

INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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INTRODUCTION

In november 1995, I sent the first issue of the International Bulletin to 32 readers. Throughout the years new readers joined our circle. Thanks to some new readers we crossed the magic line of 200! Welcome.

Ursula Konraths presented a paper titled 'The Nazi ideology, medicines and their victims' at the members' meeting of the organisation 'Gegen das Vergessen. I made a summary of it.

Azizza Malanda calls for participants in her research project on descendants of German women and black American soldiers.

Veronica Grueneisen asked me to insert an announcement for a conference and introduces the organisation she is active in and its activities.

Peter Jahn sent me a call for support for a monument commemorating the victims in Eastern Europe of the Lebensraum ideology.

Baard Borge participated in a conference in Winchester and wrote an impression of the proceedings.

Patrick Lasch sent me a moving, very special Christmas story.

I came across an article Saskia Hooiveld wrote on her research study on children born to Vietnamese women and American servicemen.

In Journal no 6 of the Research Centre for Evacuees and War Child Studies in Reading a paper of Ali Bathie was published in which she compares the experiences of British and German war children.

Paul Valent invites you to visit his new web site.

Mark Slouka's novel 'The visible world' impressed me a lot and I would like to share some of my feelings with you.

On the 20th of November, ceremonies of wreath laying took place in London as well as in Stockholm. Sinikka Ortmark Stymne and Martin Parsons report on the events.

Please inform me of any change in your (e-mail)addresses, so that we can stay in contact. Comments and new articles are welcome!

Best regards,
Gonda Scheffel-Baars

Poem written by the Jewish German poet Hilde Domin

Es gibt dich,
Wo Augen dich ansehen.
Wo sich die Augen treffen
Entstehst du.
Du fielest,
Aber du fällst nicht,
Augen fangen dich auf.
Es gibt dich,
weil Augen dich wollen,
dich ansehen und sagen,
dass es dich gibt.

You exist
Where eyes are aware of you
Where eyes meet each other you come into being
You might fall
But you do not fall
Eyes are holding you
You exist, because eyes define you
They see you and say
Yes, you exist.

THE NAZI IDEOLOGY, MEDICINES AND THEIR VICTIMS

Ursula Conraths presented a paper on the above mentioned subject at the members' meeting of the organisation 'Gegen das Vergessen' (Lest we forget).

She based her paper on three books and a presentation of Dr. Pohl of the university of Hannover. You will find the relevant details about the work at the end of the summary I made of her paper.

The leaders of the Third Reich gave their physicians the opportunity to use human beings instead of pot-belly pigs, rats or rabbits for their medical experiments. Those human beings were seen as inferior in the racist, social or economic field. These people, seen as a superfluous ballast, were now given a 'useful' destination for the benefit of future generations' health. Those chosen for the experiments were KZ-prisoners, war prisoners, forced labour hands and especially Jews. The physicians

carrying out the experiments belonged to the top level of the medical world. Ernst Klee's book contains a list of 1000 physicians involved in the experiments and mentions a couple of organisations that took a part in it as well, e.g. the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology and some well known producers of medicines.

The central question is: how could these physicians, who once took the oath of Hypocrates and promised to commit themselves to the health and the life of human beings, forget their oath and do the opposite of what they were supposed to do, in all cruelty and mercilessness?

At the beginning of the twentieth century social darwinism, deduced from Darwin's ideas but never recognized by him, found many supporters. Social darwinism states that strong social, economic and moral factors are decisive in the survival of the fittest (often misunderstood as the victory of the strongest). It puts forth that there are good and bad genes and that people have to propagate the good genes and prevent the bad genes to be handed over to the next generation. In economics these ideas led to a 'laissez-faire, laissez-passer' capitalism in which only the strongest producers would survive in competition. The disastrous effects of World War I and the economic crisis of 1929 were a fertile ground for the Nazi ideology with its racism, its Lebensraum doctrine, its striving for purity of the German blood and its 'historical vocation' of annihilating everything that was 'impure'.

The law of 1935 regulated how the 'pure' German blood would have to be protected and how the 'impure' blood needed to be excluded from propagation.

It is hard to fathom what pain and horrors the people used in medical experiments had to endure. Clauberg and Schumann started their experiments in the autumn of 1942 with women in the women's camp of Birkenau. They developed a method of sterilization and when the contrast liquid they used became scarce, they did these experiments with other liquids. In June 1943 Clauberg wrote with pride to the SS Reichsleiter that he had perfected his method. In Neurenberg he stated that his method had not been painful at all and that the 'only' effect had been the loss of fertility.....Witnesses declared that they had gone through a hell of pain.

The children of the Bullenhuser Damm were used for testing to what extent they were effected by the tuberculosis bacillus they were injected with. Kurt Heißmeyer was convinced that not the bacillus was the crucial factor causing people to fall ill, but hereditary conditions. When the children used in the experiment fell ill and got high fevers, they were given medicines to keep them alive so that they could be used in another series of experiments. At the end of the war, on April 21, 1945 the children, the nurses and the French physicians who had been forced to take a part in the experiments were taken to the small camp Bullenhuser Damm and were killed there. Heißmeyer put away all the evidence of the experiments in a lead box and buried it. He fled to his parents living in the territory occupied by the Red Army, went in hiding for some months and then opened a private clinic near Magdeburg. In 1966, he was traced and he got a life sentence. In 1967 he died of a heart attack.

Prisoners were used for experiments with medicines meant to cure some violent infectious diseases like malaria, typhoid fever and yellow fever. Typhoid fever is a disease characteristic for times of hunger and lack of hygiene. In the ghettos and the KZs with war prisoners the fever made many victims. The authorities tried to halt the disease by burning the affected people. Later on, Rudolf Wohlrab of the

governmental Hygiene Institute took the opportunity to use sick people in his search for a medicine. In January 1942, he started experiments in Buchenwald, with the participation of the Behring Company and the Bayer Leverkusen Company. Medicine research, however, was a phenomenon for which children were used even before the war. Ursula's mother was a nurse in an orphanage and she witnessed how the institute physician carried out experiments on the children in the home. Ursula and her mother try to identify this physician in order to take him to court. They still have to cope with problems related to what happened to these children and to what could not be prevented.

In 1942 Dr. Rascher started experiments in KZ Dachau to find out what effects cold-treatment and pressure-treatment had on war injuries. The staff of the Luftwaffe was interested in the outcomes, hoping that these would imply better recovery methods for pilots exposed to the low temperatures of sea water after having been shot down. The staff hoped to develop better dressings. The subjects were meant to die through these experiments seeing that autopsy could yield additional useful data.

In August 1947 the physicians' trial in Nuremberg ended with a death-sentence for seven of the accused, a life sentence for five of them. Four other physicians got sentences of 20, 15 or 10 years.

The other physicians were never accused and never trialed. They could continue their career. In 1951, one of them, Otmar von Verschuer whose pupil Mengele was responsible for the most cruel experiments, was appointed Professor of genetics at the university of Münster and in 1952 he was appointed chairman of the German Society for Anthropology. In 1953 he was given a private audience by the pope, Pius XII, the man who signed the Concordat with Hitler, the man who helped Mengele to escape to South America.

Social psychology considers racism to be a mechanism of ignoring one's own fears and uncertainties. One's dark side (jealousy, hatred, fear etc.) is projected on others in order to reach a certain stability and to acquire feelings of self-confidence. In psychoanalysis it is emphasized how important the bonding is of a new born and its mother and the impact of feeding is seen as crucial. Psychologists emphasize how important the emotional help is of the mother in the child's coping with fear for other people and how she can help her child to accept her temporary absence. How much damage is done to babies and small children who, as in the former DDR, are taken to crèches? Could a lack of self confidence and even xenophobia be seen as a result of this early separation?

Distrust of people who are 'different' in whatever way is a pitfall for all of us. Ursula confessed that she was not sure if she had been able to resist the Nazi indoctrination, or had had the courage to protest against the cruelties, risking her own life, had she lived there that time. Today the rampant racism rarely emerges, but in disguised forms it still is alive.

It is our responsibility to be alert, to learn lessons from the past and to strive for peace. We need to hand over the testimonies of the victims to the next generation so that their suffering will never be forgotten. Never war again, never Auschwitz again.

'Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit', documents of the Neurenberg Physicians processes, edited by Alexander Mitscherlich, Fischer TB
'Auschwitz, die NS – Medizin und ihre Opfer' written by Ernst Klee, Fischer TB
'Die Kinder vom Bullenhuser Damm' written by Günther Schwarzberg, Steidl Verlag
'Zur Sozialpsychologie des Rassismus' paper presented by Prof. Dr. Pohl, 24 April 2013, VHS Hannover

New Website

Dr Paul Valent has informed us of his new web site at www.paulvalent.com. Readers of this Newsletter may recall that Paul is a child survivor of the Holocaust who together with his parents survived in Budapest living as Aryans. Paul has founded a child survivor of the Holocaust group in Melbourne, has written a book Child Survivors of the Holocaust, and has written extensively in papers, chapters, and encyclopaedias on Holocaust matters. As a traumatologist he has also written books and papers on trauma generally. Readers will be able to access Paul's writings on all these matters as well as some philosophical pieces and short stories for light relief on his web site.

Again, www.paulvalent.com

CALL FOR SUPPORT for a monument commemorating the victims in Eastern Europe of the Lebensraum ideology.

Since twenty years ago people in Germany have become aware of the fact that not only millions of Jews were killed due to the political ideas of the Nazis, but that many non-Jewish people in Eastern Europe were victimized and killed as well. The Nazi ideology saw these people as 'Slavs', belonging to an inferior race and therefore predestined to be expelled from the territory occupied by the German armies, and to be relocated far in the East or to be murdered. Racism and the Lebensraum ideology were crucial in the Nazi war waging and occupation methods.

As early as 1939 the killing of Poles employed in schools and other educational institutes was planned and after the start of the war against the Soviet Union starvation of some tens of millions of inhabitants of the captured territories was scheduled. In the first year of the war against the SU two millions of prisoners of war

were the first victims of purposive starvation. Tens of thousands of war prisoners were killed by gunfire, immediately behind the front or they were taken to camps to be shot. That way the Soviet Army lost three millions of soldiers.

The blockade of Leningrad aimed at the death of the three millions of inhabitants, 'only' 800,000 people died. In Poland and in the Soviet Union villages were razed and their inhabitants killed whenever people offered resistance. In several territories where the German Army ransacked the villages and towns, creating 'Kahlfraßzonen' (areas where no food was left), the inhabitants faced starvation. In Warsaw 600,000 people were shot at random and some thousands of inhabitants were deported.

In the period of the Cold War people kept silent about these victims or saw them as the inevitable collateral damage of war waging. Nobody drew any attention to the fact that this killing was equally purposefully executed as the Holocaust. At commemoration ceremonies these victims were ignored.

We can make a difference and start to commemorate all those forgotten victims. There is a small monument, in Berlin, near the Tiergarten, in memory of the soldiers of the Red Army who were killed during the war. We could dedicate this monument to the other victims as well, or erect a new monument just on the opposite side of the road, the 17 June Street, so that finally these victims of the Nazi regime can be remembered.

Please give your support to this call and send your agreement with this plan to Dr. Peter Jahn.

Email: kl.peter.jahn@gmx.de

Bamberger Straße 27,
10779 Berlin.

Lived Life and Future Life in the Shadow of Wars

Secrets and Transparency in Norway, Germany and Elsewhere

Experiential Conference

Nansen Academy, Lillehammer, Norway

June 10th – 12th, 2014

World War II has caused major atrocities in all countries affected by German invasion. These have produced profound and deeply lodged suspicion, hostility and enmity, not only between victims and perpetrators, but also in their children and grandchildren. Resistance and collaboration evolved and created hostility and silence between adversaries within and between countries, not only at the time – they were also transmitted to the second and the third generation, infiltrating their lives, laying the foundation for ongoing hostility, anxiety, shame and repeated conflict.

Relationships are underpinned by – sometimes hidden – memories, prejudices, stereotypes, fantasies and fears.

This residential conference aims to allow participants to study, reflect and work on the emotional legacy of WWII, examining how these events continue to have impact on our personal lives today as well as on relationships between Norwegians, Germans and people from all other affected countries. Now a conjoint event in Norway is arranged by PCCA (Partners in Confronting Collective Atrocities), NCPD (Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue) and Nansen Humanistisk Akademi. Away from the pressures of ordinary life, the conference provides a safe setting for these forces to emerge, to explore how they may be understood, and whether genuine movement in the real, lived relationships between members of these groups may be possible. Focus will be on reflection and sharing experiences rather than reconciliation.

METHOD: The conference uses a variant of the Travistock Group Relations model, and builds on the work begun with Germans and Israelis and expanded to include Palestinians and others. The focus is on the exploration of experience in a variety of group learning opportunities in order to discover the links between personal experience, current tensions in and between societies and historical trauma.

MEMBERSHIP: This residential conference invites people from Germany, Norway and elsewhere – from all walks of life and all ages – who recognize the puzzling and hidden painful residues of war and historical trauma and are curious about their impact on them. No previous experience in this kind of conference is necessary.

STAFF: The Conference Director is Renate Grønvold Bugge (Clinical and Organisational Psychologist, ISPSO, OPUS). The conference staff is an international group with extensive experience in this way of working.

FURTHER INFORMATION will be available soon at www.p-cca.org. Website of Nansen Academy and Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue: [www.nansenskolen.no/index.php?option=com_content &task=view&id=57&Itemid=95](http://www.nansenskolen.no/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=57&Itemid=95)

REGISTRATION: geber-reusch@t-online.de

The Past in the Present

Introducing “Partners in Confronting Collective Atrocities”

Veronika Grueneisen, Nuernberg¹

Partners in Confronting Collective Atrocities (PCCA e.V., www.p-cca.org) is a non-governmental organisation founded in 2007. Its aim is to address the impact of national and international large group conflict which is experienced as insoluble. It consists of an international group of psychoanalysts and psychoanalytically and systemically informed organisational consultants from Germany, Israel, Britain / South Africa and Italy. Before PCCA was founded, there had already been 15 years

¹ Chair Person PCCA e.V., see www.p-cca.org

of successful cooperation in conferences on the aftermath of the Shoah between Germans, Israelis and Others affected by its impact².

This work began in the late 1980ies when, after an international conference in Israel, some colleagues from Israel and Germany sat together reflecting on the powerful emotional impact of the past interfering with present productive working relationships, between members of these two nations. How can members of post war generations relate to each other when the trauma on the side of Israelis and the guilt on the side of Germans is a constant companion in their meetings? Through the experience of many painful encounters, these colleagues had realised that guilt and shame, that the notion of victim- and perpetrator-hood cannot be born alone and needs the presence of the Other in order to be faced and in order to allow members of the post war generations to discover and use their resources in a fruitful way, in the service of the future.

Some of these colleagues were familiar with the model of Group Relations³, a model of experiential work with groups and organisations, which allows to explore the social dynamics, one's own role and use of authority in order to foster learning. Eric Miller⁴, an expert of working with this model and for many years head of Group Relations in the Tavistock Institute London, developed – cooperatively with his colleagues – the application of the GR design offering the two groups – Germans and Israelis – an opportunity to explore their relationships and inner images of themselves and each other and learn from it, individually, but also for their work as professionals and citizens, at home.

Since then, eight conferences have taken place. The first two were held in Nazareth / Israel, 1994 and 1996, hence the series was called “Nazareth series”. The third took place in Germany – with some concern as to whether Israelis would come to Germany, in the first place. However, it was an increase in Israeli participation, showing that there was a longing for a safe space to think about the past and find a new way of relating to the past, in the present.

Since then, conferences were opened up to people from other nations, eventually also to including Palestinians who had been on the minds of all those involved in this project, staff and members alike, adding to the dynamics the difficulty of dealing with a current conflict. This work is being followed up in many different ways, looking for cooperation with Palestinians and Israelis to support their work with each other as well as our own learning about ways of addressing bleeding conflict.

Currently, the effort to apply what has been learnt in past conferences has been increased. This has not only resulted in contact with colleagues in Serbia who are dealing with a more recent cruel past, but also are involved in still acute conflict, with their neighbours.

Also, in Norway, the fact that witnesses of German occupation both from the strong resistance and from collaboration are dying out has opened up an atmosphere of looking at what had, until then, been secrets, for individuals, families and in society

² S. Erlich, M. Erlich-Ginor, H. Beland Fed with Tears – Poisoned with Milk. The “Nazareth” Group-Relations-Conferences. Germans and Israelis – The Past in the Present. Psychosozial-Verlag 2009

³ see <http://www.tavistock.org/news/what-is-a-group-relations-conference/>

⁴ see Erlich, Erlich-Ginor, Beland 2009, chapter III/1, pp. 35

as a whole – which meant that the descendants of many extremely painful events had to cope with these, alone.

PCCA is hoping to spread this type of work in which people get an opportunity to look at their painful emotional heritage of national and international large group conflict, under conditions away from the stresses and strains of everyday life, and learn with and from others of their own and other nations to deal with this impact in a way that opens up a future for themselves and their children.

SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE IN WINCHESTER

The international «Children in war»-conference, originally hosted by Dr.Martin Parsons and held at the University of Reading, this year took place at the University of Winchester (September 4-6) and was capably organised by Dr.Christine Ryan.

Like in earlier years (i.e. 2004, 2006, 2009 and 2011 respectively) a number of interesting research papers were presented and discussed in plenary sessions. Traditionally, a majority of presentations have discussed World War-II related problems, most notably the British or Finnish child evacuees.

This time however, the range of topics was wider as more papers dealt with contemporary and non-European issues. Sadly, some of the announced speakers from Third World countries could in the end not make it to the conference due to visa problems. To give just a few examples of papers presented in Winchester:

Gueorgui Chepelev, a lecturer in Russian language and civilisation at the University of Paris, talked about the several dozens of thousands of Soviet children who participated in the Second World War on the Eastern front (1941-1945), either in the Red army or in the partisan units. After the war the theme of child-soldiers came to play an important role in the education and ideological formation of the Soviet youth. In his paper he discussed that trend as well as its development within childrens' literature and cinema - in connection with the political and social changes in the USSR and post-Soviet Russia. Chepelev worked as an expert in international pedagogical projects on children and youth in Russia and currently takes part in research projects aimed at collecting oral memories of war in the post-Soviet countries.

Olutayo C. Adesina's paper («Freedom from Fear»: Of Child Cadets and Intrepid Soldiers in Pre-Colonial Yoruba and Aja Cultures»), which was presented by his wife, dealt with «child soldiers» as a phenomenon in West African history. Several pre-colonial West African states adopted unique schemes of military training to produce intrepid soldiers. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, two important West African states- Dahomey and Ibadan- developed the ethos of deploying young boys to the war front as a strategy of creating a core of battle-hardened soldiers. Agaja, the man who ascended the throne of the Aja state of Dahomey in 1708 introduced a

military training scheme for young boys under which each adult soldier was allowed at state expense to take with him to war a certain number of boys of about twelve years of age. Ibadan, a militarist state that developed in the 1830s in what is now Southwest Nigeria also perfected the same scheme. Aja and Yoruba traditions are particularly rich in the colourful portrayal of these boys and the pivotal roles they played in crucial events.

In the twentieth and early twenty first century, the world became particularly strident in condemning the use of 'child soldiers' or the exposure of underage boys to war conditions. But to historians of West Africa, the use of 'war-boys' was the bitter-sweet legacy of pre-colonial West African societies who recruited and deployed these boys as military cadets, to enhance the strength of their respective states. The paper examined the West African tradition of promoting the use of boy-soldiers since pre-colonial times. It also dealt with the implications of this practice for the states concerned, and the remarkable effects on societal values and ethos.

According to Maria Sjoberg of Gothenburg University in Sweden, the early modern society was characterized of severe conflicts, but there was no strict line between military and civilian affairs. The drawing up of that boundary was a process that mainly occurred in 19th century, when civilian became synonymous with «feminine» and military synonymous with «masculine».

Was civilian aspects of society in previous centuries subordinated to military demands, and also interwoven with them? To what extent was the military in charge of civilian aspects within the military? Those questions were discussed from a gender perspective, considering the role of children in the light of problems connected with the drawing-up of boundaries between civilian and military spheres in society. What did children do within the Swedish military in the 17th and 18th centuries? And who were actually defined as children? Martha's answers were based on interpretations of data from garrisons and Ships Boys' Corps, together with previous research on military history in Sweden and Finland. Her paper was part of a project that aims to make childrens' role in the military before the era of child soldiers more visible.

In my own paper, I discussed how Norwegian schools between 1940 and 1960 handled children of collaborators. In Norway today there is broad consensus that schools, i.e. first and foremost teachers, have a special obligation to children who, for one reason or another, are particularly vulnerable. Recent studies find children who bear some form of stigma to be more susceptible to isolation or bullying at school than others. Membership in such a group is in itself socially discrediting and may lead to the child being perceived as different from its "normal" school mates. In the 1940s and 1950s, thousands of Norwegian school children may have been stigmatized and left vulnerable because of their parents' actions. During the German occupation 1940-1945, Vidkun Quisling's Fascist-like party Nasjonal Samling (NS; national unification) formed a commonly detested collaborationist regime and strived to reshape society in accordance with its New Order-vision. In the extensive trials that followed the liberation, every single NS member was sentenced for treason. Informal social sanctions against ex-collaborators apparently continued for many years to come.

According to sociologist Erving Goffmann, a personal stigma – especially a strong one such as the traitor stigma - can be transferred to family members. In the case under discussion, with parents stigmatized over a long period of time, the children almost certainly risked being singled out and picked on. How did collaborators' children as a group actually fare at school, during the occupation and in the immediate after-war years? To what extent were they cared for and protected by teachers of the day?

All in all, taking part in the conference was both interesting and not in the least a very enjoyable experience socially – with several pub visits etc. Good job Christine! We all look forward to the next CiW conference, wherever it may take place.

Dr. Baard Herman Borge, Harstad University College, Norway

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

Oral History Project is looking for German-born
Black men and women who lived in children's homes
In post-war West Germany

Research Project:

'Residential child care and intercountry adoptions in post-war West Germany. A life history analysis of Black German and women'.

Project leadership:

Azizza B. Malanda, independent PhD student

Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. Dorothee Wierling (The Research Centre for Contemporary History in Hamburg)

Contact information:

Azizza B. Malanda, e-mail: zeitzeugenprojekt@yahoo.de

About the project :

In the 1950s and 1960s numerous black German children – born of German mothers and mainly African-American servicemen who stationed in West Germany – grew up in children's homes, in children's villages or in segregated privately run homes in the Federal Republic. In addition it was nearly impossible to find West German couples who were willing to integrate a black German child into their family. As a result black German children in care were often adopted abroad, mainly to the USA and Denmark.

My research project is focused on the life courses and individual experience of German-born black men and women who grew up in children's homes in the 1950s and 1960s.

In this context I am looking for interviewees:

- who are willing to share their life history with me
- who are biologically of German and African-American/African origin
- who were placed on one or more West German children's homes in the 1950s and 1960s
- who possibly grew up in a foster or adoptive family

If you would like to share your life history or if you have any further question regarding the project, please use the contact information mentioned above. All information gathered through the interviews is kept strictly confidential and will be only used for research.

Please do not hesitate to forward this call!

Thank you very much for your support!

A SPECIAL CHRISTMAS STORY

Eva-Maria Schnoor from Hamburg interviewed Attila Lasch, staff member of a youth jail in Düsseldorf. He told her the following story.

Christmas is approaching, the calendar shows the month of December 1998. The young people in jail try to cope with their emotions related to the coming Christmas days. Some cry down their feelings of unrest, others ridicule the Christmas mood and others behave as if nothing special is ahead of them. The staff know that each year December is a difficult time for the young prisoners, the majority of whom would like to spend the Christmas days in the circle of their family and friends. Homesickness seizes young prisoners throughout the year and very often they can handle this feeling. But in December things are different.

The staff know that most of the young prisoners are perpetrators as well as victims. They failed to cope with the hard reality of the modern consumer society with its competition. One day circumstances overwhelmed them and their misdemeanour led to their imprisonment. The staff members help those young people by training them way, that when released, they will not give in again to the temptation of trespasses. Some young people cherish good memories of their childhood and they can imagine that the future will have good experiences in store for them. Others remember their childhood as a nightmare, they are convinced that good events will never come their way.

Attila Lasch has noted that over the last few days one of the prisoners, Jonathan, caught because of drugs, is apathetic and keeps to himself. The staff member is worried and on the spur of the moment he invites the young man for a cup of tea in his office. Jonathan keeps silent, but after some minutes he says: 'I'm sure you can't and will not believe if I should tell you what bothers me'. Attila replies that he knows that in life there often occur very unbelievable events nobody could ever have imagined before. Jonathan was raised in England and during history lessons he learned about World War II. But it happened long, long ago and in the young man's mind, it is just history. Attila was a boy when Hitler dreamt of his Third Reich. He explains to Jonathan how the racism of the Nazi's led to the founding of special

women-and-children homes, Lebensborn homes, where women could give birth. People call the Nazi ideas an ideology, but Attila calls them an idiocy. It had nothing to do with love but only with the wish to secure the life of an elite that would be able to assume responsibility when the old elite had grown older. Attila illustrates his words with the story of one of the children born in one of these Lebensborn homes.

When the boy was born his mother had to hand over her baby immediately, but thanks to the help of someone close to Hitler she got her baby back when he was some months old. The mother was a frivolous woman and had several relationships with men before she welcomed an American soldier in her home. This man maltreated the boy, humiliated him and abused him sexually. Life was a nightmare for the boy who at the age of 8 saw no other way than trying to commit suicide. His effort was not successful and for three months he was in coma. When he came out of his unconsciousness, he was taken to a children home. Some months later he was sent to his grandmother and then to other members of the family, to end up finally in his mother's care.

Jonathan has listened intently and when Attila asks him: 'What has become of him, any idea?' Jonathan immediately answers: 'I guess he has taken revenge, or he will have found oblivion in alcohol or drugs. But, is this just a story or is that boy a real person who maybe has been imprisoned in this jail?' Attila says: 'At the age of 18 this boy decided to assume responsibility for his own life, to learn a profession, to use words instead of his fists. He became aware of the fact that he could help other young people at the basis of his own bitter experiences.'

Jonathan is moved now, has tears in his eyes: 'This boy, at least, knew who his mother was, but I don't know her.' And then he speaks about his childhood in England, where he lived with foster parents until the age of 13, when they died. In the children's home to which he was taken the staff had a letter in which the name of his biological mother was revealed. His foster parents, desperate because of their infertility, had stolen a baby from a black woman in Los Angeles and then went to the UK. The director of the children's home had tried to find his mother but in vain. When Jonathan had left the children's home he wandered from town to town to end up in Germany, in Berlin and Hamburg and then in Düsseldorf. He wanted to have money for a trip to Los Angeles in the hope to find his mother. He drifted into the world of drugs and his path ended in jail. Especially when Christmas is approaching his longing for his mother is almost more than he can bear. 'That boy from your story, should he have been able to believe my life story?' he asks and he is eager to learn Attila's answer. 'Yes, he would have believed it, I'm sure he would have believed you'.

When Jonathan is back in his cell, Attila cannot stop thinking about Jonathan's words. He goes to his chef and asks if in his documents the name of his mother is revealed. If so, he could start a new research in the hope to find her. Starting from that name he contacts civil servants in Los Angeles with the help of one of his colleagues who speaks English very well. With all his energy and wholly concentrated Attila tries to find the needle in the haystack and the unbelievable happens: he finds the address of Jonathan's mother and contacts her. She is very excited to hear about her son's longing for her and is ready to buy him a ticket. In the

mean time Attila has asked permission of the court to allow the son to join his mother. The permission is given, provide that he indeed leaves German territory. The ticket is bought and Attila himself accompanies the young man to the airport and to the security check. When Jonathan is through, the two of them turn one last time to say goodbye. Suddenly Jonathan asks: 'Sir, what was the name of that boy whose life story you told me? I want to do what he did, to assume responsibility for my life.' Attila points to himself and says: 'His name is Attila Lasch. God bless you and your mother'. Then he turns his back and leaves the airport building.

The little boy that had experienced nothing but awful things became a man who learned to cope with the problems all people are confronted with in life and to develop a special sensitivity for people needing help. When he felt he had come to grips with the past, he left the name the midwife had given him at the name giving ceremony in the Lebensborn home, Attila, and adopted the name he chose himself, Patrick.

VIETNAMERICAN WAR CHILDREN IN VIETNAM

Saskia Hooiveld did a research study on children born to Vietnamese women and American servicemen still living in Vietnam. Her interest for this topic started with a rather basic question: 'how are they doing?' She realized that their physical appearance would make them recognizable as a group within Vietnamese society. This made her wonder if and in what way their physical appearance had an impact on how they perceive and see themselves and how their background influences the positions and place they have in Vietnam.

I would like to summarize the article she wrote on this topic in 2003 in the framework of the identity project of the organisation War and Children.

'What makes this group especially interesting and the topic challenging is the fact that their mere existence crosses or transcends, blurs and thereby questions all fixed boundaries and constructed concepts in which they could, might or are-being-thought-of to fall into. Apart from the social and scientific consequences of their existence, their personal view on their own identity and their own ideas and views on questions of belonging are important.'

'I have chosen for the angle of "identity" from the perspective of these war children who are adults now. In my view identity as a concept is very much related to questions of belonging, which are based on elements of "common-ness". It means belonging to, or being part of some construct or entity that is bigger than you as an individual, from the perspective of the individual or the social environment. On an individual level the identity is something with which an individual can distinguish itself from the rest of the group of which it feels or is considered to be part of. With identity development I mean the way people see, classify and define themselves at this moment in time, and how it has evolved during their lives and differs according to the geographical context.

People integrate into a society through a process of socialisation. As such, within a society every subgroup is integrated in its own way. Every time integration takes place, a society changes along with it. When the presence of a certain group or

people within a society is far from being taken for granted and is often questioned or challenged, then social integration has not taken place with regard to the self image of that particular society in relation to that specific group. The group or persons referred to, do not necessarily have to be born 'outside that society.'

'The Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1987 is "an appropriations law providing for admission of children born in Vietnam between January 1, 1962 and January 1, 1976 to Vietnamese mothers and American fathers, together with their immediate relatives. They are admitted as nonquota immigrants but receive refugee program benefits."

The Homecoming program is especially designed for those children who do not have an acknowledgement of paternity. In the case a child knows his or her father and has contacts with him, he or she will fall into the regular immigration program.'

'This group can be seen as being a part of a larger group of "Amerasians". Some estimations have it that they are the largest group. The context of war is indissolubly connected to the existence of these children. In existing literature on Amerasians the attention paid to the context of war could be more specified and differentiated from the situation of other Amerasians not linked to this context of war.'

'For this Vietnam specific context I like to use the term "Vietnamerican", which is based on the book 'Vietnamerica' written by Thomas Bass (1996). And for this specific group I have chosen to use the term of "Vietnamerican war children". This term refers to all the aspects that make up the experiences of this group.'

'The Vietnamese term "Nguoi Lai" means "person of mixed race". It is in fact a neutral term. Often, the term "Con Lai" is used to address persons of "mixed race". In this term, "Con" has a pejorative meaning. All sorts of variations and combinations of "Lai" are being used in talking about this group. Often these names are used instead of a person's given name. One female respondent expressed this very clearly:

'Sometimes I get angry, as I have my own name but rarely do they call me by my name. They just say "My Den" (Black American). However, some were raised not to dislike that name: 'My mother said that as I am "Con Lai", people would call me "Con Lai", there is nothing wrong with that.'

'Stigmatisation in relation to this group takes all forms. Their background as 'the child of the enemy' does play a role. One person explained how different people in her village feel resentful of her. They see her as an American. They call her 'the inhuman American imperialist' who had killed their children or their father. She reminds people in her environment of their sorrows and sufferings.

One woman, born to a Montagnard (1) mother, said that for her the stigma of being a Montagnard is bigger than the stigma of being a child of an American serviceman.'

'Some of the men and women that were born with blond or brown hair were shaved bold when they were young. In some cases, when they were still young, their mothers dyed their hair black. The majority of the respondents still dye their hair today, both men and women, for they do not want to 'stick out'.'

'From the interviews I have had, it became clear that the combination of having a dark skin and being a woman in some areas of life made it even more difficult. One of these areas of life was finding a partner, a husband.

A different, but related aspect had to do with the "concept of beauty". They found they did not fit into the prevailing idea of what a beautiful woman in Vietnam should look like; a beautiful Vietnamese woman has a light skin and long straight hair.'

'During the interviews a lot of emotions were triggered. Some of these emotions had been hidden during their whole life, so from time to time our conversations were very intense for them. When it got this emotional we took a pause. However, they all insisted on continuing the interview, as they wanted their story to be told. The strength of these stories lies in its diversity as well as in the similarities between them, and the sincerity with which they are told.'

In her article Saskia wrote down a couple of fragments of two of the interviews she had had in order 'to illuminate both the ordinary as well as the eye-catching experiences'.

'These stories illustrate how it can be that the majority of the Vietnamese people and also people from outside Vietnam, are convinced that there are "no Amerasians" left in Vietnam. Jane as well as Rose both literally live a "hidden life". Jane barely leaves her house during the day, partly due to her work schedule and for another part it is out of fear of being stared at and bullied. This makes it easier to agree with working at night only. Rose has lived in a remote area all her life. When she was small she lived in the mountains far away from people that could possibly harm her and her mother. Other interviewees live in fairly remote or not easily accessible areas in the margins of the city, or they live in small villages somewhere in the Mekong delta.

'Having curly hair and a dark skin, and being very tall or having a fuller figure compared to the Vietnamese in the neighbourhood, are things that cannot be covered easily.

Most of the respondents I have spoken to did not feel Vietnamese. This is something that is undoubtedly the consequence of being confronted with, and reminded of their background so often. Sometimes they define themselves in terms of the image that others have of them, and the names they are given.'

'In general, the Vietnamerican war children that still live in Vietnam do so for different reasons. Some choose a life in Vietnam. Others do not know about the existence of the Homecoming program, so leaving Vietnam is no option for them. There is the group that has been rejected to enter the program, the group that is applying at this moment, and a group that has been included into the program but is waiting for the documents to be arranged. Finally, some have returned from the United States.'

'This topic of Vietnamerican war children crosses boundaries existing in the scientific world; the related themes question concepts as "citizenship", "minority community", "race" and so on. Other boundaries that are being crossed and blurred are boundaries that exist in the minds of people, related to ideas of belonging. They question strong beliefs people act upon and which influence the lives of, in this case, the 'Vietnamerican' war children. These beliefs have to do with ideas concerning "lone motherhood", "the enemy", but also with what is considered to be beautiful. All these boundaries are blurred and transcended by the mere existence of these war children. Transcending national boundaries in law and policy with regard to the topic of war children could be essential in safeguarding the rights of these children. Finally, the international community could play an essential role in providing assistance to this group in their search for their background, history and identity.'

MARK SLOUKA: THE VISIBLE WORLD

'My mother knew a man during the war. Theirs was a love story, and like any good love story, it left blood on the floor and wreckage in its wake.'

As a boy growing up in New York, his parents' memories of their Czech homeland seem to belong to another world, as distant and unreal as the fairytales his father tells him. It is only as an adult, when he makes his own journey to Prague, that he is finally able to piece together the truth of his parents' past: what they did, who his mother loved, and why they were never able to forget. His childhood is suffused with stories: fragments of European history, Czech fairytales, and family secrets gleaned from overheard conversations. Central is the heroic account of the seven Czech parachutists, who in May 1942 assassinated a high ranking Nazi, Reinhard Heydrich.

This novel, Slouka's second, joins a growing genre of what might be called second generation quests: how do you fathom a world from which in a sense you come, but which you do not know? How do you penetrate the personalities and the pasts of your parents if you have grown up far from the sites of their memories?

The most important unseen presence in the boy's life is that man his mother loved before she married his father and whom she cannot, or will not, forget. The father remains devoted to his wife despite her emotional infidelity. She, however, is increasingly claimed by the memory, or the fantasy, of a phantom lover. She kills herself by walking under a bus. In his parents' homeland the narrator hopes to learn more about their past which will help him to unravel the sad enigma of his mother's suicide. Since the information he acquires does not yield clear meaning, the narrator turns to his imagination to supply the missing parts of his mother's story. In a sense children of immigrant parents always have to fictionalize their parents' stories to construct them from the bits of information and distant recollection.

The narrator 'invents' Tomas Bem, an imaginary eighth conspirator in the Heydrich plot. The attempt to kill Heydrich goes awry and the conspirators are forced to go into hiding, in a church's crypt. The author depicts the atmosphere of boredom, camaraderie and growing anxiety, when they learn about Heydrich's death (due to blood poisoning) and the terrible reprisals that followed, in which many hundreds of people were murdered. The town of Lidice was razed and all the inhabitants were killed. Tomas leaves the crypt and meets his lover in the night that the others are captured and are executed. Very soon, however, life becomes unbearable, his guilt and the knowledge that he was probably suspected of betrayal, overwhelm him.

The novel elaborates a couple of themes. I was particularly impressed by some statements of the father, who is depicted as a quiet and decent man, the opposite of the adventurous and flamboyant hero Tomas. His ideas about heroism and life in a dictatorship might be regarded as the pragmatism with which people can survive, whereas heroism is not compatible with life and ends in disaster.

'Generations of heroes, entire battlefields of them, he said, were just ordinary people who had been overtaken by the course of the events, who had done what they did with no more thought than a dog who bites when his tail is slammed in a door – people who, when their consciousness revived, felt like spectators of their own life. And yet – and this was the thing – every now and again, against all the rules of

human behaviour, it occurred: an act of heroism planned in advance, undertaken for the right reasons and carried out with the full knowledge, one might even say tragic knowledge, of the risks involved. A thing as unbelievable as a rain of toads. It isn't possible, you think. You can't believe it and yet there they are, on the pavement. When that happens, he said, all you can do is marvel at it, and take off your hat.'

This unspectacular father, this man at the backdrop, intrigues me by his reflections and realistic thinking.

'Faced with an individual who had complete power over them, most people found themselves, almost unconsciously, wanting to please him. You could see them seeking out the right facial expression, the correct stance; like animals in the open, they would instinctively find the place between dignity and cowardice – and stay there, not move. Draw their neutrality around them like camouflage. It was a kind of game. Validate the other's disgust for you without encouraging it; play the mongrel without incurring a kick. Of course, this was the easy part. The challenge was in keeping public behavior from bleeding into private life, in keeping the two selves apart. And this was impossible. No one could accomplish it entirely. No one. Every hour you lived, from the moment you woke in the dark, you were reshaping yourself to survive.'

The dilemma of the resistance fighters when confronted with the reprisals following their heroic act is heart rendingly described in Tomas' efforts to cope with this unforeseen result of their act, that aimed at 'saving lives' by killing the killer but resulted in the death of innocent people.

'The need to reduce them to numbers: 150 men and boys, 190 women and children. Numbers. Not unaware that this was exactly what the others had done in order to be able to do what they did....'

He could not allow himself to imagine them just before their death, not see them as the human beings they were. They had to be just numbers, otherwise he would succumb. But even this trick could not help him to avoid the way his comrades had gone: he had to follow them.

(Besides my own reflections on this book, I used some fragments of bookreviews on the internet, particularly the one written by Eva Hoffmann in the New York Times, 29-4-2007)

A Brief Comparison of the Experiences of German and British Children in the Second World War

by Alie Bathie

From looking at the work of historians such as Lynn H.Nicholas and Guido Knopp, and the recent studies by psychoanalysts Teresa von Sommaruga Howard and Ruth Barnett, it is arguable that the German youth suffered more complex and long lasting trauma as a result of the war than their British counterparts. In comparing the experiences of these children I have grouped six areas of enquiry roughly under either physical or psychological forms of trauma. The physical experiences of the British and German children, whilst united by bombing, rationing and family

separation, differ in terms of scale. Where Britain endured rationing and severe shortages, German children were vulnerable to actual starvation both during and after the war.

Defeat, guilt and loss marks the German children's psychological suffering as acute. The victorious Allies had the advantage of teaching their children some sense of moral victory – that the war had not been utterly in vain. In contrast, Germany's millions of war dead appeared to have been a pointless sacrifice. The ending of the Nazi regime, which had been the very foundation of life in the Reich, and the death of the Führer also left many children reeling. Additionally as the details of the Holocaust slowly became known, along with all the horror of medical experimentation and ethnic cleansing occupied countries, the children who had been taught pride and self-sacrifice as paramount suddenly found themselves branded "guilty".

The issue of hindsight is also an important factor to consider. The Allies may have seen the German children as victims of the Nazi regime, or of the allied bombing campaign, but at that time for every German victim there was a German perpetrator, and a sense that every German was a Nazi. Children, however innocent, were nonetheless children of the enemy. Even the Jewish Kindertransport children who were refugees fleeing persecution and voluntarily housed, encountered problems in many places because they spoke the enemy language. With each country immediately concerned with their own youngsters at the time, it is only with scholarly reflection that the plight of the German children is seen as particularly acute, and its effects particularly long lasting.

In aerial bombing raids the British and German children shared a common experience, and yet the severity of the attacks was, in my opinion, greater on the German side. Like their British counterparts, some German children initially found the whole experience exciting: "...they collected and traded shrapnel splinters..." British children report the colours in the sky. The reality of the situation quickly became clear though: "...when Liverpool was bombed it was the most horrific memory to me as a child..."

What served to make the British experience particularly traumatic was the constant climate of fear surrounding bombing; though evacuated children may have been physically safe, many recall being constantly worried about their parents, siblings and friends left behind in the danger zones. Many children felt guilty at 'deserting' their loved ones. Meanwhile, Britain's 'thousand-bomber' raids destroyed German cities, most famously Dresden in February 1945 and Hamburg in the summer of 1943. The firestorms that swept these cities added extra horror to the experience in comparison to the bombed British children, as "...there were stories of the shrinking and mummification of those who died..." Among the death were thousands of the Hitler Youth drafted in by the government to act as fire auxiliaries in heavily bombed areas, notably the Ruhr, exposing them to the kind of danger and severe trauma that British children escaped. The indoctrination of children under the Nazi regime hardened many children to the horrors of bombing. The constant climate of fear and tension in Britain was a considerable part of the war trauma suffered by the country's children. In contrast the self-sacrificial German youth endured the trauma of hopelessly trying to fight the fires, smelling burning flesh and seeing people attempt to flee whilst on fire. No British child was expected to take on the responsibility of a firefighter, nor were they expected to see horrific sights without fears. The German youth had no

opportunity to run away from the danger, instead having to work without hesitation in conditions grown men would find traumatising.

The separation of the British children from their families as a result of evacuation is recognised as one of the most traumatising events of the war for the families involved. Feelings of isolation and rejection were commonplace and in many cases remained for the rest of the ex-evacuees lives. The elder children who had been charged with the care of younger siblings report feeling guilty and helpless when forcibly separated; likewise, others resented the responsibility and feel they missed out on a carefree childhood. Whilst some bonded with foster families and later returned to live with them, for many the trauma of separation and moving to a new place led to panic attacks, sleeplessness, anxiety, and depression, most often becoming evident in later life when the ex-evacuees found it hard to form successful emotional relationships. The surprising number of ex-evacuees who never married could possibly be a result of this.

German children too, suffered separation and its effects. However, in the German case, separation was often accompanied by deportation or resettlement, preventing the children from ever returning to their roots or finding their loved ones. The situation was worst, undoubtedly, in those who had been deemed “lesser races” and forced out of their homes, family members often shot, amidst the clearing process of the Lebensraum policy. However, once the war in the East was lost, over 10 million German refugees left or were forced out of Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. This was a kind of terror the British children never faced. Malnourished and traumatised, the expellees had no guarantee of a home when they arrived at their destination. There were little enough rations for those who were already settled, and there was no warm reception. The destruction of the German cities had left no living quarters for the millions of refugees, whose focus was, understandably, on surviving as opposed to the emotional wellbeing of the children. Often the adults were too traumatised themselves by hunger, exhaustion, cold and violence, to look after young children, so the story of nine year old Ingrid who took responsibility for her baby sister was not uncommon. In their displacement the German refugee children shared the isolation and resentment felt by the British evacuees, but with the added trauma of witnessing the horrors of violence, hatred and revenge along the way.

Real starvation in postwar Britain was uncommon, despite rationing and severe shortages. The system is almost often referred to as a challenge, whereas in Germany after the war the lack of food supplies was life-threatening. “Children collapsed from hunger in their classes” and in 1946 a traveller noted “the bodies swollen with water from hunger oedema and the skeletal bodies of adults and children”. To make this situation worse, it was common for supply shipments to be either late or not come at all, resulting in children being encouraged to steal railway coal or get involved in the booming black market. When youth crime soared in the postwar years officials worried that all respect for rules and authority had broken down. The German war children lost their innocence not only in the horrific things they witnessed, but also in the way in which hunger drove them to act as adults: to care for tiny children, prop up the spirits of their parents, scavenge for food or make a profit on the black market. British children may also have grown up fast and parent their younger siblings literally and emotionally, but the German children were aware that their actions could either save or shorten the life of a family member.

Another physical threat faced by German children that the British only feared and never faced was the attack by enemy soldiers. The actions of the Wehrmacht towards the Russian populace during the successful period of Operation Barbarossa are still hotly debated amongst academics and it is still a highly sensitive issue in Germany today. Whatever the truth may be, in the closing weeks of the war, the Russian army advanced from the East and instigated a brutal and traumatising revenge on the people of the region. The Russians believed the extensive pillaging, torture, beatings and rape inflicted on the population of East Germany were deserved, especially following the first discovery of concentration camps at Majdanek. Women were often gang raped, in front of their children, husbands or neighbours. The women knew what was coming, and there was no way that the fear felt by the communities could be hidden from the children. Mothers cut short the hair of their adolescent daughters and dressed them as boys. For a child to witness, or even just to feel the fear of the women, this must have been deeply scarring, and on top of this rape was rarely spoken of, fearing it would “trigger male shame and revulsion”. Nicholas Stargardt says that German men “saw rape as a violation of the homes it had been their duty to defend”. Thus, as with most war trauma, the individual suppresses the memory and does not deal with the psychological effects. However, such horrific statistics as 12 percent of Berlin women being raped was the kind of physical trauma British children rarely faced.

I believe that it is evident that German children experienced more trauma, for three main reasons: the coming to terms with their parents' part in Nazi atrocities, the loss of the Nazi regime that had underpinned their whole lives and the label of the 'guilty nation'. Those who had joined the Hitler Youth had, for the most part, enjoyed the intense comradeship, had been indoctrinated to believe in the almost holy Führer, and believed in the glory of dying for their homeland. The trauma here is twofold: that of losing everything one has ever known, and the realisation that the individual leaders and possibly parents once held up as role models are now considered war criminals. Suddenly all Nazi paraphernalia must be hidden, destroyed or surrendered for fear of persecution or arrest. In contrast, the British children who had remained in the UK suffered no loss of national or cultural identity; rather, the opposite was true. Proud to be on the 'right side', the nation could celebrate its moral victory and this is true of the children as well. The stereotypical images of V.E. day depicting street-long trestle tables laden with powdered egg and cardboard cake could not have been more different to the children of Germany, who had to un-learn a lifetime obedience, hierarchy and military training. The loss of Hitler for many children came as a relief, for it cannot be generalised that all the German children were enamoured with the regime. As with most studies on war children, the trauma and experiences of those involved varies depending on age, location, personality, family circumstances and their experiences during the war. Many do remember receiving the death of Hitler with a deep sense of loss, and often shock, for the Führer had seemed infallible.

Just as the discovery of a family member's Nazi fanaticism could be deeply troubling, so was the total denial of any such involvement at the war's end. Nicholas Stargardt gives the example of a woman he calls Katrin, whose father had been a Wehrmacht officer and who was arrested by American forces in 1946. This alone could easily cause the breakdown of a relationship, not only through separation but also through suspicion of her father's crimes. On being reunited, however, any mention of her father's Nazi past was not permitted, and there grew a mutually distressing emotional

barrier between the two. Katrins story is arguable representative of many German children, as shown during the storm over the Wehrmacht exhibition in Berlin 2001. What emerged was a picture of wartime German youth being told their family member was an innocent hero, with all recollection of voluntary allegiance to the Nazi Party erased.

The long term effects of war trauma, many symptoms of them surface in much later life, in subsequent generations of an affected family. In the case of Germany the problem of guilt creates a complex web of feeling. At the time, the propaganda in Britain had done the job and the German nation was 'the old enemy', seen as the aggressive force that caused both world wars. The discovery of the numerous death camps, with their mountains of bodies and haunting piles of children's shoes, added to the horror with which Europe regarded the German nation. In the face of this, the rest of the world refused to allow a sense of German victimhood, instead imposing only guilt, even on the innocent. The war children themselves appear to have remained largely silent about their ordeals, leaving the second generation in the dark also, whilst "...today's youth complain that all they hear is that they were, and perhaps still are, a nation of murdered and accomplices". However, the children of the Nazi enthusiasts, SS officers, the Wehrmacht, and even ordinary Germans find themselves dealing with either the knowledge of, or questions the previous generation's role in the Holocaust. This sense of being caught between one's family and the acts committed during the war is a psychological effect few British children had to deal with. To be labelled as 'the guilty nation' also raises questions of grief: were the German war children permitted to grieve for their families? In the face of the Holocaust, and the perception that all Germans were somehow collaborators by omission, many found it hard to be able to see themselves and their families as victims in the same way the British children could.

Hindsight allows us to argue that Germany's children are undoubtedly legitimate victims of World War Two, as they dealt not only with the same physical and emotional effects of war as the British children, but with regards to bombing and attack from enemy soldiers they endured much that other children escaped. The confusion of being part of the 'guilty' nation and questions over who was to blame for what plagued not only the German war children themselves but their descendants also. The collapse of the Third Reich was a trauma unshared by the British children, and little understood at the time, leaving a large proportion of German children bereft of their normal routines and undermining the lessons they had been taught for twelve years. The distress the German children suffered was of a particularly adult nature: children forced to be soldiers and mock-parents, witnessing sexual violence and the complex psychological issues these traumas created all served to make the German war child a child no longer. Therefore, it is possible to argue conclusively that the German children suffered a psychological upheaval and a physical threat greater than that of children in Britain.

A DAY FOR THE CHILDREN OF WAR IN STOCKHOLM AND LONDON

On 20th November, 1989 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. On the same date this year and years to come, Finnish War Children in Sweden will honour all children of war anywhere in the world. The same thing is happening in Great Britain where a **Memory Day for War Children has already been observed twice in London's **Westminster Abbey**.**

On the 20th November 2013, just as the last rays of sun broke through the grey skies, closed to 80 people, most of them war children, gathered to remember in the Finnish Church, opposite the Royal Palace in Stockholm.

Reverend Karl-Erik Nylund assisted by his colleagues delivered a sermon. Tones from a flute and hymns sung by those assembled filled the church. Short speeches were given by representatives of the *Swedish Parliament*, *the Embassy of Finland*, and *the National Association of Finnish War Children* in Sweden. Flowers were laid at the memorial to those who died in the Finnish war 1939-1945.

Even if many of the participants had been war children themselves, the focus of this Memory Day is on the situation of today's children of war: Children living in or having fled from countries and areas affected by war. The Association of Finnish War Children appeals to everyone who shares a concern for children of war: Gather friends and acquaintances on the 20th of November to commemorate "A Day for the Children of War" by engaging in activities that would strengthen the cause of all war children and could help to ease their plight!

Why a the Day for the War Children?

Sinikka Ortmark Stymne, team member of the project "A Day for the Children of War" explains: During World War II (1939-1945) the most extensive transfer of children in modern history took place. All over Europe millions of children were evacuated from their homes, away from the horrors of war, either to safer rural areas or to other countries less affected by the fighting. In many countries in Europe former war children, now retired, have organized themselves in associations in order to deal with their often severe traumatic memories as well as coping with their daily life.

Nearly 80,000 Finnish children were sent from war-torn Finland to stay in Scandinavia, most of them in neutral Sweden, until the war was over. The youngest were only a couple of months old; the oldest had reached the age of 14. They were victims of war, as were the children who remained in Finland. Today there are associations in Finland of children who were evacuated, of children of veterans of military and civil war efforts, of German soldiers serving in Finland, of prisoners of war, and of orphans bereaved of one or both parents. The Swedish National Association of Finnish War Children currently has close to 700 members; war

children who for various reasons remained in Sweden. Our sister association in Finland – of children that were evacuated to Sweden but returned after the war – has about 1350 members. The traumatic separation from our families in Finland and subsequently from our new families in Sweden has left nearly all of us with slow-healing mental wounds. Many of us have always had difficulties knowing where we belong, to Finland or to Sweden? At best we have been able to benefit from two cultures and two languages – and thereby leading a better life.

Regrettably wars and conflicts continue to rage in the world, exposing children to extreme stress and traumas similar to the ones that we experienced seventy years ago. Still today, children have to flee war zones in great numbers. These refugee children need help and support from sympathetic people who care and can provide a sense of coherence to their shattered lives. In the year 2012 alone, nearly 3600 refugee children came to Sweden without their parents. How many war children are there in Europe? In the whole world? Who pays attention?

We, now aged children of war, want to make the 20th November a day for the Children of War and to give everybody an opportunity to show that they care!

**Project team: A day for the Children of War
The National Association of Finnish War Children**

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WREATH LAYING for all those who have been affected by war in their childhood

Innocent Victim's Memorial, Wednesday 20th of November, 2013, 3pm

'So much evidence of war-related trauma is now available that it simply cannot be ignored'

Welcome (The Reverend Canon professor Vernon White):

'On behalf of the Dean and Chapter, welcome to Westminster Abbey and to the Innocent Victims' Memorial, where we remember so many who have suffered as a result of war, oppression and violence. In particular, we remember today all those who were affected by dislocation, loss of families and homes in the Second World War, children who have been imprisoned in internment camps and all those children worldwide who are affected by current wars.'

After the prayer and the hallowing introduction by the Reverend Hugh Ellis, Professor Dr Martin L. Parsons welcomed the people attending the service on behalf of the Children in War Memorial Project.

The service continued with prayers.

Then followed a minute's silence and the laying of wreaths at the Innocent Victim's Memorial.

Quotations:

'...sadly, there is no end in sight for wars on this planet. The childhood sufferers of today will be the suffering adults of tomorrow. Peace stands by helplessly. There is no conclusion, which can be drawn firmly with respect to children in war time, be it victory or defeat: children tend to be the great losers overlooked by history'.

'Ashes and shifting sands have covered the footprints of war'...(However) despite the progress of time, and against a tide of forgetting, childhood war trauma, which had been buried for decades, suddenly surfaced, entering the light of consciousness with an immediacy as if these traumas had occurred only yesterday.'

'All the time I was evacuated I used to tell myself that one day the war would be over and I could go back home. After the war we were living in a different part of London and I made my way back to where I used to live. The whole area had been completely obliterated during the first few days of the Blitz and I was quite unable to find the spot where my house once stood. This happened more than 50 years ago. I have lived in many other places. I now have a grown-up family of my own and I am a grandfather. I now have a lovely house, but somehow I'm still waiting to go home!'

After the wreath laying the service was ended with prayers and the blessing by Reverend Vernon White.



Young people lay their wreaths at the Innocent Victims' Memorial in London



The Innocent Victims' Memorial

WEBSITES

Organisation of Children of Dutch Collaborators:

www.werkgroepherkenning.nl

Organisation of Children of War of different Backgrounds:

www.stichting-kombi.nl

Organisation of Danish Children of War, Danske Krigsboern Foerening:

www.krigsboern.dk

Norwegian Children of War Association, Norges Krigsbarnforbund:

www.nkb.no

Organization of Norwegian NS Children:

www.nazichildren.com

Krigsbarnforbundet Lebensborn, Norway:
<http://home.no.net/lebenorg>

Organisation of NS-children Vennetreff:
<http://www.nsbarn.no>

Risikoforbundet Finska Krigsbarn: (in swedish)
www.krigsbarn.se

Organisation of Finnish Children of War, Seundun Sotalapset:
www.sotalapset.fi

Organisation of children of victims and children of the perpetrators:
www.one-by-one.org

Austrian Encounter, organisation for encounters between children of the victims and children of the perpetrators in Austria:
www.nach.ws

Dachau Institut Psychologie und Pädagogik:
www.Dachau-institut.de

Kriegskind Deutschland:
www.kriegskind.de

Website for the postwar-generation:
www.Forumkriegsenkel.com

Evacuees Reunion Association
www.evacuees.org.uk

Researchproject 'War and Children Identity Project', Bergen, Norway
www.warandchildren.org

Researchproject University München 'Kriegskindheit'
www.warchildhood.net

Coeurs Sans Frontières – Herzen Ohne Grenzen
www.coeurssansfrontieres.biz

Organisation d'enfants de guerre
www.nesdelaliberation.fr

Organisation of Us-descendants in Belgium
www.usad-ww2.be

Childsurvivors of the Holocaust in Australië
www.paulvalent.com

International organisation for educational and professional development focused on themes like racism, prejudices and antisemitism
www.facinghistory.org

Aktion Sühnezeigen Friedensdienste
www.asf-ev.de

Organisation of German Lebensbornkinder
www.lebensspuren-deutschland.eu

International Network for Interdisciplinary Research on Children born of War (INIRC)
www.childrenbornofwar.org

Organisation Genocide Prevention Now
www.genocidepreventionnow.org

Basque Children of '37 Association UK
www.basquechildren.org

International Study of the Organized Persecution of Children
www.holocaustchildren.org

Partners in Confronting Collective Atrocities
www.p-cca.org

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