

# INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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## INTRODUCTION

In the Spring issue I announced that the Organisation 'Herkenning', which has been sponsoring this bulletin will no longer receive a governmental subsidy after January 2004 and that a financial contribution from the readers was necessary. The Board decided, however, to continue the sponsorship. Since the postal expenses are high, I will start with an e-mail version of the bulletin in 2004. Therefore I ask the readers of whom I don't have an e-mail address, to send it to me in due time.

In this issue you will find a report about the conference of the Finnish children of War, held in June in Oulu, Finland.

Martin Parsons did research among British children who were evacuated between 1939 and 1944 in the framework of a governmental evacuation programme. Several paragraphs of one of his essays about this subject are quoted in this bulletin.

Tony Bougourd, born and living in Guernsey, one of the Channel Islands, was evacuated to the United Kingdom in 1940. He wrote a book about his traumatic experiences. I met him during my holidays in Guernsey and spoke with him about his book and the reactions he received.

Jürgen Schubert spent his childhood and youth in an asylum as an unwanted child of the Occupiers. The book he wrote about his experiences received positive reviews.

The Organisation of NS-children, 'Venntreffe', in Norway reports about its activities.

Marianne Reuling did research on the fate of Dutch young people who became more and more involved in German war activities during the war. In her article she tells how they got entangled and what the effects on their lives were in the first years after the war.

In Germany a group of therapists met in April 2000 in Bad Boll and started an 'Arbeitsgruppe'. They wrote a declaration about their mission and the conclusions of their discussions.

In November a conference will take place at the Protestant Academy in Bad Boll, during which the German Organisation of Children of War, 'Kriegskind Deutschland', will be founded.

The organisation One by One, which organises meetings between children of victims and children of perpetrators, was founded in 1991. Among its founding members was Otto Duscheleit. This spring he announced his retirement from the Board. Martina Emme thanked him for his involvement in a letter published in their newsletter.

The website of the Norwegian Organisation of Lebensborn Children has a new name. Please make a note of it. Several other websites have been added to the list that was published in the last issue.

The office of 'Herkenning' will be closed. In future my address will be the only one for contacts: Nieuwsteeg 12, 4196 AM Tricht, e-mail: [scheffelbaars@wxs.nl](mailto:scheffelbaars@wxs.nl) and tel/fax: (+) 345- 573190.

Please send me any change of postal or e-mail address.

I thank Uta Allers for her corrections of the translations and my own texts.

I hope that you will read the articles of this issue with interest. Comments and suggestions are welcome!

All the best

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

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**EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF CHILDREN OF WAR IN OULU, FINLAND**  
13 – 15.6.2003

In the hall of the municipal library is an exhibition. Pictures with children looking seriously, some even anxiously. A bag or suitcase in their hands. A label with their name and address around their necks. They will travel to Sweden or Denmark, leaving their families and heading for an uncertain fate.

There are letters from the children to their parents and from the parents to their children. A doll, an old suitcase, some dresses, a hat, a pair of little shoes, objects which people cherished and saved. Now they are on display representing the past and bringing it close to our hearts. Maybe more than words they express the lonely adventure the Finnish children of war went through.

Around me people are speaking Finnish, a language that is not related to any West European language. I don't understand a word. This brings me close to the experience of the Finnish children, welcomed in countries where people spoke a totally different language. Precisely because I don't understand them, I am close to them. A good experience!

Pertti Kavén speaks about the Finnish children of war, Martin Parsons about children from the United Kingdom who were evacuated to the countryside and even brought overseas to the United States or to Canada. Kai Rosnell, representing the Finnish children of war living in Sweden, speaks about the several groups of children who were evacuated during the twentieth century. It is heartbreaking to realise how thousands, maybe even millions of children became uprooted because political leaders of the world play their games, not interested in the impact they have on children. We all have different stories, but we all share the experience that wars are destructive, even for the survivors.

After the lunch with reindeersoup and bread we meet each other in a hall. Tea, coffee and cake are on the tables. Several people show their interest in the International Bulletin, and the copies I brought with me are gone in no time. Fine, that's one of the reasons why I came to Oulu.

Rauni Kemi, chairwoman of the regional group of the Seudun Sotalap- set who organised this annual international meeting welcomes us in the main celebration in the afternoon. One sentence moves me especially: 'Our fathers were at the front, our mothers were occupied on the home front and we, the children, we had our own war.' If one interprets the word 'front' more abstractly, this sentence applies to all children of war, expressing in only a few words the helplessness of a child in war time, confronted with a world in chaos and compelled to cope with it all alone.

A brassband plays music of the Finnish composer Sibelius. A children's choir sings a few songs with enthusiasm and spirit. Two young women regale us with music performed on piano and cello. They make their contribution to this meeting of the 'forgotten' generation. Several representatives of churches and organisations offer their congratulations. One of them is a veteran. And I feel how the past relates to the present and the future. Healing.

The flags of the participants' countries are placed in front of the hall, the red-white-blue of the Netherlands among them. It moves me, but I don't know why. Only at night when I reflect on the events of the day, do I understand. As a child I always drew houses with flags. My preschool teacher told to my mother that apparently I liked festivals. Only years later I realised that I drew the flags of Liberation Day. On that day my mother was arrested and my sister and I accompanied her to the internment camp. There were flags, but not for us. Here in Oulu, there was the Dutch flag, for me alone! Recognition.

In the bar of the Radisson Hotel we meet in a small group: Helga from Germany, Martin and James from England, Pertti, Eeva and Barbara from Finland and I from Holland. We talked about research, psychological problems of children of war and therapy. Helga tells about her clients who were in the shelters when British bombs fell on Hamburg and other cities. James tells about the English children who were evacuated to the countryside to save them from being hurt by German bombs. And we recognize that for a child it is not important whether the bomb was made in Germany or in the United Kingdom, what political role its parents played, whether their countries belonged to the aggressors or the liberators. We experience a deep understanding and recognition, an acceptance of each other's trauma. This will motivate us in our work for the children of war, however different the groups and our tasks may be.

Thank you Rauni and members of the Seudun Sotalapset for organising this conference. I liked being your guest.

Gonda



Some paragraphs of the essay

**Reality of Evacuation**  
**by Dr Martin Parsons and Dr. Penny Starns**

The reality of the initial evacuation could be summed up in one word—chaos, a time when 1.5 million children were moved from areas of danger to areas of relative safety over a period of four days. Moreover the evacuation trains may have run like clockwork but little thought had been given to their cargo! There were no toilets on many of the trains and in some cases no seats, despite the fact that a considerable number of the children, some of them as young as three years old were expected to travel for over three hours in order to reach their destination. On arrival, many of the tired and hungry children were subjected to a ‘cattle market’ scenario, whereby host families chose the evacuees they wanted in much the same way as animals in a market were chosen for their usefulness. Farming families chose strong looking male evacuees to help on their farms, other families chose young girls whom they considered able enough to assist with domestic chores.[]

As the initial confusion subsided it was clear that the problems of sustaining essential services for a large number of city dwellers based in rural areas were numerous. Local Education Authorities simply could not cope with the massive influx of school children and the resources of local government health teams were similarly under pressure.[]

**New Cultures and Old Prejudices**

Almost all evacuees were faced with new cultural experiences upon evacuation, and many were forced to confront long-standing prejudices with regard to issues of social class and religion. A traditional picture of evacuees emerged which suggested that, all were infested with lice and disease, had atrocious manners, constantly wet the bed and were likely to commit any amount of crimes. Children in the host communities by contrast were considered to be clean, well mannered and paragons of virtue. This simplistic view gained credence for several reasons, but mainly because it was easier for authorities to use evacuees as scapegoats than confront the existing inadequacies of social care systems. [] Popular evacuee images also insisted that all were slum children and therefore should consider themselves lucky to be housed in the countryside for the duration of war. Whereas in reality many evacuees were middle-class children who were shocked to discover that their new homes had tin baths in front of fires and no inside toilets. Nearly all evacuees, regardless of social class, suffered various degrees of emotional trauma.[]

These were not the only problems to be encountered by evacuees, some were subjected to mental, physical and sexual abuse with little or no means of summoning help. The process of ensuring billets had failed to consider whether or not the inhabitants were suitable to care for children. Others were fortunate, and were well

cared for. There were also evacuees who were better cared for by their host parents than by their real parents.[]

It was not unusual for children to be evacuated more than once together with their school teachers and helpers. The original pre-war map of evacuation, reception and neutral areas had to be re-evaluated after the fall of France, when it was realized suddenly that enemy planes, now using captured airfields, could fly further into mainland Britain. Previously designated neutral areas became evacuation areas almost overnight, while others like Bristol curiously remained neutral areas, despite the fact that they were subjected to heavy bombing raids.[] The whole process of evacuation resembled a yo-yo, completely unpredictable and consequently impossible to deal with. Compulsory evacuation may have resolved some of the strategic problems, but much of the blame for the chaotic nature of the scheme originated with the failure of Whitehall to adequately equip the rural reception areas for the influx of such large numbers of the population. This failure, and the complete lack of insight into the emotional and physical needs of children, caused unnecessary distress and anxiety, and in some areas resulted in the complete break down of the evacuation scheme.[]

Parents needed to be reassured that their children were going to be well looked after by host families, and the poor turn out for the initial evacuation suggests that many parents were not convinced that this would be the case.

### **Health and Welfare**

In view of the fact that a large percentage of evacuees had drifted back to the danger areas by 1940, the Government became increasingly anxious to prove that country life was better for evacuees than their urban environment. A propaganda campaign was launched to persuade parents that their children would become stronger, healthier and more alert as a result of experiencing country life. The only problem with the campaign was that there was no evidence to support the rhetoric. More alarmingly, some evidence showed that not only were evacuees no healthier in the country but that some actually displayed retarded growth rates.[] It was only much later that child guidance clinics established a link between emotional deprivation in children and retarded growth rates.[]

The government of course had not wanted all children to be evacuated with their mothers because the hidden agenda in all of this was that women were required to work in the munitions factories, and to step into numerous civilian jobs which were left vacant by the men who had flocked into the forces. Evacuation of children was considered to be the necessary morale booster, since there was a real fear that men would not fight on the frontline unless they knew that their children were safely out of harms way.

On the surface of things it appeared that government was concerned for the welfare of evacuees and there were increased efforts to improve nutritional standards and medical inspections. The extension of the school milk system ensured that all children were eligible for milk consumption, and a school meal service was introduced. The latter measure however, was not introduced to improve the nutritional content of children's diets but to ensure that host families were not disturbed by evacuees during the day!

Throughout the war children lost more time from school because of illness than from the disruption caused by bombing, and many were unable to attend school on wet or cold days because they did not possess waterproof boots or shoes. The poverty levels of some children did in fact shock officials in Whitehall and confirmed the need for a more coherent and efficient welfare system. In the meantime however, poor health and

poverty had a detrimental effect on children's education, particularly on evacuees who were also coping with emotional deprivation.

## **Education**

Although the evacuation process was organized first by the Home Office and then by the Ministry of Health, it was actually the teachers who did most of the organizing at ground level. As such they became the 'unsung heroes and heroines' of evacuation, accompanying large parties of schoolchildren from their city schools to the reception areas. Most had no billets arranged and no premises in which to teach. The Board of Education initially proved to be ineffective in providing equipment and premises, and teachers were left to their own devices. []

The very real sense of being thrown together in adversity however, did create a different teacher pupil relationship in some instances and there were examples that pupils saw their teachers as friends rather than figures of authority. As the following recollection reveals: []. *In many ways we got to know our teachers as real people, with feelings as we had, whereas before we had been rather in awe of them. Sometimes almost afraid to speak except to answer questions in class. Now they became almost like friends, people we could trust, and tell our troubles to, and share our joys with. This was probably because our teachers were from HOME. However well we got on with our new found friends, young or old, they hadn't known us in our home background. Our teachers knew our parents, our families, our friends. They knew the homes we came from, they probably knew us better than we knew ourselves. With them we felt safe.*

Unfortunately not all children were lucky enough to establish closer relationships with their teachers. The constant upheaval caused by re-evacuations, teachers being called up for military service or being recalled to the cities usually prevented any longstanding close relationships. This situation, combined with the fact that many pupils were constantly flitting between cities and countryside, resulted in intermittent emotional attachments between pupils and their teachers.[] .

They [the teachers] were expected to resolve any problems associated with evacuee billeting, alleviate homesickness amongst their pupils, think up exercises to keep children warm when a lack of fuel failed to adequately heat school premises, cope with food shortages and medical epidemics, continue their teaching in shelters during air raids, and be responsible for the safety of their pupils at all times. []

There were also problems associated with evacuees who were experiencing learning difficulties, since there were simply not enough facilities to cope with extra children, particularly those who were unable to keep up with the majority of pupils.[] Though not all evacuees suffered in this way. The camp schools for instance, were better equipped to deal with evacuees of all abilities. They incorporated many outdoor and craftwork activities and provided educational continuity which was sadly lacking in many schools at this time.[] Teachers in camp schools were able to assess their pupils on a twenty four hour basis and did not have to cycle around numerous villages hoping to catch glimpses of their pupils in their billets.

Not surprisingly the chaos that surrounded the whole process of evacuation, took its toll on children's educational achievements. The Board of Education conducted a series of surveys across the country in 1943. These same surveys suggested that there were an unusually high number of children who were completely illiterate, and that this problem

was a direct result of the disruption caused by evacuation and the demands of war. Absenteeism was widespread and frequently overlooked, and many children who had been eligible to take their final school certificates were unable to do so. The 1944 Education Act was supposed to improve educational opportunities, but in reality it did little more than legitimize the existing system, which divided pupils by social class.

### **Conclusion**

The experience of evacuees cannot be generalised, and some enjoyed their evacuation immensely. Nevertheless it is clear that, many suffered in ways that have yet to be revealed. Still unable to speak of their personal suffering, many evacuees are only now beginning to come to terms with their ordeal. They endured the psychological trauma of being torn away from family roots, the difficulties of adapting to new circumstances, inadequate diet and medical care, social stigmatism and in some instances abuse, and a sub-standard educational system which significantly failed to recognise their needs.

This essay is based on the book of **M.L.Parsons**  
**'I'll Take That One. Dispelling the Myths of Civilian Evacuation'**.  
Becket Karlson. 1998

## **TONY C. BOUGOURD: STOLEN CHILDHOOD 1940 –1945**

The account of a boy evacuee's war years in the UK

Ed. The Studio Publishing Services Ltd, Exeter EX4 8JN, UK

Copies may be obtained from  
T.C. Bougourd, 'Torina' Rue des Appoline,  
St.Saviour's, Guernsey, GY7 9QJ

Some paragraphs from the Foreword:

'By mid-June 1940 the German Armed Forces were rushing through France towards the English Channel. It was obvious that by the end of the month the enemy would be in easy reach of the Channel Islands, so the British government advised the Crown that evacuation should take place. Immediately, the local authorities put forward a plan that would enable those who wished to do so to leave their homes and board ships bound for the United Kingdom. It was a daunting task to find homes for the thousands of adults and children from the Islands as they arrived in England by the boatload. Local Councils did their utmost to find the necessary shelter for the evacuees, and finally all were accommodated. While the majority of people found good homes, others were not so fortunate and suffered at the hands of the householders who were interested only in the government cash which they received by giving Channel Islanders a roof over their heads.'

Some lines from the Introduction:

'This is the account of my life between the ages of six and twelve, 1940-1946. My memories of those years are like the Morse code, dots and dashes. The dots represent clear recollections and the dashes my memory blanks. Thus there are gaps, which I hope will not detract from the narrative as a whole, and may at least lend authenticity, since no one will remember everything he experienced in early childhood.[] When I started to write this account I intended it mainly for my younger brothers and sisters to read, and perhaps learn what life was like during the days of the war. After all, this was a time that utterly changed our lives. We were taken from our home, the family was split, we had to adjust to a new land, new people, and new 'languages', Scottish and Lancashire dialects and accents being so unfamiliar that they might as well have been foreign tongues.[]

I was invited to give a talk to the senior classes at Vale School on the subject of being a child evacuee during the war. The response was way beyond all my expectations. The children were so keen for more, and when one of them asked for a copy of my book when it was written, I decided to make this account more widely available in the hope that it will impart a better knowledge of the way of life that some of us had during the years of the war. May it never happen again!'

During my holidays in Guernsey I see an announcement of Tony Bougourd's book. I decide to phone him and to ask him whether he knows that there is an Organisation of British War Children who were evacuated to the countryside. He is amazed to learn that a Dutch woman read his book. He invites me for a cup of tea.

He has striking features and warm, gentle eyes. 'Compared to what European children experienced during the war, my story is in fact futile', he says. I have heard this sentence so often in meetings of children of war: their own stories were less important than those of others! I tell him and say that I recognize in his story so many elements which I know from the stories of other children of war: the loneliness, the helplessness, the confrontation with a world out of order, the responsibility they assumed for younger brothers and sisters and often for their parents as well. He is moved and feels relief. In Guernsey he has been so lonely with his story while most of his schoolmates had a good, even wonderful time in the UK. Very soon after their return to the Island in 1945 he learned to keep silent about his experiences.

In his book he describes his experiences in a often funny style. The lighting in his village consisted of gaslights, the water came from a well which was drawn up by means of a hand pump and the toilet was located way up in the garden, built over a huge hole in the ground. In England conditions were totally different: there was electricity, watertaps and water closets! He knew steamers and trains he knew only from pictures and then he was suddenly travelling by boat and train himself. In Glasgow he experienced bombings for the first time and was brought to a 'safer' place near Liverpool, where he spent nights and nights in the shelters. Why is he thinking that this is less traumatic than what children went through in Europe?

He tells me about his father who fought against the Germans and was discharged from the Armt ed during the early part of 1946. There was no jubilation as the children, even Tony the eldest, hardly knew this man who had had only a leave to visit his family only three times during the war. His father had changed and after the war he lived 'in a world of his own'.

How many other children of war had such a silent father!

We talk and talk and it is hard to say goodbye. But next summer we'll meet again.

Gonda

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### **JURGEN SCHUBERT: MUNDTOT ("Gagged")**

Nachkriegsbiographie eines nicht gewollten Besatzerkindes

ISBN 3-88864-288-4

VAS Verlag 1999

Post-war Biographie of an unwanted child of the Occupiers

In this book Jürgen Schubert tells about his life and how it started. His mother and three sisters lived through the chaos of the end of the war in Schlesien (Silesia). The Polish government announced that 4,2 million Poles from the eastern parts of Poland, claimed by the Russians, would be settled in Schlesien (Silesia). That meant that the Germans who still lived there were forced to leave their homes and head for the homeland.

His mother whose husband was 'somewhere' in Europe, had a love affair with a Russian soldier who gave her support in these hard times. In this relationship Jürgen was conceived.

After the expulsion of his mother and her family he was born in West Germany. When his mother's husband turned up, he did not recognize this boy born out of wedlock. During this period many children were born under similar circumstances. Clearly the husband could not cope with the humiliation and his wife's betrayal. Moreover, the Russian soldiers were resented by the German population. Thus Jürgen's fate was sealed.

He was placed in an asylum under the misdiagnosis of being mentally handicapped. The 'treatment' was inspired not only by the principles of the 'black pedagogy'(1), but by the Nazi ideology as well. In the German psychiatric theories and practices after the war we can detect the remnants of the NS euthanasia programme. In this aspect, Jürgen Schubert describes not only his personal story. He is a witness to how a society that is still thoroughly ill, declares a healthy child sick and treats it according to its distorted views. The author spares the reader the detailed description of his suffering. He only mentions it. Surprisingly abundant is his portrayal of the very few happy events.

The undertone of the whole story is the longing for his mother, for love and intimacy. And one wonders how he managed to escape from his 'prison' at the age of 17, and where his energy and perseverance spring from. He, who was gagged, learned to speak up for himself and for all those who did not succeed in freeing themselves from their chains. The book is an inspiring example of the strength of the human mind.

GSB

(1)'Black' pedagogy was until the beginning of the 20th century the current practice in many families and schools. The goal was to 'break the will of the child' so that the educators could shape it according to their insights into an obedient and decent child.

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#### TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION AFTER WWII? REPORT FROM NORWAY

Children of members of the National Unification(Nasjonal Samling) still meet 3-4 times a year. Here are some thoughts after some of the meetings.

In October 2001 we had a meeting with War children and Romas, where we heard about the fate of the Romas in Norway. One of the Romas was also a NS-child, and therefore especially welcome. Many Romas were members of the National Unification. Some even were soldiers on the Eastern Front. The plight of the Romas in Norway was not easier after WWII.

Recently, the treatment of children in orphanages in the 1950ies and -60ies have been discussed in Norway. Scandals of assaults are getting known. Many of these children were NS-children, War children and Romas.

In the spring 2002 the ambassador and NS-child Anton Smith-Meyer told us his thoughts about "Reconciliation in our time". He also has written a book with this title. He knew his father as a man who loved his country, and who shared his joy over the Norwegian countryside with his children. In 1940 he encouraged his son to sensible resistance against the Germans. The father feared communism, and wanted to see his country as unharmed through the occupation as possible. He himself became a lieutenant in the Norwegian and British navy during the war. He came to his home town on May 16.1945, finding that his father was arrested. The fortune of the family was seized, even though most of it was separate property belonging to his mother. The mother had disagreed with his father's membership in NS. Later he was a diplomat, in South-America, US, UK and in 1975-83 consulate-general in Hamburg. There he met other families, whose fortune was confiscated by the Norwegian Government. That would happen if a Norwegian women had married a German, no matter when, and no matter the thoughts and deeds of the family in the years 1933-45.

Reconciliation after WWII has been a subject in two conferences. In October 2002, during the centennial jubilee of Narvik, was arranged a conference of reconciliation. This time, for the first time, also German veterans were invited. Some old Norwegians, however, made it clear that the German veterans were not welcome. All the German veterans then, suddenly got old and ill, and none of them appeared. No members of the National Unification nor their children were invited.

May 8-9.th 2003, there was a conference in Kristiansand, for the second generation after wars. There were War children, NS-children and refugees from more recent wars living in Norway. This was maybe a beginning of communication between the parties after WWII in Norway, although only those sensitised understood the expression "when peace broke loose." It will be followed by a discussion group. Some this autumn even has proposed a "Commission of truth" in Norway.  
<http://home.no.net/nsbarn>

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### **Young quislings in the Netherlands, 1945-1952**

Marianne Reuling

After the Second World War approximately 150,000 quislings were arrested and brought together in internment camps. The living conditions in these camps were very poor: there was not enough food, fuel, beds, blankets, soap etc. Malnutrition, hunger oedema, dysentery, and death of babies and young children were the result. Camp-guards formed another problem. A lot of them could hardly control their feelings of revenge: prisoners were humiliated, beaten, assaulted and raped. Wild shootings and maltreatment by prison-guards resulted in the death of 31 prisoners in December 1945.

It soon became obvious that it was impossible to bring all these people to justice. A new law made release on parole possible. From January 1946 until December 1949 almost 80 percent of the prisoners were, as a result of this legislation, handed over to the Stichting Toezicht Politieke Delinquenten (STPD), an association for the probation of quislings, founded in September 1945.

#### Internment camps

Amongst the prisoners in the camps were at least 12,000 adolescents, the so-called young political delinquents. They were born after December 1922, which means they were minors at the outbreak of the war.

The members of the STPD were very concerned with these young quislings, who, 'contrary to Dutch tradition, were locked up in camps and prisons together with adult nazi's, murderers, traitors and profiteers'. They feared a devastating influence on the minds of these youngsters and pleaded in favour of a treatment, according to the tradition of Dutch child welfare legislation. From 1905 on delinquent minors were not punished, but re-educated in special institutions.

The STPD succeeded: at the end of September 1945 three institutions and two camps were founded for the re-education of 360 male young quislings. The managing director of these camps was a psychologist, who started a program of 'political re-education'. Although the camps were surrounded by walls with barbed wire and guarded by soldiers, armed with stenguns, the idea was to create a democratic community in which the youngsters lived and worked together under the supervision of youth-leaders. From the beginning the problems were numerous: no work, no money, no equipment, no professionals. The first months the boys built their own barracks, tables, chairs, beds. Later they worked outside the camp: with shovels and wheelbarrows a sand dune was replaced one mile to the north, and later one mile back to the south. Typical Dutch 'family traditions' like Santa Claus, Christmas, Eastern and the queens birthday were supposed to bring the quislings 'back to democracy'. Because there was no money these

festivities often led to great disappointment or hilarious situations: a piano recital (Beethoven and Mozart) at Christmas on a piano that lacked twelve keys ended in total chaos.

The so-called imitation of family life was supposed to create an atmosphere of trust and understanding in which political re-education could take place. In this atmosphere discussions on political subjects would 'lead the quislings "automatically" back to democracy'. The problem was that most of the boys didn't have any political ideology or understanding at all. They had left for Germany to escape from boredom during the war or to seek adventure. Some of them were promised extra food for their family by the Germans. They didn't understand that their choices were interpreted as political ones so they weren't able to contribute to these discussions. The few boys with a political ideology were trained debaters as they came from Hitler Youth institutions. The youth leaders had little or no answers in the discussions with these die-hards.

The outbreak of the cold war complicated the political re-education, many quislings argued that they had fought against the Russians long before the Dutch people and government had realized the dangers of communism.

One year after the start of these special youth camps it was decided that political re-education could only be successful if all discussions on politics were forbidden.

### Release on probation

The young quislings had to wait until January 1947 before special probation law for them was ready and they could leave the camps and prisons. They were put under the supervision of the STPD: 5337 boys and 2869 girls on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 7906 boys and 2920 girls on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1949. The probation lasted always three years and during this time they had to follow the instructions of their probation officer. The aim of the probationary work was political re-education, young quisling had to learn 'to behave as a good Dutch citizen'.

Most of them had to find a job – it was often one of the conditions for their release. Even if this was not the case, they tried to find a job, because they were either too old to go back to school, or their family needed their financial support. 60 % of the young quisling came from collaborator-families, who had lost everything at the end of the war, due to looting or confiscation. Boys worked in factories, shops or at farms. They were not allowed to work in (semi-)government institutions, except for the coal mines. Most girls worked in small companies or were placed in families to assist in the housekeeping, they also lived there.

Often employers, landlords and landladies or 'foster parents' were also probation officers, which made the young quislings dependent and vulnerable. A conflict with their employer could lead to an official complaint at the risk of losing their job, their place to live or even being sent back to the interment camp. 'To behave as a good Dutchman' could be interpreted in many different ways and the resentment against quislings was large and widespread. The best way to 'survive' the three year probation was to work hard, never protest and follow instructions without discussion. Research of the probationary work shows that the political re-education developed into 'education in social adjustment'. Industry, thrift, membership of a church, a (non-political) youth-organisation like scouting (!) or communion were regarded as qualities of successfully re-educated boys and girls.

These young quislings kept silent then and they still do. They had and have an important reason to do so. In the Netherlands you can be a lying politician, a corrupt manager, a bankrobber, a drugsdealer, a white collar thief, after completing sentence you can start with a clean slate. This is not the case with quislings, their children and sometimes even their grandchildren.

The war ended in May 1945; for some it never did.

Marianne Reuling is assistant professor in the philosophy and history of education at the University of Nijmegen.

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## **ARBEITSGRUPPE: KRIEGSKINDER – GESTERN UND HEUTE** (Children of War – yesterday and today)

At a seminar in Bad Boll in April 2000 therapists discussed such topics as children of war, their traumatic experiences and the after-effects and questioned why the war experiences of citizens had been overlooked until now.

On the war fronts and in the cities, on the side of the attacking nations and on the side of the Allies, people endured violence and suffered from the effects of war. People spent hours and hours in underground shelters, were expelled from their homes and fled, felt uprooted in the camps for Displaced Persons and women were raped. The effects of these events were largely ignored until now.

For several reasons researchers and politicians focused almost exclusively on the fate of the Holocaust victims and their children and grandchildren. German researchers felt ashamed of being a part of the nation of the perpetrators and avoided facing their own past.

Social workers were confronted with several social problems, as for instance the increase in disability among young men and women and a rise in aggression among the second and third generations after the war. They drew attention to these issues in their professional journals, but did not draw conclusions from their experiences. Politicians were aware of these facts but did not acknowledge the source of the problems or turned a blind eye to them, because they did not know how to cope with them.

The generation of the people who were children during the war grew up in the era of the 'Wirtschaftswunder' (economic boom), working hard and trying to forget the past. The wars in the Balkan area, however, evoked memories of what they themselves experienced.

The participants of the seminar formulated several points of emphasis:

- it is important to draw attention to the connection between the war experiences and the actual psychological and social problems of those who were children during the war
- it is unacceptable to ignore this connection in therapy and to classify these problems among the normal problems of elderly people; recognition of this link will probably offer relief to the clients
- those people suffering from war experiences must be granted the right to get psychological help, even when they are 58 years of age or older
- recognition of the war related problems will it make possible for the German people to come to terms with their history, enabling them to become healthier partners in encounters with the victims of the Nazis
- the website: "kriegskind.de" is intended as a platform; reactions and contributions are welcome.

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### **May Europe Flourish – Shedding Light on the Shadows of the Past**

A Conference of the Protestant Akademie in Bad Boll, Germany, November 24 – 26, 2003

When a war is over, it remains in the minds of the people for a long time. It leaves its mark on the collective consciousness, on the history books and on the memory of those who lived through it. Not only that, but its after-effects have a life of their own.

"The Future of the People of Europe and the Lessons of its Dreadful History" was the title of a speech by Mayor Hans Koschnik on the occasion of the second Children of War Conference at the Protestant Academy in Bad Boll. Europe's history of atrocity is older than the last century. It winds its way from the birth of Europe through to the present day. The fate of the victims is rarely mentioned. It was only with

the rise of nationalism in this violent history that at least “the unknown soldiers” became recognized as victims at memorial events.

And the civilian victims? According to old war legend, war feeds upon the land in which it is waged. Confiscation, forced recruitment and rape were always a matter of course. Even before this recognition, civilian victims of such exploitation were always considered “collateral damage”, even if the purpose of the “moral bombing” by the Allies was the terrorization of the civilian population, just as the German destruction of Guernica and Coventry had been. There are no national patents on war crimes and many a highly decorated war hero later turned out to be a war criminal.

How can a united Europe emerge from this background of divisiveness? That is the main question of the conference. Perhaps European history is particularly instructive for the answer to this question because it shows us the way into the inferno. But for this to take place, the victims will have to scream louder, historians will have to grasp the suffering in all its vital historical significance and scientists of the humanities will have to grapple with the ambivalence, as well as the abysses, of the species humankind, and will have to describe it all in such way that we can learn to better control the evil legacy of our evolutionary history. And just maybe, and that is the hope, people still suffering from war memories, can come to terms with them better if they see that the bloody history of Europe can be overcome.

Among the seminars are:

Transgenerational Transfer of Trauma

From Trauma to a New Beginning – the Resilience of the Human Spirit and Survival as a Chance for Individual and Social Change

May the Soul Find Peace before the End – War Trauma and Pastoral Help

Guernica - an Example

Changing Sides

Men Become Hyenas – but why?

Lay Down Your Arms! The Task of the International School Textbook Committee for the Past and the Future

National Cultures and European Identities

Recognition and Acknowledgement of Guilt as a Basis for European Self-Confidence

A workshop for professionals and those affected by the war will be offered on November 23 and 24, 2003, before the conference, with the topic, “War Trauma”. This is centered on the issue of war-related traumatization and the kinds of therapy available. There will be opportunities for group and experiential work, as well as individual and group supervision for those affected by the war and for therapists.

It is possible to participate in one or both of these events. A complete program can be requested from:

Evangelische Akademie, 73087 Bad Boll, Germany

Office: Magdalena Hummel, 071 64 79-210 or Fax: 071 64 79-5 210

e-mail: magdalena.hummel@ev-akademie-boll.de

Internet: www.Evangelische.Akademie

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## **GOODBYE OTTO DUSCHELEIT**

Martina Emme, former chairwoman of One by One Germany, wrote an open letter in the organisation’s newsletter on the occasion of Otto’s retirement from the Board.

The group members organised a party for him to wish him all the best for the future and to say goodbye. In German: Auf Wiedersehen, that means literally: see you again. They expressed their hope that they will see him again at various One by One activities.

From the beginning of One by One, Otto played an important role. His presence at the meetings caused commotion, because participants doubted his sincerity: can we trust this man who served in the Waffen-SS? Can we take him at his word that he has come to an insight about what he did in the past, or is this mere show for him? Can we believe that he is working through the past with the help of dreams?

For the children of victim families his presence meant anxiety and mistrust, but it was also a challenge to explore their own feelings: did they still feel the need to see him as one of 'the other side' on whom they could project their feelings of revenge, or could they start to see in him the man he had become, the man feeling guilty and ashamed about the past and wishing to make a positive contribution to the present.

For the children of the perpetrators Otto represented the father or any other relative of the perpetrators' generation who broke the silence and took full responsibility for his deeds. All the participants in the meetings 'forced' him to prove the sincerity of his motives. Otto accepted that the group members 'put him on trial' again and again and had to prove that his repentance was real. Relationships in the group were often tense and Otto had to endure several attacks. Martina thanked him for his patience with them. It was important for them that Otto offered them this challenge and helped them to come to grips with their feelings of mistrust. He was the first, and often the only, man of his generation they met and who had the courage to face the past. Martina said that it would be a good thing if more of the perpetrators' generation were to do so.

Otto had this courage and it led him to interactions with young people, especially those of the extreme right. In these contacts Otto confronted them with the effects of blind obedience and told them that people in a totalitarian system learn to say 'yes' without reflection. From his own experience he knows that this first step can be fatal. On the basis of his painful memories, Otto managed to transform his life.

Martina said that she was impressed by the way Otto helped people who have difficulties with expressing clearly what they mean. Otto invited them to his house or went to see them. His activism for One by One, and for people in general is exemplary. Mostly he preferred to stay in the background and do his work outside the spotlight.

One by One wished him all the best, especially for his health, and the new projects in which he is involved and in which he can share his experiences with other people. Since Otto will continue his meetings with young people and his visits to schools, he still will be involved in One by One. Therefore the group members don't say 'goodbye', but 'see you again'.

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## **WEBSITES**

Organisation of Children of Dutch Collaborators:

[www.werkgroepherkenning.nl](http://www.werkgroepherkenning.nl)

Organisation of Children of the Liberators:

[www.bevrijdingskinderen.nl](http://www.bevrijdingskinderen.nl)

Organisation of Children of War of different Backgrounds:

**[www.kombi.nl](http://www.kombi.nl)**

Organisation of Danish Children of War, Danske Krigsboern Foerening:

[www.krigsboern.dk](http://www.krigsboern.dk)

Norwegian Children of War Association, Norges Krigsbarnforbund:

[www.nkbf.no](http://www.nkbf.no)

Organization of Norwegian NS Children:

[www.nazichildren.com](http://www.nazichildren.com)

Krigsbarnforbundet Lebensborn, Norway:

**<http://home.no.net/lebenorg>**

Organisation of NS-children Vennetreff:

**<http://home.no.net/nsbarn>**

Riskforbundet Finska Krigsbarn: (in swedish)

[www.immi.se/krigsbarn](http://www.immi.se/krigsbarn)

Organisation of Finnish Children of War, Seundun Sotalapset:

[www.ouka.fi/yhdistykset/sotalapset](http://www.ouka.fi/yhdistykset/sotalapset)

TRT, To Reflect and Trust, Organisation for encounters between descendants of victims and descendants of perpetrators:

[www.torelectandtrust.org](http://www.torelectandtrust.org)

Organisation of children of victims and children of the perpetrators:

**[www.one-by-one.org](http://www.one-by-one.org)**

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

[www.nach.ws](http://www.nach.ws)

The Foundation Trust, international network of organizations and groups of second and third generations children of war:

[www.thefoundationtrust.org](http://www.thefoundationtrust.org)

Dachau Institut Psychologie und Pädagogik:

[www.Dachau-institut.de](http://www.Dachau-institut.de)

Evacuees Reunion Association (British Children of War)

General secretary: James Roffey

Suite 1, Goodbodys Mill, 17 Albert Road

Retford, Notts DN 22 6 JD

United Kingdom



**Die Generation der deutschen Kriegskinder: „Psychisch haben wir überhaupt nichts erledigt“**

### **Verdammt zum Fröhlichsein**

*Nächte in Luftschutzkellern, Wochen in Flüchtlingsstrecks und Jahre mit Schuldgefühlen – warum viele erst jetzt als Rentner über ihre Traumata reden*, Von Karin Steinberger

**Strande** – Wie sie da sitzen. Erwartungsvoll wie Kinder. Als würde jemand gleich etwas Nettes verteilen. Rosen vielleicht, oder Süßigkeiten. Es ist Samstagmittag, es ist warm, und Helga Spranger verteilt erst einmal Decken, in die sich manche der Anwesenden einwickeln, als wäre man hier in der Antarktis. Dann warten sechs Frauen und ein Mann. Sie hoffen immer noch, dass nichts Schlimmes passieren wird. Günter Grass hat einmal geschrieben: „Geschichte, genauer, die von uns angerührte Geschichte, ist ein verstopftes Klo. Wir spülen und spülen, die Scheiße kommt dennoch hoch.“ Von wegen Rosen.[]

### **Schweigen aus Scham**

Die Kinder haben doch nichts mitbekommen, haben die Erwachsenen nach dem Zusammenbruch des Dritten Reichs gesagt. Die Kinder haben es geglaubt und haben versucht, Ordnung reinzubringen in ein Leben ohne Orientierung. Eine Generation auf der Flucht in die Gemütlichkeit und den Luxus. „Wir haben gearbeitet wie die Wahnsinnigen, haben die Aufbauarbeit für die Eltern erledigt. Dadurch sind wir scheinbar erstarkt, aber psychisch haben wir überhaupt nichts erledigt“, sagt Helga Spranger.

Sie ist ein typisches Luftschutzkind, noch heute ist für sie jede Nacht ein Fest, in der sie ihren Schlafanzug anziehen darf und nicht in Straßenkleidern auf dem Bett liegen muss – bereit für den nächsten Bombenangriff. [] All die Jahrzehnte haben Menschen wie sie Karriere gemacht, Kinder aufgezogen und den Mund gehalten. Wem hätte sie ihre Geschichten erzählen sollen? Den Eltern, die ihnen beigebracht hatten, dass man darüber nicht redet? Den Ehepartnern, die ihre eigenen Ängste in sich hineinfraßen? Den eigenen Kindern, die nichts vom Krieg hören wollten? Der Welt, die erst einmal Mühe hatte, die unfassbaren Verbrechen der Deutschen zu begreifen? Es war ein Schweigen aus Scham. „Uns war der Mund immer verschlossen durch den Holocaust, da konnten wir doch mit unserem Kleckerkram nicht kommen. Die Schuld war immer größer“, sagt Helga Spranger.

Doch jetzt, als Rentner, fangen die Kriegskinder endlich an, sich selbst abzuwickeln. „Man muss schon in der Lebensmitte ankommen, um sich mit dieser Zeit beschäftigen zu können. Die Energie und Distanz, sich mit der unerträglichen Schuld auseinander zu setzen, hat man erst im reifen Alter“, sagt der Kinderpsychiater Heinz Stefan Herzka. Sein Büro ist eine Dachkammer in Zürich, in der Stadt, in die er als Flüchtlingskind jüdischer Emigranten kam. „Wir haben alle eine große Sehnsucht nach Normalität, aber die ist erst möglich, wenn kollektive Trauer und Verarbeitung stattgefunden haben.“ Ein Leben lang hat sich Herzka mit Kindern auseinander gesetzt, und er weiß, dass sie vom zweiten Lebensjahr an alles mitbekommen, über Klänge und Stimmungen. Er weiß auch, dass es für Kinder die Kategorien Opfer oder Täter nicht gibt, sondern nur die Bedrohung.

Es seien die Frauen, die diese Gefühle eher zulassen, sagt er, „doch was ein rechter Bub ist, der weint nicht. Das macht uns dieser Cowboypräsident in Amerika doch vor. Wenn bei Männern der Damm bricht, werden sie überschwemmt“

Die Soldatengeneration ist bereits gestorben, doch das „Letzte Aufgebot“ lebt noch. „Denen hat man abtrainiert, Gefühle zuzulassen. Und die Erwachsenenengesellschaft hat sich bis in die jüngste Zeit mit allen Kräften gegen die eigene Schuld gewehrt. Was man den Kindern antut, wird nicht wahrgenommen.“ []

Geboren wurde Ruth Beate Nilsson in der Nähe von Danzig. 1933, im „Jahr des Heils“, wie sie sagt. 1940 wurde die Familie strafversetzt in einen kleinen Ort im Osten von Danzig, weil der Vater jüdische Freunde hatte. „Die Polen dort wurden mit Lastwagen abtransportiert. Sie mussten sich ihre Gräber selber schaufeln. Wir hörten ständig die Schüsse vom nahen Gefangenenlager.“ Kindheitserinnerungen. „Wir waren von klein an schuldbeladen.“

Im Januar 1945 floh die Familie. Nicht einmal ihre Puppe durfte das Kind mitnehmen, weil es der Vater so bestimmte, weil man in ein paar Wochen ohnehin wieder zurückkommen würde. Seit diesem Tag im Januar 1945 trägt Ruth Beate Nilsson immer große Taschen mit sich herum, so wie heute. In die Tasche hat sie alles hineingeschmissen, ihre Verlustängste, ihre Minderwertigkeitskomplexe, ihre Schuld, ihre Einsamkeit und den Geldbeutel. Geholfen haben all die Taschen nichts: „Ich empfinde mich als Behinderte“, sagt sie. []

### **Dreimal vergewaltigt**

Sie war so ein gutes Kind. Hat geschwiegen, keinem erzählt, wie man sie übers Feld hetzte damals in Hinterpommern, wie einen Hasen. War schon genug, dass die Eltern zusehen mussten, wie die Schwester dreimal von den Russen vergewaltigt wurde. Da konnte sie doch nicht auch noch kommen. Sie hätten es ja merken können, die Mutter, als das Kind mit Schnecken zwischen den Zehen nach Hause kam. Der erste Ehemann, als die Ehepflicht zur Qual wurde. Die eigene Tochter, als sie von der Mutter getröstet wurde, nachdem eine Freundin vergewaltigt und ermordet wurde: „Vielleicht ist es besser, wenn man es nicht überlebt“, hatte Ruth Beate Nilsson damals zur Tochter gesagt.

Aber es wollte sie doch keiner hören, all die verzweifelten Andeutungen. „Wir sind schon total im Regen stehen gelassen worden. Die Eltern waren doch auch überfordert“, sagt sie.[]

„Was uns fehlt, ist das angemessene Maß an Aggression. Weil Aggression ja so etwas Gewaltiges war, verbieten wir sie uns. Wir wissen doch gar nicht, was wir weitergegeben haben. Die ganze rechte Szene ist eine direkte

Folge der Nachkriegszeit.“ Dass sie jetzt plötzlich darüber redet und versucht, die eigenen „Blackouts“ aus dieser Zeit mit Erinnerung anzufüllen, ist quälend, aber auch Heilung. „Ich möchte, dass mein Leiden wenigstens noch Sinn für andere macht. So etwas darf nie wieder passieren. Dieser Druck hat mich bis heute nicht verlassen. Jeder Krieg war auch mein Krieg“.

Warum also erst jetzt?

„Wahrscheinlich, um endlich meine eigenen Kinder zu erreichen“, sagt Ruth Beate Nilsson. Dann geht sie hinaus an den Strand. Sie mag das Meer.

Jürgen Müller-Hohagen ist Leiter der Evangelischen Erziehungs- und Familienberatungsstelle München-Nord, ein Mann, der sich von Berufs wegen beschäftigt mit der Erinnerung. „Wir haben doch alle nicht daran gedacht, dass Schwierigkeiten der Enkel in der Schule Spätfolgen eines lang vergangenen Krieges sein könnten.“ Die Sprachlosigkeit zwischen den Generationen ist ihm erst bewusst geworden, als in seine Beratungsstelle Eltern kamen, deren Kinder die eigenen Gewohnheiten manisch übernommen hatten. Gewohnheiten, die einmal lebenswichtig waren. Eine seiner Patientinnen, geboren 1942, erzählte, dass sie, wenn sie mit Leuten redet, die Fenster schließen muss. Der Vater war den Nazis gegenüber kritisch, sagte Sachen wie: „Göring ist allmählich so fett wie ein Kapaun.“ Ein offenes Fenster war lebensbedrohend, damals. Aber heute? Ihr Sohn macht es genauso. „Solche Details pflanzen sich fort. Dinge, die einmal existenziell wichtig waren, macht die dritte Generation einfach weiter. Aber beim Enkel könnte man meinen, er ist verrückt“, sagt Müller-Hohagen. [] In der Theorie weiß man schon lange, dass Kinder Antennen für alles haben, was existenziell wichtig ist, sie können es nur nicht benennen und orten. Damit ist es überall, ein diffuser Brei. „Es sitzt in uns drinnen, verdünnt sich immer mehr, aber vergiftet uns auch immer mehr“, sagt Jürgen Müller-Hohagen. Solange die Kriegskinder gearbeitet haben, waren sie abgelenkt. Die Arbeit war Korsett. Doch jetzt kommt der Brei hoch.

Ein erster Ausbruch war in Bad Boll im April 2000. Dort haben sich die Kriegskinder das erste Mal getroffen. Das Treffen war Erlösung: Endlich erkannten sie, dass sie kein Missgeschick des Schicksals sind, sondern Verzweifelte unter vielen, aufgezogen von depressiven, überlasteten Müttern und dann materiell abgespeist. In Bad Boll haben sie erkannt, dass man auch ihnen etwas angetan hat. Die Gesellschaft hat es sich leicht gemacht und die Probleme einer ganzen Generation als „Rentnerneurosen“ abgetan. Die Kriegskinder haben auch das geglaubt. „Es konnte sich doch keiner vorstellen, dass das nach so langer Zeit noch mit dem Krieg zu tun hat“, sagt Helga Spranger. 1998 ging es bei ihr los, während des Kosovokriegs. Mit den Bildern kam die Erinnerung, und die bisher stabilen Dämme brachen.

Dass die Erinnerungsarbeit nicht einfach werden würde, sei ihr schnell klar geworden, sagt Helga Spranger. „Das erste Problem sind manche Vertriebenenverbände mit ihrer dumpfen, revanchistischen Einstellung. Mit denen wollen wir hier nichts zu tun haben. Da wird Schuld in Gliedmaßen abgerechnet, da ist jede selbstkritische Auseinandersetzung unmöglich. Aber man muss sich schon die Mühe machen, die Ecken auszuleuchten bei diesem Thema.“

### **Lachend im Trümmerfeld**

Da sitzen sie nun, in Strände, die alt gewordenen Kriegskinder. Namenlos wollen die meisten bleiben, weil ihre Kinder und Enkel nicht wissen sollen, dass sie hier sind. Zu Hause sind sie starke, fröhliche, hilfreiche Großeltern. Hier fangen sie endlich an zu weinen. Von panischen Eltern in den Luftschutzkellern reden sie und von der Schuld, weil man an markierten Judenkindern vorbeistolzerte, überzeugt davon, ein Kind der Herrenrasse zu sein. Von den ewigen Ermahnungen reden sie – darüber spricht man nicht, guck da nicht hin – und von der Angst. „Wir waren programmiert auf Katastrophen. Als der Krieg zu Ende war, habe ich die Panik meines Lebens bekommen“, sagt eine der Frauen. „Es war das Gefühl, mit dem Krieg kannst du leben, aber mit dem Frieden?“ Sie haben früh gelernt, Ruhe zu bewahren. Waren brave Kinder. Hitlergruß am Morgen, Luftschutzdienst, Kinderlandverschickung, Schichtunterricht. Eine ganze Generation, missbraucht für Ideale wie Rassenhass und Herrenmenschentum, verhetzt im Glauben an den Endsieg. Geweint haben damals nur die Erwachsenen.

Den Kindern ist ja nichts passiert, haben sie nach dem Krieg gesagt. Der Mann weint. „Haben Sie sich mal die Fotos von bosnischen Kindern in den Trümmern des Krieges angeschaut? Traurig sehen sie aus. Oder die englischen Kinder im zerbombten London – leblose Gesichter.“ Nur die deutschen Kinder standen in Trümmerhaufen herum und haben gelacht. „Wir haben gestrahlt auf allen Bildern. So ging das unser Leben lang weiter. Wir waren immer gute Kinder: brav, sauber und so verdammt fröhlich.“

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Reactions and contributions till March 1, 2004

