

# **INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN**

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## **VORWORT**

In dieser siebenten Nummer des 'International Bulletin' finden Sie einen Beitrag von dem norwegischen Assistenten Professor Baard Borge über sein Forschungsprojekt, das sich beschäftigt mit den Folgen der Verurteilung des Vaters für die Kinder der Kollaborateure in Norwegen, Dänemark und den Niederlanden. Er ist auf der Suche nach Leuten die mit ihm zusammenarbeiten möchten.

Morten Engebretsen, Bjorg Jacobsson und Inger Cecilie Stridsklev berichten uns über ihr Gruppentreffen in Norwegen.

Im Mai wurde in Berlin eine Konferenz veranstaltet mit der Absicht ein internationales Netzwerk zu gründen von Leuten die sich mit dem Holocaust und dem zweiten Weltkrieg auseinandersetzen und die den beiden Seiten zugehören. Marcel Kemp aus den Niederlanden war einer der Teilnehmer. Er gibt seine Impression, geprägt von seinem Hintergrund, Kind eines unbekanntes deutschen Soldaten zu sein.

Die Gruppe TRT (To Reflect and Trust) organisierte im August in Hamburg ein Seminar für das man auch Leute aus anderen Ländern und Problemgebieten eingeladen hatte: Nord Irland, Süd Afrika und Israel (Palästinenser und Israelis). Man wollte herausfinden ob das Dialogmodell, das sich in den TRT Treffen so wichtig und wertvoll gezeigt hatte, auch für andere Konfliktgruppen von Nutzen sein könnte. Professor Dan Bar-On sandte mir einen ausführlichen Bericht und erlaubte mir einige Stücke daraus in dem Bulletin zu publizieren.

Samson Munn, Mitglied der TRT-Gruppe, hat die Absicht ein Buch über Dialog nach Genozid zu veröffentlichen. Er möchte gerne in Kontakt kommen mit Personen die bereit sind über ihre Erfahrungen in Dialogen zu schreiben.

Christian Staffa und Katherine Klinger verfassten einen Band der die Vorlesungen enthält der Berliner Konferenz vom Januar 1997. Es ist möglich, den Band zu bestellen.

Ihre Reaktionen und Bemerkungen in bezug auf diese Nummer möchte ich gerne empfangen. Auch eigene Beiträge sind sehr willkommen: Sie brauchen nicht zu warten, bis ich meine Bitte direkt an Sie richte!

Mit herzlichen Grüßen

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

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

## INTRODUCTION

In this issue of the International Bulletin, the Norwegian Assistant Professor Baard Borge presents his research project into the way children of collaborators in Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands have been treated after the war. He is looking for people who are willing to cooperate with him.

Morten Engebretsen, Bjorg Jacobsson and Inger Cecilie Stridsklev tell us about their groupmeetings in Norway.

In May a conference was held in Berlin with the aim of setting up an international network of people of the two opposite sides involved in working through the past. Marcel Kemp from the Netherlands wrote about his experiences during this conference and added some important remarks about his life as the child of an unknown German soldier.

In August the group TRT (To Reflect and Trust) held a seminar in Hamburg to which they invited people from Northern Ireland, South Africa and Israel (Palestinians and Israelis), with the aim of finding out whether the model of dialogue developed in their encounters could be useful for other conflict situations: what is possible, what are the limits? Professor Dan Bar-On sent me a detailed report about the seminar and allowed me to use parts of it for publication in the International Bulletin.

Samson Munn, member of TRT, intends to publish a book about dialogue after genocide and is looking for people who are willing to share their experiences with dialogue with others and will do so by writing a chapter for this book.

Christian Staffa and Katherine Klinger edited a book containing the lectures held at the Conference in Berlin, January 1997. Those who are interested, may order it.

Your reactions and suggestions are welcome. As a rule I invite people to write an article for the Bulletin, but, of course, you don't have to wait for my request!

All the best,

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

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

## RESEARCH PROJECT

This is to inform the readers of the **International Bulletin** about an ongoing research project of mine, in which I concentrate on the life experiences of individuals whose parents were convicted in the postwar trials against Fascists and other collaborators in Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands. I am a Norwegian political scientist with a strong historical interest. Previously, I have published articles on the NS party in Norway (Nasjonal Samling), and also on the legal processes against NS-members and other Norwegian collaborators that followed the German surrender in

May 1945. Now, "NS-children" will be the subject for my doctoral dissertation. In this project I cooperate with a number of colleagues in other European countries. In fact, we are in the process of forming an international network for research into what could be called "forgotten" aspects of World War II.

The overall aim of my study is to find out more about the short- and longterm social consequences of the German occupations in Western Europe. To what extent were a great number of Norwegians, Danes and Dutch stigmatized, or even discriminated against for years to come after 1945, because they one way or another could be identified with the losing side - i.e. the "traitors"? And how long did it take these individuals - and their families - to reintegrate back into society again? My idea is to try and study these social outcomes by focusing on the life experiences of "NS-children". When studying social consequences, I also think that a comparison between the three countries in question could be analytically fruitful. Is it likely that the social outcomes took on different forms within the different national contexts?

When analyzing the phenomena of "NS-children", I believe one has to make a distinction between on the one hand, countries that were occupied, and on the other hand, the so-called "core countries" of fascism. In the occupied territories native fascists and active collaborators not only constituted a minority within the population, they were at the same time considered as traitors, or "quislings", by their countrymen. Therefore, in this group of countries the social consequences probably took on a different and, surely, more serious character than in Germany, Italy or Austria.

Up until recently, the destiny of former "war losers" in the postwar European societies has not drawn much attention from historians or social scientists. In a way, this scholarly lack of interest is puzzling, if we consider that the social outcomes in question probably affected the lives of a great number of people for a long time. The sheer number of Western European collaborators - running into hundreds of thousands - in itself seems to indicate that the subject of my study ought to become a more important part of modern European history.

Methodologically, I intend to use a combination of approaches. As to sources of special relevance, there exist some autobiographies by NS-children, at least in Norway and Denmark [and in the Netherlands, G.S.B.], and written material like this can be supplemented through interviewing and, if possible, by means of a postal survey. When doing research within this field, which still is sensitive - even a taboo - to many Europeans, there are particular difficulties one has to deal with. One such problem is finding a sufficient number of respondents. There are no official archives listing the names and addresses of NS-children, and we thus have to rely on other ways of locating some of them, for instance by using their own informal networks. This, in turn, means that the eventual sample can never be representative in the strict sense. Another methodological problem is that people with this particular type of family background often feel uncomfortable talking about their adolescent experiences. Some are simply afraid, even today, of being "exposed" as children of NS-families.

**I would like to get in contact with a wide selection of NS-children, primarily in the Netherlands, in Denmark and in Norway.** (I have already had a meeting with

an Oslo-based group of Norwegian NS-children, and they are willing to help me in my further research. I am also in contact with the Dutch "Werkgroep Herkenning"). Needless to say, within such a large segment of people, there's got to be an endless variety in their personal life experiences. Some have felt stigmatized because their parents chose to collaborate during the years of occupation, while other NS-children say they have had no problems whatsoever. Consequently, there will not be one common denominator characterizing the lives of all NS-children. It will, nevertheless, be possible to hint at some patterns in the "typical" life experience within each of the countries. Are there any systematic dissimilarities between countries, and how could such differences be accounted for?

**If you like to contribute to my research project, please send me your name and address, and I will send you more information.** Questions and comments from you are also very welcome. For instance, how would you characterize the social consequences of World War II in your own country? You may write to me in English, German or any Scandinavian language.

**All the information I receive from you will be handled with the utmost discretion, and I guarantee you that all my respondents will remain anonymous in the final report.**

Yours sincerely,

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**"The Legacy of Genocide & Inherited Conflict"  
Professional Networking Seminar, Mai 1998 Berlin**

Eine Impression

Nachdem im Januar 1997 ein erstes Treffen in Berlin von 'Kindern der Opfer' und 'Kindern der Täter', zwei Gruppen, die, je auf eigene Weise, mit dem Holocaust und den Ereignissen des Zweiten Weltkrieges verbunden sind, stattgefunden hatte, gab es im Mai d.J. eine Fortsetzung. Im Jahre 1997 waren ein paar hundert Teilnehmer anwesend, diesmal nahmen etwa 38 Menschen aus vielen Ländern und Organisationen teil. Das Zusammentreffen vom Jahre 1997 war vor allem eine Studienkonferenz mit Nachdruck auf das Erschließen und das Aufklären der intergenerationellen Problematik. Im Mai dieses Jahres war die Absicht, zu der Gründung eines internationalen Netzwerkes zu gelangen. Es wurden denn auch Organisationen aus der ganzen Welt eingeladen: aus Israel, Amerika, England, Italien, Tschechien, Ungarn, Litauen, der Schweiz, Polen, Österreich und Deutschland. Die Niederlande hatten Vertreter der folgenden Organisationen: ICODO, JONAG, Herkenning und die Werkgroep Kinderen Duitse Militairen.

Meine Impression trägt natürlich die Spuren meiner Herkunft. Als Kind eines deutschen Militärs, der während des Krieges eine Beziehung zu meiner niederländischen Mutter hatte, spielt 'der Krieg' von dem Augenblick an, da mir das Geheimnis meiner Abstammung bekannt wurde, -ich war acht Jahre alt, als ich 'es' hörte-, eine große Rolle. Bei 'uns' ist die Rede von einer großen Verbundenheit mit den Ereignissen des Zweiten Weltkrieges. Erstens gibt es das Problem, dass wir meistens nicht wissen, wer unser Vater gewesen ist. Manchmal ist ein Name bekannt, aber öfter ist das nicht mal der Fall. Das ergibt einen bleibenden weißen Fleck beim Aufwachsen, der intrigiert und fasziniert, noch abgesehen von den intrapsychischen Spannungen, die mit so einem abwesenden Vater zusammengehen. Dazu kommt das Wissen, dass er es war, der direkt mit der historischen Wirklichkeit, die das Leben von Millionen Menschen eingreifend bestimmte, zu tun gehabt hat.

Das Schweigen war, wie wir aufwachsen und erzogen wurden, das Normalmaß. Daher wurden Scham- und Schuldgefühle der Mütter nicht selten unbewusst weitergegeben und von den Kindern wiederum jahrelang in der Stille getragen. Es ist darum nicht sehr erstaunlich, dass in der Reihe 'zweite Generation Kinder des Krieges' die 'Werkgroep Kinderen Duitse Militairen' als letzte hervorgetreten ist. Wenn man nachdenkt über, oder sich beschäftigt mit dem unbekanntem Vater, bedeutet dies definitiv, dass man einsieht, mit seinem ganzen Wesen bei einer der grauenhaftesten Perioden unseres Jahrhunderts beteiligt zu sein. Kein Wunder, dass die meisten von uns fast 50 Jahre brauchten, einigermaßen das Gleichgewicht zu finden.

Die Begegnung mit Schicksalsgenossen hat nicht selten einen äußerst emanzipatorischen Impact. Die mehrmals ausgesprochenen Gefühle von Kummer, Verlust, Wut und Scham ermöglichen es einem, endlich Schuld und Scham dort hinzulegen, wohin sie eigentlich gehören. Auch wird es so möglich, einander und uns selbst zu sagen, dass wir 'da sein' dürfen und nur für unsere eigenen Taten verantwortlich gehalten werden können. Das ist sehr befreiend. So können wir uns wieder anders als nur 'Opfer der Umstände' betrachten. In einer nächsten Fase wird uns bewusst, dass wir diese Fähigkeit mit anderen Kindern des Krieges gemeinsam haben. Auch Kinder von ermordeten Widerstandskämpfern oder von fast ausgerotteten jüdischen Familien erfahren manchmal den Wendepunkt, wo sie den Unterschied zwischen den das Leben bestimmenden Umständen und der Möglichkeit, ab jetzt auf ihre eigene Weise damit umzugehen, erkennen.

Ich glaube, dass, in bezug auf diesen Wendepunkt, Kinder des Krieges von beiden Seiten, nämlich von der Opfer- und von der Täterseite, viel für einander bedeuten können. Das ist aber nicht ein selbstverständlicher und glatt von der Hand laufender Prozess: Wir sind ja Träger einer 'legacy' und eines 'inherited conflict', ausgedrückt mit den Stichwörtern Wut, beziehungsweise Scham und Schuld. So wurde der Auftakt zu einer Wertung des Mai-Zusammentreffens in Berlin gegeben. Hat dieses meinen 'Glauben' in dieser Hinsicht verstärkt oder eben nicht? Nun, mein Glaube steht fest, aber zur gleichen Zeit zeigte sich die Realität als widerspenstiger als ich gehofft hatte...., etwas, das mir als Theologen öfter passiert!

Es ist wichtig, dass wir uns, in einer Welt, in der immer noch, -sogar in Europa-, Menschen wegen ihrer ethnischen Herkunft verfolgt, 'verstezt', vergewaltigt oder getötet werden, unseres gemeinschaftlichen 'Erbes' bewusst werden, und dass wir auf die Folgen für Kinder, die all dies (mit)erleben müssen, hinweisen. Ein eventuell zu gründendes 'International Network' dürfte sich, ausgehend von den Erfahrungen von Mitgliedern der dabei angeschlossenen Organisationen, zum Ziel setzen, dieser Bewusstwerdung eine Stimme zu geben. Ein wichtiger Gesprächspunkt in Berlin war denn auch die Formulierung eines Statutes, einer Grundordnung, worin Ursprung und Ziel des Netzwerkes enthalten sein müssten. So einfach war das offenbar doch nicht. Im Jahre 1997 hatte Herr Hans Donkersloot von 'Herkenning' ausdrücklich dafür plädiert, nicht ausschließlich auf den Holocaust zu fokussieren, sondern diesen als Teil einer breiteren historischen Wirklichkeit, des ganzen Zweiten Weltkrieges, zu betrachten. Auf diese Weise könnten auch andere Gruppen, namentlich diejenigen, die bei dem Krieg in Asien beteiligt sind, mit ins Gespräch kommen. Dieses Plädoyer war, wie sich im Mai herausstellte, nicht vergebens. In Berlin waren nicht nur Vertreter von Roma- und Sintiorganisationen eingeladen, sondern auch Herr Professor Wilhelm Solms. Er hielt am zweiten Tag einen eindrucksvollen Vortrag über 'Sinti und Roma - patterns of a racist approach'. Die Formulierung eines ersten Artikels des Statutes: "The main focus of the Network is dealing with the legacy of the Second World War and the Holocaust" verlief danach ohne Schwierigkeiten.

Auch gab es Übereinstimmung über einen zweiten Artikel: "The Network is open to all groups and organizations that address the effects of this legacy on our personal-, family- and social life", obwohl verschiedene Formulierungen vorgeschlagen wurden. Allgemein waren wir sehr zufrieden mit dem Wort 'legacy', weil das Wort 'Legat' sowohl etwas von 'Last' als auch von 'Auftrag' in sich hat: Man 'erbt' die Umstände, unter denen man geboren und aufgewachsen ist, zur gleichen Zeit bekommt man den Auftrag, sich damit auseinanderzusetzen und sie soviel wie möglich von negativ durchwirkenden Mechanismen zu befreien. Die Mehrheit der Teilnehmer konnte mit der Formulierung dieser beiden Artikel einverstanden sein, und hatte außerdem den Eindruck, dass die Grundregeln für das 'Network' genügend in Worte gefasst waren.

Nach meiner Meinung hatte man aber einen essentiellen Punkt übersehen: In den zwei Artikeln wurde nicht explizit erwähnt, dass sich im 'Network' Kinder von Opfern und von Tätern begegnen und ihre Probleme verarbeiten dürften. Ich muss sagen: Es kostete mich viel Mühe, dies klar hervorzubringen. Mit Recht sagte man mir: "Sie, Kinder von deutschen Militärs und von niederländischen Nationalsozialisten, gehören doch auch zu uns?" Fühlten wir uns etwa nicht (ausreichend) akzeptiert? Wäre es doch nicht ein wenig mein Problem? Und: Was ich wollte zeigte sich doch implizit im zweiten Artikel, wo es heißt ...all groups and organizations...? Am letzten Nachmittag habe ich dennoch hartnäckig dafür plädiert, dass die Kinder der 'anderen' Seite nachdrücklich in der Grunderklärung erwähnt würden, nebst den Kindern der Opfer. Es war mir eine etwas peinliche Erfahrung. Ich versuchte zu erklären, dass es nicht um mich persönlich gehe, sondern um die tief unterliegende Verschlingung von Tätern und Opfern, die sich bis auf heute intern und extern darstellt. Meines Erachtens brauchen wir uns gegenseitig, um uns selbst und einander von der zerschmetternden Kraft dieser einzigen historischen Wirklichkeit, die beide Gruppen in so verschiedenen Weisen gefangen hält, zu befreien. Die Chance, uns der Vergangenheit gegenüber fruchtbarer aufzustellen, steckt gerade

in der Begegnung von Kindern, die 'Frucht' der historischen Extreme sind, und die durch ihre Begegnung die zerstörende Kraft jenes Gegensatzes nicht länger als bestimmend akzeptieren wollen.

Wir fanden keine Lösung, und ich musste, nicht nach meiner Gewohnheit, einen Augenblick 'loslassen', und vorschlagen, ein nächstes Mal darauf zurückzukommen. Spät am Abend haben Hans Donkersloot und ich einen Vorschlag für einen dritten Artikel aufgestellt, und diesen neben die anderen Formulierungen gehängt: "A special characteristic of the Network is that both representatives from the victim-side and from the perpetrator-side participate and meet". Hoffentlich wird das, was hierüber schon gesagt wurde im Laufe des Jahres seine Auswirkung haben und können wir nächstes Jahr Übereinstimmung erreichen.

Joop Lamboo von ICODO kündigte in Berlin an, er wolle dafür eifern, die nächste Konferenz des Netzwerkes in den Niederlanden stattfinden zu lassen. Ich hoffe darauf!

Ohne Rücksicht auf das Vorstehende habe ich das zweite, weltweite Treffen von 'Erben' des Zweiten Weltkrieges' als sehr bereichernd und stimulierend erfahren. Bei individuellen, inoffiziellen, abendlichen Gesprächen hat man ein offenes und aufmerksames Ohr für meine 'Geschichte' gehabt. Andererseits beeindruckte mich die Art und Weise, wie andere mit ihrer Vergangenheit leben und mit ihr umgehen.

Speziell möchte ich die Begegnung mit Rachel Kostanian aus Vilnius, Litauen, erwähnen. Sie arbeitet für das 'Jüdische Museum' in Vilnius. Sie bat um Hilfe bei der Übersetzung von Artikeln mit antisemitischem Inhalt in der litauischen Presse. Sie möchte diesen Texten im Ausland Bekanntheit geben, um somit die Behörden in Litauen dazu zu bringen, die Würde und die demokratischen Rechte der jüdischen Minderheit in Litauen zu fördern.

Ich möchte diese Impression beschließen mit einigen Worten, die ich in einem Presentationsworkshop gesprochen habe:

"It is my deep conviction that we only can free ourselves from an overwhelming past, when we will together pay attention to the destroyed humanity of the victims, and to the lost humanity of so many perpetrators. Therefore, I think that trying to make contact with other 'second generation' organizations is very important for all of us; it could be helpful to look together to what happened, to registrate destroying processes which are going on in the second and even in the third generation, and to try to find each other -in a sense- as allies in a common fight against inhumanity in our own days".

Marcel S. F. Kemp  
22. September 1998

## **THE HAMBURG TRT SEMINAR (2-6 AUGUST, 1998)**

a preliminary report of Prof. Dan Bar-On,  
Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. August, 1998

**TRT:** Descendants of victims of the Holocaust encounter descendants of Nazi victimizers.

Fifty years after the Holocaust, the descendants of both sides were able to meet each other (Bar-On 1989;1995;1998). A group setting, TRT (To Reflect and Trust), was formed in which descendants of German Nazi perpetrators and descendants of Jewish Holocaust survivors from Israel and the USA could initiate an open dialogue. Six encounters took place over a period of five years (1992-1997). The group consisted of nine descendants of German Holocaust perpetrators and five American and four Israeli descendants of Holocaust survivors. The questions addressed were as follows:

1. Could they face each other genuinely?
2. Could such a meeting help the participants work through aspects that could not be addressed properly within their own 'tribal ego' setting?
3. Through such an encounter, would a common agenda emerge over and beyond the separate agendas of each side?

The first encounter was devoted to getting acquainted mainly by listening to each other's personal accounts and stories. The scheduling of the encounters was planned by the group itself. The following are some of the major issues which have been addressed in these encounters:

1. The impact of the Holocaust still has on my life.
2. Self and social estrangement.
3. Feelings of uprootedness.
4. Difficulty in becoming socially and psychologically independent of one's parents.
5. How to live with so much death within and around oneself?
6. Dialogue with the victim and victimizer inside oneself.
7. Scaling of power, suffering and heroism.
8. Asymmetry among the parents - symmetry among the descendants?
9. The capacity to live with the past on different levels.
10. Doing for ourselves - helping others.

From the outset of the TRT group work there was a tension: How much time should we devote to ourselves and how much to working and helping other people in similar processes? First, this group chose to use most of the time for itself; during the following meetings, attention was slowly shifted to activities of TRT members outside the group context. Finally, during its sixth encounter the group decided to invite multipliers from three other conflict areas (Northern Ireland, South Africa and Palestinians and Israelis from the Middle East) to share with each other their ways of working with the psychological after-effects of conflict.

During the following months, people from TRT initiated contacts and traveled to the three relevant countries and interviewed potential participants for the Hamburg Seminar, the possibility of which became a reality after the Koerber Foundation agreed to fund such a seminar. The way the three groups of participants were identified and chosen was different in each setting. Some of this difference could be

accounted for by our level of ignorance of these settings. But also the diversity of the settings themselves played an important role.

After the list of participants was finalized, they were all asked to write short biographical notes (including the TRT members) which were put together and circulated upon arrival. All technical and financial aspects were taken care of by Mr. Wegner, who was nominated by the Koerber Foundation for this role. It was the first TRT seminar in which we had such help and we could feel the difference. I do not believe that such a seminar can be as successful without this kind of support.

The formal planning phase started on Saturday morning (August 1st). A few principles were the basis for the actual planning:

1. The basic interface in this seminar should be between TRT and the three (separate) conflict groups. It expressed our wish to test the question: does the TRT experience have some relevance for the work of current conflict groups, even if the problems they face in their own settings are very different from the ones TRT had to deal with.
2. In order to create the interface between TRT and the guest-group, small group activity will be preferable: separate rooms for a few members of TRT together with each one of the guest groups.
3. Other needs had to be considered as well. For example, the need of the guest group to discuss conceptual issues, to encounter each other, or to present in plenary sessions their special ways of dealing with their problems, as well as listening to those of the other groups. Plenary sessions were designed also for the debriefing of what went on in the small group sessions.
4. The program should be structured and flexible at the same time, leaving some options open for planning which would take into account the requests of our guests.
5. Enough time should be set aside for informal encounters, enabling participants to digest some of the difficult issues during the group work and to have an opportunity to get to know each other personally, not only on the basis of their 'collective identity'.
6. A couple of events were planned ahead of time: the open session, a traditional activity of TRT, providing an opportunity to present its work to the community and the media. A trip to Hamburg was pre-planned, including a formal reception at the Town Hall and a boat ride through the canals of Hamburg.
7. Different ways of documentation and evaluation were planned and discussed: the role of the observers-evaluators (new to TRT). Various requests for interviewing, media, documentation and evaluation by a questionnaire (prepared by Dr. Maoz) were presented and discussed. Some other questions were raised: What will be the procedure of receiving the group's consent to be videotaped or audiotaped? Finally my role had to be clarified: Should I move around between the groups or should I be part of the Palestinian-Israeli setting? Several members suggested that I will start with the P.I group.

A brief and personal description of what went on during the seminar.

There was a festive atmosphere when people entered the room to start the first session at 5:00 PM (August 2nd). It was apparent how diverse a group we had brought together, just by looking at the external aspects of dress, color of skin and the way people move. But within minutes more personal aspects added to the diversity, when everyone presented herself or himself within the time limit of two

minutes (kept carefully by Samson). Prominent highlights were mixed with small personal details ('how many children do I have'). Tension in the voice, even uncertainty, were interwoven with softness, humility, even some festive personal declarations. The round of getting acquainted created a curiosity to hear more and know more about every person in the room. The excitement of the first round created a kind of priming effect: This is what we would like to go on doing here. After a short, informal buffet, we went right away into the first session of the three small groups. The Palestinian-Israeli group started with a crisis of definition: 'Why are we called 'the Middle East group' and not the 'Palestinian-Israeli group'?' asked one of the Palestinian members, expressing a feeling that again he is deprived of his identity as a Palestinian by the (Jewish-Israeli) organizer of the seminar. We agreed to change the name of the group, learning how lack of attention (who gave the M-E name to this group?) can be interpreted by the other side as an intentional act of denying one's collective identity.

Then, another aspect of TRT's lack of experience became obvious: In the first round of personal stories during that evening, two TRT people talked quite extensively, while only one guest had a chance to tell his story. We concluded that the round of stories should continue the next day, but the TRT members in the groups should try to limit their interventions and first let the guests tell their life-stories. There was a very positive feeling around the idea of telling each other personal stories. It was good to learn that all the groups agreed to be video-taped.

Monday, August 3rd, was our only full day of work. It started with a plenary in which Pumla Gbodo-Madikizela and Wilhelm Verwoerd presented some aspects of the South-African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's process. In a very personal way Pumla told about her interviews with Eugene de Kock, a severe perpetrator of the Apartheid, serving a 212 year sentence. She presented him as a human being, manipulated by people in charge during the Apartheid. The combination of the chilling feeling of a murderer and the warmth Pumla created in her description of Eugene, remained with me for many of the hours.

In the P-I group we had two very heavy sessions. I believe we did our best to hold the stories within us the way they were told, especially the pain and the tears, though it sometimes threatened to break us. It gave us a clue as to why people usually avoid listening to personal details: It is so difficult to hold them within oneself. It is easier to take one side ('the real victim') and ignore the other.

In the plenary debriefing in the afternoon it became apparent that there was less an atmosphere of conflict in the South-African and Northern Ireland groups. The South Africans said that they were beyond the violent conflict, still suffering from a kind of 'conspiracy of silence'; of knowing and not knowing of the suffering of the blacks, especially on the white bystanders' side.

The NI are a group of professionals from both sides who work to reestablish a sense of community, living with the pressures of on-going 'random violence' in which the definitions of victims and victimizers are blurred.

In the evening sessions we tried to create a total mixture of the various groups, providing an opportunity to take a break from the intensive conflict group settings. It became clear that this experiment did not work out so well. The observers suggested that we should perhaps have established mixed groups around specific

topics, such as hierarchies of suffering. They gathered such potential topics which might be the themes for the small groups for Wednesday. Here a potential problem emerged: While the P-I and SA groups had just begun their story-telling process, the NI group was getting close to its final stages of the story-telling and wanted to mix with other groups or get more structured, cognitive inputs.

In the morning plenary of Tuesday, August 4th, we became acquainted with the issues of the Palestinian and Israeli participants. Ezzeldin shared with us the specific problems of the Gaza strip, staged by the Israelis to be a kind of 'giant prison', with little access to other Palestinians territories. Fatma Kassem portrayed some of the special features of the Palestinians living in Israel, caught between the two parties in the conflict, suddenly finding themselves excluded from the Oslo Peace Process. Shifra gave a brief review of the European Youth & History study in which all three groups participated, focusing on the rating of youth on a personal value 'Peace at any cost'. A very intensive discussion followed in which many sympathetic reactions were expressed towards the Palestinians, although a few people were not aware of the diversity within the Palestinians' group.

The discussion had a direct impact on the story-telling in the P-I group which followed. The story of a Kibbutz which was put under siege during the 1948 war was told, in which many people from a Palestinian's village (from a member of the group) took part, together with the Jordanese army. The story teller also tried to share with us some of the internal diversity within the Jewish Israeli society: Sephardic and Ashkenazi, right and left, religious and secular. His story, however, was not easily accepted by some Palestinians. The possibility to develop a joint project of story-telling of the older people in the two Israeli and Palestinian villages was examined, thereby establishing the legitimacy of parallel narratives of what happened between them in the 1948 war.

We ended this day with a long afternoon trip to Hamburg. In the late-evening debriefing session we decided to continue in the conflict groups throughout the next day. Now it became clear that our initially planned format of small groups will be the dominant one throughout the seminar. This meant dealing less with conceptualizations and more with the emotional level both within ourselves and interpersonally.

In the morning plenary of Wednesday, August 5th, all five NI participants presented. We got a brief review of the historical roots of the conflict, its geographic and their social meaning. We learned about their various activities within a highly tense setting: Helping members of the community overcome silencing and censorship, reestablishing joint activities, helping ex-combattants reintegrate into society after long imprisonment. This gave some perspective (and hope) to the P-I group, especially to those among us who feel that failure of the Oslo Process would mean that everything is lost forever.

We moved back into the small groups for two further sessions. One Palestinian raised the question of the validity of the Holocaust (citing a 'French historian'). It happened just shortly before our lunch break. A roar of reactions resulted, especially when another Palestinian woman said 'give me a break', relating to what she perceived as Israeli misuse of the Holocaust. A moment of crisis developed at this relatively late stage: Had we really listened to each other's stories? If so, why did we start to deligitimize them? Is it true that the Palestinian suffering, resulting from Jewish-Israeli occupation, was minimized by the Jewish suffering in the Holocaust?

Are the two deeply linked? The tension eased up a bit when one of the German participants told the Palestinians about the Holocaust, how it developed, his father's involvement in it, and how he learned about the scale of the atrocities after the war. This was for me one of the most moving moments of this week: the way the German member of TRT helped the Jews and the Palestinians acknowledge the Holocaust in a non-politicized manner. The P-I crisis affected the plenary which followed.

Not many people came to the evening open session which followed. The groups presented themselves shortly, and all the complexity of our seminar became alive in the room. Only a few questions followed: Was it too much for our audience to absorb and digest in such a short time? We needed our time off and an evening of beer, dancing and telling jokes created a special relaxed atmosphere.

The morning session of Thursday, August 6th, was a session of unwinding tensions between the Israeli and Palestinians by the five additional observers from the NI group. Feelings of mistrust from both sides were clarified. The sensitivity of both parties to the possibility of being denied the more painful parts of their identity was the focus of the discussion. How to deal with the anger, while building trust? Do the Israeli Jews try to manipulate and control? Do the Palestinians try to invalidate the pain of the Jewish people round the Holocaust? Can the Jews accept that some Palestinians did not learn about the Holocaust (those who studied in Jordan or Gaza), while others (those living in Israel) had to learn and teach it constantly, feeling overwhelmed by it, while their own disaster was totally ignored? The group preferred to use all its time to clarify these issues, at the cost of not listening to the last two life-stories which were left for possible future encounters.

The final plenary session was loaded with emotions. Participants spoke of a deep experience which they still have to digest and make sense of. The TRT personal story-telling was acknowledged and tested. On one hand, it showed how many unrecognized painful memories and emotions are still buried within us, even though we seem to be 'beyond them'. On the other hand, how can we deal with an outburst of (difficult) emotions, once surfaced within the conflict setting, that need time and psychological safety to be processed. To what extent are we actually part of what we try to do with others?

The theme of how deeply victims and victimizers are related, and how this can be intergenerationally transmitted and worked through, was one of the main issues TRT represented for participants. The victim can easily become the victimizer through change of circumstances, and vice versa. Several guests spoke of the strong resource TRT represents and radiated to them. It is now up to the different groups and individuals to test how and in what ways they can use and adopt this experience into their own work and life. The role of team-work model was discussed. Samson, facilitating this final plenary, suggested that everyone will give a personal expression or image of what he or she got from the seminar. Many expressions and images resonated in the room, hinting at how much was accomplished in these four short days. This round and the questionnaire concluded the seminar.

It is too early to evaluate the seminar and I do not feel qualified to do this properly because I was so involved in so many ways. We did get feedback from our observers-evaluators, who compared the initial and the final questionnaires. One participant mentioned the positive atmosphere, the strong impact of the opening

session and the flexibility in the planning process, being sensitive (perhaps sometimes too sensitive) to the diverse needs. He felt, however, that an initial clarification of the goals could have helped some people orient themselves better. The lack of conceptualization may hamper the learning process at some points.

In the TRT final sessions we had to process many issues we did not have time to discuss during the seminar. This was one of the major complaints which came up concerning the early planning. TRT members were so preoccupied with the guests that there was not enough time to meet during the seminar, for reflection and learning. Though we received positive feedback from our guests, some TRT members were frustrated and unhappy with the results of their own work. We addressed the question of the low expectations and perception of contribution of the German members of TRT, as it came up in the discussion and in the questionnaire. The high involvement of the Jewish members was linked to the centrality of the P-I group. An idea came up to make the German members more involved in future seminars by inviting a conflict setting which is more directly associated with them, for instance East-West relationships in Germany, past and present. As 1999 will be the tenth anniversary of the Unification, it may be good timing to organize such a TRT seminar, if necessary, even if only some TRT people - the German members and a few of the Jewish members, will be able to participate.

To summarize my own impressions, I feel that a lot has been achieved in this first TRT seminar with other conflict groups. We could also evaluate, through the intensive encounter with our guests, how much was achieved in the TRT process over the years. But it also had the benefits and setbacks of a first seminar: It was lively and spontaneous, but still also amateur, professionally speaking. We identified the areas in which we have to continue our learning process, if we go on this direction, but we can also appreciate the special resource we have already developed. It is clear that what we can offer does not suit everyone, even perhaps not all conflict settings. But, at the same time, we created a space for learning which is very special.

For example, I had never experienced how the Holocaust and Palestinian suffering from the Israeli occupation could be discussed simultaneously. We all know it has to be done, but till now it has never worked. Perhaps here we have found an opening which we have to elaborate on and improve in the future.

Before the Hamburg seminar started we considered some themes with regard to the question of reconciliation between victims and victimizers.

The idea of psychosocial reconciliation between populations within or after conflict is complicated. It becomes more possible after at least some of the following conditions have been fulfilled:

- a. a preliminary political solution has been established.
- b. legal measures have been undertaken against perpetrators of inhuman atrocities committed during the conflict.
- c. financial compensation has been proposed or provided for the victims of those atrocities.

The concept of reconciliation is based on a few a-priori assumptions:

1. the parties involved have reached a new stage in which the motives for

- maintaining their conflict have weakened considerably or become irrelevant.
2. there was an earlier stage of trust between the parties which they may now reestablish.
  3. a symmetry exists between the parties involved in the conflict, enabling them to become equal partners also in a reconciliatory effort.

These assumptions, however, do not always exist: Conflicts may change on the manifest level but this does not necessarily mean a weakening of motives or prevention of a new outburst in the future. The best example of this unrecognized tension is the ethnic conflict in Bosnia. If one assumed that earlier ethnic tensions were resolved under the communist regime of Yugoslavia (with an intermarriage rate of 46%), the disintegration of that regime caused the old tensions to surface and escalate into extreme bloodshed and atrocities, even between well-known neighbors and long-term acquaintances.

This example demonstrates that a conflict can be suppressed on the manifest level but has not been worked through psychosocially and may still be present in some hidden form. It is this hidden aspect which psychosocial conciliatory strategy has to address before one can expect a successful solution.

Some conflicts did not have an earlier phase of understanding or trust. One can expect a new phase of **conciliation**: enemies may enter into a new positive dialogue which will help water down previous stages of hostility, violence and suffering. The one-hundred year old Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an example of a social context in which there was no initial stage of harmony, unless one wants to relate to Biblical times or to Medieval Spain. This situation may require creative procedures in which this fact will be acknowledged rather than ignored and suppressed.

Rarely do violent conflicts ignite or persist between equals. They ignite between parties which have a built-in asymmetry, in terms of power or access to resources. This may be the case between a majority and a minority within one nation, or between a suppressed (black) majority and an oppressing (white) minority as in the case of South Africa. In such cases, an act of conciliation may mean first of all a political and socio-economic development of the 'weaker' side, while a new social context of mutual respect is being established.

Reconciliatory activity may be interpreted very differently within different cultural or religious belief-systems. For example, asking for forgiveness after the atrocities of the Holocaust is perceived differently by Jews and by Christians.

While within the Christian tradition this is a necessary and sufficient act for reconciliation, one which any representative of the community can initiate, within the Jewish tradition no one but the victims themselves are **entitled** to receive a request for forgiveness from the victimizers. In many cases, this discrepancy creates new sources of tension because one side assumes it did what it had to do, while the other side feels humiliated in addition to the primary feelings of pain and suffering.



## **DIE GEGENWART DER GESCHICHTE DES HOLOCAUST**

Intergenerationelle Tradierung und Kommunikation der Nachkommen.

Dieses Buch, herausgegeben von Christian Staffa und Katherine Klinger, bietet den Leser/Innen die Vorlesungen und Berichte der Konferenz, die in Berlin am 26. und 27 Januar 1997 stattfand. Diese Konferenz stellte einen wichtigen Schritt für die internationale Kommunikation über die Folgen der Geschichte dar.

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