

# **INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In this issue of the International Bulletin the American psychologist Florence Kaslow tells us about the encounters between descendants of Holocaust victims and perpetrators, encounters which she initiated.

I translated for the Bulletin the story of Els which was published in the Dutch paper 'Brabants Dagblad' in December 1994. Els is the daughter of a collaborator and lived in children's homes between 1944 and 1950.

In the book 'Bridging The Gap', edited by Dan Bar-On, some of the participants of the Seminar in Hamburg, August 1998, express what they experienced in the sessions. They came from Germany, Israel, Northern Ireland, South Africa and the USA.

In July this year they met again in Stockton, England. A small report describes the results of this Seminar.

The book 'The Model Occupation' by Madeleine Bunting is a controversial one, since the author attacks the 'official' version of the history of the Channel Islands during the German Occupation from 1940 till 1945.

KOMBI, the Dutch Organisation of children of war with various backgrounds, celebrated its tenth birthday in May. I wrote an article about the activities of a small group of children of war which led to the foundation of KOMBI.

In June Tania Nahum and Teresa Howard organised a Workshop with the title 'Breaking the silence, mending the broken connections'. They share their experiences with us.

Your reactions and suggestions as well as articles are welcome.

All the best

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

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

## **The Pathway To and Including Dialogue Group Meetings**

### **Between Descendants of Holocaust Victims and Perpetrators**

*Florence W.Kaslow, Ph.D.*

During my childhood and adolescence, I heard about the inhumane horror of the holocaust from my parents (and other relatives). They were mystified about how U.S.President Franklin D.Roosevelt, a man they greatly admired; the Pope; and the rest of the world could let Adolph Hitler and his Nazi henchmen run rampant throughout Europe, establish concentration camps with gas chambers, and commit atrocities against millions of non-Aryan people. Both had emigrated from Eastern Europe in the early 20th century with their families, who were intent on escaping the programs against the Jews. They had sought freedom of religion and freedom from persecution. That such mass annihilations were being allowed to occur, and that some politicians were engaging in policies of appeasement or denial was unfathomable. I imbibed their loathing of Hitler and his treachery, and vowed, along with many other Jewish people, to see that: 1) this would never be allowed to happen again; 2) to not be silent; and 3) to do whatever I could to help lessen the suffering of Jewish survivors and their descendants. However, when World War II ended, I was still quite young, and how to do this was very vague in my thinking.

During these years I read the book and saw the film "Diary of Anne Frank". In college, I took courses in World history and learned a little more about the Third Reich and what had occurred. By then, holocaust art was appearing. In graduate school, I read the writings of Victor Frankl, Bruno Bettelheim, and others who had been in the camps, and was horrified by what had transpired, and inspired by their courage and wisdom. My resolve to "do something" to help eradicate racial and religious hatred increased, as did my determination to find a way to do some healing work with survivors.

The first real opportunity came during my undergraduate days when I took a job at the Jewish Community Relations Council in Philadelphia. Its mission was to work to stem the tide of anti-Semitism, discrimination, and all forms of bigotry. There began my deeper education on the roots of prejudice, hatred, fear of "outsiders" and the lengths bigots would go to to harm, denigrate and destroy those they classified as "the enemy" - i.e. those who are different. It all seemed such a tragic and misguided use of energy, and totally alien to the belief that all people are created equal. I ruminated about such odious behavior, as an impressionable and emotional college student, and found it almost incomprehensible and very disillusioning.

The next major series of events occurred during my graduate student days. First I lived at Zonta International House in Columbus, Ohio - one of 4 women from the United States residing there and serving as hosts to the 12 female foreign students. I was fascinated and intrigued by the differences and struck by the similarities in our shared humanity, as well as by the universality of emotions. The second profound impact came when I did my internship at Jewish Family Service in Cincinnati, Ohio. We treated many recent refugees from Hungary who had come to the United States in the aftermath of World War II. It was gripping to listen to the terrifying tales of what they had been exposed to, how they finally had escaped, and trying to help

them recuperate from the traumatic stress experienced while building a new life in a strange country. Not only was I still fledgling therapist, but many of the sessions had to be conducted in Yiddish, a language in which I didn't have great proficiency. The thought of such brutalities was frightening, and once again I pondered how the world could let such genocides be perpetrated.

Once I got married and we began to travel, we made certain that we visited such concentration camps as Dachau, Bergen Belsen, Treblinka and Auschwitz. Each trip left us feeling devastated and repulsed. Over and over we joined those who vowed "never again". My resolve to do something mounted.

In the years since I began practicing as a psychologist and family therapist, I have treated many holocaust survivors, in individual, marital, family and/or group therapy. Their stories all reflect the lasting influence of the atrocities witnessed during the holocaust era and the defensive patterns created to cope with the prolonged crisis situation, often continued long beyond the external necessity for these. Yet, while remembering and still being baffled by the pathos and tragedy of the past, the vast majority also exhibited much resiliency and a determination to give their children a better life free from oppression, repression, and persecution. These survivors have been an inspiration to me and have contributed to fueling my desire to do more .

My professional trips to Israel began in 1979. The visits to Yad Vashem, the Diaspora Museum, and the Jerusalem Museum have been awe inspiring and thought provoking. During my lectures and workshops, I found that many holocaust survivors and their descendants could not do genograms; they had no family of origin to show, as it had been wiped out, and often they had been told very little about their ancestors - either because little was known and/or the recounting was too painful to bear. It also became apparent that life after the holocaust differed in Israel from what had transpired to survivors living in the countries in the diaspora. There was more local and national recognition of the survivors' plight and emotional fragility, and days of national mourning in Israel. Conversely, frequently new acquaintances in the diaspora did not want to hear about these treacherous days or see numbers tattooed on one's arm, but said instead: "It's over; why can't you move beyond it"? It seems a "blaming of the victim" and casting shame instead of empathy upon him or her happened in some quarters. And so the flashback nightmares were hidden; many suffered internally and silently while pretending to take on a whole new identity. Once again some realized they were "Jews of silence" - something they had vowed not to do again, yet they saw no option if they were to be welcomed and accepted in their new homelands.

Since the early 1980s, I have often been invited to do workshops for various family institutes and lecture at universities in Germany and Austria. Initially we pondered if we could even go there, or if this would be an act of disloyalty and sacrilege to our heritage. However, after much deliberation, I decided that this fit within my mission to not be silent and that mingling with German professionals as a Jewess whom they respected, I could approach some of the issues regarding their family legacies and what the holocaust meant in terms of intergenerational transmission processes and content; trust, shame, and guilt in relationships; loss in divorce and death; and concerns about personal, professional and national identity. This has been and continues to be a framework that shapes some of what transpires in my lecture

tours. Peter Sichrovsky's book, "Born Guilty" (1988), helped to illuminate my understanding and guide my activities.

In 1993 at an international conference, one of my Israeli colleagues confronted me about my willingness to go to Germany, exhibiting an attitude of "how could you". I explained my rationale, my objectives, and that I had come to believe that although we could not and should not forget, some rapprochement was essential in order to move toward a more lasting peace, and voiced my doubts about holding the children, who had not yet been born, responsible for the sins, including wholesale murder, committed by their ancestors.

Perplexed, she mulled this over and then asked if I would be willing and able to bring together German and Israeli colleagues to discuss their legacies, memories, and feelings about the holocaust. Quickly I responded, "Yes, let's try it", as it seemed an idea that needed to germinate as quickly as possible because it held the possibility of being a major vehicle through which to further realize one of my most significant aims.

Out of this weighty interchange that took place in Amsterdam, the holocaust dialogue group emerged. It has met five times since, in:

Hungary	1994
Mexico	1995
Israel	1997
Germany	1998
U.S.A.	1999

It is slated to meet again in Norway in June 2000. Each meeting has been held in conjunction with an International Therapy Association (IFTA) Congress (see Kaslow, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 for description and discussions of the separate sessions).

The same process model is utilized at each session. Attendance at each meeting is limited to 25 participants, all of whom are themselves descendants of survivors of victims or perpetrators and/or involved in treating such descendants. Sessions run 3-2/1 to 4 hours. We try to have an equal number of German and Jewish participants at these emotional, very personal interchanges; no observers are permitted. To our knowledge, these are the only such groups being conducted anywhere in the world that are composed of mental health professionals only. Because of these individuals' special ability to translate this experience of personal catharsis and healing to their clients also, the ripple effect can continually expand.

Participants are seated in a circle, as close together as comfortable. People select their seats randomly on arrival; only some choose to sit next to someone they know. I explain that our procedure is to go around the circle, with each person telling his or her personal story, relating how they first learned about the holocaust, about the involvement of relatives in it, whether the subject was alluded to frequently or considered taboo and mysterious, what it meant to them personally, how they felt and now feel about it, and how it has influenced their personal and professional lives (Kaslow, 2000, in press). Those who have attended previous sessions are asked to tell what has happened to them that is relevant to this subject since the last meeting.

No time limits are imposed; each one speaks as long as he or she needs to - usually between 5 to 7 minutes.

There is little cross discussion since each person's story is uniquely his or her own and is not open to criticism - only attentive listening. We strive to create a safe sanctuary in which each one can benefit from ventilating his/her innermost fears and thoughts amidst a group of colleagues who are respectful and non-judgmental, who resonate to each other's despair, anger and/or shame, and thereby validate the experiences and the emotions as they are recounted. Having a protected milieu in which to convey one's suffering to those who historically have been their forebearers' enemies apparently has been enormously cathartic, soothing, healing, and ultimately, freeing. My role as leader/convener has encompassed facilitating, encouraging, supporting, holding, and some summarizing.

The repetitive themes that have emerged over the course of the five sessions are:

- \* Theme 1 - Memories linger and are transmitted intergenerationally.
- \* Theme 2 - Taboo against asking questions about the holocaust
- \* Theme 3 - Trust is elusive and risky.
- \* Theme 4 - The legacy of being "Born Guilty".
- \* Theme 5 - Can I love a parent or grandparent who was a murderer?
- \* Theme 6 - Am I tainted genetically or emotionally?
- \* Theme 7 - We cannot and will not forget.
- \* Theme 8 - The desire to make retribution.
- \* Theme 9 - Can I forgive and accept my parents? Myself?

(Space precludes elaborating these here. The reader can surmise which themes are expressed by both German and Jewish [no longer limited to Israelis only] participants, and which are more characteristic of one or the other group. See Kaslow, 2000, for fuller discussion of trends.)

### Summation

The composition of the group reflects both flexibility and some criteria for inclusion, longevity of membership combined with an annual addition of new, younger members. They interact well together, recognizing that each is in his or her own place in the healing and reconciliation process. Self disclosures range from quiet and shamed, hesitantly and tentatively given, to highly distraught and volatile - expressed through tears and/or screams. Everyone sits and listens quietly, albeit sometimes uncomfortably, eyes averting contact, but riveted by what is transpiring and very attuned to each other's anguish, and increasingly to their triumphs in mastering the past. After their first encounter with the group, participants seem to achieve some relief from the knots in which they have been bound, and to be better able to focus and invest their thoughts and energy on the present and future. As for me, leading this group is a very significant annual event; I am always profoundly moved by the stories told, and grateful that together we quickly create a shared time and place for self reflection, self revelations, and building bridges across vast chasms.

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## **WE NEVER SPOKE ABOUT THE WAR**

This is the story of Els, who does not want to reveal her name, because her brothers and sisters never speak about the war. She and her siblings lived in children's homes or with family between 1944 and 1950.

In September 1944 the whole village was evacuated because of the approach of the Allies and the front coming closer. She lived in the southern part of the Netherlands. Since all the people had to leave, she did not feel that her family was different. Her father was a shopkeeper. During the war he was often away from home; that gave her an ominous feeling. She was then about 9 years old. They had a radio, and that was unusual, because the Germans had ordered all radios to be collected. All the inhabitants of the village were housed in a sport hall. Because her mother and siblings were there, she felt at ease.

After the evacuation, everybody returned to the village, but her family did not. They went to Germany: 'For us, in fact, the war started only then and there'. They travelled with another family and a single person. They were lodged somewhere in a house with several German families in a little town. She does not know its name.

On a Sunday afternoon while she was playing with the children of the neighbours, her parents and the other children made a walking tour. Dutch people in uniform knocked on the door and asked where the family was and when they would return. Later these men spoke with her parents. They had to face losing their national citizenship, if they did not go back to Holland. They decided to return: one could not sacrifice the children to be raised without national citizenship. The next day they left that town. They had to present themselves at some place at some time, Els does not remember where and when.

It was an awful trip which took a long time by train and on wagons. They had to leave many things behind for instance a sewing machine. When they approached the Dutch frontier, the group of returning families became bigger and bigger. They were hungry and had no opportunity to wash themselves. At each restplace they had to undergo a delousing treatment. Her parents were shocked by the humiliation of this trip: the Germans kicked them out of the country. They intended to go back to their village. They arrived in the town of Eindhoven in June 1945. People of the Red Cross brought them to the house of an aunt, who apparently knew that they were coming. Together at last with only their own family! Their uncle accompanied them to

their village. In their house, however, lived another family and in the shop was lodged some Foundation. Returning to the village showed them that their father had done nothing wrong.

The family in their house was astonished to see them. The family of Els did not enter the house because suddenly there were policemen. Three children were brought to an uncle in the same village, three children found lodging with the neighbours. They were not allowed to go on the street (in order to protect them against teasing? GSB) Later on they lived with an aunt in a village 30 km away and there they went again to school. Nobody knew about her father, nobody asked why they were living there. Els had to learn the Dutch language again as she had become used to speaking German during several months.

Some other children of the family were transferred to the children's homes in Moergestel and in Breda ('The KNOP'). Her uncle got tuberculosis. Then Els was also sent to the KNOP, but her sister could not stay there in that children's home. Why? Nobody asked the opinion of the children, they were sent to here, to there. Her father was imprisoned in Amersfoort, later in Vught. Each month he was allowed to see one child.

The Bureau Bijzondere Jeugdzorg had to care for the children of NSB-families. The central office was in Den Bosch and it supervised several children's homes.

### Experiences

In February 1946 Els was sent to 'Huize Lievenshove' in Bergen op Zoom, where two brothers and two sisters already lived. All the children there had 'lost' their parents in some way. Later on other children also came to live there, children of families living on the margin of society, a different kind of children.

It is more than probable that her stay in that children's home influenced her a lot. She chose to become a social worker and she sees that this has to do with her own experiences during that period. Maybe it is also a kind of 'repairing', 'Wider-gutmachung'. The story of her family gave her the idea of becoming useful to society - as so many other children of NSB-men.

She loved to go to school, but sometimes, as punishment, she had to stay 'at home'. At some point the authorities who paid for her secondary school, stopped the financial help and she had to work in the children's home. The workers in the home were often friendlier towards the NSB-children than to those of 'anti-social' families. In December 1949 her father was released. Her mother came to visit her children with a 'Mr.X'.(They did not see him as their father). It took six months before they could return to their own house, where that other family was living. In 1950 they returned and only then did it become more than clear what this NSB was all about. In Bergen op Zoom they never witnessed hatred, never experienced rejection, but in their village things were different! She still has the feeling that she has to obey others, because otherwise they will call her 'NSB-child'. She had some friends, nevertheless; there was not only teasing. But she felt that it was always possible, that there could come a moment, when they would reject her. Her father reopened the shop. Els sometimes had to go to the clients to ask them to pay the bill and they often rebuked her. She suffered under this behaviour. Later she became a leader in a youth movement of the church. At one point parents of a 14-year old girl forced their daughter to leave the club because of Els, that 'NSB-child'. That was a hard blow.

Her father died in 1950 of lung cancer. Maybe he got the illness in one of the

internment camps where nobody had noticed it. She feels it is a pity that she did not ask her father questions and neither did her mother. But after 1950 nobody in the family ever spoke about the war again.

She had to find a job, as did many children, also those of 'normal' families in that period.

Today her brothers and sisters don't want to speak about the war. She had hoped they would be willing after the death of her mother, but they don't want to. Els bought a booklet about the children's home and gave a copy to her siblings. No reaction at all! She secretly spoke with a nephew. Maybe her siblings could tell her more details for she has 'holes' in her memory.

Speaking about this time, searching for information, started only in the seventies. She saw a T.V. program in which a man told about his experiences as an NSB-child. She bought his book but did not finish it. But it was progress: until then she never watched programs concerning the war.

Els never wanted to know exactly what her father did during the war. When he had to appear before the tribunal, only four years after Liberation Day, he was immediately released. She does not have the courage to read his dossier at the Department of Justice. What should she do, if they don't have a dossier? In that case he would have been imprisoned for four years for nothing. What should she do, if it becomes clear that he committed atrocities? She is not sure she would be able to accept it, to cope with it. For more than 25 years she had the idea that release means that he did not do anything wrong. This was her stronghold in life. What helps her now, is the fact that her father did everything for his family in order to give them food, and Els wants to recognize this attitude with gratefulness.

Some remarks of GSB.

In our dissertation about children's homes, Paul Mantel and I interviewed in 1987 'Henk' and 'Janny' who were lodged in the KNOP for several weeks and 'Lia' who stayed in Huize Lievenshove. So, I can compare their stories with that of Els. De Knop was to all appearances a provisional home. In the first weeks and months after Liberation Day, food, clothing, beds were problems which were difficult to solve. There were no toys for the children, the boys played with a makeshift 'football' in the courtyard. Janny relates that Miss Z. was friendly, she allowed the children to come back for another portion of food when there was enough.

Huize Lievenshove was a big villa with a very special atmosphere. Lia told us that the leaders managed to make something special with the scarce food, especially on the birthday of one of the children. There was always a nurse in the bedroom who could help children when they called at night. The directress of the home tried to have a personal relationship with the children, talked with them and ordered to do something for her to show their capabilities. It was a home where the majority of the children and the nurses belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. One of the nurses was Protestant and she gathered the Protestant children around her on Sunday mornings to tell them stories from the Bible and to sing songs.

Lia, who lives in my village, had the courage some years ago to tell about her experience in this home during a service in church around the theme Songs Which Are Dear To Me. She told how one song helped her to endure her isolation far from her family. I was very moved by her story.

Lievenshove was a good children's home.

Dan Bar-On, ed.: **BRIDGING THE GAP**  
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ISBN 3-89684-030-4

In August 1998 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. In the seventh issue of our Bulletin Professor Dan Bar-On wrote an article about it. The above mentioned book is the result of this seminar.

From the preface, Dan Bar-On:

*'We decided to provide you with a multitude of voices, rather than tell you about this seminar through a monolithic single one.() Perhaps one solid account could provide more coherence, give a theory or a model of how to work with past and current conflicts, of how to manage the victims' and victimizers' aftereffects. During the seminar there were also requests for such uniformity (and simplicity). I do not believe, however, that we are at a stage in our "state of the art" in which we can provide such a model or theory. I truly believe that each of the voices heard here is some contribution towards building such a theory, but none of us has, at present, achieved a total perspective of all the various contexts and agendas.'*

Thuli Mpshe, South Africa:

*'I believe that sharing honestly is the true way forward to reconciliation. Knowledge and understanding of others' pain is definitely the way to understanding which leads to reconciliation. The process of learning from each other allows people to overcome conflict. It encourages empathy and the will to forgive. The reality that no matter how different we are, pain and hurt is similar suddenly hit me.'*

Maureen Hetherington, Northern Ireland:

*'I was allowed to tell my story in a room with people who wanted to listen without interruption - here in Northern Ireland "listening" sometimes means waiting for the chance to "dive" in when the opportunity arises. It was a privilege to sit and listen while others shared their story. () The trip also turned out to be a very personal and important journey for a number of reasons but most importantly I felt empowered through validation of my story.'*

Fatma Kassem, Israel:

*'The second or third day, I was asked to speak about Palestinian lives in Israel. I felt that I spoke clearly about how, even though I am Israeli, I don't enjoy the same privileges that Jewish Israelis enjoy. I spoke about how many people are oppressed in our own land. Immediately after I spoke I felt my friends, the other Israelis in this group, withdrawing from me. They were angry that I exposed their behavior to the rest of the world, and maybe especially to themselves. () Later we talked about what happened between us. I think that the road in front of us is still long, and it will take a long time to build up trust on both sides, but this is our responsibility if we want our children's lives to be different than ours.'*

Dirk Wegner, Germany, Körber Stiftung:

*'Sadly, it is still mostly the blare of worldwide conflicts which produce the greatest*

*response in the media. Reporting concentrates mainly on bombs and air strikes. The quiet determination of people whose dedication and openness contribute to bringing the solution of such conflicts a step further too frequently remains unheard - one more reason for us to publish this book.'*

Nitai Keren, Israel

Poem

The short way is the long one,  
and there are no shortcuts this way.  
While walking this way you must talk, and talk a lot,  
and while you are talking,  
                  the most important thing is to listen  
and you must listen a lot and think.

The furthest destination is the closest to your heart,  
and there are no way stations.  
To get there you must do, and do a lot,  
and while you are doing,  
                  the most important thing is to think,  
and you must think a lot, and watch.

The impossible dream is the only one you really need  
  to fulfill,  
and there is no need to deny.  
To fulfill a dream you must awaken and be alert,  
and while you are awake and alert,  
                  the most important thing is to watch,  
and you must watch a lot, and feel.

The highest hope is found in the depth of despair,  
and you must never give up.  
To keep hope you must believe, and believe strongly,  
and when you believe the most important thing is to feel,  
and you must feel a lot and give.

The strongest connection of all is the connection to oneself  
and you can't afford to depend on another.  
To connect to himself a man must meet with the others,  
and when you meet with the others,  
                  the most important thing is to give,  
and you must give a lot and listen.

The short way is the long one,  
and there are no shortcuts this way.  
while walking this way you must talk, and talk a lot,  
and while you are talking,

the most important thing is to listen,  
and you must listen a lot and think.

### **IDENTITY, CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION: the TRT Stockton College seminar, July 16-22, 2000**

This seminar was the successor of the before mentioned Hamburg Seminar. Dan Bar-On of the Ben Gurion University reports:

About thirty participants took part in this workshop. A few practitioners from current conflicts came for the first time, while others persisted from Hamburg and Bethlehem (meeting of October, 1999). At this meeting we worked alternating between plenary sessions and the three conflict groups, composed of the practitioners from the specific country (Northern Ireland, South Africa and Israel, with the Palestinian-Israeli setting) and Jewish and German members of the original TRT. Storytelling was still the major tool of these sessions, though issues of gender, identity, conciliation and re-entry were elaborated in parallel. The triangle - Germans, Jews and Palestinians - received some special attention as it composes for the Jewish members a difficult transition in identity from being victims in the Holocaust setting to being also victimizers in the P-I context. For the first time, we had ex-prisoners from the three conflict groups, and held a special session with them in the plenary. We had another moving plenary session with Faculty members of Stockton College who gave a personal report of their own difficulties as members of the Afro-American and Native-American minorities. This time the original TRT decided to cease its separate and dominating role and to deliver the decision making process to the plenary, including the practitioners from the conflict groups. There is a good chance that the group will meet again next summer in South Africa and the year after in Northern Ireland. One can conclude that the TRT work and atmosphere has a certain value for current conflicts especially when the latter have difficulties delving into the deeper emotional roots of the conflict.

Madeleine Bunting: **THE MODEL OCCUPATION**; the Channel Islands under German Rule 1940 - 1945  
ed. HarperCollins Publishers, 1995  
ISBN 0 00 255242 6

Only a few people in the world know that the Channel Islands - autonomous, although member of the British Commonwealth - in the Second World War were occupied by the Germans.

I spent my holidays four times at Guernsey, one of the Islands, and I experienced how present the War still is, among other things in the towers which the Germans built.

However, I did not visit any of the three museums dedicated to the War: holidays are holidays and as I am busy with that period in my work and personal life the whole year long, I feel I have the right to be really 'free' for two weeks a year.

When I visited the Guernsey Museum I was astonished to see a picture of a woman who had her head shaved by some men, to all appearances a "Moffenwhore" (a woman who had a sexual relationship with a German soldier). This was the last place I expected to find such a picture, all the more because I could never have imagined that even in such a lovely Island sexual collaborators had been humiliated and punished like in Norway, Belgium, France and the Netherlands.

After the holidays I contacted the Museum for further information about the Occupation and the fate of the collaborators. I did not receive an answer. By chance I found on the Internet a bookreview of a rather controversial book about the war period in the Channel Islands written by Madeleine Bunting.

The author criticizes the 'official' British version of the story of the war, the version in which it is stated that the Germans could never occupy the United Kingdom, because of the heroic attitude of all British citizens.

Bunting tells us a totally different story. Some days before the expected attack of the Germans, the British soldiers were called back to England leaving the Islands without any means to defend themselves. Some inhabitants had already fled to England, but many people had no choice but to stay. When the Germans arrived and occupied the Islands, people had to accommodate to German rule. It was almost impossible to resist the enemy, let alone to start a resistance movement. The authorities whom the Germans allowed some freedom of action could avoid cooperation with the Occupiers. The Governor of Guernsey, however, obeyed easily and wholeheartedly, whereas the Governor of Jersey kept more distance.

Thousands of foreign prisoners of war were ordered to build the defence towers and other buildings which the German needed; among others an underground hospital. The slave labour was hard, the circumstances were bad and many workers died. A small monument of commemoration on the island of Alderney is the only remembrance of the slave labourers whose story is almost forgotten, like that of the small number of Jews who were given very little help by the Islanders.

After the war the 'big fishes' found acquittal for their cooperation very easily, the little ones, however, and especially the women and girls who had had a love relationship with German soldiers, could not escape so easily. In the end nobody was sentenced, nobody was imprisoned. The story of the anger of the Islanders towards the British authorities who abandoned them and who came back after the end of the war as the great liberators, this story is suppressed and replaced by the 'official' British view on the war which is far from true. Could this be the reason why the director of the museum did not answer my request?

This book presents the readers with some interesting stuff. I would like to recommend it to you.

GSB

## KOMBI: DIALOGUE IN THE NETHERLANDS

In 1988 and 1989 two weekendmeetings were organised where children of war met each other for the first time in the history of the Netherlands. It was an experiment to explore whether it would be possible to meet as children of victims and children of collaborators or Nazis. One small self-help group of seven participants was set up and had nine afternoon meetings and a weekend meeting as the last session.

The participants of these first activities had five different backgrounds: children of Jewish families, children of resistance fighters, children of collaborators or German parents and people who spent the wartime in the Japanese internment camps in the former Dutch colony of Dutch Indies.

These last people had had their own self-help organisation KJBB since 1980 and the collaborators' children started their group, HERKENNING, in 1981. The children of the Jewish families and of the resistancefighters had small meetings under the umbrella of the official organization for war victims, ICODO., and founded their own self-help organizations in the nineties.

The experiences of the participants during both weekend meetings and in the small group showed that these kinds of encounters were very important for the discussion partners. It was a logical consequence to continue the work and to found an organization of volunteers, KOMBI. (In Dutch "Kinderen van de oorlog voor Maatschappelijke Begeleiding en Integratie", in English "Children of War for Mutual Societal Help and Integration"). KOMBI was founded in 1990 and this year in May we celebrated its tenth birthday.

It is worthwhile to relate the activities which led to the foundation of KOMBI. The first meeting was initiated by members of KJBB.

In April 1988, twenty-five women met for the first time. I was one of them. Step by step we made each others' acquaintance and gradually it became clear that we all had many things in common. Recognition of one's own story in that of another, regardless of our backgrounds, was one of the exciting experiences of the first day. We had never realised that most of us wrestled with feelings of loneliness and that we all had to take far too much responsibility at a very young age. Because of the war situation, we did not grow up in an atmosphere of safety, shelter and warmth. We talked about the family secret in most of our families and we learned that most of us lived in isolation. The Jewish people who came out of hiding or out of the camps feared discrimination. The resistance fighter families were accustomed to keeping silent, and continued the silence after the war, although the situation was different now. The collaborators' children kept silent in order to prevent teasing and rebuke, like the German families. The people who repatriated from Indonesia to all appearances integrated smoothly into Dutch society, but felt themselves not accepted.

We learned about problems with relationships. As young children we witnessed the vulnerability of our parents and we

learned to mistrust adults and any authority. Many lost their innocence at a very early age, because of the atrocities they went through or witnessed.

The more we became aware of the similarities in our stories, the more excited we got and we wanted to become allies. The experiences of our parents during and after the war had separated us from each other. We could, of course, understand that, but now we had come much closer to each other than we could ever have imagined. We wrote a declaration in which we announced that the children of parents who were enemies in their generation intended to end the hatred and the prejudices: "Maybe we can become friends in our generation". It was published in several national papers.

In the small encounter group we started off by telling our own stories. That enabled us to feel empathy with each other because we recognized so many similar experiences. We discussed the role of the partners of children of war and how the age of the children at the end of war played an important role in the aftermath. We noticed the difference between those who lost their fathers and those who had to grow up with frustrated or traumatized parents. Some of the differences which have to do with our varied backgrounds were more difficult to cope with. We experienced how deeply rooted the distrust towards collaborators' children still was.

While our group was having its meetings, the release of two war criminals was being considered and the Dutch society was divided in two factions: those who supported and those who opposed it. Emotions also arose in our group and we decided that the member who had been outside the European war should facilitate the session. By the end we could share feelings of anger, pain and helplessness.

Our sessions culminated in a weekend meeting. Each member expressed - in drawing or painting - what had been the most important experience during the sessions. We added some special words or drawings on the sheets of the others. We thus made one big sheet of all the drawings and after discussing our work, we saw that we could not separate the sheets, unless we destroyed the whole! We felt that this expressed exactly what had happened in our group: our stories had become so interwoven that we did not go home as the 'loners' we had been at the start.

The women who had met in April 1988 at the women emancipation centre met each other again in February 1989. This meeting was centered around the theme of confrontation: 'It is difficult or maybe impossible to be real allies when so many prejudices, so much distrust, anger and pain inherited from the past still influence our lives'. Although we decided not to attack each other as individuals, in practice it was too difficult to handle the emotions. The facilitators were no longer able to mediate, since they were also part of the game. History was repeated, all prejudices reinforced. The next morning we had calmed down and we could discuss what went wrong.

We were pioneers, making the mistakes of all beginners. I am convinced that we should have taken more time to come closer to each other, to find trust and strength in the similarities and should have delayed the discussions about our prejudices. We still had a long way to go together and we should have been more patient with ourselves and others.

KOMBI still organises weekend meetings and small self-help groups. The facilitators learned from the mistakes of the past.

Since 1990 we saw the founding of several new organizations, for instance JIN for the children with one Indonesian and one Dutch parent, Sakura for children with unknown Japanese fathers and INOG for Indonesian-Dutch children born after the war. The organization KJBB, which had already started already their kongsi's in 1980, is still very active.

Three organizations for Jewish children were set up: JONAG for the generation born after the war, HOK for the children who were in hiding and JOK for Jewish children who were in the camps.

In 1992 children of German parents - or with an unknown German father - set up their own organization, but now participate again in Herkenning, the organization for collaborators' children.

Children of 'the Liberation', most of them with unknown Canadian, American, Polish or Russian fathers set up their own self-help organization. Recently the children of persecuted Roma and Sinti founded their own groups.

In 1999 a network was created between all those organizations supervised by ICODO, the official organization for war victims (first generation).

KOMBI remains the organization where children of war can meet each other in a more personal way and can develop more quickly in their working-through process.

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

## SOME PASSAGES OF THE REPORT OF TERESA HOWARD

"Our efforts to understand have often been thwarted by a wall of silence. Or, we have been left to piece together many disparate fragments. I discovered that it is possible to break the silence and mend the broken connections, resulting from the trauma of the Shoah, by talking to people whose parents were differently affected. Their parents or grandparents could have been survivors, victims, perpetrators, rescuers, bystanders or followers. My talking over many months to a German of my own generation enabled me, for the first time, to link together my history and to occupy the part of myself that originally came with my father from Germany. This experience, which freed me from a lifetime of confusion and pain, led me to organise this workshop.()

Most suffered sleepless nights in the week before, yet on arrival, found an enormous release of energy. Almost as soon as we started participants expressed relief about there finally being a place to talk. Here at last was a space where they did not expect to be told to be quiet. Here, they would not be moaned at for going on about all that holocaust stuff again! The venue I found was a gem. It felt safe and contained. It was a beautiful, comfortable house on the edge of the Soonwald in the Hunsrück.() The only noise, apart from our human activity, was birdsong, trees rustling and flies buzzing. The good food and shelter was just what we needed for a task that seemed both awesome and exciting. It helped us find the courage to proceed. We all knew that we were about to embark on a very significant experience.()

Some participants knew they were children or grandchildren of perpetrators. Others were not so sure about their history. Hunger for the truth had dominated many of their lives. One participant explained that she was here to look into the internal archives not the external ones. Confusion about heritage was a theme that wound its way through everything. Those with parents and grandparents who may have been Jewish had a doubly difficult task. We heard that even records had been tampered with. The legacy of the Nazi-time was very evident in the median group. Even after all these years it was still difficult to let others know about a Jewish heritage and it was even more difficult to find a way of thinking and talking about it without falling into, what I learnt was considered, Nazi terminology. There was a lot of discussion about being half Jewish. 'We don't say half Christian or half Buddhist so why half Jewish?' On this note, I had always been proud of my quarter Jewish heritage. It always felt a much larger proportion that had so hugely influenced my life. It was surprising to discover that in Germany I was thought to have taken on my father's internalised Nazi anti-semitism! My grandfather was an Austrian aristocrat who had died by 1930. My mother is English and not Jewish. These many parts bring me the possibility of seeing the world through many eyes. It seemed almost unbearable to think about being born to parents or grandparents who had committed atrocities. To whom does one look for one's identity? Is one doomed to live a life of guilt

and shame on one's parents' behalf? The usual response to this inescapable dilemma is either collective silence or indifference. The guilt and shame seems never to go away. As one participant exclaimed: 'The injection of fear, hate and conqueror mentality comes with the mother's milk. It is an overall problem of generations in and of the German society. It is not only an individual one.'() In society (after the War) you had to learn to live without violence, but in your family the abuse continued, and no one outside would ever know. How could you make sense of a father who was seen as the revered man in the outer reality of the community while at home the inner reality was that he treated everyone with continuing brutality? With such a backdrop of unanswered questions in your life, how do you talk to others? How can you trust a friendship? The central question: 'What did my parents and grandparents do in the Nazi-time?' has led to a constant search for the truth either through painstaking research, by choosing a career such as law or by working with refugees.()

Afterwards I was left contemplating the price of making a whole nation capitulate after the First World War with a loss of honour, pride and dignity so great that it turned on a whole people within. The resulting loss of creative wealth was so huge that it can hardly be understood.()

I have discovered that many of us from the second and third generation have very mixed backgrounds. These mixtures do not fit into neat categories. They can be a rich resource but they can also be a continuing source for distress and confusion. A feeling of not belonging anywhere while living under the long shadow of the Shoah can make living a fulfilling life very difficult. Many of us have not yet found a place to reflect on these issues from this perspective.

We are planning to repeat 'Breaking the Silence; Mending the Broken Connections' next year, 15 to 17 June. In addition there are plans for another workshop for those who would like a safe space to think about how the Shoah has shaped their identity.

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