

# INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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

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### INTRODUCTION

In this 24<sup>th</sup> issue of the International Bulletin Martin Parsons, Director of the Research Centre for Evacuee and War Child Studies in Reading, gives a personal response to the question people often ask him, why he spends so much of his time researching the topic of war children.

Through the Newsletter of the Association of Danish Children of War (DBKF) I learned about a German-French organisation of Children of War. At my request its chairman Jean-Jacques Delorme sent me a text in which he presents his organisation.

Arne Oeland, chairman of the DKBF, presented his paper 'Paternity – a private or public matter?' at the Expert Meeting 'Consolidating the Evidence Base of Children of War' at the university of Cologne, in December 2006 and allowed its publication in our bulletin.

In the small Aalten museum near the Dutch-German border an exhibition called 'Born stigmatised – collaborators' children 1931 –2010' attracted almost 3600 visitors in three months, an absolute record. It was the first time in the Netherlands that an exhibition paid attention to the issue of the children 'of the wrong side'. Project manager Ben Boersema wrote a report.

Alexa Dvorson participated in the One by One Conference 'Transforming the Legacies of Conflict, War and Genocide through Dialogue', in New York, 13 - 17 November 2006. She wrote a moving personal testimony in the One by One Newsletter of which I am allowed to publish some paragraphs.

Iris Wachsmuth was for some years involved in a research project in Western and Eastern Germany in which three generations belonging to the same family were interviewed. The study focused on the questions of how memories of the grandparents' generation were transferred to the next generations and how they affected them, consciously and subconsciously. For this bulletin she wrote some lines about this project that will be published this summer.

I hope that you will enjoy reading the articles in this issue. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

Please send me any change of postal or e-mail address so that we can stay in contact.

All the best,

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

**A personal response to the question 'Why do you spend your time working with war children?'**

Dr Martin Parsons.

Director of the Research Centre for Evacuee and War Child Studies. University of Reading.

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

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

As a result of my initial concerns about stereotyping, I started by attempting to dispel the myths of civilian evacuation in the UK in world war two. This should have been a relatively innocent task, but strangely it was to bring me into conflict with some individuals and local government authorities who did not want me to search too deeply. One ex-Cabinet Minister, told me quite categorically that '*.....if I was searching for monetary compensation for the Evacuees they were not going to get it*'.<sup>2</sup>

My searches meant spending many hours in record offices in both the evacuated and reception areas looking for the relevant information and that gem of a comment which would support, or refute, the hypothesis I was testing. The task was made more difficult by the fact that few of these repositories have files labelled 'Evacuation' or 'Evacuees'. I soon realised that I would have to search through the Air Raid Precaution Files and those of the Health and Education departments. In some cases an onerous task especially where the cataloguing was a little confusing.<sup>3</sup> Some record offices such as Dorset, a major Reception Centre, didn't even know what they had on the subject. The archivist had informed me over the telephone that they had nothing in the archive except two audio tapes. When I travelled to Dorchester to hear them I decided to search through other documents and references just on the off-chance I would find something interesting....I found enough to work there 2 days a week for almost 3 years!!!

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

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

<sup>2</sup> Baroness Castle who was a Local Councillor in London during the war and later a Minister in the Harold Wilson Labour Government in the 1970s.

<sup>3</sup> But I did pick up lateral information about water-main damage in Exeter and the number of carrier pigeons kept at an ARP post in Dorset etc. Really useful!!!

<sup>4</sup> These can be either manifested at the lower end of intensity as simply not being able to say goodbye, or at the other end of the scale.....depression, agoraphobia, inability to make relationships etc. psychosomatic disorders etc.

The personal accounts of evacuation and the research in the various archives have taken up a great deal of my time, but I realised that there was more to be done in this subject area. By concentrating solely on the British scheme I felt that I was narrowing my scope too much. There had to be other war children in other areas of the world who had suffered in the same way, or had dealt with problems way beyond the understanding and experience expected of a child.

Fortuitously, in the late 90's, I was invited to the key-note address on British Evacuation at a conference in Mikkeli in Finland. This was to be a very important moment in my career and was instrumental in widening the area of my research. While there, I was invited to become President of the International Federation of War Children, a body which would ultimately bring together war children from all over Europe. The role also allowed me to get an insight into the experiences of children who were not evacuated or originally displaced but who, through no fault of their own, became embroiled in the war and post-war politics of their families and, in consequence, the targets of hatred and abuse resulting in displacement, lack of identity and lack of self-esteem. In the process I have had to learn about inter-related disciplines such as Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychotherapy. Not an easy task for an Historian.

Throughout my research I have had to deal with many depressing accounts and letters I receive from ex-war children, and without emotional support from my wife and from my very good friend the Rev Hugh Ellis, who is Chaplain to the Evacuee Reunion Association, it would have been very difficult to cope at times. However, on the positive side what my work has allowed me to do is meet some remarkable people. The ordinary person on the street who remains relatively unscathed despite horrendous abuse and life experiences, those who are willing to share their stories with the next generation to make sure they are aware of the problems their Grandparent's generation faced, and those who, despite their suffering, have forgiven the perpetrators. But above all I consider it to be a great privilege to work with people, ex-war children themselves, who have dedicated their lives and/or their retirement to bring the plight of war children into the public domain. There are many....but forgive me for mentioning a few who I consider to be pivotal in this work. In the UK there is James Roffey, who established the Evacuee Reunion Association in 1995 almost on a whim. It has now become the leading organisation of war children in the UK, and indeed perhaps in Europe. Gonda Scheffel-Baars, who has dedicated her life to getting recognition for the children of former Dutch collaborators. Pertti Kaven and the late Professor Singa Sandelin-Benko, who have done so much work in Finland with the children who went to Sweden. Dr Peter Heintz and Dr Helga Spranger, again both war children, who have helped many ex-war children in Germany and other parts of Europe to come to terms with their past, and Professor Marina Gulina who works with 'children' of the siege of Leningrad. We all have a responsibility to get people to confront their own role in the war-child scenario be it positive or negative. The psychiatrists and psychotherapists in the team are more aware of this than I as a historian but it is accepted that until some people can deal with their past they are unable to cope with their future.

However, as a team we realise that our work has only just begun. What we must continue to do is make sure that the powers that be and the public at large are made aware that war related trauma did not stop in 1945. As you read this article there are 31 wars taking place in the world. All of these affect children, and in some cases some as young as 8 years old are active participants. Between us we now have enough research evidence to demonstrate that, by ignoring the children, the countries involved are brewing up problems for the future.

We know that war trauma goes through three generations to some degree or another. Yet I still hear comments addressed to me like 'I don't know why you are doing this research they were (are) only children' or 'They're children, they'll grow out of it'.....well I am sorry to say that they don't. All children are affected by war. How can they not be when they see families destroyed (sometimes as in modern day Africa by family members), parents 'disappearing', bodies lying in the streets etc etc.?

I am in the fortunate position where I can guide my own students doing the War Child Studies course towards concentrating on war-children post-1945 in order to bring things up to date. It is refreshing that there are now a few who are continuing their studies to higher degree research levels. This is the next generation who have to take things on.

Those of us working in this field, one which has been hidden for over 60 years, have only been able to scratch the surface and although we have had the benefit of getting first-hand accounts the documentary evidence has often been difficult to find. It has taken a lot of hard work and dedication on the part of many people to get this far. Therefore, what these future scholars have to do is make sure that our groundbreaking work is employed to good intent and used to inform future generations of politicians about the effects of war on children. Hopefully, in so doing, we may be able to break the circle of trauma and make all governments realise that they have a responsibility to make sure that children in areas of conflict are affected as little as possible.



Coeurs Sans Frontières  
Herzen Ohne Grenzen

Association franco-allemande Loi 1901  
Préfecture de la Sarthe N° 0723012152  
[www.coeurssansfrontieres.biz](http://www.coeurssansfrontieres.biz)

Jean-Jacques DELORME  
Mon Sentier  
48, promenade maréchal Leclerc

06500 Menton  
[jeanjacquesdelorme@hotmail.fr](mailto:jeanjacquesdelorme@hotmail.fr)

## HEARTS ACROSS THE BORDERS

As the chairman of the organisation 'Coeurs Sans Frontières'-'Herzen Ohne Grenzen' I would like to present our association which is a joint initiative of Germans and Frenchmen. The countries of which we are inhabitants fought against each other in the past and thanks to the commitment of our respective governments since 1945 our peoples, that suffered so often from mutual hostilities, have recovered from the damages caused by the conflicts.

Although our organisation is initiated by people who are children of World War II, it is open to all children of war. A couple of grandchildren and grand-grandchildren of World War I have already joined us.

We want to take control of our own fate after having suffered, physically and mentally, in society or/and in our families, for such a long time because we were the children of 'the German enemies', a situation which we are not responsible for and guilty of. We have come to realise that we are actual victims just as all collateral victims of war – this disgrace of the human race. Our world will only become really civilised if we succeed in finding ways of solving problems without using hatred and violence.

Our organisation is based on the concept of mutual self help. We offer help to children of war in search of their biological origins, whether they are born out of a love relationship or out of an act of rape, whether they are the offspring of captives or of convicts.

In 2004, at the approach of our 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, we became aware of the fact that our fate is not ours only but that of so many other people in the world. We realised that time is running out, that our fathers and mothers are old or already dead and that witnesses of the war period are becoming rare. We had to leave the shadow and step to the fore, leaving behind us loneliness and shame.

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

We would like to come into contact with other (organisations of) children of war living in all the countries that were occupied by the Germans during World War II.

In article 3 of our regulations our aims are formulated as follows:

- We will stimulate mutual help and cultural exchanges between our two peoples
- We will stimulate contacts and dialogues between French-German and German-French families and the children born during and after the war
- We will give help to German and French people in search of their biological father and relatives in the other country by giving them help in finding their way in the Archives
- We will offer the help of translators to those people who have difficulties in understanding their relatives speaking another language
- We want to convince the French and the German Parliaments that they

should grant a double nationality to those children and grandchildren of former German-French relationships who so wish

- We want to become an associate of the U.N. Convention that protects children born during or as a consequence of wars in Europe and elsewhere in the world, including those children who were born through an act of violence
- We will welcome children living in countries where people are waging war in German and French families for a stay away from the violent conflict.

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

We would like to open a dialogue with other children of war and discuss ways of mutual support and common activities.

Jean-Jacques Delorme, chairman

### **Paternity – a private or public matter? A discussion based on experiences with Danish children of war.** By Arne Øland

(The footnotes refer to the slides in the corresponding PowerPoint presentation)

#### **History**

I am convinced that *The Association of Danish Children of War* (DKBF) would never have been founded, if the Danish governmental administration had stuck to the legislation concerning illegitimate children passed by the *The Folketing* in 1937 (in effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1938).

According to this law it was the duty of the governmental administration as far as possible to establish the paternity to children born out of wedlock<sup>i</sup>. This agenda was undertaken with great zeal as regards the nation's own citizens<sup>ii</sup>. Only in rather few occurrences it emerged impossible to complete such cases, where the putative father could have left the country in a hurry, or he could be a sailor who had signed on under a foreign flag; or it could be about a less bright woman that a very friendly but unknown stranger had taken advantage of; or a joyful vivacious say even promiscuous woman, who under the influence of alcohol had given herself to more sympathetic persons of the opposite sex during 'the time of procreation', to quote legal language. But apart from these relatively isolated cases Danish men by the thousands were convicted according to the laws either to *Fatherhood* (i.e. obligation to pay for 18 years and have juridical rights as a father), or *Obligation to pay* to the child for 18 years – so called *Solidarity Fatherhood* (no juridical rights as a father) – unless the suspected fathers themselves admitted the paternity – while comparatively few were acquitted. Even for fathers among foreign diplomats an arrangement usually was made.

For a while legal practice changed as a consequence of the German occupation of Denmark – not from April the 9<sup>th</sup> 1940, the very day of occupation, until May the 5<sup>th</sup> 1945, the day of capitulation, but from about the beginning of December 1940 until about February 1946, that is, postponed about the duration of a pregnancy. As a result of the quite friendly presence of the German occupying forces and the quite friendly reception the forces enjoyed from the governmental representation<sup>iii</sup> as well as from the population<sup>iv</sup>, births were given to several thousand children<sup>v</sup>, whose mothers were living in Denmark and whose fathers were German soldiers or at least European men in German military service (*Wehrmachtsgefolge*)<sup>vi & vii</sup>. Because men in German military service in Denmark could not be proceeded against without any further ceremony due to their extraterritorial status (extraterritoriality), a conciliation board was formed on May the 1<sup>st</sup> 1940<sup>viii</sup> in Copenhagen; the *Vergleichskommission*<sup>ix</sup>, as it was labelled in German, consisted of high officials from the Danish Ministry of Justice and jurists from the Wehrmacht. The conciliation board, which in form was substituted by a proper German court in August 1943 in Copenhagen, managed to try roughly 3 000 cases<sup>x</sup>, while about further 3 000 cases were tried at Danish courts after the capitulation – but most of them were tried only in form not in substance, since the courts very rarely served a writ (subpoena) upon the previous German soldiers at their addresses in their homelands. In stead of summoning the putative German fathers, i.e. the principal defendants, the courts were satisfied with a couple of Danish advertisements in the Danish governmental newspaper *Statstidende*<sup>xi</sup>, which of course was not read by the former German soldiers or their families in Germany, if available at all. The majority of the conducted cases resulted in the verdict 'Bidragspligt', which meant no juridical rights as fathers, but obligation to pay for the children. However already in 1948 the Danish authorities waived the recovery of maintenance from Germany<sup>xii</sup>.

### **Historical chance or historical necessity**

It is difficult to say, whether DKBF came into existence as a consequence of a number of accidental incidents among private persons in Denmark up to 1996, or an association in Denmark would appear sooner or later anyhow. The appearance of this kind of associations in a number of European countries on the one hand speaks for historical necessity<sup>xiii</sup>; on the other hand the rather anonymous, non state-subsidized existence of DKBF speaks against. Everyday life in Denmark is quite conceivable without any existence of an association of children of war – especially seen in the light of the present questionable Danish administration of knowledge of own origin; it is the governmental sanction of anonymous egg- and sperm donation I have in mind; it creates uneasy associations to similar enterprises in The third Reich (Lebensborn e.V.) as well as to identity problems for future generations of donor children.

### **Paternity – a private or public matter?**

The annual reports from the Danish archives show that thousands of Danish citizens born out of wedlock after 1938 have applied in vain for access to documents concerning the paternity. The refusals were usually given by a standard phrase, to quote idiomatically: *'No information is at hand about whom is your biological father, since the fatherhood to you is neither acknowledged nor legally stated'*.

These facts pose several questions, e.g.:

1. Did the endeavour to prove fatherhood cause problems earlier in Denmark?
2. What was the annual number of undecided fatherhoods in the relevant period?
3. Why should no information be at hand, although no juridical fatherhood was stated?
4. Does biological fatherhood (paternity) have any importance?

Question nr. 1 can very easily be affirmed, since it only became possible to decide mother- and fatherhood genetically by the advent of DNA profiling in the late eighties<sup>xiv</sup>.

It is more complicated to answer question nr. 2, since it is necessary to compare different statistics, partly because they are incomplete and partly because they do not exist<sup>xv</sup>.

Question nr. 3 – concerning the occurrence of and access to information – is dealt with at once, while question nr. 4 – the importance of fatherhood – will be given its own terms in the end.

### **Occurrence of and access to information about own origin**

Most of the more than 500 Danish children of war<sup>xvi</sup> with whom I have spoken have gained knowledge about their own origin in despite of the aversion of their mothers, family and state. The birth certificates were not enlightening, while rumour, gossip, harassments, slips of the tongue, old but suddenly surfaced documents, photographs with unknown persons or cut offs would yield the key to the enigmatic male factor – to make a pun on the term 'malefactor'.

I'll give three examples:

Recently the association had a new member, PJ; he was born in 1944 and grew up at his grandparents in the southern part of Jutland; they adopted him in 1947 after having learned that their daughter had left a male child in custody in Copenhagen, while she herself as a worker in Germany had disappeared during the bombings of Dresden. They had never been eager to tell him anything about his father. An aunt had later confided to him, that his father had been a German fighter pilot. So today PJ is 62 years old, nevertheless almost without any knowledge about his father.

From the personal information about his mother, however, I could promptly find the paternity case in my data base<sup>xvii</sup> and the name of the father; and the vice-president, Henny Granum, very quickly found information about him through Google; the father had been an engineer by *Höhere Fliegertechnische Schule* (HFTS) near Dresden; and more important, the homepage showed a photograph of the man, who our new member immediately accepted as a father because of resemblance. Was the concealment really necessary for so many years?

Henny Granum, vice-president in DKBF, intended 18 years old to meet the Danish father of her elder brother and herself, a man her mother had divorced after the German capitulation, and Henny never had met. By the prospect of a predictable finding the mother of Henny was compelled to confess. Henny and the brother had

not the same father; Henny's father had been a German marine<sup>xviii</sup>. Was this keeping up of appearances really necessary for 18 years? So much more since Henny's mother started legal proceedings against Henny's biological German father and won the paternity case in the late forties.

As far as I am concerned it was a remark at a party with all my cousins in 1993 – at that time I was 48 years old – which suddenly exposed the tabooed father issue: 'Your father was a German soldier', my cousins said. Why had I and thousands of other Danish citizens to live so many years in false consciousness about ourselves?

I shall not weary you with another five hundred stories, that usually illustrates the fact that mothers lacked any inclination to let their children know the secret about 'the real fathers', or their lying their lovers dead in war to such an extent that the German casualties would have been much heavier had it been true. At any rate the Danish Ministry of Justice assisted in blurring the origin of children of war through an exceptional circular, that altered the law concerning illegitimate children beyond recognition. When a war child later in life at length and by chance obtained information about 'the real father' – however usually incomplete – many of them applied the authorities for right of access to their respective paternity cases, but were refused. The authorities – i.e. the administration in churches and counties, the Presidium of Copenhagen, The Ministry of Justice, the archives etcetera – claimed at first that no information existed<sup>xx</sup>. Later – when a book (1994) about the mothers of the children of war by the historian Anette Warring documented the opposite – the right to access was refused referring to 'the 80-years-rule', which as far as the archives concerned tied documents up in 80 to 100 years, if they contained personal sensitive information<sup>xx</sup>.

In 1998 DKBF took action in order to obtain the right to access to the documentation in the paternity cases: a number of war children applied through the local city courts for access to the very same documents as the other aforementioned authorities had met with refusal. The action succeeded because the city courts could not refuse access to the documentation without offending the laws concerning the administration of justice. Suddenly the years of refusals from the authorities were exposed as unlawful. The archives eased practice a little later, and by the end of 1998 it became possible to have a copy from the archives of the documentation in 'ones own paternity case'.

Ever since DKBF has assisted more than 500 children of war in finding documentation in archives in and outside Denmark, so that the individual war child is in possession of the most accurate information as possible to identification of the unknown father.

Five hundred persons are certainly not many, if you rely on the hypothesis that twelve thousand were born, or even if they only were half so many, i.e. the official number registered. It is important to bear in mind that thousands still live without basic knowledge about own origin as a consequence of governmental politics, while many others shrink back from verifying the maybe inconvenient rumour about a father who was a German soldier and a mother who too eagerly gave in to foreign soldiers. Maybe it is more convenient to live under cover of an identity build with a stepfather or an adoptive family. Many prominent Danish children of war – from former ministers to noted artists, philosophers, writers and businessmen – have no wish to appear before the public as 'children of war'; the fear of being associated with Nazi Germany is great.

### **Fatherhood – a diaphoron**

Most people who grew up together with their biological parents – or at least believe they did – find illegitimate children's, adopted children's and donor children's need for identification of the real biological parents bizarre; like hearing a cry for air, when you never suffocated in the smog of the metropolis or were drowning or got an asthmatic fit, metaphorically expressed. To look for ones own biological mother or father is something quite different from family history research, which most often reminds of a pastime occupation or a mania for collecting. To the genealogist it is exciting, funny or fascinating if a great-great-great-great-great-great-grandmother had been burned at the stake as a witch or some forefathers had been convicted for poaching; it would be *etwas ganz anders*, if something similar had come upon ones mother or father. Whether one identify with the biological parents or not, one's personal mother and father are something existential, important and momentous; for they are unique and cannot be replaced by others ... precisely as the child in relation to them.

A mother or a father is not an *adiaphoron*, a philosophical term indicating something indifferent and of neutral moral importance. Motherhood or fatherhood is on the contrary something entirely unique, a *diaphoron*, a

concept coined especially for this biological bond, designating something epoch-making, a watershed in the life of every human being, either as a child or as a mother or a father.

The special character of this biological bond was one of the main reasons, why the laws concerning children were passed in 1937 [in Denmark], after a long debate in the Folketing<sup>xi</sup>. And that was why public opinion reacted so strongly against the endeavour to make 'child production' anonymous with the phantasm of Heinrich Himmler in *Lebensborn e.V.*

In the national socialistic population philosophy the demand for more children to the nation (*Völkische Gemeinschaft*) carried greater weight than the bond between parents and their children.

It is strange to note the same governmental disregard of basic human needs after the capitulation in Denmark and other former occupied territories, since the state found it most important to cut links and relations between the German fathers and their children.

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<sup>i</sup> See Letter from *Mødrehjælpen* February 1945 to a woman concerning her duty to take legal action through a paternity case. Among other things is written: "... through your midwife we have been informed that you January the 31<sup>st</sup> 1945 have given birth to a child. According to the Children Laws you are obliged to seek the paternity to your child stated."

<sup>ii</sup> *The duties of the police in paternity cases ... among other things.* Illustration from *Hvem Hvad Hvor* 1949 (a very popular yearbook).

<sup>iii</sup> 'Circular from the Home Office to the prefects concerning communication with the German authorities' August the 29<sup>th</sup> 1940. Knud Kristensen (Home secretary). Among other things we read: "... From these reasons it comes naturally, not only to repay visits from German officers or high officials with return visits of the Danish civil servants in question, irrespective of higher or lower grade of the German official, but also to some extent aim socializing between Danish civil servants and German officials. In case it is therefore requested to accept invitations from German side, unless lawful absence may exist and about which the inviting part has to be let known. These apply to invitations to social gatherings as well as to military parades and concerts ..."

<sup>iv</sup> See: Standortskommandantur Aalborg 7. nov. 1940. The document, stamped "secret", Ålborg November the 7<sup>th</sup> 1940, is about "children of German soldiers in Denmark". Among other things we read: "... The German troops have by December been in Denmark for 9 months. In December the first infants of German soldiers are awaited ... a thirteen year old girl has been hospitalized in Aalborg ... A Danish girl is engaged to a German Oberleutnant, is it told, the girl wears an engagement ring, but since September she has heard nothing from the person concerned; she assumes he has fallen, since nobody answers her letters. The child is expected in March; she has been heard saying that the German Wehrmacht of course will pay for its soldiers ... Two soldiers visited the German consul in order to know if they could bring their fiancées home to Germany. To the question "Why?" the answer was that they were obliged to marry, since the girls were going to give birth to their children ..."

<sup>v</sup> The Number of children of war in Denmark: Officially 5.579 children of war have been recorded by The Ministry of Justice. However random checks in the archives of the chief constables in different police districts show that the number of children of war is considerable higher. In my assessment the number may be closer to 12.000 – or even more.

<sup>vi</sup> Photos of Ottine Jensen (Danish civilian) and Erich Faber (German soldier) and little Marion in the pram 1943

<sup>vii</sup> A farmer family in front of the farmhouse in company of German soldiers in Jutland in 1944

<sup>viii</sup> Notitz (Informal agreement between Denmark and The Third Reich)

<sup>ix</sup> The full name in German: *Deutsch-dänische Vergleichskommission zur Bearbeitung von Unterhaltsansprüchen*

<sup>x</sup> The 'Vergleichs-kommission' in Copenhagen reported methodically the tried paternity cases to *der Heeresarchiv Potsdam/ Gerichts-aktensammelstelle* or to *der Feldakten-sammelstelle beim Gericht der Wehrmachtkommandantur Wien in Hainfeld a.d. Gölsen*. Nr. 3008 is the highest file number I have seen.

<sup>xi</sup> A page (random chosen) from *Statstidende* (official governmental gazette) November the 10<sup>th</sup> 1945 with summons in paternity cases against former German soldiers. During several years – starting in August 1945 – *Statstidende* published c 3 000 summons of this type – it was by and large what the Danish authorities did to secure subpoenas in those cases.

<sup>xii</sup> "Administrative command" September the 2<sup>nd</sup> 1948 from *The Ministry for Social Affairs* concerning the recovering of maintenance abroad from former members of the German Wehrmacht to the children procreated by them in this land. Among other thing we read: "... *The Ministry for Social Affairs* has given its approval to omit recovering abroad of maintenance paid in advance by the state for former members of the

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German Wehrmacht to children procreated by them in this land, partly because the prospective recoverable money presumably will be out of proportion to the difficulties bound up with the collecting ...”

<sup>xiii</sup> Some Identity Organisations (founded between 1986 and 2006) : NKBF (Norway 1986) - CKDM (Holland) – Association of Liberation Children (Holland) - DKBF (Denmark 1996) - Project Roots and the Canadian War Children of World War Two (Great Britain /the Netherlands/ Canada) - War and children Identity Project (Norway) - RFK (Sweden/Finland) - GI Trace (USA) - Lebensspuren (Germany) - Coers sans Frontieres (FranceGermany) - Nés de la Liberation (France) - Saksalaisten Sotilaiden Lapset ry (2006)(Finland)

<sup>xiv</sup> DNA profiling was developed in 1984 by English geneticist [Sir Alec Jeffreys](#) of the [University of Leicester](#), and was first used to convict Colin Pitchfork in 1988 in the [Enderby murders](#) case in [Leicestershire, England](#). Many jurisdictions require convicts of certain types of crimes to provide a sample of DNA for inclusion in a computerized database. This has helped investigators solve old cases where the perpetrator was unknown and only a DNA sample was obtained from the scene (particularly in [rape](#) cases between strangers). This method is one of the most reliable techniques for identifying a criminal, but is not always perfect, for example if no DNA can be retrieved, or if the scene is contaminated with the DNA of several possible suspects. (Wikipedia/DNA)

<sup>xv</sup> Provisional statistics (1999) Norway: Kåre Olsen - Denmark: Arne Øland

<sup>xvi</sup> Some of the members of DKBF at the annual congregation, Billund 2005.

<sup>xvii</sup> Data base including children of war, mothers living in Denmark and fathers, who were former members of the German Wehrmacht, SS or Wehrmachtsgelofte. Since 1997 when Bjarne Schmidt and I together started a research project in the National Archives we succeeded in creating a data base with personal information about around 20.000 persons, i.e. mothers living in Denmark and men charged as fathers to war children. A complete data base would presumably include around 40.000 persons. The data base is partly confidential according to archival legislation.

<sup>xviii</sup> Hennys Danish mother and German father

<sup>xix</sup> The ‘lie’ of the Danish authorities: Literally the Danish authorities were not wrong in maintaining that no information existed about the German biological paternities, since these paternities seldom had been decided – however it is a juridical quibble, because the authorities themselves had decided not to hear the cases properly. If on the other hand the authorities had stuck to the law and summoned the ‘fathers’ where they lived instead of being content with these doubtful writs in *Statstidende*, then there would have been no basis for an identity organisation like DKBF.

<sup>xx</sup> Remark in a television programme “Far, far krigsmand ...” (1999) by P.E.Olsen, juridical expert in The National Archive in Copenhagen

<sup>xxi</sup> ... where the classical philologist and anti Nazi social-democrat politician, Hartwig Frisch, used the example of Telemachos seeking his unknown father Odysseus in the argumentation to pass the laws and for the right of the child to know about his own origin.

Quotation from the Odyssey: “Then wise Telemachus answered her: “Therefore of a truth, stranger, will I frankly tell thee all. My mother says that I am his child; but I know not, for never yet did any man of himself know his own parentage. Ah, would that I had been the son of some blest man, whom old age overtook among his own possessions. But now of him who was the most ill-fated of mortal men they say that I am sprung, since thou askest me of this.”

## EXHIBITION AND SEMINAR ‘BORN STIGMATISED’

The museum ‘Markt 12’ in Aalten, in one of the eastern provinces of the Netherlands, close to the German border, pays attention to the everyday life in war time. It does not deal with ‘good and bad guys’, with winners or losers, with perpetrators, victims or bystanders. It shows ordinary people who in difficult circumstances have to make decisions which have sometimes consequences for the rest of their lives or of that of their relatives.

The museum opened in December 2004. During the preparation period the museum management consulted the board of Stichting Werkgroep Herkenning, the self help organisation of collaborators’ children in the Netherlands, on the issues which are related to the special position of those people in Dutch society.

The museum focuses on the story of Joop during the war. His parents owned a shop in painter’s requisites in Aalten. In 1935, they decided to join the NSB (de Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging; The Dutch National-Socialist Movement). The Party, founded in 1931, first orientated to the fascist ideas of Mussolini, gradually

sympathised more and more with the German Nazi Party. In May 1940, after the defeat of the Dutch army by the Germans, the Party members became collaborators since the Party decided to support the Occupiers. Joop's parents enrolled their son as a member of the Jeugdstorm, the Party's Youth Movement. He was by then 8 years old.

Joop was eager to tell about his life after the war as well, but that was not possible in the context of the museum that focuses only on the war period. The museum's management promised him that they would explore the possibility of a special short-term exhibition dedicated to that aspect of his story. In October 2006, this special exhibition could be opened, titled 'Born stigmatised – collaborators' children 1931 – 2010'. The life of people like Joop has been deeply influenced by the political choices of their parents and the rejection by the Dutch people as a result, not only during but even more after the war. Therefore the exhibition focuses on decisions and their consequences.

Children between 12 and 18 years old form a special visitor targetgroup and therefore the exhibition is based on the stories of two children: that of Joop, born before 1940 and that of Rinke, born after 1945. Their stories show how, in general, the Dutch people regarded collaborators' children and how they behaved towards them. A third story, that of Monika, completes the picture. She is the daughter of a Dutch mother and a German soldier.

'Born stigmatised' is the first Dutch exhibition on the issue of the children 'of the wrong side'. It tells the historical facts, but also pays attention to the emotional aspects of the experiences those children went through.

Anne Peil, Rinke Smedinga and Ben Boersema (project manager of the museum) formed the executive committee, assisted by an advisory committee which included two historians of the NIOD (the Dutch Institute for History-study on War-related Issues; one of them charged with a research project on the fate of collaborators' children), a representative of Herkenning, an author of children's books and a member of a foundation for the conservation and protection of the cultural heritage of the region. In the Newsletter of Herkenning people were asked to co-operate by telling their story or by offering on loan personal objects related to their war experiences. Unfortunately there was little response from them.

The exhibition was sponsored by several public and private funds. Two consultants specialised in communication techniques were responsible for the artistic composition and a regional firm and a couple of volunteers were in charge of the design.

The exhibition is in the shape of a labyrinth, evoking feelings of being locked up and having difficulty in finding a way out, feelings so many collaborators' children in the Netherlands had to cope with. No accusations are expressed, no solutions are given. The implicit message of the exhibition however is clear: it is wrong to exclude people from society, the more if they did nothing wrong themselves but were held responsible for their parents' political choice.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of Culture and Education, Mrs. Ross-van Dorp, opened the exhibition on October 11, 2006. The presence of a high ranking official shows that the case of the collaborators' children no longer is a taboo issue. Mrs. Ross referred in her speech to her recommendations with respect to education about World War II, which she thinks is very important and should be linked to themes like discrimination and prejudices.

About 3600 people from different regions of the Netherlands visited the exhibition that closed on January 29, 2007. That is 80 per cent more than the number of visitors in the same period of the previous year. The home page of the museum was consulted more than 3000 times and that too is a record. National and regional papers paid attention to the exhibition by publishing personal stories of collaborators' children. Radio and TV programmes referred to Aalten's museum and so did the Festival 'Gelderland 1900-2000', that took place in the same period, promoting activities with reference to the history of the province of Gelderland in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In a different venue a one-day seminar was organised in Aalten on November 17, 2006, with the same title 'Born stigmatised'. During the seminar eleven papers were presented about subjects related to the exhibition's themes. The historian Chris van der Heijden opened the day with his key-note speech. Four other historians discussed several other aspects of the historical context in which collaborators' children grew up. Educational elements were put to the fore by an author of children's books, Martine Letterie, and by the pedagogue Hannie Hemme. The psychological and social problems of children 'of the wrong side' were

discussed by four members of Herkenning. In one of the other rooms people who wanted to exchange their feelings and thoughts were welcomed by the board of Herkenning. Many of the nearly 100 seminar's participants also visited the museum. The seminar was closed by a review of the day in which the historian Peter Romein paid also attention to the NIOD research project on collaborators' children. Herkenning promised to explore the possibility of publishing the papers.

Pupils of a primary school in Aalten spoke with Monika Benndorf, a daughter of a Dutch mother and a German (soldier) father. Their frank and honest interest in her experiences was very impressive.

Taking a retrospective view of the exhibition and the seminar, it is evident that the endeavour to draw attention to a historical issue that evokes often serious emotions was successful and got more positive response than the museum is used to.

The exhibition will be on display in the German town of Münster, in the Holland House, from March 27 to April 28, and in the Dutch National Liberation Museum in Groesbeek, from May 3 to October 31.

Dr. Ben Boersema  
Project manager of Museum 'Markt 12'.

***“TRANSFORMING THE LEGACIES OF CONFLICT, WAR AND GENOCIDE THROUGH DIALOGUE”***

One by One Conference, November 13 – 17, 2006

Impressions, by Alexa Dvorson

*“From the Wound a Lovely Flower Grows”*

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

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

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

Or can they?

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

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

“Brimming.”

“Blessed.”

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

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

### **Witnesses to Transformation**

Zella Brown, Suzanne Schecker, Marga Dieter and Helga Mueller set the stage for two rounds of group storytelling in which we were reminded of the literal implication of the name “One by One:” each separate narrative has meaning, impact and significance in the bigger picture. Because some of us are familiar with each other’s stories, dialogue in this context challenges us to speak with greater clarity about our own processes, while allowing us to cultivate greater empathy for others and respect our differences. While one child grew up with bedtime stories of her parents’ imprisonment in concentration camps, another child of survivors grew up with silence and had to fill in the blanks of her parents’ ordeal by other means. Instead of processing cognitive information, she “inherited their pain. They didn’t talk about it; they lived it.”

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

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

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

### **M'chail I'Chail: from Strength to Strength**

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

"Healing."  
"Renewed."  
"Grateful."  
"Expanded."  
"Overwhelmed."  
"Elevated."

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

### **A Keynote of Courage**

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

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

### Notes on Healing through Forgiveness

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

What a concept! Nothing could be further from the philosophy presented during one of the most challenging and thought-provoking events in the One by One Conference. The forgiveness workshop, led by New York psychotherapist Marian Weisberg and trauma expert Anie Kalayjian, could have been mistaken for a crash course in human evolution and transformation. Due to time constraints, many participants felt an upwelling of unfinished business when the session ended, but they left with a toolkit of lifelong usefulness.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Let's face it: old habits die hard, and old identification systems die perhaps even harder. What becomes of someone who lets go of the anger around remembrance and remorse that have fueled a life's work and identity for years? How can forgiveness fit that sense of obligation?

Answer: it is wise to distinguish between the kind of anger that is constructive, manifesting in activism and other creative engagement, and the self-destructive kind that clings to the “demonization” of the Other, resulting in a perpetual polarization that blinds us to our own shadow sides.

We were asked to use a “workable grievance” to experiment with a step-by-step exercise in forgiveness. By acknowledging first what happened, then achieving empathy, followed by validation and reparation, closure was possible. No push-button paradigms were promoted here: just as dialogue can lead to reconciliation, this too is a process. When it works, one may arrive at forgiving the soul of another – it is not necessary to forgive the evil act.

The session concluded with these parting shots:

- 1) an invitation to observe the difference these steps can make in daily life;
- 2) an invitation to think about the impact of forgiveness—or lack of it—on the next seven generations.

### **Closing**

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

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

The closing words rang like benedictions:

"Hopeful."  
"Fulfilled."  
"Family."

The family grows. As one member said, "This is a process that will last until the end of our lives."  
...And then some.

### **A THREE-GENERATION RESEARCH PROJECT IN WESTERN AND EASTERN GERMANY INTO MEMORIES AND DELEGATIONS RELATED TO THE NAZI PERIOD**

Until now, in German society hardly any research has been done into the meaning of the participation of family members in the National-Socialist regime and into the relationship between ‘big’ history and family history. Why this omission? First of all, the majority of the grandparents’ generation see themselves as victims of the Nazi regime and its total war or deny at least any responsibility for it. Moreover, in public debates and pedagogical institutions, discussions about involvement in Nazi crimes of ordinary Germans were taboo, in Western as well as in Eastern Germany.

This research project analyses life stories of three generations belonging to the same family, in Eastern and in Western Germany. It focuses on the questions of how the grandparents’ generation transferred their experiences from the Nazi period to the next generations and how and in how far the second and third generations were affected by them, consciously and subconsciously.

How did the intergenerational dialogue take place? Do differences exist in the willingness and the ability of facing the past, differences related to gender and social class? How were individual persons influenced by the different political systems in Eastern and in Western Germany? How were structures transferred and reproduced in these three generations?

The families participating in this project are ordinary families. It is the first time that they are the object of such a project and the research topics differ from the ones pursued so far. Until now studies have focused on perpetrators' families in connection to the Shoah (e.g. Rosenthal, 1997) or on families in which people spoke about the past (e.g. Welzer et al, 2002). In the families of the three generation study project an open debate between the generations on the Nazi period was absent. In a couple of families some members resisted the regime whereas in other families a number of people belonged to the ranks of the Party officials.

In this study the stories of the three generations are presented in detail in order to throw a vivid light on the relationship between the experiences of the past and their meaning in the intergenerational transference. The study focuses on two different levels: the conscious family story in the Nazi period and the more or less subconscious delegation. Delegations are intergenerational transfers that subconsciously hand over ways of behaviour in the context of the family-programme. It is possible that they don't affect the next generation and remain latent to become only evident again in the grandchildren's generation. The first generation (which lived under the Nazi regime) are the 'gatekeepers', but the next generations would influence the construction of meaning of the family history and would contribute in this way to the neutralising of the political elements and to the freeing of the family story of their National-Socialist features.

While each following generation has less knowledge about National-Socialism and their own family story, the delegations, playing a role in the context of the National-Socialist family's past, become even more influential. The analyses in this research project show how individual members of a family are bound to specific structures of family loyalties, which are linked to restrictions on speaking up or asking questions and to family secrets. The more the family story is transferred into fragments or is hampered by taboo, the more the delegations find their unconscious expression in the behaviour of the next generations. All families, whether a couple of their members behaved oppositional or were officials in the Nazi system had a kind of 'actual contact' with its proceedings of persecution and destruction.

People belonging to the first generation related the interviewer a lot of experiences and details of their life in the Nazi period, but their grandchildren could tell only some fragments of their grandparents' story, even after the interviewer asked for more details. They could utter only doubts, express suppositions or they gave details with a meaning differing totally from that of their grandparents. The differences between the circumstantiality of the grandparents' narrative and the fragmentation of that of the grandchildren unveiled the missed chance of a genuine intergenerational dialogue. And this is the more troublesome because the third generation is unconscious of the influence of the family past in the Nazi period on their life now and here, their behaviour, their thoughts, opinions and meaning giving.

One of the important results of this study is that taboo subjects are always complex and cannot be traced back one-dimensionally to the perpetrators' context of National Socialism. In almost all the cases in this project we saw how taboo subjects differing in nature influenced each other and became intertwined, e.g. with illegitimacy of birth, sexual abuse or unresolved conflicts between parents and children which entail feelings of shame and guilt. The study describes at some length the different dimensions of the taboo subjects.

We interviewed seven families of which the grandparents were born between 1901 and 1926. Their children were born between 1931 and 1952, while their grandchildren were born between 1964 and 1978. More than 30 people reacted positively to my ads in the papers appearing in all the regions of Germany. Among them were more women than men. Committing oneself to a process of psychological working through and of awakening of consciousness appeals apparently more to women than to men. In the former East-Germany there was more willingness to participate in this project and this can be seen in the light of the need to delve in one's family history in the context of the new situation of the unified Germany. The generation of the parents felt more need to tell about their experiences than the grandparents' and the grandchildren's generation.

In the grandchildren's generation questions, conflicts and frustrations come to the fore which can be related to their specific family past and the delegations. Although in the ads the Nazi period was not mentioned and the interviewers did not point to the past before they started their encounters with the participants, this past plays an important role in the behaviour patterns of the third generation and this on two different levels: the (lack of) knowledge of the actual family history in the Nazi period and the unconsciously transferred delegations.

Because the grandchildren have only fragments and loose memories to their disposal, their narrative lacks vividness and cannot inspire their lives at present. They are hardly aware of the involvement of their families in the political circumstances of the Nazi period. In spite of notable differences between the families, they all have in common that the Nazi regime and/or World War II affected the lives of their members undeniably, which thrust upon them questions of perpetratorship, guilt and responsibility. Crucial is that most of the second and third generations don't know anything about how and in how far members of their family were entangled in the misdeeds of the Third Reich.

Although the official appeal to commemorate the victims of the Nazi regime and to reflect on the moral and ethical aspects of the past is especially directed to the grandchildren's generation – 'nobody wants to be identified with a people of perpetrators' – , the lack of memories and of an intergenerational dialogue lay the foundation of a kind of indifference and the need of not facing those existential questions. This need finds fuel in German's society where dealing with Nazi crimes has no priority.

The hermeneutic reconstructions of the family stories show how the memories have become buried in oblivion and are therefore elusive and how delegations are effective without people being aware of their activity. The experiences of the grandparents during the Nazi period don't make sense to the second and third generation and in that way there is a break in the continuing story of the families. In the narrative of the parents' and grandchildren's generations there are no traces of the grandparents' emotional relationships with National Socialism, which dictated in its highdays all the aspects of people's life and was present in everyday life in an overwhelming way.

Especially the orientation on family stories enabling emotional entrances to the Nazi past, which are so often missing in educational and public institutions, could get new qualities and could work as a promoter: communication and discussions about family stories connected with reflections on oneself could have emancipatory effects.

The conclusions of this project are discussed with some productions, which are also dealing with the family past in different generations, like the documentary film of Malte Ludin '2 oder 3 Dinge, die ich von ihm weiß' (2 or 3 things which I know from him) (Germany 2004).

The research report will be published in summer 2007, prospectively under the title: 'Verpasste Chancen? Drei Generationen ost- und westdeutscher Familien – Lebensgeschichten im Spiegel des Nationalsozialismus'

Iris Wachsmuth  
Email: [wachsmut@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:wachsmut@zedat.fu-berlin.de)

Next issue: November, 2007  
Reactions and articles till October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007

## WEBSITES

- Organisation of Children of Dutch Collaborators:  
[www.werkgroepherkenning.nl](http://www.werkgroepherkenning.nl)
- Organisation of Children of the Liberators:  
[www.bevrijdingskinderen.nl](http://www.bevrijdingskinderen.nl)
- Organisation of Children of War of different Backgrounds:  
[www.kombi.nl](http://www.kombi.nl)
- Organisation of Danish Children of War, Danske Krigsboern Foerening:  
[www.krigsboern.dk](http://www.krigsboern.dk)
- Norwegian Children of War Association, Norges Krigsbarnforbund:  
[www.nkb.no](http://www.nkb.no)

Organization of Norwegian NS Children:

**[www.nazichildren.com](http://www.nazichildren.com)**

Krigsbarnforbundet Lebensborn, Norway:

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

Organisation of NS-children Vennetreff:

**<http://home.no.net/nsbarn>**

Risikoforbundet Finska Krigsbarn: (in swedish)

**[www.krigsbarn.se](http://www.krigsbarn.se)**

Organisation of Finnish Children of War, Seundun Sotalapset:

**[www.edu.ouka.fi/sotalapset](http://www.edu.ouka.fi/sotalapset)**

TRT, To Reflect and Trust, Organisation for encounters between descendants of victims and descendants of perpetrators:

**[www.torelectandtrust.org](http://www.torelectandtrust.org)**

Organisation of children of victims and children of the perpetrators:

**[www.one-by-one.org](http://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](http://www.nach.ws)**

The Foundation Trust, international network of organizations and groups of second and third generations children of war:

**[www.thefoundationtrust.org](http://www.thefoundationtrust.org)**

Dachau Institut Psychologie und Pädagogik:

**[www.Dachau-institut.de](http://www.Dachau-institut.de)**

Kriegskind Deutschland:

**[www.kriegskind.de](http://www.kriegskind.de)**

Evacuees Reunion Association

**[www.evacuees.ndonet.com](http://www.evacuees.ndonet.com)**

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

**[www.warandchildren.org](http://www.warandchildren.org)**

Researchproject University München 'Kriegskindheit'

**[www.warchildhood.net](http://www.warchildhood.net)**

Coeurs Sans Frontières – Herzen Ohne Grenzen

**[www.coeurssansfrontières](http://www.coeurssansfrontières)**

Organisation d'enfants de guerre

**[www.nésdelalibération.fr](http://www.nésdelalibération.fr)**

Childsurvivors of the Holocaust in Australië

**[www.paulvalent.com](http://www.paulvalent.com)**

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

**[www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org)**

Aktion Sühnezeigen Friedensdienste

**[www.asf-ev.de](http://www.asf-ev.de)**



