EDITORIAL

EXPERIENCES IN POST-WAR GERMANY THROUGH THE EYES OF A VICTIMOLOGIST

People usually associate the concept of "Postwar Germany" with the time after the Second World War. I was asked by a Japanese conference organiser to reflect on the end of World War II and the period after that in Germany. The organiser wanted a personal account from me and that I should touch on memories that might be important for an audience in Japan. Both Japan and Germany have had their soldiers in many countries, causing suffering of an unbearable degree, committing a series of crimes one after the other. Both countries were flattened during the Second World War by aerial bomb attacks. Their leaders led their countries into a maelstrom of death, misery, humiliation and international disdain. However, in the last half-century, they worked their way up to the top of the international economic world. Both countries still bear their psychological scars and their historical reputations are tainted with shame, avoidance behavior (denial) and remorse. If you look for differences, in Germany, right up to the present-day, there has been without a doubt a courageous and conscious confrontation and a mental-intellectual dealing with the past that has permeated the whole of postwar German society.

In this Editorial I will discuss my experiences from the period 1939 to roughly 1959, and I write from my position as a victimologist.

A Victimologist?
My first question is: *Who is a victimologist?*

To clarify the terms the following is provided: First of all, a victimologist is a scientist, a person who works in science. Most people do not know what that means. Most people believe scientists are gifted with extraordinarily high intelligence. Most believe that scientists are permanently busy discovering new things, to find new truths. Most people have the idea that scientists do things that cannot really be learned. They think that these things cannot be taught systematically, that scientists invent special knowledge that not everybody can understand. I can assure you – from my own experience – that this is all a wrong perception of scientists.

You read in a newspaper that a scientist – or a group of them – invented something very new. Ok. But if it is new, how can the customer understand it? He will understand only what he knows already, especially exposed to mass media with such a fluid consistence and a rapid half life time. Understanding only in terms you already know – that is a general principle of knowledge.

I will give you an example. In 1999 an Austrian art museum celebrated the hundredth anniversary of Sir Alfred Joseph Hitchcock's (1899-1980) birthday. I was invited to give a speech on "*Victimology: Science of victims*". My airplane arrived earlier than my presentation was scheduled, and so I had time to walk alone through the art exhibition. The exhibited pieces somehow dealt with the way Hitchcock was reflected in modern art. I fancied myself as someone who loved contemporary art and who was not completely ignorant – but what I saw here, was beyond my perception. To be honest, I did not like what I saw, and I found this modern art nonsensical. I walked through the exhibition, absolutely unenthused. Bored. A short time later,

the exhibition staff alerted the art director that one of his speakers had already arrived, and he came to welcome me. "May I show you our art exhibition?" So he gave me a tour through the exhibition and explained. The Director of course knew why he had constructed the exhibition the way he had done. He had certainly talked about it before and had experiences in explaining - and he was able to share what he had constructed. He enabled me to connect the items exhibited with what I believed to know in the field of modern art. I had the feeling that I understood what I saw and what he had intended. An hour ago, the whole exhibition was meaningless. With the guidance of an expert, it made sense. What really happened was the creation of a continuum. He enabled me to connect the new information with the old ones which I already had.

This is what scientists have to do. They have to check whether the old concepts are still able to explain new observations. They have to see whether the old theories accommodate the observation we are challenged to "explain". Science is nothing but a special way of reconstruction. It is essentially repetition: trying to adjust the observations into the already known. Of course there are situations where the old truths can no longer be adjusted, where the containers that hold the truth can no longer be expanded – they simply burst and do not contain anything anymore. Then we have a Scientific Revolution, as Thomas Samuel Kuhn (1962) would say. But these occasions are rare. Most of the time we rehash what is known and how it is known. We check whether new observations successfully challenge us to broaden our worldview, our basic construction of reality in the style of our science today. Kuhn talks about paradigm, and that is exactly what I mean.

A victimologist is active in the social science of victims. I will dare to outline this science in fifteen lines. Such an attempt is provocative - it kind of calls for contradiction and reactions.

Victimology: Concepts, terms and questions

In the centre of the Science of Victimology stands the following concepts, terms and questions:

1. Who is the victim? The victim of Human Rights violations, includes crime, individuals, groups, masses, direct and indirect ones.

2. What is a victimisation? Victimisation is damage suffered (especially emotional, physical and financial) and is a process in which the damage and suffering occur. Here is a wide continuum to be analysed, from an individual on one end to mass victimisation on the other.

3. What is the role of reactions to victimisation? Of course victims react – a great field of victimology including crises, crises intervention and for few victims' treatment for PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Victimology deals with reactions – individual, group and collective - towards victims and victimisations. Who reacts? Reactions of the victims themselves and reactions of the social environment - victims do not react in an empty space. Their experiences are observed and evaluated and reacted to by a social environment, father, mother, family, friends, school mates, colleagues, employers - they all react. These reactions can help the victim to recover or they can be counterproductive - then we speak of secondary victimisation. And finally, there are reactions which are so patterned and predictable that we are tempted to call these reactions "social structures", opening our mind for the problem of structural victimisation. I am very much opposed to this concept since it assumes that we are

helpless against social structures. The same is valid for terms like "cultural victimisation". Social structures or cultural structures force people to endure victimisation like "female genital mutilation"? How is it possible that "culture" victimises as if culture per se has a unified value orientation? Maybe these concepts sound acceptable and explain victimology to a certain extent.

4. In what form do the reactions manifest themselves? We will look closer at the kinds of reactions:
   i) Informal reactions (these reactions are mostly not very friendly but hostile and aversive for victims);

   ii) Formal reactions – reactions that have been written down, like criminal law. Here you have the connection of victimology to the criminal justice system as a social entity. Here too is the connection to the wider concept of restorative justice.

   This is all analysed by standing in the shoes of the victim as far as possible: it is a "victims' victimology" (Sarah Ben David) - and not a victimology to improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice system. This erroneous message is sent by people who believe victimology is just the other side of criminology. I do not share this belief. While Victimology is qualitatively different, it is allied to criminology (see Kirchhoff, 2005, Kirchhoff and Morosawa, 2009).

Three dimensions

Victimology is a social science. As a social scientist, I have learned that every problem can be analysed in three dimensions, namely:

1. From a personal, individual situational direction.

2. From an institutional direction: how the observations influence the institutions of society and their interactions with the individual.

3. In a macro-view, a bird's view, dealing with dimensions we cannot change directly, the macro dimensions, gender influences, the great social structure, etc.

The topic does not allow that I talk completely distantly from my own memories - as a matter of fact, these memories are central to this essay.

Understandable expectations of the topic

If you read about Postwar Germany, there are a lot of concepts that occur in the thoughts of readers, raising expectations that such key concepts might be dealt with in this editorial. I will look at them to give an example of what characterises the situation in Germany and what characterises the general social reaction, apart from personal memories.

These key concepts are:

Total Capitulation: Germany lost the war and ceased completely to exist. The four allied forces took over all administration of Germany. The country was divided into four military administrative zones. The military government took over all administrative and political functions. The US, British and French zones later gained a limited sovereignty as the "Federal Republic of Germany", while the Russian zone was to become the "German Democratic Republic". This bi-partition only ended with the end of the communist block 1990 and the re-unification of the two German states.

The War Criminal Trials: the victorious powers conducted a court procedure to sentence the main war criminals for their systematic human rights violations. The published records of this event became an important proof for the atrocities and mass murders intentionally inflicted by the Nazis and its main figures on invaded countries, of the war crimes, of the reality of extermination camps against defamed minorities like Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, priests and political opponents. In Germany these trials were called "War Criminal Trials" – *Kriegsverbrecher-Prozesse* – even if the mass murder on declared "enemies" of the system had nothing to do with war crimes. The main supporters of the old regime were removed from their positions and several thousands of them sentenced for their involvement. This was an often failed judicial attempt of the victorious forces to punish the main responsible offenders of the old regime. Restorative Justice measures such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the mid-1990s had not yet been invented. For reasons of the Cold War – the bloc confrontation between a communist Soviet colonial system and the American led Western world – the coming Federal Republic was firmly integrated into the Western world, while the persecution of former Nazi's lost political urgency.

Denazification: was the term applied to the judicial procedure against the main supporters of the Nazi regime who were removed from their civil life positions if they could not "purify" themselves. It was carried out after the war by the victors (Allies) as part of the very successful democratisation process in the Federal part of Germany (excluding the Russian controlled sector).

Deportation or expulsion: of the Germans from areas that had been settled by Germans and that, after the war, were annexed by Soviet Russia and by Poland or from other East European countries. Between 12 and 14 million Germans in different states were victims of such expulsions from their original habitats. These "refugees" escaped the atrocities by revenge-taking people in occupied countries or were fleeing from the marauding victorious Russian Red Army and the mass rapes and murders of civilians in the lawless times around the end of the war.

Collective Guilt: the idea of the collective guilt of all Germans for the war and for the enormous crimes committed by "Nazi Germany". The term Nazi is an abbreviation of the official name of the German fascist party, the "National Socialistic Workers Party" – in itself a contradiction. While the concept of responsibility honestly justifies several compensation attempts of the Federal Republic, it is an absolutely useless propagandistic simplification to establish the guilt of individuals. This guilt is an ethical concept for individuals, not for a whole nation. Today, with

highly reputed nations involved in aggressive wars, the slogan of the collective guilt of the members of the aggressor's nation is self-defeating and most probably meaningless.

'*Wiedergutmachung'*: is the German term denoting the 'compensation payments' of the German government to the survivors of the extermination measures and to those who were made to work as slaves. The total of Wiedergutmachung is a complex system of compensation for various damages. In an attempt to indemnify Jewish victims of the suffering and persecution by the Nazis, the German government, up to 2009, paid over to such victims (and the Government of Israel) 67 118 milliard Euro and will continue to pay life-long titled compensation to survivors.

I was born in 1939. That was the time when the political leaders in Germany, the Nazi's, started the war (in September of that year) and involved the whole world in it. Overall 1939 was a time of hardship for most children, but being born in difficult circumstances does not qualify in itself to being a victim in a victimological sense. We need rather to enumerate those concrete invasions (victimisation) into the self.

But the "war" did not stay distant - it invaded very concretely the life of my family and through this my own life. My father – in his civilian profession – was co-owner and CEO of a factory with 800 employees. In his military career he was "Rittmeister der Reserve", a position like a Major. He was politically active, as a member of the NSDAP, the Nazi party, and as an elected City Councilman. He was of course "called to the weapons" and he was killed while he was City Commander of Charlon-sur-Marne in North France, in 1940. I have no personal memory on him.

Was I a war victim?

Well yes, formally of course – and my mother received a pension as a war widow and my sisters and brothers did the same until we had completed our university education. But did I suffer? To the best of my knowledge, my mother did all that was necessary and possible to take care of our family, including of course this baby and to protect it. Yes, I remember my mother being sad and crying in the mornings and of course I was not happy when my mother and my older sisters were unhappy. And yes, there were several cousins killed or who went missing in Russia, a half brother returned two years after the end of the war from American captivity. So the war did not stay away from our family.

We lived in a very big house within a large garden – a farmer would take two mornings to plough this garden. We lived outside the city. A rather peaceful city. We had lots of barracks and therefore lots of German soldiers. But – except for the last weeks of the war – this did not mean too much in terms of being subjected to the enemy's hostilities. People living and growing up in the center of the war action, for example, in Berlin, Hamburg or in the Ruhr District – the weapon chamber of the Nazi regime – would have suffered much more. Compared to these people, we lived a privileged life.

My mother had remarried, the new husband was a widower with three children, and in 1944 all these people moved into our house. While I was used to my mother as the person being in charge, there was suddenly a man who – following the usual German tradition – took charge and leadership in family affairs, and my mother – who for me had 'run-the-show' during the first five years of my life – let him do it. There was never a word of disharmony between the parents so it

could be assumed that this rather new style of male governance in the house was approved of by my mother.

I remember from my childhood an intense fear coupled with curiosity – air raids hit somewhere and I, as a six-year old, could not find out where and why. Our house was miraculously saved except for a shell of a bomb that landed on my sister's bed after partly destroying the roof of the house – but at that time we were all sheltering in the basement of the house. The roof of the basement was made up of a thick concrete floor – the house had been built in 1928 for an architect and at the time this had been a really very progressive idea in house building. Almost a decade-and-half later it proved to be very instrumental in providing better protection for five households in the neighborhood since this strong basement served as a shelter for them all at times of air raids or other military dangers. I remember the nights in the shelter. Adventurous with so many people whom we knew! I remember the interesting fingers of the light beams of the Flak - that word made it into the American/English language - it is an acronym for "airplane defense canons". It was explained to me that "our" FLAK obviously tried to shoot the airplanes of "the enemy". We dreaded the typical humming of their motors, indicating high danger, a noise which you rarely hear these days but if on occasion heard it still makes my heart beat faster. I remember that we as children observed air raids on invisible targets that were finally illuminated in colorful explosions in the sky over the horizon. I remember that neighbors told us that a Red-Cross Train with wounded German soldiers was attacked by the English Air Force and it exploded - and I remember that I was confused: a Red Cross Train with wounded soldiers should not blow up in a colorful explosion; only trains with ammunition should do that. I learned quickly that it was not good to ask too many questions – parents and older siblings gave unclear answers. My four-year older brother of course helped with explanations: he learned in school about the "enemy" and the dangerous implications of this term.

The last night before the capitulation of our city in April 1945 is still rather vivid in my memory. The night had been dramatic, even for a six-year old. I still remember the actual noises of the bombs and the artillery. I remember that after that night American soldiers took over the city (which was relatively unharmed by the war). In this night there was a knock at the house door - my stepfather opened and three German soldiers came into the shelter - one of them was hit by a shot in the abdomen. Without proper medical care this man had died. I remember his screams and heavy breathing which filled the shelter room, his often repeated and finally in a whisper ending requests for water. I remember me reacting in a physically painful fear and panicky anxiety. In the same night at around 5:00, the two other soldiers took the dead body of their comrade and they left our house. They did not want to put us in danger for hiding soldiers, and some hours later the American soldiers came. I understood these details much later, this attempt to not endanger people who, like my parents, had helped, and I still have a lot of respect and gratitude for these soldiers.

In my memory I hear the noise of tanks rolling on the street in front of our house, very slowly, turning their cannons pointed to our house, and I see about eight American soldiers slowly, seeking cover wherever possible, kind of sneaking into our garden and progressing to the house. I was told later that my stepfather, a protestant minister, stood in front of the open house door and let the American soldiers know that here was no danger – nevertheless, they had to "conquer" the house as if it was a dangerous object. But there were no German soldiers in the

house. I do not remember the details but in the end, three American officers and three American soldiers who served the officers, were stationed (billeted) in our house. We had to move closer together - the house was really very big - but at least we could continue to stay in our house. My stepfather was a protestant minister, and the Americans respected the surviving ministers by protecting the house with an "Off Limits" sign or an "Out of Bounds" - sign. Other people had to leave their houses immediately. I remember my surprise: these people were the "enemy"? They were supposed to fight, destroy and kill – as a matter of fact – but with their arrival the frightening and dangerous cannonade was over. I remember still my surprise and my relief that the morning after the rather dramatic night, there was no shooting, no explosions, only silence – until the tanks had appeared in front of the house.

I ask myself what do I "*really remember and what is reconstruction?"* If I ask my older sisters, it becomes clear: everyone of us obviously experienced different things while we were in the same room and time. My family members and I have very different memories. If we talk about our memories, I often feel that we did not live in the same time, in the same place, in the same situations. To hunt for the "truth" in detail, is futile.

Experiences in Japan and in Germany of that time are very similar. Obviously the Emperor and his cabinet were able to negotiate with the victorious American forces for quite a while. In Germany there was a complete breakdown and disappearance of all German administration. Do not expect from the memories of a six-year old that they cover things which do not pertain to the immediate needs and the immediate social environments. The immediate needs were felt – the next winters were extremely harsh. There was not sufficient food. Extreme hunger was the order of the day. Clothing and footwear – nothing available. I was the youngest and I "inherited" all the stuff that survived the usage by my older siblings. Nothing really fitted me. I especially remembered the disastrous effect of too narrow shoes in icy weather. My feet almost froze and that was a painful and tearful experience. But I remember that I did not attribute this to the war or to the general misery around all of us – I did not see this misery. This life was condition humana, normal. Everything that was not miserable was seen as a great gift, and Lord the world was not at all exclusively bad. But the hunger was immense. We ate yellow beans with potatoes when we had, and potatoes with yellow beans for a change. In a way that was normal, even if the hunger was biting.

Institutional aspects

School started in September 1945, four months after the capitulation. Of course there was no male teacher. Males were dead or prisoners of war or at the "front". We did not miss them since they were outside of our perception. We had a very resolute female teacher. She ruled over about 85 students in our class. Teaching them with no supplies, no pens, no notebooks, no textbooks - must have been formidable. Later I understood that this was a kind of miracle – that among the first institutions that worked after the complete breakdown of the social system was the school, the elementary school. Later my father took care that we attended a protestant school within his parish - and that meant a 45-minute walk to school and 45 minutes back. But in my class at this school there were only 30 students. I never understood why it was not possible to store the necessary material for daily schoolwork at the school. Students had to carry their heavy daily supply on their backs. That is a traditional structure that remains unchanged even today.

My parents really did not have any reason to "defend" or to "justify" the war or to defend the Nazi-regime Germany. My stepfather was a minister of religion, and during the Nazi time his life was really endangered. My mother was born and raised in the Netherlands, a country that German troops had occupied. Nevertheless, both never said any explanatory words to me. I know that my siblings never got an explanation: why the war, why all this killing, why the destruction? Why had we learned that the enemy must be chased out of the country? Everybody kept silent on these issues. There seemed to be a conspiracy of silence and for a while we young ones were content with that.

One day in 1946, my stepfather was extremely busy together with both protestant and catholic church members. The church organisations, based on voluntary help of the members, were the only ones that functioned effectively. The next day, "refugees" would arrive, per train, and they had to be housed, had to be fed, had to be provided with blankets and everything that was needed. Hundreds of refugees had to be accommodated. The next morning they arrived. In the evening of the day there was a big sermon to thank God that they had all arrived safely and that they would start their new life in our midst.

They were part of a continual stream of German refugees. Up until 1950, 7.876 million refugees and displaced persons came from the Eastern part of prewar Germany into the three western military zones (especially the American and British zones). Housing was a central problem: In our house, beside the ten family members, there were six additional people: my grandfather had to evacuate his great villa and had to get a modest asylum in our house. So did another uncle with his family, their houses had been confiscated and they had to leave them overnight. As ordered by the local military commander, houses were emptied so that the refugees could be housed in them. This was possible only under co-operation of the Christian church groups who were very happy that they could show their activity and their responsibility. In the Nazi dictatorship, the churches were treated as enemies of the state.

There was one obviously dangerous concept that was avoided and kept quiet, namely the Jews. We children of course did not know who were "the Jews". We learned that certain stores in the city before the war had belonged to "Jews" but no one told us what had happened to them. Questions were promptly silenced. Of course, after the war there were no Jews around. The first German Jew I met was in 1958, a neighbor of the family of the girl I dated, a friendly grey-haired survivor of the Theresienstadt's Extermination Camp. I had no idea that she was Jewish – she had to tell me that she was a Jew – and I was very shy and embarrassed since in the meantime I knew what had happened to the Jews and I was – strange enough – ashamed in her presence. In our later talks she shared with me the fact that when she and all members of her family had been deported from our city, they had thought that they were being taken to work camps in the east.

Did we learn in school about the Nazi Regime and about the war? Not at all, I do not remember a single lecture dealing with this, and we did not ask – obviously we were too busy trying to survive the tough times. Our questions came later, when I was 13, 14 years old. At that time the general atmosphere of silencing and/or avoiding questions about the war no longer prevented or hindered us from asking them.

In the meantime the Germans decided about their new constitution. The constitution was developed by survivors of the Nazi regime and ultimately agreed upon by the victorious Western powers. This constitution was often discussed and covered later in school. But on the day of the parliamentary discussion, my stepfather and my uncle sat with me in front of the radio listening to the constituent meeting of the new parliament and the inauguration of the constitution. Ten years old at the time, I understood very little. The two men discussed their concern that now Germany would become "Americanised", obviously a very dangerous future. I could not understand why the future should be dangerous! In school, the integration of the new students had occurred and the teacher had worked hard on the mistrust and the discrimination we "old established citizen" exhibited towards the new arrivals, and they continued to arrive – we learned to live with them. For me, with the Americans there came peace, no killing, no more air raids, and occasionally good food! A highlight in the time of hunger was the receipt of a "care package" from a completely unknown citizen in USA containing clothing, peanut butter and other rare food. How could "Americanisation" be dangerous? We asked. You do not yet understand, no answer or friendly diversionary remarks was all response we received from our elders.

The creation of the German Mark currency had happened a year earlier. Each German was entitled to get 40 Deutsche Mark. The new tender was admired at the family table on the Sunday evening where we sat with the usual bread and butter and herbal tea. It was the last of these frugal dinners, for next morning the stores were full of merchandise, there was enough food offered …. Clothes … I was nine-years old then, and I wondered where all these things had suddenly came from. On Saturday the merchant still had denied my question if I could buy 50 gram of butter. Overnight, the food rations were abolished and there was an abundance of food.

You can imagine, I was not impressed with the "fear of Americanisation". But I felt cheated – obviously, the merchants had kept away from us the food we needed so much and all the other things. They were there – and there must have been someone responsible for this obviously unnecessary hunger. I developed a certain critical attitude towards the things I was told and explanations given to me to my questions. I realised more and more that some items were simply not spoken about or 'silenced'.

Institutional consequences

We learned in school about the constitution, the new form of the Federal Republic with regional states with limited authority, and that seemed to be the natural condition of living together – after all, there were great differences between the different German tribes, and obviously difference was something that was enjoyable. Working together as different people was much more fun than functioning in lock-step under a central government. This of course was the influence of post-modern ideas, the demise of uniform authority and the growing enjoyment in diversity.

Of course that did not happen overnight and it did not happen without great difficulties and tensions. Very typical: corporal punishment was prohibited for teachers – authority was demanded to convince and not to force. From 1945 to 1948, teachers used corporal punishment. It was obvious that the term "human dignity" was not a phrase but meant something concrete. That relieved us students from fear, a fear which had been part of our parents and past generations' socialisation.

The macro level of analysis

One of the first laws of the new parliament dealt with victims: The '*Lastenausgleichs-Gesetz'* – The Law on Balancing the Burden. How to get the money to integrate millions of refugees and displaced persons? The *Lastenausgleich* was the most impressive victim assistance action in the history of Germany and most probably in the world. I am sometimes sad that this very wise action of the post-war German leadership to solve problems is never discussed internationally. In our science of victimology too, there is a hegemony of ideas. Often only English language contributions are taken notice of while other contributions are neglected.

Back to *Lastenausgleich,* together with the payments to the state of Israel and the compensation to Jewish victims (*Wiedergutmachung*), it is something of which the young German state can be proud. The aim was to help those who had lost their possessions during World War II. Eight million displaced/expelled people were also assisted by these measures. We called them the "refugees" or – in more political tainted discussions – the "expelled" ('*die Vertriebenen'*). They had lost everything. In the western part of Germany there were people who had lost very little or nothing – my family belonged to those privileged. Those that had not lost everything had to pay half the value of their property to the new state – and this money was used to integrate the new citizens. My mother was very concerned how she could pay the amount till 1959. That meant additional savings and a burden – in our household there was never money for any extravagant expenses.

That sharing of this burden, in my eyes, is a great achievement and a very wise solution: It assisted those who had lost everything – through no fault of their own. It took from those who, without their merit, had kept their belongings. In a way, it made everybody highly interested in the success of the integration of the new citizens and it created a kind of solidarity that became very important. It was an effort that pertained to the whole of German society. *Lastenausgleich* was administered through 600 offices, at times employing 25 000 civil servants who decided on about 60 million applications, among them 2.1 million applications for houses which had been bombed in the systematic bomb raids.

Later I learned that solutions for victim problems are possible if and only if there is the political will to help and implement the measures fairly. Of course, there are many words to describe why this help is NOT possible. All other approaches are excuses, empty words. If victims are neglected and overlooked, this is done intentionally, namely: the politically responsible group did not deem help to be necessary. In other words they simply do not want to help.

Of course, the figures are not part of my post-war memories. Germans learned relatively late to talk about their own victimisation in the war, and there were many: the systematic bomb raids lead to terroristic victimisation of the civil population – very similar to what occurred during the war in Japan. Sheer terror were the rapes during the progression of occupation especially in East Germany where the victorious Russian troops in their progress to Berlin were reported to have committed rapes against about two million German women.

Observe yourself while you read my writing about this topic. Most people think that the victimisation of Germans was not valid, since they are self-inflicted and therefore deserved. German troops and especially the armed arm of the Nazi party, had committed many rapes and

countless acts of willful murder and other atrocities against the civilian populations during the war. But is that a reason to deny millions of people the acknowledgement that they have in fact also been victimised?

It is still difficult to address the victimisation of Germans in the war, and silencing these events was typical. Not only silencing them in front of the young ones. Research shows that at first German women talked about these events. But then the men – beaten surviving soldiers – came home after they had lost the war. These rapes were covered up in an atmosphere of shame and embarrassment. Shame and embarrassment was both in part that of the direct victims – the women – and in part the indirect victims – the husbands away at war and partners who could not protect their wives. The women kept silent, and it is only recently that research projects have unearthed their plight. Very similar is the attitude towards victims of the aerial bomb attacks.

One of the curious elements in this was the fact that the women had shown that they could manage very well in post-war Germany – but as soon as the males came back, largely beaten and crippled, a group that had lost the war completely, the women moved aside and let these men take over authority. This obviously fit better into the construction of their reality – that men lead and women follow.

Analysis on the macro level

As a German, born in 1939, I am well aware of the burden this nationality carries. This was the country of concentration camps – what an euphemism – as in reality they were 'extermination' camps, of organised genocide against six million Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, members of the clergy, against prisoners of war, especially from Eastern Europe.

The country I grew up in, of course not knowing, was a country where hundreds of thousands of foreign slave workers were forced to serve under terrible conditions. For us young people growing up, this was a fact: Our fathers and family members had served a regime that was outright criminal and genocidal. Foreign states had to rid Europe of this Nazi regime, Germans had been unable to do that. Those who had served this regime were the people we loved. We needed to understand, but they remained silent.

Today we know that millions in Europe, in Germany too, suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a consequence of victimisation that was not yet at the time discovered as an after-effect of victimisation. These millions of sufferers of PTSD were left without care. The parental generation was ashamed and shocked about its own involvement.

Of course as we grew older we asked our parents: What happened? Why did the holocaust happen? Why did Germany attack? Why was there no resistance against the Nazi's? Why did you not act against this obvious crime? The generation of my parents was silent. They did not answer our questions. In their silence, they silently denied to us what happened. They pretended not to know. We had to find out for ourselves. Books like Eugen Kogon's "*Der SS Staat*" helped us. We grew up as a fatherless generation, with fathers either killed or silent. Silencing the grave victimisation was the shadow cast over our youth. It was the reason why my generation became pretty distrustful. We learnt to no longer believe the "great narratives" as Lyotard, the French post-modernist philosopher and sociologist later called them. We were ashamed of the

victimisation perpetrated by our people – people we loved and felt attached to – over large parts of Europe – against the Jews, the gypsies, the homosexuals, the clergy – all those minorities which were at that time stigmatised, labeled by a gradual step-by-step destruction of their civil and human rights in preparation for their demise.

Silencing any discussion of this victimisation has had serious consequences. We no longer share the 'great narrative' of Germany as a great country. As a consequence we never permitted ourselves to become nationalistic. The concept of our own nation, by the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis and by the millions of senselessly killed victims, was a burden and a shame for us. Of course we were lucky – Europe was growing and we had a new target to strive for. Many of us became honest and modest members of the European community. That helped us to cope with the pain of the past.

We finally achieved a level of being aware of the horrific victimisation in the past. We have learnt to discuss them in all its details – and the publication of the Nurnberg Trials was a great help. Our mass media has not avoided the painful discussion about the past. The confrontation with the past continues – every year about 25 000 young Germans visit the site of the extermination camp Auschwitz in Poland. Germans have done a remarkable job in "coping with the past", with the "*Bewaeltigung der Vergangenheit*". Many studies deal with the contributions of almost all social groups in support of a criminal regime. We owe this to the victims and to ourselves. This active dealing with a very painful past is a very positive part of our society. We do not need to be ashamed if we confront ourselves with the burden of our past. We do not have to run away from our history. Never again! But that is possible only if we know what happened and why and what is different today. This is as important as to try to make good for the damage done.

Behind all of the horrific victimisation of the 20th century was the ideology that one nation and one race was greater and better than other races and nations. It was the criminal arrogance of the leadership group in a culture to influence and to convince the majority in their country of this, namely that: one group of people has the right to force other people under their will. After Armand Mauss' (1975) interpretation, we know how that functions. We now know the mechanisms and the counter mechanisms. We all know that this narrative of superiority is wrong. But we find many excuses not to confront ourselves with this knowledge. It is we who do not act and who do act.

This is one and an important reason why I work in victimology and why I am grateful to my universities, above all Tokiwa University in Mito, Japan, and the Tokiwa International Victimology Institute to give me the space and the opportunity to do that.

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