as an element foreign to the nature of the French State. The 'real' France was represented in the person of General Charles de Gaulle who, as a political refugee in London, kept in life the Republic since 1940. After the war it was presented as if almost all the French followed him against the collaborative government and obeyed orders only under coercion. It seemed as if France liberated itself, whereas the Americans, the English and the Canadians stood aside and watched it. Nobody spoke, for a long time, about the fact, that the French executed the persecution of the Jews with eagerness. During the purification after the war the antisemitic policy of the Vichy government played an inferior role.

The lawsuit enables the country to face the real facts: there was collaboration at great scale, Jews were fetched by French policemen and deported by the orders of painstaking officials like Papon. In Bordeaux it painfully is revealed how unhealthy it is to strain history. The legitimacy of the Gaullism, based for the greater part at the heroic role of De Gaulle during the war, is suddenly subject of doubts, which are, however, not justified, for the mere fact that De Gaulle offered a high position to Papon after the war. He may have been convinced that Papon was a resistancefighter (he was for a while. GSB). The leader of the gaullists, Philippe Séguin, blames the government Jospin now for trying to tarnish the Gaullism through this lawsuit. If it was recognized from the outset that the Vichy regime collaborated with the Nazis and if this would have been investigated, if one had admit the role officials played in the persecution of the Jews, there would not be this fuss now around the trial of Papon. The gaullists get back the boomerang of the myth of the French resistance movement, after 50 years.

Another black page on which one can find the name of Maurice Papon is that of the war of Algeria. At the 17th of October 1961 some hundreds of Algerians demonstrated in Paris, to which they did not get permission. Under the responsibility of the police chief of Paris, Maurice Papon, some two or three hundreds of demonstrators died. Nobody was put to trial and the official number of deads did not go beyond three hundred, what embittered the Algerian immigrants a lot. When papers published in articles the chronology of Papon's life and career, this piece of falsified history aroused many deep emotions. One did not speak for some days about the legal proceedings against Papon who, as the first French, is put in trial for crimes against humanity. The government promised to open the archives concerning that fatal Octobernight. They were until now top secret. It is through the trial of Papon that France can reach a deeper and more honest insight in its own history.

Tessa de Loo: **DIE ZWILLINGE**

Ed: C.Bertelsmann Verlag, ISBN 3-570-12196-8

Paperback: Taschenbücher/Goldmann Verlag, ISBN 3-442-72161-X

In Köln, 1916, werden einige Minute nach einander zwei Mädchen geboren. Nach dem Tod der Mutter versorgt der kränkelnde Vater seine Töchter, bis auch er stirbt. Da sind sie 6 Jahre alt. Die eine, Lotte, ist tuberkulös und kommt zu Verwandten nach Holland. Die andere, Anna, stark und gesund, wird zu einer Bauernfamilie auf's Land geschickt.

Viele Jahre nach dem Krieg treffen sich die beiden Schwestern zufällig in dem Kurort Spa, wo sie Heilung von Arthrose suchen. Am Morgen gibt es körperliche, am Mittag und Abend mentale und geistliche Linderung, wenn sie einander ihre so unterschiedlichen Lebensgeschichten erzählen.

Lotte lebte in einer Familie mit einem stalinistischen Vater und einer liebevollen Mutter, die während des Krieges zwölf Personen versteckt und versorgt hatte. Lotte heiratet einen der Versteckten, wird Mutter und lebt weiter ohne viel Probleme.

Anne erzählt von ihrem Leben in einem kleinen Dorf, wie sie später als Weise bei einer Adelsfamilie gearbeitet hat, dass sie in dem Krieg kaum etwas gehört hat von allem was in der Welt passiert. Sie heiratete einen Soldaten, war bald Witwe, versorgte am Ende des Krieges verletzte Soldaten. Sie ist alleine, ohne Kinder, ihr ganzes Leben beschäftigt, Anderen zu helfen und immer noch energisch.

Lotte ist der Prototyp des guten holländischen Patrioten. Ihr Hass gegen 'den Mofen', gegen diesen lauten 'Schöpfer des Wirtschaftswunders' der 'von allem nicht gewusst haben', ist unausrottbar. Ihre Schwester versucht Lotte davon zu überzeugen, daß manche einfache Deutsche wirklich nichts gewußt haben, weil sie hart arbeiten mußten, keine Zeitung lasen, und im Radio nur Propaganda hörten.

Anne kann ihrer Schwester nicht überzeugen, aber sie überzeugt durch ihre aufrichtigen Sprechen die LeserInnen wohl. Sie ist lebendiger, ihre Anstrengungen sind größer, ihr Charakter ist großmütiger. Lotte betrachtet sich bis zum Ende der Geschichte als Opfer der Deutschen und sieht in ihrer Schwester vor allem das Kind der Henker. Sie verdrängt ihre deutsche Herkunft: Ich habe nichts mit Deutschen zu tun, ich bin von Kopf zu Fuß Holländerin', Selbsthaß und Selbstmitleid.

Die Schwestern nähern sich einander nicht. Anna sagt: 'Wenn wir beide nicht über

die Hürden, die der Krieg aufgebaut hat, zueinander finden können, wer wird dann dazu imstande sein? Dann bleibt der Welt für ewig in der Umklammerung der Unversöhnlichkeit, dann kann man die Dauer des Krieges um ein Vielfaches verlängern.'

Als Lotte dann endlich beginnt, ein wenig ihre Abwehrhaltung aufzugeben, stirbt Anna.

Die Autorin ist 1985 einer deutschen Frau begegnet, Maria Hesse, die sie in der Anna gestaltet hat. Sie selbst ist teilweise Lotte, denn auch sie hat manche Vorurteile und Abwehr überwinden müssen, bevor sie die Geschichte von Maria annehmen konnte. Die Begegnung mit Maria war für sie ein 'eye opener', ein wichtiger Wendepunkt.

Das Buch ist in der niederländischen Presse gelobt ('das Unrecht des Rechthabens') aber auch vernichtend kritisiert worden. Für manche Holländer ist es unerträglich anzunehmen, daß sie nicht die einzigen Opfer sind, daß sie nicht alle die heldhaftigen Widerstandskämpfer waren, so wie sie sich das viele Jahre lang vorgestellt hatten, daß es auch deutsche Opfer der Diktatur gegeben hat, wie auch unsere Königin zu Weihnachten 1994 gesagt hat. Es ist mutig, daß Tessa de Loo den Mythos der guten Holländer angegriffen hat. Ihr Buch hilft den Holländern vielleicht sich ihrer Vergangenheit ehrlicher anzunähern. Es kann für Deutsche wichtig sein zu wissen, daß man im Ausland anfängt, ihnen nicht mehr kollektiv Schuld zuzuweisen und anzuerkennen, daß auch manche Deutsche Hitlers Diktatur zum Opfer gefallen sind.