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## NS-Childhood and Historical Consciousness (II)<sup>1</sup>

### 1. *Autobiographical introduction*

I was born in 1939 and thus belong to the generation of „war children“, to whom a huge congress in Frankfurt in 2005 was dedicated.<sup>2</sup> As announced by the title of my essay, I do not start out from the experience of *childhood in times of war*, however, but from NS-childhood which was closely connected to this and was personally-emotionally, but also professionally (my field of work are the didactics of history), more difficult to integrate than the dramatic, partly traumatic influence of the war. My father served with the Waffen-SS. Despite intensive research I have never succeeded with finding out what he really did. As long as he lived there was never a direct discussion of anything. This typical silence and the negative result of archive research did not reduce the burden of problems but diffused it to incredibility.

This autobiographical introduction would be unnessecary cheap showmanship if something general was not included in the personal aspect. I am not the only child of a culprit in my profession. The historical-scientific and historical-didactic discourse in the Federal Republic was (and partly still is) dominated by people who personally experienced National Socialism and Second World War from start to finish or who – after 1945 – directly felt the results of this history on the history of their lives. The question is: what was the influence of being more or less involved into National Socialism by family ties on the later development of theory? What was consciously recorded and reflected, what was not? In what way did the inevitable argument with the “fathers” happen? In what way did the historical-didactic professionalizing of the relation to the past happen for the second generation who aggressively put forward their “historical consciousness” against the claims of emancipation of the students’ movement?

### 2. *Autobiographical arguments with NS-fathers*

There was no lack of direct arguments with the fathers’ history, but they happened – and this is both typical and momentous – outside the scientific branches as discussed here. By help of three famous names – Christoph Meckel, Dörte von Westernhagen, and Wibke Bruhns – it shall be made exemplarily clear that and how conscious research of one’s own family history was possible.

Christoph Meckel: *Suchbild. Über meinen Vater* (1980). Blurb of the Fischer paperback-edition, Frankfurt a. M. 2005:

<sup>1</sup> Extended and revised version of the verbally spoken "seven theses" (NS-childhood and historical consciousness (I)). The essay "NS-childhood and historical consciousness (II)", printed in the following one, is also published in Hans-Heino Ewers u. a. (Hg.), *Erinnerungen an Kriegskindheiten. Erfahrungsräume, Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik unter sozial- und kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive*, Juventa, Weinheim u. München 2006, S. 219-232.

<sup>2</sup> “Die Generation der Kriegskinder und ihre Botschaft für Europa sechzig Jahre nach Kriegsende” (The generation of the war-children and their message for Europe sixty years after the end of the war). International congress, April 14th -16th, 2005, in Frankfurt, organized and supported by several university and non-university institutions.

*“The man I knew was only a part of that other man whom nobody knew.”*

*Christoph Meckel’s approach at his father was originally published in 1980 and was the peak of a number of literary attempts, where the sons described their fathers and their ways of coping with National Socialism. Today a classic among literature on the father, ‘Suchbild’ is also a book of remembering which sensitively, poetically, and exactly understands one’s own childhood after the war.*

*“The way in which Christoph Meckel recognized the German malaise in his father is somehow of universal validity” (DIE ZEIT)*

Dörte von Westernhagen: *Die Kinder der Täter. Das Dritte Reich und die Generation danach.* Blurb of the Kösel-edition, München 1987:

*„We did not recognize that the fathers were already living on within our selves, in a hidden way which was difficult to see through.”*

*As a directly affected person, the daughter of an SS-officer describes her own fate, as well as those of other children of National Socialists. Still today, the fathers’ suppressed past is a burden for their children’s lives, until they succeed with integrating love and hate, admiration and disappointment by a process of understanding.”*

Wibke Bruhns: *Meines Vaters Land. Geschichte einer deutschen Familie.* Blurb of the Econ-edition, München 2004 (9th edition):

*„This goddamned honour.” – In August, 1944, the Abwehr-officer Hans Georg Klamroth is executed for high treason. Some decades later his daughter watches film recordings of her father, taken during the trial of the plotters of July 20<sup>th</sup>. Wibke Bruhns never escapes this view. Who was this man whom she hardly knew, this strange father who suddenly was so near? The long search for his, even her own, history leads her back to the past. The Klamroth family is a family of grand bourgeois merchants and looks like a Halberstadt equivalent of the Buddenbrooks. Innumerable documents, letters, and diaries make the stock of this unique family epic. “I want to understand how that came into existence what so deeply affected my generation, the generation of those born later.”*

In spite of their common interest in retrospective investigation, each of these three books – what else could be imagined – distinguishes itself by its own image, formally and regarding content matter. Partly, this is simply due to the facts which are to be historically researched. Westernhagen and Bruhns lost their fathers at about the end of the war (Westernhagen’s father was “caught” by a Soviet bomb; Bruhn’s father was executed), Meckel was able as a young man to “experience” his father for many years after the war, so that actually the NS- and war-history was eclipsed by the seemingly intact but in reality emotionally impoverished post-war history.

As the son states in retrospect, Meckel’s father was a “half-Nazi” (p. 181-182), “a fellow traveller of the ideology, voluntarily active with building up the Nazi-culture, indirectly agreeing with the burning of books, with the elimination of communists and Jews; a sick character most of all after the war, who tried to suppress his own past and who considered himself a victim of history.”

Westernhagen's father was an SS-officer who had joined the NSDAP as early as in 1929 and who had "really sold" his soul. Westernhagen was not able to find out if his father directly contributed to extermination actions (similar to my own case) (p. 61). "But it is difficult to imagine that anything else could have been the case." Also he, the culprit, considered himself a victim in the end.

Bruhn's father, also a member of NSDAP and SS, knew about the conspiracy but did not report those involved. He was hanged for this. This sounds like resistance and thus might support making him a hero, but the author does not fall victim to this danger, quite the reverse. She reveals a panorama of human-social fractures which can hardly be understood and which reached also the Klamroth's marriage. Also the differences in respect of style and arrangement are conspicuous with the three authors.

In Westernhagen, the psycho-analytical and intellectual self-clarification is of decisive influence: in NS she sees the father and sees herself being drawn into the father.

Meckel's achievement, however, is rather to be seen in atmospherically making post-war family life alive again. Several pages long, for example, he makes us aware of the "experience of an outrageous lack". Everything emotionally important was missing. "Hugs were missing, self-irony, and clarity of thought. The open stream of living life was missing. (...) Approval to untidy children's necks was missing, and approval to ways of thinking alien from the father's ways was missing."

The almost hypnotizing effect of Bruhn's work is not at last due to I-emphasized interferences by the author herself, who again and again asks directly: how am I to understand this? What should be my opinion on this? She feels personally disorientated, helpless, outraged, and she tells the reader about it.

Psycho-historically revealing but also emotionally moving is the way in which the authors arrange the good bye to their fathers in their literature.

Meckel experiences the slow wasting away of his father, who has become old and sick; he is emotionally touched but nevertheless (meanwhile in safe distance (p. 166f): *"With the torturing, growing, inevitable pain, with the agonizing misery which reached all of his organs, in the absence of obligation and world history he [the father] felt good in a terrible way. He spent his time on things which were outside himself, on taking photos, books, and questions on the fine arts. He was still reading poems, interrupted by feverless sleep, he dozed out of life without being angry. Sleeping, he died one night in June and, as he had wished, in his own room. His heart had stopped, the pacemaker beat on."*

Westernhagen consciously draws a line under her research, which were psycho-analytically accompanied (p. 94): *When I packed the books and books of pictures on the Holocaust, the Waffen-SS, the SS, the 'Leibstandarte', the war in the Baltics away to take them back to the library, I noticed that I was doing this not only with a feeling of relief but also with a feeling of regret. I had been able to spend a certain period of time with the father, as the 'next world-office' had failed to notice the originally intended, regular meeting with him. As is right and proper for a good love story – the more for missed ones which are thus made up for – I had been allowed to adore him,*

*to despise, to desire, and to hate him. Now the time was over; it was time to say goodbye to the father as I had now learned to know him.”*

Bruhns conclusively evokes the horror of the execution scene in order to dare a summary of her own history of mental processing (p. 380f): *“It was not my age. I am angry at you because of all the humiliation you made Else suffer from, and thus you, the man, are a laugh for me. Maybe I should be less arrogant. I feel distraught by that what I must understand to be your indifference towards the fate of the Jews, of the forced labourers, the mentally ill, the prisoners in the concentration camps, Himmler’s ‘sub-humans’ in the occupied countries. They denied you the attendance of a priest, for which you had asked. But you have already left behind your Mount of Olives, and you are a hero by your death. Your lived your life in a terrible age, and if it was supposed to be better for the children, well, that was a success. You paid the death toll which I do not have to pay. From you I learned against what I must be on my guard. That is what a father is for, isn’t he? I thank you.”*

I introduced these three publications in rather detail (they are exemplary for a meanwhile great number of similar publications) to make clear how deeply and lastingly the existential experience of NS-childhood influenced each of those affected. The effects may have been gradually different; the range is from successful integration of childhood experiences via the thorny working off and reappraising of the past as far as to depressive self-destruction. Noone, however, outgrew the curse of NS-history completely without damage, as far as he/she was affected by it in one way or other.

What was the influence of the political-existential experience on history-theoretical concepts which guided history lessons at school (in the old FRG) and which to great extent still claim to be valid? We will turn to this question in the following paragraph.

### 3. *Historical consciousness as a “crucial category”*

In 1980, in the same year as Meckel’s *Suchbild*, after various preparing works a pioneering essay by Karl-Ernst Jeismann was published, who raised “historical consciousness” to be the “crucial category for a new approach at historical didactics”<sup>3</sup> and who was absolutely successful with this. The idea that, according to the conservative opinion, there was the need for a “new” approach, was most of all due to education- and social-political trends of the 70s which firstly threatened history as an independent school subject and which secondly in an ideologically one-sided way orientated historical-political education towards the demand for emancipation.<sup>4</sup> By the provocative term of “historical consciousness” a counter-front was established which most of all was supposed to put an end to the danger of “indoctrination by history lessons” and to clear the way for pluralist openness.

<sup>3</sup> Karl-Ernst Jeismann, “Geschichtsbewußtsein”. *Überlegungen zur zentralen Kategorie eines neuen Ansatzes der Geschichtsdidaktik*. In: Hans Süßmuth (Hrsg.), *Geschichtsdidaktische Positionen. Bestandsaufnahme und Neuorientierung*. Paderborn 1980 (UTB-Taschenbuch Nr. 954). Information on the genesis of re-conceptualizing during the Seventies is given by the publisher in his introduction.

<sup>4</sup> The anthology published by Süßmuth contains a. o. an essay by Annette Kuhn on *Geschichtsdidaktik in emanzipatorischer Absicht. Versuch einer kritischen Überprüfung*.

Even from today's point of view there would not be any objection if pluralist openness did not at the same time water down and neutralize the real historical-political potential for conflict so much that any history teaching designed according to this objective is threatened by being stuck in non-committedness or helplessness, the more as the intellectual demand was set at an impossibly high level. According to Jeismann, a balanced historical consciousness meets three groups of demands, which are called:

- 1 "Analysis" (a. o. knowledge of facts, competent handling of sources)
- 2 "Judgement of the case" (a. o. competence of interpretation and judgement) and
- 3 "Assessment" (a. o. knowledge of normative terms, recognizing premises with assessments).

Regarding NS, Jeismann explains his concept as follows:

"A series of lessons on the age of National Socialism might thus start e. g. with a record of the different statements on the '3<sup>rd</sup> Reich' as being found and common in public consciousness and might pursue educational goals which formulate the collection, the comparison, and a first view of these statements and which provoke assumptions regarding the positions and assessments within the latter. Differences or contrasts between such assessment-dominated statements motivate the step towards the analysis of the historic phenomenon; educational goals from this dimension must now deduce the phenomenon in all its causes, ways of appearance, structures, and development periods – while from the knowledge of different interpretations the analysis always refers and points out to assessments. In a third sequence of the teaching educational goals from the field of judgement of the case would be joined in – differentiated in different ways according to each form, as far as to "theories of Fascism" for Secondary Level II. For working out these educational goals one may refer to analysis, may complete it, or may also discuss it under new aspects. From here on, teaching with its educational goals may again reach back to the dimension of assessment and now discuss those assessments and views as to be found on a higher level and in a more consolidated way and may lead to formulating one's own, more well-founded and differentiated position." (p. 210-211)

What has this text got to do with the texts of the previously quoted three authors – Meckel, Westernhagen, Bruhns? Does it make any sense to place highly abstract scientific prose, which tries to understand the fundamental principle, and belletristic texts, which offer a picture of the living detail, next to each other? A way of legitimizing this method becomes clear if we remind ourselves to the common interest of these different publications, which is in overcoming an awkward past. Who were the historically-biographically most important main actors of this past?

#### 4. *A research programme for the future*

While the three authors who were introduced at first deal *directly* with their natural fathers, indeed often directly address them, call on them, summon them as if

they were still alive,<sup>5</sup> a natural father does not appear in Jeismann's text, however, there is a "spiritual" father: Theodor Schieder, who laid the foundations of defining historical consciousness as a "basic category", as Jeismann definitely states (see most of all his annotation No. 4). Thus, we so to speak enter a mined search and problem area, because Schieder was – as we know today – deeply involved in National Socialism both as a historian and an actor<sup>6</sup> without ever having spoken about this after the war, not even in the inner circle of family or closest relatives.<sup>7</sup> This way, National Socialism as the most explosive content of historical consciousness trans-generationally disappeared like behind frosted glass, something which can still be felt clearly in Jeismann's text: no concrete details are mentioned. The terms "Holocaust", "extermination of the Jews", "culprits", "victims" aso. are avoided. The students are manoeuvred into an unstable "on the one hand ... on the other hand" in order of finally being able to judge in a "more differentiated" way. It stays pretty unclear who and what is really meant by this.

In other words: the then new approach of making historical consciousness the focus of historical-didactic research and teaching, got stuck at a decisive point.<sup>8</sup> Historical consciousness in Germany (after the Holocaust and World War II.) without appreciation of the conflictious tension towards one's own specific past, which itself generates specific future worries,<sup>9</sup> is like walking in a labyrinth-like landscape or like discussing without a topic. However, this is less true for students than much more for us, the adults, the school and university teachers, who in and for themselves should have worked through the depressing aspects of history<sup>10</sup> before offering "correct" versus "wrong" historical consciousness to their students.

Now it is not possible anymore to directly making up the conflict with the fathers. Possible and necessary, however, is the insight in retrospect that there was massive repression, as in principle it is typical for every generation,<sup>11</sup> as well as a research

<sup>5</sup> Even more strongly than by the already quoted authors and as far as to theatrical-obscene staging, this method is used by Niklas Frank, *Der Vater. Eine Abrechnung* (1987). Goldmann 2001. The longing for the absent father, who is desperately loved although he was sentenced as a war criminal, is impressively expressed by Kurt Meyer, *Geweint wird, wenn der Kopf ab ist. Annäherungen an meinen Vater „Panzermeyer“, Generalmajor der Waffen-SS*. Herder, Freiburg 1998. The series was recently continued by Richard von Schirach, *Der Schatten meines Vaters*. Hanser, München 2005. The last mentioned book is the most important for the purpose of my essay, because the author does not only argue with his father but also with his own feelings and psychological development.

<sup>6</sup> Among others, Schieder must be confronted with his memorandum on Poland, where he recommends the clearing of the rest of Poland of Jews. In more detail on this see Götz Aly, *Macht-Geist-Wahn. Kontinuitäten deutschen Denkens*. Büchergilde Gutenberg, Frankfurt a.M., S. 153-184.

<sup>7</sup> Revealing in this context is the interview with Wolfgang Schieder, Theodor Schieder's son, in: Rüdiger Hohls and Konrad Jarausch (Hrsg.), *Versäumte Fragen. Deutsche Historiker im Schatten des Nationalsozialismus*. Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, Stuttgart 2000, S. 281-299.

<sup>8</sup> Also, I do not see that this lack has meanwhile been overcome, which nevertheless does not question the merits of various following publications. But this cannot be discussed here in detail.

<sup>9</sup> On this in more detail: Peter Schulz-Hageleit, *Geschichtsbewusstsein und Zukunftssorge. Unbewusstheiten im geschichtswissenschaftlichen und geschichtsdidaktischen Diskurs*. Centaurus, Herbolzheim 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Jeismann made a first, careful step towards this direction when at the end of his explanations he referred to the "experience of our own, the German history", from which, as he says, there comes a special task of the teaching of history. This theoretically demanded reference to experience would have had to be put into practice.

<sup>11</sup> The question of what makes a "generation", how it can be determined in time, which conflicts determine the sequence of generations – these and other questions are the topic of manifold discussions. From this multitude of literature, here there is referring to Jürgen Reulecke (Hrsg.), *Generationalität und Lebensgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert*. (Schriften des Historischen Kollegs, Kolloquien Bd. 58). Oldenbourg, München 2003.

programme resulting from this. That what was shown by the initially introduced authors in the biographical-individual context must be transferred to scientific and historical-analytical ways of thinking. Nobody will doubt that stories and biographies are filled up to the brim with repression. Systematic research on these repressions belongs to the research projects of the future.<sup>12</sup>

#### 5. *Self-historization and historical consciousness*

On the subject-level, that what with objectifying demands is called “research programme” means a. o. – most of all for older historical didacticians – something like *self-historization*. Our academic “youth” during the Cold War has meanwhile become history including all those repressions touched on above. In retrospect, nobody can be blamed for not having solved the to great extent unconscious struggle with the past in a more decisive way. The style of many historical-didactic publications is less self-reflective and self-historicizing than much more announcing without history. This need not last and should not last.

Without a critical distance towards the past, which in case of existential border-situations increases towards breaking with this past,<sup>13</sup> historical consciousness cannot be developed anyway. Self-historization was a constant, so to speak subliminal dimension of the congress in Frankfurt, when war children with their manifold experiences asked to speak while taking the long process of rework from those days until today into the account.

The fact that a watchful consciousness towards not reappraised traditions as well as research on trans-generational repression are necessary becomes obvious by a look at today's schoolbooks and lessons.

#### 4. *The fact-obsessed-uncritical understanding of the NS “success” story – an underestimated danger (criticism on schoolbooks and counter-concept)*

Due to an unbalanced and one-sided concept of historical knowledge, the teaching of history is often – all too often – satisfied with purely outlining power and event history, something by which the upcoming historical-critical way of thinking is not encouraged but channelled in an authoritarian way. Let us take the example of “the rise of National Socialism”. Already the word “rise” suggests success, splendour, strength, and satisfaction, things which nobody likes to miss and nobody is completely able to miss. Everybody wants to “rise”, noone wants a “decline” or likes to be a loser. If then this “objective” rise is provided with subjective demands for understanding the process in a self-identifying way (“How did the Nazis succeed with

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<sup>12</sup> Suppressions are the core of psycho-analytical research and therapy which, however, is mostly restricted to individual case studies. Thus, inter-disciplinary cooperation of historical science and psycho-analysis must be further advanced. Among the previous projects, here there is exemplarily referring to Jörn Rüsen und Jürgen Straub (Hrsg.), *Die dunkle Spur der Vergangenheit. Psychoanalytische Zugänge zum Geschichtsbewußtsein*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M. 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Regarding development psychology, “historical consciousness” is anyway possible only at the age of puberty/adolescence, i. e. when present states of the subject can be correlated with earlier states and when the young person consciously distances him/herself from his/her own past. On this in detail see Mario Erdheim in the book of Rüsen and Straub, mentioned before (fn. 11).

this?"), the lesson mutates into the uncritical repeat of Nazi-delusional self-justification.

Thus, it is not enough to have the Nuremberg Laws repeated "as such" according to their ideological self-understanding ("name the most important regulations...") without a critical awareness of the nature of injustice and the social pathology of these regulations being mentally existent. It is misleading to demand from students a so to speak one-dimensioned "emphatic" understanding of youths in those days and to give them e. g. the homework: "Name reasons why many youths joined the HJ." But this is "the" history, I am contradicted when I complain about such a teaching in lessons (e. g. when I am sitting in classes during terms of practical work). We must let the facts speak and must not in a moralizing way distort real history from today's point of view.

Indeed: false moralizing without a knowledge basis would be as wrong as facts-fetishism on the track of the history of violence. But this is not what is recommended here. Much more, interweaving of a critical way of thinking and knowledge of real history is recommended, which can be achieved in the practice of lessons if *right from the beginning* the disastrous "rise" is viewed at from the *critical point of view* of people who even in those days were concerned and sceptical.<sup>14</sup> Fortunately, evidence of this kind is meanwhile at hand in masses.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, the uncritical understanding of the murderous NS-history is not contradicted by accepted publications and media but – quite the reverse – it is driven forward, maybe without bad intentions, but from the didactic point of view this cannot be used as an "apologize". In one schoolbook there are e. g. the following title and sub-title: "Rassenwahn und Führerprinzip – Womit rechtfertigen die Nazis ihre Politik" (Race-Delusion and the Führer-principle – How Do the Nazis Justify their Politics). Ibidem, the students are supposed to deal with the question: "Why do the Nazis erect concentration camps?" If the students answer these questions the way they are asked here, they are so to speak forced to step into the Nazi way of thinking, and this is, to have it politely, a more than *risky procedure*.

Empirical investigations on the spot confirm – unfortunately – the here presented results. Irit Wyrobnik observed the fourth form of a primary school and recorded how the topic of the Holocaust was communicated: the result is deeply distressing.<sup>16</sup> For answering the question of what NSDAP means and how this party arguments, in blind repeat of Nazi historical ideology there appeared on the blackboard: "unemployment and poverty, the Jews are the guilty." It must stay open here in how far this one example is representative for other structures. Anyway, as a symptom for

<sup>14</sup> On these basic thoughts see in more detail Brigitte Dehne, *Geschichte zum Einmischen*, in: Geschichte-Erziehung-Politik (GEP, publication ceased), Heft 7/1991, S. 607-621. With critical-didactical purpose Dehne correctly calls those people who even in those days acted in a critical-sceptical way "filter figures" and gives examples.

<sup>15</sup> Many of the Children's books and books for young readers as introduced at the above mentioned congress meet the demand of this groundwork of critical-personal distancing which does not make scientific-propaedeutical work on selected sources and events obsolete but quite the reverse makes it possible at all. Who follows NS everyday life, e. g. from Victor Klemperer's point of view and reality-experience, will so to speak inevitably combine facts, the study of sources, and critical perspective.

<sup>16</sup> Irit Wyrobnik, *Grundschulunterricht zum Thema Holocaust in Deutschland. Unterrichtsbeobachtungen in einer 4. Klasse*. In: Pädagogisches Forum, Januar 2006 (at the time of writing this essay it was at hand as a manuscript)

subliminal irregularities and serious dangers the result deserves attention and historical-consciousness-effective counter-concepts.

The risk of an uncritical and facts-obsessed understanding of NS-ideology on the one hand and the history of power and violence as being connected with it on the other hand can be minimized in several ways, a. o. by

- a) including the critical point of view right from the beginning (headword “filter figures”, see above), by
- b) the chronological anticipation of the terrible results of the NS-ideology, by
- c) psycho-historically insisting in the delusive nature (“race-delusion”) which in their own ways respectively must be lamented also for other fields (madness of arms race, mass-hysteria aso.), by
- d) activating empathy and (real-historical) imagination (e. g. what would be the results of race-delusion and Führer-principle here in our class?), by
- e) reminding to the basic rights of the Weimar Republic, which as a matter of fact were still valid,

this only to point out to some approaches.

Rash – at least from the linguistic point of view – is also an opinion which is expressed by respectable speakers and according to which the Holocaust is a part of German identity.<sup>17</sup> Even and particularly as the child of a culprit I must definitely contradict something like this. The Holocaust is neither a part of “the Germans” identity nor of my individual identity. Certainly: it is a part of German history and of the history of my family. Regarding my profession, it becomes valid by the effort for compensation, personally it will concern me as a guilt and a feeling of guilt to the end of my days and it makes us all – most of all the non-Jewish Germans – obliged for the future. Many more connections, for which the mass-murder of the Jews plays a decisive role, could be added, a. o. the European dimension which recently has been discussed more intensively. Nevertheless, shifting the murder of Jews and German identity into each other does not conclude this way, and that is a good thing.

## 7. *Interim balance*

Childhood memories are complex, and it is very important into which theoretical-mental coordinate system we fit each of our stories. The shift of the here unfolded explaining argumentation from childhood at war to NS-childhood had the following reasons:

- consciousness of the results of NS-childhood stimulates the creation of a critical historical consciousness much more than the memories of suffering from events of war.

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<sup>17</sup> On this see e. g. Jörn Rüsen’s remarks during an interview on the topic of *From Moralization to Historization – Thoughts on German Historical Culture*, printed in: *Mittelweg* 36, Heft Juni/Juli 2004, S. 86. Implementing the Holocaust into the “German identity” may also be the result of a journalistically reducing language, as documented by the *Jüdische Allgemeine* from February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Here, a speech by Federal President Horst Köhler was printed, where he had said: “*The responsibility* for the Shoa is a part of German identity (italics by P. S.-H.). The editorial staff eliminated the responsibility and shortly titled: “The Shoa is a part of German identity”. Is there the need of extended reason-giving for the fact that the political responsibility for deeds which were not done by certain people is anything else than so to speak these deeds themselves, implemented into their identity?”

- NS-childhood and its results are not a topic for public self-presentation. Nevertheless, as the starting point for therapies and conversational rounds<sup>18</sup> as well as for personal initiatives of compensation<sup>19</sup> it has had some influence which as a “latent” content, so to speak below the official, “manifest” topic of congresses, must be taken into the account and must further be supported.
- Coming to terms with the Holocaust-trauma as a society as a whole will be unstable for the time being. Not only Jews but most of all the children and grandchildren of culprits should take a stand against the danger of renewed repression. On this, one last word.

#### 4. *Think of Bubis when Walser speaks*

In the course of the initially mentioned congress it became clear to me once again how important the Jewish point of view is as a counterpart in the way of thinking of the non-Jewish Germans. Without this counterpart the danger of falling back to the self-righteous affective defence will grow, which showed up most drastically in October, 1998. We remember: during his vote of thanks for the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade Martin Walser spoke out for finally leaving the “Auschwitz moral club” behind, and everybody applauded – with the exception of Ignaz Bubis (1927-1999), then chairman of the Jewish Central Committee, who – and rightly so – was in the fear of a re-staging of a “culture of looking away and thinking away”. During the opening of the congress on war children Dieter Graumann, member of the council of the Jewish community in Frankfurt, clearly expressed his uneasiness in the face of the fact that among the topics of the congress the victims of the Holocaust had been ignored as “war children”. In my opinion, this signal (see on this the *Frankfurter Rundschau* from April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005) was important as a public mnemonic sign-post, even if neither the organizers of the congress nor its course gave reasons for dull reproaches. Also during the final meeting the critical-sceptical view was convincingly expressed: Micha Brumlik presented a paper on Holocaust-remembrance and “the suffering of the Germans” (!). The Jewish counterpart will be superfluous only when the non-Jewish Germans (in the future as citizens of a Europe growing to one) have collectively and safely internalized and integrated this part in respect of mentality-history, so that they, to have it personifyingly, let Bubis think along within themselves when Walser asks to speak. The time for giving the all-clear has not yet come, not for a long time.

*(translated from German by Mirko Wittwar, 51597 Morsbach)*

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<sup>18</sup> To quote an example, Hinrich Paul impressively reports on such a conversational round in his book *Brücken der Erinnerung. Von den Schwierigkeiten, mit der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit umzugehen*. Centaurus, Pfaffenweiler 1999.

<sup>19</sup> Speer’s daughter Hilde Schramm, to quote an example here, founded the foundation “Zurückgeben” (Giving Back) which grants scholarships to Jewish artists and scientists. The money comes from donations by families who have inherited robbed Jewish property and who were not able anymore to find the lawful owners.