

# INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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## Issue 19, Autumn 2004

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### INTRODUCTION

Nine years ago, in November 1995, the first issue of the International Bulletin appeared. We had only 35 readers, but gradually the number increased. Today there are a 100 more, all over the world.

In the German One by One Newsletter, Ursula Conraths wrote about a bitter experience. She gave me permission to publish her story in this bulletin.

In Finland a group of people is engaged in a research study on the after-effects of war and evacuation on people who were children at that time. Barbara Mattsson wrote an article about the research's goals and its results so far.

In this issue you will find three bookreviews.

Dorothee Schmitz-Köster wrote a book about her father's experiences as a German soldier in Norway, based on his letters to his mother. She studied the political and social situation in Norway during the war and inserted her father's story in the broader framework of a general view.

Michael Henderson, one of the British children who were evacuated to the US, wrote a book about an often despised topic: forgiveness. In a world where violence is mostly returned by violence, he offers a fresh and original alternative.

Peter Heinl, a psychotherapist, remarked, that in the verbal oriented therapies deeply hidden memories do not come to the surface. He developed his own method in which objects play an important role: they may trigger forgotten or unconscious memories.

During the war the Dutch and Indo-Europeans in the former Dutch colony of East-Indonesia were imprisoned in internment camps controlled by the Japanese. Janneke Boerma who as a child spent three years in such camps, wrote about the historical context of the internment.

In September a conference was held at Reading University England. My husband and I attended the conference and I will present to you a summary of a number of lectures and some personal impressions.

I thank Uta Allers and Erna Gille for the corrections they made of the translations and the texts I wrote.

Your reactions and remarks are very welcome to me. You may send in your articles or suggestions till the first of March 2005.

I would like to invite the readers who have an e-mail address to send it to me. I would like to ask all the readers to inform me about any change of address.

All the best,  
Gonda Scheffel-Baars

## A BITTER EXPERIENCE

A summarized translation of an article written by Ursula Conraths, Hannover,  
One by One-News, Spring 2004

When Ursula was 11 years old, her mother told her about her experiences in a nunnery where she lived for a couple of years. She swore her daughter to silence.

As a novice of the religious Order of the Sisters of the Poor Little Jesus, in St. Anna's Nunnery, Ursula's mother was one of the women in charge of the baby rooms.

The Order specialized in children's homes and schools. The babies who were given to the nunnery were born out of wedlock. In the Nazi ideology they were considered 'ballast people', good for nothing. They could 'make up for' their useless existences by becoming useful subjects for medical experiments. Ursula's mother recalled the screams of the babies, their fever-ridden bodies, their deliriums and the children who died.

It was only when Ursula's sister was an adult that her mother revealed to her what had happened in the nunnery.

In retrospect, Ursula wondered why her mother sent her and her sister to the school run by the sisters of that same nunnery where she witnessed those horrors.

At age 35 Ursula fell seriously ill because she could not cope with the damaging information. A skilled therapist helped her to overcome her impulse to kill herself and her mother.

Four years ago Ursula started to participate in the Sunday afternoon meetings of One by One. She felt safe while surrounded by understanding people who accepted her. The support of Petra Schneiderheinze, Robin Bah and the other members of the group meant a lot to her. One day she decided to contact the Western Germany Broadcasting Company to tell her story. A couple of programme makers became so interested in her experiences and her mother's that they made a programme about them. They filmed it in Ursula's flat in Hannover and in Düsseldorf in the children's home, nowadays run by the municipality. The manager spontaneously admitted that he knew about the medical experiments.

A last difficult step was to meet the Mother Superior in the motherhouse of the Order in Aachen. Petra accompanied Ursula. The encounter was especially difficult because of the polite coldness of the prioress. She objected to Ursula's suggestions that atrocities had taken place in the baby rooms of the nunnery. The sisters 'had always done their work with care and commitment. It was unlikely that such experiments had been done'. Ursula replied that the people engaged in the Euthanasia Programme also did their work with care and commitment. The prioress remained silent...

Ursula brought up another question - the humiliating and hard-hearted way in which the young sisters in the nunnery had been treated by the older ones. The prioress said that Ursula's mother had a weak character. If that is true, countered Ursula, where did she find the courage and the strength to leave the nunnery and end her part in the criminal experiments?

Ursula became very upset when the Mother Superior spoke about the importance of silence in the lives of the nuns and in their relationships with God. Ursula told her frankly, that not God, but her therapist and the psychoanalysis saved her. She expressed her skepticism about the Christian religion, in that the Holocaust had taken place in a country thoroughly imbued in Christianity and in which mass murderers like Mengele had grown up in Christian families. And she wondered if the Christian religion was actually capable of reaching the dark side of men's hearts and minds. The prioress remained silent.

The film was broadcast in March, 2004

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### **The child in the eye of the storm**

In Finland we are currently organizing a research where we will be studying more closely the children who were sent to Sweden during the war (1939-1945).

Our project is called *The child in the eye of the storm*. We want to see whether we can spot the effects of what these children went through, and how it may have effected their adulthood. The warchildren are now between 60 to 70 years of age.

Singa Sandelin Benkö, Pertti Kaven and I are the core people of our research group. Much of the information presented herein refers to Pertti Kaven's pioneering work on the historic events, together with Singa Sandelin Benkö's and my own work in deepening our understanding for the psychic trauma

of these warchildren. We have a psychoanalytical theoretical frame. We are looking for something we think could be called *The War Child Syndrome*. Our ambitions also extend to be able to define those psychological aspects which were most damaging, and what aspects explain why others fared better.

During the second world war approximately 70,000 Finnish children were sent to Sweden and Denmark. Some were sent many times back and forth. The youngest were some months old, the oldest school-age children.

In this journal there has earlier been a description of the circumstances concerning the billeting of Finnish children in Swedish fosterhomes. Now I will describe the *psychological* aspects we consider important.

If we are going to understand the consequences for a child being taken from one family and placed into a new one, then the age is of great importance. The real little ones, *children under three*, could never be prepared for what was to come. There is no way one can convey the realities of war to a three-year-old child and we therefore regard these children as the ones who were worst off, and most likely to experience a severe separation trauma.

The *children that already had learned to talk* before they were sent away, were a little better mentally shielded than the younger ones. They could at least remember their home and parents.

Sadly, it has become clear from different warchild stories that many parents found it too hard sending their children away, and simply were not capable of telling them the truth that they were going alone to Sweden. Some have said they were told by their mother she was only going to fetch some candy but later never returned. The child was in despair as the train began rolling but mommy wasn't there. These children experienced a traumatic separation since they obviously felt their mother had deceived and betrayed them.

Schoolchildren had the advantage that they could write and receive letters from their parents and in this way keep contact with their homeland. Still many have said they were very worried about their parents because there was a war going on in Finland.

In Sweden the children were gathered at assembly points where they were cared for, given medical checks and in many cases, treated for lice.

Subsequently most children were placed in Swedish homes while a small percentage were sent to orphanages. Mostly the children were sent to good homes where the new family strived to take good care of them. The language barrier however was troublesome and it took a while before any communication was possible. Some Finnish children spoke Swedish because Finland is a bilingual country, and this made it easier for them.

From a child's point of view the new conditions were unfamiliar and it all seemed a tough endeavour. Most children found themselves in families with higher socio-economic status than back home. Other rules and values prevailed here.

After some time most had attached themselves to their new family. The youngest ones in particular had to attach to the new parents just to survive mentally. Small children losing their parents have to find a replacement fast. They cannot evolve without close relations to a grownup.

A child may fall ill with depression if he has no grownup caretaker. Pertti Kaven has preliminary information about an unusually high number of children falling somatically ill shortly after arriving in Sweden. We presume there may have been psychological causes.

An important part of this research will deal with a more closer study of the deaths of these warchildren shortly after arriving to Sweden as well as after their return back to Finland after several years. We have a presumption that the deathrate will be higher than for the rest of the population.

Some children stayed only for short periods in Sweden while others stayed for many years. The younger ones therefore had no recollection of their Finnish homes as they were sent back home. It appears the repatriation was the toughest experience. Many children would have preferred staying with their Swedish parents.

So the main issue is that these children had repeated break-ups; when they were sent away, and once again as they were returned home. Many returned to a home that had changed. Maybe the father was killed in the war, a divorce had taken place, or a new sister or brother had been born. One warchild declared: "we were never a family again".

Many families were poor and impoverished. Children that were used to Swedish prosperity now had to come to terms with Finnish food rationing.

One has to keep in mind that not only were the children alienated from their parents, but parents were also alienated from their children. The emotional tie had weakened, even broken. Above all, some children had forgotten their mother tongue and spoke Swedish only. It took a long time to speak Finnish again.

There are reports of families being ashamed as their children could not speak Finnish. It was thought that they made a fuss and were spoiled. Especially siblings, who were not sent to Sweden, felt the warchildren had not paid the same price of suffering during the war. An aspect not clear to siblings was the feeling of warchildren of being less loved when sent away, compared with those staying at home.

The common attitude regarded the warchildren as privileged and it was generally denied that the replacement could have caused any stress for the young ones. It has been possible to discuss the issue from different points of view only during the last ten years.

And so we are faced with various degrees of separation anxiety in all children. We can see that they were repeatedly forced to adapt, readjust and create new ties with new caretakers.

School attendance after return to Finland was difficult for most of the warchildren. Afterwards it seems hard to understand, how little attention in schools was paid to the huge lingual difficulties faced by these children. They were dropped out of school more often than the others. This is also true for their vocational training.

Boys in particular had more problems with authorities compared to those who never were sent away. When boys have emotional problems they react more violently than girls. The difficulties girls face in close relations may reveal themselves in other contexts. One thesis of ours is that the motherhood of girls with a warchild background was characterized by the separation experiences.

Many warchildren have said they face problems regarding closeness and distance to their own children. Some have found it hard to let their kids grow up, while others on the contrary, have hastened their steps to independence. Both reactions may have great implications for the child in the future.

Many autobiographies written by warchildren have been published. There is an active psychotherapy group for warchildren going on in Helsinki. Many warchildren have also undergone individual psychotherapy. Some of these have been reported. One good example is the story written by Mona Serenius, a warchild who stayed in Sweden and now lives there. She had a very difficult divorce process and needed professional help. Her recovering could not have taken place without working through the wartime separation experiences in psychoanalysis. She has written an article of her experiences ("The silent cry", International Forum of Psychoanalysis, vol. 4, March 1995). Studies have been conducted that clarify various reactions and experiences of warchildren. We have created our hypothesis on how wartime experiences may affect adulthood. They are based on previous research reports.

This kind of research will most definitely evoke strong emotions in all people involved. Opinions are divided on how to interpret the consequences of this vast wartime billeting of Finnish children to Swedish (and also Danish) homes. Many warchildren believe we all ought to be grateful of the sacrifices the Swedish families made. People want to remember the best of their experiences and repress the traumatic ones. For the majority, the time in Sweden was probably just fine. Many of these people just forget the fact that even though both the Finnish and Swedish parents undoubtedly were focused on helping these children, the children still had to pay a psychological price of this help by going through great emotional strain that nobody seemed to understand.

If one is subjected to new surroundings and new caretakers several times during one's early childhood, it conclusively leaves an impression on the development of the personality. Intimate human relationships suffer. As environments and values change, it affects the developing conscience and one's own values. These may then have a less solid base.

When a child has to adapt quickly to new faces it is forced to create certain mental defence mechanisms. It turns into a kind of superficial adaptation that changes depending on whom he/ she is interacting with.

Some children have described themselves as "smileys". Others recall they easily shifted between Finland and Sweden in their minds. For example: if the parents in Finland were difficult or harsh, the child could daydream himself away to Sweden where the parents would be kinder and more loving. A superficial adaptation may result in a personality which could be called less reliable. Some have said they constantly had a bad conscience for longing back to Sweden while in Finland, and vice versa. For

many warchildren this represented an uncertainty of where they belonged to but above all it affected badly the development of their own stable identity.

We will look for traces of various traumas in our research. It implies that the limited mental resources of a child are insufficient to cope with what happened. One is unable to cope mentally with whatever occurs, if the defence mechanisms of a person fail to give protection. Mental work means that one is capable of reflecting and going through events without pushing feelings aside. A child's limited ability to grasp contexts increases the risk of being traumatized.

We will also be interested in the physical health of our studygroup. If the mind has been unsuccessful in dealing with certain events then similar experiences will channel, not through memory or the conscious mind, but through the body. Traumatized children have a tendency of somatisation, which can create an addiction to psychosomatic illnesses.

We will map out the development of human relations. For example, it is our impression that divorces are more common among warchildren than among the rest of the population. The thesis is: if experiences of traumatic separations have not been dealt with, the tendency will be to *repeat that very trauma*. This may involve scenarios where a person is abandoned again and again, or alternatively, scenarios where this person is a runaway. We will also look for manifestations of anxiety and depression. One common defense mechanism in these cases is to develop a "victim" identity, where you take no responsibility of yourself.

But we will also look for paths of survival and the healing of wounds among warchildren. In fortunate cases the traumas are defeated and the doors to a meaningful life are opened. That's what happened with Mona Serenius in Sweden.

Barbara Mattsson

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## **MY FATHER'S WAR. A GERMAN SOLDIER IN NORWAY (Der Krieg meines Vaters. Als deutscher Soldat in Norwegen)**

Dorothee Schmitz-Köster  
Ed. Aufbau Verlag Berlin  
ISBN 3-7-466-8114-6

Dorothee's father always told funny stories about the war ....From June 1940 till October 1942 he was in Norway, till the winter of 1942 he was in the Netherlands and then he set off to the Eastern Front, as a member of an elite division. At the end of April 1945 he was injured. After the war he switched without problems from the life of a soldier to that of a citizen, married and became a father.

As with so many other German soldiers, Dorothee's father said that ' the war was the best time' in his life: he traveled a lot and had all kinds of adventures.

Dorothee could not understand that her father viewed the war in this way. In their frequent discussions about this topic, there was a mutual lack of understanding, so, in the end, they stopped talking about the war. Only a couple of years before his death, her father showed a new interest in discussing the war. He gave Dorothee about 1000 letters which he wrote to his mother and he helped her to decipher them.

These letters accurately describe the everyday life of a soldier: patrols, ski trips, Christmas with a Norwegian family, manoeuvres, barrack life and the beautiful landscape of Norway to which he lost his heart. They show his hope of surviving the war safely, his predilection for adventures and his

blindness for the Nazi ideology. Because of the bombings in 1944 his mother fled from the Rhineland to the safer parts of Germany. In her letters she expressed her anxiety and her sorrows.

Dorothee was upset by the tone of many of her father's letters. She could not understand his enthusiasm. His stories about strategy, crimes, violence, terror and death were in contradiction with his euphoric tone. Therefore she started a research in Norway, where she visited the places where her father stayed and met his Norwegian girlfriend. She discussed with a number of historians the situation in Norway during and after the war. In Germany she spoke with 'common' Germans about guilt and involvement in ideology.

This book is a mixture of personal and general history and describes how the history of the political leaders and the generals influenced the history of individuals.

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### **FORGIVENESS: BREAKING THE CHAIN OF HATE**

Book Partners, Newberg, March 2002, ISBN 1-58151-115-9 (US), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.  
Grosvenor Books, London, ISBN 1-85239-031-X (UK)

From the foreword by Rajmohan Gandhi:

"The unspeakable events of September 11, 2001, changed the flavor of certain words. The concepts of *revenge* and *vengeance* suddenly became more palatable, while the opposite happened to words like *healing* and *reconciliation*. Suspicion is no longer an unworthy sentiment and hardness no more an unpleasant quality. The immensity of this tragedy has given to September 11 a unique place in the annals of callousness.

In these altered circumstances, Michael Henderson offers this new edition of *Forgiveness: Breaking the chain of Hate* as evidence that the stuff of forgiveness is sterner than suspected. It does not condone evil, and evil, on its part, cannot extinguish the power of forgiveness.[]

Even when our indignation appears to us wholly justified, most of us, whether Arabs, Jews, Americans, Afghans, Indians, Pakistanis, Kashmiri Muslims, Kashmiri Pandits or whomever, are also aware that personal bitterness can be like acid that corrodes us from within without damaging those whom we are bitter toward. Most of us, therefore, are in favor of some forgiveness somewhere. We might even start to feel something of an enemy's ache, or to see ourselves in the enemy, and the words 'ours' and 'theirs' might acquire new flavors.

If that is so, we will find medicine in these pages, sensitively dispensed. If we are more fortunate still, we may find ourselves drawn to some of the real people of whom he is writing. We might even start to feel something of our enemy's pain.[]

The relationship between strategies for reconciliation and nonviolence calls for reflection. Under the leadership of my grandfather, Mahatma Gandhi, and largely using nonviolence means, India won her independence from British rule. But, nonviolence did not lead to Hindu-Muslim reconciliation. In violence involving Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, around half a million were killed on the subcontinent.[] The subcontinent's story and that of Afghanistan show that nonviolent strategies cannot ensure goodwill and reconciliation, and that great anger can at times accompany nonviolent campaign for rights. Forgiveness and reconciliation may thus be more crucial to our future than nonviolence.

Again, forgiveness might be consistent with a restrained and responsible use of force in self-defense. During the 1946-1947 Hindu-Muslim violence, Gandhi explicitly permitted force in self-defense. What he said was impermissible, was violence against innocents and violence out of ill will."

From the Washington Post:

"Some books bear the benefit and burden of an incontrovertible theme: say, the value of love or the joy of living. So, too, with Michael Henderson's *Forgiveness: Breaking the Chain of Hate*. He makes his case with several compelling studies: Australia's national reconciliation with its Aborigines; South-Africans – white and black, recovering from their past; Ireland's terrorists and bystanders finding common ground and American whites and blacks bridging historical divides. Each demands reflection

and inspires action. Henderson's final notes on 'the value-added dimension of forgiveness' may convince the sceptical, as would practical suggestions for ending some part of the human quarrel".

A comment of Terry Waite CBE:

"Forgiveness is not an easy option. It is costly and difficult. The way into the process is by understanding. That also is hard. Forgiveness and understanding must lead to reconciliation and reconciliation will send us into a deeper knowledge of our common humanity. It is only when we recognize that we all share one world and have an equal right to justice and fair dealing that we shall progress. This book points us in that direction".

In April 2005 will be edited the new book of Michael Henderson 'See you after the Duration' about his experiences as an evacuated child that found refuge in the US.

In the next issue you may find a bookreview of this book.

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### **SPLINTERED INNOCENCE**

The Intuitive Discovery and Psychology of Childhood War Trauma in Adults

By Peter Heint

Ed. Brunner-Routledge

ISBN 0-415-22362-8 2001

0-415-22363-6 2001, paperback

Some paragraphs of the bookreview written by Martha Kent, a clinical neuropsychologist at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Phoenix Arizona, in "Human rights Quarterly", volume 24, number 4, November 2002.

"In reading Peter Heint's *Splintered Innocence; An Intuitive Approach to Treating War Trauma*, I stepped into a world that had vanished so completely, the only traces left were the marks on body and soul of the afflicted in Heint's book. Nearly sixty years ago I was a part of this world, when millions of ethnic Germans from all countries of Eastern Europe, and German nationals from the Eastern provinces of Germany, were expelled from their homes, dispossessed, raped, murdered, and enslaved. In a massive wave of human dislocation millions of people escaped on foot, in treks of horse-drawn wagons, loaded with bundles, pulled carts, carried children, and clogged all roads going West. An estimated twelve million people were involved. Three million perished. This ethnic cleansing of massive proportions remains shrouded in silence and lack of knowledge on both sides of the Atlantic.

I often wondered what had happened to the people on the treks. At long last, some of them appear in Heint's portraits drawn from his psychiatric practice and his seminars in London and Germany. They are adults now, in their fifties and sixties, but with childhood experiences etched in body and soul. What do their petrified experiences tell us about that time nearly sixty years ago and of the ravages of war on the human spirit? How does Heint approach this taboo history and personal suffering left untreated by mental health workers for decades?[]

Heint's pioneering work in treating childhood war trauma in adults, for which there is little precedent in the literature, can be thought of as an exposure approach and as an experimental therapy, with insight and understanding following re-experiencing. Heint used conventional wisdom and followed his intuition. His work is groundbreaking in its method and in treating a "taboo" subject. In one of the most traumatized countries in the world, the treatment of war-related childhood trauma, let alone the treatment of war trauma of adults, was not attempted until a few scattered efforts during the 1990s. This intuitive approach to treating childhood war trauma in adults began with Heint's sensitivity to his own post-war childhood and birth during the mad escape of 1945 from Czechoslovakia. He found that his adult moods had their grounding in his earlier experiences. This realization led him to find such links in his clients. What Heint captures so well in his cases is a process of implicit learning heightened by trauma.[]

Here, in implicit memory and implicit learning, is the source of the feeling of persistent cold, of never feeling sated, of persistent anxiety from bombs having fallen decades ago, and the absence of language and the inability to speak that is seen in all of the portraits. To achieve a somatic unthawing, Heintz engages intuition in a variety of ways: in images that occur to him and which he then describes to his clients; in one-man surrealistic plays he enacts, in what he calls "object sculptures"; or the placement of sundry objects which the client can interpret however he or she wishes, usually resulting in a narrative of some aspects of the past, of symbolic interpretation, the making of meaning and assigning of language when there had been none.

The first requirement of this intuitive approach is to access the emotional reality of childhood trauma from a child's point of view rather than through the adult's perception. The aim is to see what the child saw many decades ago by experiencing what the child experienced.[]

Intuitive assortments of things and images helped transform the lives of people.[] Participants allowed themselves to experience the object sculptures, were moved, took time to find words, cried, found connections, changed their experiences, and gained insights.

The path is intuition rather than logic. Heintz calls it "perceptual thinking", the link between perceiving and thinking. It is also a thinking with the soma that records the positive and negative of experience, and remembers and communicates without logic, awareness or language.[]

Heintz's book should be helpful to mental health professionals working with adult survivors of childhood trauma in psychiatry, counseling, psychology, nursing, social work, and related professions treating childhood trauma. It should be helpful reading to anyone who has experienced trauma during childhood.

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## **What happened to the Dutch living in their former colony, the Dutch-East-Indies during World War II?**

As soon as the war with Japan broke out on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1941 life changed totally and for ever. Nearly all the men were called up for military service and other organisations of defence. The Japanese army advanced as a tidal wave and within three months South-East-Asia had been entirely conquered.

The predominant all-embracing aim of the Japanese empire was the creation of a common 'Great Asiatic Welfare Sphere' and the use of the Dutch-East-Indies as a supplier of raw materials (oil, coal, minerals).

The population was composed of about 68,000,000 Indonesians, about 2,000,000 Chinese people and Arabs and about 300,000 Dutch subjects, Indo-Europeans included. (Relationships between Dutch and Indonesian women were accepted since the seventeenth century).

The Japanese occupation was for the Indonesian, Chinese and Arab population not less dramatic than it was for the Dutch and it meant economically a serious retrogression compared to the very difficult years of the recession (1929-1939). Several hundred of thousands of Indonesians were sent from Java to the other occupied countries as convicts (romusha's) and only about 77,000 returned home. Till the end of the war many units of resistance groups operated independently on the many islands, but most of them were soon eliminated in the most cruel ways. For white people resistance was hardly possible. The military police (Kempetai) was very cruel: brutal punishments and executions were common.

The regular and voluntary army and the reservists were immediately made Prisoners of War (POW's) and soon transported over sea to Thailand (Birma Road), Japan and Sumatra (Pakan Bary Railroad). Many ships were torpedoed and thousands of POW's drowned. Many romusha's died because of the slave work.

On the outlying islands all the Dutch were immediately interned. Many women and children had already fled to Java, the most populated and culturally developed island. The men were separated



from their families and were interned like the women and children in schools, barracks and jails. They possessed only their portable belongings.

On the island of Java the Dutch men not called up, were within a month interned; the women and children followed six months later and had to live in so-called protected districts. They were later transported in armoured trains in the extreme heat for several days to coastal towns and accommodated either in over-crowded houses or in barracks or jails. A continuous insecurity of the future existed: were the Japs going to move the internees again to an unknown camp? Every month the camps became more crowded because of the constant arrival of new transports. Everybody possessed only the barest necessities. After some time the boys were separated from their mothers; first the 18-years-old boys, then after six months the 16-years-old and so on the 14-years-old, the 12-years-old and during the last months of the war the 10-years-old boys.

Poverty prevailed in and outside the camps: there was no food, no clothing, no money.

In the beginning the situation in the camps was passable and the internees were optimistic about the duration of the war. But soon the situation became unbearable because in the overcrowded camps the sanitary conditions were bad. In the tropical heat infectious diseases broke out (dysentery, typhoid cholera, tuberculosis, tropical ulcers etc.). There were insufficient medicaments in the primitive hospitals. Everybody, also children, had to do fatigue-duty in the soupkitchens, in the vegetable gardens with bad or no tools and in the hospitals. They had to clean the collective toilets and bathrooms and the cess-pits. Mothers fell ill or died, children had to be taken care of. School was not allowed, children could not play and there was little supervision of the children.

There was no contact with the outer world about the war, no communication between the men and the women in the camps except for an exceptional postcard written in standardized Malayan sentences. The last year the camps fell under the military administration and the internees became POW's. They had always to wear their POW-number.

The camps were guarded by Japanese and Korean soldiers. Later also by young Indonesians carrying a pointed bamboo stick. They beat the POW's often very hard for punishment: when they did not bow deep enough, during the house-to-house searches and daily roll-calls in the torrid heat, or when they were swapping clothes for food through the fence. Sometimes an entire camp did not get food for a few days.

The men, women and children lived in barracks on long wooden beds and had to push on nearer and nearer till a width of 50 cm. One had to live on this small place: sleeping, eating, playing. There was no privacy; one was constantly surrounded by talking, crying, screaming, quarreling, playing children, witnessing rows between overwrought mothers. The nights were never silent because of the sick, the dreaming and crying small children.

The men survived in a different way without women and children, but they died in greater number.

On August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1945 the peace-treaty was signed, but the prisoners learned about it only a fortnight later. A real liberation did not take place because the Indonesian Revolution of Independence had broken out on August 17<sup>th</sup>, two days later, and the so-called Bersiap ('be prepared') had started. The British Liberation Army could not do much and the country became dangerous because of the rebels. The prisoners had to stay in the camps, protected by Japanese POW's! When on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1949 Indonesia became independent after two 'police actions', (military interference by the Dutch Army), the Dutch lost most of their properties: houses, estates, plantations, etc.

In the mean time the families were slowly reunited after years of separation, often totally estranged: they did not recognize each other. There was sadness and mourning (in total about 25% of the men and about 15% of the women and children died).

The Indo-Europeans who had lived outside the camps were now in danger: the rebels interned them in extremist camps where they were liberated after 18 months and they were threatened with death and loss of properties.

From December 1945 on the Dutch left in troop-ships their home-country, which most of them never saw again, to emigrate (repatriate?) to the Netherlands. In Holland they had to build up a new life on different conditions and in a different climate. They were not very welcome in the country that had suffered from the Occupation by the Germans and the war. There was no room for thousands of war victims in a destroyed country. The bewildered, wild and neglected children had to adopt to a new regular life and to school after four years.

In total 300,000 Dutch and Indo-European people have integrated after sixty years, but with many social, financial and physical difficulties. Many have to live – often not recognized - with their traumas. Children were supposed to overcome their sufferings without difficulty, but after forty years many broke down and at first the connection between their physical and psychic illnesses and the Pacific war was not recognized.

Janneke Boerma

Further reading:

Patrick Gibson: Childhood lost: a boy's journey through war, London 1999  
ISBN 0-9536443-0-8

Paula Gomes: Let it be (translated from Dutch), Oxford University Press 1993

Eve ten Brummelaar: You can't eat grass, 1996 (The Rocks: Image Desktop  
Publishing and Printing), ISBN 0-646-27322-1

Pieter Roeloffs: Traces:Memoirs of an Indonesian Wartime Boyhood (1939-1946)  
London 2001, Minerva Press

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## **INTERNATIONALER KONGRESS**

**Die Generation der Kriegskinder und ihre Botschaft für Europa sechzig Jahre nach Kriegsende:  
Unsere Kinder und Enkel sollen in Frieden zusammenleben  
14. bis 16.April 2005**

**Tagungsort:** Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Campus Westend  
Casinogebäude, Grüneburgplatz 1, 60323 **Frankfurt am Main**

Donnerstag, **14. April 2005**, 14 Uhr

Eröffnungsansprache: Altbundespräsident Dr.Johannes Rau (angefragt)

Eröffnungsvorträge: Prof. Dr. Emmy E. Werner, Berkeley, Cal.USA  
Prof. Dr. Hartmut Radebold, Kassel

Autorenlesungen und Podiumdiskussion

Freitag, **15. April 2005**

5 Sektionen mit je 4 Workshops:

Bunkerkindheit, Lagerkindheit, Fluchtkindheit, Trümmerkindheit: Erfahrungsräume von Kriegskindheit  
Leitung: Prof.Dr.Jürgen Zinnecker, Siegen/Essen

Kriegserfahrung von Kindern als Gegenstand von Geschichtspolitik und Erinnerungskultur  
Leitung: Prof.Dr.Jürgen Reulecke, Gießen

Das Kriegsende ist nicht das Ende des Krieges: Lebenslange Folgen kindlicher Kriegserfahrungen  
Leitung: Prof.em.Dr.Hartmut Radebold, Kassel

(Kinder- und jugend-) Literarische Erinnerungskulturen im internationalen Vergleich  
Leitung: Prof.Dr.Hans-Heino Ewers, Frankfurt am Main

Kriegs- und Nachkriegskinder melden sich zu Wort  
Leitung: Prof.Dr.Insa Fooker, Siegen; Dr.Jana Mikola, Essen

Filmvorführungen

Samstag, **16. April 2005** (Kongresende ca.13 Uhr)  
Abschlussvortrag: Dr.Micha Brumlik, Fritz-Bauer-Insitut, Frankfurt am Main

Podiumsdiskussionen und Ausblick

Erstes Podium: Die Generation der Kriegskinder und ihre Bedeutung für die Geschichte der letzten Jahrzehnte  
Zweites Podium: Eine Europäische Erinnerungskultur als Basis der Verständigung und Versöhnung zwischen den Staaten und den Generationen

Auskünfte: Congress-Organisation Geber+Reusch, Kaiser-Friedrich-Promenade 2,  
61348 Bad Homburg, fax. 06172 68 13 34  
Die Teilnahmegebühren betragen: 80 Euro (bis 18.März); 90 Euro (ab 18.März)

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**'PRECIOUS COMMODITIES'**  
**CIVILIAN EVACUATION, WAR CHILDREN AND RELATED ISSUES**  
International Conference September 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> 2004, University of Reading

Before leaving Paddington Station in London and travelling to Reading where my husband and I would participate in the conference, I bought a little Paddington Bear at the special stand. I could not withstand the chance of adding to my collection this famous bear, a suitcase in his hand and a label around his neck.

It was only when I was back home and put him on the bookshelf, that I suddenly saw the resemblance of this bear and the children I saw in the pictures in the conference room, ready for being evacuated: little suitcases in their hands, labels around their necks.

On the label of Paddington bear it is written: Please look after this bear. Thank you.

Was not this the mostly unexpressed wish of the parents who sent their children to the countryside: Please look after my child. Thank you.....

In retrospect it is easy to criticize the evacuation of so many children and a lot of questions arise, questions which the participants discussed amongst each other and with the presenters of the papers. Who initiated the evacuations in the United Kingdom, Finland and Germany? Did mental health workers oppose the plans? Did parents refuse to send their children away? How were the children informed about the plans and how did they react? Was one allowed to express one's real feelings?

The lectures dealt with several aspects of evacuation.

Mr. Pertti Kavén lectured on the decision-making process of the evacuation of Finnish children to Sweden during the Winterwar (1939-40) and the Continuation-war (1941-44).

After the Soviet invasion of Finland in November 1939 many Swedish people expressed their wish to help the Fins. Two Swedish women informed the Finnish chargé d'affaires that Sweden was ready to receive thousands of Finnish children. The answer of the Finnish government was strictly negative: 'Children will not be sent abroad'. The enthusiasm of Fieldmarshal Mannerheim, however, eliminated the resistance against evacuating the children. In December 1939 the first child transport to Sweden took place.

When in February 1941 the Swedish Help Committee and the Finnish authorities negotiated the sending of children who were in bad health to Sweden for the summertime, many Swedish families invited Finnish children, mostly those who had stayed with them during the Winterwar. Again the resistance of the Finnish government broke down. One of the people responsible said in 1978 that he considered the evacuation as a perfectly satisfactory solution, since the Swedish people would not have understood the rejection of their hospitality....

As a result of the negotiations 78,000 unaccompanied children travelled to Sweden and Denmark, of which between 10,000 and 15,000 never came back home.

The 'Kinderlandverschickung', as Dr. Martin Parsons put forward in his lecture, was initiated by the German authorities. It was meant for poor children in the cities who were sent to the countryside for holidays and for regaining health. Children between 6 and 10 were housed with families, whereas the children between 10 and 14 went to camps. The 'evacuation' was first voluntarily, but later parents were more or less pressed to send their children to the countryside, 'where they would be better off during the winter'. In the camps the leaders of the Hitlerjugend played an important role. The different manners of the city children were often a cause of tensions in the farmers' families, just like differences in religion. Children of the crowded cities of the western part of Germany were often sent to the eastern parts, for instance to Saksen. At the approach of the Russians the German leaders

were anxious to bring them to safer places, but an unknown number of them fell into the hands of the Russians and were sent to the Soviet Union as forced labour hands.

Although the parents were not forced to let their children participate in the 'Kinderlandverschickung' and children who were home-sick were allowed to go home, the KLV was on the political agenda. The Party intended to soak off the children from the emotional and religious influences of their families and social context and to create an opportunity of indoctrination of the children with the Nazi principles.

In the UK the evacuation was particularly a governmental initiative, although, like in Finland, several British children were invited to come to the countryside, or to the US or Canada, through private arrangements. Did parents oppose the plans?

Dr. Erwin Erhardt in his lecture showed some fragments of films in which the happy fate of the evacuated children was depicted. These propagandafilms were meant to convince the parents of the necessity to send their children to the country-side. The decision was presented as a patriotically correct decision, illustrated by the words of a soldier: 'We will fight better if we know that our children are safe'.

The evacuation was a means of improving society and put an end to the social problems of the poor quarters of the cities. It was a challenge for the kids to broaden their views and the fresh air of country life would be beneficial to the children's health. The films idealised covertly the pre-industrial era, but the living conditions of the city children had often been far better than at the farms, where there was no electricity, no running water, nor a water closet...

In his lecture 'An apple for the teacher' Dr. Sidney Brown spoke about the role of teachers in the UK evacuation and referred to current research on this subject, for a long time ignored. Researchers found that the evacuation was to mark a turning point of considerable significance for the professional practice of teachers. It separated pre-war formality from post-war closeness. In their new role, replacing the parents day and night and supported by the general appreciation for 'saving the nation's children', teachers adopted new attitudes towards their pupils. A supplementary study among pre-war, evacuated and post-war pupils at Tottenham Country School corrected the outcomes of earlier surveys. For a number of reasons the informality developed over the war-time period did not persist after the war, at least at this school. More research is needed to get a deeper insight in how the evacuation influenced the teachers.

In BBC Radio's Children's Hour the subjects of the evacuation and the war were officially lacking, because 'one should not frighten the children'. Nevertheless, as Dr. Simon Flynn said in his lecture, the children were for instance informed about the destruction of the London Zoo. Short fragments of the programmes dealt with the preparation of the evacuation and the evacuation itself. Strikingly, only a few children were live in the programmes and when they expressed negative feelings, these had never to do with homesickness, or feeling abandoned by the parents or feeling alienated in a strange environment. Children said that they missed the city because in the village there were no cinemas! The focus was on how harmoniously the city children played with the farmers' children, how the evacuees lent a hand at the farms, giving in this way their own contribution to the war effort. In short, the programmes created an ideal. Gradually people in the UK became aware of the truth that to all appearances the mass evacuation had not been that necessary, if at all.

To-day the war and its effects on every day life of adults and children is no longer a taboo. Dr. Michael Lockwood and Mrs. Catriona Nicholson carried out studies on children's literature and especially on picture books. Whereas the books about World War I emphasised courage and patriotism in a tone of moral certainty and conviction and the books in World War II played a role in strengthening resistance against the enemy, justifying the 'just war', to-day the focus is more on the effects of the war. The books show the damages, the suffering, the feelings of the children and are as such a warning against the madness of war. Picture books express the unsayable and children learn to identify with the child that is the main character in the book without being bombarded by the horrible reality of war.

Another way in which children can learn about war and its effects is the drama workshop. Mr. Andy Kempe spoke about his work with children and showed some of the exercises of his workshops with them. In drama remains always some safety because the world of drama is a fictional world: we can step back and consider how it has affected us. This is the great power of drama as an educational medium.

For the people who volunteered for the exercises, however, the drama led them back to real events, for instance the departure of the trains at Victoria Station. Andy himself played the role of a boy sitting

in the train, a little suitcase on his knees, with his anxieties. He requested the audience to ask him questions. These were moving moments. Drama became here more than just that. For me this was one of the best lectures of the conference which touched me deeply.

Three lectures I would like to present here focussed on the impact of evacuation and war on the psyche of children.

Dr. Singa Sandelin Benkö is one of the team that carry out research studies in Sweden and Finland in a project titled 'The Child in the Eye of the Storm'. (You may find an article about this project in this bulletin written by Barbara Mattsson). Dr Benkö described several aspects of the study, for instance the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. This interaction influences the outcomes, which are always subjective. The number of stories may correct the all too subjective data of the individual interviews.

Dr. Benkö underlined that the children were too young to be able to cope with the separation from their parents and home land. Denying, splitting or depersonalisation were often the ways in which the child could survive mentally. The senses of the children were optimately active; one could say that the events they lived through penetrated them. Many of them had too much responsibility in proportion to their age. One of the ways of escaping was creating a private world, separated from the chaotic or strange environment.

In her lecture 'War children yesterday, seniors today', Dr. Helga Spranger spoke about the consequences of never treated, 'long ago war traumatisation'. She showed through a couple of examples how children – even not yet born – were influenced by the war events they experienced and how these not-worked-through traumas become manifest in all kinds of psychosomatic symptoms. Children did not have a not protected childhood with parents whose love-and-care potential was diminished because of their own weakness faced with the war machinery. Separation from their parents, in evacuation or flight, traumatized the children to a greater or lesser extend depending on their age. Studies are needed into why and which traumatized persons were/ are more fit to overcome the consequences of traumatisation than others and what resources could be mobilised for the working through process.

Dr. Peter Heintz showed an example of his method of intuitive discovery of childhood war trauma. He used a display of a red cord, two koala bears and a black box and told how these objects triggered a not conscious memory in one of the participants at a seminar. This was a starting point for her for studying the family history and the gaps in the family memories. Dr. Heintz developed his own method as until recently in the ordinary education and training analyses of therapists war traumas were neglected. Moreover, he discovered that objects can trigger memories in people which cannot be reached through language centered therapy. The psychological consequences of war trauma are perceptible in three generations, so, wars 'continue' for one century after they have ended. Moreover, there are countries and regions in Europe where the population lived through a new war before the consequences of former wars were worked through.

The lectures about the book and the films 'Lord of the Flies' by professor Steven Trout and about the reactions to the film 'The day after' by Dr. Bob Rooke were very interesting as such, but they formed, I feel, a class to themselves, more or less in the periphery of the subject of the conference.

Unfortunately I missed two lectures, the one about the psychological significance of regret in UK by Dr. Steve Davies and the one about the unaccompanied German refugee children in Denmark 1945-1949 by Kirsten Lyloff. But airplanes have their own schedules and do not take into account the closing-hours of conferences...

Several presenters underlined the importance of the knowledge which we acquire in the research on war trauma.

We long for a world in which it is no longer necessary to send children to safer places with a little suitcase in their hands and labels around their necks.....

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

Next issue April 2005  
Reactions and articles till the first of March 2005

## 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>**

Risikforbundet 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)

Kriegskind Deutschland:

[www.kriegskind.de](http://www.kriegskind.de)

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