

INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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INTRODUCTION

When searching interesting articles for the Spring issue of the International Bulletin, I didn't feel at ease. We, children of war and war grandchildren and all the people interested in our life stories and experiences, we speak about war related items which have to do with a war of almost 80 years ago! But the situation in the present influences our lives here and now. Could I neglect what is going on in Ukraine and Israel and in our countries where democracy is in crisis and where extremism of all kinds has become 'salonfähig'?

An interview with the columnist Theodor Holman and a picture of the turmoil round the opening of the Holocaust museum in Amsterdam convinced me that I should write about our world of to-day as well.

I open this issue with some lines in memory of my husband who passed away in December 2023.

Next I insert an article about Lee Harris' book 'Civilisation and its enemies' that I published in the International Bulletin some years ago. It is still worthwhile to publish it again.

Another text I wrote long ago is a summary of the book 'Modernity and the Holocaust' written by the Jewish-Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman. He stated that all the factors which made the Holocaust possible are still here and now and a disaster could happen again.

Connected with some themes in Harris' book I publish two short articles about the misinterpretation of reality resulting in pacifism in the wrong manner and at the wrong time.

The Belgian political scientist Holslag held a speech in the Netherlands which was published in the magazine of the National Committee May 4 and 5. He analyses the factors which caused the present crisis in democracy and gives some recommendations to bring back a vital democracy.

Ayaan Hirsch Ali, from Somalia, then the Netherlands and ending in the USA, has spoken

about the naivety of western politicians with regard to islamism. I insert a couple of data about her and a link on YouTube for a speech she hold in the Levy Forum so that you can hear her yourselves.

Hope is frail, is a line of the well known song 'When you believe'. In another poem hope is described as a creation of footsteps in the same direction. We need hope in these days and we are realist enough to see how fragile that hope is. But can we live without it?

There are still appearing books about themes that until now have had no platform.

Aziza Malanda sent me a text to present to you her new book about an almost forgotten group of war children.

'Lugen und Scham' (Lies and Shame) is a book I would like to draw your attention to. It describes the impact of the World War II in the life of its author, Dirk Kaesler.

Then I publish a picture taken at the opening of the new Holocaust museum in Amsterdam. A survivor of WWII, Rudie Cortissos (85) attached a mezoezah to the doorpost of the entrance. His great-grandchild, the 5 years old Sharai who spoke for a while with the King, then left with her father the building at the backdoor. There they were confronted with a raging pack of demonstrators.

I will end with the interview with Holman, paraphrasing and quoting it. His text made me feel less alone.

I hope that you will agree with my choice of the articles and read them with interest. The deadline for reactions or new articles is October 15, 2024. Help me to stay in contact with you by sending to me any change in your mail address.

Warm regards,
Gonda Scheffel-Baars



IN MEMORY OF TON SCHEFFEL

My husband never read the International Bulletin, although he was much committed to it. This started long ago, after our second date. I had told him about my father's choice to stand with the German occupier during the war. Better to tell him before we would have a

real relationship, because this issue could make him to stop the relationship. Or his parents would ask him to stop. He said he wanted to be a friend with me, not with my father. I felt safe with him, I trusted him – to a war child one of the most difficult themes is trust. It was a totally new emotion to me. Ton had a talent for listening with his ears and his heart. He always said: 'When you can find the right words, you are already on your way to a solution'. He said to my father when he told Ton about his political choice: 'I don't know what I would have done in your situation.' He accepted my father who was almost always judged and being accepted was new to him.

There were a lot of war related problems to solve or at least to make them manageable. We discussed my feelings of guilt and shame, my feeling of not belonging, of not having the right to live, the lack of roots and not being supported emotionally by my parents. He believed in life, a good life for everyone: 'You will see, there will be better days and times, just go on in search of the factors that can make even you happier in life.'

Gradually I became more rooted in life, more enjoying it despite the problems in the background. When we started our organisation Herkenning in 1981 Ton was interested in founding this platform for self-help. Because I had worked through many war-related problems, together with Ton, I could write a small booklet in which I explained to collaborator's children, therapists and social workers what being a collaborator's child was all about. We overcame many problems as a group, for instance the mistrust of the Dutch society and found a couple of journalists willing to interview us and publish our stories in their newspapers and magazines.

In 1985, I came into contact with the Israeli psychologist professor Dan Bar-On. He introduced me to some Germans he had interviewed for his research and who were wanting to start a self-helpgroup now. Anneliese Rehbein and I helped them and were members of this group for four years. Ton went with me to Remscheid where we held our meetings. He accompanied me when I went to meetings in the Netherlands, to encounters of Herkenning or Kombi, the organisation for all war children. Later on he accompanied me to international meetings, in Oulu (Finland) and in Reading (UK). I recall some lines from Bette Middler's song 'The wind under your wings'. Ton was indeed content to let me shine, he was the wind under my wings. Though, he had his own organisations in which he could stand in the spotlight. Then I was the wind for him. For years he was the chairman of a regional committee of a broadcast company, and for 12 years the chairman of our village's church council.

I started to edit the International Bulletin in November 1995. Ton and I always discussed the issues. He enjoyed the fact I found satisfaction in this work while in the mean time developing my insights. I liked to be able to answer questions for help and information, to receive interesting materials from the readers and searching for good articles or poems.

When there rose a problem in Herkenning, round 2000, to stop the activities because the board was convinced that we had reached our goals, a couple of members was willing to continue, because they were convinced we had still to fulfill some aims. The group met in our village and fortunately we found people to take a place in the new board. Ton was one of them. When the chairman left because of personal problems, Ton fulfilled the place of chairman for a couple of years. When a capable woman, being a child of war herself, could take over, Ton could leave the organisation, remaining interested in the ups and downs.

In 2013 Ton had a cerebral haemorrhage. At first he lost a part of his sight, but after a couple of months there was recovery although not totally. The damage to the brain, however, was serious, he lost cognitive abilities and memory. We had not yet overcome

his problems when I was struck with a spinal cord injury and had to stay in a rehabilitation center in 2017. In the four months I was there, Ton could not handle the situation, his own suffering and my suffering combined were too much for him. In these four months he had become 10 years older and never got those 10 years back. He lost abilities and his character was changing.. After a fall in 2020 he needed a wheelchair, he began to lean on me. Fortunately, although I had my own health problems, I could handle the situation. From the Ton he had been not much was left. We mourned these losses alone and together.

His last days were difficult. When life is reduced to wrestling from one respiration to the next, it is a grace when the suffering comes to an end. He reached the age of 81.

I am grateful for his love, his supporting me and giving me joy in life. Without him there had not been an International Bulletin and an international circle of people committed to the problems in the lives of war children.

May his memory be for a blessing

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

In the following article (I inserted in the 13th issue of the IB, so long ago) you may read how Ton's listening with ears and heart helped me to find myself the right words, solving the problem.

MY MOTHER'S PANIC

Although the departure of my train back to Holland was scheduled for the afternoon, I went in the morning to Gare du Nord in Paris in order to make a seat reservation. The railway station was almost deserted and I soon found out why. There was a general strike. The man in the ticket window told me that probably the international trains would probably go, but he could not guarantee it.

Back in the hotel I discussed the case with the manager. He told me that I could always come back to the hotel for another day and, if necessary, for a few days more.

I felt relieved when my train left the station at the scheduled time. However, it stopped at several stations where it normally would not stop at all. I did not worry because I had 50 minutes to change trains at Brussels station. Just outside the station of Mons (Bergen) the train stopped and only twenty minutes later the driver explained why: a problem with the current-regulator had occurred, but was solved now. I looked at my watch. The train would arrive two or three minutes before the departure of the train to Holland. Would that be enough? It wasn't. Fortunately another one would leave within three quarters of an hour. I sat down, started to write in my diary and reflected on my stay in Paris.

Gradually I became aware of the growing number of announcements: 'the train to Oostende will depart from platform 8'; 'the train to Turnhout will depart from platform 4'; 'the train to....' I saw that not only our platform had become crowded, the others had too. No train entered, no train left. There was a lot of noise at one of the other platforms and I guessed it were football supporters who shouted that way. But when they jumped on the tracks, they unfolded banners: they were students protesting some governmental decisions. The noise was so intense that I could no longer hear the announcements.

An old man looked at me and I saw terror in his eyes. A deep panic caught me. What if my

train would depart from another platform? My husband was waiting in Roosendaal and did not know what happened here. I already had missed one train, he would begin to worry. I ran down the steps, maybe I could understand the announcements in the underground passage to the other platforms. No new messages. I was completely alone and in despair. I ran upstairs. It was much better to be in the crowd.

After a long, long time the train from Paris to Holland stopped at our platform. I felt relieved, now I was safe. People told me, that this was the very last train to the Netherlands. It was good to talk with them, because we shared the same fate. We had to wait another twenty minutes - "because of the dangerous situation"- and then, finally, we left Brussels.

My husband stood on the platform in the Roosendaal station. He told me that he had earned from the news that there was a strike and when he had called the hotel, the manager had told him that I could come back if necessary. That's why my husband did not worry. Nevertheless I started to cry. All the tension of the last few hours came out. But I could not stop, although my husband tried to comfort me: 'Everything is OK now, why are you crying?'. I related what happened in Brussels and the panic that caught me. He wondered what could have been so serious that I was so upset. 'It was as if it was war', I said. My husband stopped walking and said: 'Do you hear what you are saying?' And suddenly I understood that it had to do with the panic of my mother when she had to leave Holland with my sister and me at the approach of the Allies in September 1944 in order to seek refuge in Germany.

Together with 65,000 women and children of NSB-members (supporters of the Nazi government) we stood on the platform in the station of Rotterdam. We traveled in special trains, which sometimes stopped for hours and hours in the fields or in the forests, which were even attacked by planes. My father had given my mother the order to go to Lüneburg and not to stay in the cities like Hamburg or Hannover. She must have been haunted by the question how to reach Lüneburg: where did she have to change trains, if there were trains at all...

The old man who looked at me in Brussels triggered a memory I never consciously remembered. I am sure that this old man had his own horrible experiences with crowded platforms and trains.

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

Paragraphs of the first chapter of 'CIVILIZATION AND ITS ENNEMIES' by LEE HARRIS, ed. Free Press 2004

Forgetfulness occurs when those who have been long inured to civilized order can no longer remember a time in which they had to wonder whether their crops would grow to maturity without being stolen or their children sold into slavery by a victorious foe....

They forget that in time of danger, in the face of the enemy, they must trust and confide in each other, or perish....

They forget, in short, that there has ever been a category of human experience called the enemy. That, before 9/11, was what had happened to us. The very concept of the enemy had been banished from our moral and political vocabulary. An enemy was just a friend we hadn't done enough for yet. Or perhaps there had been a misunderstanding, or an oversight on our part – something that we could correct....

Our first task is therefore to try to grasp what the concept of the enemy really means. The enemy is someone who is willing to die in order to kill you. And while it is true that the enemy always hates us for a reason, it is his reason, and not ours.

These are sentences with which the book 'Civilization and Its Enemies' begins, an extraordinary tour de force by America's reigning philosopher of 9/11, Lee Harris. What Francis Fukuyama did for the end of the Cold War, Lee Harris has now done for the next great conflict: the war between the civilized world and the international terrorists who wish to destroy it. Each major turning point in our history has produced one great thinker who has been able to step back from petty disagreements and see the bigger picture – and Lee Harris has emerged as that man for our time. He is the one who has helped make sense of the terrorists' fantasies and who forces us most strongly to confront the fact that our enemy – for the first time in centuries – refuses to play by any of our rules, or to think in any of our categories....

We are all naturally reluctant to face a true enemy. Most of us cannot give up the myth that tolerance is the greatest of virtues and that we can somehow convert the enemy to our beliefs. Yet, as Harris' brilliant tour through the stages of civilization demonstrates, from Sparta to the French Revolution to the present, civilization depends upon brute force, properly wielded by a sovereign. Today, only America can play the role of sovereign on the world stage, by the use of force when necessary. (He wrote these lines in 2007). Lee Harris' articles have been hailed by thinkers from across the spectrum. His message is an enduring one that will change the way readers think – about the war with Iraq, about terrorism, and about our future.

(GSB)

A couple of personal notes about Harris' book.

Harris makes clear that in the aftermath of the first World War ideologies such as fascism, national-socialism and communism could inspire multitudes of people eager to have an ideal future to strive for while the implosion of four empires made life unstable and vulnerable. The Czar empire, the Ottoman empire and the Austrian-Hungarian empire had been the home of very different peoples. They had to find a new national identity. Harris characterises fascism, national-socialism and communism as 'fantasy' ideologies, because they were based on principles which had no roots in the reality of the world. The communistic world empire was a dream, like the Aryan empire Hitler wanted to found. Mussoloni tried to revive the old Roman empire. In order to convince the members of his party that this was a reachable aim, he invaded Ethiopia in East-Africa, because the Roman empire had conquered a lot of peoples and countries. Ethiopia was poor, the conquest did not give any profit, there was only a propaganda profit. It is known that at the end of the war Hitler decided that the dearly wanted trains for transport of the army were used for the deportation of the Jews. These are but two of the examples why Harris called the three leading ideologies or the twentieth century 'fantasy' ideologies, irrational ideas strove for to no positive end.

Harris describes in details the roots of the actual Western culture with its liberal, social and moral principles. It is his opinion that we have to defend these norms and values. The one we have to fear is the ruthless man who stands up and succeeds in having adepts who, like him, have no conscience but are tended to destroy and to kill. I feel we have now seen such a ruthless man attacking a country without any cause (in our eyes) the overwhelming activities to help the Ukraine people shows in my opinion that we, may it be consciously, may it be intuitively, understand that they defend our Western civilisation.

GSB

ZYGMUNT BAUMAN: MODERNITY AND THE HOLOCAUST 1999

One of his important opinions is that the Holocaust was not a black-slide into barbarism, but a logical, although not desirable, effect of modernity and of rationality. From the period of Enlightenment and the French revolution in the 18th and 19th century on, we developed the idea that modernity was a positive progress in history. Although the two world wars and the financial crisis between them could have changed that idea, it was very consistent. With pent-up rage we like to remain convinced that those crises and wars were exceptional events, outside any ratio and understanding. We continue to ask ourselves: How could all this happen in the West- European civilized world?

Bauman states that the scientific way of studying objects, the human being as well, has influenced our way of seeing the world around us. It is an 'objective' way of seeing, reducing the subjective influence of the researcher.

The concept of 'social engineering' fits well in this 'objective' vision. The human being itself has to shape his society. It is the 'garden model': the human being decides upon where to plant flowers or trees and lop them to his desire. He can uproot plants and destroy them like weeds.

The technical progress was combined with more efficient methods of producing, for instance the assembly line. The distance between the boss who gives the order and the people who do the actual production had become longer. Each working man does his own task, but often do not see what the product is at the end of the line.

This stimulates the switch between moral responsibility (is the product I make ethically good?) into technical responsibility (is the way I do the work correct, independent of the product I am producing?). Bureaucracy fulfills here an important role as well.

Last but not least the scientists boasted that they had made science 'value free', that is to say, they eliminated values and norms considered to be 'disbelief'.

All those factors could shape a society under control of a leading ideology. This could use the technical possibilities to model their 'garden' with destroying what they saw as weed. The Holocaust is a product of modernity and all the factors exist until now. A same elimination of 'not accepted people' can occur even now and in fact easier than in the forties of the 20th century. The mass murder in itself was irrational, but it was executed with rational instruments.

How can we prevent that all these factors come to explosion in a dictator state or in extremists activities? 'Old' norms and values like solidarity and responsibility can cast up a dam against the aggression of the human being. A pluralistic democracy is needed to withstand aggression and wars.

Summary made by GSB

THE NIGHT I FELT ASHAMED

Jacob Soetendorp, a liberal rabbi in the Netherlands for a couple of years before the war and some years afterwards, has written columns for a national newspaper. One of them I will never forget.

During the war he had found a hiding place for him and his family in the southern province of the Netherlands. After some time a resistance fighter warned him to leave that village since he suspected the Gestapo would organise a search tour. Another man came to the village and brought Jacob and his family to another place. When they were walking through the night he was suddenly shocked as he became aware of the situation. This unknown man risked his life and that of his family to bring people in danger to safety.

Soetendorp recalled the period before the war when he had been dedicated to a group that promoted pacifism. Members wore on their coats a small broken rifle. He had been proud when wearing it. He was 'on the good' side, believing in 'the strength of positive powers'. He believed that these feelings would become stronger than the violence that he heartily despised.

The Dutch army was weak, there were not enough weapons to fight against Hitler's Wehrmacht. In 1938 the Dutch government had become aware of the fact that it needed to buy more war material, but that was too late. In 2 years one could not restore years of neglect. Moreover, the government hoped that Hitler would accept the Dutch neutrality so that the country would not be attacked, like in World War I. Soetendorp believed in pacifism even when the war started in September 1939, although not yet in the Netherlands.

In that night he got the insight that all the soothing discussions and encounters with Hitler had not been able to withstand him. In that night he felt ashamed.

GSB

BANISH THE BOMBS

In the seventies and eighties there was a strong peace movement in the Netherlands. The Ecumenical Contact (IKV) was very active and launched several actions. One of them was dedicated to distribute stickers and posters with the slogan 'Banish the (nuclear) bombs, to begin in the Netherlands and then worldwide'. The NAVO or the VS planned to store cruise missiles at a Dutch military airport. The IKV organised big demonstrations in 1981 and another one in 1983. The last brought 550 000 people to the Hague. There was turmoil in the communities of a couple of churches. People who had their arguments not to take a part in the demonstrations were railed as 'not-good Christians'. This schism generated deep emotional wounds.

Another important point put to the fore was to stop demonizing other nations. We had to stop thinking of them in terms of 'enemy'. Of course we did not hate the ordinary Russians, but we feared the norms of the communists and their dictatorship indoctrinating the population and the children.

Lee Harris criticizes in his book this mindset of believing that the government of dictatorship is not a real enemy, because we can always find a way to deal with them. The Protestant Church published a booklet titled: 'Everyone of any faith can live under what kind of government whatsoever'. I protested, because the Jews could not live under the Nazi regime. The board's secretary answered me that the authors had not had in mind the Jews, but the East-European peoples. Of course they had not had the Jews in mind; when in the 20 centuries of the existence of the church had the clergy seriously taken care of them?

One week after the Russians invaded Ukraine, February 24, 2022, one of the old leaders

of the IKV had been interviewed. He admitted with shame that he had been completely mistaken with regard to the trustworthiness of the Russians. He felt ashamed of his actions to convince people of his insights that there were no enemies, only people to deal with. I felt relieved by his words, it was a recognition of the fears we had had between 1945 and the years of Gorbatsjov. Real fear for a real enemy, like now in 2024.

GSB

THAT'S WHAT DEMOCRACY IS ALL ABOUT: POWER AND WISDOM

The Belgian political scientist Jonathan Holslag when being in Tunisia, had an encounter with the brother of an activist for human rights who had been arrested by the secret police. The family had been in fear and stress. Their son had protested against the way in which the president had eliminated the parliament and had silenced the press. The brother said: 'What I don't understand is that the mass of the population do not rebel against it, as if freedom is not important to them. As if they accept to live in a state that has changed in a jail.' Holslag spoke also with people in other cities and in the countryside. People agreed that the president limited their freedom and undermined the democracy. But, they said: 'There are more urgent and important things. To diminish the stream of immigrants. The high percentage of young men without a job is making them disillusioned. The huge inflation, making a piece of meat out of reach for the majority of the population. It is not that the people of Tunisia don't care for freedom and democracy, but they are deeply disillusioned by the way the democracy has worked in their country and they don't see an alternative.'

Holslag continued: 'This is not only at stake there, it's in our country as well. Until now the firewalls of the democracy have functioned well. But also in the Netherlands, fairly wealthy and with normally spoken faith in democracy, it is not unthinkable that democracy will be attacked. It is precisely the fact that we consider democracy as evident, that makes her vulnerable.'

Holslag sees four factors that are at the basis of this vulnerability.

'A first explanation is that of the inevitable diminishing of historical awareness. When democracy is growing older, the knowledge of how many sacrifices it had cost to overcome the horror of dictatorship will slip away. WWII was such a period of awareness, but when the years go on, we have our commemoration ceremonies, but they seem to become less important.

A second factor is that our society has become decadent, the freedom is no longer connected with responsibility. The Enlightenment consisted of three elements: openness with no restriction, intellectual emancipation and moral behaviour. Our freedom has become more or less restricted to the first element, which makes the citizens vulnerable for the glister of materialism and capitalism. Dr.

Mill sees a connection between this and unbalanced influence of the commerce. Many teenagers have a picture of a human being more determined by influencers and Temptation Island than by Aristotle and Kant. The result is a generation of civilian consumers which has no longer the power to defend democracy and to overcome the controversies with opponents.

A third factor connected with the second one is that democracy has become procedural. The mechanisms of voting and balances of power is still functioning, but the enthusiasm about them is disappearing. The political responsibility stops for many people when they

walk home after having voted. A caste of vocational politicians patronising the people perpetuates this behaviour by their emphasizing the complexity and make coming to conclusions a technocratic labyrinth giving sometimes the citizens the illusion of being heard. One of the most important conditions of a healthy democracy is damaged this way namely the importance transparency. The result is a vicious circle, so that the management of the government seems to be a court of old eunuchs and the people are increasingly uninterested.

And to close with, the decadent democracy of openness with responsibility has given too much room to its enemies: dictatorial business partners, capitalist freewheelers operating all over the world without any loyalty, extremism based on hatred and the banality washing this all: bread and games. Democracy is under attack from powers we continue to stimulate with our own money.'

'The fact that you are here this evening, ladies and gentlemen is, I guess, because you are willing to fight against those powers, that you are willing to defend democracy. You deserve my compliment, but before we continue we have to see clearly what kind of challenge this is. Many philosophers - from Plato with his anacyclose and De Tocqueville with his sceptical analysis till Hannah Ahrendt – seem to have had the opinion that this battle can't be avoided. Plato sees how democracy develops into the power of the pack of common people that leads to tyranny. Arendt seems to define that freedom ought to go through a crisis to invent itself again. It is quite real that the situation first of all will deteriorate before it becomes better.'

'I am not a defaitist. Europe and its democracy aren't terminal patients. Variety is an advantage. The stupid decisions of one country stimulates the other ones to introspection. See Brexit. Although European money continues to stream into countries as Russia, Saudi-Arabia and China, these nations found themselves placed before the same transition. The result is a very turbulent world. But in this world we still have a chance. When thinking about the possibilities to reach our goals, we have to educate as soon as possible a new generation of democratic leaders to lead the ship through the storm. Leaders with ideals, a moral compass, leaders with perseverance who are able to explain difficult questions in clear terms. This rises the question what good leadership is all about. Leadership is not in the first place to have the majority of votes, to acquire honour and wealth. Leadership depends above all of the legitimacy of working with these cards to inspire people to work, to accept sacrifices and the wisdom to give priority to the correct goals.

It is important to have a clear image of what power is all about. Power has a soft kernel of morale and trustworthiness, If we don't know exactly which norms and values we speak about, there can't be leadership, or democracy and responsible freedom. Speaking about the European values we ought to have in mind the image of a tree with roots. Our roots are various, in mediteranian traditions, especially in the Jewish and Christian traditions and the Greek-Roman. In the Middle Ages the roots have flourished and the fruit was the Renaissance. This period is characterised by the human dignity, in my vision best formulated by Pico della Mirandola; 'You are not mortal neither immortal, so that you can be the free and proud architect of your own personality.' This humanistic revolution generated the three branches which created Europa: freedom, equality and brotherhood. And – more and more important – respect for the nature. Europe is not a story of choice which branch to choose, but flourishes especially when the three balance each other.'

'What can we do now? It is often more easy to define what the differences are between us, than to make clear what is our bond. I know that this can be discussable, but the unity of

many democracies in Europe is an answer to external challenges. See the generation of the States-General of the Netherlands. We can discuss with young people the historical injustice and commemorate it, and we can tell them which sacrifices our ancestors brought to defend the country against their enemies. At the other side we need to have the courage identify the enemies of democracy and freedom explicitly. We have to diminish our dependance of fighters against our values, e.g. China as distributors of products we need, or multinationals which have too much influence on our social interactions because of their monopoly as gate keepers. To strive for our independence is important to allow us to make our own choices, but also to keep the power and the prosperity of state and citizens here because we need them for their part in the flourishing of democracy. That will be a difficult process, but one that can't be avoided.'

'The most important thing we have to lay is an internal one. Despite an information society, despite the unseen chances to study, we notice that there is little focus on moral and intellectual emancipation. We talk a lot about thinking critically, but we don't teach our young men and women to adopt that attitude. We talk a lot about citizenship, but it is a much ignored topic in our education. I plead more time and more commitment to these items in our schools, an obliged civil internship of a year for our youngsters, and more focus on lifetime's learning to understand what makes our society unique.'

'These things depend on our commitment to better prepare the new generations for war. I surely believe in the importance of initiatives from the basis, but we now need a new generation of leaders. I think that we have to invest in a program that prepares the most engaged and talented people to defend the democracy instead of obtaining the so often expensive, plutocratic and devoid of values MBA's to reserve a job as consultant. That program should be an extra level beyond the regular programs, not a reservation for political scientists. Crucial to such a program is the intrinsic motivation, ability to continue in most difficult circumstances, a sharp moral compass, empathy and all the abilities needed to acquire power and to use that with wisdom. Because that is what democracy is all about: power and wisdom, the ability to acquire power in order to strive for ideals.'

AYAAN HIRSI ALI was born in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1969. The daughter of a political opponent of the Somali dictatorship, Ayaan Hirsi Ali grew up in exile, moving from Saudi Arabia to Ethiopia then Kenya. As a young child, she was subjected to female genital mutilation. As she grew up, she embraced Islam and strove to live as a devout Muslim. In 1992 Ayaan was married off by her father to a distant cousin who lived in Canada. In order to escape this marriage, she fled to the Netherlands where she was given asylum, and in time citizenship.

In her early years in Holland she worked in factories and as a maid. She quickly learned Dutch, however, and was able to study at the University of Leiden. Working as a translator for Somali immigrants, she saw at first hand the inconsistencies between liberal, Western society and tribal, Muslim cultures. After earning her M.A. in political science, Ayaan worked as a researcher for the Wiardi Beckman Foundation in Amsterdam. She then served as an elected member of the Dutch parliament from 2003 to 2006.

In 2004 Ayaan gained international attention following the murder of Theo van Gogh. Van Gogh had directed her short film *Submission*, a film about the oppression of women under Islam. The assassin, a radical Muslim, left a death threat for her pinned to Van Gogh's chest.

A visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington DC, Ayaan is currently researching the relationship between the West and Islam. Ayaan Hirsi Ali was

named one of TIME Magazine's "100 Most Influential People" of 2005, one of the Glamour Heroes of 2005 and Reader's Digest's European of the Year for 2005. She has published a collection of essays, 'The Caged Virgin' (2006), a memoir, 'Infidel' (2007). More bestsellers of her hand: 'Nomad: from Islam to America' (2010), Heretic: Why Islam Needs a Reformation Now" (2015). She founded an organisation for the defense of women's rights. She is researcher for a couple of American universities or Foundations.

On YouTube you may find a speech she held in the Palm Beach Synagogue for the Levy Forum. There are more speeches or interviews recorded. In the internet you may find several texts, for instance 'Reclaim the spirit of American Idealism', 'The Escape from Islamic Extremism'. On the website of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni you may find a couple of quotes.

WHEN YOU BELIEVE

Many nights we prayed
With no proof, anyone could hear
In our hearts a hopeful song
We barely understood
Now, we are not afraid
Although we know there's much to fear
We were moving mountains
Long before we knew we could, whoa, yes

There can be miracles
When you believe
Though hope is frail, it's hard to kill
Who knows what miracles you can achieve?
When you believe, somehow you will
You will when you believe

Oh-oh-oh
Mmm, yeah

In this time of fear
When prayer so often proves in vain
Hope seems like the summer bird
Too swiftly flown away
Yet now I'm standing here
My hearts so full, I can't explain
Seeking faith and speakin' words
I never thought I'd say

There can be miracles
When you believe (When you believe)
Though hope is frail, it's hard to kill (Mmm)
Who knows what miracles you can achieve? (You can achieve)

When you believe, somehow you will
You will when you believe

They don't always happen when you ask
And it's easy to give in to your fears
But when you're blinded by your pain
Can't see the way, get through the rain
A small but still, resilient voice
Says, help is very near, oh (Oh)

There can be miracles (Miracles)
When you believe (Boy, when you believe, yeah)
Though hope is frail
It's hard to kill (Hard to kill, oh, yeah)
Who knows what miracles
You can achieve (You can achieve, oh)
When you believe somehow you will (Somehow, somehow, somehow)

Now, you will (I know, I know, know)
You will when you (When you)
Believe
You will when you (You will when you)
Believe
Just believe (Believe)
Just believe
You will when you
Believe

(Song from the musical 'The prince of Egypt')

*What were the experiences of Black Germans who grew up in German children's and youth homes in the 1950s and 1960s?
What are the central themes of their life stories?*

Black Germans who grew up in children's homes in the 1950s and 1960s have so far been invisible in the German culture of remembrance. Based on this gap, recently published book *ÜberLebenswege – Erinnerungen und Erfahrungen Schwarzer Deutscher der Nachkriegsgeneration* by Azziza B. Malanda focuses on the biographies of Black Germans who were born in 1946 and 1949 and grew up in German welfare institutions. As illegitimate descendants of white German civilians and Black American occupying soldiers, they experienced social stigmatization and racism in post-Nazi Germany both inside and outside of institutions. In this context, the men and women had to develop survival strategies from an early age in order to survive in the home and in society.

The book pursues an intersectional approach, taking into account the categories of race, class and gender and their intersections as well as a postcolonial perspective. *ÜberLebenswege* thus contributes to making a previous gap in research on the history of Black Germans in the early Federal Republic of Germany visible and filling it with new insights.

The Author

Azziza B. Malanda studied in Cologne and London and completed her PhD in history at the University of Hamburg. Her publications include texts on the experiences of Black Germans of the post-war generation who grew up in children's homes and on German colonial history. Since 2021, Azziza B. Malanda has been deputy director and PR and public relations officer in the project "DOMiDLabs: Making Museum Design Participatory" of the Documentation Centre and Museum on Migration in Germany (DOMiD).

Azziza B. Malanda

Monography

ÜberLebenswege– Erinnerungen und Erfahrungen Schwarzer Deutscher der Nachkriegsgeneration

Peter Lang, Oxford/New York 202

Imagining Black Europe, Volume 4

ISBN 9781800795525

Hardcover, 276 Seiten, 72,95 EUR

Note: the title is not easily to translate in English, because two different interpretations play a role. The meaning is 'About ways of life' but also, and more 'Ways of survival'. Memories and experiences of black German children born after the war.'

DIRK KAESLER: LÜGEN UND SCHAM (LIES AND SHAME)

Vergangenheitsverlag, Berlin 2023

The well known sociologist Dirk Kaesler has written with 'Lügen und Scham' a book combining fate and self research. Kaesler found out that he was not only born and raised in a 'Lebensborn home', but that his father of whom he bears the name was not the soldier fallen in war. The truth is that his mother was an employee in the 'Lebensborn organisation.' She had fallen in love with a SS man, the actual father of Kaesler. He felt the need to do research on his family, a difficult but very lightening work.

It is at first the story of his mother, a daughter of a wealthy family, whose dreams were smashed by her becoming a widow and being left alone. A woman who had to grow up with her son, to whom she in her hard circumstances clung as an alternative of a husband. To break trough this suffocating grip is a coming-of-age story at the background of the political changes in that period. The grandparents lived under monarch Wilhelm in an agrarian world at the countryside, then they lived in the Weimar Republic, next in the Third Reich and then ended in the poor circumstances of the after the war. In this framework the lies and shame did not yet come up, but played a role in the relationships. This is an extraordinary book, written in a clear style and deeply moving the readers. With this book about lies and shame Dirk Kaesler has given a root finding theme about German's society after the war.



This is the 5 years old Shaira, grand-grand daughter of the war survivor Rudie Cortissos (85) who attached the mezoezah at the doorpost of the entrance of the new Holocaust museum in Amsterdam that was opened by King Willem-Alexander on March 12. Outside the museum a mass of demonstrators had gathered and scanned slogans for a free Palestine. Although the mayor of Amsterdam declared afterward that she had not heard antisemitic slogans, many others had heard them definitely. In her function of mayor she had signed the permission for demonstrations, because she considers the freedom of speech an important democratic right. She gave priority to the yellers neglected the emotional protection of the guests among them the Israeli president. What should have been a glorious day for the Netherlands became a nightmare for Mr. Cortissos, his grandson and grand-granddaughter. And other guests.

The picture shows how Shaira's father tries to pass the demonstrators as fast as possible

trying to spare his daughter this turmoil. The demonstrators' faces are full of rage and hatred, one of them shows a picture with a dead Palestinian baby, as if he hold the father and his daughter responsible for its death.

This is the atmosphere in the Netherlands, 2024. Never again became, now again.

Picture: Amaury Miller

STORIES ABOUT WAR

For their issue of March 8, the editorial staff of the Dutch Jewish Weekly (NIW) interviewed the journalist and author Theodor Holman on the occasion of the publishing of his book 'Stories about War'. He is born in 1953, nevertheless a war child because the experiences of his parents in Japanese captivity, influenced his life deeply. The war was not a real taboo at home, but there were always ways to block the path to questions and this created silence. And when they spoke about the war, there was a match between his parents who had suffered more, he at the Birma railway, or she in the internment camp. In his childhood he lived in a district in Amsterdam where many Jewish families lived. His Jewish friends grew up with secrets and silence just like him.

In his columns in a national newspaper he wrote about the war in Ukraine, he felt solidarity with the attacked people. And then October 7 arrived. In the last chapter of his book he writes: 'There is a double war in my head'. He weighs his words, but about Israel he has no nuance, he supports the state wholeheartedly. He recognizes the right of Israel to defend their state, but feels that the people has even the right to take revenge; a word that appears in his book regularly.

NIW asks him if this is the right time to write a book about war.

TH: 'To me it is always the right time to write books about war. I cannot see my life's philosophy, the way I have my position in the world, without the war. It is a part of how I see life. Topics like right and wrong, good or bad, justice or lack of justice never play such a prominent role as in wartime. In reflecting on these themes one mostly starts thinking about morale, but that brings us to nothing. Because the morality of a Palestinian is of course another one than mine.'

NIW quotes some lines of his book: "The tragedy of revenge is that it has something of justice in it. It does not give a solution, but sometimes one has to allow people to take revenge.'[...] One cannot avoid feelings of human beings, that is why I write my lines. About the soldier who in a second has to decide on life or death, to safe the enemy or let him die. These kinds of moral problems.'

NIW; 'The war as micro cosmos of the existential problems of the human being?'

TH: 'War is a dystype, war has no meaning. Who today is still interested in the war between the Greeks and the Romans? Is a Syrian refugee interested in World War II? Inside this framework you have to seek the meaning. You can't say easily a stereotype such as 'we have to strive for peace'. No, maybe we have to fight to reach peace. And such a war is insurmountably terrible, necessary if you want to give your children to live in freedom. One of the things that makes my life meaningful is freedom. I learn gradually that this is a difficult term. Many people don't want freedom. They long for a stark leader telling them what to do, be it God or the director in the office.'

NIW: 'Why do these two wars, Ukraine and Israel, touch you personally so deeply?'

Holman answers that he knows Russia and many Russians. Russian culture has inspired and shaped him. 'But then suddenly Putin invades the state of a brother-people and goes back to the WWII and starts speaking about Nazism, not recognizing that his ideal to extend his territory is typically fascistic.'

NIW: 'And Israel?'

TH: 'On October 7 I knew that waves of antisemitism would overwhelm us. This was not a prediction, but I wrote that in the hope that it would not happen. I hoped that my readers would think: 'Yes he is right., we have to stop antisemitism '. But the contrary occurred. They blamed me for announcing a war because I did not see another solution. If we want to live in justice, in peace, we have to wage a war. Because *they* declared us the war.'

NIW: 'You speak about *we* when you speak about Israel'.

TH: 'Yes, I feel that I am a part of it. Maybe in 20 or 30 years I will find myself at the wrong side of history. People will blame me for being 'wrong', but that does not block me. We (Europe) has murdered 6 millions of Jews through industrial destruction. I don't know how you can better illustrate evil than by the gas chambers. So, Jews deserve to have their own country. Everyone wanted this, it saved the Jews. Israel has a civilisation with norms and values, with moral judgments which I support wholeheartedly, which I embrace, which inspire me. That's why I speak about *we*.'

At the question if he has limits in his support of Israel he declares that any state, also our own country, can make mistakes. Israel feels to him like Germany or Belgium, a neighbour state. What touches him is connected with the experiences of his parents under the Japanese occupiers. He had Jewish friends in his youth because they lived close to his parental house.

NIW: 'Do you see parallels between the two wars?'

TH: 'Both are threatening me and depict my opinion on this world in sombre colours. Everywhere people demonstrate on behalf of the Palestinians and much less on behalf of Israel. Or Ukraine! Antisemitism is a strange 'ism', an ideal. And inside that ideal there is only room for an absolute truth: "Jews are bad" [...] People think that the problems in the world can be solved by eliminating the Jews. Where people think that way, the concentration camps are not far away. And in the same time I see go down my own ideals. I was always left, but I was mistaken. I am now a capitalist, but these are dangerous words to utter.

NIW: 'Can a post-ideological society remain strong compared with those ideologists who are willing – for whatever bad ideology – to die?'

TH: 'No, such a society will perish. I believe in a culture that can relativize and this culture can only exist where there is freedom. But not everyone wants to have such freedom. Nor do they want peace. Peace is a situation of luxury, of the elite. That's why I become more and more gloomy.' [...]

'People say: "There are already so many dead children, that is criminal, we cannot accept this." My answer: "It is war. Berlin has been bombed several times. Had that not been the case, Auschwitz had been liberated much later. They bombed Berlin with the 'message': surrender. That's why my father felt so good about the nuclear bomb on Hiroshima. [The war against Japan ended much earlier than had been the case with the 'normal' war waging of the USA. Therefore people under the Japanese rule were liberated before they could succumb. This was the case with Hofman's parents]. Without that bomb I had not existed' [...] I don't like the uses of names of illnesses, but I do it now. Hamas is an inflammation that needs to be eliminated, that needs healing. Antisemitism is a cancer. It grows and grows and it cannot be eliminated entirely.'

NIW: 'How do you explain this to a generation who hardly knows something about WWII?'
TH: " With eating iftar meals together with moslims (sarcastic laugh). One can only explain this by telling stories, by reasoning logically, by education. But oh, the schools.....Pupils have difficulties with calculating, their language is terrible. Lessons in history have almost become the exclusive right of left. I am very worried about it. Our civilisation will perish. Civilisation and good manners. I never could have thought that one day I would be worried about these things.[..] I am rather conservative, because I think that many things in the Netherlands are important enough to be conserved. Changes can be good, but when you are proud of your civilisation you need the courage to hold in security several elements. I am conservative in this way that I want to keep the values of the seventies and the eighties, the freedom we had in that time. These forms of freedom are in danger.[..] Where I blame my generation for is that people say: "I go to my home in Toscane, I will read two good books, and oh, it is 4 o'clock, time for a glass of white wine." That is awful, because a big and powerful generation keeps silent. I want them to stand up and break the silence.'

Translation and summary GSB

HOPE

It is not indisputable to say
if something like hope
really exists.

Hope is comparable
with roads
in the country side.

There never was a road.
But when many people
walk in the same direction
then a road comes to the light

unknown author

WEBSITES

Organisation of Children of Dutch Collaborators:

www.werkgroepherkenning.nl

Organisation of Danish Children of War, Danske Krigsboern Foerening:

www.krigsboern.dk

Organization of Norwegian NS Children:

www.nazichildren.com

Krigsbarnforbundet Lebensborn, Norway:

priveadres: k.e.papendorf@jus.uio.no

Organisation of NS-children Vennetreff:

<http://www.nsbarn.no>

Riskforbundet Finska Krigsbarn: (in swedish)

www.finskakrigsbarn.se

Tapani Ross on Finnish War Children (blog)

www.krigsbarn.com

Organisation of Finnish Children of War, Seundun Sotalapset:

www.sotalapset.fi

Organisation of children of victims and children of the perpetrators:

www.one-by-one.org

Austrian Encounter, organisation for encounters between children of the victims and children of the perpetrators in Austria:

www.nach.ws

Dachau Institut Psychologie und Pädagogik:

www.Dachau-institut.de

Kriegskind Deutschland:

www.kriegskind.de

Website for the postwar-generation:

www.Forumkriegsenkel.com

Evacuees Reunion Association

www.evacuees.org.uk

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

www.warandchildren.org

Researchproject University München 'Kriegskindheit'

www.warchildhood.net

Coeurs Sans Frontières – Herzen Ohne Grenzen

www.coeurssansfrontières.com

Organisation d'enfants de guerre

www.nésdelalibération.fr

Organisation of Us-descendants in Belgium

www.usad-ww2.be

Childsurvivors of the Holocaust in Australië

www.paulvalent.com

International organisation for educational and professional development focused on themes like racism, prejudices and antisemitism

www.facinghistory.org

Aktion Sühnezeigen Friedensdienste

www.asf-ev.de

Organisation of German Lebensbornkinder
www.lebensspuren-deutschland.eu

International Network for Interdisciplinary Research on Children born of War (INIRC)
www.childrenbornofwar.org

Organisation Genocide Prevention Now
www.genocidepreventionnow.org

Basque Children of '37 Association UK
www.basquechildren.org

International Study of the Organized Persecution of Children
www.holocaustchildren.org

Partners in Confronting Collective Atrocities
www.p-cca.org

War Love Child – Oorlogsliefdekind
www.oorlogsliefdekind.nl/en

Children of Soviet Army soldiers
www.russenkinder.de

Stichting Oorlogsgetroffenen in de Oost
www.s-o-o.nl

Philippine Nikkei-Jin Legal Support Center
www.pnlsc.com

Austrian children of Afroamerican soldier-fathers
www.afroaustria.at

Organisation tracing American GI fathers
www.gitrace.org

Children in War Memorial
blog: <http://childreninwarmemorial.wordpress.com>

Stichting Sakura (Dutch/Indonesian/Japanese children)
<https://stichting-sakura.nl>

Stichting JIN (Indonesian/Japanese children)
<http://www.jin-info.nl>