

INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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INTRODUCTION

Last year Baard Borge from Harstad university in Norway presented a paper on the problems NS-children met at school because of the political choice of their parent(s).

Marie Kaiser sent me the summary of the first outcomes of a study on children born out of the German occupation during and after WWII.

The Danish Organization of War Children drew my attention to a new website, that of children fathered by soldiers of the Soviet Army. This website is linked to other sites and thus I found information on children of Afro-american fathers and people in search of their American fathers who served in the Allied Army.

At a symposium in Utrecht, Netherlands, organized by the 'Stichting Oorlogsgetroffenen in de Oost' (SOO, the Foundation of War Victims in East Asia) I learned about their activities and those of the PNLSC, a center supporting people in search of their Japanese fathers. I also learned more about the community that was formed around the website of oorlogsliefdekind – war love child, dedicated to people who were fathered by Dutch soldiers between 1946 and 1949, when the Dutch government tried to restore its authority in the colony of the Dutch East Indies that was striving for independence.

The search of the unknown father is often very difficult, but it sometimes has an unexpected result. I present to you the stories of Anne-Marie, Hiroshy and Rob.

Together with other researchers, Iris Wachsmuth interviewed people belonging to the second generation in Germany. The outcomes of this study, that was carried out in Israel as well, were published in the book 'Das ist einfach unsere Geschichte' (This is simply our history).

The experiences of Dutch collaborators' children were studied by the historian Chris van der Heijden, psychologist Bram Enning and the historian Lenie Bolle. It is interesting to see how differently they viewed and depicted the target group!

The Day of the War Children was celebrated in London, Stockholm and The Hague. Some lines on this event in this issue of the IB.

I would like to be informed on any change in your (e-mail) addresses so that we don't lose contact. Reactions on this issue and any articles for the next are very welcome!

Best regards,
Gonda Scheffel-Baars

SCHOOL EXPERIENCES OF COLLABORATORS' CHILDREN

by Baard Herman Borge (PhD) Associate professor, Harstad University College, Norway

In Norway, there is nowadays broad consensus that schools, above all teachers, have a special obligation to children who for some reason are particularly vulnerable. As for what characterizes such children, international research has emphasized how a child's personality can give her or him an increased risk of being isolated or mobbed at school.

Nonetheless, recent studies suggest that external characteristics also play a role. In Norwegian schools, minority groups such as children from other ethnic backgrounds and children with a disability have fewer friends and are more often bullied than other pupils. A common feature of these and other vulnerable student groups is that they, for one reason or another, are stigmatized. To belong to such a group is socially discrediting and means that the school environment often will perceive the group members as different from their "normal" class mates.

Empirical research has demonstrated how a school's handling of vulnerable pupils has a significant effect on their everyday life. In this connection, the teacher has considerable potential to make a difference. If he or she offers care and support, this can improve the daily existence of the children in question. However, if teachers fail to give them special attention, it can worsen a girl's or boy's situation drastically. In the following, an example from recent Norwegian history, where a group of students for many years were in a vulnerable position, will illustrate this problem.

The NS-children

During Nazi Germany's occupation of Norway, Vidkun Quisling's collaborationist movement "Nasjonal Samling" (NS) gained control over the state apparatus and attempted to transform society in accordance with its Fascist-like New Order vision. Consequently, many compatriots regarded the 60 000 NS-members as traitors. In the post-war trials, every single ex-member was sentenced for treason. Informal sanctions against former collaborators continued for many years after 1945.

The traitor stigma is known as a both intense and lasting form of branding. Given that a personal stigma – especially a strong one – sometimes will "rub off" on the bearers' immediate family, there is reason to believe that many NS-children both during and after the war experienced acts of stigmatization. Sociologist Erving Goffmann named that effect courtesy stigma but it is also known as associative stigma. In the case under discussion, with the presence of an intense stigmatization of some children's parents, it may safely be assumed that the children risked facing social sanctions.

How did Norwegian schools of the 1940s and 1950s tackle the challenge that some students had parents who more or less were pariahs in society? Did schools seek to shelter children of collaborators, or let them fend for themselves? In the following, I will present some quotes as well as quantitative data from my survey among 367 NS-children born between 1928 and 1971. Two questions will be addressed: What characterized their school experiences, and how do they in hindsight describe the attitude of teachers?

In the survey, carried out in 2001, grown persons were asked to account for events that took place many decades ago, when they were children. The relationship between distance in time and people's ability to remember is not straightforward, but forgetfulness and failing memory obviously represent sources of error. While the sample used is not representative in the statistical sense, it is sufficiently large and varied to allow cautious generalizations about school experiences of Norwegian NS-children as such.

School life during the occupation

Many of the respondents who went to school during the war reported that they, after the German invasion of April 9th 1940, all of a sudden encountered a dismissive attitude, or open hostility: "It was agonizing. I was a 1st grader and the boys in my class stood one day and were going to shoot me with gunpowder toy guns because I was a Nazi", a woman (b. 1933) recalled from the spring of 1940.

In literature on the years of occupation, schools have been presented as an important arena for the popular resistance against the New Order. In the years following 1945 many authors have depicted how opposition against the NS created a strong bond between most teachers and the majority of the pupils.

Another important but rarely discussed dimension of war-time events in Norwegian schools is that some children had to cope with the fact that their parents became an object of hate for almost everyone. Collaborators' children, all together many thousands, were mostly surrounded by class mates and teachers who sympathized with the resistance. As the "battle of attitudes" came to dominate school life, it goes without saying that NS-children came to constitute a vulnerable group.

Through its paroles, the Home Front even encouraged "good Norwegians" to ostracize them: "Your children shall not play with their children." The following quote from a post-war book about the history of Nordstrand school in Oslo, shows how difficult circumstances must have been for some NS-children:

"It was a total war, and the struggle to keep oneself clean from the Nazi influence was hard and relentless. Children from Nazi homes were frozen out of the fellowship in class, and class mates who wanted to maintain friendship with them heard harsh words and were sometimes also given a more tangible disciplining."

This excerpt does not indicate much sympathy for children from "Nazi homes", nor any doubts regarding the rightfulness of ostracizing minors as an act of resistance. A woman from Oslo (b. 1927) who was not herself an NS-child, sent me this school narrative from 1940:

"I was in 6th grade at a large Oslo school when the war came – and shortly after a rumor began to go in class: Berit's parents are NS! Berit was a quiet and timid girl, always hard to get personal opinions out of. Now she was frozen out – without even having expressed any opinion on the current situation. On the long wall at the back of the classroom were pegs to hang our coats on – there were also some hooks on the adjacent short walls. I'll never forget the sight of Betty's coat hanging alone on the long wall, while all the rest of us had piled our clothes together on the few short hooks on the other walls."

Berit was the only NS-child in that class: "She lived in an ice-cold atmosphere – it hurts to think about it today." Being frozen out is a form of psychological harassment. In some cases, this was the only form of discrimination an NS-child was exposed to at school. A man (b.1928) wrote that he was isolated, but not mobbed. Students and teachers were nice to him, despite the ostracism.

But NS-children could also get more tangible proof that they were not well liked by other pupils. Apparently, physical attacks on them were not rare. "We felt that we were kept to ourselves. There was frequently aggression against us", reports a man (b. 1929).

How many NS-children were harassed in the war years?

I was frozen out. School books were torn and soaked with ink. Warm soup down on my neck. Surrounded by a "wall" of hatred. (man, b. 1928)

People were nice. I did not notice anything special. Many came to mom and dad and asked for help. (woman, b. 1934)

It has long been known from published personal accounts that collaborators' children could suffer from discrimination and rejection during the war. In my survey I found numerous examples of this. However, the harassment described by individual respondents had many different forms, and was remembered as more or less serious. Some told of intimidation that took place over a long period of time. Many of the latter stories are sad to read, for example that of a woman (b.1930):

"Horrible bullying in all situations. School was a place of despair. I was harassed by teachers as well as students, in a small town with a little school with 4 classrooms. I was locked outside the building in foul weather, rain and thunder. My pack lunch was soiled."
A man writes that he was chased by gangs on his way to and from school, beaten and kicked. At school he became isolated during breaks. But the boy was also terrorized in other ways:

"I was knocked on the head with fists, in quick pace. Had to run a gauntlet between two lines of school children, who used their belts to whip me. Some used their belt buckles instead of the leather strap. Spat on and soiled."

In other cases, discrimination was less physically brutal but may still have been serious for the boy or girl who was hit by it. Some could only remember the odd negative remark in the war years: "No major problems", wrote a woman (b. 1934). "Sometimes maybe we were called 'Nazi brats'- but it rarely happened in school", she added. "I remember some episodes, never violent, but various negative statements. Under the circumstances, I have nothing to complain about", wrote a man (b.1931). A few were also unsure what role their family background actually had played for the harassment they experienced: "Did I get a nick name because I was an NS-child, or would I have gotten it anyway?" one wrote.

How widespread was the practice of harassing NS-children during the occupation? To give a sure answer is of course impossible today, so many years later. But the survey may give an indication. Among the eldest, who were born before 1940 and therefore remember the war, as many as three out of four said they were teased or bullied – mostly at school – for the sake of their parents, 40 percent told of serious problems.

Despite the many gloom stories from school life in the war years, one should not forget that some stated that they personally had a reasonably good period. 25 percent were never, as they remembered the years of occupation, bullied in any way, neither at school nor elsewhere.

"Out of the four teachers in my school, three were enrolled in the NS. Cannot remember that there were serious differences between students, or between teachers and students, regarding the NS, apart from a single 'innocent' episode...In the circle of friends, I got to take part in what I wanted and was never subjected to bullying". (female, b. 1929)

A man who started school in 1938 also writes that he experienced little discrimination between 1940 and 1945. His siblings however, endured more of it. He himself was small in stature "but good in sports, so therefore popular within the circuit of friends". Another man (b. 1930) pointed out that he, with the exception of a fight that started when other boys would

tear off his NS Youth Organization-button, did not experience problems during the war. Not afterwards either, for that matter. He felt himself simply as one of the guys, which almost certainly was connected with the fact that he had an unusually outgoing personality.

How did teachers handle the “Nazi children”?

*Schoolmates often insulted me. They were supported by the teacher. He never reprimanded any of them. They talked about sending all the Nazi swines to Bjornoya > Arctic island> We were to be slaughtered and everything terrible should happen to us.
(woman. b.1933)*

Under the New Order, teachers were intended to play a key role. The NS membership rate among teachers was somewhat higher than in the population as a whole, but the vast majority of teachers did not sympathize with Quisling's movement. On the contrary, that particular professional group became known for its firm stand against the NS-regime, refusing to educate children in accordance with national socialist ideals.

How, then, did teachers handle children of parents they knew had chosen the “wrong side”? In the heated atmosphere that prevailed, it was obviously a challenge for schools to treat children of local “quislings” in the same way as their class mates. Undoubtedly, NS-children were as a group more susceptible to teasing and bullying than other students. Did teachers therefore try to give them special protection? How did the teachers, who most stood on the “right side”, solve that difficult task?

Many anecdotes from the war years bear witness to how popular it could be among children when a teacher let it shine through that he or she dislikes the NS. Accordingly, teachers have told stories about how support from students warmed their hearts and strengthened them in their resistance against the New Order.

But this newfound community feeling in classrooms was not unproblematic. If a teacher took his or her dislike of the NS out on particular pupils, they would be in a desperate situation, with both the teacher and their class mates against them. Thus, the teachers' attitude towards them was critical for NS-children's daily lives at school.

How did the Norwegian teacher cope with that challenge during the war? What emerges from the survey is a mixed picture. On the one hand, nearly two out of three respondents who attended school in those years, say that their teachers did not deal with them differently from others in the class.

A woman (b.1930) tells that she was ostracized by her class mates, “but the teachers were nice, so lessons were pleasant.” Some NS-children were reliant of their teachers when other students attacked them. “Bullying and isolation came primarily from my peer students. Mostly I think the teachers remained neutral or came to my rescue”, enters a man (b. 1932)

On the other hand, one in three reported that one or more teachers did handle them differently than other students. In a few of these cases the teacher is portrayed as a helper: “She did not tolerate that anyone was nasty to her little girls”, a woman wrote. A man described how a teacher handled him awkwardly, yet in the best sense:

“I became almost transparent or invisible whenever the word “Nazi” was mentioned. A teacher stopped me in front of the catheter and asked – in the present of the whole class – if someone was being mean to me. I remember that he 'exhorted' the class and said that I 'could not answer for the wrongdoings of my parents'. I remember that I blushed with anger and shame, and that I wanted to strangle the teacher.’

However, some teachers – one way or the other – allowed their dislike of the NS to influence their behavior towards some of the children in class. Several respondents told about teachers who failed to intervene when they were bothered by other children. A man who constantly was humiliated at school during the war wondered why his teachers never came to the rescue:

“A recurring question was: where were the teachers? All this – at least some – they must have registered. It went on more or less constantly. My school received the messages that I was kept at home because of beatings and verbal abuse on the way to school. Why on earth did they do nothing? I did not think of my teachers as coldhearted, but how could they let all this happen? Why did none of them stretch out a hand? I feel tears arise again as I write down these lines.”

Others tell that the teachers ignored them completely in class. A man (b. 1933) stated that his teacher consistently called him and two other boys with NS-parents “children of the enemy”, in front of the whole class. Another man (b. 1934) was forced by his teacher to throw pen nibs at a picture of Vidkun Quisling. A woman tells that when the mandatory portrait was hanged up in her classroom in 1940-1941, she was moved from her usual desk to another, right underneath Quisling. That she now sat below the despised Führer, as the laughing stock of her class, was otherwise only part of the harassment that her teacher and other students exposed her to.

It cannot have been easy to be an educator in Norwegian schools during the occupation. For some, it must have been tempting to highlight their own “patriotic” attitude by signaling that collaborators' children were not as much worth as other pupils. Besides, teachers who did not turn their backs when “Nazi brats” were being intimidated risked being criticized by the bullies' parents, perhaps even accused of being pro-Nazi.

In the survey I found many examples where a teacher discriminated NS-children, apparently without any consequences for him or her. Even the mayor's children could be teased and tormented day after day at school. Because of the regime's lack of support and legitimacy in the population, party members were not always able to protect their children, especially not while they were at school. Despite Quisling's new regime, the individual teacher, who mostly was in opposition to the NS, still had supreme authority in the class room.

School life after the war

When school started again in the fall, the situation was somewhat more normal, but it was still uncomfortable when the teacher lectured about the 'Germans and the Nazis'. And the 'rascals' in my class easily took the signals. (male, born 1938)

NS-children frequently suffered in schools during the occupation, but school life did not necessarily normalize once the war was over. In the survey, there was no marked distinction between the school experiences of the eldest, who went to school between 1940 and 1945, and those of the younger, who began their school career between 1945 and 1950. Many told of school days more or less marked by harassment and isolation in the years immediately after the war. Judging by survey results, the “ice-cold front” still was a reality in Norwegian schools. On the basis of the atmosphere that prevailed in the public, at least until around 1950, that finding is not surprising.

Hatred against ex-collaborators was very much alive, and NS-children were even less protected than during the occupation“. I was mobbed, called bloody Nazi brat”, told a man who began school right after the war. A woman (b. 1939), entered the following: “I was under

pressure at home to have top marks in everything. Some of the other students bullied me because of my father, possibly with envy, and all this made school very difficult.” Another woman, who started school in 1945, told of largely unproblematic schooldays, but looking back she understands that there were issues related to her father's past:

“I was a good student, but should not be outstanding, neither in the classroom, nor on the ski slopes or otherwise. If I excelled, someone could whisper: “Do not think too highly of yourself, your father was a Nazi!” So I learned early on to tread carefully, be as invisible and common as possible.”

Some of the NS-children born in 1938-1939 experienced few problems at school. “I had a teacher for school work and good friends”, tells one respondent. Another noted that he pretty much had it all right at school: He had many friends and was able to defend himself when occasionally subjected to verbal harassment for being a “Nazi child”.

Towards 1950, children of ex-collaborators still could be victimized in schools. But did they remain scapegoats also in later years, as the occupation became less prominent in public memory? To shed light on that issue I compared how different age groups told about events at school and on their way to school. In general, the younger NS-children less often than the older told of major problems. But the difference between different age groups was unexpectedly small.

Between respondents born in 1930-1939, more than 40 percent, as already mentioned, told of serious difficulties at school. But also within the cohort born 1940-1954 a relative high percentage, i.e. more than 30 gave similar accounts. Only in the very youngest category, that is individuals born in 1955 or later, a marked change took place. Among the latter, less than 20 percent described major problems linked with their family history.

With regard to less serious or occasional problems, the difference between cohorts was less pronounced, but such problems were also more common among the older respondents. Thus, as pupils and teachers became less preoccupied with the war, NS-children less frequently were teased or bullied. A man (b.1950) wrote that school life became easier when there was less focus on the war. His time in high school therefore was better than elementary school had been.

To summarize, we may conclude that the hostile attitude NS-children met in schools during the occupation often sat in the walls. At the local level, popular resentment against NS-families continued for many years after 1945. To have such a family background could be problematic for a school child. Not just in the immediate post-war years, but perhaps throughout the 1950s.

A man born as late as 1952 told this story when he started school in 1959: “On my first day I was baptized in the toilet by older children who called me a Nazi pig.” The boy did not understand why other pupils bullied him, asked his father what a Nazi was. “Seven years old, I had father explain his past to me”, he wrote. It is only after 1960 that school circumstances seemingly becomes normal for the vast majority of NS-children. But not for everyone. Even the youngest respondents, who were born in 1960 or later, had in some cases been victimized because of their family background.

How did teachers handle NS-children after 1945?

I remember an episode – we had a history lesson about the war. The teacher talked a lot about the Germans being cruel and mad. I raised my hand and asked if all Germans were like that. Then he came down and yelled “You Nazi brat!” and hit me right in the face. I

thought then that I had the wrong mind set and that there was something wrong with me. If I only had known. (male. Born 1943)

A recurring issue in the stories about more or less hostile school teachers in the post-war years is what happened during history lessons, or when the war theme came up in other connections at school. In the post-war period, the history of the occupation was used to strengthen national cohesion. By and large, text books used by schools accordingly depicted the years 1940-1945 as a struggle between good and bad, i.e. "good Norwegians" set against a handful of treacherous Nazis. In my survey, some respondents told of teachers who took into account that they had one or more NS-children in their class by presenting the topic in a more balanced way than what was common: "It was difficult for me when our teacher talked about the war, but he never exaggerated."

To another group of teachers, history lessons seemingly represented an opportunity to demonstrate their aversion to the former collaborators and their children. One example is this story from the late 1950s, told by a woman (b.1946):

"My teacher in elementary school showed me clear contempt, and I remember quite clearly she said that when we would all meet again in 25 years she would reveal who among us had NS-parents. This made such an impression on me that I dreaded for 25 years."

Nonetheless, the majority of those who started school in 1945 or later reported that teachers never gave them any special treatment due to their background. Still, one in four said teachers did treat them differently from other pupils. In a few isolated cases, the discrimination was positive. A woman (b. 1951) told that her teachers handled her "like fine China", i.e. gently. But most of those who felt that teachers singled them out referred to unpleasant or painful experiences.

Some were ignored by individual teachers. "A teacher who had been in a concentration camp, never asked me any questions. He sat and stared at me all time, with a contemptuous glance," wrote a man (b.1943). Many told of teachers who made cruel remarks, often in the presence of other pupils, such as in this example: "One teacher said the NS-members had been less gifted intellectually and that could be the reason why I struggled with math."

Conclusion

Having reviewed some numbers and quotes from my survey we now have a basis for assessing how the Norwegian school system dealt with a vulnerable group of pupils in the years 1940-1960. In the survey, a substantial share of respondents told of discrimination and rejection linked with the NS-stigma. That was not just the case for those who were at school during the war but also, although to a lesser extent, for all the younger age cohorts.

Yet, the overall impression one gets of school experiences is mixed. As expected, many told of unpleasant memories. But in every age cohort, some gave a more positive account of their school days. "Quite OK. At the time I didn't even know what NS meant", wrote a man (b.1957).

As for the behavior of educators, personal accounts of respondents also varied a great deal. Individual teachers did provide care and protection for children of collaborators, but there were far more testimonies of educators instead of helping them added to their burden. Thus, the survey demonstrated well the power of teachers to make a difference, for good or for bad.

In the years of occupation, one in three NS-children apparently had negative experiences with teachers. After 1945, the corresponding share was one in four. However, every third or

four teacher did not victimize children from NS-families. The majority who felt discriminated by teachers referred to one individual, not all the educators, they came in contact with. Most likely, the majority of Norwegian teachers never treated "Nazi children" differently from other pupils. On the other hand, relatively few seem to have made an active effort to shelter them.

As a final point, it should be said that survey findings must be understood in light of common attitudes of the day. In the 40s and 50s, the fact that school children could be mean to each other was more or less taken for granted, and teachers did not necessarily see it as their duty to protect pupils who were intimidated.

Summary of the study on 'Occupation Children' by Marie Kaiser and others

Network workers from the universities of Leipzig and Greifswald distributed a call for participants for their study on German 'occupation children'. Data were collected from 03/2013 until 12/2013. This is a short summary of current project activities and descriptive sample information.

Overall 146 data sets were included for analyses (men: 37.0%, N=54; age: 63.4/5.7). When asked about their biological background almost half of the participants (48.6%) stated their father was of American origin, 1/5 are descendants of former Soviet soldiers (21.9%) respectively of French soldiers (22.6%) and 4.1% of a British Army member. Four people were not aware of their father's home country or the army he fought for. The majority of the respondents (75.3%) stated that their biological parents maintained love, respectively voluntary sexual relationships. Only 6,8% were born of rape (Kaiser et al., submitted).

In October 2013 we were able to present first sample information as well as an overall impression regarding the questionnaires and personal contacts at a meeting of GITrace in the Bundestag, Berlin (Germany). First results of the study were presented at the German Psychosomatic Congress (DKPM), Berlin. At the moment, several publications on study results are in progress. Multiple discussions and personal conversations about follow-up projects emerged from our study.

In cooperation with Dr. Barbara Stelzl-Marx (Ludwig-Boltzmann Institut für Kriegsfolgenforschung, Graz) we were able to initiate and conduct a comparable study using our questionnaire on Austrian 'occupation children'. More than 100 Austrian 'occupation children' participated. Data analysis is in progress and eventually, we are planning to compare both samples, German and Austrian.

Simultaneously, an adapted version of the questionnaire was applied in a study on Norwegian children born of war ('Wehrmachtskinder', 'Tysker jung', 'krigsbarn'). This study is a cooperation project of the universities of Greifswald and Leipzig, of Haukeland Universit tskrankenhaus Bergen as well as of GESIS in Cologne.

The G nther-Jantschek-F rderpreis f r deutsch-norwegische Kooperationsprojekte des Deutschen Kollegiums f r Psychosomatische Medizin was applied for and granted for project funding.

GITRACE Friends in the USA, the United Kingdom, Germany and Austria are willing to support with their experience in this field the search for fathers in the USA.

T.R.A.C.E. (Transatlantic Children's Enterprise) was founded in 1986 by Pamela Winfield (UK). She married short after the end of war 'her GI' and lived in the USA for several years. After her husband's death she went back to the United Kingdom and started to help people in search of their unknown American father. Throughout the years an international network of people with experience in the field of father searching was established. In February 2004 Pamela Winfield received a royal award for her dedication to children of war. Soon after having received this honour she died. But people continued her work until today.

In 2005 John Munro created a new website, www.GITRACE.org. People can find in this website information about research, addresses and links to other websites and success stories.

Representative for Germany and Austria is Ute Baur-Timmerbrink. Her e-mail address: u.m.timmerbrink@t-online.de

From this website I quote the following poem

My Handsome GI Daddy

I never met my Daddy
He died when I was small
He never got to hold me
Or even see me crawl

But soon I'm going to meet him
As he lies there in his grave
My handsome GI Daddy
I know you were so brave

I treasure the one photograph
In your uniform-you look so smart
I hold it very frequently
Close-by near my heart

Someday I hope that I will TRACE
My New York ancestry
And then my family jigsaw
Will completely be

Dear Daddy I know you're watching
To guide me on my way
Please give a sign or just a clue
to really make my day

I'll stand beside your graveside
And send you lots of LOVE
Please keep on watching over me
From the Heavens above.

Dedicated to "MY HANDSOME GI DADDY"Sgt. Louis Beldon Lee 1914-1949
written by Elaine Lee Drury – July 2004

LOST IN ADMINISTRATION

Afro-Austrian GI Children in Austria
Research Project

LOST IN ADMINISTRATION is the research project that aims to document the history of those children who were born to Afro-American GIs and Austrian mothers in the post war period. Many of these children were put into state custody and/or given up for adoption in the United States. A series of interviews and a collection of documents shall bring back the memory of these children. LOST IN ADMINISTRATION is conducting archival research in European and US archives. Central to this project is the direct contact with these former Austrian children – born between 1946 and 1956 - themselves!

Please get in touch with us, if you are personally connected with this history, or if you know anybody else who might be!

Contact: office@afroaustria.at tel.++ 43 699 1123 9065
postaddress: Schleifmühlegasse 18/1, A-1040 Vienna

In autumn 1945 about 70,000 US-American soldiers were present in Austria, among them several black Afro-Americans. Immediately after the war the military authorities forbade personal relationships between the GIs and Austrian women or girls, but in October 1945 the soldiers got permission to fraternize with Austrian females. From these relationships children were born, in majority out of wedlock. The children's features defined them as born from Afro-American fathers and these children met with discrimination.

The university of Salzburg started a research project in order to draw attention to this unknown chapter of Austria's history. The personal stories of those children alongside with memories of civil officers and social workers will open the way to a more complete image of the post-war years in Austria. Attention will be drawn as well to the international legal and political context and the covering by the media at the time.

www.afroaustria.at

RUSSIAN CHILDREN!

The older people still remember this term: Russenkinder/Russian children, a term used to describe German people whose fathers served in the Soviet Army.

Here we are, some of them, to talk about our origins, of course not only about children of Russians, but of fathers from all over the former Soviet Union as well, and furthermore, fathers of other countries who fought in the Soviet Army.

Our fathers have taken our mothers under different circumstances; they raped them, were devoted to them and loved them, everything was there. Our mothers have suffered, were unable to cope with the circumstances. They let their anger out on us, so that many of us were physically and mentally abused.

Children are not a burden, but ought to be a joy, for they are mankind's future. The old Nazi ideology seemed still alive even after a long time. And this paradoxically helped us to identify us and our mothers.

Our mothers received little attention of those who were linked to our birth or of the German public. There was discrimination, many of our mothers were under enormous psychological

pressure. This led to an unfavorable development in our lives and influenced negatively the way how we were raised.

Fortunately, there were also other, more joyful circumstances, and we want to report them here as well.

60 years after WWII, we want to draw attention to our fates. During the time when the Soviet Army still existed, there was no way to do research on our fathers. In 1990 however, the Russian Federation opened their archives and gave and give us information. We are finally able to get to know our fathers and their families. A new world opens.

The members of our organization met the first time through a research project from the University of Leipzig. The first meeting took place on March 8, 2014, and there was an immediate sense/feeling of closeness – togetherness - between us.

After the meeting we decided to go out in public – to let the world know that we exist: no more silence. We want our fathers/mothers to be remembered, and we want to encourage, educate and help all the others who still suffer in silence.

We are calling you up, read this website, think about your need or wish to get to know your fathers and their families. Whatever the circumstances were, it happened over 60 years ago.

Our fathers are part of our life, no matter how we and our mothers see them.

As in all wars, since mankind exist, soldiers have taken women as prey and leave children behind. In general these children have had very few opportunities to find their fathers and have therefore greatly suffered. The exchange with others here on this website can help you and hopefully we can find some inner peace.

Now there are new generations who have a more open and different mind and view things happened in the past in a different way.

We want to be remembered and not forgotten.

We do not want to make any accusations, we want to open a new part in our life.

Our children and grandchildren will ask us about our past, and we want to give them the answers. Some things will be impossible to find, but we do what we can to the best of our knowledge and abilities.

Until now we did research on fathers from Russia, Kazachstan, Ukraine and White Russia.

www.russenkinder.de

STICHTING OORLOGSGETROFFENEN IN DE OOST

The SOO, aiming at a better relationship between the Netherlands and Japan, offers the following services:

1. We continue the translation of the POW cards of all Dutch/Indonesian KNIL and Marine servicemen together with the POW Research Network in Tokyo.

These cards, in total 46979, were made during the Pacific War by the Japanese POW Information Bureau. They were handed over to the Dutch government in 1955.

The cards give rich information, such as where/when people were captured, when and to which camps they were transferred, what kind of diseases they caught; if they died in the camp, the date/time/place of death and how they were cremated and when/where these people's ashes were handed over to the Allied Forces.

If people survived the camp, the card also shows when/where they were released after the war ended.

2. Father search actions for Japanese/Indisch/Dutch people.

We offer systematized and confidential Japanese biological father search through interviews, workshops, research with Japanese veterans, archival research in various archives both in Japan as in the Netherlands and abroad. Human right lawyers in Japan give also support for father search and family reunion.

We support and give advices to JIN and SAKURA, the organizations of Japanese-Indisch/Dutch people in the Netherlands.

3. Presenting reference documents and public documents from Japan.

As reflecting on the war, post-war academics of Japan have been working on many researches on former Dutch East Indies under Japanese occupation and the result of the occupation. Also many memoires and notes written by military personnel and civilian personnel have been published. Because most of these researches and books are written in Japanese, they have not been really accessible for non-Japanese readers. SOO will provide those available source materials in English, and also will offer archival information on the declassified public records and how to access those documents.

In November 2012 the SOO started cooperation with the Japanese lawyer, Mr Kawai Hiroyuki, who has been working for the Japanese war orphans in China in order to obtain the Japanese nationality for them. He is the chairperson of the Philippine Nikkei-jin Legal Support Center in Tokyo.

www.s-o-o.nl

DUTCH CHILDREN OF WARTIME LIAISONS WITH JAPANESE SEARCH FOR THEIR ROOTS

by Maki Okubo, Senior Staff writer of the Asahi Shimbun

Hiroshy de Winter was born in the Dutch East Indies as a result of the wartime Japanese occupation. Japanese forces overran the Dutch East Indies, later to become Indonesia, in 1942. The Japanese presence lasted until the end of the war in 1945, August 15.

Liaisons, forced or not, were common between Japanese soldiers and Dutch women.

Invariably, children were born out of wedlock.

Raised by his single Dutch mother in the Netherlands after the war, de Winter, 68, always knew he had a Japanese father. As a child, he endured taunts and discrimination from classmates because of his Japanese looks. It was after his mother died (1993) that he learned he also had a half-brother in Japan. On her deathbed, she still harbored fond memories of his father. In her personal effects, she left a note written by his father. It included his parents' address in Japan. That was the spark that took him to Japan to meet his younger sibling and his father for the first time.

De Winter lives in Roosendaal in the southern Netherlands. His brother, a 61-year-old Japanese, lives in Sapporo. Both men share the same facial and body features. There is no question they share the same father.

In 2011, the man in Sapporo learned for the first time that he had a half-brother in the Netherlands. A relative told him: "Listen to me calmly. You have an elder brother. He is Dutch". The man was startled. His half-brother was born in Java in April 1946. His father cultivated cotton there.

In autumn 2011, De Winter came to Japan. Guided by his sibling, he met his father for the first time. The man was suffering from dementia and living in a special facility. De Winter embraced his father and showed him a photo taken when the man was young, which his mother had treasured. The father was startled to see the photo and began to cry.

According to the Dutch government, the Japanese military interned about 130,000 Dutch people, of whom more than 20,000 died from malnutrition and diseases. About 40,000 of the internees were soldiers and were treated as POWs. The other 90,000 were civilians.

Now in advancing years, many of those children who were born and raised in similar circumstances as de Winter are looking for their "roots". It is not often that Japanese-Dutch citizens succeed in meeting their Japanese fathers or other family members in Japan. Some, like de Winter, are lucky and find their biological fathers.

"It may be a shame (for the fathers). But children are victims because they were separated (from their parents) against their will, due to the war", said the younger brother of de Winter.

A sense of shame has tormented many Japanese-Dutch people.

Rob Sipkens, 68, who lives in the southern Netherlands, learned 25 years ago that his biological father was Japanese. Since then, he has been afflicted by the thought: "I am a child of shame".

His mother's family was living in Pekalongan, Java, His grandfather, who was white, became a prisoner of the Japanese military, and his grandmother and mother were obliged to work in a military mess and other facilities. When his mother was about to be raped by a military policeman, another Japanese man came to her rescue. But he then made her pregnant against her wishes. "I gave birth to you when I was 19 years old. I did not tell your father that I did so", she told Sipkens.

Strong anti-Japan feelings raged in the Netherlands after the war and Sipkens assumed that most Japanese people are cruel and brutal. He had little sense of self-worth, which unhinged him. He became unable to work.

The turning point came in autumn 2009 when the Japanese Foreign Ministry initiated a program inviting former Dutch prisoners and the offspring of Japanese liaisons with Dutch women to visit Japan. They were all classified as war victims. Sipkens visited Japan for 10 days. During that period, he met Japanese citizens who were kind and polite and listened to his story in earnest. At that time he thought: "There is no shame in having Japanese blood." Wherever he went, Japanese people talked to him in Japanese at first because he looked Japanese. Far from feeling like an outsider, Sipkens was comfortable being in Japan. He is still earnestly looking for his father. All he knows is that the family's name is Kawabata. "I want to see him, even if he is a bad guy. That is because he is part of my roots. Half of me came from him", Sipkens said.

MARIE-LUISE KINDLER, LUISE KREBS, IRIS WACHSMUTH, SILKE BIRGITTA GAHLEITER (ed.) **'DAS IST EINFACH UNSERE GESCHICHTE'**. ('That is simply our story') Lebensweg der "zweiten Generation" nach dem Nationalsozialismus Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 2013.

In this book the outcomes are published of a part of a research study carried out by people belonging to the third generation. They interviewed people of the second generation, both in Germany and in Israel.

This book focuses on how events, feelings and thoughts connected with national-socialism have been transferred in families.

The researchers took four questions as guide lines:

1. What did children experience whose parents lived in Germany during the Nazi regime?
2. Which experiences of the parents have been transferred through transgenerational processes?
3. How has the family's attitude with respect to Nazi domination influenced the quality of life of the second generation?
4. How have these influences become tangible in the lives of the children?

The book presents the outcomes of 30 interviews with people who responded to a questionnaire. Moreover, ten life stories are included: six of children of bystanders, two of children whose parents were war victims and two of children whose parents belonged to the perpetrators.

In the 'bystander families' the parents have difficulties with facing the past. They keep silent, they suppress their memories and feelings, their family life is characterized by taboos. These families are exemplary for the way German society in general handles the past.

In the 'perpetrators' families' the past is blocked out solidly.

In 'war victims' families' the parents try to protect their children and they do everything to avoid burdening them with their experiences. There are tangible tensions in the families and the parents cannot give enough emotional support to their children. However, these children feel a deep need to face the past and to unravel what happened and what cannot be discussed in the family.

The ten stories show how the first generation has unloaded the working through of the past onto their children. The impact of this boarding-out is intense. 'Circumstances in a family can influence deeply the current lives of the offspring born many years later,' is one of the conclusions of the authors.

(From a book review in the EL-DE-INFO, Nr. 47, Sept.-Oct. 2013, the newsletter of the Nazi Documentation Center in Cologne).

DUTCH COLLABORATORS' CHILDREN in three research studies

In 2007, Rinke Smedinga and Paul Mantel, both collaborators' children and members of the self help organisation “Herkenning”, planned a website, “Open Archives”, on which people could publish their live stories linked with WWII and its aftermath. In September 2008, the Archives went online with stories of collaborators' children. In the beginning the Open Archives were hosted by the Dutch expert centre on the psychosocial effects of war, persecution, aggression and violence, Cogis. In 2010 the Archives were incorporated in the Dutch National Archives in the Hague. The staff of the NA developed a help programme for people visiting the site.

The initiators meant the Open Archives to be also a collection of data for historians and researchers, but until 2013 very few historians and researchers used the more than 200 live stories available. In 2013 The board of “Herkenning” asked the historian Chris van der Heijden to make an inventory and analysis of the published stories. In March 2014 he presented his prosopography, collective biography, in a book, titled: Children of “foute” parents (that is the term used in the Netherlands to describe the target group, the collaborators' children)

Although each story is unique, there are a large number of recurrent subjects in the majority of the stories, such as: shame, feelings of guilt, being victim of exclusion or discrimination, being the target of teasing by friends and teachers, difficulties in expressing feelings and giving trust to others, difficulties in starting relationships and accepting orders.

As a historian Chris was aware of the vulnerability of the material he used: a life story is by definition subjective and research showed how unreliable memories can be. But he is also aware that any analysis is an interpretation and thus is as subjective as the material the researcher studies. He decided to accept the truth as it was presented by the author, aware of the presence of a deeper significance of what is related, a truth more true than the events described. Even when it is obvious that some event did not occur on the day the author mentioned in his story, it is the task of the reader and the researcher to trace the message beneath the words and between the lines. When the first German aircraft penetrated Dutch territory, May 10, 1940, the sun was not yet up. So the woman that related that it was bright day when she was woken by the noise of the aircraft, in fact did not tell the 'truth'. But her message is true: the appearance of an intruder that darkened the brightness of her life and changed it for good.

In his book Van der Heijden presented 6 life stories, illustrating a number of recurrent subjects in the life stories of collaborators' children and showing at the same time the uniqueness of the individual stories. He included his own experiences in this book: described the suitcase with 'secrets' in the attic and stated that not all his sisters and brothers were ready to explore the political choice of their father. This confirms what is seen in many families, that only one of the children is ready to face the past, whereas the others prefer to avoid any reflection on what happened. As an illustration of the unreliability of memories, he told a story about a furious neighbour railing at him because of a football. He considers this story to be his, whereas his younger brother is certain that the neighbour shouted at him...

In 2010, the psychologist Bram Enning was charged by the NIOD (the Dutch National Centre for War Documentation) to study the changes in opinion with respect to collaboration in Dutch society, in the framework of the project 'Erfenissen van collaboratie' (Legacy of Collaboration). He studied the circumstances in which the organization “Herkenning” was founded and how collaborators' children were judged by the Dutch and how they saw/see themselves in the context of society. It is unfortunate that his book 'Spreken over fout' (Speaking about 'wrong') is characterized by slovenliness and sloppy thinking, by downright errors and suggestive use of words and by the description of one aspect of an event and omitting the other aspects that would correct the image presented. To give one example: the

author calls the newsletter of “Herkenning”, *Bulletin*, consistently *Information bulletin*, so all his references to this non-existing journal are a nonsense.

Since he gave several incorrect data about a MA essay (about collaborators' children in children's homes) Paul Mantel and I wrote in the eighties, I met the author, together with the chairwoman of our organization, the author to discuss all the points of disagreement and criticism. Although we asked him several times why he did not contact us in order to verify his interpretations, we did not get a real answer. “Herkenning” had placed at his disposal the archives of the organization, but we did not even get a free copy of his book. His supervisor in the project asked us to take into account that the author - since 2012 no longer fellow of the NIOD - had to finish his book in his spare time. Can one put forward such an apology to members of a non-professional organization, who collected all the data in the Archives in their spare time.....

The worst error in this book, however, is that the author reached the conclusion that “Herkenning” abandoned its mission, self help for collaborators' children, and adopted the task of becoming the mouthpiece of the collaborators. Here his discourse is completely off the rails. From the speech delivered at the 30th anniversary of “Herkenning” in which the chairwoman mentioned the various tasks the organization would still have to carry out, the author picked out only one task, that of being partner in societal processes and events. The KB (the Royal Library), planning to digitalize all the papers that appeared during the war, including the collaborators' papers, asked for our organization's reaction to this plan. The National Archives, considering to cancel the restrictions on consulting the collaborators' dossiers, asked for our opinion on this issue. The board of our organization consulted the members and sent a well documented and well grounded answer to the two institutes. The KB and the NA understood very well that their plans would affect collaborators' children, and consulted “Herkenning” as a representative of these children. What was clear to the authorities and is clear to every well-thinking man or woman, was not clear to Enning, a psychologist in his job of historian. He ignored the importance of the plans for the children and gave vent to his suspicion, expressed in several places in the book through suggestive use of words, that, notwithstanding the negations of “Herkenning”, there had been some 'real' collaborators among the members, thereby neglecting the fact that the regulations exclude such persons from membership. How prejudiced can a researcher be. In a personal encounter Enning admitted that his conclusion was wrong. But the book is available in the bookshops, no chance for rectification...

In her study on Dutch collaborators' children Lenie Bolle showed a far more mature scientific attitude. Her study has the same subject as that of Enning, she studied our organization as well, but she refined her focus by analysing 6 biographies written by collaborators' children. She shows her independence by disagreeing with one of the most influential NIOD fellows, Jolande Withuis. Withuis recognizing in fact only two categories of war victims, the resistance fighters and the Jews, criticizes in her publications the other categories who strive for recognition as war victims. She sees but one motive among the other categories: if they have received the recognition of being war victims, than we want it too! Lenie Bolle states that she did not come across such motives in “Herkenning”. In stead of such an attitude, she noticed much empathy of collaborators' children towards other war children and war victims and the absence of any attitude of competition and envy. She emphasized that those who learned to handle their problems left the organization after some years and that those who stayed did so to help to fulfill the aims of: “Herkenning” in a committed and almost professional way.

How can two researchers, Enning and Bolle, come to such complete different opinions? Could the answer lie in the following? Lenie's great-grandfather and his brother were member of the Dutch national-socialist party, his brother as well. Lenie's grandfather did not often speak about the past. However, his visit of the internment camp where his father was held imprisoned like a criminal, affected him a lot. But, apparently, the war did not leave many traces in the family. Apparently, because Lenie found letters in the dossiers of the her

great-grandfather's brother and his wife, letters that made clear how much the lives of that family had been affected by the internment of the parents. The her great-grandfather's brother wrote a letter to the school director to intervene in the teasing and bullying of his children by their classmates and some teachers. In another letter addressed to the leader of the internment camp, a neighbour of the children asked if it was possible to send their mother back home, because one of the children was pining because of the absence of his mother. Lenie comes to the conclusion that these family members had to cope with some of the problems she has come across in the stories of other collaborators' children and that are described in publications of "Herkenning". Her family, however, never contacted "Herkenning", and she is sure that another tens of thousands other collaborators' children never did, although they experienced the same acts of discrimination and exclusion as those who joined the organization. In her opinion there is no single reason to doubt the representativeness of "Herkenning" for a majority of collaborators' children – and here again she disagrees with NIOD's opinion.

Have we to conclude from the comparison of the two historians, that one can study and describe historical events and their impact only when one is in some way related to these events? This would be disastrous with respect to history study and writing and I refuse to draw that conclusion. What remains is that we can only note that, apparently, the very renowned NIOD institute has become the puppet in the hands of a couple of short-sighted historians.
GSB

MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY

Dear friends In the United Kingdom and in Sweden,

To-day, November 20, 2014, we, Dutch collaborators' children, have our annual meeting. At the beginning of the programma, we will commemorate all the children of war, from the past and the present, children on both sides of conflicts that adults did not see any other way to cope with than through war.

We commemorate them, in solidarity with you in London and Stockholm and with all others who, to-day, will pay attention to the plight of children in war, oppression and persecution. Through our commemoration of the innocent and the so often invisible victims of war, the children, we appeal to all those who, in countries and international institutions, decide on peace or war. And we ask them to do their utmost to protect the children of their country and world wide. These children will shape the future – let it be in the strength build up in a happy, violence-less childhood and youth.

We, here in The Hague, will commemorate all those children whose childhood or youth was broken through death or traumas, remembering the words of a song written by the Dutch singer Marco Borsato, which, translated in English, is as follows:

Walking through the ruined streets,
father gone and country lost,
without help and all alone
at your mother's side.

Little lamb amidst the wolves,
where will end your way?
No one notices you are
small and, vulnerable, a child.

But tomorrow peace will come,
sun will shine, caress your hair,
world will be a playing-garden,
you'll be safe and play.

After winter comes the spring,
gray skies turning blue again.
Although out-side war is over,
the war inside you, will it end?

Pretty eyes are poisoned, for
they saw too much grief and pain,
and no one notices you are
small and vulnerable, a child.

Stichting Werkgroep Herkenning
The Self-help Organisation of Dutch Collaborators' Children

TO MY FRIENDS IN THE HERKENNING

As you hold your ceremony in The Hague on the 20th November the War Child Memorial group will be holding a similar service at Westminster Abbey in London. Many children will be attending and will place wreaths on the Memorial to the Innocents. The wreath of poppies that I will lay will be for those children in all countries who have suffered as a result of war and conflict.

Let us hope that our joint efforts, together with colleagues in Finland and Sweden, will continue to bring the plight of children in both past and present conflict areas into the public domain.

Your suffering, both during and after the war, was intense and we will be thinking of you and pray that you will all find inner peace.

Much love to you all
Martin

Professor Martin Parsons PhD FRHistS



Gonda

Many thanks for your message! In order to establish a link between our and your ceremonies on the 20th of November, I will share it with the participants in the gathering at the Finnish Embassy.

The commemoration starts that day at 10 p.m. with a ceremony in the Finnish Church in the Old Town of Stockholm. It will be followed at 2 p.m. by a conference at the Finnish Embassy. There will be song, music and speeches.

A well-known pediatrician, who worked extensively with refugee children, will talk about treating new and old trauma.

A Fin who was a war child and two young people who as children more recently fled wars in Asia, will tell about their ordeals. They have been asked also to compare the similarities and differences of their flights and of their first years in Sweden.

Best wishes!

Project team: A day for the Children of War: The National Association of Finnish War Children (in Sweden)

Sinikka Stymne

WEBSITES

Organisation of Children of Dutch Collaborators:

www.werkgroepherkenning.nl

Organisation of Children of War of different Backgrounds:

www.stichting-kombi.nl

Organisation of Danish Children of War, Danske Krigsboern Foerening:

www.krigsboern.dk

Norwegian Children of War Association, Norges Krigsbarnforbund:

www.nkbf.no

Organization of Norwegian NS Children:

www.nazichildren.com

Krigsbarnforbundet Lebensborn, Norway:

<http://home.no.net/lebenorg>

Organisation of NS-children Vennetreff:

<http://www.nsbarn.no>

Risikoforbundet Finska Krigsbarn: (in swedish)

www.krigsbarn.se

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.coeurssansfrontieres.biz

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

Next issue: Spring 2015

Articles and reactions: March 15, 2015