

## INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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### INTRODUCTION

In this fourth bulletin I present you a few themes only: news from Norway and the Netherlands, book reviews, a personal story from the USA and an article concerning 'history in us'.

I know that in groups in which people try to work through painful memories, there often arises a struggle 'for the truth'. It seems very probable that this struggle is part of the process, is a necessary stage and, for that reason acceptable, although I myself regret such troubles. One of the conditions, I feel, is to respect the opponent, notwithstanding differences in view; attacking persons is unacceptable. It is therefore a pity that in one of the Norwegian contributions this respect is absent. Should I have censured the text? After some hesitation I decided to publish it, you can judge for yourself. In future, however, I will refuse such texts. Discussion OK - this bulletin tries to promote exchange of opinions - attacks NO.

Monique Diederichs presents the Dutch Organisation of Children of Soldiers and her experiences in the discussiongroups and national meetings.

Paul Mantel wrote an impression of the Conference held in Berlin, 26 - 28 January.

Ingrid Schirrholtz describes her experiences with psychodrama as an instrument of working through.

I am glad I can review two books, written by readers of this bulletin.

The text written by Jürgen Müller-Hohagen is longer than any text published before in this bulletin. It is, however, worthwhile to be published in full, as it offers a lot of points to be reflected on. I wrote a summary in English and I hope to have done justice to this article.

I hope you will enjoy this issue and we hope to meet again in fall.

Best regards,

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

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

## VORWORT

In diesem vierten internationalen Bulletin gibt es nur einige Themen: Nachrichten aus Norwegen und Holland, zwei Buchbesprechungen, eine persönliche Geschichte aus Amerika und einen langen Artikel über 'Geschichte in uns'.

In manchen neuen Organisationen worin die Leute mit ähnlichen Interessen und/oder Problemen sich treffen, gibt es Streit 'um die Wahrheit'. Offenbar ist so ein Kampf unumgänglich, er ist als Stufe in einem Prozess notwendig und darum akzeptabel, wie ich einen solchen Streit auch immer bedaure. Bedingung ist wohl, dass man einander respektiert und nicht persönlich angreift. Ich muss leider sagen, dass dies in einer der norwegischen Beiträge nicht erwogen ist. Musste ich zensurieren? Nach vielen Zögerungen habe ich mich entschieden das nicht zu tun, die LeserInnen können selbst eine Meinung entwickeln. Ich füge aber gleich hinzu, daß ich nächstes Mal so einen Artikel nicht mehr publizieren werde. Diskussion OK - das ist auch einer der Zwecke dieses Bulletins - Angriffe Nein.

Monique Diederichs schreibt über ihre Erfahrungen in dem holländischen Verein für Kinder von Militären.

Paul Mantel besuchte die Konferenz in Berlin, 26. bis 28. Januar, und gibt seine Impression.

Ich freue mich zwei Buchbesprechungen präsentieren zu können von Büchern die von zwei unseren LeserInnen geschrieben worden sind.

Ingrid Schirrholtz beschreibt ihre guten Erfahrungen mit Psychodrama in bezug auf ihre eigene Geschichte.

Der Artikel von Jürgen Müller-Hohagen führt uns zu der Beziehung zwischen der 'großen' und der 'kleinen' Geschichte. Obwohl er viel länger ist als wir es in diesem Bulletin gewohnt sind, finde ich es wichtig diesen Text zu publizieren: es gibt viele Anlässe zur nachdenken und Impulse zur weiteren Verarbeitung der Vergangenheit. Ich habe eine Zusammenfassung in Englisch geschrieben.

Ich hoffe, dass dieses Bulletin Ihnen wieder gefallen wird und ich hoffe dass wir uns im Herbst wiedersehen.

Herzliche Grüße,  
Gonda Scheffel-Baars

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

## WORKGROUP CHILDREN OF GERMAN SOLDIERS (WCGS)

In the spring of 1993 the radiochannel NCRV focused on the theme 'children of German soldiers' in their programme 'Plein Publiek' (Public Place). This was the first time I became aware of the fact that there are many more people in Holland who have the same background as I have. Peers who may have had and may have to

face the same problems.

In those times I was engaged in writing my M.A.thesis and I decided to make contacts with the organisation WCGS after having finished my history studies. It was only in spring 1994 that I first participated in a meeting group. That first evening impressed me a lot. In the stories of the others I recognized some of my own themes, the silence around the 'wrong' background being one of the most important. Taking part in the meeting group and in a programme on television 'Rondom Tien' (At 10 o'clock) in April 1994, brought about the decision to stop my suppressing the fact that I am the child of a German soldier and a Dutch girl. Thanks to this programme in which other children of German soldiers told their stories as well, the number of members of our organisation was doubled. We used to have 30 members and after the broadcast we were 75. Compared to the ca 15.000 children born from a relationship between German soldiers and Dutch girls the number of members of WCGS is, of course, strikingly small.

After the broadcast there came some requests to set up more meeting groups. I decided to lead one in the North-West of our country. At the time, summer 1994, there were another 3 groups in other Dutch regions, each consisting of 15 participants.

In our meetings the focus is on the exchange of experiences in our efforts to find our (living or dead) German father and/or his family. Moreover we discuss the experience of the circumstances we had to grow up in and of living in a society which is, more or less, hostile towards us.

We also meet in national meetings; a short time ago we decided to organise such meetings twice a year. It struck me at the first national meeting, in November 1994, that a rather big number of my peers have an image of their mothers which was and often is very negative. Some even dared to call her 'Moffenhoer'(Moffenwhore; Moffen is a pejorative word for Germans). I myself never saw my mother in that way, but I became aware of the fact that most of the Dutch will judge her as such. The heated discussions in the groups brought me to the theme of my dissertation which I have worked on for 2 years now. The aim is to approach the image that people in general have of the girls and the women who started a relationship with German soldiers, in a more balanced way.

Moreover, I want to explore and to describe the different positions they were in between 1940 and 1945. My quest is not only pointed at the 'management' in those times, but especially at the personal experiences of the women and the girls. To that end I interviewed some 60 women, some of them being the mothers of members of our organisation.

It is very likely I would not have had the courage to start a research on a theme that is, even after 50 years, so heavy and to give it a place in my life, had not my peers of WCGS helped and supported me.

Monique Diederichs

Berlin 26/27 januar.

'The presence of the history of the holocaust'.

Nine years ago I was Wuppertal (Germany) in connection with the research of Dan Bar On on a meeting with, among others, children of perpetrators.

In my memory the assembling was all about making a start with the questions we at

least should ask ourselves. This was done against the background of a course of steps of working through for children of perpetrators that Dan Bar On had identified. There were five stages in realizing the extent and profoundness of the suffering that was done to the victims of the Holocaust.

As long as we didn't accomplish this task of biblical proportions and intensity our lives would be insincere: in it we denied, evaded or minimized the truth about the cold ruthlessness of our parents, and in it we didn't want to know about the seven-dimensionality of the meaning of the Holocaust.

I couldn't do otherwise than agree with Dan in making this demand as a condition to the meeting with children of the enemy.

And I couldn't do otherwise than fully disagree with Dan because he not only doubted my individuality but also my intentions.

After nine years the situation isn't changed fundamentally perhaps, for that the historical background is too great a burden, too complex. But we do have a better view on the different aspects of this history; and the fifty years after the war made clear the independence and individuality of the after-war generations. Beside a great current in which people prefer not to know too much about history and in which suspicious norms and values still live on, there is a large and clear group of people who made use of fifty years of peace and prosperity to develop conscience and empathy.

With which is not to be said that that is simply a gift of time. In these years there has been hard working: hard understanding, hard admitting, hard searching.

The meetings in Berlin last January stood, for me, in the sign of this progress made by the hard work that has been done. The complex of individual experience, loyalty to the war generation and the coping with the massive meaning of the war history still gave rise to moments of clear visible distrust between the members of the different categories. But I believe hardly no one really was discomfited by these moments of anxiety.

As the second generation Germans I met in Wuppertal went still very bend under the heavy burden they had taken on their shoulders, or they had found on their shoulders, after nine years much of this humourless 'Rote Armee Fraktionen'-time is for a good part behind us. In Berlin there was much more notion of the distinction between literal guilt, guilt feelings and the shame that comes with the acceptance of growing up in a culture with a history of horror. Actually there was, besides the awareness of the seven-dimensional meaning of the Holocaust in western culture, also the possibility of a laugh. And that would not have been possible without mutual trust and appreciation.

Sombreness was not a rule of conduct, a clothing code.

In this meaning of progress I also understood the interest the Germans had in the experience of the Dutch (foreign) children of collaborators. One was no longer fixed on a self-implication of guilt and more interested in learning to *live* with the 'other side'; which implicates more confrontation in respect of their own experience as an after-war 'child of'. The experience of the children of collaborators in Holland, who live probably more in confrontation with condemnation, is because of that, interesting for the 'wrong children' of Europe.

Finally, to get back to Dan's five steps. These stages of disattachment of the own

background, often literally letting go in stages of one's family, are in fact inevitable. At least, if you would like to use your brains, but without individuality, without strictly personal freedom and anarchy this program is impossible to follow. In Berlin 1997 there was, as for me, more room for this individuality. And may that all be a projection of my own experiences and understanding: so be it.

Berlin 1997. 'Die Gegenwart der Geschichte des Holocaust'.

Vor neun Jahre war ich in Wuppertal im Anlaß der Untersuchungen von Dan Bar On für eine Sammlung mit u.a. Kinder der Täter.

In meine Erinnerung war das Wichtigste in diese Begegnung ein Anfang zu machen mit die Fragen die wir uns mindestens stellen sollten. Das geschah gegen die Hintergrund eine von Dan Bar On ausgesetzte Trajekt von durch zu laufen Stufe von Verarbeitung für die Kinder der Verfolger. Es gab fünf von diese Stufe ins Bewußtsein von Umfang und Tiefgang das Leiden der Opfer der Holocaust zu kommen.

Solange wir dieser Aufgabe von biblischer Proportion und Intensität nicht vollbracht hätten war unser leben nicht aufrecht: es verneinte, weichte aus oder bagatellierte immers ja die Wahrheit über die kalte Mitleidslosigkeit unserer Eltern und es wollte nicht wissen wie siebendimensional die Bedeutung die Mord auf die Juden war.

Ich könnte nicht anders als Dan Bar On zustimmen in diese Forderung als Bedingung für eine Begegnung mit die Kinder der Täter.

Und ich könnte nicht anders als völlig uneinverstanden sein mit Dan weil er nicht nur an meiner Individualität aber auch an meiner Absichten zweifelte.

Neun Jahre später ist die Stand der Dinge grundsätzlich vielleicht nicht geändert, dafür ist die historische Hintergrund zu beladen und zu vielumfassend. Aber wir haben ein viel besser Sicht auf die verschiedene Aspekte der komplexe Geschichte. Und die fünfzig Jahre Nachkriegsgeschichte haben die Individualität und Unabhängigkeit der Nachkriegsgenerationen klarer gemacht. Neben die große Fluß der Menschen die lieber nicht zuviel von der Geschichte wissen will und in bedenklichen Normen und Werte durchleben, gibt es eine deutliche und große Gruppe von Menschen der die fünfzig Jahre Friede und Wohlstand gebraucht hat um das Gewissen und die Empathie zu entwickeln.

Womit ich nicht sagen will das das einfach eine Gabe der Zeit war. Man hat in diesen Jahre hart gearbeitet: hart begriffen, hart zugegeben, hart gesucht.

Die Begegnungen in Berlin letztes Januar standen, was mir angeht, in dieser Zeichen der Fortschritt durch die harte Arbeit die schon geleistet ist. Das Komplex von individuelle Erfahrung, Loyalität und die Umgang mit der massiven Bedeutung der Geschichte gab noch immer Anlaß zu Momenten von deutlich sichtbares mißtrauen zwischen die Mitglieder der verschiedene Kategorien. Aber ich meine das Keiner sich wirklich hatte abschrecken lassen??

Der zweite Generation Deutschen den ich in Wuppertal begegnete ging noch gebeugt unter die schwere Augabe die sie auf die Schultern genommen haben, oder die sie auf die Schulter gefunden haben; nach neun Jahre ist diese humorlose 'Rote Armee Fraktionszeit' größtenteils hinter uns. In Berlin gab es mehr Bewußtsein von das Unterscheid zwischen realen Schuld, Schuldgefühle und die Scham über eine Kultur mit eine Vergangenheit von Horror.

Neben das Bewußtsein von die Siebendimensionalität der Bedeutung der Holocaust in die westliche Kultur gab es wahrhaftig Raum für ein Lächeln; und das war unmöglich ohne gegenseitiges Vertrauen und Anerkennen. Scham war nicht das Benehmungs- und Kleidungs-vorschrift.

In die Sinne von Fortschritt sah ich auch die größere Interesse der Deutschen an?? die Erfahrung der Niederländische (ausländische) Kinder der Kollaborateure. Man war weniger fixiert auf die eigene Schuld an die Vergangenheit und mehr interessiert in das lernen *leben* mit die 'andere Seite'; das impliziert mehr Konfrontation um Aufmerksamkeit für die eigene Erfahrung als Nachkriegskind zu fragen. Die Erfahrung der Kinder der Kollaborateure in die Niederlande, die vielleicht mehr in die Konfrontation mit Verurteilung leben, ist um dieser Grund für die 'Fehl-kinder Europas' interessant.

Zum Schluß: um zurück zu kommen auf die fünf Stufen von Dan Bar On. Diese Schritten der Erarbeitung der eigene und die allgemeine Geschichte; oft buchstäblich als ein Loskommen der Familie zu verstehen, sind tatsächlich unvermeidlich. Wenigstens, wenn man den Kopf nicht nur noch einseitig brauchen will, aber ohne Individualität, ohne persönliche Freiheit und Anarchie ist das unmöglich zu tun.

In Berlin 1997 war, so sah ich es wenigstens, mehr Raum für Individualität. Und soweit das ja alles nur ein Projektion meine eigene erfahren und verstehen ist: 'so be it'.

## SUMMARY

The exposition 'Vernichtungskrieg 1941-1944' in München, organised by the Institute of Social Research of Hamburg, evoked anger and protest, from many Right Wingers, whereas in other German towns, as distinct from München, there was hardly any protest at all. The argument was, that the honour of the German soldiers was profaned. These people did not give any reference to the desecrated honour of the victims. The past is still present, sometimes it springs out of the hiding places.

Jürgen Müller-Hohagen is a therapist and adviser in a counseling centre for families. He lives in Dachau. He spent 14 years in München, as a student, as a professional. After he moved to Dachau, 18 km from München, he met, for the first time in his life, survivors of the KZ. By then the past was no longer just a story, he could not any longer avoid facing the reality of what had happened in the Holocaust. Loose knowledge became clear awareness and recognition.

In his practice he became more and more aware of the links between the problems people have to wrestle with now and the Nazi-past of their parents. He presents the case of Mrs.D, who consulted him because of problems with her son leaving home. Gradually it came out that she had been the scapegoat in her family, a model family to all appearances, in which, however, aggression was acted out on one of the daughters. The father was a SS-man, no one talked about it, her parents rebuffed her. The problems with her son leaving the house were put in another light: she feared to be abandoned by her son, like her parents abandoned her by their harsh attitude and behaviour.

SS-men are mostly described as cold-blooded executioners, who, coming home, hugged wife, children and played with the dog. It is a myth. Survivors stated in their testimonies: 'The worse were not the brutal ones, but the sticklers'. After the war the aggression of these model employees found an outlet in the family, when they were disappointed by the broken off dream of a glorious future, an outlet in the family. Especially daughters became the object on which to cool their anger.

'We suffered too' is a statement one could and can often hear in German families. One points at flight and uprootedness. And indeed, these events influenced people and one can trace transference to the offspring. Mostly, however, the suffering of the victims and their children are kept out of sight and the equalization of the suffering on both sides is unpalatable.

To discuss the theme of guilt is still a heavy business. It has not only to do with the guilt of the past, also at present offspring of victims are ignored or confronted with careless and (therefore) threatening statements.

The clients of Müller-Hohagen found relief when they could finally speak about the past (of their parents). Most of them grew up in confusion, their questions were rebuffed, often they were the scapegoats in the family. Those born after the war suspected a lot, but could not get at the truth. One of his clients, who spent several years in a psychiatric clinic, brought him to the insight, that those who succumbed under the burden of the past so full of atrocities and needed psychiatric help, in fact may be normal than those who simply live on, as if nothing happened, the so called normal, mental healthy people. Many of his clients belong to decent, even notable families. The children were labelled: too sensitive, too serious, too ethic. They have the feeling their parents tried to bribe them with prosperity, that they tried to silence them and even succeeded, although temporarily. Children kept silent out of fear. They suggested that the child was foolish, even mad. The children felt threatened and became convinced that nobody is trustworthy.

In his own life Müller-Hohagen experienced some feeble echo of this same haze, confusion, silence in family and school and the prejudice that those who want to find out, are accusers.

A small number of members of the first generation found the courage to admit that there is a link between the aggression of the Nazi-system and the problems of the children and the grandchildren, some of whom committed suicide.

Sharing thoughts and feelings with each other means relief to those who thought they were the only people having these ideas, often at the brink of mental collapse or madness. Therapy cannot undo the harshness of childhood, it can help to unravel a confused and confusing past, to clear up darkness, and in this way to procure a sense of security.

It took a long time before the world recognized the traumas of the survivors, even in circles of therapists the conspiracy of silence was terribly strong. Bringing to the attention the transference of Nazi-ideas and -aggression to the next generations, meets a lot of resistance: until now many Germans do not want to stir up the past, their mental tranquility is, however, bought with the troubles of the

minority who cannot longer avoid facing the past, sometimes because of the mere fact that their nightmares are too real.

Marcelo Viñar, psychoanalyst in Uruguay said: 'Everybody is, whether he knows it or not, whether he agrees or not agrees, a summary and a mirror of the history of his era and his social context; it expresses the extraordinary complexity of mankind, in good and evil. One is the subject of a personal and collective history, two sides of the belonging to one's period, and no one can place himself outside this framework.

The protest against the exposition in München proves that the rubbish that is still underground, like in München, the former 'capital of the Party', sometimes comes to the surface. All those who thought they were mistaken in their observation of reality, see they were right. This is a positive effect of a negative reaction. Moreover it became clear that the majority of publicly stated opinions distance itself from the Right Wingers.

Facing the past enables people to explore the effects of it in one's own life, to assume responsibility for the present, recognizing the ungoing aftereffects of the Holocaust in the lives of survivors and their offspring, in order to be able to set off for a honest life in future.

Translation: GSB

Martin Bormann: **LEBEN GEGEN SCHATTEN**

(Bonifatius Verlag, Paderborn,  
ISBN 3-87088-901-2)

Oft habe ich mich gefragt wie man überhaupt leben kann, wenn der Vater - nicht wie der meine 'nur' als Kollaborateur - in dem Nazi-system eine wichtige Rolle gespielt hat.

In seinem Buch 'Leben gegen Schatten' zeichnet Martin, geboren unter dem Todeszeichen der Swastika, wie er suchend und streitend seinen eigenen Weg im Leben gefunden hat, unter den Schatten des Führers und des Vaters hinweg. Dieses Buch ist ein mutiges Buch! Ich bin sehr beeindruckt davon, dass Martin es gewagt hat dieses Buch unter seinem eigenen Namen zur Veröffentlichung zu geben. Wenn man weiß wie Journalisten sein ganzes Leben lang hinter ihm her gejagt haben, kann man nicht anders als mit starker Bewogenheit diese Entscheidung werten. Wie frech Leute sein können wenn es um Sensation geht, zeigt uns der Vorfall (Seite 169/170), wie Journalisten Martin gleich ein Interview über seinen Vater abzwängen wollen, wenn er kaum an Hinrichtung in Afrika entkommen auf dem Weg nach Hause ist um sich, mit den anderen Priestern, in Sicherheit zu bringen. Martin war der Nestor in der Selbsthilfegruppe in Wuppertal/Remscheid, von Dan Bar-On initiiert, und ist Mitgleid der TRT-Gruppe. Für mich ist er immer ein Beispiel gewesen das mich ermutigt hat wenn es mir schwer fiel: wenn er mit dieser Last weitergemacht hat, da könnte ich doch nicht damit aufhören.

GSB

I often wondered how it was possible to live as a child of a high ranked Nazi und how people with such a father managed to do so. In his book 'Leben gegen



Schatten' (Life against Shadows) Martin, born under the death symbol of the swastika, describes how he sought in his life to free himself of the shadow of the Führer and that of his father and to build up a life of his own.

This book shows his courage! He published it under his own name and all those who know how journalists always chased him in order to get some sensational news, will appreciate this courageous step. On pages 169/170, for instance, Martin describes how journalists almost forced him to talk about his father, when he hardly escaped execution in one of the African countries engaged in civil war and found finally safety in the plane which brought him and his brother priests home.

Martin was the Nestor in the group of children of Nazi's in Wuppertal/Remscheid initiated by Dan Bar-On and he is now a member of TRT. For me he embodies the inner strength people (can) have. His example encouraged me in moments I felt at a loss: if he could have the courage to continue facing the past, I could not stop the work, could I?

GSB

Martina Emme: **'DER VERSUCH, DEN FEIND ZU VERSTEHEN'**  
Ein pädagogischer Beitrag zur moralisch-politischen Dimension  
von Empathie und Dialog

(IKO Verlag, Frankfurt,  
ISBN 3-88939-113-3)

Der Titel ihrer Dissertation entnahm Martina einer Äußerung von Primo Levi, der Schriftsteller, Überlebender von Auschwitz, der die Täter nicht haßte, sondern zu verstehen versuchte. Gegen alle negativen Meinungen, dass Begegnungen zwischen Mitgliedern der beiden 'Seiten' unmöglich, und sogar für die zweite Generation unerwünscht sind, beschreibt Martina in dieser Veröffentlichung wie Gitta Sereny in ihren Gesprächen mit dem Kommandanten von Treblinka, wie Dan Bar-On in seinen Gesprächen mit den Nachkommen von Nazis das ganz bestimmt anders erfuhren, erlebten dass es möglich ist sich offen und ehrlich zu treffen. Martina, eine der Gründerinnen der Gruppe One by One, kennt auch von eigener Erfahrung her wie eine tiefe und heilende Auswirkung Begegnungen zwischen Kindern der beiden 'Seiten' haben können.

Sie versucht in ihrer Dissertation, was schon in z.B One by One, TRT und Kombi Realität ist, theoretisch zu unterbauen. Sie exploriert mehrere Ausarbeitungen des Konzeptes Empathie von z.B Martin Buber, Carl Rogers und Ruth Cohn. Ist es möglich ihre Gedanken anzuwenden in ganz extremen Situationen, wo heftige Emotionen Begegnungen sehr belasten, wie um das Thema Holocaust herum? Diese Frage bejaht sie. Es ist sehr interessant zu erfahren wie Theorie und Realität hier einander die Hand reichen.

Für jeden der überzeugt ist von der Nützlichkeit dieser Begegnungen für die Verarbeitung der Vergangenheit ist Martina's Buch sehr empfehlenswert. Eigentlich brauchen diejenigen die (noch) nicht überzeugt sind dieses Buch noch mehr. Ob sie es lesen wollen...?

Martina chose as title for her dissertation a statement of Primo Levi, the author, survivor of Auschwitz, who didn't hate the perpetrators but tried to understand them. Against all negative opinions, that encounters between the two 'sides' are impossible and even, with regard to the second generation undesirable, Martina describes in her book how Gitta Sereny and Dan Bar-On experienced in their encounters with respectively Franz Stangl, camp leader of Treblinka and offspring of Nazis, that it is possible to meet in openness and to reach a better mutual understanding. Martina, one of the founders of the group One by One experienced herself how deep and healing encounters between children of survivors and those of perpetrators can be. She tries to give in her dissertation a theoretic basis to that what takes already place in ,for instance, One by One, TRT and KOMBI. She explores the concept of empathy in several studies, of Martin Buber, Carl Rogers and Ruth Cohn. Is it possible to apply their concepts in situations in which many emotions may block the dialogue, like in encounters between the two 'sides'? Martina answers this question in a positive way. It is interesting to see how reality and theory shake hands. This book is a must for everyone who is convinced that a dialogue is possible and desirable even round the difficult issue of the Holocaust, although, of course, those who are not (yet) convinced need this book more. Will they read it?

## LEGACY OF THE HOLOCAUST

by U.Ingrid Schirrholtz

The first time I got to know a child of Holocaust survivors was in 1985 when I met Hesther in my psychodrama training group in New York. We seemed to drift toward each other naturally, both being quiet, somewhat withdrawn, feeling we weren't really part of the dynamic and expressive group. Dealing with our families of origin in our personal psychodramas I was struggling with the conflict between loving and missing my father on one hand and being angry with him for being so cold, withdrawn and intolerant to any expression of aliveness on the other hand. My father had died of a heart attack over ten years prior to my coming to the United States, but I hadn't really mourned his death.

Hesther seemed to be the one who could relate to this mixture of love and contempt I felt for my father, and in return I knew exactly what it must have been like for her to grow up in the emotional barrenness of unexpressed feelings and silence, of unimaginable pain that could never be talked about when she did her psychodrama portraying the emotional climate in her family. Hesther was the first person I could start to talk about growing up with the legacy of the Holocaust. The Holocaust became the central theme around which our friendship developed, and our dialogues provided an - often painful- impetus for exploring the past.

In 1989 I met Miri, a psychodramatist from Israel. She came to do her internship with me at the hospital where I was working at the time. When I asked her at our first meeting if she was aware that I was German there was a moment of silence, then she replied that she was interested in exploring this dimension of our relationship. And indeed we soon started to talk about our experiences with the Holocaust, both of us being driven by a strong desire to find a way of working through the legacy of the Holocaust. We found that psychodrama was a powerful tool to do this work and we were planning to take this work out into the world. Our relationship had a purpose

and this purpose added the role of friends to the roles of student and supervisor. After the completion of Miri's internship we decided to embark on a project of working through the Holocaust psychodramatically. We asked one of our psychodrama trainers, Jacqueline Siroka, to be our facilitator and recruited a young filmmaker to videotape our sessions. We called our project: 'The Legacy' and started out with a great deal of enthusiasm. Our psychodramatic exploration became a means of dealing with self and other, our differences and similarities. I needed to hear Miri's story, her parents' story, to find out what growing up was like for her, how the Holocaust had left its marks on her life. I also needed to explore for myself and share with others how the Holocaust had influenced my sense of who I am and how I feel about myself.

Eversince I can remember I had felt a sense of shame about being German. What was done by Germans in Auschwitz and all over the German Reich was evil. By being born German I was part of this evil even if I never participated in it. My roots were poisoned. How can I be a good human being if I am part of the evil and my roots are poisoned? Do I have to spend the rest of my life atoning for the sins of my father's generation? And how does one atone for the killing of six million people? What was the evil I was being part of by being born German? Is it inside me? That sadistic cruelty that I had heard about and seen in movies, do I have that inside of me, is that my German heritage?

In our psychodrama sessions I started to explore and take the role of the perpetrator, the Nazi, acting out the voices that I had heard in childhood, my fantasies of what happened during the extermination. In playing a Nazi my worst fear came true, there was a part of me that liked and even enjoyed being in the role of someone who has power, gives orders, is blindly obeyed without questioning. In this role I felt big and important. But I could only maintain that role by not feeling. When I allowed myself to feel I could not deny the tremendous pain of those who were being tortured and destroyed. I started to realize that having my feelings is what makes me human, what makes me being me, the unique person who I am, and that I have a choice if I want to cut off my feelings as so many Germans did during the Holocaust in order to have a sense of power, or if I wanted to feel and to be human even it is painful at times.

The psychodramatic work Miri and I did together created a strong bond of friendship between us. When the videotape of our work was about to be edited we talked about publicly presenting our work. It was then that Miri referred to me as the daughter of a Nazi. This shocked and upset me tremendously.

When I started this project with Miri my motivation came out of wanting to explore and deal with my identity as a German, the legacy that my country left me with, rather than the legacy my father had left me with. My father had been dead for over a decade and we had never really talked about the Holocaust. We had a great deal of political arguments, him being a conservative and me being a socialist during the student revolution of the sixties. Nowadays I wonder what we were really arguing about under the guise of politics. Only once had I asked him during my teenage years what he thought about the Holocaust and the answer he left me with was: 'I didn't like Jews anyway'. This was the only statement from my father about the Holocaust and it left me confused and devastated. Does this mean that it is right to kill people we don't like? Are people we don't like not human beings? I never got an answer to these questions because I didn't ask them. And now it is too late. It is hard

to come to terms with the fact that the man who made this statement is also my father who I had a close emotional bond with and whose love and approval meant the world to me. I had always known that my father had not been in the army during World War II. He was an engineer who was exempt from military duty due to being involved in the construction of military objects. Only in recent years I have made an effort to find out in more detail what he did during the war, what he thought about Hitler, if he was a party member. I had always assumed - in a kind of self-protection - that he had not really been involved in any atrocities. But now I started to wonder if he had been involved in the construction of concentration camps. What exactly were the military objects he had helped building? On my visits to Germany I started to ask three older cousins on my father's side who had known him quite well. From them I heard that my father was involved in the construction of an ammunition plant near Hamburg, that he was not a party member and that he had been critical of Hitler on several occasions. The Berlin Document Center confirmed that my father had not been a party member.

My reaction to this information was relief, relief that he had not been directly involved in the extermination process and that he had not been a party member. So he was not a perpetrator, he was not a Nazi, but what did that make him? I know that he was not in the resistance and he knew what was going on. From the information I got about the ammunition plant I know he must have seen slave labor with his own eyes. So he was a bystander, someone who knew what was happening, someone who played his part in the system that bred evil, and thus allowed it to go on. That is his guilt, his legacy to me. Was he a coward, do I wish he had spoken up, rebelled, not complied with the system? I don't know, because if he had spoken up, rebelled, not cooperated, I might not have been born.