

Come tell me after all these years
your tales about the end of war
tell me a thousand times or more
and every time I'll be in tears

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The Japanese Internment camps – not a thing of the past Dr. P.G. Bekkering, (G.P.), M. Bekkering-Merens, Psycho-therapist.

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"My experiences are not unique. All who have been in the camps in the Dutch East Indies encountered similar things. Only the personal process of assimilation differed. It is this process that mattered".

This was written by H.I. Leffelaar in 1959 in a book in which he describes his experiences as a boy in the Japanese camps. He opens with a description of his recollection and his digestion of the experiences: to him this is the beginning of a long journey of which the destination is uncertain. Many of the people who went through similar experiences have tried to integrate them into their lives with varying success. Full assimilation has not been possible for many who have achieved only a partial adaptation, a sort pseudo digestion. It is feasible that this adaptation and the suppression - which has demanded too much energy - results in disturbances in the second half of life.

From our personal experiences, and from those of our clients and patients as well as from the literature, we know that an increasing number of people from the former Dutch East Indies, who are now between 40 and 60 years of age, are now often confronted to their astonishment by psychological and psychosomatic problems that have their roots in the camp experiences. We have, therefore, thought it worthwhile to give a short survey of what happened to these people during: the Japanese occupation of Indonesia (1942 - 1945) and subsequently, because there are probably quite a large number of Europeans who have undergone the same type of traumatic experience in Malaysia, Sarawak, Burma, The Philippines, Vietnam etc. We believe that doctors, social workers, layman and ex-internees should be aware of the way in which present behavioural disturbances and complaints may be related to former camp experiences.

NUMBERS

About 300,000 people returned to the Netherlands from the Dutch East Indies after the war. 100,000 had been interned in a camp, about 60,000 children and 40,000 adults. Most of the children are still alive. Those who were babies in 1942 are now almost 40, and children of up to 20 at that time are now approaching

60. Those who were adults in the camp are now of course over 60 years of age. It is important to differentiate the age at which an individual was first interned. The big difference being whether one was interned as an adult, a mature human being, or as a child of under 5, between the ages of 5 and 10, or between 10 and 18. Those who entered the camp as adults may well have been able to absorb their experiences consciously, and to accept them, because their personality was already matured and stabilised with well developed psychological resistance. Nevertheless camp experiences even in the phase of life can leave deep traces. A long stay in a camp invariably leaves psychological scars. We consider that the experiences of those who were in the camps as children differ fundamentally, and have quite different sequelae. Leffelaar writes that his impressions and observations differ fundamentally from those who were with him as adults.

Camp children underwent these traumatic experiences in a susceptible phase of their life, and the impressions they gained can, consciously and unconsciously now lead to various disturbances. They are at a stage where it becomes necessary to contemplate one's own death, and address again the experiences of the past. The "forced over-adaptation" of which they have compensated up to now may fail (Bastiaans 1979).

WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM

December 7th, 1941 the Pacific war started. By February the 15th 1942 the "impregnable" Singapore fell. On March 8th the Allied Forces on Java - the last bastion – surrendered, and rapidly the whole Archipelago of the Dutch East Indies was occupied by the Imperial Japanese armies. Sooner or later all Europeans and many Eurasians were interned in special sections within the cities or towns, or else were transported to factories, monasteries, coolie barracks etc. Later on many isolated camps were erected in remote areas.

In the civil camps, to which we will limit ourselves in this article, men were separated from women and

children. The age limit of "men" was constantly lowered. By the end of the war groups of 10 year old boys were repeatedly being taken from the female camps, as the Japanese, by that time, insisted on regarding them as adults. In general internment was rapidly achieved and hit the European community harshly. The change within a few hours from comfortable houses to crowded, unfurnished wards, or to barracks, or into overcrowded houses in segregated districts under condition where nothing was organised and nothing was distributed induced a feeling of helplessness (Van Velden 1963). The internment lasted three interminable years from 1942 to 1945.

THE CAMP SITUATION

There are a number of distinguishing features which we feel to be characteristic of all the camps, though individually they may differ in degree and severity according to the place and time :-

DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY

One wasn't free to come and go as one wished, although inside the camp there as freedom of movement. Sometimes work was organised outside the camp, but many camp inhabitants didn't pass the gates for years.

CROWDING

Inmates lived in cramped conditions. Often hundreds of prisoners confined to barracks designed for far smaller numbers. The physical sleeping space was sometimes as narrow as 55 cm, and the barracks themselves were closely aligned. Overpopulation to an oppressing degree.

POOR NUTRITION

Every camp knew its good and bad times as regards to food supply. As a rule there was a chronic shortage of food and deficiency of proteins, vitamins, trace-elements and, of course, of calories. As a result inmates suffered a lowering in their general resistance, becoming visibly emaciated, eternally hungry, particularly in the final year 1944 – 45. It was a race with time. The influence of deficient nutrition in the earliest years of life had been suggested by van Praag (1979) as possibly resulting in permanent damage.

LACK OF PRIVACY

No seclusion was ever available, there as no privacy. Everything took place "en masse" getting up, roll-call twice a day, eating, sleeping, washing, cleaning, toilet etc.

FEAR

There was intimidation by individual guards, and often collective punishments, which seemed to have no relation to the alleged offence. Punishments which were applied to the whole camp including the children, such as withholding food, long roll-calls even during the night etc. Such punishments often had a barbaric

character. Long "punishment" roll-calls in the fierce heat could be a disaster. Then there was the Kempetai (Japanese Gestapo), who sometimes came for people and took them for interrogation or punishment (torture); their return was uncertain. Confrontation with such violence, and stories about it had a paralysing influence.

In short there was a complete dominance by the mighty, the strong, the "man with the gun", a dominance which induced feelings of complete powerlessness and humiliation. For many the psychological trauma has continued its influence right up to the present day.

SEPARATION

Separation from one's family and friends was always imminent, and its experience could be a catastrophe, especially for children. Strong emotional ties - the bonds of love - could suddenly be severed. Such experiences can result in a reserved attitude towards forming deep emotional ties later in life. Mothers who were forced to stay behind when one or more of their sons had to be transferred to the male camp suffered particularly severe emotional trauma. Many lost their immediate and direct aim in life.

UNCERTAINTY

Always there was uncertainty about the immediate future, for example there were the sudden transportations to another prison in an unknown place, and often such transportations were postponed repeatedly for varying and unknown times after they had been announced. There was always uncertainty about the long-term future. How long will this last? Can we stand it to the end? One was, of course, convinced of the victory of the Allies, but it was taking such a long time. In the meantime there was uncertainty about the life and the well-being of one's family and one's friends in other camps, and of those in the Netherlands nothing was known. No mail was allowed between relatives in different camps with the exception of an occasional single postcard, the standard text that took perhaps six months in transit. By the time one got such a card one was never sure that the sender was still alive.

One was always uncertain about the behaviour of one Japanese ruler. His behaviour was unpredictable and totally incomprehensible because of the cultural differences. The language formed an additional barrier. Complaints and protests by internees were considered as signs of ingratitude, and were disrespectful towards the Emperor. The enforced and almost ritual character of correct bowing by the prisoners had a special meaning, and was not intended as humiliation, but by many Europeans it was considered as such. By their treatment the Japanese made it clear that prisoners should have no expectations. They were conquered and they were therefore worth nothing: "as scraps of paper in the wind". Drastic measures such as transfer to other camps, house searches, the enforced confiscation of all books and papers, separation and transportation of the

growing boys in the male camps were often announced and carried out on Sundays and on Holidays. All of these were uncertainties, totally random; one was and felt powerless in relation to one's own fate.

MONOTONY

In the beginning there were many activities: church services, teaching, (both of these were in many camps sooner or later forbidden), lectures, debating, cabaret, gymnastics etc. Later with increasing exhaustion and debilitation everything became grey, such communal activities ceased, and every inmate withdrew into himself.

ISOLATION

Although news about the course of the war penetrated into most of the camps, one knew little of the goings-on in Indonesia, and in the rest of the world. One had feelings of being forgotten completely - especially in the more remote camps. One felt that nobody knew of the existence of European prisoners in Indonesia.

CAMP HIERARCHY

Most of the management within the camps was in the hands of prisoners who had been placed in authority on the basis of their personal qualities which often had nothing to do with their social position before the war, and what now seemed important was often what previously may have been regarded as useless. Moral values seemed to be reversed. Camp regulations were followed meticulously because otherwise a disciplined life inside the camp was impossible, and such discipline was essential for the orderly distribution of food the organisation of kitchen duties, cleaning and transport services etc. Theft within the community wasn't tolerated, but stealing from the Japanese if undiscovered and not too risky for the camp (because of collective punishment upon discovery) wasn't considered immoral. Orders from the Japanese commander, particularly those which we considered as bizarre were sabotaged as far as possible. There was a strongly contrasting system of moral values for "in" and "outside", children often were in conflict with power and authority. The ruler was deeply mistrusted.

THE KONGSI

"Kongsi" is the Indonesian word for alliance. The Kongsi as the small, coherent group which grew together, and often replaced the disrupted family; a typical camp-phenomenon. A good kongsi was a kind of life insurance, and was supported by loyalty towards each other and a strong "in-group" camaraderie. Because of this loyalty kongsi's were rarely broken up. A bad kongsi could have far-reaching consequences most certainly for the children in their dependent position upon it.

"CAMP - MENTALITY"

General reaction towards camp conditions, especially when the situation became evermore grim as in 1944-45 was of the form: "I will make it. Death won't get me. I will overcome this disease or defect, and I will persist". Existence became a day-to-day matter; we were always existing through the present and looking towards the future. This "future" became over-rated and idealised. Perhaps this experience was merely an intensification of what is in any case a basic human characteristic.

THE "THEN" CHILDREN

What happened to the children of under 18? The war meant practically for all children the disruption of the family: father left them; familiar family surroundings had to be left. Boys of 18 and over had to go to the adult men-camps. Later the age limit was lowered successively until at last boys of 10 had to leave camps for women and children. These transportations repeatedly took place taking with them each time a new group of "men". During the last month before the surrender of the Japanese, persistent rumours circulated that women under 40, and girls of older than 12, would be sent to the work camps. In short the camp period meant for children an existence constantly under threat. Van Velden (1963) writes in her paper about the camp children :-

"the children were very sensitive to the atmosphere of 'danger' in the camp, they followed rigidly the Japanese regulations. They didn't enter prohibited areas, and they stood quietly at roll-calls. During penalty roll-calls even when they lasted for half a night, they kept deathly silent. Many children didn't play for months. For older children the situation was even more difficult. They had reached the stage where they were able to form their own judgement, and they saw and heard too much of the selfishness, the quarrels and the dishonesty of the adults. Children were forced to become independent very early, they had to form judgements, and they had to learn to distinguish values. They had responsibilities thrust upon them especially towards their mothers and towards their younger brothers and sisters. Many came to feel that they were going to be responsible for life after the liberation, and they tried to learn as much as possible in preparation. It is hardly surprising that they became disillusioned with the behaviour of the adults and with the countless fine and hollow words they heard in speeches before, during and after the war, and that this disillusionment has prevented them from entering enthusiastically into things". This quotation shows clearly what difference the age at internment meant to the experiences encountered. For the sake of this article we condensed the age groups to 3, but a finer classification 0-2, 2-4, 4-6 etc, should be used.

A) Ages 0 - 5 years

Usually these children retain few conscious reliable memories of the camps, but they must have absorbed like a sponge the feelings of the people surrounding them and the atmosphere of the camp community.

Incomprehensible threat, the desertion by their father etc., were factors they couldn't fully understand yet. There was a scene in Singapore, 8 months after the war, May 1946. Chinese dressed in Japanese uniforms were making a film. A little girl from one of the camps, about 3½ years of age, bowed dutifully every time she even spotted one of the Japanese. Her mother couldn't persuade her to give it up, she had become so strongly conditioned.

Camp life often forced a symbiotic relationship between a mother and her children, which kept them mutually alive. The re-acceptance of the father and brother(s) after liberation thereby became a problem, which did not get enough attention. This in addition gave rise to severe conflicts within families, and the hurt and misunderstanding can persist to the present time.

B) Between the ages of 5 - 10 years

These children experienced the camp period more consciously, but during their stay they still had very little personal "defence". Many had few real tasks or duties which they must perform for the family or for the Kongsì. There was little possibility of their reading widely because there were hardly any books. Other activities of learning, playing (itself very limited because of lack of room and absence of toys) were all restricted by the existence of camp life, which we have already described. Such children felt fully the threat from above and the powerlessness of the inmates, but often they understood only very inadequately what was actually going on. For example there is a pronouncement of someone born in 1934, who committed suicide in 1957: "if only I knew what threatened me" (the feeling of apprehension). Caring contact was limited or totally lacking. Children were too big for it, and there was very rarely privacy for mother and children to be alone together.

C) Older children to the age of 18 year

"The Little Adults". These children had to bear great strain. Their image of the grown-up world was formed early and without proper maturations. They were, and most certainly felt themselves to be, co-responsible with the adults. Boys of 10 later had to go to the men's or boys' camps. Often they left with their teddy-bears packed in their rucksacks. How were they looked after when they arrived in these camps? A guardian was often appointed. Did emotional ties grow? Only rarely did they find their father in the camp to which they were transported.

For these older children there was an abrupt blockage in their developing futures. They were usually the ones who had to do the heavy physical work in the kitchens and in the transport parties. They had the full responsibility.

For children of all ages those who had particularly negative experiences within family life before the war, therefore lacked certain basic learning of trust and stability, had an extra burden. The same can be said of all those who had, especially in the first years after the

war, negative experience viz. of the re-united family or of other close relationships. (Keilson 1978).

Death was there in reality. The death rate in the camps rose, in the last year (1944-45) very noticeably so, and the children perceived it, because in most camps it was a custom to give some sign when a dead inmate was carried out of the gate. One minute silence was kept at such times.

When bathing the physical decay of the adults and their misshapen appearance by hunger oedema was inevitably noticed by the children. Hunger and disease constantly evoked thoughts of death. Life behind barbed wire or bars on an overcrowded and limited area choked and depressed the younger inmates even more than the adults.

Transportation to an unknown destination always aroused fear, particularly the isolation of being separated from mother or the "kongsì" members. The wearing out and the irreplaceability of indispensable goods such as plates, jugs, pans, pails, clothes etc., laid heavy responsibilities on the children using them. Theft was always a risk.

The emotional unreliability and instability of adults affected children, and often resulted in distrust and emotional seclusion, attitudes that are difficult to overcome in later life.

There were mothers who lost their self control towards their children: they spanked them often, and tried sometimes even to steal food from their children. Quarrels were always going on, and children could not help but overhear. Mischa de Vreede (1974) wrote: "I went once to the cemetery outside the camp - an open clearing in the forest. It was good to be there for a death. It was quiet, without the cries and the whining and yelping of the children, and the scolding, things you had to endure in a camp all day" (Mischa de Vreede was born in 1936).

The intense feeling of powerlessness was paralysing. The adults offered little protection, and they too could hardly change anything in the situation. The humiliations, for example standing on roll-calls for hours, of having to bow to the Japanese guards at will, was also perceived by the children. So was the humiliation of feeling always dirty and of being infected with head lice and suffering from constant diarrhoea.

The false hopes, based on recurrent rumours and predictions about the end of the war, were a burden for many of the children. Just as the ever recurring talks about food and recipes. "A camp child" who was born in 1939 formulated as follows :-

"Peeling off the social layers or masks, only the naked existence was left, and the struggle for it and for the nearest human being. Sometimes such struggles involved damage to one's fellow internees: treason, theft from the sick for example. On the other hand there were deeds of extreme valour and of the utmost solidarity. A child learned to know the nature of man in an absolute, and extreme way and perhaps this resulted in their later imposing upon themselves extreme and

absolute demands, and later having few illusions or trust in the benevolence of man".

LIBERATION AND PEACE

After 3 years of internment the war ended in August 1945, but liberation and peace did not follow immediately. The political situation in Indonesia was turbulent and daily life was unsafe. In many regions a guerrilla war was going on, and again death was a reality. Shelling, kidnapping and murder were common, and children were not excepted. Many internees had to stay within the camps for their own safety, sometimes for as long as a year. A camp child born in 1939 writes: "I didn't have an idea that there had been a 'liberation' between the first and the second internment, which lasted almost a year".

Restoration of a pre-war "normal" life, the dream of the internees, turned out to be impossible. The Indonesian reacted in a hostile manner. Positive feelings which many of the "Europeans" who had been born in Indonesia had towards that country were not acknowledged, and the concern and sacrifices many had made during the war seemed worthless to the Indonesians. Most of those who lived in the camps were transported by troopship to the Netherlands, a country that many of them had never seen, and where no one knew or understood what they had endured. A country which had undergone its own war and liberation, and which had little time and compassion left to give proper attention to the horde of have-nots who had returned. The internees, and especially the children, didn't feel really at home in Holland; they felt they were uprooted.

Good physical care was provided. The Government did its best to provide the repatriates; en route to Holland everybody received clothes, and on arrival was issued with double rations for half a year, housing was organised in pensions or with relatives etc. Unfortunately because of their past experiences most of the ex-internees retained a feeling of being lost and isolated. Many families stayed disrupted because of circumstances or when re-united parted again.

DIFFICULTIES IN ADJUSTMENT

It remains a question as to how far camp experiences can be communicated to, and shared with, others who have never experienced such a different way of life. Sometimes it seems one speaks another language. Outsiders find it hard to listen again and again to the stories of internment, while this reiteration is a necessity for the ex-internee who is trying to come to terms with the trauma he has undergone. In our opinion this same fate of non-communication and isolation is felt by European ex-camp people.

An additional factor was that people in the Netherlands had little affinity and felt very little involvement towards the tropics, the war in the Pacific, and towards the Japanese occupation of Indonesia. This was certainly true after 1949 when Indonesia became independent. Because of this lack of

understanding and interest for what one had gone through, one remained silent about one's experiences of internment. Sometimes one encountered a sort of negative stigmatisation in the form: "you colonials, exploiters etc., it serves you right, and now you are even receiving double rations here". Also the welling up of sentimentality and a distorted recollection about experiences in the camps by adults, who perhaps had a need to over-dramatise or even excuse their feelings, affected the younger ex-internees who had a more realistic recollection, and who tended thereafter to turn away from their past. In the Netherlands those who came from Indonesia heard for the first time of the atrocities in the German concentration camps. One's own experiences paled in comparison, and one kept silent out of a certain shame because the sufferings of others had been so much worse. Suffering, however, is always individual. The forming and the deforming influences of a camp period are always experienced individually, and have to be digested and assimilated individually. Comparing suffering, in such a way is meaningless, and it may be harmful to the individual faced with his own need to come to terms with the past.

Added to this, one's very survival creates obligations and the need to be grateful. One was and one stayed grateful for much, but this feeling developed a compulsory aspect. Don't complain was the motto. To be grateful meant or at least implied that one had to prove gratitude. To prove that one had earned the right to be alive. One set oneself the dedicated task of working to maintain oneself, of becoming and remaining independent, of taking a grip on the general situation. To give in seemed threatening. Parents needed and wanted to "forget". They didn't talk or think about the camp anymore on purpose: "that has been": Disappointments, hurts, anguishes, failure of careers, the unnecessary suffering, being expelled from a country, living with death etc., kept one silent about the feeling of having failed towards the children.

Later on a great deal was published about the German concentration camps, very little on the contrary, about the Japanese camps. This reiterated to those who had come from Indonesia that their sufferings had been so much less. They had not been troubled by the icy coldness of winter. The Indonesian camps had not been camps of deliberate annihilation. One felt ashamed to be constantly thinking of what one had been through, and one kept silent. Besides all this we had never had an opportunity to undergo any kind of collective mourning process, to come to terms with our experiences of camp-life and of war as a collective body of people.

To some extent our sufferings were not acknowledged by the community, or even by ourselves. In literature, in films, in the theatre and in the ever recurrent publications in papers, periodicals etc., it was the European war that received all the attention, and thereby was digested by us all. The Japanese / Indonesian war remained an isolated period alien both

collectively and individually. Moreover when the war ended there was no direct confrontation between the tyrants and the victims, therefore, no opportunity directly at that time to assimilate. A "reconciliation" as not possible, because further communication with a former enemy never took place.

This was a genuine loss, and is illustrated by the fact that many particularly younger ones hungered for a re-valuation or if you like a re-experience of their time in the camps. Someone confessed that he went to see the relatively mediocre film "Bridge on the River Kwai" about ten times. Another told how he had watched fascinated, the television series about the destruction of the Japanese Kwantung Armies: with beating heart and sweat in the palms of his hands he looked at the Japanese soldiers: "yes that is how they were, that's how it was". The intensive interest which many of the younger internees developed about the war in Europe and the European camps, possibly signifies a shift. Did the Japanese become "German", is this an attempt to digest? What can one think of a couple, both Japanese "camp children", who went to Poland in 1965 during their holiday to see the camps. They entered with uncertainty Maidanek, where the wife had to vomit acutely behind the first barracks. What motivated them to spend this short holiday on such a "pilgrimage"? Was it perhaps an attempt at confrontation and coping, albeit with a "shift"?

It is possible because of the factors mentioned the suffering was never properly acknowledged. What had occurred in the past was not recollected collectively, and thereby carried over the threshold of the past into the present. This failure hampered the process of digestion considerably. Added to this, individually, ex-camp people will always try to pursue normality, and to hold on to it until eventually they break down. Many are not able to acknowledge the possible relationship between their past experiences and their current problems. Rob Nieuwenhuys (1979) calls his last book typically "A little bit of war" because he says: "I was saved the worst hardship. For me there was only imprisonment, the daily routine with its deadening effect, the fear, the dreams of powerlessness, and the periodical starvation". Put like this, it doesn't seem to have been such a big experience that one should still have problems because of it.

THE TRACES THAT WERE LEFT BEHIND:

It is clear that a long period of internment must leave its imprint, especially on the children, even when the camp experiences are not marked by atrocities, that by themselves can stigmatise even adults to deep subconscious level. These traces need not always lead to abnormalities: especially a strong safe emotional bond with emotionally important persons in early youth, before, during, and especially after the camp period is of the greatest significance in preventing this. However, the question remains as to what possible future pathology they can induce.

Many have been able to reach a certain degree of digestion and integration. It is difficult to trace to what extent important decisions in life should be considered as having pathological origin. Such things as a decision on emigration - a break with everything? One's choice of a partner? Choice of profession or career? The evasion of certain responsibilities? The turning down of a particular nomination or appointment on basically unreal grounds etc.

Many people will have peculiar habits which would not necessarily be regarded as disturbing under normal situations. For example excessive carefulness, playing safe with regards to financial things, insurances etc., afraid of being different from others, of being conspicuous, a fear of luxury and of waste etc.

In certain situations a strange and excessive reaction can occur, for example reactions of fear in situations of violence, as reactions of disproportional aggression towards police and/or authorities or alternatively a notable excessive passivity and acquiescence towards authority. Excessive reactions towards being ill, fear for disease and of death. In short, neurotic types of reactions under certain conditions.

For some camp life may have led to the abnormal formation of the character in such a way as to make life more difficult: reactions such as emotional reserve or aloofness or guardedness towards oneself and towards others, fear of becoming attached or attaching oneself excessively towards people, excessive guilt feelings and excessive anxiety in daily life, and insatiable feeling of having missed a lot, excessive feelings of remaining a victim or even on the contrary denying ever having been a victim, and of pressing on to one's breakdown.

In addition there are "functional" disturbances such as sudden lassitude, insomnia, headache, "pseudo" cardiac complaints etc. One woman, born in 1939, came to re-experience after a couple of interviews, the traumatic post-war period. Her own emotional guardedness had been a defence, and the vague memories of the camp period came into the open. The functional cardiac complaints from which she suffered became much less cause for panic, and more tolerable or manageable after this, and she never again required admission for pseudo-infarction.

A whole range of psychosomatic abnormalities can also be related to the previous camp period and its gradual absorption.

Finally there are the serious psychiatric symptoms such as phobias, depressions etc., explosive aggressive behavioural disturbances such as arson, destruction of possessions and suicide. It is clear that much of this impacts on the children of such sufferers.

The psychopathology following camp experiences is not specific to any one form, but perhaps possibly to a certain extent, to the content and to the intensity. What is it in essence? Intensification of general human problems such as powerlessness, fear, menace, uncertainty, abandonment and loneliness?

RETROSPECT

Most ex-internees managed to carry on independently. Many supported by friends, relatives and loved ones were able to achieve a "cure", to reach an inner liberation. In the course of the years the telling of the stories, the repetition, and the emotionally re-experiencing what they have repressed is to be regarded as a superior form of "therapy". Occasionally a somewhat scarce literature will have had such functions: just re-read the lines of the poem of Leo Vroman (1964)!

Many will refuse psycho-therapy even when it is clear to others that it would be of benefit to them: Here we come to a delicate point in that therapy readiness and willingness to acknowledge a need is as a rule faint or absent, a typical mark of the camp attitude, which is to go on and on, not to break down, and somehow to carry on your own at all costs. Others were, treated, at times professionally, more often non-professionally, perhaps without either the participants realising what was occurring, and what were the deeper underlying problems.

Recognition is important in therapeutic contact. Everyone has a need to be recognised, everyone wants to let himself be thoroughly known within a trusted and confidential relationship without evoking inequality. For "camp people" with problems this is perhaps true in an even stronger measure, because they have had to conquer the feelings of being powerless, and of being a victim.

When serious decompensations occur, a structured form of therapy is probably advisable or necessary. The seriousness of pathology has to indicate the direction of the therapy, its clinical course, for example within a specialised centre or not. Only therapists who regard their clients during the therapeutic contact as fellow human beings, and behave towards them in this way can truly give help. It is worrying that sometimes camp people are treated by therapists in an "instrumentalistic" way. Such therapists teach their clients a certain way of behaviour and approach whereby true re-experiencing can be endangered, while the core is "to dare to come to life again" with all the risks attached to it.

Overt or covert authoritarian behaviour on the part of helpers provokes resistance and aggression from the client, and can block the whole process of assimilation and acceptance. In a similar way social agencies providing financial aid should realise how sensitive camp people are in this respect. Because "camp problems" are related to essential emotional experiences of children before, during and after the camp period it is of paramount importance to discover these experiences together in a close therapeutic contact, and to include them in the assimilative process. Drug therapy may be necessary sometimes as a support.

Finally, as a general practitioner and as a psychotherapist we encounter in our practice mostly the negative sequelae of the camp experiences. But there are also enriching sequelae to be noted. It seems, perhaps, as if we would like to reduce everything to our

camp experiences; this would not of course be admissible, and would be an unrealistic one-sidedness.

SUMMARY

There are in the Netherlands about 60,000 people who have been in a Japanese concentration camp between the years 1942-45 during their childhood. There were about 200 camps scattered over the Archipelago. The "camp situation" and its influence on the growing children are described. A number of factors which hampered the assimilation of their experiences are mentioned, and psychological and psychosomatic disorders are named. These disturbances will often arise only when the people concerned come into a critical phase of their lives between the ages of 40-60.

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