

# INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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Red: Gonda Scheffel-Baars, Nieuwsteeg 12, 4196 AM Tricht  
The Netherlands Tel/fax: (+) 345 573190  
e-mail: [scheffelbaars@wxs.nl](mailto:scheffelbaars@wxs.nl)

Sponsor: Stichting Werkgroep Herkenning  
[www.werkgroepherkenning.nl](http://www.werkgroepherkenning.nl)

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### INTRODUCTION

I am happy to present to you the twentieth issue of the International Bulletin in which you will find articles in which, I hope, you will be interested. There is never a lack of texts and I would like to thank all the writers for their contributions. Thanks also to Uta and Erna whose corrections of my translations I appreciate very much.

Only 50 years after the war, Loes felt the need to do investigations about her father's fate. As a German living in Holland, he was sent to Russia where he presumably died as a prisoner of war. She found his grave at the border between Rumania and Ukraina. A moving story.

Living in post-war Germany was hard. Like in so many other German families, the members of Inge Franken's family rarely spoke about the Nazi time. Inge wanted to know the truth about her family's involvement, but she was met with rejection and contempt. She did not stop her investigations and nowadays a couple of cousins are facing the past as well.

Nathan Durst wrote a long article about child-survivors of the Holocaust, a group of victims that for many years was not seen as a separate group. In his article he focused on the traumatising experience of children being separated from their parents and its age-specific effects. Many of his reflections are valid for other groups of children of war as well. Nathan, a child-survivor himself, gave me permission to publish a couple of paragraphs of his article.

Michael Henderson wrote a book, 'See you after the Duration', about his experiences as one of the British children evacuated to the USA. The book also casts light on war-time North-American life.

'Eyes that do not see' is the title of a poem that Carola Cahn, a-child survivor, wrote in the 1950ies. Many survivors were met with indifference and unwillingness to understand their experiences after their liberation and returning home.

Carola Cahn also wrote an article about the healing effects of her participation in a One by One's dialogue group, a text which was published in OnebyOne News, 2001. Carola gave me permission to copy it for this bulletin.

Sharing one's experiences with others, is one of the goals of many organisations of children of war. The One by One speakers' team have been visiting schools in Berlin and Inge Franken reports about its effects. They relate especially the healing effects of honest dialogues between people whose parents were enemies in their time and situation.

Members of TRT (To Reflect and Trust) will co-monitor a course during the conference 'Dialog and Personal Stories' that will be held in Florida, July 18-22,2005. In the announcement in this bulletin you will find an e-mail address to contact for more information.

Michael Ermann, from the University of München, describes the research study in which he is involved. I would like to invite the readers who have an e-mail address to send them to me. Please send me any change of postal- or e-mail address.

All the best,

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

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## LOES' NAME-PLATE

Loes, born in 1942, is the third child of a Dutch Mother and a German father that married before the war. In 1925 her German grandfather accepted a job in the southern part of the Netherlands. His children went to Dutch schools, but the family remained loyal to the German customs and spoke German amongst each other. All the same, the sons married Dutch girls. During the war the youngest son studied in Detmold (Germany). He was sent to russia as a soldier where he was killed. Loes' father was enlisted as well and went to Poland. At the end of the war the German members of Loes' family went back to Germany, but her mother decided to stay in Holland. In September 1944, after "Dolle Dinsdag" (Mad Tuesday) the family broke up. (Dolle Dinsdag is the day that the leaders of the Dutch National Socialist Party decided to send wives and children of Party members to Germany to escape the reprisals of the Allies that approached and were expected to liberate the Netherlands soon). Loes' mother and her baby daughter found a shelter with her Dutch family and the other children were admitted into other families.

Loes does not have many memories of that period, although she feels that the family where she lived were not fond of children. The atmosphere in the house was chilly and 'dark' and Loes was ordered to keep quiet. A Polish officer was billeted in the same house and with him Loes felt at ease. He was kind, offerered her chocolates and took a sincere interest in her. In retrospect she sees that he was like a father to her.

After the war the family was re-united but everything was different now. The closeness of the pre-war situation was lost. Loes' mother was convinced that her husband would come back and she and her children went daily to the Roman Catholic church to pray for his safe and speedy return. Loes had no idea what having a father was about. Her father was just a picture, a small square in black and white. She did not remember him and there were hardly traces left in the house. It is very likely that many belongings were taken away, just like to the belongings of collaborators' families.

After the war Loes' mother received a couple of old letters by her husband dating of the last months of 1944, but it was unknown where he was and whether he was still alive. About four years later the postman handed a letter to her mother with a Red Cross on the envelope. Her mother was upset and allowed Loes to miss school and to stay at home. The message of the Red Cross stated that Loes' father presumably died as a prisoner of war in Russia. Confirmation never came. Her mother tried to find out the truth, but she received no answers. She rarely spoke about her husband. When she died, aged 65, she said: 'I want to go to Heinz, I want to be with him, up there...'

Because of her marriage Loes' mother had become a German citizen. She received her Dutch nationality again some years after the message of the Red Cross about her husband's presumtive death and after investigations of the Dutsh government about her possible involvement in activities for the benefit of the enemy. Her children, however, had the German nationality by birth and a German passport. They could acquire the Dutch nationality only at the age of 21 if they would like to obtain it. When Loes was 17, the law was changed and she opted for a Dutch passport . Up to now she has had two nationalities. The law came at the right moment. Loes studied at the teacher training college and as a foreigner she would have had no right to have a job in any governmental service. She would not have been admitted in any public school.

Her origins had already caused her a lot of problems because a proper birth certificate was lacking. She and her sister were born during the war and as Germans they were entered in the "Standesamt" in The Hague and not in their birth-place. The files of the Standesamt were sent to Germany at the end of the war, or destroyed. At least, there are no traces left of the Standesamt's administration. All the same, Loes had a birth-certificate, decorated with the swastika...an object which one is not proud of and fears to show at the school administration or when applying for a job.

Dutch society was a hard environment for children with a German family name to grow up in. Children in the neighbourhood and at school called them 'Moffenkinderen' (Boches' children). One teacher at the teacher training school refused to pronounce Loes' name, but said instead: 'Schweinekopf' (Pig's head). She did not want to trouble her mother and never told her how she was ridiculed and cursed at. In the Netherlands all the Germans were considered to be Nazis. For Loes and her sisters it was difficult to handle the negative feelings against them. Loes found a way to cope with it: 'Maybe all the Germans were bad people, but my father was certainly not'. She reflected on the topic and felt that if 'Germans are Boches and Boches are bad people', it was up to her not to become a Boche. In her opinion Boche was synonymous with violence. When, one day, a girl in the neighbourhood teased Loes, she reacted in a furious way – although until then she had never fought back. The girl was injured and Loes was at loss: now she was a Boche...Clearly one cannot run away from one's origins...

When she and her classmates and their teacher visited the memorial dedicated to the Dutch soldiers who were killed when the Germans rushed in in May 1940, Loes felt at odds with herself: as a German girl she had no right to be there, but on the other hand, she disliked profoundly to be there, as if she betrayed her father. Loes learned as a child to keep silent, to hide her thoughts and feelings and she even felt that she did not have the right to have any opinion whatsoever.

In 1994, when the festivities for the 50<sup>th</sup> celebration of the Liberation of the southern provinces of the Netherlands started and she, as a teacher, was supposed to commit herself to the special activities for her pupils, she could no longer avoid to face the past. When teaching history in her classes, she always managed to avoid becoming emotionally involved, but now, 50 years after the war, her 'automatic pilot' refused to do its work. Of course she knew who her father was, unlike so many children with an unknown German (or Canadian, American or British) father. But in fact she did not know anything about him. And until 1994 she had never found the need to start investigations after his fate.

When she visited a museum, a man asked her about the correct orthography of her family name and invited her for a talk. Loes did not feel at ease at all, but agreed to have the conversation then and there – it was better not to postpone it, otherwise her fears would become unbearable. The man knew who her mother and her sisters were, he said, and Loes became suspicious. But with no ground, as she experienced very soon. The man told her about a book in which her father's name was mentioned, alongside the names of the other citizens of her town who perished during the war: Jews, resistance fighters, soldiers and just citizens. A couple of years ago the authors had done some investigations about her father and had found that he was an incorruptible and innocent man, not to be blamed for any activity during the war. A good German. Loes was indignant that the authors never contacted her, but she felt so proud about her father that her indignation paled beside her pride.

This period brought the past unavoidably to her present life and she could not cope with it. She fell ill and went to a therapist for help. At his advice and supported by her family doctor she started to find out what happened to her father. As a woman with a German passport, she had easy entry to German archives and the files in several offices. On her way to find the truth she learned that some members of her German family were Nazi adepts and she feared the day that she would learn about her father's political ideas ...

The information of the German Red Cross and data she found in a special investigation office in Kassel revealed to her that her father was buried in Rumania. Reconstruction of the events makes it likely, that the Russians at the end of the war wanted to get rid of their prisoners of war. They were sent by train to the West. Many died during the trip and the dead bodies were thrown out of the trains. Loes' father was found near the railway at the frontier between Rumania and Ukraina. Villagers

collected the dead bodies they found – Rumanian, Russian and German soldiers -and buried them at the cemetary of the Orthodox Church.

Loes met the people who still take care of the graves. One of them called her ' my sister'. She stays in contact with her. She picked up some earth from her father's grave and back in Holland, she sprinkled it on her mother's grave. In this way she brought her father home. Since then the war is over. Unfortunately, she cannot share her experiences with her sisters who don't like to reflect on the past.

After Loes' divorce she could no longer hide behind her husband's name. It was a difficult step, but she bought a door-plate with her own, German name and she is proud of it. It is like a statement: here I am, a German, yes, but with the same right as anybody else to live and to be accepted and loved as the person that I am.

This is a summarized translation of the interview with Loes that was published in the jubileebook of Kombi, the Dutch organisation where children of the war of different backgrounds meet. GSB

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## **EXPERIENCES IN POST-WAR GERMANY**

By Inge Franken

I was born in 1940 and up to 1944 I lived mostly in East Prussia where my father was a village teacher until the outbreak of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Then he became a soldier and fought in Poland, France and the Soviet Union. He was involved in the siege of Leningrad where he was killed in May 1942. That meant that I grew up without a father. This was decisive for my life and particularly for my attitude towards National Socialism. I grew up with the knowledge that my parents were firm believers in the fascist system. They became convinced of fascist ideas very early in life through the youth movement. My father became a member of the NSDAP (National Socialist Germany Workers Party) at the age of 21 as early as 1933. My mother was an enthusiastic member of the BDM (League of German Girls) and worked in a children's home that belonged to the National Socialist Welfare Organisation until she got married.

When I started to think for myself and had more information, this led to me strongly rejecting my parents, particularly my father, who I never knew, because he had died for the fascist regime. It made my situation even more difficult, because I felt I had been abandoned for an idea.

My knowledge about the attitudes of people in my family towards the Nazi regime was very inexact: I knew who had been a supporter, who had worked actively within the system and who had opposed it. All of these attitudes existed, but my knowledge was very unclear. Nevertheless, I felt that I knew a lot, because it was much more than my friends knew about their families. However, the Nazi time was never talked about at home. I often heard sentences that never had a context for me, short comments that I did not understand and thus became mysterious. But I put no questions when I heard such comments. I sensed that the adults were hiding something from me, something that it was forbidden to talk about. My sister, two years older, remembers the following sentence that, today, explains a lot to me: 'We bet on the wrong horse'. That reflects the resignation and disappointment which my mother and her sister, who lived with us, so clearly felt. When I think back, these were the only feelings present when they talked about the Nazi time. And then, of course, my mother mourned most of her life for the loss of her husband. Only very recently has she learned to accept his death.

So, how did I get information about the Nazi period? Exactly when did I start searching? I can't really say. I first draw to the subject during religious instruction for our confirmation when the minister told us about the film: The Bridge. It showed the crime of how children were turned into soldiers at the end of the war. This impressed me deeply. The Nazi period was never dealt with at school, but my mother told me only a few weeks ago, that I used to assail my teachers with questions. She remembered this probably because she found it threatening. I could have assailed her, but I didn't.

A key experience in 1955 was a bicycle tour to Holland with three girls from school. Because we were German, the youth hostels did not let us in. I was speechless, and at home I was told that Germany

had waged war with Holland, so they didn't like us. A short time ago I asked my mother about that experience and I wanted to know why she had not given me any further explanation. She didn't know. It was her silence that caused me to start reading about this subject when I was a teenager. And I have never stopped. The crimes committed at that time and the consequences they have had, have become my life's theme.

I was in my mid-thirties when I started to ask myself: what had the members of my family thought and done during the Nazi time. I wanted to read the letters that my father wrote home from the war. My mother copied some of them for me into Latin letters, because I couldn't read the old-fashioned German letters in which he wrote. It must have been very painful for her to read his Nazi language, and she added comments in which she showed deep regret about what she and her husband thought then. Today I can read those letters in the original, which gives me much more information, and my picture of the time has become more detailed. The person of my father is no longer merely the Nazi I have to hate, but he was also a man who loved his wife and children, and who longed for a settled, civilian life. I can no longer see him as only black or white. I try to understand, even if I can't forgive, what my father and my mother tolerated jumping onto the Nazi bandwagon.

For a long time I was the only one in my family who wanted to know about the past. Later, when I became a bit more courageous and the family realised the nature of the facts that I wanted to know, I harvested rejection and contempt. Only in the last year has there been a change among my cousins. This was caused by the questions put by a niece who lives in Switzerland and who put questions to her grand-parents. This caused my cousins to look through family documents and to talk about the subject: How did we experience fascism during our childhoods?

One cousin suddenly said to me: ' nge, we supported our parents' silence after the war because we didn't ask them enough, nor did we think about our own experiences.' I am very happy that this process has begun, even if it is very slow and I know how difficult it is for them to change the picture they always had about their parents. Once I heard the words: ' I want to leave my father alone. His life was difficult enough.' And that referred to an uncle who was the biggest Nazi in the family.

My path to greater clarity has been strongly influenced by encounters with the children of Holocaust survivors in the One by One dialogue group. For many years I never met any Jews and, therefore, knew nothing about the consequences and effects on their families into the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> generations. I had never asked myself what happened to the survivors of the camps, where they had begun a new life, where they had received help. Information about the trials of Nazis in Germany only reached my head, but never my heart.

The confrontation with the biographies in the dialogue groups showed me that I had imbibed the guilt feelings of my family. I was very frightened of being attacked for crimes committed by my parents' generation. Today, I am always deeply moved when we hold discussions about the consequences of the Nazi time and we respectively listen to each other. I have now been able to substitute guilt feelings with a feeling of responsibility, and this I want to take on myself mainly for what we have done with this history in our families and for how we behave today in society. I feel much freer to find out facts, to write to the archives, to study documents, and to help other Germans in this process. And I can also speak more freely and listen better than I used to, when someone wants to tell me his or her story.

Despite all the searching for facts and causes, my horror that crimes like the Holocaust and the liquidation of other groups of victims took place in the country in which I live and where my roots lie, will always remain. And even if I, personally, did not become guilty, I have to bear the consequences as every German does, whether we like it or not.

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Some paragraphs of the article:

## **Child-Survivors of the Holocaust: Age-specific Traumatization and the Consequences for Therapy.**

Nathan Durst. Ph.D.\*

\_\_\_\_\_Published in: American Journal of Psychotherapy. Vol 57(4) 2003

### Introduction.

Some time after the end of the terrible fratricide in Rwanda, we received an important and somewhat unusual visitor in the offices of AMCHA\* (The National Israeli Center for Psychosocial Support of Holocaust survivors and the Second Generation): the Ambassador of Rwanda who wanted to learn about our work with Holocaust survivors.[]

His question was the following: "What should we do with the[se] traumatized children now, in order to prevent the situation that you at Amcha are struggling with, 50 years after the Holocaust?"

It became then very clear to me, that the experience that we have gathered with child survivors of the Holocaust has universal lessons.

Wherever there is war, children are the most injured and the most silent; therefore, they easily become the most forgotten victims.

My personal interest in this subject stems firstly from the fact that I myself am a child survivor. I was born in Germany, and was saved when in hiding in Holland. As a clinical psychologist, I have seen many child survivors in my practice and at Amcha, where I work as Clinical Director.

### The case of child-survivors.

For many years, children were subsumed under the global group of survivors and it was not even clear that they should be seen as a separate group. In fact, the German authorities, who were responsible for the restitution laws ("Wiedergutmachung") objected to the assumption that childhood experiences could leave any scar or would result in physical or mental difficulties. They claimed that since young children would not remember the details of suffering, they could not have been permanently damaged (1). There are only a few articles that deal with the immediate impact of the Holocaust on children.

Anna Freud and Sophie Dann (2) described the suffering of six orphans, who had survived Theresienstadt, and were at liberation between three and four-and-a-half years old. These clinicians recorded the behavior of these toddlers, who had no memory of their past, since they had been separated at such an early age from their families. Up until the time of their arrival at the nursery home at Bulldog Bank, England, where Freud and Dann were working, the children had been passed from one hand to another, living in different places between their second and third year. The children did not know what it meant to have a family, and they had no experience of normal life outside a camp or institution.

During the year they stayed in the nursery home, they created their own social structure, clung to each other and developed strong group identification. The children showed much sensitivity and responsibility towards one another's needs (like offering comfort), whereas towards the adults they were found to be very aggressive and hostile. In the beginning the children were difficult to handle, because of their hypersensitivity, restlessness and aggressive behavior. During their stay in the nursery, they learned to master some of their anxieties and acquire English as a new language. Slowly they developed adaptive social attitudes in the interaction with the caregivers. When this group of child-survivors was interviewed 30 years later (3) they brought up basic questions about their past: they wanted to know what had been the fate of their parents and whether anyone knew who had been in their original family. They had no knowledge or memories about them, and these questions about their identity and feelings of belonging, haunted them still, so many years later.[]

Keilson (4) undertook the only systematic (but uncontrolled) longitudinal study that researched the age-specific traumatization of Jewish war orphans, who were of different ages, living in the Netherlands. Out of 2041 non clinical orphans, he took a random sample of 204 who were born between 1925 and 1944. Most of these youngsters had survived the war in hiding, and a small number had been incarcerated in concentration camps. Keilson investigated the relationship between stressful traumatic situations and the permanent personality changes they evoked in the children. He was the first to draw attention to the fact that the post war period could have traumatic effects: children who found a favorable emotional environment after the war coped better emotionally than those who had not, even if their suffering during the period of persecution had been great. He found that the

children's new surroundings after the war either mitigated or intensified the traumatization process. In his study, published 25 years after the end of the Holocaust, he concluded that the child-survivors, who were no older than 4 years at liberation, tended to suffer from neurotic character developments. Children who were been between the ages of 11 to 14 years tended to suffer from anxiety, and those who were above the age of 14 suffered from chronic reactive depressive symptoms. Based on his classification of the children, according to the age at which they were separated from their mother, the data showed that the younger the child was, the more harmful the effect on his/her later development. []

It was only in the 1980s, several years after Keilson's research, that professional articles about child-survivors as a sub-group and as a new term in Holocaust literature and research began to appear. According to Krell (5), a child-survivor was defined as a person who was no older than 16 years of age at the end of the war, in 1945. He pointed out the differences between "adult-" and "child-" survivors in respect to the role of memory, methods of coping, and long-term adaptation. He proposed to reexamine theoretical considerations about early development and losses.[]

#### Psychotherapeutic approaches

Most of the child survivors lived for many years in the shadow of their fragmented self, in a kind of double reality. Life was split between the past and the present, between outward successful adaptation, and the scarred inner core. The early separations, traumatic persecution, and losses afflicted the children's capability to build new rewarding attachments; they showed a reluctance to seek treatment for the inflicted pain. The small amount of literature that has been undertaken on this topic points to a number of important insights.

Krell (5) mentions the therapeutic experience inherent in the documentation of the child survivors' histories. Being able to tell one's story gives the survivor the opportunity to integrate traumatic fragments into a "whole" narrative and to undertake an act of remembrance and preservation. The story also becomes a legacy for the future generations. Giving personal testimony of collective traumatic experiences makes the reconstruction of the historical sequence possible. The awareness that is gained by the witnesses telling their own story, also has important therapeutic value.[]

#### Therapeutic interventions in Amcha.[]

During the 15 years that Amcha has offered its services, we have gathered vast experience and have learned to be modest in our expectations. We cannot change the reality of the past. We can, however, alleviate some of the pain. We cannot fill the void of the past of the group of younger children nor can we take away the traumatic memories of the older child-survivors. We can, however, provide a holding environment where these survivors can experience belonging to a new group and find some relief for their sense of existential loneliness.

An approach that we have found useful is the combination of group and individual psychotherapy. The rationale for combining these approaches is based on the finding that many child survivors derive a sense of security from communal sharing, being accepted as survivors without shame or guilt, and being part of a group with a common background.. This feeling of understanding and being understood is even stronger when these groups are formed on the basis of equal ages (e.g. survivors born between 1929-1933). The group then becomes a peer group with common past experiences.

Risk-taking, confronting, giving and receiving feedback like in sibling interactions in a family, mutual empowerment, and the touching upon very painful memories, are all issues that can better be handled in a group setting than in individual therapy. The individual and group therapist cooperation gives the necessary holding basis, in order to process the traumatic past.

Tauber and van der Hal (6) reported on their experiences as co-facilitators in group psychotherapy with adult child survivors. They aimed to transform the children's arrested perceptions into the current adult's needs. The process of transformation went through three stages: the emotional aspects of their lives (e.g., longing, fear, anger etc.), the cognitive aspect of their past, and the integration of past and present. The theoretical idea behind the second stage is based on Tauber's (7) concept of "compound personality", which asserts that within the child-survivor's personality, the traumatized child-self and the chronologically appropriate adult-self coexist with one another. Often a contradiction is found between the inner expectations of the child and the demands on the adult, resulting in an unbalanced personality structure, which makes it difficult for the survivor to manage life.[]

#### Psychotherapy with child-survivors: a challenge.

My psychotherapeutic insights are based on the experience of many years with child survivors, who asked for assistance. Therefore, the knowledge I was able to gather is based on my clinical

impressions and experience, and should not be generalized to the whole population of Holocaust child survivors. Based on the ideas of Keilson (4), who divided his research group according to developmental stages, and Raphael (8), who described the different responses of younger children to the death of a significant figure, I will present some case vignettes from various age groups. The sequel of the losses incurred by the survivor, and the continuous adaptations during the war are different for each category. As a result, the therapist must be aware of these differences and adjust his/her therapy to the specific needs of the deprived inner child residing within the survivor.

0 – 3 Years. Toddlers are at first passive and totally dependent on their caregiver (mother). They need a person who is permanently available. In this object relationship they find basic security and learn to trust and attach themselves to others. Slowly they start to discover the world around them, but are still very much in need of confirmation by a parent. Children react emotionally to object-loss, but the meaning of death is not grasped. When in this stage, the child is separated and brought into hiding, the traumatic experience will last briefly and a regression might occur. More lasting traces are signal anxiety, distrust, anxious attachment, like clinging or rejection, and craving for unmet need satisfaction. There will be no memories of the earliest years.[]

### 3 - 5 Years.

The importance of the dyadic relationship and dependency lessens, but the need for security is strong. By using language, children learn to express themselves; there is also more self-control in relationship with others than there was at a younger age. In play and fantasy, many anxieties are acted out, as they are not always distinct from reality. Separation will elicit strong reactions. Children of this age bracket who survived were mostly in hiding. They might have vague memories from the past and possess some pre verbal signs such as smells, sounds or images. These children tended to develop chameleonlike features that were connected to the continuing demands of having to adapt to ever new frightening situations. Separation at this stage of the development of identification will evoke ambivalence and a stronger need for dependency. Throughout life, many forms of anxieties, feelings of helplessness, and/or psychosomatic complaints could be expected, whereby expressions of grief, such as anger, sadness or denial are the reactions to the losses. Memories of their lost ones are mostly not available.[]

### 5 – 8 Years.

Children in this stage like to socialize with others and, with the ripening of the cognitive abilities they can accept death. At this age children want close companions, but at the same time, achieve increasing detachment. They have a growing sense of justice, based on regards for rules of the game and are more aware of the opposing forces of good and bad.

Although the majority of children between these ages survived by hiding, a certain number of children lived in ghettos or concentration camps. Whereas in this age- group more memories are secured than they are in the younger age groups, psychological defenses against remembering the unbearable are strong and situations or affects will often be dissociated, forgotten or repressed. Childhood amnesia is experienced as a breach in one's life history. Feelings, such as sadness, loneliness, and lack of belonging, are expressions of masked depression.[]

### 8 – 12 Years.

In the latency phase, children detach from their parents. Validation through others becomes more important than it had previously been, together with the need for approval and admiration to establish self-evaluation as well as self-esteem. The concept of time, the intrinsic sense of order and causality, conscience growth, and guilt feelings become part of one's identity. The development of social skills and the first differentiation between the sexual groups occur. This is accompanied by feelings of shame. An interference in this stage can result in the reawakening of helplessness, feelings of insecurity and inferiority, with difficulties in socializing and confusion about the identity. It is important to show normalcy and well-adjusted coping towards the surroundings. At this stage in life, the meaning of danger and also of death is understood; fearful experiences can become somatized.[]

### 12 – 15 Years.

During these years, many bio-psycho-social changes take place; features like maturing, ambivalence, and striving for independence and autonomy are central. But there also arises the need for figures to idealize and identify with. Youngsters can take more responsibility, not only for themselves but sometimes also for others, who are weaker. They have a better understanding of moral conflicts and the complexities of life and search for norms, values and the meaning of life.

Young adolescents, who went through war experiences, understood exactly what happened; their striving for independence and achievement could become accelerated or decelerated; they were forced to take on too much responsibility and, after going through devastating experiences, often lost faith in mankind.[]

### **Concluding remarks**

During the Holocaust, most of the children kept longing and thinking about their relatives, and kept them alive, at least in fantasy. The continuous fight for survival, demanded being on constant alert and to adapt to new circumstances, which prevented expected grief reactions or mourning.[]

Altogether, child-survivors were left alone and many of them still complain about loneliness. As they reach old age, they want to reconnect to the remnants of their past. These remnants, in general, are painful and sad memories about the many losses, they had to endure. They lived with them alone for many years, and do need now a significant other, a partner, who can contain their pain.

Many of these survivors do not come to therapy, and those who do, often do not dare to touch the painful scars that lie within them. This is a challenge for the therapist, as she/he might feel that she/he should not touch or open Pandora's box. According to my experiences, this box is filled with tears, which have never been cried in the presence of an empathic other. We should strive to be this empathic other.

In the introduction to this article, I mentioned that the Ambassador of Rwanda visited the offices of Amcha: This was my answer to his question:

Dear Mr. Ambassador. In modern war, the real losers are the children. After they come back to society, there is no home anymore and they have the need to feel wanted and protected, their feelings to be respected and understood, the stories of their experiences and memories to be heard, even when they have no voice. When they only shout in anger, please understand that they have lost their tears and have forgotten the words to express their inner pain. In order to become who they really are, they need help to learn and accept what has happened to them, in a surrounding that respects the individual differences and recognizes their losses and traumatic experiences from then and the sequels now.

Thank you; by asking this question I understand that you will not forget them.

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\*Nathan Durst, Clinical Psychologist, Clinical Director AMCHA  
P.O.B.5296, Herzlyah 46191, Israel; e-mail:npdurst@hotmail.com

\*AMCHA, P.O.B.2930, Jerusalem 91029, Israel

## EYES THAT DO NOT SEE

Carola Cohn

Somehow out of hell and darkness I've come  
Back into a world considered bright.  
Reborn I was and told to "live"  
Since then I live with eyes half-closed.  
Were I to open them what would I see?  
Once, you asked me about the past, the other world.  
Isn't there enough darkness around you to see?  
If you do not see it next to you, how can see mine?

What will it help if I try to make you see with my eyes  
If your own do not want to see enough?  
How many times have you seen a meadow  
But have you ever seen it with a prisoner's eyes?  
Those eyes that have forgotten what green and brightness was  
While they only saw ever burning fires lighting up the gray skies.

Now, when I see children happily alive with their mothers  
Or a cat contentedly nursing her litter of kittens  
I have to close my eyes and turn away from so much life and love.

Now, too late, you ask "how was it"?  
But where you when our souls cried silently for help  
Where were you then – where are you now? Where?  
Why would you want to know about the suffering of others far away  
When you do not it close to you?  
Have you forgotten how your black brothers live  
Or do you know how hungry they are to be free? Just like you.

Do you know what his heart says when you ask me "how it was "  
While you do not see him next to you?  
He who is suffering silently besides you,  
perhaps also because of you – because you allow it  
and perhaps I do too.

When our eyes are closed, we do not see, we do not want to see.  
If we did, we would not ask.  
Now I live where brightness could exist  
And all I beg of you is do not ask, try to see.

From hellish darkness I have come  
And your brightness hurt my eyes  
But then he came and he was dark – that soothed my eyes.  
He did not ask. He knew.

(Written in the USA - early 1950s )

### My "Journey of Transformation" – by Carola Cohn

In March 2001, I attended my first OnebyOne Dialogue Group in Berlin. In order to understand what this encounter entailed for me personally, I have to give you a brief biographic sketch of what preceded this momentous decision, arrived at after great emotional turmoil.

My complete story, in the process of being published, is entitled:  
"My Nine Lives – through the Retrospectroscope".

I was born in 1927 in Berlin into a family of well to do, nonreligious, completely integrated German Jews. My father's family had been "Berlin Germans" for generations. My father, a lawyer and musician, had been decorated with the Iron Cross 1<sup>st</sup> class for his service and injury during WW1. He fully believed the promise which came with the medal that he had earned "the everlasting gratitude of the fatherland".

My mother was born in S.Petersburg into a family that had emigrated from Germany several generations earlier. Though nonreligious, the family had converted to Protestantism to further their integration in Russia.

With the Revolution they were labelled "white Russians", expropriated and had to return to Germany; my mother's brother was sent to exile in Siberia with his young English bride.

This past experience of expropriation and forced immigration was later to determine my mother's blind, total refusal to emigrate while that was still possible.

Politics were never discussed within the hearing of my brother and myself. I learned about persecution, being an "undesirable Jew" and Nazism by what I heard, observed and experienced on my own skin, although I could never talk about it, because politics were a "taboo" subject in my family. My father knew and attempted to emigrate but he was helpless when confronted by my mother's "NO" about leaving Germany.

And so in June 1942, after my father's arrest by the Gestapo, we were reunited to be transported in a sealed cattle wagon, destination unknown until we landed in Theresienstadt. The so-called "Ghetto for the privileged", also called the "Children's Ghetto" from where 15,000 children were taken from their parents and sent to the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Less than 100 children survived, I am one of those survivors, the only one of my family.

By "blind luck" I was pulled out of the gas chamber in Birkenau by an SS due to what I think was an error of identification. I never saw him before nor afterwards. I landed in an "Arbeitstransport" which took me and 499 other young women to slave labor in Austria. After liberation I learned that we had been in a camp belonging to Mauthausen.

From there my Odyssey as a "wandering Jew" began from one D.P. camp to another without funds, help or information whatsoever. I was then taken to be sent illegally to Palestine by the Hagana without being informed about the dangers and reality of those transports which often landed in Cyprus or the ships sank after being attacked.

I returned illegally to Italy after 9 months in Palestine where I had been deemed "undesirable" as a "Yekke", a German, who was blamed for Hitler by some!

After another year illegally in Italy, I received my affidavit and emigrated to the US where I remained for 19 years before I returned to live in Italy, the first place where I had felt "free".

In 1960 I returned very briefly to Berlin in order to meet my brother's childhood friend who had survived there underground.

I had also hoped to be able to fill in my "memory lacunae" but I was unable to do so, nor could I integrate my 1960 persona with me and my Berlin past.

The most difficult problem occurred when I saw that with most of Berlin destroyed, the two homes where I had lived were still standing, intact, probably still with our furniture inside. My hatred and rage were so great that I could easily have launched bombs into the buildings. My rage and feelings of vengeance were equally aroused whenever I was seeing anyone of a certain age whom I wanted to accost and ask if they had killed my family.

I had to flee from Berlin with my memory holes left gaping, frightened by my unsuspected, violent feelings. It had been a very traumatic visit. I swore I would never to return to Berlin, nor would I ever speak German again, except with trusted friends.

In March 2000 a friend told me that an "interesting" 3-day meeting was to take place in Rome, at the Valdese Church, with representatives of OnebyOne, a German-US association between the children of "victims" and/or survivors of the Shoà and the children of, as well as former, "perpetrators" who have established a dialogue between them to clarify the past and in order to begin to "understand the enemy".

At first I refused point blank, though consented to attend the meeting when I realized that I was free to walk out. I was introduced to Martina Emme and to Ilona. Even after Martina mentioned my having been born in Berlin, I could only speak in English with her.

After listening to their testimony I was most moved by the honesty and authenticity with which they spoke about their family's past as "perpetrators", as well as about their own feelings of guilt and

shame about the Nazi past. This was followed by Rosalie's (U.S.) account of her parent's Ghetto experience from where they landed in Auschwitz.

Researching the past, Martina had found out the hidden truth about her grandfather who had been on active Wehrmacht duty in the same ghetto to which Rosalie's parents had been deported. After hearing this testimony, I felt that if Rosalie could have a dialogue and also become friends with a "German", I could give it a try as well. I offered to show her a bit of Rome and I began to speak in German with her as I got to know her better.

Martina returned to Rome in January 2001, for the exhibition of OnebyOne artists. She stayed with me and we have since then become friends.

Martina's visit coincided with the manifestations for "Memorial Day" of the liberation of Auschwitz on Jan.27<sup>th</sup>. I was scheduled to give my testimony on RAI TV together with Roberto Olla who had interviewed me at length for his forthcoming book "Cherries Again, Uncle SS" and his TV documentary film "The Revolt of the Spirit" which dealt with Theresienstadt and the "passive" resistance there. As long as the ghetto inmates could perform music, compose or paint, the former artists reaffirmed their humanity in spite of being reduced to "non persons", awaiting the decreed "final solution."

By coincidence, a part of the film had to be redone due to some lighting mishap. The RAI TV crew came to my house to re-interview me. I used the opportunity to introduce Martina and OnebyOne. On the RAI television program we both spoke about the significance of the OnebyOne Dialogue groups in line with M.Buber and the importance of trying to "understand the enemy" in the sense of Primo Levi. Next I received a tentative invitation from Martina who knew about my refusal to return to Berlin.

I had to work through my very ambivalent emotions. I was terrified about another traumatic visit. However, with Martina's understanding of my conflicts and her offered support and Roberto Olla's feeling that the time had come for me to finally face and confront Berlin, I accepted the invitation. Somehow I knew that the feared "dragon" was inside me and had to be fought in a direct confrontation with the outer reality of today's Berlin.

Next, I feared censure from the "victim" side more than facing the "perpetrators". As a non believer, I have been accused of being a "traitor" to Judaism in the past!

I was in a turmoil. In my book I cited Heine: "Denk ich an Deutschland in der Nacht, so bin ich um den Schlaf gebracht". The same insomnia overcame me before and after happy that I went there to face the "dragon", which allowed me to leave unburdened and relieved of old fears and nightmares.

At breakfast on the first day of our meeting, I was unpleasantly struck by the fact that the "perpetrators" sat together at one table, while the "victims" were together at another one. I commented on it and was told that this would change. Next I noticed that the sequence of our talks followed the same "rule". I asked if I could change the order to talk earlier than scheduled, wanting to break up this division into the duality of "two factions."

The first speaker from the "perpetrator" side spoke about the devastating effects of being the son of a "mass murderer", for whose actions he still felt responsible.

Someone else whose family had not been actively involved or guilty of atrocities, spoke of his deep-seated shame as a German for their past history which had left its indelible mark on everyone.

When it was my turn, I just had to speak about my guilt feelings as sole survivor of my family.

I had been rejected by my mother at age 3 in favor of my brother who became her "Seelentroester", the "consoler of her soul". This led to ever increasing resentment and finally hate of my mother to the point where I felt that no coexistence between us was possible. One of us had to cease to exist! I adored my father and loved my little brother whom I could not blame for my mother's obsession with him.

Because of my mother's blind refusal to emigrate in time, we had landed in the extermination camps. Emotionally it was as though the "final solution" had in part also become my own personal solution!

What right did I have to survive when I had harbored such dark, devastating secrets in my innermost soul?

I made this confession of unending, enormous guilt and shame before Ilona spoke of her own shame and guilt for her father's having been a member of the SS. Having been able to share what up to then had been my unspeakable, secret burden gave way to previously unshed tears. I was allowed to cry while being held and comforted by Ilona.

With that shared experience of our respective shame and guilt, all former arbitrary divisions between us fell away. We became two human beings, united by understanding and sharing each other's pain. Since that moment, shared by all within the group, I can no longer accept the categorizing of "victim" vs "perpetrator", more than 55 years after the facts of history which has left its mark on us all.

Much to my relief and surprise, I was understood and not censored by the Jewish "side" who agreed with me when I spoke of my need to now look at and evaluate the past exclusively in human and individual terms.

Unless one attempts to do this, one risks another genocide: we cease to be human beings but become symbols who have to carry the banner of vengeance for past, unforgotten, eternal hates. For example, this has happened in Serbia where genocide has been perpetrated to vindicate a battle lost against the Turks in the 12<sup>th</sup> century!

I have learned another lesson in this most difficult week: I had to face my own prejudices, and admit to the fact that the Germans are, and want to be considered human beings, rather than as symbols of Evil and the "final solution".

It seems to me that a role reversal has occurred: the Germans have become the "non-persons" as far as many Jews are concerned, though admitting that "some of them are even friends"! I heard the same phrase the other way around a long time ago, in Germany!

Do we always have to fight some "category" which represents the "devil" or evil on whom to project all responsibility for whatever is wrong with the world, or perhaps with us due to our own personal problems?

This is also known as "paranoid projection". It was practiced by the Nazis when blaming the Jews for all the ills of the world, thus justifying the need to purify Germany and the world with the "final solution"!

While talking about "paranoia", permit me to make a play on words: The "final solution" was planned at the Wannsee Conference. In German the word for paranoia, or a mad idea, is "Wahn" – thus it was the "Wahn -Conference" which sealed our fate in 1942! Hitler's "Wahn" about a "superrace" had fallen on fertile soil, the scapegoat had been found, more acceptable to fight and do away with than the realities of defeat in WW1 followed by inflation, unemployment and the grave other social ills of that time.

Many other far-reaching considerations come to mind which I hope may become the theme of my next book.

At this point I would like to express my complete solidarity with and gratitude for what OnebyOne is attempting to do. I plan to return to Berlin for the next Dialogue meeting and hope that we may be able to establish a branch of OnebyOne here in Italy.

However, there are two criticisms I would like to voice for your consideration:

1. As a survivor, I feel as though I already no longer exist because OnebyOne addresses only **the** second generation of sons and daughters. I know that those few of us still around are on the way to extinction, like the dinosaurs. But as long as we still exist and can bear witness, we would like to be included! (I feel relegated to "non person" status by this omission).

2. I cringe everytime I read or hear "holocaust" instead of SHOAH.

I know the word is used in the US, but I doubt whether the definition of that word is known.

"Holocaust" refers to a religious sacrifice, thus it is hardly applicable.

I especially want thank Martina for the "Mensch" that she is and for what she has been doing. It is also thanks to her that I have been able to achieve some sort of reconciliation with Germany, associated with my own efforts to "Understand the Enemy" by reading her excellent, well documented book by that title. Martina's invitation and support has allowed me to revisit and know a Berlin so very different from what I had stored in my memory and dreaded in my mind.

I discovered Berlin to be a beautiful city, which I had always denied. I was able to shed enormous burdens of grief and hate. I found my Berlin roots again and could accept them without having to apologize for being a German. And as Martina also noticed, I even refound my old Berlin humor and could remember "forgotten" songs from the 30's. Last but not least, I became able to resume using my given name Cohn without fearing that, just like the yellow Star of David, it would brand and expose me to all kind of derision and dangers. Thank you all and OnebyOne for my Journey of Transformation!

Published by OnebyOne News, 2001 – in preparation publication by Puffin Press ; in Italian pub. by La Rete di Indra-Peacemaker Community in: Buone Notizie, V. No. 2, 2001.

## ONE BY ONE'S SPEAKER TEAM

Since 1996, members of One by One in Germany have been visiting schools in Berlin to tell about their experiences during and after the war. All of them participated in dialogue groups and they wholeheartedly support the principles of the One by One organisation: walls of mistrust can be broken down through honest dialogues between children of (Jewish) victims of the Nazi Regime and children of German Nazis or bystanders. As a rule, there are two people on the Speakers' Team who speak about their parents' persecution by the Communist Party of the former GDR.

Recently Eugen Kahl spoke about his parents' rescue in Frankfurt am Main. Panny Patch related her experiences in post-war Germany as a lively and open U.S.-American girl. She was a perfect counterpart for Inge Franken, who grew up in a family hidden behind walls of silence and not being allowed to ask questions.

One by One is eager to find new speakers for its team, since it is now, given the financial situation, rather difficult to invite One by One members from the U.S.A. Members living in Berlin are the core of the team.

To date, 29 schools and institutions have welcomed One by One speakers: secondary grammar-schools, vocational schools, colleges, high schools, an institution for adult education, the vocational school for police officers, the Anne Frank Centre and the House of the Wannsee Conference.

For years Inge Franken contacted schools and prepared the visits of the Speakers Team. Two years ago she stopped contacting new schools because there were some problems with teachers being afraid that their pupils would ask 'difficult' questions. The teachers did not want to become emotionally involved in the encounters and did not have the courage to invite One by One speakers. There is, however, a group of schools to which the speakers are invited every year, especially in the tenth classes and for projects in State-funded vocational schools for teachers. At present, schools learn about the Speakers Team through articles in newspapers and magazines, and become interested through enthusiastic reports from colleagues.

Inge likes to organise the speakers' visits and the project meetings. Such a project was organised last year in the secondary school in Neuruppin and at the Heinrich von Stephan School in Berlin Moabit. At the One by One Conference in November, 2004, teachers and pupils of four different schools, students and speakers met and exchanged experiences. The discussions continued for two and a half hours and could have gone on much longer. It is a pity that there was no time left to watch the colour slides of the project days in Neuruppin. The discussions continued during dinner and Inge is convinced that the co-operation with the schools will be just as effective again in future.

What are the effects of the visits and the projects and what are the One by One's goals? Many pupils start investigations in their own family. They speak with their parents and grandparents about the war. They see how the Nazi Regime and the war influenced almost all German families. National Socialism is not just an idea that fits well in history books and history lessons at school, but was a phenomenon that for twelve years had an impact on the every day life of Germany. The pupils learn how children and grandchildren of the victims of the Nazi Regime and children of Nazis or people who participated in the persecution of Jews and other groups the Party sought to eliminate, are still influenced by the past.

The pupils appreciate the openness with which the speakers relate their experiences. They see that prejudices and mistrust can be overcome and that facing the past has a healing effect on those who have the courage to do so. They especially value the presentation of two stories, representing both sides of the conflict in the past. They are moved by the stories of the Jewish survivors and wonder how youths and adults could ever become supporters of the Nazi ideology. At the ages of fifteen and sixteen, the pupils are sensitive for the personal stories; most of them are reflecting themselves about their individuality and personality. They are amazed that in most of the families the war was never an issue. They try to find out how their parents managed to resume normal lives after 1945.

A small number of pupils are not positive about the visits. Genuine discussions need more time than just the two hours provided in the school programme. Others say that they are not interested because the war is often a topic in discussions and they feel overloaded by the topic.

Most of the pupils, however, feel that the personal stories give them more details and information than books or films about the Nazi period. They believe that telling personal stories is the best method of confronting people with the past. The courage of One by One members to speak so openly about experiences and feelings make a strong impression on them.

A summarized translation of an article written by Inge Franken in the One by One Newsletter, issue November, 2004  
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## **SEE YOU AFTER THE DURATION**

By Michael D.Henderson  
Publish Brittanica/Publish America  
ISBN 1-4137-3868-0

Why would British parents risk sending their children to safety over submarine-infested waters? How would American and Canadian families and public respond to them? What adventures would the children get up and what would be the long-term effect on their lives and on attitudes on both sides of the Atlantic?

This book sheds light on an aspect of World War II that is little known on either side of the Atlantic. It is a tale that is at times moving, often humorous, evoking an authentic picture of life and attitudes sixty years ago. It is a saga of separation, a story of unashamed patriotism, and an important and very readable contribution to the literature of World War II.

“Innumerable volumes have been written about the transatlantic relationship, but here is a book that goes to its heart, the unbreakable emotional bonds that stretch across a vast ocean. Neither sentimental nor mawkish, Michael Henderson has captured the essence of this enduring, moving, wartime saga”.

Raymond Seitz, US Ambassador to Britain 1991-1994

“Those of my generation, born towards the end of the war, are often haunted by the thought of what might have happened had we been just little older. Michael Henderson tells us in a fascinating narrative, filled with adventure, drama and sadness of children taken from their parents to a foreign land for their own safety. One of the things I liked most about this book is the light it casts on some of the nooks and crannies of war-time North-American life.”

Sir Christopher Meyer, UK Ambassador to the US 1997-2003

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## **DIALOG AND PERSONAL STORIES**

**July 18 – 22, 2005**  
**Fort Lauderdale, Florida USA**  
**Nova Southeastern University**

The 3-day course and the 2-day conference will bring together scholars, educators, and practitioners from the United States, Europe, Israel, Palestine, and South Africa, with expertise in peace building, working with trauma victims, education, women's issues, group facilitation, and more.

**Dialog with the self and others:** a 3-day course, July 18-20

This experiential seminar is open to graduate students and upper level undergraduates in anthropology, behavioral sciences, communication, conflict studies, education, law, organizational studies, peace studies, political science, psychology, social work, sociology, and more. The course will be co-taught by members of the TRT (To Reflect and Trust) and will include:

- Plenary sessions
- Daily work in small break-out groups
- Art-based group work, storytelling and active listening, films, psychodrama and more
- Mentoring opportunities

- An online component at the beginning and end of the course

Summer Institute rate \$ 670 (including meals)

**Storytelling, listening and Change:** a 2-day conference, July 21-22

This event will bring together speakers and participants from around the U.S. and the world with expertise and a deep interest in the many uses of storytelling, the sharing of personal experiences, active listening and the positive change that these can have on individuals, families and groups, organizations, communities and societies.

Registration fee \$ 150 –180 (depending on meals taken)

Awards will be given for best student presentation and best new researcher presentation. The paper will be published in the Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies (on line and paper format).

Course and Conference, 5 days: registration fee \$ 800 (include meals)

Flight and accomodation fees covered by participants.

More information: <http://shss.nova.edu/events/DCAR-TRT/index.htm>

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## **Department of Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, Psychiatric University Hospital Munich 12.04.05**

### **Project *WarChildhood.eu* at the University of Munich**

#### **European war childhoods in the 2nd World War and their consequences**

Almost five years ago an increasing occupation started with the topic of the childhood in Germany in the second World War and in the Nazi period. There is a quickly growing number of publications to this topic since then. In connection with this, the research project *WarChildhood.eu* arose at the university of Munich in 2003. It has the aim of saving the memories of contemporary witnesses in questionnaires and interviews and evaluating them under a scientific perspective.

The first phase of that project which started in October 2004 deals with the childhood during the second World War and the Nazi period in Germany. There is the plan to extend the project to other European countries and to study the processing of this critical time under the omen of different social, cultural and political prerequisites in Europe. First contacts were started to England, Finland and Italy. Members of the birth years 1933 to 1945 are invited to participate in the studies. That selection is doubtlessly arbitrary. One could also include older persons or after the war born. Until now about 500 persons in Germany have replied to a questionnaire on the war childhood. Half of them are also ready to hold personal interviews on their childhood, the time after and their further life. The first of these interviews were carried out during the last months.

Memories, attitudes and assessments in connection with the childhood and its long time consequences are the object of research: How have the participants processed their experiences after 60 years? How do they assess them today and which consequences do they see for their lives, their identity and attitudes?

The very first impressions out of the interviews can be summarized in some key sentences:

- There isn't "the typical war-baby". As expected, memories and traces of the war childhood are very different and depend on how the interviewees themselves and their families were involved into the war and the Nazi period, and on the support of their mastering after the war.
- The war had also adventurous sides besides the terrible ones in the memory of participants who have experienced that time as older children and teenagers.
- Younger participants regard themselves more strongly touched by the post-war period than by the wartime itself. Experiences of sorrow and adventure stand besides each other also here.
- The national socialism plays a minor role in the representation of concrete memories in older interviewees, whereas in the memory of the younger they do not appear at all. Within the families the topic was mostly avoided.

- The holocaust wasn't named spontaneously in the interviews.
  - In the mastering process denial, shame and feelings of guilt play a noticeable role.
- The amplified public discourse about the war childhood topic during the last years is judged as relief and abolition of a taboo by the interviewed war children.

The project is carried out by a research group under management of the psychoanalyst Prof. Michael Ermann in the department of psychotherapy and psychosomatics of the Munich Psychiatric University Hospital. There are local study groups at the University of Greifswald and in Münster. The project was installed in connection with the national research group w2k on war childhood. Further Information can be found on the Internet under [www.warchildhood.net](http://www.warchildhood.net).

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Next issue

November, 2005

Reactions and articles till the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2005

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