

# INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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## Issue 23, Autumn 2006

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### INTRODUCTION

Martijn Lindt visited Germany in May and had a moving experience in the city of Coesfeld which he would like to share with us.

For 'Heirloom', the second anthology of the Melbourne ChildSurvivors of the Holocaust, Paul Valent wrote a text titled 'Not a phoenix'. He gave me permission to publish it in this issue of the International Bulletin.

Dan Bar-On started this spring with his 3 years' training programme at the Koerber Foundation in Hamburg, during which the participants learn to use personal storytelling in social conflict situations. He wrote a report on the first results of this training and you will find a summary of it in this bulletin.

Good news from the Netherlands: the government will finance a historical research on the history of collaborators' children. Paul Mantel reports about it. He describes also what happened at the special ceremony he attended on April 28.

In this issue you will find two bookreviews.

Roar Henriksen wrote about the fate of the children of the members of the Norwegian Nasjonal Samlung in the context of the social, moral and political circumstances of post-war Norway. Otto-Ernst Duscheleit wrote an autobiography in which he describes how he was enrolled in the Waffen-SS and ignored the past for decades, until a dream reminded him of what had happened during the war. He assumed responsibility for his decisions and deeds and dedicated the rest of his life to peace.

In the Foreword of the third issue of the International Journal of Evacuee and War Child Studies, James Roffey wrote about the evacuation, about myths and facts. The Journal's editor gave me permission to publish the text in this bulletin.

Patricia Thompson wrote a poem about young evacuees. She was one of them.

To end with, a report on the conference 'Children in War' in Reading, 6-8 September.

I hope that you will appreciate the articles in this issue. Reactions are welcome!

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

## COMMEMORATION

For a holiday I made a trip in Germany. Here and there I dived in the history of the cities and the towns I visited. In 1945, all of them were for 90 per cent in ruins. In the Netherlands we know the bombing of Dresden, but do we know about what happened to the other cities? I tried to imagine what it meant to be robbed in one night of everything that constituted your surroundings: school, shops, hospital, post office, public gardens, everything. I spoke with some people about the past. Pain predominated.

On May 3 I realised that I would still be in Germany at the moment of the commemoration ceremonies for the victims of the war which we celebrate in the Netherlands in the evening of May 4. Whom should I commemorate? The Dutch victims like every year? This year I would like to include the German citizens who died in the bombings and those who survived, but were affected for the rest of their lives. I wanted to share my decision with the Germans of to-day, but how?

On May 4, at the end of the afternoon, offices would close soon, I arrived at the Market Place of Coesfeld. I went straight to the City Hall and said to the reception clerk that I would like to speak to one of the representatives of the municipality about the commemoration ceremonies in the Netherlands. She was kind to me, like all the Germans I had met during my trip. She said that the best person to meet on this issue was the mayor, the city-councillors being not present in the City Hall at that moment. If the mayor could not disengage himself, the PR woman would be a good alternative.

We go upstairs. I see a large painting on the wall: Coesfeld in ruins and rebuilt. Some moments later I am in the mayor's room in front of the mayor in the company of some other persons. He looks at me, surprised. I repeat what I said to the reception clerk and try to make clear that, in fact, the issue deserves more than just some moments. He says that he is in a meeting. I recall the possibility of seeing the PR woman and a while later we are sitting together in her room, I and this woman of about 30 years old.

I tell her about my decision to include the victims of the bombing of the German cities in my personal commemoration ceremony that evening, now where I am on holiday in Germany. I tell her that I want to inform her of my intention since I see her as the representative of the city of Coesfeld and in some way of Germany as well. She says that it is a honour to her. I tell her, that until recently no Germans were welcome at the commemoration ceremonies in the Netherlands and that even when they are present, the focus is on the Dutch victims and on them only. I say that I am sorry that we, the Dutch people, never regretted the bombings and that we even never gave the Germans the opportunity to mourn their losses. She assents to what I say and adds something about the Germans' guilt. I tell her frankly, that in my opinion bombings on civilians are never allowed. Tears appear in her eyes. She says to me that she will report my words to the City Council and suggests me to talk with a journalist. But I have a meeting with my travel companion and will pass the night in another town and moreover, tomorrow I will go back to the Netherlands. At the reception desk I leave my name and address.

The most important to me is, that I had the opportunity to speak to someone who at that moment represented to me all the Germans. It did not take more than half an hour. But in these 30 minutes, I see in retrospect, life was real and intensive on the highest thinkable level. I have not allowed myself stopping at my intention, evading the difficulties and creating distance, but I have faced them and I have gone the whole track.

Martijn Lindt  
Amsterdam  
May 2006

## **NOT A PHOENIX**

Paul Valent

Published in: *Heirloom; second anthology of the Melbourne Child Survivors of the Holocaust*, edited by Marietta Elliott-Kleerkoper, Helen Gershoni and Floris Kalman

I resent people who admire the resilience of child survivors of the Holocaust, and emphasise how normal they are. I resent the way they selectively point to how well such children have done in their marriages, occupations and professions. I do not deny that many have done well by certain conventional standards, but the admirers ignore the costs. They use their admiration to avoid the need to empathise with child survivors' suffering.

I look like one of the successes. Some even say that I have used my Holocaust experiences in my profession as psychotherapist. It is true that my child survivor background has helped me to acknowledge others who suffered exorbitant wounds in their childhood, and that the Holocaust and its consequences for child survivors have served for me as a guide to understanding and validating the suffering of others.

I believed in the widespread abuse of children, without this arousing concern of even being given credence among the general community, when these survivor children themselves were quiet about their abuse for decades, even forever. I could believe the extent of the abuse and the claims of innocence on the part of the perpetrators. Their revisionist blaming of victims and their supporters has brought to mind parallels with Holocaust denial. The lack of justice with respect to Holocaust perpetrators has been a reminder of the difficulty in extracting a conviction from the courts for child abusers.

The doubts raised relating to abused children's memory and their own lack of conviction about what they knew were also issues raised in our child survivor group. From my experience with this group I was able to encourage other survivor children to follow up their hunches and their symptoms, until the truth of their trauma was exposed.

Yes, the success of child survivors in establishing worthwhile lives gave me hope in the treatment of despairing people, who had been through what no child should have to endure. Seeing the courage of child survivors, I drew on the courage of other survivors to face their fears and overcome them in their current lives. Perhaps, most of all, the discovery within child survivors of normal, loving children, even if engraved with their experiences, gave me faith to seek out the indestructable innocence and goodness in the core of others who had been maltreated, and felt that they could never retrieve a benign world.

But resilience, as if unaffected, even benefited? Sure, if the Holocaust can be a learning ground for other traumas and genocides, that is a consolation. If I have been able to transfer such learning to others' benefit, it is a bonus. And it is true that the experience of others, both my fellow child survivors and my patients, has helped me to retrieve parts of myself beyond the Holocaust.

Don't make me a successful statistic. Don't get me wrong: I have been lucky in many ways, and I am not complaining. But who can see my night time panics? Who plotted the uneven journey of my life? If I had a choice, would I have chosen my traumas in order to spend a career reverberating with those of others?

What parent would have chosen our experience for their children? Who would believe that no matter how resilient, they would not be adversely affected by them? My strongest desire is for children not to have to experience the limits of their endurance, not to have to use their courage to retrieve their humanity years later, and not to need people to admire them for having survived.

## **Summarizing the first year of the Hamburg seminars (at the Koerber Foundation): From personal storytelling to analysis of interviews (January and June, 2006)<sup>1</sup>**

**Dan Bar-On, Ben Gurion University of the Negev**

### **a. Developing the rationale of the Hamburg seminars**

The six Hamburg seminars for 2006-8 were designed to teach participants how to use storytelling in social conflict situations. The design included several phases: Telling your own life story in a group context, learning to conduct biographical interviews and analyze them, developing a group within a conflict situation and bringing it into a dialogue with another group 'from the opposite side', summarizing these different steps and evaluating them. We chose people who could serve as 'multipliers' in their own context: they would be able to translate their experiences, learning and reflections in the seminars to their own diverse social contexts.

The new design has never been tested before and was based on the assumption that bringing together practitioners and experts from different conflict settings around the world could create a positive joint-learning experience. Some parts of it were tested in two specific conflict contexts: the experiences gained from research in Israel and Germany about the after-effects of the Holocaust; the TRT (To Reflect and Trust) group which brought into dialogue descendants of Holocaust survivors and descendants of Nazi perpetrators (1992-2005); students' seminars at Ben Gurion University (on the after-effects of the Holocaust; encounters between Israeli-Palestinian and Jewish-Israeli students); projects developed at PRIME (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East) in cooperation with Professor Sami Adwan and finally my earlier writings (Bar-On, 1989; 1995; 1999; 2005).

Peace building projects, based on a methodology of storytelling, biographical interviewing and analysis and facilitating dialogical group processes, were the common denominator of most of these previous experiences. Still additional knowledge was necessary, based on experiences in and knowledge of macro social processes, specifically working within social contexts of asymmetric power relations.

The open question was - how can one translate these experiences and knowledge into the new seminar setting, and from that setting into the home settings of the participants? The participants chosen for the first Hamburg seminar were professionals who had a lot of earlier experience and knowledge in their respective fields: A psycho-dramatist, a film maker, an organizational consultant, religious leaders, psychoanalysts, psychotherapists, university professors and teachers. They come from a variety of cultural settings, religions and countries (Serbia, New Zealand, British Columbia, the Balkans, Israel, USA, UK and Germany). A relatively smaller number of participants were less experienced but highly qualified younger people, mostly studying for their MA or PhD. It was a huge challenge to try and develop a systematic learning experience for such an experienced and heterogeneous group of people, assuming that they could not only learn from us, but also help each other in this process.

Among the twenty-five participants that were chosen for the first seminar we had more women than men (about 2:1), ranging in age between 72 and 21. English was our preferred choice of language, which later turned out to be also a restriction, especially when interviews were conducted in a variety of languages and had to be partially translated for the seminar.

### **b. The January 2006 Hamburg seminar**

The first seminar took place during the last week of January, 2006. We divided the group into two equal parts: While one was doing personal storytelling with me, the second group studied biographical interviewing and interview analysis with Dr. Lena Inowlocki from Frankfurt, an expert in biographical interviewing and analysis in a variety of conflict settings.

In the storytelling group an intensive process developed in which participants shared some difficult life experiences.

Lena worked with the participants on how to conduct biographical interviews, and the initial steps of their analysis. Each participant had to design a project in their own social context, in which the first step would be to interview two people (mostly representing two generations), transcribe these interviews, send them to one of us and later bring their homework to a joint analysis session during the June seminar. The major obstacles in this learning process were that some participants had had experiences with other forms of interviewing (structured intakes) or with their roles as therapists (in which they wanted to help people change), which they had to unlearn and relearn in order to engage in a good open ended biographical interview, in which the interviewee is supposed to structure their life story without leading questions or other

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<sup>1</sup> - I wish to thank Dr. Wolf Schmidt, Gabi Woidelko, Ulla Geske and Alexandra Senfft from the Koerber Foundation in Hamburg for their special support and help in making this seminar take place at their foundation.

interventions by the interviewer. Participants were instructed how to tape-record and carefully transcribe the interview, how to write a protocol about the procedure of the interview and how to write an initial analysis.

It was clear from the outset, that in parallel to our goals, participants had their own agenda. They wanted to interact freely, to learn from each others' experiences. Some wanted more theoretical input from us; others wanted more time for the storytelling sessions. Some had difficulties with the structure of the seminar, while others felt that the first seminar was not structured enough. We had also some logistical problems.

### **c. Homework between January and June seminars**

By March 1st, participants had to deliver the primary plan of their projects. By May 1st they had to send the transcription of their interviews, together with a protocol and some initial analysis. From the project proposals one could learn that some participants wanted to use the Hamburg seminars in order to expand their current work interests: e.g working with young Rwanda immigrants in Germany; working with Maoris in New Zealand; dealing with the aftermath of the violence in the Balkans. Others wanted to go beyond their current foci at work and to: e.g.study their own or others family history in relation to Nazism; develop a neighborhood project with German and Muslim women; developing a group of Vietnam Vets and their descendants in the USA.

Participants invested many hours in conducting their interviews, transcribing them, writing their protocols and initial analysis. One could learn from the protocols how important tiny practical details were: How was the subject presented to the interviewee in the first telephone conversation? Why interview the son before interviewing the father? Did the interviewer feel very insecure and how did this feeling effect the process? Into which setting did the interviewee invite the interviewer? Could the interview be conducted undisturbed? What was discussed before and after the taping? What psychological meaning was associated to the fact that the interviewee wanted to sit in a cold and slowly darkening room? Could it be that by asking the interviewee to narrate their story from only after the Genocide in the country of origin, previous parts of their life story were actually skipped by both the interviewer and the interviewee? One interviewee asked to be presented using his real name, against our ethical standard procedure, as he felt that all his life his identity has been wiped out as a member of the First Nation community in British Columbia. He did not want this seminar to become part of that past.

In certain case studies, one could easily identify the link between the personal storytelling during the first seminar and the content of the interviews that the participant conducted and presented now in written form.

### **d. The June 2006 Hamburg seminar**

We wanted this time that a major part of the learning process will be done in small groups, in which participants can interact more intensively, seeing each other as a resource for this learning process, while we become more of an additional resource, external to the small group. We had four parts in mind:

1. Discussing in detail the homework of the interviews<sup>2</sup> in three parallel groups. We emphasized how difficult we believed was the transition from conducting the interviews to their analysis, and the purpose of these sessions was to help make this transition. One of the goals was to introduce the procedure of raising hypotheses, what did the interviewee try to tell in content and form, and clarifying what will happen later in the text if that hypothesis was to be confirmed or disconfirmed. For example, in one case I took the first paragraph, without giving any contextual hints and asked participants to suggest hypotheses as to who the interviewee was, in which context was she telling her story, etc. This way, participants could follow their own categorization processes, which they apply almost automatically when presented with a text. In another interview we dealt more specifically with the setting of the interview (that turned out to be very unfavorable for the interviewer). In a third example, we discussed in detail the role of the specific cultural symbols and metaphors raised by the interviewee. In a forth example, we became interested in when the interviewee narrated in comparison to the parts in which she only used only arguments. In the fifth example, the participant read what she prepared about the literature on Nazi physicians as background to the analysis of her interviews, which were conducted with physicians' family members. During the first two days, we provided some theoretical aspects of qualitative thinking and methods of analysis: Lena suggested the concept of 'working alliance' as a central concept to reflect the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Based on the psychoanalytic recognition of transference and counter-transference, the concept also includes reflection of the cultural, institutional, situational, interpersonal, and idiosyncratic aspects of the interaction in the research setting. Interpreting these aspects by seeing oneself as researcher *as part of the interaction*, leads to understanding shared as well as conflicting research interests. This includes hierarchical relationships, privileged positions, and their

ethical consequences. The concept is of special importance in understanding the conditions of research and knowledge in conflict settings. It is also helpful for the participants who regularly work as psychotherapists or counselors in distinguishing the specifics of a research setting and of the relationship with the interviewee.

Dr. Tal Litvak-Hirsch from Israel provided the holistic form of narrative analysis based on a model of Lieblich, Tuval Mashich and Zilber (1998). I discussed first the concept of abduction as an intermediate form of thinking, compared to induction (starting from a theory) and deduction (starting from the data) (Levin-Rozalis, 2002). Secondly, I discussed the issue of narrative versus historical truth (Spence, 1980) which appeared in many of the interviews. My third topic was that of hermeneutics of faith versus suspicion (Josselson, 2004) that focuses on the face value of the text, versus the possibility to read into it untold stories, beyond what the interviewee told. Though participants read these concepts in the reading material provided prior to the seminar, such plenary discussions helped elaborate and focus on the relevance of these concepts to our interview analysis.

2. Preparing the participants for the next part (group work) of their projects. On Wednesday we re-divided the group into four subgroups, in which they were supposed to prepare the next phase of their projects during the coming two days, followed by website virtual interactions during the next six months.

Four different group processes developed as a result of this new division. In the first group, six German women started a very intensive process among themselves (why are we cut off from the 'world', as represented in the seminar? why did no men join us?), followed by a lively exchange among them, about how they are going to help each other think about their specific projects. For example, if one participant wanted to study the meaning of 'home' for people who came from former East and West Berlin, each of the other participants told the meaning of 'home' for them, thereby giving an idea what could be expected from presenting such a question in a group process.

The second group brought up some common theoretical issues related to the storytelling process itself, as they were planning to use it: open-ended time versus framed time, shaping the responses to the stories, group interaction in relation to storytelling process, number of meetings and structure of meetings. Is the storytelling process an end in itself? How to motivate participants to come? How should one handle storytelling within a power structure? How to introduce storytelling process in on-going processes?

A third group differed in terms of their planning stage. Two participants (Israeli Jew and Arab) had already a design in mind – developing two separate groups in two underprivileged neighborhoods (a Jewish and an Arab) in the South of Israel. They needed some help in more practical aspects. Three other participants were still finalizing their design, which was also related to their PhD studies.

The last group focused on two participants from the Balkans (a Serb and a Bosnian) who finally decided to develop a group together that will use storytelling methods to uncover the after-effects of W.W.II, and ask if these still affect interethnic relations in this region. They asked themselves if they are ready to conduct such an interethnic setting: Especially, to what extent can they trust each other and work in a setting that may criticize them for their cooperation?

### 3. The storytelling component

Personal storytelling did not have in this seminar the same major place it had had in the first seminar. Still, we wanted to give each participant an opportunity to come back to some part of their personal story. We had to take into account that there were additional aspects of their story that participants wanted to share with. Still, some participants complained in their evaluation questionnaire that they expected to have more time for this part of the seminar and missed the longer process of storytelling of the previous seminar.

### **e. Summary**

Though we are only one third through the process of the Hamburg seminars and it is still too early to evaluate it, we could observe several important aspects:

1. How deeply method, theory and intervention are related in our process: Only a very careful analysis of the interviews can yield new knowledge that can then be tested within new group interventions. Similarly, the personal storytelling enabled some of the more intimate interviewing to take place.
2. How important is the role of creating a safe space, first of all for the personal storytelling, but later also as interviewers, analysts and planners of the project. Part of the safe space is related to nonjudgmental attitudes. For others, safe space means having a good theory at hand, when dealing with such complex and sometimes frustrating issues.
3. In most of the storytelling, interviews and projects, the intergeneration aspect seems crucial, though it may have different meanings or metaphors in different cultures.
4. It is interesting to follow how people, especially those who come from dominant parts of the society, how little they are aware of power relations and their impact on cross cultural or cross ethnic

exchanges. More so, power relations are deeply embedded in the language and therefore become sometimes invisible to a layman's eye or ear.

5. Germany became for us a central aspect of our seminar. Aside for those who want to delve into their own family past, there are several projects that test the relations between Germans and Others: Muslims Turks in Berlin, women in Hamburg, Palestinian students in Germany), the Church in India (in relation to the mother Church in Germany), the Czech, the Mexican ancestors, the young from Rwanda (who live in Germany), relations between Eastern and Western Germans, etc. Though we have participants who will work in six other national settings (Balkans, Israel, USA, British Columbia, New Zealand and United Kingdom), the German context is strongly represented in this seminar.
6. For me personally, it is quite clear that to conduct this seminar in the hometown of my mother (which stopped to be so more than 70 years ago) is not easy. On the one hand, many things seem so familiar, but on the other hand also alien and complicated. The friendliness of people around me help a lot in this respect. Will I finally have to admit after this seminar will be completed that there is such a thing as theory and method and it is not only a coincidental sequence of events, as I usually prefer to describe it? We will have to wait and see...

(Further information is available at the Koerber Foundation website)

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## **DUTCH GOVERNMENT FINANCES HISTORICAL RESEARCH ON THE HISTORY OF CHILDREN OF EX-COLLABORATORS**

When the Workgroup 'Herkenning' ('Recognition'), the self-help organization in Holland for the children and grandchildren of ex-collaborators, started in 1981 it was initiated by outsiders: a journalist, a clergyman working for the radio, a psychologist and a psychiatrist. It is not that the people who were the object of the initiative were incompetent or extremely shy, it was because they simply didn't know each other. Their isolation because of their family history was almost complete. So it started as a nearly not existing history. Unknown, hidden, not mentioned. Now, after 25 years, this history is recognized by society as a source of information on how the war experience was dealt with in post-war Holland.

The German occupation was an extreme shock to the Dutch, who hadn't seen war for over one and a half century. Dutch society was a thoroughly civil and quiet civilization in which social conflicts were managed ever since the 17<sup>th</sup> century with a stubborn spirit of consensus and economic awareness. Shocking was the swift defeat by the German army (5 days). What about our great 'Waterlinie', our defence lines behind the rivers and lakes? Just like the French were surprised to realise the Germans never even saw the Maginot defences, the Dutch saw too late that by 1940 you could simply fly over the water. Shocking was what the Nazi's turned out to be: not democratic at all, impossible to make deals with, murderous and unreliable, and crazy in their lethal hate for the Jews. Shocking too was that the Dutch were so relatively easily compromised in that misbehaviour and crime. Yes, the Dutch made the biggest contribution in fighting as SS volunteers at the East front and yes, of all West-European countries Holland lost the most of her Jewish community. But no, the Dutch didn't collaborate as a whole; with a population of almost 9 million in 1940 it convicted about 70.000 ex-collaborators after the war. But the Dutch were heavily compromised with their civilized ways of dealing with conflict. In general they accommodated, tried to make the best of it, like they had always

done, they tried to be civilized long after civilization failed. The Germans didn't need a big occupying force here, it all went relatively smoothly.

The impact of the occupation meant a severe blow to the self-esteem and self-understanding of the Dutch and the first decades after the war they couldn't really face up to the reality of the war years. They assembled behind the strong backs of the resistance fighters and were in their way very harsh towards the ex-collaborators. They didn't lynch, they ostracized. Ex-SS as well as the children of small and as good as innocent national socialist party members. Families of ex-collaborators were socially isolated for many years and in a society that is one of the most densely populated in the world this isolation was as inescapable and confronting as it was virulent. For a long time here was good and there was wrong and not so much in between and this paradigm outlasted the change of generations in the sixties when young was left and antifascism was the dress code.

Over the last 25 years there is more acknowledgement of the reality that in this war time of harsh convictions, many people were not convinced at all, or only half and even more so didn't know what it was all about and what was to be done or not done.

As our own world is proven to be too complex for a right or wrong, a black and white solution to political issues, there is more awareness of how difficult it was in WWII not to be compromised. A simple ideological point of view nowadays is not enough to deal with complex social matters and conflicts. Old taboos based on experience with fascism have to be confronted now that we face cultural differences in a world that is around the corner. We have to live together ever more and more and fascist cleansing and ideology is better to be recognized and well understood before it is too late. There is still a lot to be learned about how exactly Nazism became so powerful.

So, the question arises how post-war society in Holland dealt with the war experience into the everyday life and why it was necessary to ignore the misbehaviour and abusing of the clearly innocent children of ex-collaborators for such an uncivilized long time. What was the point in that question and I don't mean it to be a rhetorical one.

Researching the history of the children and the families of the ex-collaborators is also a first effort to get a serious view on the social-psychological surroundings of the ex-collaborator him/herself. Although this is an additional effect, with this research they (literally) come more within reach of historical study.

Within two years Ismee Tames, the researcher of the NIOD (Dutch Institute of War Documentation) is expected to finish her work with a book. Her task is a serious one, the main archive of the *Bijzondere Rechtspleging* (the adjust legislation which was made to deal juridically with collaboration straight after the war), is the biggest archive in the collection of the the National Archive. An archive of kilometres of black pages of national history, as well as an archive which is hardly accessible. How symbolic.

Paul Mantel

## **GONDA SCHEFFEL-BAARS KNIGHTED BY THE QUEEN IN THE ORDER OF ORANJE NASSAU**

Since I have been asked by the editor of this International Bulletin to write about the historical research of NIOD, I have to take the opportunity to mention that Gonda Scheffel-Baars has this year obtained an order of knighthood by the Dutch Queen.

This honour is given every year to people of great social merit. It is given ceremonially to the person by the mayor of the nearby town. For Gonda this was the Mayor of Geldermalsen.

I had the privilege of attending the ceremony.

The mayor mentioned all of Gonda's social activities, of which her activities for the children of collaborators was honoured as especially very important and courageous. Gonda was among the first people that started Herkenning, 25 years ago, she has made huge contribution to the Bulletin of the group and she started her international activities already in the eighties. She was also one of the people who took the initiative to start KOMBI, that brought together people of different family war

histories. In the last years, when governmental financial support for Herkenning stopped Gonda has made a great effort to make a compendium of all the knowledge that was built up in 25 years of self-help.

Feeling herself for a long time stateless on the psychological level, this award was rather ironic to Gonda and when the ceremony ended and everyone sung the national anthem she was gripped by emotional memories of the moment of her mother's arrest, the moment that she felt that her own people had thrown her 'out' and not belonging became an essential feeling.

'Nevertheless, I felt happy', she told me afterwards, 'and it felt like a complete recognition not just for me but for Herkenning, Kombi and, in fact, for everyone who has suffered this injustice for so many years.

As for the board of Herkenning, yes we do see and appreciate the recognition, but above all we thank Gonda for the tremendous amount of work and care.

Paul Mantel



## **Brennpunkt egrON – etterkrigstidens moralske dilemma**

(English: Focus yawroN – postwar moral dilemma.)

Published by Falkenberg Forlag 2005, 336 p.

Article by the author: Roar Henriksen.

A book about awkwardly Norway (yawroN).

«Every time the word «Nazi child» was plunged against her it stuck with a burning grieve. Time never assuaged, it felt like a butcher's knife». This is the beginning of Geth's story. She is now 60 years old. In all these years – and still – she is exposed to nazi-harassments in postwar Norway.

When I some years ago collected information for this book, in order to support Geth's painful experience as a child, I did not know what to find. It was an exciting project, and I was prepared to end up with an ugly story about the «terrible Nazis». I assume the readers understand that Geth's parents were at «the wrong side». They were members of the Norwegian political movement called *Nasjonal Samling* (National Unification), a nationalistic party which everyone like to brand as a Nazi party. In the so called prosecution, which started directly after Germany's capitulation, nearly 100 000 were accused of treason against their native country. Nearly the half were sentenced; those who were members of *Nasjonal Samling*. Geth's parents were among them, condemned as traitors.

Some young historians now ask, whether the NS-members really were traitors, or if the labour party needed a scapegoat. After all, the labour government before WW II had almost annihilated the defence, and the neutrality of the country was rather unreal.

It is no secret that the Norwegian government ran to England June 7. 1940, after they ordered a complete Norwegian capitulation. The Norwegian war lasted to months. The fight was heroic and without hope of success. The soldiers were mobilized by letter, two days after the German invasion. The Norwegian weapons had been made useless and the communication system failed to work. Many fighters were volunteers. Their only hope was military support from England, which failed.

Did the Norwegian government need to escape? The Danish government stayed! Who were the traitors, those who made a run or those who stayed and defended interests of their fellow countrymen towards the Germans? These questions are weaved into the story of Geth and her parents, as also the post war legal settlement is one of the subjects.

Searching historical information, I found no evidence of those cruelties that common NS-people has been accused of for more than 60 years. With a few exceptions they were all honest and sincerely people, who wanted peace in their own country. In their mind and heart they cared for the nation, meaning to be nationalistic. Most members did have less sympathy for Stalin than Hitler.

This has made the Norwegian Society condemn the NS-members as «nazis», giving them the responsibility for all evil deeds of National Socialism, without themselves taking the responsibility for the misdeeds of communism, or their own.

While Geth's experiences as a little child, during the years after the liberation in May 1945, is the starting point in this book, it became natural to tell about social isolation, including daily pains caused by blows and kicking, as something more than just an isolated case or a coincidence. It was the lengthening of a degradation that was pushed on to her parents – and all other members of the National Unification. They were caged; in many cases treated worse than animals. Forced to lie on their knees they had to say the «Lords prayer», while they were spitted on. Or they were forced to squat down to relieve themselves in their own hands. Prison officers lined them up, and told the time was come for execution; a sort of hazardous play where bullets smashed into the wall just centimeters from a deadly outcome. In several jailhouses young females were raped, without any consequences for the perpetrators – the prison officers. It was only right and fair that the opportunity at least was in the hands of «good Norwegians», now that German soldiers were chased home. (Put in mind that German soldier was punished with dead in rape cases.) Pregnant females were exposed to the same bad treatment as every one else; they had to eat decomposed fish in a mix with nitric acid. They were caged like cattle into small rooms with a stinky loo-bucket, which they hardly were aloud to empty. It all reminds of German concentration camps during the last time of the war.

In the middle of all this hatred, while this «treason settlement» was implemented and 10 percent of the Norwegian Constitution was neglected with hardly anybody reacting, thousands of innocent NS-

children literally felt the pain. Not necessarily because of their parent's wrong doing, but the letters NS was (and still is) like a sign of shame in the Norwegian haven of liberation. With blessings from the Norwegian government the children were defined in a new way, from ordinary children to «bloody Nazi children», children of the mongrels, children of the traitors, and so on.

This spineless behavior could never transmit without one specific man, Eivind Berggrav – a clergy (bishop). He stood firm in first line to expose pestering and hatred. I am sorry to tell that the church never has taken action to ask forgiveness for his bad behavior. On the contrary, the church still describes him as a man for his time, brave and at the right place when he was needed. In postwar time he is described as the great primate of the church.

Unfortunately it is only one conclusion in this matter. When a bishop makes propaganda in order to make an opinion against innocent children, and to make them feel as much pain as possible, little is left behind of God-fearing behavior. But he had to act like he did. He stood clearly at the German side in the first part of the occupation. In other words he had to save him self. But no one stood up against him. They all feared to be branded as traitors. It was after all much better that all those «bloody Nazi children» took the blame, to feel the shame and sin which was nailed on to their parents. Besides, this bad behavior was what the government wanted, it was politically correct. Everybody had to trim the sails to the wind.

The result of this behavior has an astonishing way of keeping appearance. Now – 60 year after the war ended – Geth is still exposed to different kinds of harassing. In the little village (Langesund) where she lives, so called «good Norwegians» maintain to keep the tradition as a life style. The proof came to light in 2001, when Geth took a case to court. One of her neighbors made a true statement to support her. Then she was shocked by the adversary lawyer. He told the whole situation was Geth's own fault; she got a «stigma» – she was a «Nazi child»!

She felt it like a sad experience when the court did nothing to stop the harassment, not even when the opposite part stressed forward that neighbors, like the one who just made his statement, «had been shot like a traitor during the war».

Geth has learned how to deal with these problems. She has built her own defense hard as concrete. But she will never understand why people are so afraid of making up their own mind. Why do they always have to hide in flock mentality?

She knows this behavior creates security. But she also looks upon it as a sign of cowardice. They are afraid to destroy the conquerors' glorious picture of war and victory, afraid to see it fall into pieces just like crumbs from a cookie. They are afraid that a lot of concealments will be discovered, and that all these years in postwar Norway with «treason settlement» will be dismantled as a real dark and sad history.

The book «Focus yawroN – postwar moral dilemma» (only Norwegian edition) is historically correct, but politically incorrect. This is the way it still is – in topsy-turvyfied Norway (yawroN).

Roar Henriksen

### **VON DER WAFFEN-SS ZUM FRIEDENSDIENST – mein Weg aus Schweigen und Vergessen (From Waffen-SS to peace programme – leaving behind silence and denial)**

Otto-Ernst Duscheleit  
Ed. Brandes & Apsel  
ISBN 3-86099-515-4

Otto Duscheleit was born in Insterburg, near Königsberg in the former German province of East-Prussia. As a boy, he became a member of the Hitler Jugend and at age 17 he was enrolled in the 'Arbeitsdienst' (Labour Service). Two months later, the leaders pressed him and the other new members of this service to 'volunteer' for the Waffen-SS. If they refused to do so, they would be sent to the detention barracks. Otto signed the document and had to endure his mother's disappointment. She told him that refusal would always have been preferable, even if this should have led to detention and punishment. But Otto lacked the courage of his older brother Ulrich, who criticized the Hitler regime, although he had supported the Party before the war. When he was to be sent to the detention barracks for the second time, he shot himself.

After the war the family left East-Prussia, which became a part of the Soviet Union. In Berlin Otto set up a firm trading wine. He married and had children: after the darkness of the war years, life was good again. When he was 60 years old, a dream reminded him of the past. He could not get rid of this dream, in which he was accused of being a perpetrator, and moreover, he did not want to ignore its message. He found the courage to face the past, to explore his own behaviour and deeds and to assume responsibility for them.

In this book Otto describes his working through in which his dreams helped him to have an honest look at himself and to find a new way in life. He has dedicated his time and energy to peace. He is one of the founders of the organisation One by One and was for years a member of the speakers' team. He especially likes to come into contact with young people to tell them his story as a warning not to give in to pressure and to be critical towards political ideologies.

Otto feels that he is guilty, because he remained obedient till the end of the war and did not reflect on the past until his dream woke him up. He was a perpetrator. But he is also a victim, like his children wrote in a moving poem for Otto's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, because he was pressed to 'volunteer' when he was only 17 years old and because the war robbed him of his youth and innocence.

This is an honest and genuine testimony of an exceptional man.

GSB

## **LIVING IN THE PAST – OR INFORMING THE FUTURE**

James Roffey,  
Chief Executive Officer, The Evacuees Reunion Association, UK

The evacuation of millions of children from the towns and cities of Great Britain during the Second World War was recognised at the time as being the biggest family and social upheaval ever experienced in the long history of this country. For the railway companies who played a major role in the transportation of the millions of people it was the greatest and most successful operation they had ever undertaken.

Virtually every community in the British Isles was affected by the evacuation, not only those in the evacuation areas but also the many in the designated reception areas who had to undertake the monumental task of finding homes for the evacuees, educating them and being responsible for their health and well being. All that against a background of war.

After six long years peace finally came, the last of the evacuees left the reception areas to return home (apart from the many who had no homes to return to). To the surprise of many returning evacuees they found that no one, especially their parents, would talk about the evacuation or listen to them. If they tried to relate their experiences they would be brusquely told to "Forget the evacuation, it's all over, live for the present", and that is what most of them tried to do. No one gave a thought to what the long-term effects of the evacuation might be.

Sadly all that was publicly remembered about the evacuation were the many false myths which began to circulate even before the children were taken away under the government scheme entitled 'Operation Pied Piper'. It was widely believed that all the evacuees originated from inner city slums, with behavioural and personal hygiene problems to match. It was believed that everyone in the rural reception areas was 'middle class' and lived in well appointed housing. For many years to say that you had been an evacuee would often invoke rejection and disdain.

It was in an attempt to make known the true story of the evacuation that The Evacuees Reunion Association was primarily formed in 1995. At first it was either ignored or rejected by officialdom, the media and the general public. Then gradually attitudes began to change. 'The Evacuation' is now a popular subject in schools, the media and with adult societies of all types. A few examples are 'A major role in the events to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of the War', participation in the annual Remembrance Sunday Parade at The Cenotaph, London, the provision of trained speakers on the

subject of evacuation and participation in conferences, events and re-enactments throughout the country.

An unexpected but very welcome development was the links that have been made with the war children and evacuees of many overseas countries and the realisation that so many similarities exist. Also unexpected has been the growing interest in the long-term effects created by evacuation. Recently the BBC made an hour long television programme in which former evacuees spoke on that very subject. It is now realised that such a major disruption to the lives of millions of children cannot be brushed aside by the words used in the past, such as "Children are resilient creatures who quickly adapt to change and soon forget all temporary problems". Many people who were evacuees still bear the mental scars of being separated from their homes and families and taken to unknown places, where they lived with strangers, some of whom were far from welcoming.

In conclusion it can be claimed that it is possible to come to terms with the past, but it can never, or indeed should be, forgotten or ignored.

(This text appeared in The International Journal of Evacuee and War Child Studies "Children in War". This journal is available on subscription. Annual subscription for two issues is £14 for UK subscribers and £ 16 for Overseas subscribers.

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### **THE YOUNG EVACUEES** by Patricia Thompson

We packed our bags in haste,  
We had not time to waste.  
Danger knocked at our door,  
Whether we were rich or poor,  
We kissed our loved-ones goodbye,  
We had not time to weep or cry.

We had our gas masks in tow,  
Our name-tags on show.  
Our fates were sealed.  
We had no time to appeal.  
With each step, we knew not where,  
Some felt happy, others despair.

At the station, we took the train,  
Whether happy, or in pain.  
When its engine prepared to leave,  
Some young hearts were aggrieved.  
Others thought it a great adventure,  
Laughed and cheered at the departure.

Now in worlds beyond our own,  
Many began to long for home.  
Some missed their mum and dad,  
Others felt so fearfully sad.  
Under bedclothes some prayed,  
Asked for loved-ones to be saved.

Tears of woe welled in their eyes,  
Some wet beds, others nightly cried.  
Now out of danger, so we thought,  
Young lives in different ports.  
Strangers appeared from everywhere,  
Some brought kindness, some despair.

Some wartime hosts were intolerable,  
To the small and vulnerable.  
The very young ones could not write,  
To alert loved-ones of their plight.  
Older ones, who were unhappy,  
Fled back home rather snappy.

Some adored their wartime hosts,  
Others feared their allotted posts.  
As youn evacuees we learned,  
Far beyond our tender years;  
Some people are kind and loving,  
Others cruel and uncompromising.

### **CONFERENCE 'CHILDREN IN WAR' READING 6 – 8 SEPTEMBER 2006**

Personal impressions of Gonda Scheffel-Baars

Like two years ago, Reading University hosted this conference: a perfect venue, good catering and an interesting programme. Martin Parsons was the indefatigable pivot on which everything turned: always present, knowing all the participants by name and taking care of their special needs and aware of everything that was going on.

I can focus on only some aspects of the conference and I would like to share with the readers of the International Bulletin some issues of the discussions with which each day was concluded. People who needed to elaborate some topics or discuss more thoroughly some subjects that could not be answered in detail after the presentations, gathered in the 'discussion circle' and shared with each other their emotions, their doubts, their despair and hope. One participant said: 'We are sitting here together, discussing our experiences and emotions of 60 years ago, but each day the number of 'children of war' is growing in all those areas where wars are waged and violence is all-present. What can we do for those children, what can we do to prevent wars and violence, what can we do to advance peace, so that children can enjoy their childhood and youth and do not need 60 years to work through their suffering?'

'We should go to Trafalgar Square and block the traffic, appealing to the world leaders to stop war', suggested someone; but we all knew that we would have been silenced by the police before we even could have started to explain what we wanted to tell. That evening the regional TV broadcast a 3 minutes' item about the conference and our message was at least heard in the surroundings of Reading.

'We need courageous politicians, who stop war and promote peace', said another participant; but we all remembered that Gandhi and president Sadat were killed exactly because they strove for peace. 'We should protest the weapon trade of our governments and the special production of light rifles with a view to children handling them', suggested someone else; but we all were aware of the superior powers of industry and politics.

These were off-putting emotions and we wondered if there was nothing positive to observe. There was.

Helga Spranger, a German psychiatrist, showed us drawings made by traumatized children in the area of the former Republic of Yugoslavia. Poignant scenes, indeed. Positive is, however, that those children got the opportunity to express their pain, their sorrows, their fears and confusion so soon after the horrible events they went through. Therapists and social workers learned from the victims of World War II that the negative effects of traumatization can be diminished when people receive unconditional support and help, and can 'tell' about their experiences and meet with understanding. Most of the conference participants knew from their own experience how long it took before people were willing to listen to the stories of the children and stopped belittling them by statements like: 'You were just a child, you cannot know', or 'You are lucky that you don't remember, so it cannot have affected you'.

Because children of World War II took courage and told their stories, children of current wars receive help and support sooner. Their speaking up was not in vain.

Therapists and social workers learned from the experiences of the victims of 1939 – 1945, how war and traumatizing events blocked the communication in the families. Each member of the family had their own experiences, when e.g. the children were evacuated, or went in hiding or were left behind when their parents were arrested because of collaboration. After reunion of the families everybody wanted to go back to normalcy. So, many things remained undiscussed. Andy Kempe showed us how the method of drama can be used to break open the silence in the families. He visits schools and has the children playing scenes in which they fulfil the roles of their (grand)parents who were children during the war.

Faye Lawson, one of the students at the Research Centre for Evacuee and War Child Studies, who is preparing her M.A., showed in her presentation how in the past in (children's)books on war topics the focus was on heroes and heroic acts, whereas at present, influenced by the knowledge about the emotional experiences of people/children during World War II, the focus is on emotions, the fears and hopes of ordinary people and children.

Chris Gittins, aware of the problems of the evacuated children who could not let out their frustrations and therefore often scored badly at school, at least below their level, used this knowledge in his trainings programme for teachers. These see themselves at present confronted with children of immigrants or people seeking asylum causing sometimes problems (violence) for themselves and the other pupils.

He told about an experiment in one of Africa's countries, where social workers suggested a three days' cease-fire each month to the fighting warlords, so that a mother-and-childcare programme could be executed. The warlords accepted the proposal and kept their promises. Gradually they became convinced that if weapons can rest for three days for the benefit of the most precious that a country possesses: the children, they could rest also for ever.

Chris Shire, another student at the Research Centre, presented a paper on the evacuation and indoctrination of German children under the Hitler regime. In ardent terms he described how the Nazis victimized the children of their own people. Which of us could ever have imagined a young Englishman pleading the case of the German children of war?

'What can we do?' Peter Heintl, one of the discussion facilitators, reminded us of that young man, who found himself in 1859 in the field of Solferino after the battle. He heard the cries of the wounded and dying soldiers and started to help them, regardless to which army they belonged. He just did what the situation inspired him to do, not realising for a moment that his deeds were the beginning of that famous international organisation of the Red Cross.

'What can we do?' I recalled the device of William of Orange who led the Independence revolt against the Spanish king in the 16<sup>th</sup> century: 'There is no need to hope, just start; there is no need to be successful, just persevere.'

We cannot prevent wars, we cannot protect all the children of the world against violence, we cannot transform the world overnight into a paradise. But we CAN do something. We did already do by our speaking up, breaking the silence and bridging the gap between descendants of victims and descendants of perpetrators. We can continue by sharing our feelings and thoughts, our questions and our answers.

## **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.krigsbarn.se](http://www.krigsbarn.se)**

Organisation of Finnish Children of War, Seundun Sotalapset:

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

Evacuees Reunion Association

**[www.evacuees.ndonet.com](http://www.evacuees.ndonet.com)**

Researchproject 'War and Children Identity Project', Bergen, Norway

**[www.warandchildren.org](http://www.warandchildren.org)**

Researchproject University München 'Kriegskindheit'

**[www.warchildhood.net](http://www.warchildhood.net)**

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