

INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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INTRODUCTION

This is the 60th issue of the International Bulletin. I started 30 years ago with 32 readers, and the number grew with the years.

It is me a great pleasure to tell you that two organisations have joined our network:

The French 'Recontre-Réconciliation' and the German 'Kinder des Widerstandes' I will introduce them with some lines I found on their websites. Worthwhile to visit their sites.

There were rumours that the British Evacuees Association would stop, but they will continue to end 2026. I draw attention to the founder who passed away and I join a poem about young evacuees.

I insert another poem, written in the dialect of Groningen in the north of the Netherlands. Of course I translated it. The story around this poem is heart braking.

Timothy Snyder is a writer who writes about war and peace, dictatorship and democracy I found an interview with him in the internet. It is a difficult book, but one that everyone should read.

The organisation 'Russenkinder e.V.' had to stop its activities. I will give some information about this event.

The story of Katja and her sister Olga was published in the IB in the nineties. Now that the Russenkinder stops to be an organisation, this story is interesting, because it was the Russian sister who was in search of her German half-sister.

I wrote some lines on history, to share with you the eyeopener I received in a book I read when studying history.

There is a need to organise encounters between persons of different war backgrounds and nationality. I had the opportunity to be a member of an encounter group and I insert a text about our aims and effects of our meetings.

Reactions and texts are welcome. The deadline for the spring issue is April 15. I would like to receive any change in your e-mail) address, so that we remain in contact.

Warm regards, Gonda Scheffel-Baars

RENCONTRE-RECONCILIATION

Welcome everyone,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to this first issue of "Résonance," the newsletter of the Rencontre Réconciliation association. This project was born from our desire to create a space for exchange, reflection, and sharing around trans-generational memories of war, family histories marked by conflicts, and the traces that still resonate today.

The Rencontre Réconciliation association was founded with the conviction that the duty of remembrance is not limited to a simple reminder of the past, but that it is a powerful lever for building a more enlightened and peaceful future. We wish to open dialogue between generations, and between different European memories, to better understand the scars left by history and, together, move towards reconciliation.

This monthly newsletter aims to keep you informed about the events we organize (conferences, webinars), the testimonies we collect, and reflections on the duty of remembrance.

We will share articles, analyses, personal stories, and much more.

If you are interested in the content of "Résonance", we invite you to subscribe now so you don't miss any future publications. In addition, your feedback is essential: please feel free to share your comments, suggestions, or proposals to enrich this dialogue, which we hope will continue to resonate in the months to come.

Together, let us keep this memory alive, so that it may guide us towards peace and understanding.

With warm regards,

Joël PARE

President of the Rencontre Réconciliation Association

www.rencontre-reconciliaton.org

KINDER DES WIDERSTANDES

We met as children or grandchildren of people who during the Nazi-period were persecuted. February 2021 we founded the organisation 'Kinder des Widerstandes' (children of resistance fighters) in Nordrhein-Westfalen. As daughters, sons or grandchildren we want to remember our mothers, fathers or grandparents. Many friends support us.

Our parents or grandparents were victims of torture and terror, many died in detention, re-education camps or concentration camps, some of them left Germany. After the war many survivors and people who returned to Germany focused on rebuilding a shattered country, to shape a democracy and to remove antisemitism. They became persons who gave their testimonies, especially in schools. They spoke about what they had to go through in the Nazi-period, the dangers influencing their way of life. They spoke about the way they organised their resistance against the Nazi's and the impact the war and their resistance had on their families.

We give hope to the young people, telling them that is needed and also possible to fight regimes focusing on racism, anti-semitism, xenophobia nationalism and actions that are inhumane. We visit schools and tell our story to pupils of school year 9 and older and secondary schools. Moreover we introduce ourselves at events organised in Nordrhein Westfalen.

Peter Gingold who emigrated to France, after having a part in the resistance movement wrote: 'Don't forget our bitterst experience. The fascists did not come to power because they were stronger than their opponents, but because we didn't organise ourselves as resistance fighters. Hitler's triumph in 1933 would have been impossible when all his opponents had founded a united front. That this was not founded is due to the fact that nobody knew what fascism meant in practice when it had got the power. But nowadays we know what fascism is all about. For all future generations there is no acceptable reason that justify when they don't stop fascism.'

(Peter Gingold, Paris, 'Boulevard St. Martin' edition in 2009. Editor U. Schneider, Papyrossa Verlag S 5321

<https://kinder-des-widerstandes.de>

EVACUEES REUNION ASSOCIATION

The Association was formed in 1996 by former evacuee, James Roffey, and officially launched at The Imperial War Museum in London. It exists to provide meeting opportunities for those who, as children, were evacuated from their homes and families in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and other major towns and cities in Britain, that were seen as likely targets for enemy bombing during the Second World War. As that was developed so the southern and eastern coastal areas were also evacuated due to the threat of invasion by Nazi Germany.

In addition to organising meetings The Evacuees Reunion Association (ERA) helps many former evacuees to cope with the long term effects of the evacuation and to share their memories with people who understand.

A major part of the ERA's work is educational, this is to make the true story of what happened to some three million children better known and understood. It has a team of forty trained speakers who give talks to schools, and to a wide variety of other groups of people.

Membership of the ERA is not restricted to former evacuees but open to anyone interested. Its members are scattered all over the UK and in many other countries, its American group is rapidly expanding. Contact with members is maintained by the publication of a monthly newsletter called 'The Evacuee' which is posted to everyone at no extra charge to their annual subscription of 9.50.

The ERA is proud to be a member of INTERFEW, the International Federation of Evacuees and War Children. We are very pleased to create links with other countries in the firm belief that such friendships will help prevent the children of today and the future to suffer as we all did, and worse, in war situations

In the last issue of British Evacuees Association I read that James Roffey passed away on March 25, 2025. With enthusiasm and full energy he has been of great importance for the British evacuees.

May his memory be for a blessing

THE YOUNG EVACUEES by Patricia Thompson

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

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

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

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

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

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

Some adored their wartime hosts,

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

VICTORIA AMALINA

In Timothy's book 'On Freedom' I came across some paragraphs about Ukrainian writers.

The poet Volodymry Vakulenko began to write a diary about the war the day that the Russian army invaded Ukraine. After some time he knew that the Russians wanted to arrest him. He took the decision to bury the diary in his garden. Only his father knew the exact place. Very soon the Russians caught and murdered him.

Victoria Amalina wanted the diary to be published. She found a publisher who was willing to take the risk. Victoria tried to find the place where the diary was hidden and then visited Volodymry's father, because he knew where his son had buried it. They found it under the cherry tree. She found an editor willing to publish it. Very soon Volodymry was arrested and murdered. Shortly after she noticed that she was being followed by Russian officials.

When she was in a restaurant with friends a missile was launched exactly at the restaurant, it was not by chance, Victoria was seriously wounded and died 4 days after the attack.

In Oader, the Grunnings literair tiedschrift", a magazine written in the dialect of Groningen I found a poem in commemoration of Victoria.

I translated it.

What else could I have done
to commemorate Victoria Amalina
I was in Brussels, you were in Kyiv
where you was buried. It should not have happened,
not for you and thousands more like you,
as a soldier, or because of being there and then at the wrong place
where Russians observed attentively and followed them.

But Victoria was also a promised one
she spread her wings as a poet and a writer,
she wanted to reveal war crimes which were needed to be known
in Ukraine and at the tribunal at the Hague.

Although Victoria was a well known writer
she was too late to miss the missile
that struck the famous Kramataske restaurant on June 26.
Four days long she has tried to remain in the light
but the shadow was approaching and put her in its bag.

What else could I have done
than drink a strong blond beer
so far away from her coffin
and cheers on Victoria

you light of Brussels.

This what has been told:
Saint Michael gave help in 1695, to fight evil.
You were at that very moment in July 2023
in Kyiv's Saint Michael's cathedral
you threw your last breath.

What was the sign that evil even
the most clear light can be extinguished.

Timothy Snyder: On freedom -

In the years since the 2016 US presidential election there has been no more significant critic of the advance of Trump's form of nihilism than Timothy Snyder. The Yale history professor effectively took a sabbatical from his day job in 2017 to write [*On Tyranny*](#), a series of 20 lessons derived from his close study of totalitarian regimes in Europe in the last century and how they might apply to the US in this one.

He followed that book, in 2018, with 'The Road to Unfreedom', an illuminating and disturbing account of the ways in which Vladimir Putin's war on truth was being seeded as a global virus, promoted by the tech oligarchs of Silicon Valley, and amplified by the self-serving populists in the White House and Downing Street and elsewhere. With the prospect of another round of Trump-led deconstruction of the rule of law, Snyder here unites all those strands of his attention and sets out an urgent case for exactly what is worth fighting for: "If I can describe the worst, can I not also describe the best?"

OLE-object

On Freedom is a companion volume to those earlier books, penetrating in its analysis of our current crises – of information and climate and civil society – and clear in its prescriptions for change. In it, Snyder reclaims several words that have been co-opted by the so-called libertarians of the right, not least his titular subject, which here becomes defined not as a negative – as in "freedom from" regulation, or from the demands of fact, or from social obligation – but as an active, physical demand ("if we want to be free, we have to affirm as well as deny").

Snyder gains his understanding of the threats to democracies through his knowledge of the collapse of Soviet communism

It has been Snyder's developing contention as a writer that the body is where we site our opposition to the dehumanising advance of "screen culture"; he has encouraged a vigorous "corporeal politics", voting with paper ballots that can be counted and recounted; eye-to-eye interaction, rather than social media; marching and debating, not online likes and anonymous snark. "Power wants your body softening in your chair and your emotions dissipating on a screen," he wrote in 2017. "Get outside. Put your body in unfamiliar places with unfamiliar people."

Like other authors with whom he shares these concerns – , [Peter Pomerantsev](#) – Snyder gains his understanding of the threats to western democracies through his first-hand knowledge of the collapse of Soviet communism. The key reference points in this meditation therefore include Vaclav Havel and Simone Weil, those writers who lived their philosophies in a climate of repression.

Using their coordinates, he identifies five key determinants of a truly free society – and it seems highly appropriate that those tenets can be counted on the fingers of one definitely raised fist. Each one leads to the next. The foundation is sovereignty (not the resolve of narrow nationalists but the creation of political conditions in which individuals are safe and enabled to make meaningful choices about their lives, underwritten by empathy). That in turn leads to "unpredictability", the freedom to behave in ways that authority (and algorithms) cannot control; and mobility (the possibility for young people, in particular, to "break free of the structures (and people) that allowed them to become [sovereign]"). That is only possible with the freedom of "factuality" ("the grip on the world that allows us to challenge it" – Snyder makes a particularly impassioned argument about the devastating effect of local news deserts on democracy); and finally, "solidarity", the recognition that these freedoms are not just for the privileged 0.1%, but for everyone.

This is a rigorous and visionary argument, and one deeply rooted in Snyder's own biography – he begins with his memories of ringing the family Liberty Bell on his Ohio farm, as a 10-year-old on Independence Day. He has subsequently done nearly all of his thinking about these ideas not on a screen but in interactions with those who feel the presence and absence of freedom most keenly: from Ukrainian pensioners caught up in never-ending conflict to the inmates of a high-security prison, where he teaches a course on liberation. The result is that to his prescriptions for freedom you might add three more: buy or borrow this book, read it, take it to heart.

On Freedom by Timothy Snyder is published by Bodley Head (£25). To support the *Guardian* and *Observer* order your copy at guardianbookshop.com Delivery charges may apply

- This is the archive of The Observer up until 21/04/2025. The Observer is now owned and operated by Tortoise Media.

Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers,
but to be fearless in facing them.
Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain,
but for the heart to conquer it.
Let me not look for allies in life's battlefield,
to my own strength.
Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved,
but hope for patience to win my freedom

Tagore

RUSSENKINDER

The 'Russenkinder e.V' is a German organisation set up in 2014. Its aim is to support children in search of their Russian fathers and their families by giving advice and practical help. The organisation is focused on the fate of these people who generally learned their background only when they had become adults.

Their website in 6 languages – German, English, French, Russian, Polish and Hebrew- gives more detailed information.

The aims of the organisation:

- To help people in search of their fathers when they met difficulties they cannot solve themselves.
- The people can ask details and advice and practical help

Definition

- Russenkinder are people who have a German mother who had a relationship with a Russian soldier or officer in the Soviet army.
- Generally they lived in a problematic situation because their mothers did not tell anything, concealed facts and events, trying to make a new start in life by repressing the past.

- The organisation gives also support when people met with problems of coping with the past.
- The organisation tries to find a place in the public space, so that the issue of this category of war children becomes more known, especially important when the political situation creates stress.
- The organisation is registered in Berlin (therefore the e.V.is added)

The website of the 'Russenkinder' is worthwhile to be visited

The organisation has given help in a big number of cases, the website was frequently visited for information. All its activities found place in a public atmosphere of disapproval.

Germans remembered the behaviour of the Russians soldiers in 1945. But gradually there came more acceptance. Then, in 2022, Russian troops invaded Ukraine and this influenced the organisation a lot. In fact every activity stopped. Therefore in this year no other decision could be made than to cancel the organisation.

Here is the mail (in translation) which Anatoly sent to me in July 2025

Epilogue

Dear Russenkinder and friends, the organisation Russenkinder e.V.is history now.

On July 17, 2025 at 11.04 o'clock the notary sent a message to the Amtsgericht Charlottenburg that the organisation was canceled.

The organisation has fulfilled its aims in a very positive way. We built our organisation on a democratic basis. We had to cope with bureacratic obstacles, but this showed our need to do our work in an integer way, to be controlled by everyone who liked to work with us.

As a registered organisation we made possible to follow our work in the public space.

We would like to thank all our Russenkinder, the people who gave us help, friends, sympethizers who supported us that warmly.
We will remember all the persons who passed away during these years, those who contacted us for support and those who gave advice.

Warm regards,
Anatoly Rothe

KGB brings two sisters together

Katja was 47 years old when she received a letter from the Red Cross in March 1993 that changed her life.

I read on the envelope "War prisoners mail" and immediately I knew what that meant. I knew it by intuition. After the death of my stepfather, my mother told me about my 'real' father and showed me a picture. I thought: "This cannot be my father".

Then I started to reflect. As soon as one is interested in a topic, one suddenly finds a lot of information, articles, films and so on. As a result I watched the documentary film "Befreier und Befreite" (Liberators and Liberated) by Helke Sander and Barbara John. They tell the stories of Russian women raped by German soldiers and German women raped by Russian soldiers. And I became convinced that I was the product of such an act because I was born in April 1946.

My mother gave me little information. Actually, the story was a family taboo. We did not speak about it. My mother told me that my father died after the end of the war because of a lack of medication. And, indeed, it was common knowledge that there was such a scarcity. But what my mother told me was not the truth. I did not ask more questions, though.

The Red Cross informed Katja, daughter of Wladimir Smirnov, that her half-sister was searching for her. Katja was not shocked; she felt relieved. She hoped to learn the whole truth about her origins. She went to the office of the civil registry in Köpenick to see whether her father's name was written on her birth certificate. It was not.

Three weeks later she found the courage to speak with her mother, who told her: "I have to tell you about your father. We had a love relationship and lived more or less together till your second birthday. He was an officer in the army and took care of you and me. And then, suddenly, he disappeared. Two commanders of

the army came to see whether he was hidden in our home. They did not come back; neither did your father."

Later her mother told Katja that she, like so many other women, was raped by a Russian soldier who participated in the Battle of Berlin. They kept quiet about the issue and those who had a love relationship kept silent too, because common opinion judged them as unethical.

It was her half-sister Olga who could tell her what really happened. Her parents divorced in 1939. Her father, an engineer and a major in the Russian Army, took part in the liberation of Berlin. In his position as Vice-Commander he played an important role in the contacts with the other Allies in Berlin. In 1947, however, he was denounced by his car driver. He might have had plans to desert to the West and he was considered to be a traitor.

In Russia he got a 75 year sentence to a convict settlement, Magadan, known as the Gulag Archipelago. He died in 1952 at the age of 39. The officials stated that he died from a stroke, but that was always the official reason.

As a 12 year old girl Olga, found a letter in which her father was called an enemy of the nation and she learned that he was in detention. Her mother implored her never to talk about this to others, even not to her best friends. The topic was taboo in the family. Her father's sentence prevented Olga from receiving her doctorate in engineering.

It was only in the Perestroika period that Olga learned more about her father's fate.

"In 1986 I received a letter from the KGB about the rehabilitation of my father. I asked for more information, especially about the lawsuit. Only four years later did I get permission to see the KGB material in their office. I read all the documents in the 12 hours which were given to me, more than 250 pages. I made notes, because it was not allowed to make copies. The documents mentioned a child whom my father conceived in Germany with a German woman. In court he admitted that it was his daughter.

Then I became determined to search for my half-sister, my only relative, since my mother had died one year before. I thought: "Maybe my half-sister knows the story of our father and is still convinced that he is a perpetrator. And I would like to tell her that he wasn't, as the documents prove.

Olga tried to find more evidence and she was successful. The brother of one of her friends had been in the same detention settlement as her father. He told her that there had been a revolt on May 9 1952. Olga's father died the next day. Coincidence? The rebels asked for better conditions. Stalin had them severely punished: 500 inmates were executed. Olga asked the KGB for more information about this uprising and got a promise to receive more. She never did.

In 1990 Olga continued her research with the help of the Red Cross in Moscow. The officials said that it could last for several years and she might never succeed. The administration in Germany was less strict. Maybe the mother had remarried and had another name now. Maybe she had moved to another address.

Three years later, however, the Red Cross found Katja, who wrote a letter to her sister, although her mother objected.

She planned a meeting. But it was not as easy as that. Olga did not react! Through friends and friends of friends in Moscow and through radio- and TV programs, she tried to find her sister. She learned that she had left Siberia and was still alive.

In July 1994, Katja finally received a letter from Olga. In April 1995 the two sisters met each other in Moscow. Katja recognized similarities in the pictures of her father and her sister with her own face. She was happy that now, she suddenly had a big family: a sister, two nephews, 4 grandnephews, an uncle and an aunt, whereas until then she had only one relative, - her mother.

Later that year Olga came to Berlin. Katja's mother refused to meet her. Her only reaction was: "Yes, today it is nice weather."

Later, Katja had to cope with an identity crisis. It was difficult to her to integrate the new information.

Subsequently the two sisters met each other several times, alternately in Russia and in Germany. Katja and her husband visited Olga in the village where she was living. With the money Olga got from her sister, she bought a water filter installation. That was much needed for the poor conditions of this village.

Katja learned that her father loved children very much and she regrets that she had to grow up without a father and especially without a child-friendly father.

The two sisters speak German with each other. Olga learned the language in Königsberg where she lived during the war. The contact with Olga's sons is difficult because they speak only Russian.

It is uncertain whether they will meet in the future because of Olga's heart disease and the lack of room in Katja's new home. It will not be easy for them to accept this.

The story of Katja and Olga is not typical. Many children tried to find relatives and most of them were unsuccessful. The story is, however, certainly representative of the fact, that so many people learned the truth 50 years after the war. They learned that it was a lie, although it was loudly proclaimed in the former GDR, that, of course, the Russian liberators did not rape German women. They learned

that women who had love relationships with foreign soldiers - sometimes for very practical reasons, such as food and shelter - were not to be judged so harshly as people had done.

This article is based on the text of radioprograms of June 16, 1995 on SFB (Sender Freies Berlin) and the broadcast of August 1995 on MDR (Mittel Deutscher Rundfunk) in which the two sisters were interviewed by Heidrun Schmidt, and on a personal letter that Katja sent me to tell me what happened since then.

GSB

SOME LINES ON HISTORY

In November 1918 the cease-fire between the Centrals and the Allies was signed. The map of Europe and the Middle-East changed dramatically. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became independent states and Poland was again an autonomous state after 150 years of being divided by the neighbour countries. A big territory of Hungary was added to Romania, of course without consulting the people. That was the political norm of those days.

The big Ottoman empire – the biggest one that ever existed – as an ally of the Nazis – was to lose its boundaries. Turkey was reduced to the shape it has today. Iran had been an autonomous state already in the Antiquity and was recognised as such. Still there was a lot of Ottoman territory to be divided. The British and French authorities took it upon them to shape a new map for that region. They created some new countries: Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. Iraq and Jordan received a king, Faisal in Iraq and Abdallah in Jordan. They received the kingship out the hands of the British government as a compensation, or consolation prize, for the fact that their father had been pushed out of his function as sjarif and emir of Mecca and Medina, functions the Saudi leaders took over. That was their triumph.

When I studied history I read a book titled 'Minorities in the Middle-East'. I apologise for the fact I do not remember the author's name, (remembering names is a special blind part in my brains). This book was an eye-opener and can help us to understand the situation of today. There never existed a Syrian people, Syria was the name of a territory where different ethnic groups lived. Those groups found themselves at their surprise united in one state. But those groups had not the nationalistic ambitions like the Europeans. They lived in clans and their first loyalty was bound at the clan leader. Of course there were clashes

between the different clans, the leaders hoping to get more power. The situation now, is not that different. In Syria the family of Assad belonging to a small different group of Muslims, the Alawites, had seized themselves the power and reigned a lot of years. After the exit of Assad there are different groups claiming the power. In people of different groups peoples belonging to a dictatorship, at the death or abdication of the leader, the old rivalries are renewed. This was for instance the case in former Yugoslavia. The six different people united by Tito declared after his death independence and meanwhile fought with the neighbour states, Historians were not surprised, there are mechanisms in history which come up at certain circumstances.

As an historian I feel the need to explain how difficult it is to create one united nation. I take as an example my country, the Netherlands. In 1581 the protestants who had left the Roman Catholic Church had also the will to stop being governed by the Spanish king. They decided to govern themselves and this was the birth of the Republic of the 7 united Netherlands. So there were 7 provinces that reigned themselves, but for serious situations as war and international contacts, they formed one nation. This form of government stopped in 1815, after the French occupation ended. The Netherlands became the name for the unity of the provinces under the reign of King Willem 1. The provincial loyalty has not disappeared but the unity is far more important. Provinces becoming one nation is a long process. Germany got its unity only in 1870, Italy in 1871. In the Germany of our days the several provinces, states, has in many questions autonomy, just like in the United States of America.

In the beginning of the twentieth century the people in the Middle-East were not yet in the phase of nation building, so the import of that West-European concept shocked them. They suddenly found themselves united with clans they never had had relationships with before. Nation building is the task of the peoples themselves and cannot be forced upon them. That chaos of the beginning of the 20th century has still its effects.

Moreover, the British government had asked the Arabs to revolt against the Ottomans, then they would receive an Arabic state. In the Balfour-declaration of 1917 the British government said to see with benevolence that the Jews should create a national home in that territory. When the war was over, the British government did not keep their promises because they put the whole territory they called Palestine under mandate. The shock could not have been greater. The British government could no longer reign over Palestine and handed their power over to the United Nations. On November 29, 1947 the UN presented a two-state solution, creating an Arab nation and a Jewish one. The Arabs did not accept the plan, the Jews did although the map was complicated. At the base of this plan Ben Gurion declared in 1948 Israel as a sovereign nation, Many countries agreed, six Arab states did not. They attacked Israel. Had Israel not won the war, the territory had been divided in a southern part, annexed by Egypt, a middle part, annexed by Jordan and a northern part, annexed by Syria. No one spoke in

these days about Palestinians. 70% of the Jordan inhabitants are Palestinians, so some people are convinced that there exists already a Palestine nation, although under a foreign king.

There have been several efforts to come to a peace treaty between Palestinians and Israelis. We know the handshake of premier Rabin with Yasser Arafat. But Arafat was still in the phase of tribe and clan, he and his family became very rich. In 2005 the Israelis left Gaza, they left blooming kibboetsiem and even the dead people were taken to Israel. In 2006 there were free elections in the Gazastrip, won by Hamas. The financial help from abroad was meant to promote agriculture and found factories and companies, but the money was invested in other things, we know now. Because of the withdrawal of the Israelis in 2005 it is not correct to say that Gaza is occupied territory.

On YouTube someone suggested to create the United emirates of the Palestinian people, just like the United Emirates. Then the clan leaders do not loss importance, in the contrary. So there could come the united emirates of Syria, of Iraq and Lebanon. The problem is: will they agree with such a solution? It is not a special West-European solution, it is universal. A federation of political groups is a concept that has also been used in other parts of the world to satisfaction.

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

I join a paragraph of a text written by Sidney Bialystock in the Jewish weekly of September 19 in the Netherlands.

The western concept of national freedom collides with the Palestinian reality, where tribal structures dominate and hatred against Israel and the Jews for decades tied the tribes together. This attitude did already exist before 1948 and is therefore no reaction on occupation and settlements, but against existence itself. This is a difficult reality where many people in the West has great troubles with to accept. There is a sharp contrast with the circumstances of the 1,700 million of Israeli Arab citizens who choose to live in a peaceful attitude in co-existence with the Jewish population.

The idea that a Palestinian state will bring automatically peace is a dangerous illusion as long it is founded in the negation of Israels existence. How to negotiate with a partner who is denying your existence? Who hold hostages in tunnels, spread propaganda and calls violence resistance? As long as we support the illusion, we strengthen the impasse. Sometimes because of feeling guilty or sometimes simply in naivety.

Peace asks more then good intentions or morally right.. Peace asks recognition. Unambiguously. Recognition of Israel as the Jewish state, with safe and defensible borders. As long as radical islamic ideologies, especially from the Shias, makes from the destruction of Israel and the claim on Jerusalem a sacred goal, this is not a conflict about territory, but a conflict about existence.

KOMBI: DIALOGUE IN THE NETHERLANDS

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 organizations 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.

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 other 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 was the organization where children of war could meet each other in a more personal way and could develop more quickly in their working-through process. The encounters had very positive results.

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

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>

Risikoforbundet 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

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>

Encounter, organisation planning a yearly encounter between descendants of victims and of perpetrators of WWII of any nationality

<https://encounter2022.wordpress.com/home/the-encounter-2>

<https://encounter2022.wordpress.com>

<https://encounter2022.wordpress.com/home/the-encounter>

Organisation to promote (inter)national encounters between war children in Europe

www.rencontre-reconciliation.org

Organisation for children of German resistance fighters

<https://kinder-des-widerstandes>