

INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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Issue 28, Spring 2008

INTRODUCTION

At the seminar 'Damaged Children' in Kiel, September 2008, Hartmut Alpei presented a paper that adequately described his feelings, which are, according to me characteristic of those of many Germans who were children during the war. You will find a summarized translation of his paper in this bulletin.

Pierre Rigoulot presented a paper at a Colloquium in Caen, November 2008, discussing his study among collaborators' children in France. He gave me permission to publish his text.

Last year, the issues of transgenerational traumatisation and the problems of the post-war generation were on the agenda of two Dutch organisations, Kombi and Herkenning. I present to you a summary of my literature study on these topics.

Sakino sent me a report on a meeting in Breisach where a small but dedicated group discussed the possibilities and plans for the founding of an International Dialogue Center.

Michael Henderson's book 'No Enemy to Conquer' appeared in January. A book review informs you of the contents.

Sabine Bode five years ago wrote a book about the German war children, 'The Forgotten Generation'. Her new book that appeared in March discusses the problems of the grandchildren of the war. In this IB just an announcement, a more detailed book review will be published in the autumn issue.

I would like to draw your attention to the announcement of the conference 'Children: the Invisible Victims of War', in Reading, September 2009.

This year it was the first time in 65 years that the bombing of the Dutch town of Nijmegen was commemorated in a ceremony in which Dutch and American authorities participated. For decades, nobody spoke about the event, because it was caused by the liberators...

There are clear, positive changes in the attitude of Dutch society with respect to collaborators' children and their parents.

The Memorial Centre of Westerbork had the courage to focus on the internment camp period of the site in a special exhibition showing the circumstances in which the collaborators gathered there lived between 1945 and 1948.

I would like to thank my friend Erna Gille for her help with translations and textwriting.

In the last few months I lost contact with five readers of the IB because of address change. I would like you send me any change in (e-mail)address so that we can remain in contact.

Reactions, comments and articles are welcome!

All the best,
Gonda Scheffel-Baars

IF ONLY I COULD FORGET

If only I could forget,
but they're never far away.
Maybe after a drink,
just for a while,
a short moment of grace,
they will retreat from sight.
But sobriety restored,
the grief and fear return.

If only I could forget,
but they're back on stage,
as soon as happiness appears,
some moment of delight.
A sweet, soft touch revives
the terror of the past,
even more powerful and grim
than when I met it last.

If only I could forget,
but they never release their grip.
If I pause and drop my guard,
or think: I've come to rest,
the night cleaning my head,
then suddenly, from deep within,
I hear the screams, the blast:
to-day reverts to the past.

Jan Smeets

(from the one-man show 'Waarom heb je mijn schouder niet gezocht' about the life of Martin Reuser, a son of a Dutch collaborator)

AM I A 'WOUNDED' CHILD?

This is a summary and translation of a paper presented by Hartmut Alpei at a Seminar held in Kiel, Germany, September 20th 2008, and organised by Förderverein Kriegskinder für den Frieden e.V. and Kriegskind e.V.

'The main topic of this seminar is 'wounded children'. What can I contribute to that topic? Does it apply to me at all? Others have suffered a lot more than I have: they had to flee, they wandered around for weeks, they were abandoned by their parents or lost them, they spent night after night in shelters, they were under attack during air raids, they became separated from their parents and siblings, they witnessed the death of their friends or relatives, they have been raped or saw women being raped.

I lived in my hometown for the whole period of the war. I wasn't one of those children who in the context of the Kinderlandverschickung were sent to the countryside, for their safety as it was put. Our house was not hit by a bomb.

Although I lost my father, I always had my mother who cared for me.

My brother, 15 years my senior, was seriously wounded at age 19, but at least he survived. My sister, my senior by 13 years, had troubles in coping with the loss of her father, but my mother and she could share their emotions and support each other.

Although my father was not at home when my mother was pregnant, neither when I was born, he was allowed to spend some days at home to see his new born child. At the end of the war my father was sent to the front in spite of the heart problems he had, where he was killed in action fairly soon after his arrival. But fortunately he spent three years of his military service in the training centre in Halberstadt where we could visit him from time to time. Although I grew up in a house with only women, I had my uncle Herrman, husband of my father's sister. Although my father was killed, we knew when and in which region and thus we did not suffer from the tension of so many other people who did not know anything about their relatives being missed. True, we don't know the exact place where my father died and where he is buried, so we cannot take care of his grave, but in 1995 my sister and I had the opportunity to visit the region where he died, somewhere between Lithuania and East-Prussia.

We German war children were taught not to complain, because others suffered far more than we did. We learned to function well, without complaining, without lamentations, and we do until now. 'You are nothing, the people are everything', was one of those sayings of the NS propaganda to make personal sorrows unimportant.

I have to admit, the war did affect me. When preparing this paper, a lot of memories emerged and I became aware of the effects the war had on my life.

Hartmut lived in a big house with five other families at the fringe of a little German town. In case of a bombing alarm people went to a big shelter in the nearby forest, a big cave in the hill. Hartmut's family had put a stool there so that at least one member of the family could sit during the air raid. But in case there was too few time to go to the common shelter, the laundry room served as such. Near that room there was a number of tubs filled with water in case the house was set in fire. Phosphorescent yellow arrows showed the way to the shelters in the houses, so that rescue crews

would easily be able to locate people under the debris. Far in the 60's those yellow arrows could still be seen on some of the houses.

Hartmut is afraid of being in small rooms – does this remind him of the hours spent in the shelter? He is afraid when the earth trembles, for example when the washing machine is out of level – does this remind him of the trembling of the earth when he visited the barracks of his father and the town was under attack? One day he saw a British plane near the barracks that was shot down. Close to it was a scalp, just the skin and some hair. Hartmut was 4 years old by then.

He remembers that he and his grandfather climbed through the rubbish of his bombed house and found a silver spoon and some broken plates and cups among the wreckage. He still remembers the typical smell of those bombed houses. The rubbish of the houses were brought to a site outside the town. There and in several other cities artificial hills formed by the rubbish emerged that can still be seen today. The people of Hildesheim called the rubbish 'Kummer'. That same word also means in German: distress, trouble, grief, misery. When they had put away their 'Kummer', were they also rid of their misery? And Hartmut, did he have misery?

'My grief was nothing compared to what the Germans did to other people. How could a German ever allow himself to think of his misery because the German people under Nazi rule had become a nation of perpetrators, how could they ever see themselves as victims? It was unthinkable to speak about the suffering the Germans went through because of the enormous guilt of the crimes they committed.'

'Nevertheless, I had grief. Hitler had taken away my father! But, was I aware of the loss? Did I miss him at all?'

In their living-room, above the sewing table, was his father's portrait. There were always flowers in a vase below the picture. Hartmut's father was always present but he wasn't part of what happened. He could not give reprimands or speak encouraging or comforting words, he did not quarrel and did not shake hands to be friends again, he did not hug his wife or lay his arm around her shoulder. Hartmut had a 'picture-father', but could not learn from him how a father functions in his family or how a man behaves towards his wife and children. And this had consequences for his life as a husband and a father.

During the last weeks of the war Hartmut was not at home, but was with his uncle Herman and his aunt Frieda in the Harz. In this region there were no bombing alarms, there were no air raids. His town was attacked and seriously damaged. His mother and sister found housing in a hut at a distance of 15 km from their house. The grandparents managed to escape their house set in fire and reached the fringe of the town safely.

After the war the grandparents lived with Hartmut, his mother and sister – many families lived together, this was almost 'standard'. They gathered dead wood because coals were scarce and for instance people were welcome at a Christmas party only if they offered wood or coals. Hartmut's family always had food: they found mushrooms in the woods, they gathered potatoes and ears of wheat or rye left behind on the fields, they grew some vegetables and relatives gave them bacon and sausages.

It was important that Hartmut had so many people who took care of him: his mother, his sister, his grandparents, his uncle and aunt. He became aware of his fortune after he had read the book 'We, Children of War Children' written by Anne-Ev Ustorf. She explains that mothers who managed to give their children the feeling that they could protect them, that they were safe, prevented their children from developing psychological problems, although they went through traumatic events.

After the war the slogan was 'back to normalcy'. But what was normal? His sister had to make up her arrears in her studies and his brother who did not have the opportunity to get a training because of the war, had to start it only after the war. In 1946 Hartmut was accepted in elementary school. The staff, in majority women, gave the children one meal a day, which was very important for the poor children. Because of the scarcity of paper the children used slates.

What was normal? His brother had nightmares and screamed in the nights, but nobody asked him why. Half of the fathers of Hartmut's classmates were dead or missing.

'Did you in fact need a father, you could do without, couldn't you? When I was a pupil of a secondary grammar-school I noticed that some pupils were respected by our teachers because their fathers were well known in our town. My father was dead and I often wondered whether he would have also become such a well known and respected citizen. My comrades spoke about the joined activities with their fathers, but I only had my mother. They told me about their quarrels with their fathers, but with whom could I have had a quarrel? They were angry because of the 'idiot' prohibitions of their fathers, I had no one to be angry with. They made trips to Italy and told me stories, but we always stayed at home because the pension money my mother received was just enough for the household and my education. When I wanted to participate in school activities I had to gather the money myself.'

His brother and sister left home in 1949/1950 and from that day on Hartmut became the 'partner' of his mother who supported her. There lived a lot of people in the house, there was a lack of privacy, little room for each individual. For that reason Hartmut and his mother even slept in the same bed.

The family dynamics between father, mother and children was absent and his 'substitute' father, uncle Herman, who for example taught him how to use a hammer, could not completely replace his father. Gradually Hartmut found outside his family more people with whom he could have an emotional relationship. He became a member of a walking club – more than half of the members were war widows – and soon the young people formed their own club. They made hikes lasting two or three weeks. His mother allowed him to participate, notwithstanding his age (14, 15) and in retrospect Hartmut appreciates his mother's attitude very much. The 19 year old leader of this hiking club inspired Hartmut and at his turn he became a group leader. A young teacher at grammar school impressed him a lot so that, when entering university, he chose the subjects of this teacher: history and Latin. He had vivid discussions on existential questions with the father of one of his friends. With some professors he had good relationships, both professionally and personally. So 'You don't need a father to guide you through life, do you?'

Hartmut was successful in life: he became a teacher, liked his work, he married, had children who are successful in their social and professional lives, he liked trips and

holidays, he was the father of a 'happy family'. But he was unaware of the effects of the war in his life until he saw the movie 'Söhne ohne Väter' (Sons without Fathers). His son admitted that he had always felt some barrier between him and his father, a distance he always thought was due to the commitment of his father to the pupils of his school. His eldest daughter told him that she had longed for more tenderness and closeness when she grew up. When his children were babies Hartmut had taken care of them, cuddled them, changed their diapers, had told them stories, sang them songs when they went to sleep but when they grew older his care stopped. Hartmut remembered pictures from him and his father taking care of him; but his father died when Hartmut was 4 years old. He suddenly realized that he had experienced how a father behaves towards small children, but that he did not know how to behave towards children growing older.

Very often in his life Hartmut wondered what would have been his father's opinion on what happened in his son's life. He wondered: would he have been proud of me? In some way Hartmut tried, not aware of his motives, to perpetuate his father's life that stopped so abruptly, by doing the same things his father had done: organizing activities for young people, liking and playing music, becoming a teacher, being interested in questions of education, committing himself to the pupils of his school specialized in supervising children with all kinds of behavioral problems. He read books from his father's book case as if to posthumously have a discussion on the topics that interested them both: the goals of political left and right, Communism and National-Socialism. His MA dissertation was entitled: 'Left people from the Right.'

In the 90's he focused on the question how to see the attitude of Heinrich Sachs, former head teacher of the 'Odenwaldschule'. Unlike his predecessor he did not go to Switzerland out of protest against the take over of the Nazis, but remained at his post between 1933 and 1946. On the face of it he accommodated to the Nazi system, but he gave protection to several Jewish pupils in his school and thus saved their lives. Was Sachs a righteous man deserving an award, or was he just a spineless fellow lacking the courage to go abroad? Who in fact were the 'better' Germans: those who stayed or those who left?

In fact the actual goal of his considerations of Sachs' behaviour was to get insight in his father's position. His mother had told him that his father joined the SA because he did not want to become a member of the Party and that he had been glad to be able to join the army, so that he was not obliged to propagate the Nazi doctrines in his school. And because of his heart problems he was allowed to keep away from the front and the violence until some months before the end of the war. How to see his father: was he a supporter of the system, was he an opponent or just a hanger-on? He could not discuss this issue with his mother or sister, neither with his brother who had his own part of the war.

When he reached the age at which his father died he wondered: his last thoughts, were they focused on his family, on his son? And he got the feeling that he in fact had no right to live, especially not because he loved life so much. He felt a need to justify his being alive.

At age 60, his health started to give way. Off and on he lost consciousness and medical checks did not find any physical cause. The first time this happened to him

was after he had to tell to one of the pupils that her father suddenly died. Could there be a connection between this message and his life without a father? Thereupon he started to read books and articles on war related problems of people who were children during the war and on the effects of growing up without a father. He recognized many of the described symptoms: problems with saying goodbye, never spoiling food, having a stock of conserved food in house in case of..., never throwing things away, because one day they might prove to be useful, being unable to let oneself go in real fun or happiness, always answering 'Yes, I'm fine' even when feeling sick or miserable, being unable to watch movies in which people are in danger or risk to perish in their problems.

'I wonder: is there a need to take up therapy and work through such issues? Why not! Could it be that, in fact, I am afraid of opening this chapter of my life? How do other people cope with their fears? Could therapy be helpful? Am I a 'wounded' child? And then, unavoidable, the feeling emerges: what about all those children in the war regions today, who witness violence and become victims themselves, how can they survive? If help is crucially needed, it is for them!

Could there be another conclusion for us war children, then to commit ourselves to promoting peace in this world, wherever we found ourselves able to do so. At the end of our lives we should focus on the to-day war children, more than on ourselves, shouldn't we?!

COLLABORATORS' CHILDREN IN FRANCE: guilt, justifications and testimonies

In 1992 the social historian Pierre Rigoulot published a book, entitled 'The Children of the Purification', containing the results of his study among ca 40 children of people who in French society were seen as collaborators with the Nazi regime.

[The situation in France during the war was complex, because the provinces in the north and the west were occupied and were under German administration, whereas in the provinces of the south-east a 'free' French government, led by general Pétain in Vichy, co-operated with the Germans.]

Pierre Rigoulot spoke with sons and daughters of the 'big' fishes, people who were ministers or officials in this Vichy government, but also with offspring of the 'small' fishes, members of the French Fascist Party and not responsible for more than this membership. One could wonder if it is acceptable to group all of those people in the same category, that of collaborators, but all of them were seen this way after the war, in their lawsuits or in their being killed illegally by the mob even before their case could be considered or could be taken to court.

The leader of the militia, Paul Touvier, certainly was a collaborator, but what about Jacques Le Roy Ladurie (the father of the well-known French historian), who withdrew as a minister of the Vichy regime and joined the resistance movement?

What matters is: the children of the 'big' and the 'small' fishes alike felt the pressure of being a son or a daughter of a person who was despised in society. The disgrace fallen on the fathers also tainted their children. Their fathers (there were but a small number of female collaborators apart from those women who had had a love affair with a German) had become unclean, and society needed to be cleansed of the stain they had laid on France. The children were aware of the purification and were often part of it.

The disgrace imposed on the collaborators and their children, was also often imposed on historians studying the nature of collaboration and wanting to qualify the massive images people had of the collaborators and of the phenomenon of collaboration. That could explain why it took such a long time before historians dared to speak with the collaborators' children about their experiences during and after the war and their view on their fathers' ideas and acts. Their testimonies were seen as suspect, too subjective, but why would their testimonies be more subjective than those of other people interviewed in the framework of 'oral history' projects? Historians need to measure all of the testimonies with the yardstick of historical criticism, so why ignore those of collaborators' children for such a long time? One reason might be the subconscious fear that accepting the fact that these despised traitors were fond fathers to their children at home, would trip up the current image that they were the embodiment of evil.

One other reason might be the fear that studying the nature of collaboration would be considered to be an approval of the collaborators' political choice.

Moreover, until recently, the 'real' historical studies carried out were studies on structures, social and economic mechanisms, development and deterioration, ideologies, revolutions and evolutions, not on personal developments or psychological processes.

Nevertheless, it was the very stories of the collaborators' children, that could render a service to the convictions and views of historians by their stressing the fact that

history is complex, that events should be considered from different points of view, that nothing can be explained from one or two causes, that people should be considered in their context and in 'multi-colour'.

The war did not end in May 1945: it is still a subject that is discussed among historians, in society and among politicians. The war was first and foremost depicted in a very nationalistic way, it was seen as the fight between the patriots and the traitors. But gradually, the massive images had to give way to more balanced views in which, for instance, the resistance movement proved to be to a lesser extent the solid and co-operating body people always thought it had been and in which the number of myths around the heroes of the resistance movement were tackled. There were other issues 'under attack': the ignoring of the period between 1939 and 1941, the exaggerated number of communist deaths in the resistance movement (more than 75 000 shot, used to say the Communist Party. The truth is near 5 000), the ignoring of the massacre of the Polish officers in Katyn, the rapings by Russian soldiers in Germany, the numbers of people killed through bombings like that of Dresden.

Immediately after the war it was not accepted, it was unthinkable, to describe topics such as collaboration in a balanced way. People needed the reassuring certainty suggested by the division of the population into good and bad guys, into victims and hangmen. But the collaborators' children always knew that a war is not a fight between angelic and diabolic spirits, but that each individual is a complex of good and bad – and admitting this reality does not mean that ethics do not matter or that resistance to a totalitarian regime is unimportant. The world shows a variety of gray tones, it does not do to use only black or white.

Many collaborators' children refused to accept their fathers being charged with having accommodated themselves to the oppressors and collaboration meaning that they were the sole group in society guilty of supporting the enemies. True, the majority of them objected because they love their fathers, nevertheless their refusal forces society and historians to consider the limits of collaboration. Raymond Aron drew attention to this topic in his book 'Chroniques de Guerre' when comparing the period before and after November 1942 (1). Even the author Bernanos in his book 'Français si vous saviez' stated that it is impossible to explain the total collapse of France after the surrender in May 1940 by the collaboration of a handful of 'rotters and idiots'. And for sure, his motive was not at all to extenuate those people! Then there is that other writer, the incorruptible resistance fighter and historian Marc Bloch, he too knew that collaboration is a complex phenomenon. The children refuse to view their fathers as monsters and they appeal to us to reconsider collaboration in all its variety and readjust our images of the collaborators. And in this way their stories are crucial for our understanding.

No doubt, when considering those stories in more detail, it is clear that the majority of the children own up to their father's mistakes and guilt, but almost always add some explanation or extenuation. 'I know, nevertheless...'

'My father made the wrong choice but at the moment he joined the Party nothing was known about the concentration camps and what the Nazi regime was all about'.

'True, my father supported the occupiers, but his motive was to help France survive notwithstanding the defeat'.

'Maybe my father should not have joined the authorities of the Vichy regime, but it would have been worse to accept Germans in these functions'.

'True, my father was enthusiast about the Nazi ideals, although before the war he was a member of a socialist party, but he was convinced that the Nazis too promoted the socialist ideals'.

'My father was mistaken, people made him make this mistake'.

Many children make a distinction between their fathers in the 'outside' world, as the men who made the wrong political decision, and the men in the 'inside' world of the family where they are warm husbands and friendly fathers to their children.

There is a couple of collaborators' children who refused to speak with Rigoulot. One can only guess what motives they had. Maybe they did not trust the interviewer and his motives. Maybe they wanted to show solidarity with their fathers. Maybe they wanted to perpetuate their victim's position of people no one is willing to listen to without prejudices.

Not all of the collaborators' children sought to justify their fathers' choices and acts. Some of them judged their father radically, but Rigoulot has doubts about the actual nature of their condemnation. Sometimes he felt that in fact, those people went along with their fathers, being loyal to them far more than the others, in the following sense: my father was a horrible man, they say, now I will be horrible too by saying that it is a delight to me to see that he was shot down by the resistance fighters or got a life sentence.' Or even: 'I will be more horrible, so that I will be the real bad guy and not my father and now people can be furious with me, not with him'.

In some cases people showed solidarity with their fathers, and rightly so, because they were condemned without a valid reason, or because they were the victims of animosity, or simply because the law of the conqueror prevailed.

Of course, we have now left the path of the usual history writing, we have entered the world of psychology and ethics. We witness the agony of the children who try to find a balance between two tendencies: their love for their fathers and their disapproval of their choices. How difficult it will be to live in the tension between these emotions. We know the same problem with children who are victimized or misused by their parents: even those children love their parents and show loyalty.

Their fathers' political choice affected the lives of the majority of Rigoulot's interview partners. A couple of them experienced isolation, because former friends broke off relationships or comrades excluded them from their activities. Others were called names such as 'lousy Boche'(pejorative name given at the time to Germans) or 'traitors' daughter or son'. The daughter of a Belgian collaborator saw her engagement broken by her future bridegroom, a couple of them were refused the job they applied for because of their fathers' choice. A couple of these children left the country together with their parents just before Liberation day, some were arrested together with their mothers, and one was sent to an orphanage. These are traumatising experiences and the very small children were affected the most, although they lack distinct memories.

Rigoulot was surprised to find how many of his interview partners, one way or another, followed their fathers' footsteps: a son becoming a politician, just like his father, although not in a party of the Right; a daughter involved in social work like her

father in his time; a daughter imprisoned for a small offence, just like her father, which her father had been able to escape by becoming a member of the SS; a daughter who tries to make good for her father and identifies herself with a Jew. Some of the children chose their fathers' hobbies (horses, water colour painting) or their fathers' professions. Of course, in many families sons and daughters follow their parents' footsteps, but Rigoulot found in his interviews a higher percentage than average. Is this the children's way to come close to a father who for ethical reasons they want to keep at a distance?

The most typical effect, however, is the result of how society at large considered those children. The more people pointed at their fathers, the more those children tried to defend them and the more people blamed them for siding with their fathers. Of course, children are not responsible for their fathers, nor for their deeds, but often people don't take the trouble to make this distinction. Maybe this is a reflection of the old doctrine of 'the fault transferred through the blood'. Did not even Mitterand say one day in 1981, that Giscard d'Estaing, his competitor in the presidential race, was of 'the collaborators' race'!

It is evident that the fulfilment of the biblical prophecy: 'In those days they will say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge' (Jeremiah 31:29) will be long in coming.

This is a summarized translation by GSB of the paper Pierre Rigoulot presented at the Colloquium "Les silences d'histoire" (The Silence in History) organised by the French-German organisation Coeurs sans frontières/Herzen ohne Grenzen at the Mémorial in Caen, November 22-23, 2008.

Note 1: The so called 'free zone' led by Vichy's authorities is invaded on November 11, 1942 by German and Italian armies, as a reaction to the landing of the US army three days before. No more freedom is left to Vichy to act differently than the Germans.

TRANSGENERATIONAL TRAUMATISATION

(this article is based on a literature study I did on behalf of the board of Kombi, the Dutch foundation that organises meetings open to war children of different background groups and the board of Herkenning, the self-help organisation of children of Dutch collaborators)

The concept and its mechanisms

In the 1980s, transgenerational traumatisation (or: indirect or secondary traumatisation) was a hot issue and many publications at the time focused on this subject. The psychiatrist E. de Wind (1) introduced the concept in the Netherlands. In his papers and articles he over and over again made clear that it is not a law of the Medes and the Persians that children of traumatised people become traumatised themselves. If there is a certain openness in the family allowing people to speak about the past, if the parents have managed to work through some of their psychological problems, the children may be influenced by their parents' behaviour and views, but not in a pathological way. If the children have the opportunity to discuss their problems with their parents or friends, this often suffices to prevent them from getting psychological problems that require professional help. Although they may have feelings of unsteadiness or of vague anguish, they will manage to function in their professional and personal contacts quite normally.

De Wind illustrated the mechanism of indirect traumatisation by the story of the chickens, not at all afraid of a snake, until their mother started to give the alarm and ran away. They did not understand why their mother was afraid, but felt her agony and followed her in her flight.

Willem Heuves (2) describes the non-verbal interaction between a mother and her baby. The mother notices the movements and emotions of her child and reacts to them in an adequate way. The baby experiences that his mother understands his needs and wants to comply with them, while accepting his emotions and giving him the feeling: you are OK. A depressed mother, however, is more or less absorbed in her own thoughts and not alert enough to recognize the signals her baby is giving to her. She does not actually see what her baby wants to tell, she does not respond to his needs and leaves him with frustration and uncertainty.

Heuves set forth that, normally, parents know how to handle their child's fear of a 'weird animal' beneath his bed, and help him to overcome his anguish. Parents who in their childhood or youth experienced serious terrors and threats may feel overwhelmed by the recurrence of these emotions at the moment they witness their child's fear. The child notices the terror in the eyes of the parents and his own childish fear for the non-existing animal is linked with the realistic anguish the parents experienced in very real dangerous situations.

Moreover, Heuves states, depressed or traumatised parents often interpret their child's behaviour not on the basis of this behaviour, but on the basis of their own experiences. A mother who stumbled almost over her baby creeping on the floor said to her guest: 'That is how this child always behaves when there are guests. He is always in my way, just because he is jealous that I speak with you.'

Petra Aarts (3) put to the fore that depressed and traumatised parents often do not know how to react to their children's interest in questions of death and birth and their experiments with food and excrements. At a certain age all children become interested in these subjects, but they may remind their parents of painful childhood

experiences that may overwhelm them. Even if they don't express their emotions, the children will experience how troubled their parents are and will feel uncertain, inclined to avoid in future such outbursts of emotions, even unexpressed.

D. J. De Levita (4), for years professor in the field of war-related problems of the post-war generation, noted that in general children want to have happy parents and will do their best to make them happy by being a 'good child'. Children of traumatised parents see that all their efforts to improve their parents' well-being are in vain. They may experience their unsuccessful efforts as their own failure, or may feel guilty, assuming that they are the source of their parents' depression. The failure of their efforts thus becomes a traumatising factor.

Normally children are able to accommodate to whatever circumstances. If those circumstances are actually pathogenic in nature, they develop pathogenical manners of behaviour, and children, who in their own constitution don't have clues for developing depressions or other psychological problems, nevertheless end needing therapeutic help.

The psychoanalyst Mrs J. Groen-Prakken (5) makes a distinction between traumatising and development interference. She describes trauma as a mental damage that cannot be dealt with with the normal coping strategies people use to overcome problems. She identifies the latter concept as the effects on human beings caused by events or circumstances that prevent the fulfilment of basic needs at the age those needs need to be fulfilled to guarantee a normal development. She describes the case of a four months old baby who needs to be put in a plaster corset in order to prevent his hips to dislocate. It is, however, the age that normally babies start to roll from their back to their belly and the corset impedes him in this normal development. The physical hindrance may result in a psychological problem. Groen-Prakken explains that people living under constant stress or living in situations in which their very existence is at stake (concentration camp, hiding, persecution, flight) develop a trauma. Some people more than others run the risk of becoming traumatised. She points in particular to people who lack, for some reason or another, the necessary 'ego-strength'. There are periods in life that ego-strength is rather weak: in childhood, adolescence and old age.

According to Groen-Prakken, all people living during a war are affected by development interference, adults and children alike; to children the consequences are, however, more dramatic.

Interference of the war have often had as a result that people could not be 'good enough' parents to their children, whereupon their failing parenting interfered with the normal development of their children. They in their turn may influence the development of their children and in this way the effects of development interference are handed over to the next generations. The only way to stop this process is by becoming aware of where it started and working through.

The silence of the parents

As was said before, E. de Wind underlined that a certain openness about the past between parents and children will prevent children becoming indirectly traumatised. In many families, however, the parents kept silent about the past. They did not find words for what they had experienced in camps or in hiding or they did not dare to recollect the past afraid of becoming overwhelmed by unmanageable emotions in front of their children. Many were convinced that not speaking about their experiences would spare their children a lot of pain, not aware of the fact that silence

was actually more burdensome than speaking up. Many post-war children blame their parents for their silence, because they see it as their right to know what happened. But above all they feel they need to know about the past in order to be able to understand the behaviour and views of their parents and of themselves. The need of the parents to keep silent is contrary to the need of the children to know and in fact there is no way out of this dilemma.

Tamarah Benima (6), born after the war in a Jewish family, stands up for her silent parents by putting to the fore that two essential motives for sharing experiences are absent in the parents-children relationship. First of all, sharing experiences aims at sharing emotions, but the relationship between parents and children is by definition an asymmetric one, so a genuine exchange of emotions is not possible. The second motive, the transfer of 'lessons for life', does not apply either, because the war experiences of the parents are of no use in periods of peace. Tamarah relates how her father used to tell his daughters how important it is to have a fur coat when a war breaks out: the coat is warm, can be used as a blanket, you can put a lot of things in the pockets and if necessary you can sell it for food... Such an advice does not make sense to children who attend school, visit a disco or fitnessclub and enjoy life with their friends.

The psychiatrist Judith Kestenberg (7) who conducted a research project (1974-1984) among war children and the post-war generation, described how these people were affected by their travelling to and fro between two worlds: the world of the past, their parents' world in which the war is still not over or in which they are preparing for a possible new war to break out and their own world, the world of the present, the world of friends, colleagues, sport and holidays. Achieving a well-defined identity is impeded by this constant 'shuttle trip' between two different worlds.

Confusion in terminology, differences of view

In search of information on the typical problems of the post-war generation (if any at all) came across the term 'second generation' that researchers use either to define the post-war generation, or the people who were children during the war, (so the war children), or both categories. It was often not evident which category they had in mind when writing their articles.

According to the psychiatrist P.C.Blom (8), the watershed between the war children and the post-war generation is not so much defined by the date of birth (before and in the war or after), but by being directly or indirectly traumatised. He noted, that children of Dutch collaborators born in internment camps or children in Indonesia born in the chaotic period after Liberation day because of the civil war and returning to the Japanese camps for safety, were traumatised themselves, although born after the war, because the war situation continued for them.

We also have to keep in mind that not only the post-war generation grew up with traumatised parents and were affected by their depressions and anguish. War children lived also with parents who were so absorbed in dealing with their own sorrow that they lacked the energy to be the 'good enough' parents children need for a normal development. So war children have their indirect traumatisation in common with the post-war generation, but differ from them because of their being directly traumatised during the war. In only two of the about 40 articles I consulted, the authors referred to this fact!

According to De Levita, the crucial factor for both categories is the attitudes and the mental well-being of the parents. He thinks that they count for more than the possible traumatising of the war children themselves.

Judith Kestenberg, however, found distinct differences between the categories. (The summary I give here does not do to any extent justice to the elaborate article she wrote about this issue, which was in its turn a summary of her research).

War children, in general, try to forget the past, whereas the post-war generation wants to know what happened in the past.

The post-war generation cling to their parents (and the parents to their children) in such a way that saying goodbye in whatever form is always difficult for both, whereas many war children have problems entering into relationships with other people.

War children have been humiliated or at least overlooked, which impeded the development of a strong and healthy identity, whereas the post-war generation is affected by the damaged identity of their parents caused by the humiliation they have suffered.

The post-war generation did not dare to express their feelings of aggression towards their parents at the moments this would be normal in a child's development, whereas war children often directed their aggression to their parents instead of to the people responsible for the misery they all went through.

The post-war generation suffers from psychosomatic diseases like bulimia or anorexia, whereas war children suffer from the long-term effects of hunger and deprivation, revealing itself in lack of energy and vitality and digestion problems.

The therapist, B. Filet (9) put to the fore the aspect of elusiveness of the problems of both categories: 'Many war children and those belonging to the post-war generation suffer from psychological pains that can hardly be defined and they are so common in the context in which they live that nobody recognizes them as symptoms of war-related damages.' [...] 'These are symptoms of an inner configuration rather than clear-cut psychological problems'. The expert, nevertheless, notices the historical context in which the client or his family have been traumatised, on the basis of emotions typical of their background group or on the basis of the characteristics of the emotional pains. Children of resistance fighters show often bitterness and deception, people who were children in the Japanese internment camps in Indonesia often find symbolic ways to express their grief about the loss of their mother country and their traumatic immigration to the Netherlands and show their distrust of authorities. People from Jewish families often show to be afraid of loss of control and of discrimination and the majority of collaborators' children suffer from feelings of guilt and of shame.

The concept under attack

In the late 1990s some scholars stated that transgenerational traumatising does not exist.

In 1995, a couple of researchers took on the (governmentally financed) task to study the problems of people born after the war in families who experienced the war in the Japanese internment camps in Indonesia. In the opening paragraph of their report they stated frankly that they dissociated themselves from the results of studies conducted by therapists or psychiatrists, who 'of course found problems – they need clients, don't they!' They declared their target group 'free from problems', at least not suffering from more psychological troubles than their peers. Petra Aarts (10) commenting on this report found, however, that the researchers had overlooked an

important fact, viz. the composition of the control group. More than 50 per cent of the people of this control group was faced with war-related problems in their families, although they belonged to different background groups than the 'Indonesian' one. No wonder that the researchers did not find differences between the study group and their peers....Aarts assumed, that the researchers probably found what suited the government: no problems, no need to continue granting financial support to the post-war generation for psychological help or other types of care.

In 2002, the therapist IJzendoorn (11) reported on the three generations research he conducted in Israel together with two colleagues. He interviewed fifty grandmothers who were Holocaust survivors and their daughters and granddaughters and fifty grandmothers who lived already in Israel before 1939 and their daughters and granddaughters. They focused on the issue of attachment and separation, one of the issues often discussed in reports on war-related problems. His conclusion: 'In general we did not find clues that justify the use of the term secondary traumatisation. To put it briefly: intergenerational transfer of traumas does not exist, at least not when children and grandchildren are living in normal circumstances. This proves how resilient the Holocaust generation was and how successful in keeping away from their children the effects of their traumatisation.'

He leaves us with some questions: What are 'normal' circumstances – the situation in Israel where Jews constitute the majority in society or do his results also apply to other countries where Jews constitute a minority group in society and often are the target of discrimination? Why did he focus only on one issue, however important in itself, and not on others as well? Why did he use this research to proclaim his opinion that Holocaust survivors are not the pitiful victims as they often are portrayed?

The 'hidden agenda' of those scholars could prove to be very costly to war children and the post-war generation. Therapists reading their reports might be tempted to accept that transgenerational traumatisation actually does not exist and might feel permitted to stop asking questions on war experiences in the family during intake encounters or during therapy sessions.

The Institute for Documentation and Coordination of Help for War Victims, Icodó, organised meetings for the post-war generation open to all different background groups in the Netherlands in 1996, 1998 and 2000. One of Icodó's employees was charged with the care of these people. Since Icodó merged with two other institutes into the organisation Cogis, no initiative has been taken on behalf of the post-war generation. Has this lack of activity had anything to do with the new trend of denying transgenerational traumatisation?

Besides, in the magazine of the new organisation the articles focus less on war-related problems and more and more on the problems of asylum seekers, members of NGO teams and veterans of peace missions. War as an issue of interest is evidently 'out'.

The actual situation

The psychological problems children of war-traumatised parents are not basically different from those of their peers, is the conclusion of several research-studies. In 1990 a study among people belonging to the Jewish post-war generation proved, however, that children of survivors claim significantly more psychological and medical help than their peers.(12)

The following cases show the impact of their parents' war experiences on the lives of their children.

During a professional training Rien learnt that his father, a convict for some years during the war, belonged to one of the accepted categories of war victims. His relationship with his father had been very tense and he had seen his father as the perpetrator and himself as his victim. It was an eye-opener that the 'perpetrator' was himself a victim; this insight gave Rien the opportunity to re-consider his relationship with his father, even more than a decade after his death. He managed to find a new and balanced view on him and could leave behind the negative feelings that had always accompanied him.(13)

The therapist M.J.M. Coopmans (14) presented the case of a teacher caught in a conflict with his colleagues, driving him into a depression. The therapist could not find any clue in the personal development of his client and even the troublesome relationship with his father could not account for his misery of the moment.

Nevertheless, the key was found in his father's experiences as a convict. The therapist advised his client to find out more details of his father's stay in Germany. The client learnt about the high ambitions his father had had before the war, the war preventing them to be fulfilled, while after the war his father lacked the energy and vitality to realise his ideals. The client, a very dedicated teacher trying to reach the highest possible level and therefore criticised by his less dedicated colleagues, had to find out whether his ambitions were really his own or actually his father's which he tried to fulfil in his place, to 'make good' the failure caused by the war. This cleared the sky and it did not take long before he accepted a job at another school.

A young woman, born after the war in a Jewish family, participated in a self help group, focusing on the topics of loneliness and communication problems.(15) Soon she learnt that underneath these problems lay the sadness about the fact that she did not have any children. Thereupon she recognised that underneath this problem lay the despair of her 'betrayal of her family': if she did not give her family offspring, the family would cease to exist, because almost all the members had been murdered in the context of the Shoah. If she did not give children to her family, 'Hitler would have the final victory'. It is evident that if this topic had been ignored by herself or a therapist, any therapy would stick.

According to me, it is not important to know whether these cases can be defined as examples of indirect traumatising or of development interference. What counts is the impact of the war throughout the generations and the importance of becoming aware of this influence.

Reaching out to the post-war generation

On 31 May, Kombi organised a meeting where the participants discussed the similarities and differences between the problems of war children and the post-war generation on the basis of six interviews. The four people born after the war had not been aware of the possible link between their problems and the war experiences of their (grand) parents until other people drew attention to this connection or until they happened to come across a publication on this issue. They raised the question: how can we reach other people who don't know that their problems are probably linked to their family's war experiences?

This meeting was to be the last one before Kombi would stop its activities at the end of this year, but the participants felt that there was still a task to take on, in particular on behalf of the post-war generation. So they decided to continue the organisation's

activities, although in a somewhat different way. The discussion groups will have to yield their central position to the interactive website to be set up. Kombi will start a 'knowledge centre', gathering scientific knowledge alongside stories which will elucidate the problems of the post-war generation. The PR team, aware of the various different views with respect to transgenerational traumatisation, will contact therapists and psychological magazines asking their renewed attention to the plight of the war children and the post-war generation. They will also contact magazines of different types and ask them to publish stories that may help readers to see how their problems might be linked to the war experiences in their families.

Today, many publications recommend therapists to go into the social, ethnic, cultural and historical context of their 'new' clients (asylum seekers or foreign employees). The members of Kombi want them to be informed of and to take into account their 'social, ethnic, cultural and historical context': the war (of their (grand)parents). And if institutes like Cogis cannot be convinced of the need to resume their activities on behalf of the post-war generation, the members of Kombi will reach out to them.

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

Note: Cogis invited representatives of all the war children organisations in the Netherlands to a brainstorm meeting with respect to a 'knowledge centre' as a joint initiative.

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Dan Bar On - IDC initiators meeting in Breisach, Germany

On February 28 and March 1, 2009 another meeting of 6 initiators and one guest of the “Dan Bar On -International Dialogue Center“(in foundation) took place in Breisach, Germany.

The meeting was hosted by Dr. Christiane Walesch – Schneller in the “Blue House”, a memorial place of former Jewish Life in Breisach.

The meeting started with an introduction into the history of the house and it’s meaning and purpose and with a walk to places of Jewish life and history in the small town.

Dr. Walesch –Schneller impressed us with her incredible knowledge about historical details as well as with her generous hospitality.

In the second part we discussed ideas about structure, form and possible projects of the future center. We agreed on creating a registered association which Sakino Mathilde Sternberg will take further action to.

A few interesting projects were introduced by the participants, which could be hosted by IDC. We agreed that the initiators of the projects will take care of the procedure of their projects in terms of content, financing and responsibility. IDC will function as an “umbrella” for those assigned projects that will be commonly agreed on to be in alignment with IDC purpose and meaning.

In the evening we shared with each other parts of our lifestories. We experienced this as a very valuable part of the meeting. We agreed that storytelling should be further on an important element of the prospective IDC-meetings because of it’s high contribution to group cohesiveness.

The meeting ended with a delicious lunch snack and a feeling that we set into action a beautiful endeavour.

The next meeting of the IDC is planned in January 2010 as a greater event.

Sakino Mathilde Sternberg

Next issue of the International Bulletin: Autumn 2009
Reactions and articles till the 1st of October 2009

MICHAEL D. HENDERSON: NO ENEMY TO CONQUER.
Forgiveness in an unforgiving World
Baylor University Press
ISBN: 9871602561401

Bookreview by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat (from the site www.spiritualityandpractice.com)

Michael Henderson is a British freelance journalist and author of numerous books including *Forgiveness: Breaking the Chain of Hate* and *All Her Paths are Peace*. He is convinced that forgiveness is like a muscle that must be exercised. He has gathered inspiring and edifying stories of individuals and organizations around the world who have sought to advance reconciliation among enemies and to bring about peace rather than sustain enmity.

In the foreword, His Holiness the Dalai Lama writes:

'When something terrible happens, instead of finding some individual or group to blame, fostering hatred and a desire for revenge, we should try to take a broader view and consider the long term. Much more constructive than stoking feelings of resentment and revenge is to forgive and to transform the negative event and its consequences into a source of inner strength.'

Henderson has divided the book into segments on:

- Clash or Alliance?
- Reaching Out to 'the Other'
- Moving Beyond Victimhood
- Taking Responsibility
- Creating Safe Space
- Acknowledging The Past

Each section also has commentaries by world leaders, activists and peace makers, such as Desmond Tutu, the late Benazir Bhutto, Rajmohan Gandhi, Betty Bigome, Joseph Montville, David Smock, Donna Hicks, Margaret Smith and Mohammed Abu-Nimer.

A major emphasis in the book is to chart the great strides forward in the strained relationships between Christians and Muslims.

In a cogent quotation about the amazing nature of forgiveness, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks observes:

'In a world without forgiveness, evil begets evil, harm generates harm, and there is no way short of exhaustion or forgetfulness of breaking the sequence. Forgiveness breaks the chain. It introduces into the logic of interpersonal encounter the unpredictability of grace. It represents a decision not to do what instinct and passion urge us to do. It answers hate with a refusal to hate, animosity with generosity. Few more daring ideas have ever entered the human situation. Forgiveness means that we are not destined endlessly to replay the grievances of yesterday. It is the ability to live with the past without being held captive by the past. It would not be an exaggeration to say that forgiveness is the most compelling testimony to freedom. It is about the action that is not reaction. It is the refusal to be defined by circumstance. It represents an unexpected set of possibilities for the future.'

When there are conflicts and major wars raging in every corner of the globe, it is encouraging to read about so many people who have broken the chains of hatred, violence, and revenge by reaching out to enemies. Among the mentors of forgiveness profiled in this book are a Tutsi survivor who has worked to rebuild Rwanda and advance the cause of reconciliation; a Christian pastor and a Muslim imam in Nigeria who are directors of an Interfaith Mediation Center; an IRA bomber and a victim's daughter; and the father of Daniel Pearl who honors the memory of his executed son through Jewish-Muslim dialogue.

Henderson also presents the work of grassroots organizations in hot spots around the globe working for reconciliation such as a toll-free telephone service set up by Parents Circle-Families Forum which enables Arabs and Jews to talk to people 'on the other side'.

In the section 'Acknowledging The Past' there are some fascinating pieces on the apologies offered by the Australian government to the Aboriginal people and the British for the fire-bombing of Dresden. We also appreciated Henderson's inclusion of some documentary films, including *Forgiving Dr. Mengele*.

Early in *No Enemy to Conquer*, the author notes:

'Forgiveness has an image problem. It fosters so many misconceptions. Some withhold forgiveness for fear that they might easily become a 'doormat' for others, or that justice might not be served, and cruel people will literally get away with murder; or that forgiveness and apology, particularly in terms of injustices of the past, is just the latest caving in to political correctness.'

Henderson makes a strong case for the moral and ethical firepower of forgiveness in public life. He answers the concerns of those who have a hard time with this spiritual practice, which is held in such high esteem by all the world's religions. We highly recommend *No Enemy to Conquer* and hope that it is widely read, discussed, and its lessons applied in communities around the world.

SABINE BODE: KRIEGSENKEL

Ed. Klett-Cotta

305 pages

The stories of the grandchildren of the war show the influence of the war experiences of their parents or grandparents on their lives. The post-war generation don't want to perpetuate the silence of their (grand)parents. They feel the need to face the past in order to prevent the problems being transferred to the next generation without being worked through.

THE ERRONEOUS BOMBING OF NIJMEGEN 22-21944

Not until some years ago citizens of the town of Nijmegen, near the border with Germany in the east of the Netherlands, started to commemorate the victims - the dead and the wounded citizens of their city - of the bombing in February 1944. Whereas the citizens of Rotterdam immediately after the war organised their yearly commemoration ceremonies for the hundreds of people who perished in the air raids of the Germans in early May 1940, at the start of the war, the citizens of Nijmegen kept silent and found no way to commemorate the victims in public ceremonies. The reason is clear: the bombing of Nijmegen was not an act of the enemy, it was an error made by the Allied Forces....

This year special attention was drawn to the ceremonies because it was 65 years after the horrible events. This was in fact the first time that the story received much media covering, not only regionally but also in the rest of the Netherlands. It was the first time that representatives of the American air force and the American ambassador were invited. Never before, had the ceremony had such a formal character.

Ria Roosendaal-Martens said in an interview in the daily paper De Telegraaf: 'We actually never blamed the Americans for their error, how could we have done so? Those young fellows there high in the sky, they were our liberators and nobody makes such an error deliberately! That's why so many people for such a long time never spoke about the disastrous events of that horrible day in February 1944.' However, the bombs were released very deliberately, as is known at present! Although, mistakenly on the wrong city. The B-24 Liberators of the 446 Bomb Group had orders to drop the bombs on the Messerschmitt factories in Gotha, in Thüringen in Germany, but the weather conditions were very bad and the crews of the planes could not get the factories located correctly. They decided to return to England, but as a rule, they were supposed to drop the explosives somewhere before their arrival in the motherland, if necessary even in the North Sea. When they saw a railway yard below them, they were convinced it was the one near the German town of Kleef (Cleves) and they dropped the bombs. But they were mistaken! Some of the bombs fell on Arnhem, Deventer and Enschede, also Dutch towns, but the majority fell on Nijmegen, destroying the old centre with many medieval houses. More than 800 people died in the inferno that raged after the planes had passed by. It happened early in the afternoon, after the signal 'all clear' of the air raid alarm was given and people resumed their work. They were surprised by a new signal 'attack is coming soon'. Many people could not reach the shelters in time. Ria Roosendaal-Martens survived, because the tower of the St. Stevens church capsized in the opposite direction from where she was and did not fall on her house. Her brother was seriously wounded, the only survivor of his group of comrades that was watching the planes, watching without any fear because they saw American planes... Physicians feared he would soon die, but he managed to stay alive, although disabled for the rest of his life.

Nijmegen was on the frontline until the end of the war, but Ria says that she and her family managed to go on with their lives and did not develop psychological problems, because their parents were warm and stable people that gave their children the feeling that they, together, would overcome any problem.

Not everyone had the same luck. A woman, I call her 'Petra', grew up in a family where one of the sons and her father died during the bombing and where the event of February 1944 was a taboo subject. The family could not cope with the loss of two of their members and the fact that they died through the hands of the liberators added to the misery. Petra had serious psychological problems at the moment that, some years ago, she saw an add in a regional paper in which the organisation Kombi asked the readers: 'Do you still suffer of the effects of the war or the war experiences of your (grand) parents and would you like to meet people with similar problems?' After considering the pros and the cons, Petra participated in an introduction meeting of Kombi and later on in one of the encounter groups in her region. Although the majority of the other participants had experienced the war in a different context, they could share with each other a couple of common experiences. Petra could tell her story, for the first time in her life to people who understood her feelings and emotions and who could support her. Petra could speak about her fears, the feeling that life is a risky adventure and the distressing feeling that even your parents cannot protect you in this world full of threats. Breaking the taboo meant an enormously courageous step and helped her to get more self-confidence. However, when I asked her permission to translate the story she wrote for Komi's Newsletter and to insert it in translation in this issue of the International Bulletin, she answered me, that she lacked the courage. She still feels more or less guilty of breaking down the wall around the family secret and the idea that her story would go all around the world made her feel sick.

In the commemoration ceremony on February 22 the American ambassador apologized for the mistakes of the Bomber Group crews that plunged so many families in deep distress. The mayor of Nijmegen admitted that he realises now that the authorities who for decades ignored the catastrophe that struck the city were wrong. He said that he was aware of the negative effects of denying the losses of the city and its citizens and promised that in future there would be more openness.

During the commemoration week all over the city posters showed the sites as they were before the bombing, immediately after the catastrophe and in the present condition, so that all the passers-by could see the differences and become aware of the changes that had taken place in only some minutes.

The people who until now had not dared to speak up, out of consideration for the liberators, will get now, at last, the opportunity to take their own pain and grief seriously. Maybe this will be a relief to them, unchaining energy bound until now to suppressed anger and deception. Maybe the fact that at last they are allowed to tell their own stories in which the liberators are not the heroes but the guys who destroyed their lives and hopes, will have a healing effect.

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Programme :

Wednesday September 9 2009

Key Note Address:

Dr Peter Heinl: *Reflections on the future of childhood war trauma*

Session 1:

Natalia Benjamin: *'You can't help liking them' - The Basque children Refugees in Great Britain*

Julie Summers: *'What happened when the men came home in 1945?'*

Session 2:

Margaret Simmons: *Bombs to briquettes: Women in Australia tell their stories of British Evacuation in WWII*

Sam Heywood: *Giving them voice: interpreting children's wartime experiences at the Imperial War Museum*

Sue Wheatcroft: *'An Undue Burden' - Disabled children in England during WWII: successes and failures of the government Evacuation Scheme*

Session 3:

Professor Baard Borge: *'What did you do in the war, Dad? How children of former NS-members in Norway relate to their parents*

Ruth Barnett: *Genocide under cover of war*

Professor Erwin Erhardt III: TBA

Dr Corral Smith: TBA

Session 4:

Gonda Scheffel-Baars: *Dialogue as a helping-hand: hands-on expertise of Kombi*

John Oakes: *Kitchener's Lost Boys*

Howard Baker: *Letters Home!*

Dr Andy Kempe and Terence Frisby: *'Just remember two things...it's not fair and don't be late.'*

Thursday September 10, 2009

Session 1:

Mattie Turnbull: *Evacuation: Scottish children – a largely neglected event.*

Dr Helga Spranger: *Daddy is back again! His family in the post-war period*
Dr Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto-Arponen: *Spatial Trauma in war children*
Dr Nathan Durst: *Psychotherapy with Child Survivors of the Shoa*

Session 2:

Cathy Martindale: *With the benefit of hindsight, could it be said that the German children were the main victims of World War II?*

Sharon Natt: *'The child soldier is the most famous character at the end of the 20th century'*

Hayley Bull: *Diminishing borders. Re-assessing the child victims of World War II*

Robert Crosland: TBA

Session 3:

Dr Sidney Brown: *Long term impact of evacuation on secondary school teachers*

Lindsey Dodd: *Children under the Allied bombs in France 1940-45*

Professor Bob Rook: *Children, War, and the 21st Century Since 9/11*

Professor Steve Trout: *'Trenches in the Backyard: Male American Youth Culture and the Memory of WW I, 1919-1941'*

Friday September 11 2009

Session 1:

Teresa von Sommaruga: *Do children feel their parents' emotions?*

Pippa Bleach: *Child Survivors of Rwanda. The only way to secure its future*

Catherine Earl: *Loyalties and Liberation: Schooling Vietnamese girls on both sides of the revolution*

Session 2:

Ali Bathie: *A brief comparison of the experiences of German and British children in the Second World War*

Elisabeth Patkai: TBA

David Crutchley: TBA

Session 3:

Dr Brita Aarniala: *My mother language is my heart*

Mai Maddison: *Yings without Yangs: Fractured Lives.*

Dr Martin Parsons: TBA

Plenary: Dr Trevor Davies

16.00 Conference ends

EXHIBITION IN MEMORIAL CENTRE CAMP WESTERBORK

From December 1 until March 31 the Memorial Centre Camp Westerbork in a special exhibition focused on the period in which the camp served as an internment camp for Dutch collaborators from 1945 until 1948.

The manager and his staff, when planning this exhibition, were aware of the criticism they risked from the side of in particular the Jewish community. Westerbork is first and foremost known as the camp where the Jews were gathered before being sent to the KZ's in Germany. And, indeed, protests came, but they were counter-balanced by statements of people that supported the view of the staff. One of them, a former mayor of Amsterdam and a former Minister in a Dutch government, Ed van Thijn, said in his first reaction: 'This is not a good idea, why such an exhibition in OUR camp where I lived for the last few months of the war', but soon he realised that the whole story of Westerbork should be told.

Westerbork was built as a national camp for German Jewish refugees. Such a camp was planned to be set up in the woods in the centre of the Netherlands, but people objected to this, among them Queen Wilhelmina. Then the authorities chose a far-away place in the north-east of the Netherlands, in the heathland in the municipality of Westerbork: isolated as to prevent the German Jews from becoming part of the Dutch community. The refugees were not very welcome in a country with serious economic problems and the Dutch Jews feared that their arrival would give fuel to antisemitism, which was always present in society, but never a real threat. The government expected the Dutch Jewish Community to fund the camp (more than one million guilders) and although reluctantly, the Jews did, through the Committee for Jewish Interests that was set up as early as March 1933. The first barracks were completed in August 1939 and the first refugees (22) entered the camp in October 1939. At the end of January the population of camp Westerbork had increased – 167 people – and at the end of April the camp had 749 inmates.

On May 10, 1940, the Germans ignored the Dutch neutrality and attacked the country. The Jews in Westerbork had an evacuation plan – because they knew from their experiences in Germany that no good could be expected from the German occupier. By train they reached Zwolle, some 40 km away from the camp, but they stranded there because the bridge had been damaged during an air raid. They had no other choice than to return to the camp. Some who tried to find shelter elsewhere, were taken back to Westerbork by the Dutch (!) authorities; this happened before the surrender of the Dutch army, so before the Germans took over.

From February 1941 until April 1945 Westerbork was in use as a 'transit' camp. By Nazi standards, this was a 'human' camp, there was no lack of food, there was even entertainment. Nevertheless, it was the gateway to death. Almost every Tuesday a train left the camp, in fact 93 such trains headed to Germany, the last transport leaving on September 3, 1944. Seven people managed to escape from this train, one of them broke her wrist. Two farmers found her and took her to hospital where she received medical help. They took care of her for the rest of the war although they were members of the Dutch national-socialist Party....

This event tackles two prejudices: the Jews went to the slaughterhouse like lambs; and all of the collaborators had antisemitic ideas and were involved in the Holocaust.

Two weeks after the Canadians liberated the northern provinces of the Netherlands, in April 1945, the first collaborators entered the camp to remain in internment until they would be taken to court. At that moment 850 Jews still lived there, because they had no opportunity to go home.

It is bizarre, but a number of these Jews were ordered to serve as guards in the camp! Even Ed van Thijn, who was ten years old at the time had the supervision of a couple of collaborators whose task it was to gather dead wood in the forest near the camp. Surprisingly enough, no one ever tried to escape and no one ever threatened the boy 'armed' with a stick. In retrospect Ed says, one cannot understand that people simply, without comments, accepted the orders of the authorities, even when these orders were completely absurd. 'Only a sick mind could see no problem in Jews being ordered to guard their former enemies'.

Some weeks later the Jewish guards were released from their task. Westerbork became overcrowded with a 8.000 prisoners, people suspected of being members of the Nazi Party. The majority were, but a percentage of them was not and had nothing to do with collaboration whatsoever. They spent weeks, months, some even years in internment not being guilty. To many visitors this aspect of the exhibition is completely new.

During the first months, the circumstances in the camp were dramatic, there was a lack of food and clothing, hygienic circumstances were bad, many people were ill. Moreover, many prisoners were maltreated, physically and psychologically. In those first months 89 of the inmates died due to malnutrition or maltreatment. The last collaborators left the camp in December 1948.

Three years later the former soldiers and officers of the KNIL, the Royal Dutch Indies Army, from the Molucca Archipelago, arrived for a- as was then believed -temporary stay in the Netherlands until fair solutions had been found for their professional life, since they could not return to their homeland because of the proclamation of the Republic of Indonesia. They were taken to several places in the Netherlands, among them the former concentration camps Westerbork and Vught. The housing problem in the Netherlands after the war was very serious, but who can conceive of the notion of housing those people in former concentration camps? The temporary stay became a permanent one. In the sixties the Moluccans left the camps and found housing in cities in the surrounding areas. The last barracks were demolished in 1971. Some years ago the Westerbork museum set up an exhibition focusing on this group of South Moluccans. The main project of the Memorial Centre and the museum, however, is and will be the Dutch Jews and their persecution.

A majority of the visitors of this special exhibition on the internment period praise the staff for their vision and courage to draw attention also to this episode. It shows that the views on the war in Dutch society are changing and that an increasing number of people can see more nuances than the black and white in which the war history was depicted for more than 50 years.

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

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.nkb.no

Organization of Norwegian NS Children:

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

Organisation of Finnish Children of War, Seundun Sotalapset:

www.sotalapset.fi

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

www.torelectandtrust.org

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

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

www.thefoundationtrust.org

Dachau Institut Psychologie und Pädagogik:

www.Dachau-institut.de

Kriegskind Deutschland:

www.kriegskind.de

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.nesdelaliberation.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 (in preparation)

