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INTERNATIONAL

BULLETIN

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Jubilee issue, Autumn 2020

INTRODUCTION

From the 50 issues published between November 1995 and Spring 2020 I selected a number of interesting articles for this special issue. They covered 193 pages – far too much!
I had the difficult task to decide about the texts to be put aside and texts to be the contents of this issue. I hope you will enjoy my choice of articles and through them the story of the International Bulletin itself!

Best regards,

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

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FOREWORD

What was the reason that a Dutch self help organisation for collaborators' children started to edit an International Bulletin? Gonda Scheffel-Baars had no doubts about the importance of war children looking beyond their own problems and learn from meetings with war children abroad. She committed herself to create an international platform in print and online and this book shows how her work developed throughout these 25 years.

Gonda makes evident that children affected by the war have to cope with similar problems and that these are more important than the differences between them. Recognition (that is the English word for our organisation Herkenning) is one of the significant results of meeting other war children. And to break the silence at home and in society about what happened, for silence is a heavy burden on all of them.
This survey of 25 years International Bulletin presents to us the development in the Dutch, German, Scandinavian and English war children organisations.
In the first meeting of Werkgroep Herkenning in December 1981 some 30 shy and nervous people ('I hope that nobody notices that I have come to this meeting') could finally tell their story. Twenty years later, 180 people met in a very open and warm ambiance. That shows how meeting people with similar problems can influence one's life in a positive way.

Gonda was and still is very busy with contacting war children and their organisations abroad. As one of the first (founding) members of the Werkgroep Herkenning she promoted in the nineties of the last century the importance of these contacts to war children in Germany and to therapists. In this book you can follow the experiences of war children and their ways to cope with the past. Some of them went their way all alone, others founded organisations of self help. This applies to the 70 000 Finnish children and the one and a half million of English children who had been evacuated, evacuations initiated by the governments who were convinced this was the best way to protect them, not aware of the negative impact that this could have on these children.

There is the hard situation in which Danish mothers who had had a relationship with a German soldier, and their children were refused medical help. The heart wrenching story of the Lebensbornchildren in Germany and Norway who for a long time did not know about their origins because nobody in the families talked about them. And what about children robbed in other countries and taken to Germany to transform them into German Aryan children.
The effects of war do not end in the lives of the war children themselves as Sabine Bode described in her book about war grandchildren (Kriegsenkel). When parents don't tell their children about their war experiences as child, their children cannot reach them and are affected by their parents' experiences transmitted to them unconsciously. The war as a wall between two generations.

How can one continue this work for such a long time? Gonda describes how she get and got energy by attending conferences like in Reading in the UK and meeting people who are committed to this work like she is. The English initiative to celebrate a War Child Memorial Day at November 20 gives her the feeling, that she, as a collaborator's daughter, belongs to the world wide circle of war children.
That she edited this biannual International Bulletin for 25 years shows her perseverance. Werkgroep Herkenning hopes that she will continue this work, because international exchange of experiences is of great importance.

We thank Gonda for her important work!

Cuny Holthuis-Buve,
Chairwoman of Stichting Werkgroep Herkenning

Introduction of the first issue of the IB, November 1995

The organisation 'Werkgroep Herkenning' (Recognition), founded in 1981, learned at the end of 1986 about the research in Germany of the Israeli psychologist Dr. Dan Bar-On. He interviewed children of Nazis in order to study the aftereffects of the war and the holocaust in their lives.

The board asked me to contact him during my visit in Israel, in April 1987. We met and started our co-operation. First activity was Bar-On's visit to Holland. At this occasion he interviewed five of our members (June 1987).

The stories of the Dutch children confirmed many of the findings in his German research. The differences clarified the distinct situation in both countries.

During his second visit Bar-On showed to a group of collaborators' children a videotape he registered, an interview with two of his German interview partners.

Seven members of Herkenning participated in a symposium held at Wuppertal University, June 1988. We presented in several lectures our organisation and discussed the problems collaborators' children have to cope with.

During this symposium Bar-On asked us to help to set up a self help group, composed of some of his interview partners in the neighbourhood of Wuppertal. Anneliese Rehbein and I offered our help, later on we became 'regular' members of the group.

My contact with Dr. Bar-On and the Wuppertal group entailed more international contacts. The French historian Pierre Rigoulot contacted me when he was finishing his research about collaborators' children in France. Eystein Eggen from Oslo phoned me when he was setting up self help groups for NS-children in Norway. At congresses I met other people engaged in studying the problems of children of Nazis and collaborators.

In the bulletins of our organisation I related about those international contacts, although for most of our members the focus is still on their own problems and working through, the international aspect has no priority to them.

This year our organisation received for the first time in 14 years governmental subvention. We could open our own office with two part-time professional employees. Now we have facilities we never could dream of.

At their meeting in April the board invited me to tell about the international activities. There the plan was launched to set up an international bulletin. They charged me with this task. The bulletin intends to be a meeting place for all the groups and all the individuals who are studying the problems of children of Nazis and collaborators and organising help for them. We hope that in this bulletin we can exchange experiences, can offer help and support and learn from each others activities.

In 1987 already Dr. Dan Bar-On and I tried to come in contact with collaborators' children in other countries. At that time we were not successful, clearly time was not yet ripe.

The bulletin is, therefore, a landmark for each NS-child.

As at this moment most of the target group are German speaking or German understanding people, the greater part of the articles are written in German. Some articles are given in English as well. I would appreciate it if the German-speaking members of mixed groups will be so kind to translate the other articles in English or to write a summary of them. I would like to receive suggestions at this point, how to solve the language question in a more acceptable way.

Each group will receive 3 copies of this bulletin. I would like to ask you to make copies for your members. Individuals who receive a bulletin are allowed to make copies for friends or other interested people.

I thank all people who enthusiastically responded to my request to write about their activities. This first issue cannot contain all the information I received. In the next issue which I hope to publish in Spring 1996 I will give you more information about other groups. In this first issue groups told how their organisation came into being and some persons told about their activities. Next issue could present more personal stories and poems and could give more information about the problems and the ways people found to handle them. I, as 'editor', will appreciate your reactions, but most of all I hope that you will react to each others stories.

MORE THAN A DREAM (issue 14)
Hilversum, April 1982, a small hall in a meeting center, that's the place.
People enter, pale, wary, nervous.
In the coffee corner a woman starts a conversation with one of the other participants. The others drink their coffee in silence.
The chairman welcomes those present, thirty men and women, and gives the program of the day.
When in small groups - not too close to each other; they are not used to closeness - they tell their stories.
Some don't have the courage, even in this circle, to tell their names.
Some talk almost without breathing.
Others don't find the words to express what burdens their hearts.
Slowly, slowly they experience the safety of the place. They learn that they are not the only ones with a bizarre and painful life. They feel relieved by the understanding from the other participants.
At the end of the day they go home, less pale, less nervous, but still wary: a person they are acquainted with might see them leaving the meeting and might ask the theme of the meeting or might guess it....

February 2002, same hall.
People enter, they kiss, they hug each other, there is warmth and joy.
In the coffee corner people are in lively conversation with each other.
This time 180 persons subscribed. There are also some guests: representatives of the other organisations of children of war, representatives of the official Institute for War Documentation and of the governmental Organisation for Help to War Victims and some young historians who are engaged in research.
Marcel, the previous chairman, welcomes us in a speech which is alternately humorous and serious.
Two members of the first board light candles for all those who died during these twenty years.
A number of members are honoured especially because of their support of the organisation and because of fulfilling important tasks.
The first chairman, Dick, is appointed to be honorary president of our organisation.
And then, there is talking, talking, talking.
The atmosphere is vivid and people have too little time to talk to all the ones with whom they would like to speak. It is a marvelous meeting.

Twenty years ago we could not have dreamed that such a party would ever happen in our circle. We worked very hard to liberate us from a burdening past and to find strength in our thoughts and feelings. Slowly we became the warm persons we were in potential.
We sought the publicity to tell our stories so that the Dutch people learned about the injustice done to us and the stigmatisation. We hoped to bring forth a change of mentality.

Some beloved persons, some of them members of the resistance movement, took the initiative for our organisation and supported it. Much needed help in the beginning, without which we would have lacked the courage to start groups.
But most of the work we did all ourselves. This was more than a dream coming true.

KOMBI: DIALOGUE IN THE NETHERLANDS (issue 11)
In 1988 and 1989 two weekend meetings were organised where children of war met each other for the first time in the history of the Netherlands. It was an experiment to explore whether it would be possible to meet as children of victims and children of collaborators or Nazis. One small self-help group of seven participants was set up and had nine afternoon meetings and a weekend meeting as the last session.
The participants of these first activities had five different backgrounds: children of Jewish families, children of resistance fighters, children of collaborators or German parents and people who spent the wartime in the Japanese internment camps in the former Dutch colony of Dutch Indies.
These last people had had their own self-help organisation KJBB since 1980 and the collaborators' children started their group, Herkenning, in 1981. The children of the Jewish families and of the resistance fighters had small meetings under the umbrella of the official organization for war victims, ICODO, and founded their own self-help organisations in the nineties.

The experiences of the participants during both weekend meetings and in the small group showed that these kinds of encounters were very important for the discussion partners. It was a logical consequence to continue the work and to found an organization of volunteers, KOMBI. (In Dutch "Kinderen van de Oorlog voor Maatschappelijke Begeleiding en Integratie", in English "Children of War for Mutual Societal Help and Integration"). KOMBI was founded in 1990 and this year in May we celebrated its tenth birthday.
It is worthwhile to relate the activities which led to the foundation of KOMBI. The first meeting was initiated by members of KJBB.

In April 1988, twenty-five women met for the first time. I was one of them. Step by step we made each others' acquaintance and gradually it became clear that we all had many things in common. Recognition of one's own story in that of another, regardless of our backgrounds, was one of the exciting experiences of the first day. We had never realised that most of us wrestled with feelings of loneliness and that we all had to take far too much responsibility at a very young age. Because of the war situation, we did not grow up in an atmosphere of safety, shelter and warmth. We talked about the family secret in most of our families and we learned that most of us lived in isolation. The Jewish people who came out of hiding or out of the camps feared discrimination. The resistance fighter families were accustomed to keeping silent, and continued the silence after the war, although the situation was different now. The collaborators' children kept silent in order to prevent teasing and rebuke, like the German families. The people who repatriated from Indonesia to all appearances integrated smoothly into Dutch society, but felt themselves not accepted.
We learned about problems with relationships. As young children we witnessed the vulnerability of our parents and we learned to mistrust adults and any authority. Many lost their innocence at a very early age, because of the atrocities they went through or witnessed.

The more we became aware of the similarities in our stories, the more excited we got and we wanted to become allies. The experiences of our parents during and after the war had separated us from each other. We could, of course, understand that, but now we had come

much closer to each other than we could ever have imagined. We wrote a declaration in which we announced that the children of parents who were enemies in their generation intended to end the hatred and the prejudices: "Maybe we can become friends in our generation". It was published in several national papers.

In the small encounter group we started off by telling our own stories. That enabled us to feel empathy with each other because we recognized so many similar experiences. We discussed the role of the partners of children of war and how the age of the children at the end of war played an important role in the aftermath. We noticed the difference between those who lost their fathers and those who had to grow up with frustrated or traumatized parents. Some of the differences which have to do with our varied backgrounds were more difficult to cope with. We experienced how deeply rooted the distrust towards collaborators' children still was.
While our group was having its meetings, the release of two war criminals was being considered and the Dutch society was divided in two factions: those who supported and those who opposed it. Emotions also arose in our group and we decided that the member who had been outside the European war should facilitate the session. By the end we could share feelings of anger, pain and helplessness.

Our sessions culminated in a weekend meeting. Each member expressed - in drawing or painting - what had been the most important experience during the sessions. We added some special words or drawings on the sheets of the others. We thus made one big sheet of all the drawings and after discussing our work, we saw that we could not separate the sheets, unless we destroyed the whole! We felt that this expressed exactly what had happened in our group: our stories had become so interwoven that we did not go home as the 'loners' we had been at the start.

The women who had met in April 1988 at the women emancipation center met each other again in February 1989. This meeting was centered around the theme of confrontation: 'It is difficult or maybe impossible to be real allies when so many prejudices, so much distrust, anger and pain inherited from the past still influence our lives'. Although we decided not to attack each others as individuals, in practice it was too difficult to handle the emotions. The facilitators were no longer able to mediate, since they were also part of the game. History was repeated, all prejudices reinforced. The next morning we had calmed down and we could discuss what went wrong.

We were pioneers, making the mistakes of all beginners. I am convinced that we should have taken more time to come closer to each other, to find trust and strength in the similarities and should have delayed the discussions about our prejudices. We still had a long way to go together and we should have been more patient with ourselves and others.

KOMBI still organises weekend meetings and small self-help groups. The facilitators learned from the mistakes of the past.
Since 1990 we saw the founding of several new organizations, for instance JIN for the children with one Indonesian and one Dutch parent, Sakura for children with unknown Japanese fathers and INOG for Indonesian-Dutch children born after the war. The organization KJBB, which had started already their kongsi's in 1980, is still very active.
Three organizations for Jewish children were set up: JONAG for the generation born after the war, HOK for the children who were in hiding and JOK for Jewish children who were in the camps.
In 1992 children of German parents - or with an unknown German father - set up their own organization, but now participate again in Herkenning, the organisation for collaborators' children.
Children of 'the Liberation', most of them with unknown Canadian, American, Polish or Russian fathers set up their own self-help organisation.

Recently the children of persecuted Roma and Sinti founded their own groups.
In 1999 a network was created between all those organisations supervised by ICODO, the official organisation for war victims (first generation).
KOMBI remains the organisation where children of war can meet each other in a more personal way and can develop more quickly their working-through process.

EILEEN'S STORY (issue 34)
For decades Eileen was convinced she was the daughter of a German soldier, an enemy's child. Born in April 1946 in the Dutch internment camp where her mother was in detention, her start in life was not the best one can wish. Her mother Anja had collaborated with the Germans and when people saw she was pregnant she was arrested and interned in a camp. Everybody was convinced that her baby was fathered by a German, but Anja knew that the baby's father was a Canadian liberator with whom she had had a short relationship.
During the first year of her life Eileen was with her mother in the camp, but then the authorities thought this was not a good context for a child to grow up and they planned her transfer to a children's home. Anja's parents, who had broken all contact with their daughter because of her collaboration, learned about those plans and decided to take Eileen in their home and take care of her. At some moment, however, the authorities decided that Eileen could be reunited with her mother who lived by then in a home where former collaborators were re-educated and in which living conditions were much better than in the internment camp. In 1954 they released her mother and Anja and Eileen could hope to have a more normal life in future.

At age 11 Eileen was told that her father was a Canadian, but her mother did not want to tell her more. 'Ask me more when you are 18, then I will give you more information', she said to her daughter. Her mother married a customs-officer, who had a daughter from his first marriage. Anja did not behave well towards her daughter and her step-daughter. All her frustration and bitterness came out through violence and ill-treatment of the children. As soon as possible Eileen left the house to live on her own. She had always dreamt of becoming a physician, but because the money for such a study was lacking she went to Wageningen, where nurses lived together in an institute and received an education in nursery skills.
At age 18 Eileen visited her mother and asked her about her father. Her mother could not give her much information and very soon Eileen found out that there were many 'Bill Whites' in Canada. Disappointed she stopped her efforts to find her father.
Only many, many years later, when she had read Olga and Lloyd Rains' book *Roots, the voices of the left behind*, she contacted the couple who saw their life's mission in helping children of Canadian soldiers to find their unknown fathers.

Their help was successful and last spring Eileen met her two Canadian half-sisters April and Vanessa. They told her that her father Bill White had volunteered for the army as a physician and as an officer of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps he participated in the battles round the city of Antwerp and in the liberation of the eastern provinces of the Netherlands. Vanessa and April spoke with love about their father, who had been a warm and caring man. They were a little bit disappointed about his silence concerning his daughter in the Netherlands. He knew about her, because Anja had told him about her pregnancy, whereupon he had sent clothing and money. But by then Anja had been in detention and could not answer his letters. But the Canadian sisters believe that he had probably wanted to tell them about Eileen – it was he who gave this name to his daughter – but the unexpected death of his son William, who was only 15 years old, meant such an emotional blow that he never spoke about the war again.

In the summer of 2011 Vanessa and April visited her half-sister in the Netherlands and they could see for themselves, that despite the difficulties in her childhood and youth, Eileen has managed to come to grips with the past and has become very successful in the art works she makes. She is a beloved mother, spouse and grandmother. Vanessa and April had wonderful childhoods and youths compared to Eileen's and they felt more or less embarrassed when learning the details of their half-sister's difficult start in life.
But they want to look ahead. Of course many years in which they could have known each other and could have had good relationships were lost, but they hope to have still a lot of years before them in which they can share their experiences with each other. Eileen will visit her half-sisters in some months' time and they will show her the settlements of the Indians, of the tribe to which one of their forefathers belonged. 'I understand now why I have such deep dark eyes', Eileen said. The story of Eileen and her half-sisters is a story of war, sorrow and suffering, but also one of love, ideals, resilience and life.

MONIKA DIEDERICHS: KINDEREN VAN DUITSE MILITAIREN. Een verborgen leven. (Children of German Soldiers. A hidden life)
Uitg. Aspect, 2012 ISBN 978-94-6153-218-3 (issue 36)

In 2006 Monika published her book 'Wie geschoren wordt moet stilzitten' (Those who have their heads shaved should sit still) as a report on her studies on women and girls who had had a relationship with a German soldier or officer during the war. Already then she planned a research study on the experiences of children born from these relationships. Last year the outcomes of this study appeared in the above mentioned book, on the basis of 26 interviews with children and 8 interviews with mothers.

In the first two chapters Monika describes the way in which the Germans organised the care for pregnant women and girls in the Netherlands occupied by them. In the next chapter we get acquainted with the story of people who had been handed over by their mothers. The next chapters contain stories of people raised by their mother or other relatives and the book continues with the description of the ways in which a couple of these children tried to find their unknown biological father.
The last chapter gives a review of the outcomes of a research study on children of German soldiers in Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands.

Each story is unique, although several recurring topics are found in most of the stories. But differences are plenty because of the different contexts in which the children were raised. Children who lived with their mother had other experiences than those who lived in children's homes or were sent to families for adoption. It makes a difference in which way the child learned about his/her unknown father: was it the mother who told him or did the mother keep silent so that others uncovered the secret for him. The age of the child at the moment the concealed past was revealed plays an important role as well. So does the way in which the child found shelter and support or, conversely, was not given that important basis in life.

In the forties and fifties society had difficulties in accepting unmarried mothers. It was seen as a shame and those girls and women were stigmatised. Children born out of wedlock experienced in some way the blame. Children adopted by a family experienced in their lives the problems many adopted children have to cope with in their lives and the children Monika spoke with had to cope with the fact that they were considered to be the enemies' child on top of this. In one family the grandparents took care of two grandchildren, both born out of wedlock. One of them, the child of a Canadian soldier, was treated better than the other one, the child of a German soldier.

The subtitle of the book characterises one of the common themes in these children's lives: their lives were hidden. Many of those children did not know about their origins whereas very often the family, friends and neighbours knew all about the mother's relationship with the German soldier. From the moment they learned the truth these children started to keep silent about the fact that their fathers had been soldiers in the enemy army, because they guessed that people would despise them for their origins. The majority of the mothers never spoke about the past, did not answer the questions of their children, very often even refused to give them the father's name. The truth had to remain hidden and the best way was to keep silent.

A couple of children knew about their origins because schoolmates had told them so, but others grew up without any knowledge whatsoever.
But in each life came a moment that the truth could no longer be concealed: the child had to sign a certificate or to get a passport, received a call for the elections or went to the community's administration to fix the day for a marriage.
For some of them this was the moment that they decided to try to find out the identity of their fathers. Others postponed the search fearing that their fathers might have been involved in violent situations or in the Holocaust.
Those who found their father, very often after a long lasting research journey, had to face the fact that he was dead. In cases that the German family had known about the Dutch child, he/she was often welcomed wholeheartedly as the extra brother or sister. But also those German families who had not known that they had a Dutch half-brother or half-sister, were often open and welcoming. But this was not always the case, sometimes the deep feelings of belonging to the same family or to share with each other a part of their origins were lacking.

The majority of the children wrestled with the question: who am I? It is important to know who your father is, because a part of your identity is formed by him. Children who lived with their mother grew up without a father, without a man who could be a model to be followed. Or those who grew up with stepfathers had difficulties in accepting him as identification object. Without a father the circle of relatives is also much smaller. Sometimes it was important to have information about the father's family because of particular diseases or extraordinary artistic talents.

Many children of German soldiers were railed at and experienced hatred from their schoolmates. Their mothers kept silent when they asked why they were so disliked. They answered the question themselves thinking they weren't nice children. So they started to try to become friendly children in order to obtain the acceptance of their schoolmates, which they did not get of course. They used the same docile and obedient attitude to get their mother's love, and very often they did not succeed, because their mothers had problems with accepting the child at all.

This was their hidden life: a life in silence, lacking a safe basis, lacking self-confidence, yearning for acceptance, caring for the mother. When growing up some children concluded that their mother's silence had been selfish, so they stopped loving her and started to dislike her. They lived a life in which many issues could not be spoken of, a life of continuous alertness blocking spontaneity, a life missing part of its so important roots.
Many of them, however, managed to overcome their problems. They found and accepted help and support and succeeded in discovering in themselves unknown energies and resilience. Their start in life was far from brilliant. Nevertheless they managed to shape it such that they could fulfill their tasks in life. But not all of them were that lucky, many continued a life that did not give them much satisfaction.

THE NORWEGIAN NS-CHILDREN: SOME ISSUES FROM A RESEARCH PROJECT IN PROGRESS

We still fear being condemned and rejected because of our parents, just like many of us have experienced throughout childhood. (NS-child Karin Berle, 1996)

Passages of the paper presented by Associate Professor Baard Herman Borge, Harstad University College, at Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie (NIOD), Amsterdam, June 8, 2001. Summarising: GSB (issue 13)

Introduction

In today's Norway, as a minimum 100 000 countrymen are children of parents who belonged to Vidkun Quisling's collaborationist movement *Nasjonal Samling* (NS) during the years of German occupation from 1940 to 1945. It is generally believed that many of the so called NS-children experienced difficulties while growing up in post-war Norway, solely because their parents once were branded as *quislings*, that is "Nazis" and "traitors". Also, it is claimed that numerous NS-children suffer from health repercussions caused by exposure to heavy bullying during childhood.[]

So far, the notion of their plight has been based on a limited number of individual, often tragic stories presented by the media or in autobiographies. To what extent are these accounts representative? Up until recently the collaborators' children have not been subject to empirical research.[] In this paper, I will present some preliminary findings and observations from my own ongoing postal survey among NS-children born in the years between 1930 and 1960. It should be underlined that this paper is based on the first 100 completed questionnaires only. Thus, many potentially interesting research questions will have to wait for further analysis until all 350-400 questionnaires eventually can be included.[]

A new field of research

During the last 10-15 years, research on the German occupations in Western Europe has taken a new turn. Traditional views are re-examined and new research questions are posed. Whereas the historiography of the period has traditionally concentrated primarily on the resistance against Nazi-Germany, historical interest now seems to be shifting towards the many forms of collaboration: "Who *were* the people who ended up on the 'wrong side' of the fence during the war?" and "What became of them *after* the liberation?"[]

In my view there is a considerable potential for comparative research within this field. As all the countries under consideration roughly share the same war-time history, a most-similar-cases design can be applied, under which possible differences in long-term social outcomes must logically be due to "societal effects" in one form or the other. Another point to be made here is that this kind of research is *not* only useful in terms of learning more about the more or less marginalised categories under consideration only, it could *also* help us gain a deeper understanding of society at large.[]

Until recently, I think it, at least in Norway, has simply not been *comme il faut* to bring up the life experiences of the particular social categories already mentioned. As the history of these people can not so easily be incorporated into the dominant understanding of the war years, as it is represented in popular memory, scientists have avoided the subject, perhaps thinking that they otherwise might be accused of running errands on behalf of the former Nazis.[]

Why study the NS-children?

In my opinion, there are several reasons why historians and social scientists of today could benefit from interviewing NS-children; one is that they represent a historical source that so far has hardly been utilised. Hence, to interview them on a large scale represents a new way of casting light on how the collaborators, and their families, experienced both the years of occupation as well as the immediate post-war restoration and the decades that followed. To what extent did collaboration leave a persistent popular memory? How long did it take to re-integrate former collaborators in society? When, if ever, did discrimination against them cease?[]

In a way, the scholarly lack of interest in these childrens' alleged problems, as well as in other social consequences of World War II, is puzzling, as testimonies indicate that these corollaries may have affected the lives of many Western Europeans for a good many years after 1945.[]....it goes without saying that their plight ought to be reflected in contemporary Norwegian history as well as in our collective memory.[]

My impression is that children of NS-parents often welcome it as a kind of recognition when public attention, after all these years, is now being paid to their childhood experiences. One man wrote to me that he feels my research project is valuable, as it will reveal that there were *many* children in his situation (*It wasn't just me*). He continued by saying that NS-children should no longer have to hide their family shame, and the Norwegian society should not once again be allowed to turn its face away from the entire problem.
I agree with this man's views, but would like to add yet another reason why my project *could* be helpful to some NS-children. A key point of mine is that their supposed troubles are *not* merely an individual matter, of significance only to themselves. On the contrary, their problems should *not* be "privatised". Rather, I think, we should consider them as an outcome of specific *political* decisions and processes, possibly also neglect from government authorities. The individual NS-child had no influence over the driving forces behind the social branding of former collaborators - and their children. This, in turn, is the reason why I think their childhood experiences should be a concern for the Norwegian society. It also means that responsibility for the hardships some NS-children undoubtedly suffered during adolescence to some extent could be placed.

The social legacy of war-time collaboration in Norway
In Norway, everything identified with the "wrong side" during the war has until this day been a subject capable of stirring public emotion. Possibly, this issue may have been even more sensitive in this country than in most other countries formerly occupied by Nazi Germany.[I recognize, however, strong similarities with the Dutch situation; GSB]. Surveys indicate that the NS-stigma has been surprisingly persistent.[]

While little research has been done on the social re-integration of ex-collaborators after the post-war treason trials (*Rettsoppgjöret*), there is, contrary to what some historians maintain, reason to believe that many of them met discrimination in various forms for years to come, for example, they often had problems finding new employment and also proper housing for their families. The former Nazis in all probability constituted the most stigmatised group in post-war society, even in comparison with the situation of the Communists during the Cold War era.[]

A paradox
Should it be true that branding of former Nazis and their families has had a particular tenacity in Norway, it is, in my view, paradoxical, bearing in mind that the Norwegians on the whole experienced less hardships during World War II than did many other peoples of Western Europe.[] To many NS-members, Quisling's regime was principally a buffer between their own countrymen and the Germans.[]

The NS' regime in war-time Norway had more leeway in relation to the Germans than did most of its parallels elsewhere in Europe, and Quisling and his men used their power in an attempt to reshape Norwegian society (*Nyordningen)* in accordance with their own political ideals. As a reaction to NS' ambitions, the leaders of the national resistance movement decided to concentrate on fighting Quisling's 2 percent-strong movement and its ideology, instead of attacking German interests directly. Civil resistance against NS was organised in the form of an effective social boycott. Every "good" Norwegian was encouraged to establish, and uphold, an "ice-front" (*Isfronten*) against the NS minority.[]

To my knowledge, *Isfronten*, as *the* main form of resistance, was unique to Norway. Paroles from the Home front even extended this strategy to encompass the NS' members' offspring (*Your children shall not play with the traitors' children*). As a consequence, excommunicating children with known NS-parents came to be considered good, patriotic behaviour.
Following the peaceful liberation of Norway in May 1945, collaborators were arrested, put on trial and accused of treason, like in all the other countries which had been through a German occupation. Comparatively, the trials in Norway were nonetheless out of the ordinary, because every single NS-member, even those who apart from their membership had been totally passive during the German occupation, were prosecuted. [In Holland we see the same phenomenon; GSB]. Thus, having signed an NS membership form was treated as a criminal act in itself. Again, this lead to a spotlight, this time publicly, on who the local "traitors", even the small fish among them, were.
It could be argued that the political decision to take legal action against *all* the NS members was a logical outcome of the way civil resistance had been organised during the occupation. In a way, the trials confirmed that the NS-members, as a collective, really *had* been the primary enemy of the Norwegian people. A corollary of the legal processes, not foreseen at the time, was that many thousand sons and daughters of the ex-NS members had to grow up in a transparent post-war society with a father or mother who were previously convicted of treason.

Victims of post-war restoration
Another possibly important thrust behind the NS-stigma has yet to be mentioned. I believe that the phenomenon could be understood in the light of post-war restoration, as the social branding of so called "not-national elements" is most likely to be closely knit to the unifying effect of World War II in our country.[] In the immediate post-war years Norwegians probably felt a stronger sense of belonging to the national community than ever before.[]

In Norway, the events that followed the German attack on April 9, 1940, has constituted a vital part of our national self-image until today. According to popular memory, nearly all Norwegians were strongly opposed to Nazism, which is plainly understood as evil itself, during the years of occupation, a period allegedly characterized by a unique national team spirit. Historians have emphasized national consensus as the single most distinctive feature of occupied Norway.[]

Undoubtedly, the war led to a high degree of national unity in Norway, which at that time still was a young nation-state, that had gained full independence from Sweden only 35 years prior to Germany's invasion. In itself the consensus-effect of Norway's post-war restoration, which I think has often been underestimated, is of course a positive one. At the same time, though, the medal does have a reverse, as the war's contribution to Norwegian nation-building also meant that quite a few countrymen were defined as unworthy of belonging to the new found fellowship of "good" Norwegians.[] Therefore, I think one could argue that the former NS-members, and partly also their children, in a way came to pay the prize for national unity.

The survey
From July 2000 and onwards I have distributed a tailor made 47-page questionnaire to NS-children, and so far approximately 900 have received it in the mail. All in all, the document contains close to 200 questions, of which many are open-ended.[]
When phrasing the questions I received invaluable help from a number of NS-children.[] All the same, such a postal survey among NS-children, or similar groups, necessarily meets with a number of methodological problems.
First, as there naturally exists no list of the entire NS-population, a random sample, which is statistically representative in the strictest sense, can not be drawn.[]

Secondly, as I will demonstrate later on, among NS-children a widespread fear of having one's dark secret revealed still prevails. One should be aware that NS-children must often overcome mental barriers before they are able and willing to fill in my questionnaire and return it to me.[]

A third group of methodological problems is how to decide in practice who *is* an NS-child, and who is *not*. []
Perhaps an even greater problem of definition is to choose the age groups that should qualify as NS-children. Some say that the only real NS-children are those old enough to have their own memories of the occupation. Others want the exact opposite; to include only NS-children born after 1940, while excluding those born before the occupation started.[] To me, it would seem the best solution to include both the older and the younger children of former *quislings.[]*
As for the oldest, we should remember that even those born in the late 1920s were no more than 13-14 year old children as the Germans came to Norway. During most of the occupation, they were children, e.g. less than 18 years old. And *if* they were in NSUF (the NS youth organisation), this was not necessarily their own choice, but often a result of their parents forcing or of their isolation. Ostracised in their own environment, many had to seek company with other NS-children. Conversely, I think the younger, post-war generations, also ought to be included, so that we may study the development of the NS-stigma, and its practical consequences, over time. As I have already mentioned, I think there's reason to believe that popular hatred and contempt lasted for years to come after 1945. What was life like for NS-children in the late 1940s or even in the 1950s or 1960s? When did things get better, when did the parents' past cease to be a problem for the children?

Concluding remarks
My data seem to verify that many of them in fact *have* experienced problems, though not always grave problems, related to their particular family background. Furthermore, my results also give reason to presume that being an NS-child in itself quite often has caused considerable psychological strain for the individual. Feelings of shame and guilt are seemingly widespread along with a fear of being found out as a son or daughter of "Nazis" and "traitors". Perhaps these stress factors are part of what might be termed an NS-child syndrome, that sometimes, as shown earlier, will lead to mental distress and need for therapy. On the other hand, one should also note that a large share of my respondents report that under no circumstance have they felt their parents' war-time NS-affiliation as problematic, and so describe their own early days as normal.[]

I think the robustness of the NS' members could be the result of a strong ideological conviction.[]. Their children, on the other hand, and especially the younger among them, were simply *born* with the NS-stigma, e.g. it was not a result of something *they* quite voluntarily, had done during the German occupation, at a time when the younger NS-children were not even born and the older were too young to take a political stand different from that of their father and mother. In contrast to their parents, the children *neither* had an ideological conviction to back them up mentally, *nor* a supportive milieu of others who were in the same boat. Consequently, to me it seems that NS-children often were left to carry the weight of their parents' past all alone. Hopefully, my survey will eventually give us more secure knowledge about the various ways in which this predicament came to affect the lives of many thousand Norwegian children.

THOUGHTS (issue 8)
In early January, I received a personal letter from Holland with the request that I write an article for the next edition of the Bulletin with a deadline of April 1, 1999. Half doubting, half knowing that I could do it, I agreed. Today is May 6 and I torment myself with my confused thoughts.
What happened?
For weeks I've been under pressure. On the surface nothing is perceivable; I'm functioning extraordinarily well, but inside, and especially at night, childhood memories of nights of bombing raids pursue me.

I was born on October 10, 1937, the first child of a master gardener and his wife in a small town in southern Germany. My father was an idealistic Nazi, who, in 1928, long before Hitler's seizure of power, at the age of nineteen, became a member of the Nazi Party through the influence of his older brother. Both were the children of missionaries, who wanted to do something for their tormented homeland, which was in the grip of massive unemployment and political confusion. Had they per chance been raised in a working class family, they would possibly have become Communists.

Why do I speculate so much about my father's motives for joining the Party, although I didn't really know him, was never able to talk with him person to person? All I have of him are a few photos and his farewell letter from January 2, 1945. Since then, he is counted as missing. He was thirty-five years old then, the same age as my daughter is today.

My whole life, my thinking, my behavior are overshadowed by and, at the same time, based on the historical events in which my parents were involved as participants, and which reached their dreadful apex in the Holocaust. I know that my parents certainly did not want that, and yet they were partly responsible for the deaths of millions of innocent people.

My parents are dead. They cannot change anything. I have to take up their legacy, even though I did not choose to be born into, of all things, a Nazi family. Many children of perpetrators deny the past. I, too, needed decades till I learned to accept it. Since then, I feel better. I only wish that others could also have this experience. Repression and denial take their toll in valuable psychic energy.

My mood has changed during the writing of this article. I now feel strong enough to say that which I feared most. I was afraid that many people would read this and I might possibly be misunderstood.

Despite that, I am grateful that I had this chance to share my thoughts with many people. It's about the war in Kosovo. I could scream. It isn't possible to bomb people into peace. I remember the nights in the air raid shelter. I was six years old. I didn't know why the bombs were falling.
But it was clear to me that something bad was coming to us from the outside. Had I been older and a boy, I would surely have voluntarily enlisted, to die a hero's death against our "enemies".
In view of the current NATO bombing raids, I ask myself, why science has made progress in all disciplines, but has completely failed in psychology. Did anyone really believe that a dictator would capitulate just because he was threatened with bombs? Did none of the people responsible for the bombings foresee that the hands of the country's reasonable people are bound through the bombing attacks, because a citizen cannot take a moral stand against his or her own people in such a threatening situation? Did no one have an inkling that the misery of the people, whom one allegedly wanted to protect, would be heightened to infinity?

I want to end abruptly with these questions. My hope resides therein that more and more people will dare to express their discomfort with this war. Maybe a time will come in which at least half of the costs of war and rebuilding will be used for prevention of wars. Maybe then enough money will be available for psychological studies about the source of humanity's shadow side and how it can be avoided at all levels. Since the Holocaust, we Germans, especially, should know what totally normal human beings are capable of doing unto other human beings. One thing is clear to me: terrorizing people with bombs increases this potential.

Gertrud Kauderer
translation: Uta Allers

GOODBYE OTTO DUSCHELEIT (issue 17**)**
Martina Emme, former chairwoman of One by One Germany, wrote an open letter in the organisation's newsletter on the occasion of Otto's retirement from the Board.

The group members organised a party for him to wish him all the best for the future and to say goodbye. In German: Auf Wiedersehen, that means literally: see you again. They expressed their hope that they will see him again at various activities.
From the beginning of One by One, Otto played an important role. His presence at the meetings caused commotion, because participants doubted his sincerity: can we trust this man who served in the Waffen-SS? Can we take him at his word that he has come to an insight about what he did in the past, or is this mere show for him? Can we believe that he is working through the past with the help of dreams?

For the children of victim families his presence meant anxiety and mistrust, but it was also a challenge to explore their own feelings: did they still feel the need to see him as one of 'the other side' on whom they could project their feelings of revenge, or could they start to see in him the man he had become, the man feeling guilty and ashamed about the past and wishing to make a positive contribution to the present.
For the children of the perpetrators Otto represented the father or any other relative of the perpetrators' generation who broke the silence and took full responsibility for his deeds. All the participants in the meetings 'forced' him to prove the sincerity of his motives. Otto accepted that the group members 'put him on trial' again and again and had to prove that his repentance was real. Relationships in the group were often tense and Otto had to endure several attacks. Martina thanked him for his patience with them. It was important for them that Otto offered them this challenge and helped them to come to grips with their feelings of mistrust. He was the first, and often the only, man of his generation they met and who had the courage to face the past. Martina said that it would be a good thing if more of the perpetrators' generation were to do so.

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

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

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

Dan Bar-On, ed.: **BRIDGING THE GAP**
Körber Stiftung, Hamburg 2000
ISBN 3-89684-030-4 (issue 11)

In August 1998 the group TRT (To Reflect and Trust) held a seminar in Hamburg to which they invited people from Northern Ireland, South Africa and Israel (Palestinians and Israelis), with the aim of finding out whether the model of dialogue developed in their encounters could be useful for other conflict situations. In the seventh issue of our Bulletin Professor Dan Bar-On wrote an article about it.
The above mentioned book is the result of this seminar.

From the preface, Dan Bar-On:
'We decided to provide you with a multitude of voices, rather then tell you about this seminar through a monolithic single one.() *Perhaps one solid account could provide more coherence, give a theory or a model of how to work with past and current conflicts, of how to manage the victims' and victimisers' aftereffects. During the seminar there were also requests for such uniformity (and simplicity). I do not believe, however, that we are at a stage in our "state of the art" in which we can provide such a model or theory. I truly believe that each of the voices heard here is some contribution towards building such a theory, but none of us has, at present, achieved a total perspective of all the various contexts and agendas.'*

Thuli Mpshe, South Africa:
'I believe that sharing honestly is the true way forward to reconciliation. Knowledge and understanding of others' pain is definitely the way to understanding which leads to reconciliation. The process of learning from each other allows people to overcome conflict. It encourages empathy and the will to forgive. The reality that no matter how different we are, pain and hurt is similar suddenly hit me.'

Maureen Hetherington, Northern Ireland:
'*I was allowed to tell my story in a room with people who wanted to listen without interruption - here in Northern Ireland "listening" sometimes means waiting for the chance to "dive" in when the opportunity arises. It was a privilege to sit and listen while others shared their story. () The trip also turned out to be a very personal and important journey for a number of reasons but most importantly I felt empowered through validation of my story.'*

Fatma Kassem, Israel:
'The second or third day, I was asked to speak about Palestinian lives in Israel. I felt that I spoke clearly about how, even though I am Israeli, I don't enjoy the same privileges that Jewish Israelis enjoy. I spoke about how many people are oppressed in our own land. Immediately after I spoke I felt my friends, the other Israelis in this group, withdrawing from me. They were angry that I exposed their behavior to the rest of the world, and maybe especially to themselves. () Later we talked about what happened between us. I think that the road in front of us is still long, and it will take a long time to build up trust on both sides, but this is our responsibility if we want our childrens lives to be different than ours.'

Nitai Keren, Israel

Poem

The short way is the long one,
and there are no shortcuts this way.
While walking this way you must talk, and talk a lot,
and while you are talking,
the most important thing is to listen
and you must listen a lot and think.

The furthest destination is the closest to your heart,
and there are no way stations.
To get there you must do, and do a lot,
and while you are doing,
the most important thing is to think,
and you must think a lot, and watch.

The impossible dream is the only one you really need
to fulfill,
and there is no need to deny.
To fulfill a dream you must awaken and be alert,
and while you are awake and alert,
the most important thing is to watch,
and you must watch a lot, and feel.

The highest hope is found in the depth of despair,
and you must never give up.
To keep hope you must believe, and believe strongly,
and when you believe the most important thing is to feel,
and you must feel a lot and give.

The strongest connection of all is the connection to oneself
and you can't afford to depend on another.
To connect to himself a man must meet with the others,
and when you meet with the others,
the most important thing is to give,
and you must give a lot and listen.

The short way is the long one,
and there are no shortcuts this way.
while walking this way you must talk, and talk a lot,
and while you are talking,
the most important thing is to listen,
and you must listen a lot and think.

IDENTITY, CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION: the TRT Stockton College seminar, July 16-22, 2000

This seminar was the successor of the before mentioned Hamburg Seminar.
Dan Bar-On of the Ben Gurion University reports:

About thirty participants took part in this workshop. A few practitioners from current conflicts came for the first time, while others persisted from Hamburg and Bethlehem (meeting of October, 1999). At this meeting we worked alternating between plenary sessions and the three conflict groups, composed of the practitioners from the specific country (Northern Ireland, South Africa and Israel, with the Palestinian-Israeli setting) and Jewish and German members of the original TRT. Story tellling was still the major tool of these sessions, though issues of gender, identity, conciliation and re-entry were elaborated in parallel. The triangle - Germans, Jews and Palestinians - received some special attention as it composes for the Jewish members a difficult transition in identity from being victims in the Holocaust setting to being also victimizers in the P-I context. For the first time, we had ex-prisoners from the three conflict groups, and held a special session with them in the plenary. We had another moving plenary session with Faculty members of Stockton College who gave a personal report of their own difficulties as members of the Afro-American and Native-American minorities. This time the original TRT decided to cease its separate and dominating role and to deliver the decision making process to the plenary, including the practitioners from the conflict groups. There is a good chance that the group will meet again next summer in South Africa and the year after in Northern Ireland. One can conclude that the TRT work and atmosphere has a certain value for current conflicts especially when the latter have difficulties delving into the deeper emotional roots of the conflict.

WE DO NOT EVEN EXIST (issue 14)
Danish children of war explore the past

At the occasion of the editing of the book 'Horeunger og hellligdage -tyskerboerns beretninger', edited by Det Schoenbergske Forlag and written by Arne Oeland, chairman of the Danish Organistation of children with a Danish mother and a soldier of the German Wehrmacht, the journalist Marc-Christoph Wagner wrote an article in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung on 28 December 2001.

A paraphrased summarized translation follows:

Wagner referred to a research project by the physician and lay historian Kirsten Lyllof who found out that more than 13,000 German refugees, 7,000 of them children aged between 0 and 5, died in 1945. (Numbers for the years prior are not available).
She related that, indeed, many of them died from starvation, inflammations and dehydration. But it is obvious that medical help could have saved many of them. However, after five years of occupation, most of the Danish physicians were reluctant to treat German civilians. Hospitals closed their doors. The refugees were lodged in internment camps where the hygienic conditions were especially miserable, an unacceptable situation. Only when an epidemic was about to spread to the Danish population, did the government take action.

Lyllof wondered whether the physician's oath can be betrayed in special situations or if precisely in situations in which hatred and rejection are the norm, the oath exhorts the physician to uphold it.

The Lyllof's article, published in 1999 in the "Historisk Tidsskrift" and in summarized form in the daily "Politiken," sparked an intense debate. Many declared, that Lyllof had not taken into account the special conditions at the end of the occupation. So many years after the events it was easy to view the refusal and reluctance as unethical, though in that period it was quite understandable. This kind of argumentation is typical of the way Danish people have coped with the past; that's to say of the way it did **not** cope at all.

A similar issue is in the spotlight again - that of the fate of the German children of war. It is estimated that there are between 6,000 and 8,000 of them. The number is probably much higher because women gave the child the name of a later husband or did not mention any name.

The book by Arne Oeland is another blow for the established historians, because this issue was also not put on their agenda. Arne, a teacher, did not learn until he was 48 years old that his biological father was a soldier of the German Wehrmacht. A cousin of his told him the secret, which was well known in the family but was a taboo topic. Arne went to the civil registry office and the archives of the church to discover that his father's name was absent from the registry. He was met with denial: there were no documents. Later the officials admitted with reluctance that there were files. Instead of helping him to find the requested information, which is a civil right, stated in the Constitution, they tried to block his research. Arne finally found his father's name, although it had been eliminated from all the documents which citizens had a right to consult.

The case was no exception. Arne learned that many more children of German soldiers had met with the same reluctance and resistance. It was obvious that the staff of the Danish government had tried to destroy the fathers administratively. The children were robbed of their origins.

It is even more unacceptable that the civil administration not only violated the law **then** but is still doing it. In January 1938 a law was passed on in which the rights of children born out of wedlock were guaranteed. The law stipulated that the biological father should be found and that physicians, judges and officials had to do their utmost to find him. Even in the case that several men could be considered to be the father, each of them was obligated to pay support and education for the child until its 18th birthday.

During the occupation this law was not suspended. A special committee was charged with the search of the father. It diligently fulfilled its task. Even soldiers in the Siege of Stalingrad were asked to send blood for the proof of paternity! This measure can be seen in the tradition of the 1938 law which forbade marriages between 'Aryans' en 'not-Aryans'.

After the capitulation of Germany when the people in the street took revenge on the German 'whores', the officials tried to blot out the descent of the children of the war. If German soldiers wanted to take their responsibility for their child, they were denied the contact with the mothers. The government wanted to prevent family reunions. The 'raison d'état' violated civil rights.

The issue was taboo and one can understand why. Whereas the physicians refused to save the lives of German refugees, the officials blotted out the descent of Danish children. Fifty years after the war it is unacceptable that the government continues the strategy of its predecessors. The conditions now are not 'special' at all.

THE STORY OF HANNE (issue 13)
Deep in my heart I always knew that it was not the truth I was told in my childhood and youth. There was always this feeling of *'Is it really the truth'? - 'Could it go for the truth'?*
My mother told me that my older sister, eight years my senior, (Kirsten) and I have the same father. My mother was not married but she had been sort of engaged with my father (by the way, I never saw him, which is another strange thing). The eight-year gap between my sister and me did not fit with other stories which my mother told. That's why I always was so sceptic. Later I recalled, that I was labeled 'German-kid' during my early school classes, but at that time I didn' know what it meant.

In 1969 I married Kurt and we moved via Give and Frederica to Odense, where Kurt got a new job. He was actually born in Odense.
I often visited my mother in Vejle. Habitually we talked about 'our father'. Each time I visited my mother it was an issue. But in the beginning of the eighties something happened. As usual 'our father' was the topic and as usual he was incredibly glorified - in my imagination almost divine. Later that weekend my sister came around to see me to the train and she asked me how the visit had been. *'Fine, we talked about our father as usually*', I said. *'Our father'?* My sister was astonished. *'We don't have a father in common!'* It should be emphasized that 'our father' was never mentioned when we were all assembled. It was strange but understandable since it was a taboo.

All of a sudden the pieces fit in. I asked my sister if my father was a German, which she confirmed. At that moment my world fell apart. I felt completely empty and the trip home was extremely long. When I arrived in Odense I had cried my eyes out.
The next day I called my mother and asked her if the words of my sister were true. *'Yes'*, my mother said, '*but it's none of your sister's business to tell you that'.* She was furious. I asked her to come to me the next weekend to talk it over.
My mother told me that my father had been married and had two children in Germany. His name was Hans and he came from Hamburg. Towards the end of 1944 he was sent to Holland. She did not tell me why. For a short period of time my mother and father stayed in contact, but later my mother didn't know what happened to my father.

In the beginning of the eighties I considered that it would probably be impossible to find the family of my father after such a long time. Maybe I didn't want to know because my mother was still alive. My mother didn't touch the issue any more and I let it be.
At the end of 1987 my mother died and Kirsten and I had to settle the estate. My sister handed me a knife, a token from my father with swastika and all that. The knife, the name Hans and the town Hamburg.....it was all I knew about my father. And again I let it be, although I deeply wanted to find my German roots. I talked very much about it with my family and when I learned about the Organisation of Danish Children of War, my grownup daughter said that I should do something about it. But I lacked the courage and threw it aside, although I really wished to know the truth. My daughter wrote a letter to Arne Oeland, the chairman of the above-mentioned organisation, in which she told him about my story. He replied that I had to write to the Archives with information about my mother and myself, my name, my date of birth and so on.

After reflection and talk with my sister who found the idea OK - although she didn't actually understood the 'deep significance' - I wrote to the Archives. First of all I wrote to the church in Vejle where I was baptized and I asked for information from the parish register since nothing concerning my father was written at my certificate of baptism. There was nothing.
The next thing to do, according to Arne Oeland, was to write to the Rigsarkivet in Copenhagen and to the Landsarkiv in Viborg and apply for copies of the case of paternity. After a couple of weeks they answered me that I could get access to the case, but beforehand I had to sign a solemn declaration not to publicize the content of the paternity case. Some weeks later I received a copy of the documents. Suddenly I had answers on

some of my questions asked so long ago. There was an exact name and a family. The old documents confirmed that I had two half sisters, twins, in Germany, ten years my senior!

Automatically the next question arose. Should I go any further? Should I dare to 'penetrate' a foreign family and say: "Here I am"? I had to evaluate many possibilities. There were so many things to be considered: my Danish sister and my unknown family in Germany. But all of mine - my sister, my husband and my children - urged me to take the next step. They felt I wouldn't be satisfied before I received some degree of certainty. The thought of rejection didn't occur to me at all. I had a name and a city I could ponder about. But I always wished to give my father a face. I am an artist - a painter - and I painted quite a lot of portraits of a person turning his head away or without a face (my father). Now I wished a face in my mind instead of the person turning away.

I talked with Arne Oeland and he suggested to me to contact Mr.Josef Focks in Germany. I sent the necessary documents to him and after approximately two weeks the telephone rang. It was a Saturday evening I recall and it was Mr. Focks who called me from Germany to inform me that he found my family. (He is so kind to talk with, very understanding and extremely considerate). He told me that I have two sisters, twins, in a little town, Geesthacht, just outside Hamburg.
He had talked with one of my sisters, Marlene and her immediate reaction was: 'How exciting! Now I have a sister more!' She wanted me very much to write a letter immediately, or better to call her by phone! Mr.Focks mailed me the address and telephone numbers of my two sisters. It was an immense relief and I wept for joy. My two sisters in Germany and I are very indebted to Mr.Focks - and we told him.

I wrote a long letter to Geesthacht and enclosed some pictures of my family here in Denmark. Shortly after that I received pictures of my father, my sisters and their families. I felt so overwhelmed. We agreed to meet in Germany in the beginning of December 2000. Kurt and I left for a weekend. We were received with open arms. Incredibly positive, but also very overwhelming! We arrived Saturday. Children, daughters and sons-in-law and grandchildren were invited to coffee in the afternoon and dinner in the evening. They were all so amazingly sweet. Sunday we visited the cemetery where I saw my father's grave and placed a wreath. My sisters told me that my father died in 1982 leaving no hints about a daughter in Denmark. Afterward they said that they would have searched to find me if they had known about me.

Today it is a wonderful feeling to be in contact with my father's family, although the very first meeting was so over-whelming that I shortly after dissociated myself from them in fact. The first day after returning home I fell sick and was hospitalised with a heavy pneumonia. I believe that my health suffered due to the strong emotional disturbances. I wanted to be alone and kept to myself. I wept and wept. It was a process to settle the new me.

Today I am fine and very grateful.
In February our children and grandchild, Kurt and I celebrated the birthday of my twin sisters in Germany - and the young generation became acquainted. In May Kurt and I went for a vacation in France and we visited Geesthacht and the family on our way, celebrating the birthday of one of my new brothers-in-law.
Last summer one of my nephews and his wife and children came on vacation In Denmark. They usually rent a summerhouse in Denmark. They are fond of Denmark and he was extremely happy when he realised to have family here. This time the destination consequently was Funen where my sisters (all of them) and their husbands visited them - and us of course! Kurt and I celebrated our birthdays while they were on vacation here and they all joined us. We are very happy.

Hanne

LIVING IN THE PAST – OR INFORMING THE FUTURE (issue 23)
James Roffey, Chief Executive Officer, The Evacuees Reunion Assocation, UK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(This text appeared in The International Journal of Evacuee and War Child Studies “Children in War”.)

A PERSONAL RESPONSE to the question 'Why do you spend your time working with war children?' (issue 26)

Dr Martin Parsons, Director of the Research Center for Evacuee and War Child Studies, University of Reading.

I am often asked why I, born in the early 1950s, have spent the past 16 years researching the topic of war children. To begin with the answer would have been very simple. As a history teacher in a Secondary school I was concerned that the stereotypical images, both visual and written, could be seen in virtually all the text books on offer in the classroom, in the media and popular schools broadcasts. I knew that this could not be true, the stories and the explanations were too simplistic and I concluded very quickly that they remained the product of the war and post-war propaganda machine which, to a great extent, was anti-evacuee and pro-host.[1]

In 1990, I made the momentous decision to change career, from a very senior teacher in a school to become an academic. I wanted to return to my subject and not have to spend my time sorting out timetables, recalcitrant children and financial budgets. What the move gave me were the time and the space to concentrate on what I liked doing best….researching and writing. Having maintained an interest in my first degree (War Studies) it was only natural that I combined this with the reappraisal of life on the Home Front in World War II Britain…..Easy! Or so I thought. What I didn't realise at the time was this was to become my lifetime's work.

As a result of my initial concerns about stereotyping, I started by attempting to dispel the myths of civilian evacuation in the UK in world war two. This should have been a relatively innocent task, but strangely it was to bring me into conflict with some individuals and local government authorities who did not want me to search too deeply. One ex-Cabinet Minister, told me quite categorically that *'…..if I was searching for monetary compensation for the Evacuees they were not going to get it'*.

My searches meant spending many hours in record offices in both the evacuated and reception areas looking for the relevant information and that gem of a comment which would support, or refute, the hypothesis I was testing. The task was made more difficult by the fact that few of these repositories have files labeled 'Evacuation' or 'Evacuees'. I soon realised that I would have to search through the Air Raid Precaution Files and those of the Health and Education departments. In some cases an onerous task especially where the catalogueing was a little confusing.[2] Some record offices such as Dorset, a major Reception Center, didn't even know what they had on the subject. The archivist had informed me over the telephone that they had nothing in the archive except two audio tapes. When I traveled to Dorchester to hear them I decided to search through other documents and references just on the off-chance I would find something interesting…

I found enough to work there 2 days a week for almost 3 years!!!

The more searching I did, the more I realised that the evacuation schemes of World War Two, although successful from a logistical point of view, had taken very little account of evacuees as individuals with particular needs. It is a point that I now make with my students, and when I give talks elsewhere. We cannot generalise the effects of the evacuation. What would have been considered a 'good' experience by one, would not have been by another. It really came down to the environmental, social and family background of the child…and in some cases the mothers. One can sympathise with the planners who were intent on moving (originally) 3-4 million people over three days, an enormous task. But having got the evacuees into their reception areas, the responsibility for their welfare was left very much to the experience and motivation of the billeting officers in the locality. In some cases, as in Dorchester in Dorset, they were very successful in looking after their charges, in others they

[1] I always make the point to my students that British propaganda relating to the Home Front in World War Two was so successful that people still believe it today.

[2] But I did pick up lateral information about water-main damage in Exeter and the number of carrier pigeons kept at an ARP post in Dorset etc. Really useful!!!

were not and some of the children suffered as a result, sometimes to the present day.[3]
Another aspect of the evacuation scheme which is also ignored is the effect the return of the children had on both their own families and on the one they had left in the reception areas…some after a stay of five years where they had been well cared for and loved.
The personal accounts of evacuation and the research in the various archives have taken up a great deal of my time, but I realised that there was more to be done in this subject area. By concentrating solely on the British scheme I felt that I was narrowing my scope too much. There had to be other war children in other areas of the world who had suffered in the same way, or had dealt with problems way beyond the understanding and experience expected of a child.
Fortuitously, in the late 90's, I was invited to the key-note address on British Evacuation at a conference in Mikkelli in Finland. This was to be a very important moment in my career and was instrumental in widening the area of my research. While there, I was invited to become President of the International Federation of War Children, a body which would ultimately bring together war children from all over Europe. The role also allowed me to get an insight into the experiences of children who were not evacuated or originally displaced but who, through no fault of their own, became embroiled in the war and post-war politics of their families and, in consequence, the targets of hatred and abuse resulting in displacement, lack of identity and lack of self-esteem. In the process I have had to learn about inter-related disciplines such as Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychotherapy. Not an easy task for an historian.
Throughout my research I have had to deal with many depressing accounts and letters I receive from ex-war children, and without emotional support from my wife and from my very good friend the Rev Hugh Ellis, who is Chaplain to the Evacuee Reunion Association, it would have been very difficult to cope at times. However, on the positive side what my work has allowed me to do is meet some remarkable people. The ordinary person on the street who remains relatively unscathed despite horrendous abuse and life experiences, those who are willing to share their stories with the next generation to make sure they are aware of the problems their Grandparent's generation faced, and those who, despite their suffering, have forgiven the perpetrators. But above all I consider it to be a great privilege to work with people, ex-war children themselves, who have dedicated their lives and/or their retirement to bring the plight of war children into the public domain. There are many….but forgive me for mentioning a few who I consider to be pivotal in this work. In the UK there is James Roffey, who established the Evacuee Reunion Association in 1995 almost on a whim. It has now become the leading organisation of war children in the UK, and indeed perhaps in Europe. Gonda Scheffel-Baars, who has dedicated her life to getting recognition for the children of former Dutch collaborators. Pertti Kaven and the late Professor Singa Sandelin-Benko, who have done so much work in Finland with the children who went to Sweden. Dr Peter Heinl and Dr Helga Spranger, again both war children, who have helped many ex-war children in Germany and other parts of Europe to come to terms with their past, and Professor Marina Gulina who works with 'children' of the siege of Leningrad. We all have a responsibility to get people to confront their own role in the war-child scenario be it positive or negative. The psychiatrists and psychotherapists in the team are more aware of this than I as a historian but it is accepted that until some people can deal with their past they are unable to cope with their future.
However, as a team we realise that our work has only just begun. What we must continue to do is make sure that the powers that be and the public at large are made aware that war related trauma did not stop in 1945. As you read this article there are 31 wars taking place in the world. All of these affect children, and in some cases some as young as 8 years old are active participants. Between us we now have enough research evidence to demonstrate that, by ignoring the children, the countries involved are brewing up problems for the future.

[3] These can be either manifested at the lower end of intensity as simply not being able to say goodbye, or at the other end of the scale…..depression, agoraphobia, inability to make relationships etc. psychosomatic disorders etc.

We know that war trauma goes through three generations to some degree or another. Yet I still hear comments addressed to me like ‘I don’t know why you are doing this research they were (are) only children’ or ‘They’re children, they’ll grow out of it’…..well I am sorry to say that they don’t. All children are affected by war. How can they not be when they see families destroyed (sometimes as in modern day Africa by family members), parents ‘disappearing’, bodies lying in the streets etc etc.?
I am in the fortunate position where I can guide my own students doing the War Child Studies course towards concentrating on war-children post-1945 in order to bring things up to date. It is refreshing that there are now a few who are continuing their studies to higher degree research levels. This is the next generation who have to take things on.
Those of us working in this field, one which has been hidden for over 60 years, have only been able to scratch the surface and although we have had the benefit of getting first-hand accounts the documentary evidence has often been difficult to find. It has taken a lot of hard work and dedication on the part of many people to get this far. Therefore, what these future scholars have to do is make sure that our ground breaking work is employed to good intent and used to inform future generations of politicians about the effects of war on children. Hopefully, in so doing, we may be able to break the circle of trauma and make all governments realise that they have a responsibility to make sure that children in areas of conflict are affected as little as possible.

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF CHILDREN OF WAR IN OULU, FINLAND
13 – 15.6.2003 (issue 17)

In the hall of the municipal library is an exhibition. Pictures with children looking seriously, some even anxiously. A bag or suitcase in their hands. A label with their name and address around their necks. They will travel to Sweden or Denmark, leaving their families and heading for an uncertain fate.
There are letters from the children to their parents and from the parents to their children. A doll, an old suitcase, some dresses, a hat, a pair of little shoes, objects which people cherished and saved. Now they are on display representing the past and bringing it close to our hearts. Maybe more than words they express the lonely adventure the Finnish children of war went through.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FINALLY, THE “WAR CHILD” SPOKE (issue 33)

Sinikka Ortmark Stymne, Swedish writer,2008

Parents want their children to be spared from the horrors of the war raging in their country. Therefore they send their children to a solitary diaspora in a country where peace reigns. For instance, last year about 1000 solitary refugee children came to Sweden, mostly from Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. Estimates put the number of displaced refugee children in Europe to 100 000.
I was one of about 80 000 “War Children” who were evacuated from Finland to Sweden during WWII. In 1944 and 1945 I lived in three foster families. I was physically safe and I did not have to listen to the thunder of bomb-planes. But spiritually I was lost by being separated from my mother and father and from my language and my cultural roots in Finland.
We lonely war children were expected to be nice, obedient and grateful. Some of us found a loving family, others didn’t. Many returned to Finland but some 15 000 remained in Sweden. Most of us are plagued by guilt from feeling rejected by our parents as well as from having deserted both them and our Swedish foster parents.

Almost half a century later I told my story in the book ”Thou Who Hast the Children Dear”*. My story broke the silence and war children could openly start talking about their grief. Both countries have since then officially acknowledged their mistaken contribution to the plight of the people concerned.
Here follows a scene from my story dating back to August 1944:

Two girls aged nine and ten, are walking across the grazing fields. The first, Sinikka, light brown eyed, her dark hair sun-bleached. The second, Inga, blue eyed and golden haired. Both with bows as butterflies in their hair. Nature surrounds them with green meadows, high trees and silence. The corn is waiting to be harvested…
The girls climb the old cherry tree, sitting on stable tree branches, their legs kicking. Sinikka looks at Inga. She is silent and thinking about something. She isn't as usual. Is she angry? That would be dangerous. Am I going to be sent to a children's home? Haven't I been nice enough? Don't they want me here any more, like the two families before them? Have I been nagging or something? Inga was almost always talking about something, but not now. Awkwardly it came:
- Please Inga. I know you have heard something. I'm not going to tell anybody if you tell me. Please! I promise. I give you my word of honor…
Sinikka knew nagging was dangerous. Her mother wrote long time ago in a letter that she shouldn't.
- Please … Her eyes were begging. - I'm not going to tell anybody.

Silence was thick for a moment. Then Inga said:
-Your father is dead and he's been so for a long time.
Sinikkas legs stop kicking. Time stops … Inga wasn't talking about her father! It couldn't be. A long time? Her mother would have told her if it were true… Sinikka climbs down, without a word. Inga looks guilty but Sinikka doesn't notice. She remains in the shadow of the cherry tree. From this moment she was frozen stiff and numb. From this moment on she had no hope left, no hope to return home, no home left in Helsinki…
She went to the farm and waited till the moment when the house was empty. Then she takes her mother's letters from a box and reads them once more… Mother wrote nothing about Father's death. Months ago she wrote that he was ill, when Sinikka was still living with the first foster family. She had been worried and cried. Her foster family had consoled her by persuading her that her father was almost well. They had pointed out words and she looked in her dictionary...
She takes another letter, it is from Easter… Mother wrote that Father has stiff arms and cannot write with them, but Mother will continue to write. And Sinikka was content with that. Then later, Mother didn't write, she couldn't understand what Sinikka wrote anymore. Finnish and Swedish were mixed into an incomprehensible lingo. She didn't have any language left…
Sinikka kept her promise to Inga. She didn't talk about her father's death. Neither to her foster family, nor to her mother in Finland. Her father was inaccessible. He was living deep in her heart.
Tears of grief flow almost sixty years later.

In 2005 the plight of Finland's War Children was publicly recognized. The king of Sweden and the president of Finland presided jointly over the installation of a statue named "Separation" on the Finnish-Swedish border, where the majority of Finnish children crossed during the war.

"TRANSFORMING THE LEGACIES OF CONFLICT, WAR AND GENOCIDE TRHOUGH DIALOGUE" (issue 24)
One by One Conference, November 13 – 17, 2006, Impressions, by Alexa Dvorson

"From the Wound a Lovely Flower Grows"
It's more than commendable when a group of magicians disguised as a planning team manages to organize a conference down to the last name tag and teabag. But one mystery factor - the unknown outcome - always figures in the equation: no one can predict how even the most finely tuned agenda will play out until the event actually begins.

The stakes were higher than usual. To give the program a wider scope, the One by One Conference Committee took a risk by inviting guests beyond the circle of "usual suspects," so the suspense was even greater. Given the daunting schedule peppered with presentations about Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur and Armenia – to name a few - some participants might have felt upstaged or overwhelmed by the spectrum of subject matter: "I have so much on my plate with my own story; now I have to make room for all this too?"

A legitimate concern, perhaps: after all, each chapter of war, conflict and genocide leaves unique scars on the body of human history. Just as no two stories shared in One by One's dialogue groups are ever the same, diverse legacies of trauma, guilt and transcendence ranging from Peru to Pakistan cannot be simply cut and pasted as lessons to apply elsewhere. Or can they?

That was part of the mystery of this conference. The divergent backgrounds of participants and guest speakers created a lush backdrop for exploring and reporting on the power and potential of dialogue from many perspectives. The underlying themes of co-existence and reconciliation lent a common ground conducive to rich exchange. But the bonding agent that offered up the greatest space for resonance and revelation was none other than the human heart.

This was the open secret of the week's success – from the Conference Committee's heartfelt intentions in the planning stages to the emotionally charged, one-word utterances in the closing circle that brought five days of profound sharing, inquiry, and listening to a conclusion:
"Inspired." "Brimming." "Blessed."

In the opening presentation, Martina Emme and Rosalie Gerut traced ten years of dialogue and transformation in One by One as they recounted the group's origins in 1993: a seed of academic inquiry that took root and grew into a flowering tree whose branches continue to spread.

It was a Harvard researcher (a child of concentration camp survivors) who staged that first meeting, later dubbed the "zero group," between children of Nazi perpetrators and those of Shoah survivors. Despite initial apprehension, the participants realized they weren't finished talking to each other when the meeting was over. They've been conversing ever since. As others found their way to what gradually became a kind of family, One by One expanded to an incorporated organization with chapters in Boston, New York and Berlin, their members spanning three generations. Besides a decade of dialogue groups and monthly meetings, the immense dedication of individual members has manifested in numerous independent projects including a One by One delegation to Bosnia, school presentations, and book projects.

Witnesses to Transformation
Zella Brown, Suzanne Schecker, Marga Dieter and Helga Mueller set the stage for two rounds of group storytelling in which we were reminded of the literal implication of the name "One by One:" each separate narrative has meaning, impact and significance in the bigger picture. Because some of us are familiar with each other's stories, dialogue in this context challenges us to speak with greater clarity about our own processes, while allowing us to cultivate greater empathy for others and respect

our differences. While one child grew up with bedtime stories of her parents' imprisonment in concentration camps, another child of survivors grew up with silence and had to fill in the blanks of her parents' ordeal by other means. Instead of processing cognitive information, she "inherited their pain. They didn't talk about it; they lived it."

On the other side of the fence, a schoolgirl in the United States learned the meaning of prejudice when a classmate refused to partner with her because she was German. Another wanted to die when she learned of her father's guilt as a Nazi perpetrator.

"I couldn't have a positive identity with my roots and family," said a third German participant, "because the world was saying they were evil."

"But walking the path of dialogue," concludes another, "we help each other..."

M'chail l'Chail: from Strength to Strength
Despite our very different stories, we have one significant commonality: many of us benchmark our biographies with demarcation points to chart the paths of our lives before and after joining One by One. In some cases it has meant the difference between hope and despair, fright and security, isolation and community. The more we have grown in the spirit of dialogue through the years, the more we have to share with others; when we give voice to something that has been locked away, wounds can be treated, and history changes. Conference attendees affirmed this during the closing circle with the words:
"Healing." "Renewed." "Grateful." "Expanded."
"Overwhelmed." "Elevated."

Thanks to the facilitators' gentle rituals to create space for clear intent, the atmosphere so conducive to warm, heart-based exchange was reinforced every day. When this is possible, as one speaker reminded us, pent-up energy can be channeled in other ways, and "spiritual work happens." This requires total presence, the giving of oneself through listening, and gentle but firm adherence to timing.

A Keynote of Courage
Joseph Sebarenzi, former head of the Rwandan Parliament and survivor of the Rwandan genocide, presented a stirring portrait of life in Rwanda before and after the murder of almost a million Tutsis and allied Hutus. He was joined by H.E. Professor Joseph Nsengimana, the Rwandan Ambassador to the UN, who gave the keynote speech at Fordham University. Both speakers discussed the benefits and shortfalls of *gacacas*, or people's courts, whereby perpetrators are given lighter sentences if they agree to tell the truth of their acts in April 1994, sometimes referred to as "the month that would not end."

Sebarenzi challenges those bent on vengeance with the words, "Revenge is like adding guilt to victimhood. It solves nothing. At some point, we have to ignore the past and envision the future." Pointing to One by One's healing effects of dialogue, he drew applause for his closing words: "If you can do it, we can do it."

Notes on Healing through Forgiveness
As a long-term resident of Germany, a country whose value system places punctuality not far behind democracy and freedom of speech, I used to delight in the two-word greeting of a colleague who would let me off the hook when I regretted arriving at my workplace a few minutes late. "Instant forgiveness," he said.

What a concept! Nothing could be further from the philosophy presented during one of the most challenging and thought-provoking events in the One by One Conference. The forgiveness workshop, led by New York psychotherapist Marian Weisberg and trauma expert Anie Kalayjian, could have been mistaken for a crash course in human evolution and transformation. Due to time

constraints, many participants felt an upwelling of unfinished business when the session ended, but they left with a toolkit of lifelong usefulness.

Myths were dispelled in a flurry of bullet points: forgiveness does not mean forgetting or denying whatever evil was committed; the enemy is not exonerated, nor are the dead or wounded betrayed. Furthermore, forgiveness does not forego justice. And in this paradigm, it is not necessary to wait for perpetrators to acknowledge their acts and ask for forgiveness first.

I could almost swear I heard little wheels whirring in people's heads-mine included-as we tried to wrap our brains around these daring notions in record time. The tight places in our belief systems were instantly noticeable, as if we were trying out new yoga positions in the heart-mind.

To stretch those tight places, another dose of bullet points: the state of being unforgiving can manifest in anxiety, compulsion, fear, resentment, inflexibility, horizontal violence and depression. There were instant nods of recognition; most of us have been visited by any combination of those conditions. As session participant Helen Rinde put it, "When I hold onto anger and hatred, I give away my power. By opening my heart, I get it back."

Thus one of the more salient points proposed: forgiveness is for healing oneself, not for someone else. According to Dr. Kalayjian, making a conscious choice to forgive can cleanse the soul of resentment, yield its grip on misery, and free the self from the chains of hate and anger. Whoever is not addicted to carrying sadness and grief [raise your hand!], she went on, has the chance to release trapped energy - which can then be channeled into positive action for the world.

Again, the wheels whirred in a screech of instant resistance. Won't this send the wrong signal; doesn't it ultimately let perpetrators off the hook? How on earth can this be applied to the Shoah, or any other genocide?

Dr. Kalayjian had an answer for everything. A descendant of survivors of the Turkish genocide of Armenians, she has heard such questions before. You forgive the soul of someone, she replied, not the evil deed. And: forgiveness is not something to be forced; it is a shift in perception to see beyond the reactive judgments of the ego—a shift not possible without adequate grieving time.

Let's face it: old habits die hard, and old identification systems die perhaps even harder. What becomes of someone who lets go of the anger around remembrance and remorse that have fueled a life's work and identity for years? How can forgiveness fit that sense of obligation?
Answer: it is wise to distinguish between the kind of anger that is constructive, manifesting in activism and other creative engagement, and the self-destructive kind that clings to the "demonization" of the Other, resulting in a perpetual polarization that blinds us to our own shadow sides.

We were asked to use a "workable grievance" to experiment with a step-by-step exercise in forgiveness**.** By acknowledging first what happened, then achieving empathy, followed by validation and reparation, closure was possible. No push-button paradigms were promoted here: just as dialogue can lead to reconciliation, this too is a process. When it works, one may arrive at forgiving the soul of another – it is not necessary to forgive the evil act.
The session concluded with these parting shots:
- 1) an invitation to observe the difference these steps can make in daily life;
- 2) an invitation to think about the impact of forgiveness—or lack of it—on the next seven generations.

Closing
Four days' cultivation of dialogue's fertile ground concluded with a party of song, readings, dance, and more storytelling. The next day, part of the closing circle was dedicated to the memory of Gottfried Leich, a One by One member who passed away in February 2005.

The sharing of common space to discuss a rich range of issues yielded an atmosphere so inspired that the heart quotient seemed to multiply with every session and conversation. By thinking outside the box to lend the conference a more global terrain, the planning committee made a glowing contribution to support the community of mediators, healers, peace artists, activists and facilitators; may their momentum be blessed and enhanced in 2007 and beyond.

The closing words rang like benedictions: "Hopeful." "Fulfilled." "Family."
The family grows. As one member said, "This is a process that will last until the end of our lives."
…And then some.

Leclerc

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HEARTS ACROSS THE BORDERS (issue 24)
As the chairman of the organisation 'Coeurs Sans Frontières'-'Herzen Ohne Grenzen' I would like to present our association which is a joint initiative of Germans and Frenchmen. The countries of which we are inhabitants fought against each other in the past and thanks to the commitment of our respective governments since 1945 our peoples, that suffered so often from mutual hostilities, have recovered from the damages caused by the conflicts.
Although our organisation is initiated by people who are children of World War II, it is open to all children of war. A couple of grandchildren and grand-grandchildren of World War I have already joined us.
We want to take control of our own fate after having suffered, physically and mentally, in society or/and in our families, for such a long time because we were the children of 'the German enemies', a situation which we are not responsible for and guilty of. We have come to realise that we are actual victims just as all collateral victims of war – this disgrace of the human race. Our world will only become really civilised if we succeed in finding ways of solving problems without using hatred and violence.
Our organisation is based on the concept of mutual self help. We offer help to children of war in search of their biological origins, whether they are born out of a love relationship or out of an act of rape, whether they are the offspring of captives or of convicts.
In 2004, at the approach of our 60th birthday, we became aware of the fact that our fate is not ours only but that of so many other people in the world. We realised that time is running out, that our fathers and mothers are old or already dead and that witnesses of the war period are becoming rare. We had to leave the shadow and step to the fore, leaving behind us loneliness and shame.

We did not want to be an organisation just for Frenchmen, but from the outset we wanted it to be a common project of Frenchmen and Germans. For that reason our organisation has a bilingual name. We also wanted this organisation to be embedded in a broader framework. Therefore, the foundation act has been signed not only by the representatives of the French children of war, Jean-Jacques Delorme and the representative of the German children of war, Johanna Brunne, but also by the director of 'Fantom e.V'., Ludwig Norz. ('Fantom e.V.' is an historical research organisation on a European level). The Act was signed in November 2006 in the German House in Paris on the basis of a treaty agreed on at the meeting of 'Fantom e.V.' in Berlin in October 2006. In the small signing ceremony a couple of members participated and also the assistant director of the WASt in Berlin – an institute specialised in tracing lost relatives.

We would like to come into contact with other (organisations of) children of war living in all the countries that were occupied by the Germans during World War II.
In article 3 of our regulations our aims are formulated as follows:
-We will stimulate mutual help and cultural exchanges between our two peoples
-We will stimulate contacts and dialogues between French-German and German-French families and the children born during and after the war
-We will give help to German and French people in search of their biological father and relatives in the other country by giving them help in finding their way in the Archives
-We will offer the help of translators to those people who have difficulties in understanding their relatives speaking another language
-We want to convince the French and the German Parliaments that they should grant a double nationality to those children and grandchildren of former German-French relationships who so wish
-We want to become an associate of the U.N. Convention that protects children born during or as a consequence of wars in Europe and elsewhere in the world, including those children who were born through an act of violence
-We will welcome children living in countries where people are waging war in
German and French families for a stay away from the violent conflict.

We have succeeded already in helping a number of French people to find their German relatives and we have helped one German woman to come into contact with her French family.

We would like to open a dialogue with other children of war and discuss ways of mutual support and common activities. Jean-Jacques Delorme, chairman

SPLINTERED INNOCENCE
The Intuitive Discovery and Psychology of Childhood War Trauma in Adults
By Peter Heinl
Ed. Brunner-Routledge ISBN 0-415-22362-8 2001 0-415-22363-6 2001, paperback (issue 19)

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

"In reading Peter Heinl's *Splintered Innocence; An Intuitive Approach to Treating War Trauma*, I stepped into a world that had vanished so completely, the only traces left were the marks on body and soul of the afflicted in Heinl's book. Nearly sixty years ago I was a part of this world, when millions of ethnic Germans from all countries of Eastern Europe, and German nationals from the Eastern provinces of Germany, were expelled from their homes, dispossessed, raped, murdered, and enslaved. In a massive wave of human dislocation millions of people escaped on foot, in treks of horse-drawn wagons, loaded with bundles,

pulled carts, carried children, and clogged all roads going West. An estimated twelve million people were involved. Three million perished. This ethnic cleansing of massive proportions remains shrouded in silence and lack of knowledge on both sides of the Atlantic.
I often wondered what had happened to the people on the treks. At long last, some of them appear in Heinl's portraits drawn from his psychiatric practice and his seminars in London and Germany. They are adults now, in their fifties and sixties, but with childhood experiences etched in body and soul. What do their petrified experiences tell us about that time nearly sixty years ago and of the ravages of war on the human spirit? How does Heinl approach this taboo history and personal suffering left untreated by mental health workers for decades?[]

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

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

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

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

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

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

DOROTHEE SCHMITZ-KÖSTER AND TRISTAN VANKANN: LEBENSLANG LEBENSBORN. Die Wunschkinder der SS und was aus ihnen wurde. (For ever Lebensborn. The wanted children of the SS and what came of them) Ed. Piper, München/Zürich, 2012, ISBN 978-3-49205533-8 (issue 36)

Dorothee Schmitz-Köster has been involved for years and years with research studies on children who were born in and/or lived for some months in one of the children's homes directed by the Lebensborn organisation. This organisation was an idea of Heinrich Himmler and it was aimed at setting up a chain of mother-and-child homes. The care given in these homes was open to married and unmarried pregnant women and girls, who, however, had to come up to the standards of the 'Aryan' race as laid down in the ideology of the Third Reich. Not only the mothers were bound to those standards, but the fathers as well. In many cases, however, it was in not their racial conditions but their enthusiast support of the Nazi party that gave mothers a free entrance.
In Germany Lebensborn had 9 mother-and-child homes and after the Anschluss 2 homes were opened in Austria. After invading Norway the Germans opened 11 Lebensborn homes, France, Belgium and Luxemburg had each just one home. A Lebensborn home was scheduled for the Netherlands, but the end of the war prevented its start.
Correct statistic material is not available, but researchers guess there are some 18 000 people who in one way or another have a connection with Lebensborn. In Germany and Norway Lebensborn children founded an organisation, but they have only 200-300 members. It is more than likely that many people don't even know that there is a connection between them and a Lebensborn home, for the simple reason that their mothers kept silent and nobody uncovered the truth.
It is a wide-spread misunderstanding that the Lebensborn homes should be considered as 'birth-factories' where women impregnated by SS men could give birth to children who were to become the future elite of the Third Reich. It is true that the SS was eager to have an elite that would seize power when the leaders had become old, but the homes accepted only women who were already pregnant. In cases that one of the nurses became pregnant during her service, she was dismissed or sent to another home. Lebensborn focused on strong and healthy children; nevertheless a number of babies were disabled or suffered from genetic diseases. These children were sent to other homes where they were killed.

The regime in the homes was strict. The time schedule was not based on the babies' needs – feeding, washing, changing napkins -,but on the home's convenience. Johanna Haarer's 'pedagogic' insights were followed with strictness, and there was no room for weaknesses and loving care. It was seen as important to impose discipline and control even on the newly borns.

In this book the author presents twenty life stories to us. There is no standard life story, the context in which people were born was different, just as the circumstances were different in which they grew up and learned the truth about the past.
Nevertheless, there are some topics which play an important role in the lives of many Lebensborn children. Many of them do not know who their father is and a majority of the mothers are not willing to give any information or to mention the father's name. The silence of the mother and other relatives undermines the children's self-confidence. Many children feel that they in fact were not welcome or do not have the right to live, especially when the mother has left them behind in the home or has handed them over for adoption. Many people feel without roots, particularly when they have gone from home to home and were not given the opportunity to get settled in the new context. Many people fear that their fathers have been involved in fights and have committed acts of violence or have been involved in the Holocaust.

How important it is to know one's father's name is shown in the story of Michael. As a 13-year-old boy he asked his mother the identity of the man who sent her letters. She conjured him that it was not important and that he should forget the name. His grandmother supported these words and because of the women's heated discussions he never forgot that name. When his children spoke with him about their intention to find out who their unknown grandfather was, this name was the only detail they had. It proved to be enough; thanks to the Internet they found their grandfather rather easily.
Elke had good memories of her father with whom she had grown up when he was still married with his first wife. And later on her mother, her father and she lived together on the grounds of one of the Lebenborn'homes. In hindsight she suspects him of having been active in the euthanasia of disabled babies, although he was classified as 'bystander' after the war when his case had been brought up before court. She intends to explore the question, because she does not want to live on with lies about him.
Children who had been handed over for adoption very often postpone their search for their biological fathers because they don't want to cause their adoptive parents any sorrow. Wolfgang learned about his Lebensborn connection after the death of his adoptive father, when his adoptive mother showed him a portfolio with documents. She locked away this dossier and it never emerged again. Only after his adoptive mother's death Wolfgang felt free to start his research.
Rainer, born in a Norwegian Lebensborn home and adopted in a German family, found the names and addresses of his biological parents, but did not continue his research, because he did not want to disturb the relationships in that family. He thought the harmony between the members of that family were more important than his own wish to get acquainted with them.

These are just four of the persons whose stories have been published in this book. This book is special because the stories are accompanied by beautiful black and white pictures of photographer Tristan Vankann. This book gives Lebensborn children not only a voice, but also a face. The fact that these people were willing to have their picture published shows to me that at present people feel more at ease to speak about a debatable past than some ten years ago. The time seems to be ripe to do away with taboos.

GSB

THE FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING OF 'LEBENSSPUREN' (issue 26)
The board of the German organisation 'Lebensspuren' (Life Traces) invited me to be their guest at their annual meeting. In 2002 people who were born in one of the Lebensborn children's homes or lived there for some weeks or years met for the first time. Gradually they felt the need to have their own organisation, because more and more people joined their group. 'Lebensspuren' was founded in 2005.

The backdrop of the meeting was the beautiful small town of Wernigerode in former East-Germany. It is proud of its robust castle, its splendid city hall and its many very old timber framed houses. Imagine the town covered with snow and you have the perfect Christmas greeting card Charles Dickens style. But the past was not only good and brilliant. Wernigerode housed also a Lebensborn home and an annexe of the Buchenwald camp. The mayor stated in his speech that people in his town are aware of the black pages of its history. They know that one cannot deny them, seeing the need to learn from the past in order to prevent new disasters. They have taken on the responsibility of explaining to young people that freedom and democracy need to be defended against new tendencies of extremism.

There exist a number of definitions of what the Lebensborn organisation intended to be. This varies from the supposition of an American military judge in the Neurenburg trials that Lebensborn was ‘a charitable institution’ to an ‘organisation of baby farms and breeding factories’ where SS men begot ‘Aryan’ babies. Lebensborn offered pregnant women a range of services, that is true. They could stay in one of the homes before and after the delivery, there was strict secrecy if requested, the baby could stay in the home for 2 years and the organisation could, if necessary, support the finding of adoptive parents. So far, so good. But there were three conditions applying to the mother as well as to the father: they should be of the ‘Aryan’ race, should have a healthy constitution and there should not be any hereditary illnesses in their families. In fact, Lebensborn offered ‘Aryan’ fetuses protection by preventing their abortion, but the organisation did not assume responsibility for the ‘non-Aryan’ fetuses.

It is rumoured that in the days before the capitulation the registration books in all the Lebensborn homes were destroyed in an effort to wipe out all traces. This does not apply to all the homes, e.g. in Wernigerode 16 books have been preserved. Since one of the buildings belonging to the Lebensborn block is still in the original condition a committee is trying to transform it into a new documentation center with an exhibition room. Registration books of other Lebensborn homes can be transferred to Wernigerode and people assuming that they were born in a Lebensborn home and who are in search of the truth could consult the data in the new center.

Edna, born in the Wernigerode home, told us her story. As a young girl she went with her mother to Denmark, where her stepfather taught her the Danish language before she was sent to school. He did not want the children to tease his step daughter because of her speaking German. The ties with the German family loosened throughout the years, but Edna’s mother wanted to be present at her mother’s 80th birthday. Edna accompanied her. Since she was now in the region of her origins, she got the idea to visit the house where she was born. Her mother found some pretext not to go along with her, so Edna went alone. On the spot she wanted to have a look in the garden and she ringed the bell. A friendly woman invited her in, ready to show her the house as well. She asked when Edna was born and exclaimed: ’Then you are a Lebensborn child’, shutting up immediately noticing that Edna did not know what Lebensborn represented. ‘In fact, it is a secret’, the woman said, whereupon Edna answered: ‘If so, then I surely have to know’. Later on she found in the registration books her name and birthday and the names of her parents.
Back in grandmother’s house she could not withhold herself from saying what she had learned about her origins. The whole family reacted unanimously: there was no connection whatsoever between Edna’s birth and Lebensborn.

Edna’s story is typical of the Lebensborn children’s story. Many don’t know and will never know that they were born in a Lebensborn home. Some come across the truth, by chance. The mothers, confronted with the facts they always concealed, deny them vehemently. Others see no other way than to admit, justifying their silence by telling their children that they wanted to protect them. One could wonder: who did they protect after all, was it not above all themselves?

Gisela Heidenreich, chairwoman of the organisation, presented a paper in which she explained how destructive the silence of the mother, her lies or half-truths are for her child’s identity. All her love and care do not undo the negative effect of the concealing of the secret, there is a wall between mother and child which hampers the full development of a trustworthy and emotional relationship. Her words showed that although the actual circumstances for the different categories of children of war may differ strikingly, the psychological effects of the war and the aftermath are often similar for all of them.

A representative of the WASt (an organisation specialised in tracing lost or unknown relatives) spoke with me about the international network he intends to set up. He was eager

to join the group of readers of the International Bulletin. We both felt that international co-operation is important: we could exchange experiences and support each other in specific actions.

Many Lebensborn children spend much time and energy in the search for their origins. It is important to them to have the support of people who are willing and are able to help them. One of the officials of the Berlin Archives and a functionary of the WASt gave useful information in their presentations.
For the next day the documentary film about Ingrid's life was scheduled but it could not be displayed because of technical problems. Instead, people involved in Ingrid's search, among them the film maker, elucidated their role in the enterprise. Their reports impressed me a lot. Their explanations made it clear to me how crucial it is that people commit themselves wholeheartedly. Detailed knowledge of the past and a brilliant memory combined with the willingness to use one's intuition and to follow traces one generally does not pay attention to are indispensable. Those people need the disposition of a terrier and a dedication that surpasses the ordinary.

At last, Ingrid's story could be reconstructed. She proved to be from Slovenia and is one of the so called 'Verschleppte Kinder' ('stolen children') who from several countries were sent to Germany where they were subjected to 'germanisation' ('Eindeutschung'). The SS organised 5 razzia's in Slovenia in which families were caught suspected of having connections with the Partisans. Many adults were shot on the spot, but not all. Ingrid's family was caught in the first raid. Her mother was released three days later, together with two of her three children. In the meantime Ingrid had already been taken to Germany. What could Ingrid's mother have done? She was still alive, unlike other mothers, and protests could have ended in new imprisonment or even death. It is to be assumed that she accepted to take another child home, maybe the daughter of a neighbour, a friend or a cousin, or just a baby who had lost its parents.

An eye-witness remembered the little carry-cots on the railway platform in which the babies were transported. In one of the Archives the report was found written by the man who accompanied the transport and which contained also some pictures. In Archives of another Institute the film maker found pictures taken during the raids, probably to be shown in Berlin as a demonstration of the 'good work' the SS did in Slovenia, but evidently not sent. Another dossier contained pictures of all the families caught in the razzias, among them also of Ingrid's family.

Ingrid stayed in a children's home in Austria for some days and arrived in a Lebensborn home in Bavaria later on. The home managers found adoptive parents and Ingrid grew up in a caring and loving family. At the age that she was expected to understand, her adoptive parents told her the truth about her adoption and handed her a notelet with the name Erika M. and a date – in all likelihood her true name and her birth date. Investigations of the Red Cross yielded no results.

Then Ingrid came into contact with Georg Lilienthal, a historian specialised in Lebensborn issues. This contact was the beginning of a search that ended successfully. Josef Focks, expert in tracing lost relatives, found her supposed family in Slovenia and some members were willing to be subjected to a DNA-test. The match gave 93%, a high percentage, implying that it is almost certain that Ingrid and those people are relatives. Another family of the same name refused any contact. Moreover it turned out that there lives another Erika M. in the same region and of Ingrid's age. Who is she? Is she the child that Ingrid's/Erika's mother brought home instead of her vanished daughter? Frank Berger, the film maker, is willing to do more research, for it is heart wrenching, that at the moment that Ingrid found her true identity, the other Erika lost hers. But as long as she refuses any contacts he cannot do anything for her.

Ingrid found her biological roots in Slovenia, but feels that her social roots lie in Germany. These were intensive and moving days in Wernigerode. I am grateful that I could participate in this Lebensspuren meeting.

STEPHEN JOSEPH: WHAT DOESN'T KILL US. **The New Psychology of Post-traumatic Growth**

review by Brian Boyd in The Irish Times, April 2, 2013. (issue 42)

Can trauma be good for us? Can a truly distressing and devastating life episode actually be a powerful force for growth? It does seem to be a counter intuitive argument but an Irish professor of psychology – and a leading expert in the study of the effects of trauma – is receiving a lot of attention for the idea that traumatic events can, if handled correctly, be the triggers for or positive change.

“This is not about ‘looking on the bright side’ or some ridiculous idea of treating a serious illness or similar as a ‘gift’,” says Prof. Stephen Joseph. In his current book, '*What Doesn’t Kill Us – The New Psychology of Post-traumatic Growth'*, he argues, with no little skill, for a new definition of post-traumatic stress disorder, one that allows an understanding of how personal growth can occur even in the midst of severe distress.

Traumatic life events – which include serious illness, divorce, bereavement, violent assault, as well as involvement in acts of natural disasters/terrorist events – have a psychological hangover long after any physical damage may have healed.

“People who have suffered from these events report persistent nightmares, upsetting thoughts, avoidance of anything that reminds them of the event. Even a particular song playing on the radio or the sound of a car back-firing can greatly upset people if it triggers some awful memory of the event,” Joseph says.
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was recognized by the American Psychiatric Association in the 1980s as an umbrella term for the understanding of the lingering mental after-effects of a traumatic episode.

“PTSD has become a very widespread diagnosis but over 20 years of research into the field, I have become increasingly aware of the amount of subjects who while displaying symptoms of PTSD also report how they have become better people since the damaging event,” Joseph says. “What I’ve been finding, and consistently so, is that people don’t have a disorder in terms of an illness or a brain dysfunction. What they are experiencing is a normal and natural reaction to a devastating episode in their lives. It is similar in a sense to the grieving process.”

“My argument is that there is too much focus on the negative effects of PTSD, whereas if handled properly, PTSD can help people reorder their lives, become more compassionate, give them a new sense of priorities and help form new relationships and strengthen existing ones. In some cases, there can even be a new relish for life that simply wasn’t there before and people can become stronger as a result of what happened to them.”

Joseph, from Belfast, was part of the team of psychiatrists in the early 1990s who were employed by lawyers acting for the survivors of the '*Herald of Free Enterprise'*.

When the passenger ship sank in the North Sea in 1987, almost 200 passengers lost their lives as 300 survivors watched helplessly as family members died.

In interviewing the survivors, he was surprised to find that almost 50 per cent of them – despite still being traumatised by what they had gone through – reported that their lives were now actually better than they had been before the event.
“In fact 70 per cent of the survivors reported some sense of ‘positive growth’ in that they felt they had become stronger, more resilient, were a lot less materialistic than before and now attached more value to their relationships with family and friends,” he says.
Intrigued by these seemingly contradictory findings, he researched further.

In his book he talks about meeting an ex-RUC officer, Michael Patterson, who was blown up by an IRA bomb, losing both his arms and receiving horrific injuries to his legs. Patterson suffered from PTSD – he was unable to talk about the event and had constant nightmares – but after therapy, he went back to college to earn two doctoral degrees. He now works in Belfast as a clinical psychologist with a unique insight into how to cope with trauma. In 2008, he was awarded an OBE.

While Joseph does refer to a “trauma industry”, he is careful to balance his argument. “The amount of studies and interviews with survivors I’ve carried out over the years show that the diagnosis of PTSD can be a self-fulfilling prophesy, in that it can negatively shape people’s expectations of having any form of ‘normal’ life after a traumatic episode. My point is, we need to look at PTSD in a different way and we need to help people shape their own recovery.”

“As much emphasis needs to be placed on the idea of post-traumatic growth. I’ve heard people say ‘my cancer diagnosis was the best thing that ever happened to me’, which may sound a strange and extreme opinion to many, but these people are referring to how they reordered their lives and their relationships in the wake of such a devastating event.”

A professor of psychology at the University of Northampton and co-director of the Center for Trauma, Resilience and Growth in the same city, Joseph has spent the last 20 years studying and researching why and how some people really struggle in the aftermath of trauma, while others use it to build a better life.

“It still surprises to me to find that people, generally, are a more resilient to traumatic events that one would think – and all the studies carried out in the aftermath of 9/11, the London 7/7 bombings and the Madrid train station bombings bear this out.”
He adds: “My belief is that when trauma happens it shatters the assumptions we all have about the world.”

“People basically believe that the world is more or less a just place but when something dreadful happens to them – a cancer diagnosis, for example – those assumptions are profoundly shattered and there is need to rebuild our view not just of the world but of ourselves.”

“The expression I keep hearing in this regard is ‘I am wiser now’ and almost all report increased feelings of compassion.”
“It is important to understand that no amount of wishful thinking will help with post-traumatic stress,” Joseph adds.
“Those symptoms you experience will not go away if you stick a smile on your face, they will persist depending on the severity of the trauma but they can be managed.”

THE LONG SHADOW OF THE WAR
(A translation of the interview that appeared in the newspaper Welt am Sonntag, March 2009) (issue 29)
The author Sabine Bode describes in her book “Kriegsenkel. Die Erben der vergessenen Generation” (‘Grandchildren of the War. The Legacy of the Forgotten Generation), how the war experiences of their parents affected the children born in and after the sixties and how they have left their marks in many German families up to the present time.

For years Sabine Bode has been involved in studying the effects of the war on the psychological and mental condition of the German people. Five years ago she published her book on ‘the forgotten generation’, people born in the thirties and forties, who were children during the war, and who were traumatised by events they went through or had to witness. Many of them did not find a way to cope with their experiences and, unwittingly, passed their problems on to the next generation.

Andreas Fasel: ‘When did you get the insight that not only the people who were children during the war, but that also their children, in their turn, were affected by the war?’
Sabine Bode: ‘When, in the nineties, I did my research on the aftermath of the war, I often spoke with the children of my interviewees as well. They often told me that the relationship between them and their parents was tense, even destructive. When I asked them if this could be caused by the fact that, for example, their mother had to hide in the shelter, night after night, or that their mother had lived through dangerous moments during her flight and had been subjected to existential fears, I always got the same answer.’
AF: ‘Which one?’
SB: ‘We never reflected on this possible cause. The topic of the war children became an issue in the public debate and then the grandchildren contacted me and asked me: ‘Will you please also study our case?’ I remember in particular one man who intended to organise a symposium on the issue and he indeed succeeded in gathering people interested in the material. Those people have met several times since then and I guess that without this persistent man, I would never have had the opportunity to write this book.’
AF: ‘Why did not you want to commit yourself to this topic at first?’
SB: ‘I thought it was so closely connected with the problems I had just studied: War children, war grandchildren, and next war dogs…To me it was so unambiguous..’
AF: ‘At first sight it is indeed rather strange to write a book on the vicissitudes of the post-war generation’.
SB: ‘The problems of the war children, one can describe easily in such a way that everyone can understand what they experienced. But the case of the post-war generation is different, they experienced nothing special, their lives are characterized by an emotional vacuum.’
AF: ‘That needs an explanation. What is typical of this generation?’
SB: ‘First of all I would like to say that not all the people belonging to the sixties’ generation are affected by the war, in the same way that not all the war children were traumatised. We focus on notable attitudes and feelings. War children often said of to me: ‘It did not damage us. It was normal at the time, wasn’t it?’ By these sentences they managed to hold at a distance their pain and grief for years and years. The war grandchildren say: ‘We cannot reach our parents, we cannot have emotional relationships with them’ and these sentences describe what is real, these sentences are not a method to escape grief and pain.’
AF: ‘A conflict between generations is completely normal, isn’t it?’
SB: ‘Yes, and we, the people of 1968, we had our fights and arguments with our parents. But the people born in the sixties and the seventies have conflicts with their parents they have never spoken about. The parents do not know that their children have problems and if they know, they think: ‘I wish I had this kind of problems, compared to mine…’
AF: ‘What then are the typical problems of this post-war generation?’
SB: ‘Many of the people who contacted me told me that they were aware of the fact that something was wrong inside the family, but that they didn’t know what it was.

They don't understand why they have the feeling that their lives have 'start-problems'. They often have the feeling they have no basis on which to stand, they lack a sense of security and they see that, in fact, there is nothing to be found in their lives that can explain these feelings. From their birth on there was no want of anything and their parents are even in fact decent people.'
AF: 'What is here the connection with the war experiences of the parents?'
SB: 'People who had to flee or who were expelled from the East when they were children, often don't have the feeling that they experienced something traumatising, something serious. But their experiences damaged in a way their emotional abilities and therefore they cannot have deep emotional relationships with their children. It is not easy to explain this connection, but it is there.'
AF: 'Please try to explain this, nevertheless, to me.'
SB: 'Karl Heinz Brisch, a psychologist specialized in relationships, carried out interesting studies in this field. Experiences the parents could not cope with re-appear in their relationships with their babies, like ghosts from the past, in the way that these parents are not able to react emotionally and in an open way to their children.'
AF: 'What does it mean: to react in an open way to their babies?'
SB: 'Mechtild Papousek, professor at Munich University, describes this as follows: 'To focus on the development and experiences of the child, to react to their signals, their interests, preferences, joy and grief. To play with the child and enjoy its development and speak with the child.'
AF: 'And the war children were not able to behave in this way?'
SB: 'Of course not all the war children had this emotional inability. If they all had lacked this ability, it would have been disastrous to our country. On the other hand, I feel that, nevertheless, many of the war children have emotional problems in relationships.'
AF: 'Have you any idea how many people would say: 'Yes, I am a typical war grandchild?'
SB: 'A trauma researcher said recently that about 8 percent of the Germans over age 65 show symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.'
AF: 'That is what soldiers coming home from Afghanistan suffer from?'
SB: 'Yes, you're right. And the numbers are high, we have 14 million of people over age 65. In Switzerland 0,7 percent of the population is affected. The trauma researcher Michael Ermann of Munich considers a quarter of all the people born between 1933 and 1945 as restricted in their psychosocial functioning. From these figures one can deduct that the number of grandchildren affected will be enormously high.'
AF: 'Beneath this generation that at first sight has nothing to complain of, there is in fact an enormous abyss? Was it not difficult to find interviewees among them?
SB: 'Oh, not at all. It was much easier than with the war children. I told you, after the publication of my book on the war children they contacted me and said: 'Now I understand the problems my parents have to face'. And often they continued: 'I feel responsible for them, I cannot break away from them', or: 'I have to take care of my mother in her loneliness.'
AF: 'I feel this is quite normal, parents grew older, the children take care of them.'
SB: 'In these cases, however, parents and children have switched their roles from the outset. The war children say that they lacked a lot in their childhood. And their children were as young children already aware of these unfulfilled needs of their parents and have tried to fulfill them, at least tried not to add problems to the heap. But, of course, in a normal relationship between parents and children it is up to the parents to take care of the children and to take their needs into account.'
AF: 'This role switch, this parentification, also often occurs in families where parents suffer from psychological disorders.'
SB: 'That is indeed a similar phenomenon.'
AF: 'The war children were grateful that you and other people drew attention to their vicissitudes.'
SB: 'They are grateful that their traumatic experiences and their problems in coping with them are given attention and recognition. They feel relieved. One can witness this in meetings. At first all the faces are stern, then the atmosphere becomes more relaxed, people

start to laugh. There is an optimum effect in a therapeutic sense.'
AF: 'But now, you bring to the fore the failures of the war generation, this generation that worked hard to rebuild society. But people don't like criticisms!'
SB: 'I feel that many war children themselves are interested in these topics, because they want to understand what is wrong in their families. But you are right, reflection on these issues needs the willingness to do so. It is important to say that the complaints of the post-war generation are no accusations of the parents, or of the war generation as such. The children understand very well that their parents were traumatised, this is, however, no reason to keep silent and to swallow their own problems and spare their parents. They choose to break the silence and to find the key for their problems, and by doing so they stop the transfer of problems that have not been dealt with to the next generation.

Sabine Bode's book has been edited by Klett-Cotta.

CONFERENCE READING SEPTEMBER 2011 (issue 33)
The leading theme of this conference was 'The Lost Childhoods of Wartime'. A couple of papers focused on war children's experiences having affected their psychological and social lives after the war. We could have become desperate because of all those problems, grief and pain we were confronted with, but the impression I took home with was not that of despair but that of hope!

First of all the contributions of a couple of students, presenting the issues they conduct a research study on, evoked in me feelings of warm appreciation and admiration. These young people commit themselves to difficult topics instead of choosing less complicated subjects and they do this with heart and soul. The same enthusiasm and ardent zeal I witnessed in the presentations of three former students of Martin Parsons, now graduated, who spoke at this conference about the outcomes of their studies. I felt privileged to listen to them and speak with some of them at lunch or during coffee breaks.
We listened breathless to the presentation of Peep Varju, bowled over by his terrible fate. But the strength he showed us in his being present at the conference and in his relating inexpressible events impressed all of us deeply.

In moving words Ruth Barnett drew our attention to the fate of the Gypsies and their ongoing discrimination. As a child she met with traumatic events. Now she is on the barricades for people who need our support.

For decades the evacuations of British and Finnish children was seen as successful operations, until a number of these evacuees started to speak about the negative effects they had to face because of their stay in the countryside or abroad. Researchers like Martin Parsons, Barbara Mattson and Perrti Kaven published the outcomes of their studies, confirming the evacuees' experiences and problems. As a result of these publications people tended to see evacuation as such as a traumatising event. It is good to learn about evacuations shaped in such a way that the children received enough support to overcome their problems so that traumatising was averted: the evacuation of the Basque children and the pupils of the Jewish Free School. These children were kept together, surrounded by teachers and other adults taking care of them and this situation allowed them to keep their traditions and/or to speak their own language.

These stories alongside other issues raised the question of representativeness of the groups of people on which research studies are conducted. Our discussion led to the hypothesis that people willing to be interviewed or ready to participate in self help organisations belong to a category between the deeply traumatised people and those who were not affected at all or had got support averting traumatising.

In Sweden professor Pennti Anderson found in his research study significant differences between people who were evacuated in their childhood and a control group of people who stayed in their families. Whereas many people of his target group showed symptoms of PTSD, the vast majority of the control group showed none of them. His study confirms the supposition that evacuated people were affected by their experiences and that effects still influence their lives many decades later.
Another discussion came up after Nigel Stanley's presentation in which he related the flight of British nationals from the north of Malaya to the south when trying to escape the Japanese invaders. During the flight the soldiers escorting the group of women and children sometimes got the food rations of the children who were called 'useless mouths'. When asked why people used this term he explained that the term was first used in the French-German war of 1870 where in the starving city of Paris the food portions were first of all given to the soldiers defending the town, food withheld from the children. Ruth Barnett said how awful using this terminology is, as children per definition cannot be judged by their actual contribution to the community. People need to recognize the children's priceless importance as future family, community and nation makers. Without children no future.

Julie Summers interviewed a number of parents who sent their children to the country side in the context of the evacuation programm of the UK authorities. Many of them had felt very unhappy because their children were not at home and regretted to having given in to the propaganda of the government, the clergy or the women' magazines.

The bookproject of Alison Baverstock has been inspired by the knowledge we acquired from the stories of war children and the studies on their experiences. One of the big problems is the alienation of the family members leaving those staying at home and the other way around. Alison Baverstock's husband is a soldier serving abroad, e.g. Afghanistan. So she knows from her own experience how important it is to stay in contact with each other. But exchange of news about everyday life is not enough. Therefore books are distributed among the soldiers and their families. All members read the same book on which they comment in a scrapbook. In this way there is also an exchange of thoughts and emotions.

During this conference I again became aware of the importance of our work. We share our knowledge, we exchange our experiences, we ask for help and get support. We know that although war is still a reality in a lot of places in the world, the war children of today can be helped better and in at an earlier stage thanks to what at present is known about the effects of war on children.
Sometimes I would like to 'retire from the war': thirty years ago we founded our self help organisation 'Herkenning', I began to work on my problems as early as 1974, so now I long for 'vacation' and I long to leave the war-related problems behind me.
In Reading I found a new motivation to carry on for another couple of years.

WREATH LAYING for all those who have been affected by war in their childhood
Innocent Victim's Memorial, Wednesday 20th of November, 2013, 3pm (issue 37)

'So much evidence of war-related trauma is now available that it simply cannot be ignored'

Welcome (The Reverend Canon professor Vernon White):
'On behalf of the Dean and Chapter, welcome to Westminster Abbey and to the Innocent Victims' Memorial, where we remember so many who have suffered as a result of war, oppression and violence. In particular, we remember today all those who were affected by dislocation, loss of families and homes in the Second World War, children who have been imprisoned in internment camps and all those children worldwide who are affected by current wars.'

After the prayer and the hallowing introduction by the Reverend Hugh Ellis, Professor Dr Martin L. Parsons welcomed the people attending the service on behalf of the Children in War Memorial Project.
The service continued with prayers.
Than followed a minute's silence and the laying of wreaths at the Innocent Victim's Memorial.
Quotations:
'…sadly, there is no end in sight for wars on this planet. The childhood sufferers of today will be the suffering adults of tomorrow. Peace stands by helplessly. There is no conclusion, which can be drawn firmly with respect to children in war time, be it victory or defeat: children tend to be the great losers overlooked by history'.

'Ashes and shifting sands have covered the footprints of war'…(However) despite the progress of time, and against a tide of forgetting, childhood war trauma, which had been buried for decades, suddenly surfaced, entering the light of consciousness with an immediacy as if these traumas had occurred only yesterday.'

'All the time I was evacuated I used to tell myself that one day the war would be over and I could go back home. After the war we were living in a different part of London and I made my way back to where I used to live. The whole area had been completely obliterated during the first few days of the Blitz and I was quite unable to find the spot where my house once stood. This happened more than 50 years ago. I have lived in many other places. I now have a grown-up family of my own and I am a grandfather. I now have a lovely house, but somehow I'm still waiting to go home!'

After the wreath laying the service was ended with prayers and the blessing by Reverend Vernon White.

My personal reaction to the wreath laying ceremony (issue 36)

The first time that I learned about a War Child Memorial Day was in Reading, at the conference of September 2011. Sinikka Ortmark suggested to us, on behalf of the Finnish Evacuees Organisation in Sweden, to try to get the 20th of November accepted as a day of remembrance for all children of war. Her suggestion was in line with the plans of a British group in which Martin Parsons and Irene Glausiusz played an important role.

Martin and Irene regularly sent people information on the progress of the project. In this way I learned that their efforts had been successful and that a short ceremony near Westminster Abbey was planned for November 20th. The day after the ceremony they sent me a report which I read with satisfaction. I felt glad that Martin and Irene's efforts had borne fruit.
Only the next day, when I received pictures of the wreath laying, did I suddenly realise that those wreaths had been laid down also for the Dutch collaborators' children as well, so also for me. Tears filled my eyes and even now, months later, when I write these lines, I feel a deep emotion of being accepted by other war children. Even now I actually lack the words to describe my feelings; they have to do with solidarity, with humanity, with caring for each other, with friendship and love.
And I am still amazed that these pictures, more than words, have communicated the reality of what this first ceremony of wreath laying was focused on.

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

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