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# Emotional Dichotomies – The Children's Press in Postwar Germany

## *Introduction*

Wars are inherently motivated by emotions. Hatred, fear, vanity and pride coalesce to motivate mass mobilization. The Second World War, which began with lightning conquests by the Third Reich, ended with the division of defeated Germany into four occupation zones. In the aftermath of the war, German society had to deal with multiple difficulties such as famine, millions of prisoners of war (POWs), refugees and deportees and an extreme housing shortage caused by the Allied air bombings.

As a result of the defeat, Germans were presented with the challenge of fostering new emotions and repressing those that had been cultivated and internalized during the twelve years of Nazi rule in the personal, social and ideological spheres. These three spheres were redefined and substantially transformed after the war. It was undoubtedly the ubiquitous sense of self-sacrifice that predominated in German society's efforts to cope with its recent past in the immediate aftermath of its defeat.

The urgent need to cope with the difficulties of defeat, which were the focus of German public discourse in 1945-1949, is reflected in the texts of contemporary children's magazines such as *Pinguin* (1946-1951), *Ins neue Leben* (1945-1950) and *Schulpost* (1946-1957). These targeted children in their early teens, with some sections of *Pinguin* also intended for older teenagers.

The most popular magazine in the American Sector (Stuttgart) was *Pinguin,* which was highly regarded both by the German population and by the Allies. Founded in March 1946, with Erich Kästner – the well-known children's writer whose works had been banned under the Nazi regime – as editor-in-chief, *Pinguin* was one of the few children's magazines at that time that was written by journalists rather than professional educationists or writers. After reaching a peak circulation of 200,000 copies, it began losing readership by 1950, which is when Kästner also left it.[1] *Ins neue Leben,* which was popular in the British Sector, was published from October 1945 in Berlin. Its chief editor, Paul Hildebrand, had been imprisoned in Buchenwald for two years, and upon his release in 1945, at the age of 74, he returned to

1 Manfred H. Burschka, Re-education und Jugendöffentlichkeit. Orientierung und Selbstverständnis deutscher Nachkriegsjugend in der Jugendpresse 1945-1948, Göttingen 1987, 159-163; Birgit Ebbert, Erziehung zu Menschlichkeit und Demokratie. Erich Kästner und seine Zeitschrift »Pinguin« im Erziehungsgefüge der Nachkriegszeit, Frankfurt a. M. 1994, 134.

Berlin and edited the publication until his death in 1948. The biweekly magazine had a circulation of around 100,000 copies. *Schulpost* was published in the Soviet Sector of Berlin from July 1946, with a readership of 300,000. From 1948, the magazine adopted a clear political line, attempting to convince its readers to join the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ) youth movement.[2]

Children's magazines, like all the press in Germany at the time, were part of the licensed press (*Lizenzpresse*). In order to print a newspaper, edit it or write in it, candidates had to fill out a questionnaire and receive an operating license from the Allies. Each of the occupation zones had slightly different licensing rules, and despite a relatively slow start, the number of newspapers and magazines published in postwar Germany reached several hundreds. In 1947, children's magazines numbered 67, including school, church and special-interest magazines. The three magazines discussed in this article have been selected for three main reasons: (1) They are representative of three different occupation zones; (2) they had a circulation of over 100,000 copies each – clear evidence of their popularity; and (3) all three appealed to a similar age group and did not have an avowed religious or sectoral agenda. In addition, the significant role played by the press during this period makes it particularly interesting to examine the ways in which these magazines chose to appeal to their readership.

The magazines published in the immediate aftermath of the war show that children were an integral part of society, experiencing the difficulties, stresses and transformations affecting German society in general. In this period, the children's magazines constituted an almost exclusive channel of information for young readers, providing unique insights into how German society coped with its hardships. They also served as a readily available platform for postwar education and re-education. In an attempt to reinvent itself, Germany used its children's magazines to provide the nation with a new set of beliefs. Moreover, since each copy was read by several individuals – an average of three per edition, not including parents and older brothers – the ideas expressed in these publications had a very large audience.[3]

As a primary informal communication channel in these difficult times, the children's magazines were a key source of information and, more importantly, support for their young readers. They also conveyed clear ideological worldviews, representative of the occupying power in each zone – all in an attempt to help children cope with the present, to offer hope for a better future.

The present article examines four emotional polarities that enable us to chart the nature of postwar German society: despair/hope, compassion/self-

2 Tanja Nause, Zwischen Kartoffelnhamstern und Kohlebeschaffen, in: Ursula Heukenkamp (ed.), Unterm Notdach. Nachkriegsliteratur in Berlin 1945-1949, Berlin 1996, 219-228; Rudi Chowantez, Die Kinderzeitschriften in der DDR von 1946 bis 1960, Berlin 1982, 36-40.

3 Die Redaktion, in: *Horizont* 3 (1946), 3 f.

pity, courage/cowardice and revenge/reconciliation. These were part of an educational tactic that helped the children's press to distinguish the postwar discourse from that of the Nazi period. These emotional polarities clearly distinguished right from wrong, good from evil and desirable from undesirable. Children's magazines are an ideal medium for this purpose since they invoke a variety of emotions in their readers in their effort to inform and educate. Their discussion of children's emotions was used to deliver messages, mobilize their help and promote individual and social change and even ideological protest.

### *Between Despair and Hope*

The emotional polarity of despair and hope was particularly significant in the discourse of German children's magazines in the first postwar years. On the one hand, the war had ended, and with it the bombings and fear of death, but on the other, the reality revealed following the defeat demanded new ways of coping and created new fears. The success of the reconstruction effort depended first and foremost on Germany's ability to rehabilitate itself, and in the process tear down both physical and ideological ruins.[4] Hope and optimism were of the essence. However, there was also great despair engendered by the distinct threat of massive famine or the rumors about the victors' policy to deindustrialize Germany (although consistently denied by the Allies). Published under the Allies' license, the press in general, and children's magazines in particular, contributed to the denial of such rumors and to presenting Germany's reconstruction as a joint German-Allied interest. German's crisis of societal trust, both internal and external, created the need for constant reminders that only hope could lead to better days. Despair was thus denounced and hope endorsed in the reality depicted in the press.

One of the areas in which clinging to hope was most crucial was the fate of the German POWs.[5] At Christmastime in particular, the editorials attempted to foster hopes for reunion with fathers and brothers. For example, an early short story called »Ilse wartet« (*Ins neue Leben*, December 1945) describes the months of waiting by the family, and particularly the children. Ilse is a young child living near Berlin's Potsdamer Platz. She last saw her father three years ago, at the train station. Although he promised to return

4 On the dilemmas of postwar writing, see Heinrich Böll, Bekenntnis zur Trümmerliteratur [1952], in: idem, Zur Verteidigung der Waschküchen – Schriften und Reden 1952-1959, Munich 1985, 27-32.

5 Some 11.5 million German soldiers were taken prisoner during the war, 8 million of whom by the Western Allies. The latter POWs experienced reasonable conditions and all were released by 1949. The prisoners captured by the Soviets, however, suffered great hardships – about a million of them died in captivity. Moreover, when the last POWs were freed in 1956, it was revealed that about a million were still missing, their whereabouts unknown.

soon, he was declared missing (*vermisst*) a few weeks later. Ilse sits for hours by the window looking at passersby, hoping her father will be among them. She even thinks she saw him several times, but he has not appeared. Gazing at other people's comings and goings reinforces her sense of abandonment. The window represents the transition between real life outside and the limbo of waiting inside. The outside world can bring Ilse's father back, while on the inside, all she experiences is waiting and disappointment. The author addresses Ilse as follows:

> »Don't be sad – least of all now at Christmastime. Look, only half of the POWs have been released so far. Also, your grief only adds to the hardships of your mother's life. And you don't want to do that. How wonderful it will be when one day, maybe even tomorrow, you'll come home from school or from playing, and your father will open the door! How happy he'll be when he hears that his Ilse has been brave […]. Believe me, your father is thinking about you a lot and is longing to see you again. And if at Christmas he is not with you under the Christmas tree, at least he is there in spirit; and who knows, maybe the mail will soon bring good news from him! This is what we wish you and all the children who are still waiting for their fathers, as the most beautiful Christmas present.«[6]

Negative emotions, such as moodiness, sadness or concern are simply unacceptable to the author, while courage, optimism and hope are essential for the return of the missing father. This short and compassionate text attempted to encourage the waiting children. Many of those children, particularly the younger ones, felt that waiting had taken over their entire life.

The sense of sacrifice felt by the waiting families intensified as the months passed by and the POWs failed to return. Ilse's story and others suggest that anticipation can become debilitating. Due to the huge number of POWs, there was a feeling as though German society was trapped in an eternal waiting room. Women went to work, aware that when the men returned they would have to relinquish their jobs. They avoided new relationships pending clear news of their husbands' fate. And they had to keep supporting their children through all their dreams and nightmares.[7]

6 Wolfgang Haus, Ilse wartet, in: *Ins neue Leben* 5 (1945), 13.

7 About 40% of the POWs in 1945 were married, an indication of the huge numbers of those awaiting them. For more on this difficult situation, see Elizabeth Heineman, Gender, Public Policy, and Memory: Waiting Wives and War Widows in the Postwar Germanys, in: Alon Confino/Peter Fritzsche (eds.), The Work of Memory: New Directions in the Study of German Society and Culture, Champaign, IL 2002, 214-239, here 224ff.; and Barbara Willenbacher, Zerrüttung und Bewährung der Nachkriegs-Familie, in: Martin Broszat/Klaus-Dietmar Henke/Hans Woller (eds.), Von Stalingrad zur Währungsreform, Munich 1990, 595-618.

From a broader perspective, German society as a whole waited for many things: for the occupation forces to leave, for socioeconomic reconstruction and for the establishment of (as it turned out) two sovereign states. The ability to return to normality was clearly marred by the uncertainty regarding the fate of so many loved ones. This is a paradoxical situation, for if waiting prevents the return to normal life, and hope perpetuates waiting, families will seek to avoid making a fresh start as long as they have hope. On the other side of this coin, it was clear that despair would not be a good recipe for reconstruction. Therefore, the editors saw it as their responsibility to provide children with stories that would channel hope in constructive directions. The importance they attached to optimistic real-life stories is exemplified by the following letter by 13-year-old Gerd Ruß of Berlin, describing his Christmas present. While he and his family were sitting in the kitchen, he writes: »It was around 11 o'clock when someone rang at the door very softly, just as my father used to do. My sister answered the door, and then we heard her shout: *Vati*! And indeed, my father had come home from Russia.«[8] Gerd's father had spent three years in a POW camp some 2,500 miles away from Germany and it took him, the boy writes, three weeks to make the journey home. The young reader describes the happiest thing that could have happened to him at Christmastime, and the editors evidently chose to publish it to foster hope among other readers who were still waiting. Although the letter's authenticity cannot be proven, it must have seemed very real to its young readers, who probably drew great comfort from it.

In their effort to continually bolster optimism, the editorials not only published many letters such as this but also totally ignored the great despair and difficulties experienced upon the fathers' actual return such as the need to restructure the family's hierarchy and the psychological problems experienced by the men as a result of the war and their imprisonment, including alcoholism and violence.[9]

## *Compassion and Self-Pity*

The massive population movements during the last months of the war created chaos inside what was left of Germany. Many German and *Volksdeutsche* families that migrated from their homes in the east did so in a hurry and in a state of panic, caused by the constant threats of revenge, hunger, cold and disease. Many children lost their parents in the turmoil. The difficulties of assimilating millions of German refugees and deportees from the east into a bombed-out and famine-stricken country were enormous.[10] The differences

8 Gerd Ruß, Ihr selber habt das Wort! in: *Ins neue Leben* 3 (1948), 14.

9 Katty David, Children at War: World War Two as Experienced by Children, Tel Aviv 1992, 68 f. [Hebrew].

10 For more on the refugees' assimilation difficulties, see Wolfgang Benz, Fremde in der Heimat. Flucht – Vertreibung – Integration, in: Klaus J. Bade (ed.), Deutsche im

between the two populations were great. Moreover, many refugees and deportees nurtured an ambition to return to their homes in the east, which delayed their social integration, in some cases for many years.[11] The editorials in the children's magazines sought to encourage rapprochement between the two populations – the old and the new – and the emotional key selected to promote that goal was one of empathy and compassion. However, in the process of incorporating the refugees and deportees into German society, the compassion shown for this population became assimilated to the sense of self-pity felt by Germans following the war.

One of the critical junctions in which compassion and self-pity converged after the war was the theme of lost children (*verlorene Kinder*). Stories and photographs of lost children that appeared regularly in newspapers aimed to invoke compassion for both the children and their parents. *Pinguin*, for example, made a particular effort to help these children and publicized their stories. In February 1946, the faces of seven lost children looking for their parents appeared in the magazine for the first time. The stories these children told were sad and complicated. Some were unable to give any information other than their first name and their father's occupation; others had been left in hospital and nobody had come to pick them up. A six-year-old girl said that her mother had got off the train for a moment to buy some tea and bread, but the train had departed, leaving her mother behind. Others had been picked up by retreating soldiers who had taken them to orphanages.[12] A year later, *Pinguin* reported that 46 children had found a home thanks to its »lost children« ads.[13] These ads highlighted the suffering experienced by German society as a whole by focusing on the plight of innocent refugee children:

> »More than two years have passed since the war ended. But the suffering that has been caused by this war is by no means over. Our mothers are still mourning our fallen fathers, and many of our sisters are mourning their husbands, many fathers or brothers have come home from war as invalids or are still detained as POWs. Many people have lost their homes due to the war or have had to leave their homes and homelands and depart for the unknown with a small bundle under their arms. These refugees in particular live in great misery. Let us just think of the many children who lost their parents in the chaos of those long journeys.«[14]

Ausland – Fremde in Deutschland. Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Munich 1992, 374ff.

11 Bill Niven, Introduction, in: idem (ed.), Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany, New York 2006, 1-26.

12 Die Redaktion, Verlorene Kinder, in: *Pinguin* 2 (1946), 4.

13 Die Redaktion. Gefunden! Ein Jahr Kinder-Suchdienst des »Pinguin,« in: *Pinguin* 4 (1947), 12.

14 Charlotte Rave, Kinder finden ihre Eltern, in: *Ins neue Leben* 13 (1947), 10f., here 10.

This short piece exemplifies the hierarchy of membership in the German collective. When talking about the suffering of the native German society, stories of loss are presented in the first-person plural. By contrast, the suffering of refugees and deportees is presented in the third-person plural, suggesting that the children are not yet part of the collective and the goal is to incorporate them by invoking compassion and empathy.

The editors' attitude to the refugee children was very different from the way they perceived the adults with whom the children had come to Germany. Implicitly, they tried to assure the readers that the refugee children were receiving the support they needed regardless of the fact that German society regarded adult refugees as an unnecessary added burden.

Beyond their frank desire to help refugee children, the editors highlighted the suffering of German society as a whole – of millions of homeless Germans looking for their loved ones and seeking to create a future for themselves – in order to show, as many would have it, that German society had suffered enough and paid the full price for its wartime crimes. The lost children were thus emblematic of a Germany trying to reconstruct itself.

Directing the criticism outwards contributed to expanding the German societal space to incorporate the refugees and deportees, to depict a united German society facing the Allies, rather than native Germans facing the newcomers. In other words, instead of creating a hierarchy of suffering within German society, the newspapers attempted to create a cohesive postwar collective by holding the Allies responsible for the humanitarian crisis. This redrawing of boundaries enhanced the sense of self-pity. Although this feeling is not expressed explicitly in the magazines, its evolution may be traced throughout the months as individual suffering becomes identified with a collective disaster.

The perceived lack of concern by the Allies was a target for criticism. The following *Pinguin* editorial protested the lack of a dedicated lost-children information office:

> »Each and every head of cattle in Europe is counted by statistics – not a single chicken in the country escapes the vigilant eyes of some office, every German adult has been registered over and over again with 26 fingerprints and the latest I.D. – but who knows the whereabouts of the many thousands of children for whom their parents are desperately searching?«[15]

A similar attitude is evident in the theme of Allied bombings. Although these are hardly ever discussed in the written text, they are often represented visually. In illustrations accompanying various stories, the skylines of bombed-out cities provide the background for the main figures. The sense of physical destruction is alluded to so frequently in many of the discussions, comics,

15 Hilmar Pabel, Ein Vater sucht seine sieben Kinder, in: *Pinguin* 10 (1946), 25.

stories and letters to the editor that the ruins come to symbolize the socioeconomic destruction of Germany and further enhance the sense of self-pity.

Last but not least, this pervading sense of self-pity was also contributed to by Germans' need to hold the Nazi leadership exclusively to blame for their troubles, freeing themselves of any responsibility for the crimes of the Third Reich. Thus, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, German society saw itself as a victim of both the Nazi leadership and the Allies, and pitied itself for it.[16]

## *Courage versus Cowardice*

Speaking out was no mean feat in postwar Germany, and required some courage. After so many years in which people had lived in fear of informants, the children's magazines sought to provide an example of a democratic free press. To do so, they made a point of presenting a variety of viewpoints, expressing unpopular views and balancing arguments with counterarguments.

An interesting example of this approach is found in an exchange of letters published in *Ins neue Leben* in order to provide a lesson in responsibility and democracy. From the large number of letters published, it appears that the editor attributed great significance to children's letters, and, in accordance with a policy of free speech, he published both flattering and less flattering letters. He requested letter writers to give their full names and addresses, so that he could reply to each personally. One day, a letter reached the editor with the sentence »Your newspaper is a piece of rubbish.« Despite the unflattering content, the editor was pleased to see that the writer, Betty Schütz, had attached her address. He wrote back to her, saying that the magazine would appreciate it if Betty could indicate what precisely its shortcomings were. However, Betty failed to respond for a long time. Finally, the editor's letter was returned with »address unknown« stamped on the envelope. »A fine postwoman went from door to door, asking and searching. At the post office the clerks organized a search. Much effort and work were wasted – just because a young person was too much of a coward.« The editor asked »Betty« why she was hiding, as nothing would happen to her if she spoke her mind: »You are surely still haunted by those past years, when complaining was prohibited, when it was not allowed to criticize a newspaper.« He expressed the desire to find out what »Betty« thought would have happened to her if she had given her real name, surmising that this behavior resulted from the fear of informers, who had been rampant during the Nazi period and whose letters to the Gestapo had been anonymous. Apparently, »Betty« feared to

16 As can clearly be seen in various OMGUS documents, the American occupying forces in Germany were very troubled by the German feelings of victimhood and discussed how this issue should be dealt with, mainly through re-education. See, for example, files in the archive of the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich: 3/428-3/2; 5/261-3/2, 86; 5/261-3/2, 55.

express herself freely in public. The editor took this opportunity to stress that youngsters should take responsibility for what they write – this was the democratic game. He endeavored to explain that the era of fear and cowardice was over, that the rules of the game had changed. Believing in your own opinions, without hiding behind aliases, was essential for the creation of a new, free society.[17]

This story implies that although the young readers are not responsible for Germany's past, they are indeed responsible for its future and are obliged to have the courage to face it. The accompanying illustration reflects the importance the editor ascribed to this issue: it shows young boys in a classroom, one of whom is telling a friend: »When I write, I also put my name at the bottom!«[18] This visual message reinforces the message in the text, making it clear and easy to remember.

A similar polarity of courage and cowardice is evident in a short story published in June 1949 in the East German *Schulpost*, describing a class of 13-year-old pupils. Hans, the class clown, wants to put an ink-stained sponge on the teacher's chair. The whole class observes him with great interest and cheers him on. Only Wolfgang stands aside, refusing to take part. »You are trying to break the class apart,« the others tell him, but he replies: »You can beat me, because it's all of you against me: but you can't force me to take part in doing something nasty.« The pupils are enraged, some of them want to beat Wolfgang up, but Hans argues that this would only give him the attention he craves and tells them to leave the coward alone, because he surely doesn't have the guts to inform on them. The boys accept his argument and place the sponge on the teacher's chair. When the break ends, the teacher enters and the pupils stand to attention. When he allows them to sit down, Wolfgang remains standing and warns the teacher not to sit down. The teacher is shocked and disappointed, and asks who is responsible for the prank. Nobody stands up. Finally, Wolfgang stands up and to everyone's great surprise takes responsibility for it. The teacher thanks Wolfgang and commends his courage, and then goes on to berate his fellow pupils:

> »There are three types of people: a few who want and do only good, others, also not many, who want and do bad and mean things. And then there is the great mass. They don't know exactly what they want, and they do what the people around them do, whether good or bad. Apparently you all belong to that stupid and cowardly mass. I had hoped that there would be at least one of you who would be willing to fight for what is good and right – one at least, I had hoped. When the Nazis committed their foul deeds and asked everyone to take part, there also weren't many – but even so several hundred thousands said: ›We won't be part of these foul acts! We will fight against them, even if you torture us to death!‹ Not many of

17 Die Redaktion, Mut oder Feigheit? in: *Ins neue Leben* 17 (1946), 13.
18 Ibid.

> them survived. When I came back from the concentration camp, I thought that I would find young people who would be eager to emulate those people and allow only good and right things to happen, who would fight against meanness, no matter what the consequences. Is there not one single ›resistance fighter‹ among you?«

Following this speech, Hans stands up and admits to what he's done, and the whole class goes on with the lesson.[19]

On the basis of a hypothetical situation that would be familiar to its readers, this short story seeks to set out the basic principles for the education of East German children. First, it contains the idea that the vast majority of German society, which passively complied with the Nazis and their crimes, might revert to such crimes in the future. Only if people take a stand can society be saved from evil. According to this story, this silent majority is collectively responsible for crimes committed on its behalf. Second, the admirable figure in the story is Wolfgang, rather than the intended victim, the teacher, with whom we are not led to empathize. Wolfgang personifies the few who had the courage to resist the Nazis – the pride and joy of German society as a whole, and particularly of East Germany. His behavior shows that solidarity does not necessarily mean behaving in the same way as everybody else.

In the examples brought here, from both West and East Germany, cowardice is equated with Nazism. The period that has just ended is the period of cowardice and fear while the coming period is one of courage and responsibility. The difference between the two approaches is that while the Western magazine views courage and responsibility as the basic condition for free speech and democracy, its Eastern counterpart emphasizes that they are the basis of communism and a healthy, non-capitalist society.

### *Revenge versus Reconciliation*

Klaus Feinberg is the new boy in class. »He spent a long time in a concentration camp,« the teacher explains to his classmates before he arrives, and asks them to treat him nicely.[20] The story does not make it clear whether this request is made out of pity for the boy, or whether it is the usual request made whenever a new boy joins the class, as »boys will be boys.«

The three leading boys in the class discuss this during break time: »His name was Feinberg [they said], and he was in concentration camp, as a Jew, hmm… His first name Klaus was perfectly all right, though.« They reflect compassionately on what he must have gone through in the camp. Although they are only ten or eleven years old, adds the author, they are well aware of what went on in those places, because it was all in the papers. For example,

19 Helmut Preissler, Wolfgang ist ein ganzer Kerl, in: *Die Schulpost* 6 (1949), 7.
20 Hans Mielke, Der Neue, in: *Ins neue Leben* 6 (1946), 13.

one of them says: »They even set dogs on the children.« However, they have not yet actually seen anyone who was imprisoned in those camps. The information they have been exposed to about the horrors of the camps – committed in their name – must have made them extremely uncomfortable, but at the same time also excited to actually meet a camp survivor, particularly a boy of their own age.

Klaus enters the classroom. He is pallid and simply dressed. He sits down, and the lesson begins immediately. During the break the rain prevents the students from going outside to play. As they play inside the classroom, one of the young boys discovers that a big chunk of bread his mother had given him in the morning out of her own small portion has fallen on the floor and become completely inedible after being trodden on by his classmates in the commotion of their play. He cries over his lost food, and everyone pities him. Suddenly, the new Jewish boy takes his food out of his bag, breaks it in two and offers one half to the crying boy. This ensures Klaus a place of honor in the class, and when he returns home, he is accompanied by the three most popular boys. The new boy becomes the hero of the day, and is accepted as equal.

The use the story makes of bread is highly symbolic. Bread is sacred not only because of its significance in Christianity, but also because of the dire shortage of food at that time. The fact that a Jew breaks the holy bread in half and offers it to the boy who has lost his food is highly significant to the story's message of reconciliation.

It seems that Klaus's experiences are meant to represent the disaster that befell the Jewish people as a whole. The expression »concentration camp« encompasses a complex web of disparate pieces of information, embodied by the new boy in class. His successful assimilation in the group not only stands for the Jews' ability to forgive German society, but also for the ability of that society to become normal again and atone for its sins. Interestingly, it is the Jew who makes the first step, while the Germans follow him, letting him lead and show the way, and then accept him back into the heart of German society, as a distinguished member. The Jew need not be excluded anymore. The final scene, in which the four boys walk home hand-in-hand, is the ideal vision of reconciliation in the new Germany endorsed by the children's magazines. To achieve this, however, a sacrifice is still required by the outsider. His status is not self-evident; rather, he must pay a price to reintegrate in the society that has so violently rejected him. Having paid this price, his classmates find the courage to make amends.

This theme is represented from a different perspective in »The War,« published in *Pinguin* in July 1947.[21] The story is about a boy beaten up by a group of bullies because of his ethnic origin. At first glance, the story appears to be about the fate of refugees and deportees in postwar Germany or about

21 William Saroyan, Der Krieg, in: *Pinguin* 7 (1947), 18 ff.

Jews in Nazi Germany. However, the editor chose to publish a translated version of a story by the American writer William Saroyan – an Armenian by origin – about a German boy molested during the war in the United States. Having heard so much about the atrocities committed by Germans, having met soldiers on their way to fight in Europe and having seen Charlie Chaplin's movie *The Great Dictator* ridiculing Hitler, the American boys decide to contribute something of their own to the war effort. They choose Hermann, a boy from their neighborhood, as their scapegoat. They ambush him in the street and call out: »Are you German?« – »Yes,« he replies. – »Do you hate the Kaiser?«[22] they ask – »No, I don't hate anybody,« Herman replies. After being violently beaten for his answer, he is asked once more: »Well, do you hate the Kaiser *now*?« to which he replies shrieking: »No! It is you I hate.« The bruised boy then returns home to his shocked mother.

At nighttime, the boy who tells the story – one of the bullies – shares the events of the day with his older brother. The brothers, themselves the sons of Armenian refugees, talk quietly in a dark room. The storyteller asks his brother: »Krikor, do you hate the Germans?« to which his brother replies: »No, I don't hate them, they are like us.« – »And the Kaiser, do you hate him?« – »I do not hate the Kaiser« – »Krikor, you hate the Turks, who made our people suffer so much,« insists the younger brother, to which the elder brother replies: »I don't know. I never imagined them as human beings, but they are, they have families just like us. I always imagined them as – I don't know what …«

This short story attempts to deal with children's feelings of revenge and hatred, as well as implying, perhaps, that German children feared the hatred and revenge of the victims. The editor might have chosen this story in order to educate readers to judge people as individuals, rather than lumping them together in collective categories and holding them to blame for the crimes of their societies or communities. The German editor chose to show that Germans, too, may fall victim to atrocities for no other reason than their ethnic origin. Moreover, it may be that the choice of this particular story – written by a celebrated American author – is meant to show that forgiveness is possible, that German boys should not be held to blame for crimes committed by others.

Although at first it appears natural to hate all Germans, since they were to blame for the war – »It was just natural, we were supposed to hate them; everyone hated them. It was right to hate them. It was right for that time«[23] – the two brothers eventually reach the conclusion that they cannot hate an entire people, and they even manage to view the Turks, those responsible for the Armenian Genocide in 1915-1918, as humans, equal to them in every respect. Through this story, the editors offered their young German readers

22 Saroyan chose to use the word Kaiser rather than Führer to designate Hitler.
23 Saroyan, Der Krieg (fn. 21), 20.

the hope that they, too, would and should be treated as equals despite their nationality.

## *Summary*

Ambivalent emotions and the clash between emotional exhortations and the somber reality are salient phenomena in postwar Germany's children's magazines. Individually, children were called upon not to lose hope while their daily lives were chaotic and desperate. Socially, they were expected to show compassion for the other, the alien, but the aliens were German refugees and deportees from the east, and pity for the refugees often turned into self-pity as the latter became integrated into native German society, or at least were perceived as part of that society. Finally, on the national level, the need for atonement became directed outside rather than within German society, and the magazines often chose to express the hope that the German people would be forgiven.

The content of these magazines presumably reflects their editors' view of the children as partners in the social change they sought to promote. The stories urged the children to take an active part in the struggle to transform German society by demonstrating exemplary values and behavior, and an ability to learn the moral lessons of the past and at the same time face the future bravely. However, having experienced so much hardship both during and after the war, these young readers probably did not want or need soothing messages. Having experienced the most brutal aspects of life – having become desensitized to suffering – what they most required were honest and clear messages that could help them name their emotions. Not all their feelings could find a proper expression in the immediate aftermath of the war, but some feelings – apart from the largely repressed sense of patriotism – did find a place. Apparently, the magazines assumed that daily experiences – or stories relating such experiences – could be used to arouse and channel certain emotions that would help German society deal with certain difficult issues on the individual, societal and ideological levels.

The magazines demonstrate a powerful emotional duality in which »positive« emotions such as hope, courage and compassion are emphasized, while their »negative« counterparts are presented by way of warning. The daily hardships in postwar Germany are used as a catalyst for focusing on German sufferings, a tendency that was liable to lead to disregard of, or at least indifference to, the sufferings that Germans had caused to others.

The emotional polarities presented above are representative of postwar German society as a whole. This was a society characterized by hope as well as despair, courage as well as cowardice, a society in which compassion turned into self-pity, which feared retribution and at the same time sought reconciliation. These dichotomous emotions are not the only ones articulated by the postwar children's magazines, of course, but they are typical of

their educational, or rather re-educational stance. Via these emotional polarities, children (as well as their parents) could more easily grasp the dilemmas that threatened German society or required immediate resolution in the aftermath of the war. This device allowed the editors to make a didactic use of emotional descriptions and to deliver clear educational messages, in which the very presentation of the negative shed light on the positive, and the error illuminated the right answer.

The emotional re-education undergone by German society in these years would affect its attitudes to the Nazi past and the postwar hardships. Children, particularly teenagers who had lived most of their lives under Nazi rule, suffered greatly in those years, and the different emotions they were encouraged to express influenced the way they would cope with the past for years to come. The children's magazines thus made a significant contribution to the processes of opinion shaping, remembrance and forgetfulness in postwar Germany.[24]

24 This contribution is based on the author's Ph.D. dissertation, which was submitted in 2007 in the Jewish History Department, University of Haifa, under the supervision of Prof. Yfaat Weiss.