

INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

Issue 9, Autumn 1999

Nummer 9, Herbst 1999

INTRODUCTION

In this issue you will find several articles from Scandinavia.

Hédi Fried from Sweden sent me reports of her initiatives to visit several Holocaust commemoration-sites, Auschwitz among them, with students of a school in Stockholm and of a school in Hamburg.

I came into contact with Claus Bryld and Arne Oeland from Denmark, the first Danish people I got to know after my efforts which started ten years ago to meet Danish people and which, until now, were not successful! Claus Bryld is cited in a lecture about the situation in Denmark after the war, written and presented by three students (Jennifer Hollinger, Aimée Koch and Susanne Lund) at the seminar 'Humanity in Action', held this summer in the Netherlands. Arne Oeland is the president of the Danish Organisation of Children of War, DKBF. Together with Elna Johnsen from Norway, member of the Norwegian Organisation of Children of War, he spoke at a seminar in Bosnia. You will find the text of his lecture and a report about a project for Bosnian children by Elna in this issue.

Ingrid Stridsklev from Norway sent me a report about the meetings of her group, NS-children, and a review of her book about the MS Thekla which exploded on September 1 1945.

Monika Muggli from München wrote a moving article about the fate of the transport Aay. The Israeli historian Jakov Tsur found out how it disappeared and what role Helga Müller's father played in this event. Helga and Jakov spoke together at a meeting in Germany, a impressive example of the way in which children of victims and those of perpetrators can cooperate.

Tania Nahum from Australia participated in a conference, "The Presence of the Absence", in Vienna, September 1999. At my request she wrote about her experiences and her feelings.

This issue will be sent to 12 new readers and I feel happy that more and more people are becoming acquainted with this International Bulletin and are interested in what it presents.

Your suggestions and contributions are welcome!

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

[This compilation does not include alle the articles mentioned in the introduction]

VORWORT

In dieser Nummer finden Sie viele Beiträge aus Skandinavien. Frau Hédi Fried aus Schweden sandte mir einige Texte über ihre Initiative, Auschwitz und andere KZ Lager zu besuchen zusammen mit Schülern aus Stockholm und Hamburg.

Obwohl ich vor 10 Jahren schon versuchte in Kontakt zu kommen mit Leuten in Dänemark die sich mit dem Krieg auseinandersetzen, war es mir bis heute nicht gelungen. Froh bin ich, dass ich jetzt Claus Bryld und Arne Oeland kennengelernt habe. Sätze aus einem Interview mit Claus Bryld sind aufgenommen in einer Vorlesung geschrieben von drei Studentinnen (Jennifer Hollinger, Aimée Koch und Susanne Lund) die teilnahmen an dem Seminar ' Humanity in Action', das in diesem Sommer in den Niederlanden stattfand. Arne Oeland schrieb einen Text den er präsentierte auf einem Seminar in Bosnien. Er ist Präsident des dänischen Vereins für Kriegskinder, DKBF. Auch Elna Johnsen aus Norwegen, Mitglied des norwegischen Vereins für Kriegskinder war dort anwesend und sie berichtet uns über ein Projekt für bosnische Kinder.

Inger Stridsklev aus Norwegen schickte wieder einen Bericht über ein Gruppentreffen der NS-Kinder. Sie schrieb ein Buch über das Schicksal des Schiffes MS Thekla das am 1. September 1945 explodierte. Eine Buchbesprechung schildert was passierte.

Monika Muggle sandte mir einen Text über das Schicksal des Transports AAY. Von dem israelischen Historiker Jakov Tsur erfuhr sie wie der Transport verschwunden ist und welche Rolle Helga's Vater darin spielte. Jakov und Helga sprachen zusammen in einem öffentlichen Treffen in München, ein beeindruckendes Beispiel wie Kinder von Opfern und Kinder von Tätern zusammen arbeiten können.

Tania Nahum schrieb auf meine Bitte über ihre Erfahrungen in Wien, wo sie teilnahm an einer Konferenz im September 1999.

Auf unserer Adressenliste stehen 12 neue Adressen. Ich freue mich sehr dass jedes Mal mehr Leute das Internationale Bulletin kennen lernen und an dem Gebotenen interessiert sind.

Eure Beiträge und Bemerkungen sind willkommen!

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

[Diese Kompilation enthält nicht alle in dem Vorwort erwähnten Artikel]

Summary of 'Von einer großen Idee zu einem einmaligen Projekt'

In June 1995 the book by Hédi Fried "Nachschlag für eine Gestorbene" was published in German and she spoke about the story of her life with students of the Bramfeld School in Hamburg. She answered the questions of the young people in a very open and moving way.

In 1998 she got the idea to visit some of the concentration camps where she lived during the war - Auschwitz, Birkenau - and the former Warsaw ghetto, with students of the Villenstadt School in Hässelby/Stockholm where one of her friends is a teacher. She remembered her visit to Hamburg and suggested that the group could include some students from Hamburg. The director of the Bramfeld School reacted in a positive way and they started to make preparations for the trip in May 1999. The students learned about the Holocaust, read Hédi's book as well as a book by Peter Weiss ("Die Ermittlung") and watched the movie "Die Bertinis" by R.Giordono.

The students from Schweden arrived in Hamburg on May 3. Together with their German peers, they visited the concentration camp Neuengamme and the Bullenhuser Damm School. The next day was dedicated to touring the city of Hamburg and its surroundings. The next day they embarked for Krakow - through Berlin, Frost, Breslau - and they picked up Hédi and her friend at their Krakow hotel. Then they visited Auschwitz and Birkenau. Nobody will ever forget how Hédi followed the same path her parents took after their arrival in Auschwitz, all alone with her memories and emotions. Later, during their trip to Warsaw, she answered the students' questions: questions about guilt, about the war in Kosovo, the ethnic 'cleansings', the similarities and differences with Auschwitz. And again, like four years ago, Hédi had this message to them: you, the young people of Germany, you are not guilty, but you have the responsibility to do everything possible to prevent another horrible event like the Holocaust.

After the trip students and teachers of the Bramfeld School made a little book with poems, essays, letters and pictures about their experiences. They made clear how important a visit to a Holocaust site, was for them. They described how difficult it was to really imagine what the victims felt, what they thought, what actually happened to them.

These three days will have an great impact in the lives of the young people. With heartfelt letters they thanked Hédi for her courageous initiative. It is possible that the partner school in Coventry will join the project next time.

SILENCE?

Humanity in Action - June 1999

by Jennifer Hollinger, Aimee Koch, Susanne Lund

We create memories through the stories we tell, but how and what we remember are just as important as remembering. When those stories are about the Holocaust we are left with a fragmented narrative. In the aftermath of the Second World War, there was a need in Denmark for unified patriotic memories to create a homogenous national identity. This resulted in an environment that encouraged the re-telling of

that which was heroic and a distancing from the less glamorous tales. A focus on the resistance effort left little room for the "story of those who chose the wrong path." (1) Silence was used as a coping mechanism but it presents a paradox - it functions not only to heal but to deny and sublimate. Repressing the past allows the perpetuation of stigmatization. Remnants of this stigmatization continue today as we attribute the actions of the resistors and the Nazis to their descendants. Misidentification creates an environment that makes it difficult to engage in an open discourse about the past. By changing that environment, we can explore a fuller history where all sides are free to tell their stories.

Silence surrounds both the stories of resistors and the stories of Nazis but it plays different roles. For resistors, silence is an act of humility, but for Nazis silence is more of a societal repression. Suzanne Kürstein, co-founder of Forening Af Börn Af Modstandsfolk (2), whose father and uncle were involved in the resistance, and Peter Gulstad Skanning who has dealt extensively with their history, noted that there is often a reluctance on the part of resistance fighters to relate their personal history for fear it would be made into a Hollywoodesque action drama. (3) Kürstein explained that her father did not want to be an idol even though he was the only Danish recipient of the Victoria Cross, awarded by the British government, along with other high honors. "He did what he did because he thought it was the right thing to do. He did not want everyone to go around talking what he did. He did it because he felt it was right not because he wanted to be a hero." Silence in this case is a by-product of the humility so praised in Danish culture. It is a silence that is short-lived and voluntary.

Conversely, for descendants of Nazis, shame rather than pride evokes the "same method of blocking out so that the problem doesn't exist." (4) But this is an imposed silence that has a more permanent and far-reaching effect than the quiet humility in the case of the resistors. The dual nature of this silence allows it to serve as a mechanism of healing and stigmatization. Claus Bryld, the son of a high ranking member of the Danish Nazi Party, wrote about his experiences in the book *Hvilken Befrielse*. (5) In an interview with us, he described his childhood as virtually free of overt discrimination related to his father's involvement in the Nazi party. Although his neighbors and schoolmates were aware of his background, their silence served as a humanitarian gesture of tolerance. By keeping silent they implicitly accepted him, providing a way to deal with the past - what was not said was thus just as important as what was.

However, as much as it can be a means of acceptance, silence can also be a subtle way of perpetuating inhumanity. Silence sometimes functions as the unspoken means of passing on stereotypes. When we encourage the breaking of the silence only for those who have good stories to tell, we not only give a false picture of the past but jeopardize the present and the future. We do so by subtly passing on stigmatization, as though a child necessarily inherits the evil disposition of an anti-semitic heritage, a heritage over which he had no control. Society, as Bryld suggests, seems to offer descendants of Nazis only repression or stigmatization: "You are not allowed to make a discourse...of the problematic parts of the past ... it is very difficult in a politically correct society to accept empathy in bad things...it is very forbidden to have been a member of the Nazi party. You know you can't talk about it and if you talk about it, people think that you are a Nazi too...some people think that if the children talk about it with a certain kind of empathy they must be Nazis too".

As a liberal, democratic people, Danes are quick to support the notion that it is

wrong to judge a person by the generations that preceded him. As Kürstein claims, "We must look at people as people. We cannot judge someone because they are of noble birth or they are a worker. I am not a better person for what my father did." Nor is the son of a Nazi for what his father did. Children should not be accountable for what their parents did before they were born: "It was your parents. You were not involved; you are not responsible."(6) Identification with family history can be a valuable means of preserving the memories when it is a matter of choice rather than a forced responsibility. The need for empathy and community gave rise to "insider group" organizations like Forening Af Børn Af Modstandsfolk which benefits its members and the public through a mission of education. Some descendants may feel a special obligation to continue the story of their families, but we cannot choose our families and because of this we cannot be endowed with special obligations. We must choose in our own right to feel such a responsibility. The child of a Nazi should have just as much opportunity as the child of a resistor to study and express their history. But by creating an environment that encourages the remembrances of the descendants of rescuers and silences the remembrance of descendants of Nazis, we perpetuate the discrimination we fight against.

We acknowledge it is wrong to judge a person for a past over which he had no control, and yet we do it, however unwillingly, through an almost unconscious, "instinctual" prejudice. While a club of descendants of resisters is praised, an organization of children of Nazis would probably not be acceptable in Denmark. Why, when the idea of an organization of Nazis is broached, is the immediate response to label them as Neo-Nazis? The automatic assumption of Nazi sympathy due to one's birth, is evidence of the degree of the prejudice that exists, however covertly, in Danish society.

If the function of the resisters' club is to promote tolerance and decency, why must the purpose of the (as of yet nonexistent) organization of children of Danish Nazis not be education but the inculcation of ideology? The common perception is that the union of children of Nazis sharing the same purpose as the union of children of resisters would be unthinkable. They would draw down on themselves all the hatred from the parents. They would inherit their father's sins."(7) But why do we have this "instinctual" reaction that retelling history is somehow adopting it? It is the unspoken aspects of these stereotypes that can be the most dangerous as we perpetuate them unconsciously and without intending to do so. We have trouble conceiving of a club of descendants of Nazis as anything but an extension of evil because the stereotypes are so ingrained that an association with evil by design means an association with evil by choice. However, organizations can be beneficial in mitigating prejudice by offering a means of identification with those who experienced similar circumstances - they can serve to erase the isolation of minorities. Bryld estimated that there are some 100,000 relatives of people who were affiliated with the Danish Nazi party during World War II. In Germany, by contrast, it is much easier to find people whose parents or grandparents were involved in the Nazi party during that period. "But in Denmark we never meet others of the minority of which we are a part."(8)

The conditions precluding the formation of an organization of descendants of Nazis are not found in other Scandinavian countries. In Norway, clubs exist for this very purpose, focusing mainly on the fact that their parents were willing to risk their lives for the ideas they believed in. "It is a very old ideology that you do not mean anything seriously if you are not willing to risk your life. And many of our parents risked their lives."(9) They applaud their parents' conviction even if they condemn the

ideology itself. Bryld, however, expressed that these organizations had become rather romantic and that there is a danger of irrationalism. As Bryld warned, too much of an identification with history threatens misidentification. Every generation must define itself. "I don't think you should use the past as a kind of identification mechanism because the world is evolving ... and I think that you have to make your own identity, not from your parents' experiences but from your own experiences." He feared that there is a risk that such organizations perpetuated a sense of victimhood. Treatment of Nazis after the war made them in some sense victims. The anger and guilt of the Danish population in the post-war period needed channels for expression. The Nazis that were left provided those outlets. Bryld's parents were treated so severely that they felt forced to leave the country for a period even after his father served his prison sentence. "Many places my father couldn't say his name after the war because they knew who he was and he was condemned. If he was going to buy a ticket at the cinema he couldn't say his own name."(10) He had his profession as a lawyer and, in many ways, his life taken away from him resulting in a punishment greater than his prison term. It was a sentence that society subtly passed on to subsequent generations. Not only did the punishment result in stigmatization and loss of livelihood, but it had a profound effect on the rest of his family as well.

When we punish people we have to think about what the purpose of that punishment is and what we hope to accomplish through it. While justice is necessary, this perpetual punishment may have prevented the reintegration into society of subsequent generations. In effect, those who were not involved were punished. Guilt by association made some descendants of Nazis feel victimized. Descendants too are victims because "if you are not responsible for a situation you are a kind of victim but it would be bad to consider yourself a victim because then you become a victim...I don't think it is the right way. You can't make an identity of being a victim for the first and for the second you can't compare, I don't think, with the children of the Holocaust."(11)

In the chaos of the post-war period, punishments were often arbitrary. Although Bryld felt that he escaped much of the Danish anger in the aftermath, he believed his parents had been treated unjustly. In Denmark, retroactive laws were passed to sanction the brutal punishment of collaborators and others, violating their human rights by unjustly making them responsible after the fact. It is now forbidden in international human rights legislation to punish actions that were not considered crimes at the time they occurred. However in 1945, no such legislation was respected. "It would have been better with a kind of reconciliation."(12) Instead this punishment made it "very difficult to regret because you feel that you are being made responsible for acts that you are not responsible for. I think that [the condemned] felt that they were made responsible for the political acts of the Danish politicians because the wrath of the people had to be led into some channels and it was directed towards the collaborators and the Nazis, not towards the Danish politicians who had also collaborated with the Germans for three and a half years and they felt that, maybe, it is not correct. Some of it is correct maybe, but it became a very deep bitterness I think and a feeling of being abandoned by everybody."(13)

If we want to prevent the repetition of atrocities, we can perhaps learn more by focusing on the not-so-glorious side of the aftermath of the Danish occupation. Bryld, who is one of the few children of Nazis to speak out, felt compelled to tell his story. "The history has been rather twisted...there is a kind of general discourse in society which is not very realistic, which is more romantic and nationalistic than realistic. And I felt that the story of the losers, as I call it, also plays a certain role or

has to be visible. It is not only the story of the resistance movement, the national patriots, which must be known today. Also the story of the people who chose the wrong way and maybe you can learn more from that than you can learn from the victory?" How can we expect the Holocaust to never happen again if people are aware of only the half story? - they have to know what it is that they must fight against. This raises one of the fundamental questions of the historical discipline: How do we pass on history to the next generation? If we are to remember the Holocaust so that it does not happen again, we must strive to remember it as a multitextual, inclusive discourse among all the groups involved. The violations that occurred in the aftermath of the war are grim reminders of how we can all be perpetrators, whether or not our parents chose to wear a swastika or handmade RAF colors. The fact that some Danes did save the Jewish community is well recognized, but the treatment of "field mattresses", German refugees, and German soldiers remaining in Denmark after the war are topics that, until recently, have been infrequently discussed and virtually unknown. That these stories are now being presented to a more general public provides the unique opportunity to study the Holocaust and its aftermath from a fuller perspective. Through the memories of Nazis, survivors, resisters, and everyday citizens, we are able to widen our perspective of the Danish experience. The opening of archives that had previously been sealed adds another dimension, allowing the integration of official documents with the histories of individuals which are now emerging from all sides of the war experience. As the Holocaust has become an international warning against passivity and the horrors of industrial genocide, an open dialogue should be encouraged.

To understand is not to forgive or to forget, but to learn. By knowing what went on we do not excuse what transpired. It would be impossible to say that we could ever really know the history in its entirety, because documents are still hidden and there are still those who are afraid to speak out. But we can create an environment that is conducive to the relation of everyone's stories, not just the ones that we want to hear. Given the time that has passed and the distance from the events that transpired, we can perhaps begin to tell the history of the Second World War and its aftermath without passing judgement to successive generations, to enable the dialogue of dichotomous groups and to facilitate a more complete understanding of what happened. To do so requires a reconsideration of the way in which we educate young children about these events. We try to protect them from the less-than-glamorous aspects of Denmark's role during the war, but this attitude can often cause more harm than it can prevent. Because of the way that we educate in terms of black versus white, good versus evil thinking, it is easy to distance oneself, especially as a child, and say that the Germans were evil, we were not. When we fail to teach all sides of the story, we risk that children might believe that because they are not German, they could not perpetrate those kinds of atrocities. We must make it clear that not all Germans were Nazis, nor were all Nazis German. We are all affected by circumstance - no one is born a Nazi or a resister, victim or victimized. The Danish picture of the Second World War traditionally focuses on its resistance effort but, even with its overwhelming success, it was the work of a minority of Danes. Most were "holy people of the last days" who waited until there was one clear victor to join on the allied side. (14) Therefore, those involved in the Nazi party and those involved in the resistance comprised a small portion of the population and the history. Both sides share an underlying humanity despite their differing paths. "It would be very good for both parts to realize that the other part is human too."(15) Challenging the fundamental narrative by telling the stories of disparate groups

helps to prevent the unconscious ingraining of stereotypes and stigmatization that we somehow manage to pass on to our children. By not labeling the descendants of the Nazis as inheritors of evil, we can break the cycle of silent hate.

DANMARKS KRIGSBARNFORENING

In the five-year period from 1940 to 1945 German forces occupied Denmark. The first two to three years were rather peaceful and dominated by cooperation - Danish historians agree on this point.

In 1943 the Danish army was disarmed, the government resigned and the Danish resistance movement finally woke up to action. It's a thought-provoking fact that the very first German death penalty didn't befall a member of the resistance movement, but a volunteering Dane who deserted at the eastern frontiers.

After the capitulation collaborators were convicted. Almost 50 Danes were executed, and many others had to stay for years in jail. There was no formal jurisdiction against women, who fraternised with the enemy, but they were treated as traitors and expelled from normal social life - many moved to other parts of the country to avoid harassment. The suicide-rate among young women increased significantly. Officially around 6.000 children of war were registered - children with Danish mothers and fathers who somehow served the German occupation forces. Recent investigations indicate a much higher number, allegedly the double.

I was born in Copenhagen in November 1945 - out of wedlock. I have a brother and a sister - both legitimate.

At first my mother attempted criminal abortion and later she tried to give me away, but in vain. In the end she decided to take care of me. Although my despairing mother tried to get rid of me, the story of mine turned out happy and successful, simply because I survived for so long - due to her love and energy. Here I am. I had no hints as to the identity of my father while growing up, and I had no suspicion at all that my existence had anything to do with the German occupation of Denmark. Five years ago my cousins told me - it came to me as a shock - that I was a so-called "German child."

It was a riddle to me how otherwise very talkative family succeeded in keeping it a secret for all these years. I tried to obtain precise information about my father, but soon realised that the hatred was unabated after 50 years. It was still taboo to discuss the issue. I attempted to investigate my own genesis - my very early history. Danish authorities were very averse to provide any information concerning the paternity.

At the time I thought myself a rare thing in Danish history: perhaps my mother was the only odd one, I thought, who gave birth to an enemy child.

Chance would have it that a historical book was published just at that moment. It gave documentation to at least 6.000 children of war - as an absolute minimum. Certainly I was not alone. My curiosity rose.

The thought of all these years I lived in false awareness made me feel furious. During 50 years the Danish authorities and my own family had concealed the truth from me, a truth I ought to be the first to know. The anger gave me plenty of drive to do something:

* to form a society *Danmarks Krigsbarnsforening*, (Danish Association for Children of War), à la the Norwegian *Norges Krigsbarnforbund*.

* to start an inquiry concerning "Illegitimate children and children of war" in the governmental archives.

During the last 2 1/2 years DKBF was contacted by around 200 children of war and forced the authorities to give up the illegal administrative praxis of secrecy. Today every single child of war can have information from the old records. It is a very important achievement.

Many children of war were given away, many grew up with the grandparents or relatives, and some spent their childhood in children's homes. Ignorance of our own background or a false awareness was our common lot. The majority (who stayed with their own mothers - like me) had to live with taboo and concealment of their real paternity - especially when mother and child had moved to another part of the country, where nobody knew about them. But if the story was known, the child would soon learn about his (or her) unfortunate origin from the mobbish schoolmates or from a teacher's malicious sarcasm or from a stepfather's persistent terror.

Till now our knowledge of our own early life has been as scattered and unreal fantasies in a very rude and real world. But just like the Freudian view of dream as the royal road to the unconscious - the basic nature of personality - in the same way these documents represent the only road to knowledge about our origin. The Danish Press sometimes express virtuous indignation - with good reason - about other nations' behaviour towards small children. We hear about regimes that for different reasons separate parents from their children and destroy the personal information, to the effect that thousands of citizens are unable to find out who their real parents and real family are. To that point Denmark does not make any exception.

Right up until last year (1998) Danish authorities refused the 'German' children right of access to the documentation of their own family relationships - an illegal practice with crucial consequences to the identity of thousands of Danish citizens. Today - more than fifty years after the capitulation - many people in Denmark are still searching for their unknown fathers and families in Europe. Years of search for information home and abroad, and tiresome efforts to re-establish self-confidence and identity has convinced me of the importance of the UN-convention about the Rights of the Child, especially article six to nine.

One of my old friends is a true child of the resistance movement. His father was a member of the resistance movement and his grandpa was founder of one of the best-known resistance groups in Denmark. In the sixties when my friend and I went to the cinema, listened to music, discussed politics or played chess, we sometimes disagreed very much, but in a way that didn't disturb our mutual respect. Today I can't help thinking if our friendship would have been possible, if we had been aware that I was a child of the enemy.

The 1st of May 1998 I finally had the documents that show that my biological father was a prisoner of war, Yugoslavian citizen Carl Chmelak or Karel Hmelak, born the 14th of June 1923 in the northern part of Yugoslavia, supposedly in Slovenia. Still I didn't succeed to verify the information and find my father and his family in Slovenia.

Arne Oeland

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PROJECT 'CHILDREN OF THE ENEMY'

I represent the Norwegian War Children Association. Our members are all born between 1940 and 1946 with Norwegian mothers and fathers who belonged to the German occupation army. More than 10,000 children with German fathers were born in Norway during and after WWII. Our organisation NKBF was founded in 1986 and has about 600 members today. We help our members to find their identities and their biological families, here in Norway and in Germany. People are still searching - 50 years after the war. We are also dealing with the long term affect of growing up in post-war years as the children of the enemy. For many of us it has been very traumatic. After all these years it is still necessary to have a confidential membership of NKBF. More and more clearly we understand that being the children of the enemy is a common problem throughout the world. We formed a project group on our annual meeting in 1998 and I am the president of this group. We invited the War Children Associations in Denmark and the Netherlands to join us in this work. Denmark reacted very positively.

Together with Arne Oeland of the Danish War Children Association I visited Velika Kladus in Bosnia. What we saw and heard there struck us. We saw and heard about children who lived under very difficult conditions, sometimes in houses without roofs or windows. They lacked clothes, shoes and school-material. We were told that they had little food and they tried to support themselves and their families by begging. Together with the Ombudsmen (Division of Children's Rights) we are trying to initiate a project for the benefit of these children and their mothers. We have too little money to do what really needs to be done, but through our project we will try to raise consciousness about the situation of these children.

Thanks to WHO's support and some money we have raised on our own (lottery), we will be able to donate 1000DM pro month to the project. Without support from other organisations we will be able to do so for one year only. The number of children we can help depends on the amount of money each child will get. As we see it, it will be better to give a few children real help, for example a scholarship of 500 DM, than to give a lesser amount to more children. We also wish that a part of the money goes to a project for the children's mothers. We think, it is important for them to form a social group where they can get psycho-social support, talk, work and maybe earn some money for themselves.

Our own background as the "children of the enemy" will naturally influence our wish about whom we want to help. It has nothing to do with the political situation in Bosnia Herzegovina or any other places. We are a non-political organisation. But we want to emphasise that we see and clearly understand the mechanism that leads to harassment and discrimination of especially children and their mothers of the 'wrong side' after a war. We also know a lot about the long-term effects and consequences. We also know that this happens everywhere in the world in post war periods. We have felt it ourselves. Most of all we want the issue openly discussed and dealt with.

As a part of our project we also intend to establish an **international registration** of children of mixed origin and the identity of their mothers and fathers, when their parents belong to different sides of a war - if possible recorded with DNA profiles. The information will be kept in a computer bank with restricted possibilities of getting information out. Only the children as adults and their parents should have access to the data. Also for scientific research such an archive could be useful. The computerbank could be situated anywhere, but we plan it in Bergen. In this matter we work together with the University of Bergen. Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Department of comparative politics of the University of Bergen is the leader of this part of the project.

We will also work towards **greater openness** for the children of the enemy and their mothers in post war periods.

If readers of the International Bulletin want to support our work or our project with ideas, opinions or money, please feel free to do so. I think our common experience is too valuable not to be used for the benefit of the war children of today and in the future. My address:

Elna Johnsen
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Summary of the book "**M/S Theklas himmelferd**" (ascension) by **Inger Cecilie Stridsklev**, Snöhetta Publishing Co.Ltd, Lesja, Norway

In May 1945 the German occupation of Norway was exchanged for an allied, mostly British occupation. The British decided that all German military equipment in Norway was to be destroyed.

M/S Thekla was a river boat from the town of Haren in Germany. It had sailed for about one year along the Norwegian coast. The ship was ready to leave for Germany when it was ordered north once more for another load. The crew was made up of six German merchant sailors. Being in the merchant navy was maybe the only way of escaping military service in Germany during WWII.

All sorts of ammunition was gathered at the quay in the centre of the town of Florø, also ammunition confiscated from the Norwegian Resistant Forces. The ship was filled with explosives to be dumped in the ocean. Ten Norwegians held in custody were commanded on the ship. There was also one guard and one interpreter.

The captain was Staff Sergeant David Cohen who had specialised in ammunition. He belonged to a Disarmament team in Bergen which consisted of three men. David Cohen had been ill. The ship could not leave the harbor without the ammunition expert and two men fetched Cohen at the hospital which he left, as he felt he had to go, against the advice of the doctor.

The ship had reached its planned position at about 3 p.m. on September 1st. 1945. Then it exploded. Nothing was left.

Not much care was taken to inform or help the bereaved. David Cohen's widow received September 9th a telegram informing her that her husband was missing, probably dead. She went to Norway in 1946, but was hardly allowed to go ashore, and got no information, not even about the Norwegian-Allied-committee which was founded to inquire about what had happened.

No one was ever charged because of this accident.

Exactly fifty years after the accident a delayed burial took place on the site where this happened, on the top of a ferry. There was a ceremony in which protestant, catholic and Jewish priests participated. Three shovels of earth was thrown onto the water. David's son Jack took care of the first one.

This story does not belong to Norwegian history of WWII or the postwar period. It does not fit in with the common tale of heroes and culprits.

Zusammenfassung von **"M/S Theklas himmelferd"** (Himmelfahrt) von **Inger Cecilie Stridsklev**, Snöhetta Publishing Co.Ltd. Lesja, Norway

Das deutsche Schiff M/S Thekla war am 16. September 1944 nach Norwegen gekommen. Es hatte Güter für die Heeres-Verwaltung nach Stavanger transportiert. Nach der Kapitulation bekam es noch einen letzten Auftrag. Im Zentrum von Florö an der norwegischen Westküste waren alle Sorten von Munition aus der Gegend gesammelt worden. Die alliierten Mächte, besonders England, hatten verordnet, alle deutschen militärischen Güter in Norwegen zu zerstören. M/S Thekla wurde mit Munition aller Art, auch mit von der norwegischen Widerstandsbewegung in Beschlag genommenen Munition beladen. Die Ladung musste ins Meer geworfen werden. An Bord waren sechs deutsche Matrosen, ein Wachoffizier, ein Dolmetscher, zehn norwegische Gefängnen und ein Mitglied eines englischen Munitionsteams, David Cohen, Munitionsexperte. Er war im Krankenhaus, aber ohne ihn konnte das Schiff nicht fahren. Zwei Männer holten ihn und er verliess das Krankenhaus obwohl der Arzt ihm beschwur zu bleiben.

Am 1. September 1945, um 15.10 Uhr, wurde das Schiff durch eine gewaltige Explosion vernichtet. Es gab keine Überlebenden, auch keine Leichen.

Einen Bericht der Norwegisch-Alliierten Untersuchungskommission und der Gerichtsverhandlungen über dieses Unglück gibt es weder in Norwegen noch in Deutschland oder England. Keiner ist verurteilt worden. Die verantwortlichen Autoritäten haben kaum etwas unternommen, um die Angehörigen über den Tod der 19 Männer zu informieren. Erst nach einem Jahr erhielt der Reeder des Schiffes einen Brief von einem deutschen Kapitän der die M/S Thekla gekannt hatte.

Die Witwe von David Cohen besuchte 1946 Norwegen, um sich über das Unglück zu informieren. Ihr wurde kaum erlaubt in Norwegen zu sein und sie bekam auch

keinerlei Auskünfte.

Genau 50 Jahre nach der Tragödie ist ein ökumenischer Gottesdienst am Unfallort auf dem oberen Deck einer Fähre gehalten worden mit sowohl einem evangelischen, einem katholischen und einem jüdische Geistlichen. Drei Schaufel Erde wurden ins Meer geworfen, die erste von dem Sohn von David Cohen.

Die Geschichte der M/S Thekla ist noch immer ein Teil von unaufgeklärter Kriegsgeschichte und Nachkriegsgeschichte Norwegens. Wie auch viele andere Geschichten passt sie nicht hinein.

"THE PRESENCE OF THE ABSENCE"

Conference

at the University of Vienna 1st-3rd September 1999

For three days in September this year I attended a conference entitled "The Presence of the Absence". It was an International Holocaust Conference held at the University of Vienna organised by the 'Second Generation Trust' in the UK, together with colleagues in Vienna and Berlin.

The Conference was supported and part-funded by the European Commission, as well as significant government departments within Austria. The aim of the conference was to focus on two main themes: Austria's role in the Holocaust, including its deliberate, amnesiac unwillingness to confront its past; and the nature of communication and transmission in the family and society in Austria and world-wide, from the perspective of eyewitnesses (first generation) and descendants of victims and victimisers (second generation).

The structure of the conference was daily morning lectures and afternoon workshops. In addition there was the option of attending an 'Open Forum', a facilitated 90 minutes session each afternoon "to provide an opportunity for delegates for more personal and emotional discussion and reflection about the conference." Participants were requested to join the same 'Open Forum' each day for three days. A maximum of 20 participants in each group was anticipated. An alternative session was to attend a "Work in Progress" presentation.

The themes for each days were as follows:

Day 1 "Concepts of Identity for Descendants of Victims and Perpetrators of the Holocaust"

Day 2 "Money and Justice: Strategies and Realities"

Day 3 "The Future of Memory"

About 300 people participated in this conference and my understanding is that many people were turned away as the conference was oversubscribed.

The 'Second Generation Trust' and supporting organisations are to be congratulated for mounting this conference. One can only begin to imagine how difficult it must have been for the organisers to consider the issues that required consideration when presenting material containing such very powerful and sensitive topics.

My experience of the conference was mixed. I felt that there were too many papers presented, especially on the first day, not allowing enough reflective space for the material to be digested and thought about. Most papers were given in German with simultaneous English translation, even when some of the speakers spoke fluent English. This was not made apparent when the conference was advertised in English, although it was clear that most of the Workshops would be in German. This made it more difficult to pick up the meaning of material and stay with the feelings that accompanied it. I began to wonder about a repetition in the present of the very issue we were exploring - the domination of one culture upon a minority culture. I am in no way suggesting that this was done at a conscious level, but it is important to be aware of how past traumas become enacted or played out in the present, even in the way conferences are organised.

For me one of the most profound and moving experiences in the conference was the showing of the film "Impossible Friendship". It was introduced by Samson Munn (a son of two concentration camp survivors) and Dirk Kuhl (the son of the high ranking Gestapo commandant of Braunschweig who was executed by the British military authorities in 1948). This showed the development of their friendship, especially as Dirk accompanies Samson on his journey to the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.

The emotional journey taken by these two special people encapsulates the struggle which survivors, as well as the second and third generations are faced with. Do we continue to hate and live in the past or try and talk with and hear some of the 'Second Generation' pain of the "other" side? It is not a matter of forgetting, forgiving or even reconciliation, but a possible "acknowledgement" of the other. I believe this is a film that could be used as an important basis for discussion for children learning about the Holocaust, as well as the Second Generation.

This area is a very sensitive and controversial one: and in some circles cannot even be mentioned. "The Austrian Encounter" is an attempt to address such issues. It is an encounter group that has met four times in four years for dialogue between descendants of Nazis and descendants of victims encountering each other and themselves. This was also presented in a small workshop as part of the conference.

My hope was that the Open Forum would provide an opportunity for such dialogue to develop at this conference, but the lack of boundaries and containment made it difficult for participants to experience this as a safe reflective space, although some beginnings were made in this direction.

There were several excellent papers: including one in particular by Gabriele Rosenthal from Germany who presented a well researched sensitive paper of the transmission of the effects of the Holocaust on future generations and by Micha Brumlik, also from Germany, on how whole cultures can become traumatised

through the transmission of trauma through the generations.

This conference continued the important beginnings of the first Conference in Berlin and offered other Second Generation descendants the opportunity for both victims and victimisers to begin addressing the ever-present legacy that they carry from the past.

My belief is that the work of the Second-Generation Trust in the UK deserves full support in every way for bringing out into the open these often unspeakable issues. The conference certainly did manage to achieve its aims, and from some of the comments in the final session many people felt considerable gratitude and experienced a transformation within themselves over the period of three days.

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The fate of the transport AAy and the suppressed truth

In mid 1942 a transport of 1000 prisoners left the Theresienstadt concentration camp in Czechoslovakia with an unknown destination somewhere "in the east". For several decades their fate remained unsolved.

In early 1998 I posted a question in the Holocaust-newsgroup, whether someone is interested in contacts between the 2nd generations of the Holocaust victims and of the German perpetrators and bystanders. I got several friendly answers but one woman replied especially kindly and helpful: Debbie Roth-Howe. With the help of her hints I eventually could establish contact with two Munich members of One by One: Natalie Fasolt and Helga Müller.

In early 1999 I joined our little One by One offshoot in Munich. For almost one year I have been busy e-mailing with a good friend, a survivor of Theresienstadt, Auschwitz-Birkenau and other concentration camps and, today, historian in Israel: Jakov Tsur. I got to know about his horrible experiences during the Holocaust and learned about his research work which was and is his mission for the rest of his life.

After we had become familiar with one another's stories I learned from Helga about the names of the places where her father had raged in Byelorussia during WW II, Baranowitschi and Kolditschewo. This reminded me of something I had already read - a historical paper by my friend Jakov. Its title: The fateful way of the transport AAy.

Some weeks later we, Natalie, Helga and I met in a Munich restaurant before going to attend a lecture given by Gesine Schwan, professor of political sciences, about "Politics and Guilt", the poisonous silence after WW II. When Helga saw me she found that I was rather pale. The reason was an unexpected and devastating discovery.

Just an hour before I had reread Jakov Tsur's paper, which elaborates in detail what happened to the 1000 inmates of the transport AAY. Their planned destination was Maly Trostinez, an extermination camp near Minsk, but their train was stopped before arrival. As there was one of the bloody "actions" going on in the Minsk Ghetto there was no place for another thousand people. The train had to be detoured to the detachment Baranovici. The occupants were unloaded and murdered in gas vans and by shooting immediately afterwards and buried in mass graves. This was done under the responsibility and by order of SS-Untersturmführer Woldemar Amelung - Helga's father. These were the shocking facts that caused my deep confusion, and Helga's too.

Meanwhile Jakov Tsur and Helga Müller had met in Munich and appeared publicly talking about "Historical truth and suppressed guilt." They both found a way to mutual understanding with their firm will to bridge the abyss separating them.

Monika Muggli