

INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN

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INTRODUCTION

MonikaSchwarz, researcher in the domain of antisemitism, said in her speech in The Austrian Parlement: 'I never found it so difficult to formulate a lecture on this topic.'

I always hope that the texts I choose will give you stuff to reflect on. But now, where the opinions on the ongoing wars are so different and opposite, I am afraid that some lines might hurt someone. Though, I have the task to make a choice.

I open this issue with some lines on Jeanne Diele, member of Herkenning's board, who passed away in September.

I read a text on a grandson of four members of the resistance movement and the impact the story of his grandparents had on his life.

I interviewed Sveta, a refugee from Ukraine, and spoke with her about her decision to start a new life in the Netherlands.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote an interesting weekletter on the circumstances that lead to the fall of civilisations. As a rabbi, of course, he mentions the faith in God, but I understand it in this way that we can read also: faith in your norms and values. Don't forsake your convictions, the source that feeds your life.

I found an impressive poem on a gray photo.

I wrote a text on hostages, comparing an event in the Netherlands of 1977 when Moluccan youngsters hijacked a passengertrain and took children and teachers in hostage with the hostages-taking one year ago. About the difficult decisions that had to be taken to get the hostages free with using the less of violence. In 1977 the problem was only a Dutch one. The case of the hostages kept in Gaza, arouses commentaries throughout the world. How far more difficult is it to take decisions now compared with the Dutch situation.

I publish the begin sentences of Monika Schwarz's speech and give you the link to find her text in the internet.

Douglas Murray received the Alexander Hamilton Award of the Manhattan Institute and gave an interesting lecture.

Alette Smeulers wrote the book 'Perpetrators of Mass Atrocities'. The subject may interest some of the readers, although no one would take the book in the suitcase for reading during the holidays, I guess.

Samson Munn send me a request, which I insert in this issue. I am glad that the Austrian Encounter has been continued in The Encounter.

In the eighties, last century, we had in the Netherlands encountergroups, in my organisation Herkenning and in Kombi, an organisation for war children of any background. In 2007 I wrote a book about the experiences which changed our lives.

To end with: I found an article on a 'children republic' in Budapest, founded in 1944 and continued to 1950. It feels good to me to insert this positive story that at the end.

Commentaries and new texts are welcome! Whenever you change your mail address, please let me know so that we will remain in contact.

Deadline next issue: April 15, 2025

Warm regards to your all,
Gonda Scheffel-Baars

In Memory of Jeanne Diele-Staal (1939-2024)

In the nineties Jeanne felt the need to explore her family history. She presumed that some patterns of behaviour towards herself and towards her children, attitudes she would like to change had roots in her childhood. She was in shock when she found out that her father had been a member of the NSB, the Dutch National-Socialist Party. She planned a visit to the Special Archives (CABR) containing the dossiers of more than 100 000 people who had taken sides with the German Occupiers. She read the dossier of her father and got the insight that his political choice had influenced and still influenced her life. After that she could start with exploring that influence.



She became acquainted with the self-help organisation Herkenning for children of Dutch collaborators. Very soon the board felt that Jeanne had certain skills that made her the right person to assume the task of telephone-contactperson. Her openness and honesty helped people overcoming their fears and starting to tell her or his life story. In the first years of our organisation we had had several regional encountergroups, but in the 21th century self-help groups had become more or less old-fashioned. But soon there were members wishing to participate in encounter groups and Jeanne had the skills to organise and facilitate them, since she is a professional personal coach. In 1995 she became a member of the board.

With her abundance of energy and her positivity she became a member of a team of war children of different war backgrounds, visiting schools to tell their family story. This team was organised by the Commemoration Museum Westerbork, the former assembling camp for Jews to be sent to concentrationcamps. After a short training she got the permission to visit schools. She made more than 200 visits and each time the children or youngsters were impressed by her story, so different than the general image of the war.

Some years ago Jeanne wished to leave the board and her activities forHerkenning, because she experienced health problems. At September 13, 2024 she died at the age of 85, the age of the very strong. We remember her with gratitude in our heart for all her energy and the talent to make contact with everybody and to connect people with each other. We will miss her.

May her memory be for a blessing.

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

GRANDSON of four resistance fighters

Jurgen Schouten is 55 years, born many years after the war. Despite that, the war influenced him a lot. He grew up in the house of his grandmother, who had had families in hiding throughout the war and accepted her daughter with husband and child in her grand house when the war was over. Jurgen's mother was born from a relationship between his grandmother who was courier for the resistance movement and a Hungarian man who helped pilots of the Allies through France and Spain to travel back to the UK. Their common motivation to withstand the Occupiers candled their love relationship, that did not hold on when there was no enemy to fight against anymore and freedom had come. Jurgen's mother married a journalist of the wellknown newspaper *the Haagsche Courant* whose parents had been active in the resistance movement, just like his mother's parents.

He learned about the war from his grandmother in whose house he grew up.

Whereas his grandmother never spoke with her daughter and son-in-law about her experiences during the war, she told many stories to her grandson. This is a well known phenomenon: it is easier to talk to grandchildren than to one's own children. Jurgen is proud of his grandmother who asked a lift from a German military vehicle, hiding under her clothes a sum of money for the resistance fighters in Utrecht. The German soldiers were so kind to ask her where they could drop her, so that she had no long walk to the address she had to go to. Wisely she gave an other address and thanked them for their help.

Even before the war she had showed her fearlessness when she went to Finland to help to take care of wounded soldiers and officers in the war against the Soviet Union. When she came back in the Netherlands she found SS-men on the second floor of 'her' hospital where she had worked for many years. She was so angry that she summoned them to leave. And indeed they did, thanks to the strong will of his grandmother, who had courage and flair and was a beautiful woman. She used her female beauty to make the Germans act friendly towards her.

Jurgen's parents-in-law had given to many people a temporary place to hide, before they could go to a definitive address. One person in their neighbourhood told the Gestapo that they hid people and a couple SS-men went to their home to search the house. That day there were no people in hiding, so the SS-men went back without captives. His mother-in-law took care of a small suitcase that one of the hiding people had given to her, being sure he would come and take it after the war. But he did not come back. The constant stress asked its toll, even after the war they could not get rid of their over-alertness. Their son, Jurgen's father, grew up in a house in which the war was continued in some way. It burdened the son and he took this legacy with him in relationships and in his jobs where he met often with difficult situations.

Jurgen suffered from depressive feelings during some periods in his life. He went to the organisation ARQCentre '45 where a psychologist explained him what transgenerational transfer of trauma was all about. That was an eyeopener and it gave him mental support and power. Some years later he became a member of an organisation where children of resistance fighters meet. Listening to the stories of the members gave healing, because Jurgen there found people who understood his problems. So often in relationships and jobs people did not understand what he struggled with, and there he learned to understand that people with no burden of the war in their lives simply cannot understand. He could work through some psychological problems, so he is now in peace with the war. His grandmother always said: 'Don't mourn the dead, but remember them and respect them, because they have fought against the Occupier in order to reach peace.' Jurgen has a deep respect for his grandparents.

GSB

SVETA, an Ukrainian refugee

When the bus with Ukrainian refugees stopped at the frontdoor of the Community House in Wamel, the Netherlands, my brother watched the women and children leaving the bus. He felt the need to do something good for them, went to the shop and came back with a bag full packages with cookies. He handed the bag to the security person and came back, one hour later, with a bag with drawingblocks, pencils and colourpencils. The security man thanked him and told him that the refugees had already found a nickname for him: Cookiesman. Later on he gave extra lessons in English and Dutch to a small group of refugees and helped the other people in the House with for instance negotiations with employers.

I told my brother that I would like to meet one of his friends and Sveta was willing to visit me. She was looking forward to our meeting. Sveta is a general practioner and her husband Kolja is a technician. They have two children, Anja 13 years old and Alexis 7 years old. They used to live in the eastern part of Ukraine, in the Donetsk region. In their town a big part of the population were Russians and small groups of Russians founded their organisation of Separists. Sveta was used to speak Russian alongside the Ukrainian language. She had some very good friends, all of them Russians. They were ordinary people, not at all enemies, despite a bloody history of conflicts between the two neighbour countries.

In 2014 the Russian Army occupied the peninsula Crimea and recognized parts of Ukraine as parts of the Russian Federation. Sveta and her family lived through some difficult days when there were fights and shootings in their environment. They decided to move to a town with more security. They found an apartment and new jobs in a town 80 kilometers westwards. Fortunately, Sveta's mother and grandmother found an apartment in the same town as well. There they could make a new start. The political situation was not an important topic in their lives, the life of every day asked much of their energy. In their personal life they were so fortunate to find a better job for both of the parents and a nice apartment in the city of Odessa, in the west of Ukraine, the most important port of the country.

I asked her whether they had ever thought about the possibility that the Russians would come back to continue their pressure on Ukraine which had started in 2014. She answered me that they did never had had an interest in political items, so no, they never reflected on the issue. When in December 2021 and in January and February 2022 the Russian Army surrounded their country, they had not been afraid, had not had the idea that there would be an attack. In the morning of February 2024 they woke up from the shootings and bombings in their city, especially in the ports. The first emotion was deception: that they had thought to can live in peace in Odessa, far from the borders with Russia, and that their moving to that city proved now to have been in vain. They took some days to explore their situation and the opportunities or impossibilities to have a normal life in their homeland. They decided to leave their country and try to find a place to live abroad, in the West. They traveled to the border with Poland and there they were registered as refugees. They were lodged in a big building in which

the refugees could make a choice to what country they would like to travel. The choice was between Germany, the Netherlands or Denmark. They opted for the Netherlands, although they would have liked to go to Belgium where lived some of their friends. Some days later a bus brought them to a reception address in Beuningen in the Netherlands. There were also refugees from other countries, e.g. Syria. A few days later a bus brought them to Wamel.

The people who welcomed them in the Netherlands were kind but overloaded with work. Therefore the cookies they received from my brother felt to them as a real welcome, an act of friendship. The rooms in the Community House where they were lodged were small but each family was given an own room. The civil community provided them with food and organised lessons in English and Dutch, one hour a week. Which is not much to learn in a short time a strange language. But they were grateful for all the good things they received. Most of the adults found a job, rather soon after their arrival, whereas refugees of other countries were far less interested in finding jobs, the newspapers said.

For Sveta and her family their stay in Wamel started with health problems by their son. Since Sveta is a family doctor herself, she saw that he needed medical help and went with him to the hospital. There they concluded that he was OK, but in fact he had to cope with a foodpoisoning. Sveta managed to get the right medication from the local family doctor and some days later he recovered. Not a nice start to begin for the third time in some years a new life. But now they are doing well, the children visit schools and Sveta and her husband has jobs. Of course these jobs are not at the level of their professional education, this is due to the language problems. But Sveta has hope to overcome them and find finally jobs in their own professions.

History never had a big place in her family, Seveta said. Her grandmother lived through WWII and told a lot of experiences she had to go through then. The terrible silence that reigns in so many families and is one of the factors for transgenerational transfers of traumas, was and is absent in her family. Although life in Ukraine was very difficult between 1939 and 1945 and the people suffered from Soviets and Germans, Sveta can speak about the plight of her grandmother in a calm way. She takes always a part in the commemoration ceremonies at May, 9, to remember what happened in the past and to give tribute to those who tried to protect their country. The day that Ukraine became independent, in 1991, is an important day of joy and memories.

She and her husband can never go back to their homeland, because her husband had had to go in the army and she had had to take her place after the frontlines. Whenever the war is over, they cannot go home, because they will be seen by their countrymen as traitors. We did not speak about it, but I understood that this issue is at stake. I remembered the discussions in our mixed group of war children where children of resistance fighters were angry at their fathers because he gave his time and energy and sometimes his life for the freedom of the country or to help people who risked to be caught by the Germans. Their issue was clear: was his family less important than freedom or saving lives of other people? I can understand Sveta's decision to help her family to live in peace in another country instead of staying in Ukraine and become involved in violence.

Others will see them as traitors, but thanks to the stories of Dutch resistance fighters I see her dilemma: to stay or to leave. And I respect her decision.

Sveta is a radiant woman, there is sunshine in her eyes. I am sure that she will find her way in my country together with her husband and children. The meeting with her was very inspiring.

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

WHAT IS THE REAL CHALLENGE OF MAINTAINING A FREE SOCIETY?

By Sir Jonathan Sacks, former Headrabbi of the United Kingdom

In our parshat Eikev [some chapters of the Bible GSB] Moses springs his great surprise. Here are his words:

Be careful that you do not forget the Lord our God.. ...Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settled down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord, your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery....You may say to yourself: 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me'...If you ever forget the Lord your God, I testify against you today that you will be destroyed. (Deuteronomium 8:11-19) [..]

The real challenge is not poverty but affluence, not insecurity but security, not slavery but freedom. Moses, for the first time in history, was hinting at a law of history. Many centuries later it was articulated by the great 14th century Islamic thinker, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), by the Italian political philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), and most recently by the Harvard historian Niall Ferguson. Moses was giving an account of the decline and fall of civilisations.

Ibn Khaldun argued similarly, that when a civilisation becomes great, its elites get used to luxury and comfort, and the people as a whole lose what he called their *asabiyah*, their social solidarity. The people then become prey to a conquering enemy, less civilised than they are but more cohesive and driven.

Vico described a similar cycle:

“People first sense what is necessary, then consider what is useful, next attend to comfort, later delight in pleasures, soon grow dissolute in luxury, and finally go mad squandering their estates.”

Bertrand Russell put it powerfully in the introduction to his *History of Western Philosophy*. Russell thought that the two great peaks of civilisation were reached in ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy. But he was honest enough to see that the very features that made them great contained the seeds of their own demise:

What had happened in the great age of Greece happened again in Renaissance Italy: traditional moral restraints disappeared, because they were seen to be associated with superstition; the liberation from fetters made individuals energetic and creative, producing a rare fluorescence of genius; but the anarchy and treachery which inevitably resulted from the decay of morals made Italians collectively impotent, and they fell, like the Greeks, under the domination of nations less civilised than themselves but not so destitute of social cohesion.

Niall Ferguson, in his book *Civilisation: the West and the Rest* (2011) argued that the West rose to dominance because of what he calls its six “killer applications”: competition, science, democracy, medicine, consumerism and the Protestant work ethic. Today however it is losing belief in itself and is in danger of being overtaken by others.

All of this was said for the first time by Moses, and it forms a central argument of the book of Devarim. If you assume – he tells the next generation – that you yourselves won the land and the freedom you enjoy, you will grow complacent and self-satisfied. That is the beginning of the end of any civilisation. In an earlier chapter Moses uses the graphic word *venoshantem*, “you will grow old” (Deut. 4:25), meaning that you will no longer have the moral and mental energy to make the sacrifices necessary for the defence of freedom.

Inequalities will grow. The rich will become self-indulgent. The poor will feel excluded. There will be social divisions, resentments and injustices. Society will no longer cohere. People will not feel bound to one another by a bond of collective responsibility. Individualism will prevail. Trust will decline. Social capital will wane.

This has happened, sooner or later, to all civilisations, however great. To the Israelites – a small people surrounded by large empires – it would be disastrous. As Moses makes clear towards the end of the book, in the long account of the curses that would overcome the people if they lost their spiritual bearings, Israel would find itself defeated and devastated.

Only against this background can we understand the momentous project the book of Devarim [Deuteronomium] is proposing: *the creation of a society capable of defeating the normal laws of the growth-and-decline of civilisations*. This is an astonishing idea.

How is it to be done? By each person bearing and sharing responsibility for the society as a whole. By each knowing the history of his or her people. By each

individual studying and understanding the laws that govern all. By teaching their children so that they too become literate and articulate in their identity.

Rule 1: Never forget where you came from.

Next, you sustain freedom by establishing courts, the rule of law and the implementation of justice. By caring for the poor. By ensuring that everyone has the basic requirements of dignity. By including the lonely in the people's celebrations. By remembering the covenant daily, weekly, annually in ritual, and renewing it at a national assembly every seven years. By making sure there are always Prophets to remind the people of their destiny and expose the corruptions of power.

Rule 2: Never drift from your foundational principles and ideals.

Above all it is achieved *by recognising a power greater than ourselves*. This is Moses' most insistent point. Societies start growing old when they lose faith in the transcendent. They then lose faith in an objective moral order and end by losing faith in themselves.

Rule 3: A society is as strong as its faith.

Only faith in God can lead us to honour the needs of others as well as ourselves. Only faith in God can motivate us to act for the benefit of a future we will not live to see. Only faith in God can stop us from wrongdoing when we believe that no other human will ever find out. Only faith in God can give us the humility that alone has the power to defeat the arrogance of success and the self-belief that leads, as Paul Kennedy argued in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1987) to military overstretch and national defeat.

Towards the end of his book *Civilisation*, Niall Ferguson quotes a member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, part of a team tasked with the challenge of discovering why it was that Europe, having lagged behind China until the 17th century, overtook it, rising to prominence and dominance.

At first, he said, we thought it was your guns. You had better weapons than we did. Then we delved deeper and thought it was your political system. Then we searched deeper still, and concluded that it was your economic system.

But for the past 20 years we have realised that it was the in fact your religion. It was the (Judeo-Christian) foundation of social and cultural life in Europe that made possible the emergence first of capitalism, then of democratic politics.

Only faith can save a society from decline and fall. That was one of Moses' greatest insights, and it has never ceased to be true.

WAR

The story wants to be told
and to be concluded- but it breaks off

sure they told me and told me
but yet

I see the gray thumb-marked picture
but still the grass is again more green than grass
and the blossom is again more white than blossom

In that gray garden I guess there have been a war
in that man, in that woman, that child
in that grass under that gray blossoming tree

they told me and told me how they there
had been forced to disappaer, to be transported
in good wagons, for never coming back

and though, the story needs to be told and
hopes that all will be over – but it breaks off

sure they told me
how peace was restored

but yet there is no other picture than this one
in which everything had still to happen

Rutger Kopland
in: Tot het ons loslaat, 1997
(Until it let us go)

HOSTAGES

In December 1975 a couple of Moluccan youngsters hijacked a passengers train and another group attacked the Indonesian Ambassade. The Dutch people were in shock. The hijackers killed the engine-driver and two passengers. They were caught in a rescue action of a commando group and imprisoned. In July 1977 another couple of Moluccan youngsters hijacked a passengerstrain and kept in hostage the children and teachers of a primary school in Boven-Smilde. How could this occur in our tiny country with its decent and tolerant people? Of course we knew about the actions of PLO members in railway stations or airports. Abroad. We knew about the murder in München in 1972 at the Olympic Games. We knew about the hijacking of a plane that landed in the warm airport of Entebbe in Uganda. But kidnapping and taking hostages in our own country, we could not believe our eyes.

In 1950 round 12500 Moluccans came to the Netherlands. They were soldiers of the Royal Dutch Indonesian Army (KNIL) and stood in the military hierarchy on a level between the Dutch and other ethnic groups of the Indonesian Archipelago. They did not want to be incorporated in the Indonesian army after Indonesia gained Independence and therefore they were 'sent' to Holland, 'temporarily' until a solution had could be found. But the day they left the boats bringing them to Holland, the KNIL was dissolved and those proud and fair people were humiliated by the Dutch government robbing them of their jobs and their honour.

Everyone followed the events on radio and on tv and we all lived with the question that was on the government's agenda: how to free the hostages and protect them against the rifles of the kidnapers? How to use as little violence as possible to set the hostages free? It seemed impossible to find the right solution.

In an interview on tv, the president in exile Ir. Manusama, said that he understood the motives of the youngsters who wanted to draw the attention of the world to the difficult situation of the Moluccans in the Netherlands and who had therefore chosen to use kidnapping, just like the PLO members. But then Manusama criticised them seriously with the wise words: 'One cannot obtain one's freedom by depriving other people of their freedom'. Later on Manusama asked to be invited to speak to the VN, but this was rejected because 'he did not represent a real nation'. Some years later, Arafat was welcome, although he did not represent a real state either. Bia's in the Assembly of the United Nations.

The children in the school were forced to call: 'Mr. Van Agt (minister of Justice) we want to live.' It was heartbreaking. The kidnapers hoped that the government would begin negotiations, but that did not happen. After some days the children became ill and they were released. When I heard the news I started to cry and my two young sons said to me: 'Don't cry, Mammy, they are free now!' They did not yet understand the stress I had lived through during those days. I see still those children, wrapped in blankets, coming out of the school.

When a group of special trained soldiers supported by overflying planes attacked the train, two hostages and two kidnapers died. The youngsters in the school surrendered.

25 year later, several tv canals showed pictures of the rescue action and spoke with some of the train passengers and of the school children. I remember one man very well. Some days after the end of the action in the school he, as a boy, reacted in a calm and almost adult way when asked about his experiences. But 25 years later he told that the days as a hostage had had an unexpected big impact. Almost all his initiatives to get a school diploma or to find a job ended negatively, he was still over-alerted, (easily to label as one suffering of PTSS). He was angry at the kidnapers, who in prison had had the opportunity to study and now had good jobs, whereas his life unto that day was a failure.

A couple of years later the parents of the two killed kidnapers took steps to get the government in court and they accused the ministers who had formed the government in 1977 of using disproportional violence and of giving to the commando group permission and even the order to kill the kidnapers. There are still a lot of dark spots in the event, declarations which exclude each other. Who will ever know what exactly happened those days? We were so fortunate that our

leaders could act without the interference of other countries, criticizing their decisions.

Now we know about the hostages taken in Israel by Hamas and taken to Gaza. A number of them was released, but more than 100 are still there, hidden, probably serving as a living shield around the important Hamas leaders. The situation on October 7, 2023 was very complex, there are many stories of people who could escape, who could hide and who saved themselves from being caught. We know the stories of the released hostages and their stay in Gaza, in the dark tunnels. We know the stories of the Palestinians, sometimes incorrect or not well considered. Still in October they said that the Gaza children had no food and were starving. But there have been transports of food since the beginning of the conflict and we were not shown pictures of these starving children.

The situation is complex, so much more complex than in the Netherlands in 1975 and 1977. Then the government had to seek a solution and could expect criticism. That came, however, only years later. There are now so many factors, each of them being ready to be criticized, the government can simply not take the decision that is correct to everyone and that cannot be criticized. Whatever they will decide, it will always be the wrong choice to some people throughout in the world

How to find the correct decision to free the hostages and in the same time to destroy the enemy, Hamas. Not the Palestinian people! The world is speaking to Israel about proportionality when taking action. How to do that in the reality of now and here? I remember how the Allies decided in 1943 and 1944, that this time Germany had to be forced to surrender and that the Allies had to get the military victory. No negotiations and cease-fires like in 1918, but the complete destruction of the Nazi regime was the goal. At all price! A good deal of that price was payed by the citizens in the towns that were bombed again and again, the majority of the victims being women and children. In all the occupied countries people liked those bomber flights, because they would bring freedom to them, in due time. No thoughts about the damage to the German citizens. There was just one man, who already in 1944 wrote that these tactics of the Allies were unethical, unacceptable. It was the German Jew Dr. Hans Keilson, in hiding in the Netherlands, later on a psychiatrist treating Jewish children with war related problems.

As about Japan, there was an unanimous opinion: the Japanese army had to be conquered, at all cost. The bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki finished the war in the far East, with an untold number of victims and a deep impact on the next generations. But ironically, many hundred of thousands lives were saved, because the forced labor white men used by the Japanese army to build bridges and railways and the women and children in the Japanese internment camps would not have survived when the war had continued for two or more months.

What will the politicians in Gaza and Israel do? What should they do, what can they do?

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

Antisemitism researcher **Monika Schwarz-Friesel** speech at the **Austrian Parliament** on the occasion of the 79th anniversary of the liberation of the Mauthausen concentration camp.

“In a poem, Nelly Sachs asked in 1961, “Why the black response of hatred towards your existence, Israel?” Although the state existed at that time, Nelly Sachs referred to Jewish existence in general with the word Israel throughout her life. And so, the question leads directly into the heart of my lecture. For hatred towards Jews and hatred towards Israel form an inseparable symbiosis.

I had been asked to speak about antisemitism after October 7, 2023. For 20 years, I have been researching the topic of anti-Jewish sentiment and am familiar with the depths and manifestations of this cultural hatred. Nevertheless, I have never found it so difficult to formulate a lecture on this topic. This is not only due to the brutality of the massacre but also because the reactions to this monstrosity were and still are monstrous. It drastically shows us that parts of humanity have learned nothing from history.

October 7th showed the quintessence of hatred towards Jews, its ultimate rationale, the unconditional desire to extinguish Jewish existence. Here, we encounter not the banality of evil, but the antisemitic evil itself in its most terrifying form. Just as the Nazis believed that Jews had to be eradicated as a world evil for the benefit of humanity.

The rest of her speech can be found in the internet.

WHAT IT MEANS TO CHOOSE LIFE

Douglas Murray

It's my view that none of us comes into the world fully formed, by any means. I want to take a moment to mention the fact that there are many people in this room here tonight who've helped to form me. You all know who you are, and I'm not going to name names or hold anyone personally responsible. I'm also very deeply honored to receive this award because the list of previous honorees includes so many other people whom I credit with part of my intellectual evolution—not least, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, William F. Buckley, and Tom Wolfe. I'd also like to cite a fellow émigré writer to this city, who's no longer with us but who made a huge impression on me. And I know Ayaan Hirsi Ali had the enormous honor of meeting the great Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci.

I mention her because she wrote a great book about the war in Vietnam called *Nothing and Amen*, which starts with one of the best lines that I know of in any book. It opens with her niece, a young child, asking her a question: “Life, what is it, Oriana?” And the next sentence is “The next morning, I went to Vietnam to find out.” Now, it seems to me that the nature of being a writer is to get to the

essence of things, to get to the nature of things, to try to work out life in its totality, whether that is—as I've done recently—writing about the fentanyl epidemic in this country and all the monstrous things that come from it, or from the many war zones I've reported from.

The purpose, I suppose, is to try to get to the truth.

And the truth is not just an abstract thing but specifically a truth about ourselves as human beings. I suppose that in that case, it's inevitable that a writer would be drawn to war because war is, in some ways, the ultimate subject: it shows us human beings at our very worst and also at our very best. A couple of years ago, I was reporting from Ukraine with the Ukrainian armed forces as they were taking territory back briefly—all too briefly—from the Russian advance. I always think of the woman I wrote about in my column in the New York Post: this woman of 28, a beautiful blonde woman whom I met at the very front line. It was in the cold of November, and she had given birth to her first child the month before the Russians had invaded. And I asked her, "What did you do?" She said, "I gave my child to my mother in Kiev, and I haven't seen her since. There's no rotation. We don't have the luxury of rotation in the army at the moment."

I think of all the people I've seen in Iraq, Ukraine, northern Nigeria—where the Christians are under such terrible and almost ignored persecution—and many other places. But I've never seen as much of the best and the worst of humankind as I have in the past six months in Israel and Gaza. I was here in New York on October 7. On October 8, I went down to Times Square, where there were men and women waving signs celebrating the massacre of the previous day. They weren't calling for a two-state solution. They weren't saying that we'd awfully like to do some borderline territory swaps in the West Bank. No, no. It was all celebrating the massacre.

Some of them were holding these signs in Times Square saying, "By any means necessary," at a time when we already knew what those means included—and, in fact, when the massacre was still going on. I thought then—and I said this in the Post—that a few things were obvious. The first was that I had to get to Israel as soon as I could. The second was that we were going to see a kind of Holocaust denialism in real time, and therefore I thought I should see with my own eyes everything that had happened, everything I could see. And the third was that I noticed already what I had said shortly after October 7: that there are some times in your life when a flare goes up and everybody can be seen precisely where they're standing. That seemed to be exactly what had happened. I went straight to the sites of the massacres, to the hospitals where the wounded were recovering. I won't give you all of the—or even any of the—terrible stories you can hear. From there, I joined the experts—I joined the pathologists in the morgues of Tel Aviv as they were trying to identify the dead, an unbelievable task, which they do with extraordinary delicacy and religiosity, actually. I spent a lot of time with the families of the kidnapped and with the survivors of the Nova party. But I also had the great opportunity to witness firsthand Israel's response

—because unlike some countries today, Israel doesn't just sit back with equanimity when it's attacked, much as some of the world would like it to do.

I saw one of the fences that the terrorists broke into on October 7—and I thought immediately, as well, [that] after the seventh, people aren't going to realize the scale of this: this was a 4,000-person battalion-size terrorist attack that aimed to go all the way up the center of the country. I felt rather proud, actually, to go back through that fence with the IDF when they were going into Gaza in search of the hostages.

I saw the tunnel networks that Hamas has spent all these years building with your money and mine. I have a friend from the British Army, Colonel Richard Kemp. One day, we were standing beneath one of the tunnels that Yahya Sinwar had built—he's the mastermind of the attacks on the seventh—and which he had been videoed going through. I said to Richard, who, like me, is a fan of dark humor, "This is about the size and width of the London Underground." And he said, "Yeah, and I hear it's even longer than the London Underground." I had the opportunity to say, "And I think it's rather better run."

I suppose I can say, as much as anyone, that I saw it all. On the day I left Israel, a few days ago, I was the first person allowed in to see the Hamas terrorists who'd committed the atrocities of October 7 in the prison cells in which they're held. I mention all this, really, to say, what do I make of all this? I'm going to quote Scripture.

I think often of the line from Deuteronomy when God says, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants might live." And I think also of the psalmist who said, "I shall not die, but I shall live." Because when I think of October 7 now, I don't think only of the victims; I think of the extraordinary heroes. And I want to mention them to you above all. A young man, a friend of mine in his thirties, woke up in Jerusalem on October 7, realized the seriousness of what was going on, got into his car, drove south, collected some guns, left a farewell message to his children and his wife on his phone.

On the road, he got a call from his company commander, saying, "You have to come back to base in Jerusalem. And he said, "No, we are needed in the south now." And his battalion commander said, "Are you defying an order?" He said, "Yes, I'm defying an order. We are needed in the south." And he fought for the next forty-eight hours and survived.

I think of my friend Moshe, whom I've had the great good fortune of being with for many months. He's now my cameraman and was from the beginning. The first day we were together, we donned our battle armor and helmets on the Gaza border. And I noted that Moshe had a bullet mark down the top of his helmet, and he hadn't mentioned anything about it. I asked, "Where's that from?" He explained that it was from October 7. Every Saturday, he would go down to see a friend of his—who was also in the media-, in Kfar Azah and he drove right into the middle of the firefight on the highway.

He got out and fought and killed three terrorists with his own gun that he carries with him, thank goodness. He fought for the next two days. And he doesn't expect any

applause from it or anything like that; he just did what he had to do. I think of the extraordinary Druze men who provided the food at the Nova party and whom I met a few months ago, some weeks after the atrocities, and who described to me not just what they'd seen at the party—which the world was already trying to deny—but what they'd done. They didn't see themselves as heroes at all, but because they could understand Arabic, they saved many young Jews that morning. I asked them, "Why, among other things, did you do it?" They're proud Israelis, they're Druze. They said, "The Hamas hate us even more than they hate the Jews."

I think of the Muslim doctor whom Hamas held as a human shield at one point in the morning. Even after being wounded, he saved the lives of other Israelis. I think of the extraordinary people of the United Hatzalah, a sort of first-responders unit: they all get an alert on their phones. They all go off and address a car crash. I spoke to the head of that organization in Jerusalem. He said, "In thirty years of doing this job, the whole thirty years altogether wasn't like one minute that morning. The lights just went off everywhere." And I think of a young woman called Adi Baruch. She was 23, and I was with her family in December in Judea and Samaria. She was a beautiful girl, a photographer—she decided that she had to go and reenlist after October 7. And she did. Her parents begged her not to, but she said that she had to. She was killed on her first day by a rocket that landed on her in Sderot. Her parents shared with me the note that she'd left for them, in case she didn't make it. In it, she said, among other things, how sorry she was, but she said, "I wanted to live life, and now I want you to live it for me."

I think, finally, of an extraordinary evening in November last year. I was at the Schneider Children's [Medical Center] when the helicopters came, returning the first hostages, the first children whom Hamas had stolen from their homes in the south. We'd been waiting for them for two days. There were two days of thwarted exchanges, where Hamas deliberately eked it out and eked it out—more and more torture for families. But when the helicopters emerged—there were two of them, and they emerged in the night sky. The people of Tel Aviv realized what was happening, and every car in Tel Aviv stopped. Suddenly, I noticed applause from the citizens, the Tel Avivians. Then there was singing, singing all the way through the streets of Tel Aviv. I asked my cameraman, "What are they singing?" They were singing a song, "Hevenou Shalom Aleichem"—"We brought you peace."

I learned afterward from speaking to the helicopter commander that there was intense competition among the helicopter pilots to have the good fortune and honor of returning these children home. Now, there are millions of stories like this across Israel. The country rings with them, it resounds with them. It makes me think a lot about home, my home here in America, my home in the UK. There have been polls over the last couple of years asking Americans and British people, "What would you do if your country was invaded?" Two years ago, when Ukraine was invaded, there was a poll here in the U.S. that found—I don't want to make a partisan point but let me risk it—it turned out that a minority of Democrat voters said that they would stay and fight for their country. A slight

majority of Republican voters said that they would, but it ended up with only 52 percent of the American public saying that they would stay and fight.

I assume that the rest would hotfoot it to Canada, assuming that Canada wasn't the one invading, which is one of the very few things in geopolitics I like to hold. But when I looked at those polls in the UK, there was an even worse one a few months ago. The pollsters told young British people that the defense secretary said that there was a possibility that we might have to have enlistment in the UK for young people; a mere 27 percent of young people said that they would be willing to be enlisted to fight for their country. These, I don't need to tell you, are not good results. And they bring a whole set of questions, some of which I wrote about in my most recent book. It doesn't surprise me that a lot of young Americans wouldn't be willing to fight for their country if they've been told from the cradle that their country was rotten from birth and had nothing going for it other than slavery, colonialism, and everything else. You've really got to miseducate Americans into this kind of self-loathing.

But I compare this to what I've seen in the last six months. Actually, a number of my readers and viewers have said to me in the last six months, "You've changed, Douglas." I sometimes ask them what it is they mean, and they say, "You've lost some of your pessimism." I've said to them, there's a reason for that. And the reason is what I've seen in the Israeli public, because actually this wasn't theoretical. It wasn't a poll question. It wasn't some dolts on an American campus, cosplaying being terrorists for the day. Their pathetic attempts—I mean, what's the latest one? They're now in L.A., doing calls to prayer. There's a guy in New York who's got a belly button and a crop top. And at the beginning of this academic year, he was on camera calling for climate emergency, and now he's for Hamas. And I suppose he's "Queers for Palestine" and "Chickens for KFC" and all that.

I would love to drop him into Gaza, although, as I've occasionally said, I'm not sure that there are very many tall buildings to throw him off. But once they rebuild them, that guy will have about a day. He'll be introduced to the elevator fast, I reckon. One of the great things about Israel at the moment is what my friend Bari Weiss said when she arrived in February: "Isn't it wonderful to be a country where nobody gives a damn about woke?" It's so true. Nobody bothers about pronouns. Life is too serious. Reality: it's right in front of you. It seems to me there's a lesson in this, and it's not a lesson for Israel. It's a lesson for us, for you and me, if we are going to restore countries like Great Britain and the United States of America. I spoke some months ago with an older guy in Tel Aviv who said that he'd fought in the 1967 and the 1973 wars. He said, "I owe the younger generation in Israel an apology. I used to say that they didn't have it in them. ...they like partying. They like being on Instagram and TikTok." And he said, "I owe them an apology. They've been magnificent." And the thing is, perhaps it does require life to become serious again. Perhaps the students we see at these destroyed universities just need a dose of reality someday. I always pray that that day never comes to them, because it'll be the biggest wake-up call anyone has ever had. But all I would say is that this country and Great Britain should be so lucky as to have a young generation like the one in Israel. They were weighed in the balance since October 7, and they've been found to be magnificent.

What I wanted to say, really, in closing, is that question, I suppose, of Oriana Fallaci's. I wonder what I've learned about life. And I'm going to give you, I'm afraid, a circular definition: that life has to be fought for and has to be cherished. And that's what Israel has been up against: a cult of death, a cult that wishes to annihilate an entire race, and which, after dealing with that race, has made very clear what it wants to do with Christians, everyone in Britain, everyone in America, and everyone else next. They don't hide it at all. We are merely stupid in not believing them. I suppose for those people in America who don't believe them, I say slumber on as long as you can.

I want to thank the Manhattan Institute and you for this deep honor. But I want to dedicate it to the people of Israel of all ages, who, in the face of absolute death cults—in the face of people who most people in this country have no idea of, can't imagine what these people are capable of—I want to dedicate my acceptance of this award to the people of Israel, who, in the face of death, choose life. Thank you.

This transcript was adapted from a speech delivered by Douglas Murray upon receiving the Manhattan Institute's Alexander Hamilton Award.

ALETTE SMEULERS: Perpetrators of Mass Atrocities; Terribly and Terrifyingly Normal?

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Description

The 9/11 attacks, as well as the ones in Madrid, London, Paris and Brussels; the genocide in Nazi Germany, Rwanda and Cambodia; the torture in dictatorial regimes; the wars in former Yugoslavia, Syria and Iraq and currently in Ukraine; the sexual violence during periods of conflict, all make us wonder: why would anyone do something like that? Who are those people? Drawing on 30 years of research, in this book Alette Smeulers explores the perpetrators of mass atrocities such as war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and terrorism. Examining questions of why people kill and torture and how mass atrocities can be explained, Smeulers presents a typology of perpetrators, with different ranks, roles and motives.

Devoting one chapter to each type of perpetrator, the book combines insights from academic research with illustrative case studies of well-known perpetrators, from dictators to middlemen, to lower ranking officials and terrorists. Their stories are explored in depth as the book examines their behaviour and motivation.

Perpetrators of Mass Atrocities thus provides a comprehensive understanding of the cause of extreme mass violence. Such knowledge not only can help the international criminal justice system to be able to attribute blame in a fairer way but can also assist in preventing such atrocities being committed on the current scale.

Perpetrators of Mass Atrocities is essential reading for all those interested in war crimes, genocide, terrorism and mass violence.

THE ENCOUNTER

Dear Gonda,

Most of your readers will know of Dan Bar-On's work, and many will have met him over the years. As you know, I was a participant in *To Reflect and Trust*, the pioneering dialogue group created by Dan Bar-On, throughout its existence. I was 40 years old at the first meeting of *TRT*, held in Wuppertal, Germany, in 1992. I am 72 now, still working full-time as a radiologist (although I retired as a professor).[,,]

I write now to let you and your readers know of two turns of events. *The Austrian Encounter* -- descendants of Nazi perpetrators and their collaborators meeting with descendants of victims, somehow related to Austria -- chose to end its organized group life in the summer of 2021, after 26 years of meeting. It was founded by me in 1995 after five trips to Austria in the previous two years, and facilitated by me for many years, as well. The first two or three meetings were also organized by me, but throughout most of *The Austrian Encounter's* life the group was organized by Eleonore Fischer (of Austria) and/or Dominique Kerschbaumer (of Austria and France). The group's web site has been <https://www.nach.ws>. While the web site is still functional, you may now remove the link from the final pages of your superb *International Bulletin*.

At the close of its final meeting, a handful of individuals came forward saying, more or less, *yes, The Austrian Encounter has come to an end, but that does not mean that we wish to discontinue meeting! No, rather, we would like to create another group with no necessary personal connection to Austria, but open to all descendants linked to the Holocaust, and again, for intensive, interpersonal dialogue.*

That was how *The Encounter* was created. Once again, no fee, no historiography, no therapy, no religiosity: simply intensive personal conversation with *the Other*. Typically three or four days, all day long. A group no larger than ~20, typically 11–18. The first meeting was held summer 2022 near Paris, second in 2023 in Berlin, and the third just this past week (August 2024) in Trieste. The next meeting is scheduled for Łódź, Poland, summer of 2025. I myself attended the Paris and Berlin meetings. Unfortunately, for health reasons, I was unable to attend the Trieste dialogue, but I look forward to rejoining the old and new participants in Łódź. All meetings of *The Encounter* have been organized by Dominique Kerschbaumer.

The Encounter has its own web site. Would you please be so kind as to place a listing for its three language pages at the end of issue 58 of the *International Bulletin*?:

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

Deutsch: <https://encounter2022.wordpress.com>

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

Thank you, Samson

DIALOGUE AS A HELPING HAND

The beginning

In the eighties, some people took the initiative to organise meetings between people who as children lived during the war in Japanese internment camps in the former colony of the Dutch East Indies and children of Jewish families. At the same time ICODO, the Service Centre of Information and Co-ordination for the Benefit of War Victims, became aware of the traumatization experienced by the offspring of war victims, Jewish people and resistance fighters as well as people from the Indies, and started organising meetings for them. But the children of parents who had collaborated with the German occupiers were not invited. Two women, both survivors of the Japanese camps, experienced themselves the importance of those meetings and planned a weekend meeting where *all* war children would be welcome. When some collaborators' children subscribed, the organisers realised that if they were to be refused admittance now, the war would go on. Here was the opportunity to 'stop the war'.

This first 'mixed' meeting took place in April 1988.

The participants were afterwards euphoric about what they had experienced together. Some women wrote: *'....We felt true solidarity. This was most strikingly shown on the Saturday evening, when a number of women were dancing, each in her own way. A Jewish woman held hands with the child of a Dutch Nazi, a daughter of a German mother danced hand in hand with the daughter of a resistance fighter, a child of communist parents danced together with a woman who experienced the hardships of a Japanese camp. No one could ever have imagined that this was possible! They danced as if it was a matter of course, but it was actually excitingly extra-ordinary. Women, struggling with war-related problems were dancing together, beyond all boundaries.'*

A second weekend meeting was held in January 1989. The programme focused on facing opinions and prejudices through checking the information about "the others" that the participants had got from their homes and their surroundings. From the report of this meeting I quote the following lines: *'....Facing one's prejudices and those of others was rather shocking. Inevitably there appeared from behind the children the shadow of the parents and it took a lot of effort to continue to see each other as "allies".[...] If we want to hold on to our alliance and develop lifelong friendships, we cannot avoid asking each other difficult questions; we have to take seriously our feelings of fear and distrust, but also of warmth and recognition, and we need the courage to express them frankly' .*

A couple of participants of the first weekend meeting started a discussion group.

They met nine times between October 1988 and March 1989. A report assessed the results of the group meetings, the successes and the failures, the themes discussed and those still to be addressed. I quote from the report:

'We did not know if we would be able to hold on to each other also and even when this would demand a lot of our mental and emotional strength. But we could! It is possible: war children with different backgrounds can meet, accept and respect each other. It is not an easy road, but it is a practical one.'

The weekend meetings and the discussion group showed the need to offer war children opportunities to meet, if possible in a more structured way. Supported by two members from the former resistance movement, Edith Nagel took the initiative to found Kombi, Children of the War for Mutual and Social Counseling and Integration. The deed was signed on 1 May 1990.

Opposition to Kombi's initiative remained strong in certain circles of the former resistance movement and in the Jewish community. There was no criticism of the fact that for example children from the Japanese occupation met children from a resistance family or children of Jewish origin. The pain and the rejection were caused by the participation of collaborators' children. Entering into a discussion with them was considered to be a betrayal of the victims.

Hetty Voûte, a former resistance fighter, addressing her comrades from the past, said:

'From time to time mixed groups of all war children arise and their members speak and weep and laugh together. And they will be able to teach us to liberate ourselves from the hatred. It is of inestimable importance that they exist. We must learn from them how to curb our hatred, how to deal with our hatred, how to learn to liberate ourselves from it.'

The encounter groups

The central position of *the personal story* is supported by views developed by several researchers.

Van den Bout and Kleber remarked that people are forced to re-experience over and over again their harrowing traumatising experience as long as they don't tell their stories and integrate them into their own life-stories.

Geelen pointed out that by telling one's own story and listening to those of others (with similar experiences) the connections between occurrences from the past and reactions to them, and possible problems one faces at present, become clear.

The personal story is authentic and gives to the narrator a personal identity. Even though the others recognise much in the story, it remains his or her own story. No opinion is given or defended; there is no judgement or condemnation.

The personal story is unique, in addition to similarities the differences also stand out. Similarities form the basis for solidarity and empathy, differences are very important for the learning process of the group as such and for the participants personally.

Unconscious, disturbing factors are transformed into conscious problems so that coping with them becomes possible.

The context in which the burdensome experiences were incurred, becomes less relevant, the child was not responsible for them and is not to blame for them.

From then on prejudices can become a thing of the past: they (normally) concern groups and people belonging to these groups, but not individuals. The personal story places the individual at the centre, the stereotypes disappear.

The Kombi discussion group programme includes *breaking down prejudices, conquering fear and anger*, leaving behind the pain that the child experienced as a result of the war, the circumstances and the aftermath. Confrontations are painful for those who express their pain, but also for those who listen to it,

knowing that it was caused or partly caused by her background group. If everybody can bear in mind, mentally and emotionally, that what is said does not imply an accusation of a person, but that it is an expression of the feelings of a damaged child, however inconsistent or incorrect, then the group remains the safe place where all misery may really be expressed.

Somebody once said: 'If there had been no Jews, I would still have my father.' If such an expression can be felt as the intense grief of a child whose father gave priority to rescuing Jews rather than caring for his family, if it can be seen as not being directed against Jews, but against the helplessness of a child feeling let down, then an expression like this can be enlightening for the whole group. It is the counsellors' task to analyse the meaning of what is said and to channel the emotions. However, the counsellors are also damaged children and certain aspects of 'the other's' story may cause old pain to emerge in them. It is difficult then not to react to those hurt feelings.

A pitfall may be that group members and counsellors – partly without being aware that they are doing so – avoid confrontations to keep the situation agreeable. If that happens they collectively miss a splendid opportunity to work on certain problems and to put disturbing feelings and thoughts behind them.

One of the problems in a 'mixed' self-help group of war children is the '*hierarchy of grief*'. This means to say that war victims often make a distinction between the level of grief that was experienced and that they add a value judgement to this level. People who went through a lot of misery may consider themselves greater victims or more important than the others and because of this feel superior.

Hierarchy of grief is wrong because of the value judgement associated with it and it undermines the equality in the group. However, thinking in terms of more and less is human and as such is not wrong. For it is possible to determine objectively that there is a difference in experiences. This, however, does not say much about the consequences and the resulting grief. The grief experienced is real in all cases, it cannot be compared in terms of more or less.

Countering the phenomenon of rivalry in grief might have the undesirable effect that the differences in the experiences of the participants are lost from sight. The emergence of the phenomenon of hierarchy of grief is not only a pitfall or a problem, it can well be the starting point of an intensive process of growth of the participants individually and as a group.

Each background group has a number of words or *expressions that are highly emotionally* charged. When they are used unconsciously by others, a fierce reaction may occur, without it being immediately clear why. Some perfectly common words or expressions like 'selection' or 'transport', 'go into hiding' and 'confiscate'; or a perfectly normal noun like 'rucksack' may result in an emotional reaction. A Jewish woman born after the war, went with her cousin to camp Westerbork. She was carrying a small rucksack. Her cousin reacted fiercely: 'How did you get it into your head to go to Westerbork carrying a rucksack?!' The rucksack reminded her cousin of the rucksacks her relatives were carrying when they were taken to Westerbork and from there to the German concentration

camps. For her younger relative the rucksack was just a normal object. Coping implies that a rucksack can once more be looked on as a normal useful object, even when paying a visit to Westerbork. Avoiding allows the pain to fester and allows the past to direct one's current life. Coping and assuming control means breaking through the pain and liberating yourself.

'Added value' or Kombi's uniqueness

In 2005 a questionnaire was put to a large number of Kombi participants to gain insight into their reasons to apply and to make an inventory of what participation meant for them. The main theme behind the questions was whether Kombi's mixed approach played a role in their application to participate in Kombi and if this approach had an 'added value' for them when compared with experiences in their own background group.

The mixed background approach of Kombi was an important reason for three quarters of the respondents to join a discussion group; for the others it did not play a role. However, many of these latter people have also argued that the mixed approach was indeed very important for their development.

The respondents mentioned as positive effects of the *mixed meetings* among other things:

- the mutual recognition and acceptance
- the opportunity to look beyond their own background problems and to define the common features in their experiences
- the increase in insight into the impact of war on one's own development and on that of people in general
- to learn to put things in perspective and to differentiate, as a result of which the hierarchy of grief was countered
- to get rid of prejudices, distrust or fear

The *group process* as such provided effects like: respect, recognition, acceptance, security, 'coming home'.

Some respondents defined the *social relevance* of the discussions and they see dialogue as a model applicable in similar situations elsewhere.

A few mentioned the effects on a *moral level* in particular. They learned to see the dichotomy of right and wrong in another perspective or discovered that both categories are part of themselves.

When we compare Kombi with other self-help organizations, we see that people who sign up for Kombi because of the mixed approach, run the risk of sharp criticism and opposition from the people around them, because by joining Kombi they remove a social distinction between 'right' and 'wrong'. Taking this risk makes them different from the average participant in a discussion group.

Wallowing in self-pity probably occurs less in Kombi than in homogenous self-help groups, because next to the similarities there are also clear differences. Some of the problems, namely prejudices, distrust and fear, can only be worked through in direct contact with the people one fears or distrusts. For that reason, joining a Kombi group requires an active attitude.

When we compare Kombi with other, international, 'mixed' organizations, we see that the main difference is found in the background groups involved in the meetings. In TRT, AE and One by One,[note] the meetings concentrate on the historically determined separation between the descendants of victims of the Nazi regime and descendants of the perpetrators. The parents were enemies; the children reach out to each other. The dialogue is used as a means to remove the differences that have been generated in a conflict situation. This model, provided it is made operational, is applicable in all former or current conflict situations.

In Kombi the meetings focus not only on the historically determined divisions between the children of victims and those of collaborators, because children from the Japanese occupation, the (children of) civilian victims, children of forced laborers, children of liberators and children of Roma and Sinti families also participate in the groups and weekend meetings. All of these groups are not or to a lesser degree involved in the historically determined conflict situation of the war in Europe, and therefore, from the start, attention is drawn to the child that became a victim of the war, regardless of the context in which that happened.

Sharing our hands-on expertise

In 2001 some members struggled with the problem of how Kombi's ideas could be passed on to people in other situations and times. At the time, they could not find people to put time and effort into recording Kombi's legacy.

Moreover, priority was always given to the feelings of the new participants who kept coming and who were still struggling with their own problems. Directing more attention outside Kombi, might have caused a sense of insecurity in these people.

In 2007 the book 'Dialogue as a helping-hand' was published as an attempt to make Kombi's hands-on expertise available to others. I sent the email version of the book, translated in English, to a couple of people. Those of you, interested in having a copy, please tell me and I will provide you with one.

In 2008, Kombi organised a meeting where people born after the war told that they 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?

We decided to explore the possibilities of starting a knowledge-centre accessible to internet users, providing them with information on war-related psychological and social problems. Scientific knowledge alongside stories will elucidate in particular the problems of the post-war generation.

The 'knowledge centre' will be a co-production of Kombi and Herkenning (the organization of Dutch Collaborators' Children), the organisation of the post-war Indonesian generation and the foundation of Japanese-Indonesian children. We will co-operate with Martin Parsons who intend to gather in the Archives of his Research Centre in Reading all the relevant material on war children in an international knowledge-centre.[note]

Gonda Scheffel-Baars

Notes: TRT stopped its activities, just like Austrian Encounter [AE being continued in The Encounter] .One by One exists until now.

The 'knowledge centre' we aimed to create could not be established. Co-operation with Martin Parsons continues until now.

GAUDIOPOLIS

Gaudiopolis is derived from the Latin *gaudium*– joy and the Ancient Greek πόλις – city. It means City of Joy. It was a self-administrated children's republic in Budapest following World War II.

Gábor Sztehlo was a Lutheran Pastor in Budapest who had saved hundreds of Jewish people from Nazi and Hungarian Fascist persecution during World War II. Following extensive damage and destruction of the properties used for sheltering the people under his protection during the siege of Budapest, he set up another home for children in March 1945 using an abandoned villa on Budakeszi Út, which was situated in the less bombed district of Buda. Here he provided shelter for Jewish children waiting for family members to claim them, but also for other underprivileged and abandoned children, orphans and children of 'class aliens' according to the new communist rulers

Due to the increasing number of children seeking shelter, further abandoned villas in the same neighbourhood were also occupied. Here the children were given shelter and regular schooling, provided by idealistic teachers. Pastor Sztehlo wanted the children to overcome social boundaries and to grow up to become independent and critical citizens. In November 1945, the number of children having reached more than 200 (some of them as young as four years old), Pastor Sztehlo called a general assembly in the reception room of the main villa. In front of the assembled children, he called out "Now make a republic!" and left the room. After some silence, a voice raised the question as to whether they needed some kind of constitution. This was debated and it was quickly agreed that, among many other things, such a constitution should guarantee the right to education and include the prohibition of war. László Keveházi was appointed prime minister while Pastor Sztehlo was unanimously elected honorary president of the republic.

There were regular cabinet meetings, a currency called Gapo Dollar (linked in value to the price of tram tickets in Budapest) and a newspaper, called Gapo-Matyi, which reported critically on government proceedings. Apart from the constitution, a code of laws was also drafted. Elections were held to appoint judges, the chief of police and representatives from each room of the villas. Children were allocated to the different villas according to their gender and age. The eldest boys lived in the 'Villa of the wolves', while other villas had names such as 'Villa

of the swallows', 'Rainbow Villa' and 'Villa of the squirrels'; girls had their accommodation in the 'Castle of girls' and were not allowed to stand for election. One of the most important features of the life in Gaudiopolis was work for the community. The citizens had to get acquainted with different professional fields in proper workshops. Everyone needed to contribute to the efforts in solving the problems which emerged in the common life of the whole community.

The main problems faced by Gaudiopolis were the lack of funds and food for the children, leading them to unanimously add an amendment to the constitution allowing theft in situations of need. With Pastor Sztehlo's intervention, they received some money from the provisional Hungarian government and in 1946 they were granted aid from the Red Cross.

In March 1946, an insurrection was staged by the 12-to-16-year-olds, due to their perceived lack of representation and participation in the government. Prime Minister Keveházi resigned and, following an electoral campaign, a new government was elected representing children from all age groups.

Conscious of the perils of boredom, and in order to distract the children from their memories of pain and suffering, regular activities were organised – dancing, movies and lectures by prominent members of adult society, such as writers, theatre directors and doctors.

In 1950 or 1951, under the Stalinist regime of Mátyás Rákosi, the children's home was nationalised and the Gaudiopolis project abandoned.

Gábor stayed in Budapest to organize hospices for the handicapped and elderly, amongst other social work. After the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, his family moved to Switzerland, where he joined them in 1961. In 1972 Sztehlo was recognized by Yad Vashem as being "Righteous Among the Nations", the first Hungarian to receive the title. He died from a heart attack on May 28, 1974, in Interlaken, Switzerland.

In 1991 former students and coworkers established the Gábor Sztehlo Foundation for the Help of Children and Adolescents. In 2009 a memorial to Sztehlo, created by the sculptor Tamás Vigh, was erected facing the Deák Square Lutheran Church in Budapest.

Many of the citizens of Gaudiopolis went on to lead successful and distinguished lives, becoming scientists, doctors, lawyers, pastors and businessmen. They include the Nobel laureate for Chemistry by George Olah and the London-based writer and journalist Mátyás Sárközi. Former residents of Gaudiopolis met for several years annually to commemorate their past and pay homage to the tomb of Pastor Sztehlo.

WEBSITES

Organisation of Children of Dutch Collaborators:

www.werkgroepherkenning.nl

Organisation of Danish Children of War, Danske Krigsboern Foerening:

www.krigsboern.dk

Organization of Norwegian NS Children:

www.nazichildren.com

Krigsbarnforbundet Lebensborn, Norway:

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

Organisation of NS-children Vennetreff:

<http://www.nsbarn.no>

Risikforbundet Finska Krigsbarn: (in swedish)

www.finskakrigsbarn.se

Tapani Ross on Finnish War Children (blog)

www.krigsbarn.com

Organisation of Finnish Children of War, Seundun Sotalapset:

www.sotalapset.fi

Organisation of children of victims and children of the perpetrators:

www.one-by-one.org

Dachau Institut Psychologie und Pädagogik:

www.Dachau-institut.de

Kriegskind Deutschland:

www.kriegskind.de

Website for the postwar-generation:

www.Forumkriegsenkel.com

Evacuees Reunion Association

www.evacuees.org.uk

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

www.warandchildren.org

Researchproject University München 'Kriegskindheit'

www.warchildhood.net

Coeurs Sans Frontières – Herzen Ohne Grenzen

www.coeurssansfrontières.com

Organisation d'enfants de guerre

www.nésdelalibération.fr

Organisation of Us-descendants in Belgium

www.usad-ww2.be

Childsurvivors of the Holocaust in Australië

www.paulvalent.com

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

www.facinghistory.org

Aktion Sühnezeigen Friedensdienste

www.asf-ev.de

Organisation of German Lebensbornkinder

www.lebensspuren-deutschland.eu

International Network for Interdisciplinary Research on Children born of War (INIRC)

www.childrenbornofwar.org

Organisation Genocide Prevention Now

www.genocidepreventionnow.org

Basque Children of '37 Association UK

www.basquechildren.org

International Study of the Organized Persecution of Children

www.holocaustchildren.org

Partners in Confronting Collective Atrocities

www.p-cca.org

War Love Child – Oorlogsliefdekind

www.oorlogsliefdekind.nl/en

Children of Soviet Army soldiers

www.russenkinder.de

Stichting Oorlogsgetroffenen in de Oost

www.s-o-o.nl

Philippine Nikkei-Jin Legal Support Center

www.pnlsc.com

Austrian children of Afroamerican soldier-fathers

www.afroaustria.at

Organisation tracing American GI fathers

www.gitrace.org

Children in War Memorial

blog: <http://childreninwarmemorial.wordpress.com>

Stichting Sakura (Dutch/Indonesian/Japanese children)

<https://stichting-sakura.nl>

Stichting JIN (Indonesian/Japanese children)

<http://www.jin-info.nl>

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

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

<https://encounter2022.wordpress.com>

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