THE ABUSED CHILD AND THE ABSENT FATHER

1. The father, who abuse a child, all the children, and eventually his wife, and who left the family, or was excluded from it in one manner or another is nevertheless, very often very present in the family.

In fact this presence is often a very destroying one. Only when his wife, the mother of the children, and, hopefully, those who belong to her, have found peace with the father, is this not the case. This does not mean that what happened or was done is explained away, or glossed over. Facts remain facts. It does not mean that sorrow, grief, is denied. Peace means that the mother can think about the father or her children without becoming angry, without wishing revenge.

The father of the children is, as soon as peace with him is found, in a sense forgotten. Maybe once there will be a new relationships and more probably this will not be the case. Anyway, he is a memory, not more.

2. This peace only can be found if the collective responsibility,. The responsibility of the mother as well as of the father, for what happened, is accepted. If the mother leaves the "romantic world", in which there are good and bad people behind her, if she accepts her part of the responsibility of the havoc, of the abusing, there is a possibility for peace.

This common responsibility is very often quite clear when sexual abuse happened, the mother conniving with the father (or the father with the mother). But even when the mother is very sure that she never did the children any harm and that she always was totally opposed to it, even running risks herself because of the violence of the father, even then there is a shared responsibility. No human solution can ever be found without acknowledging their responsibility.

3. Mostly, or even always, it is only possible to accept this responsibility, if we know in the same time about forgiveness. Finding peace with the abuser of the children is, in a deep sense, forgiving. We only can forgive, being forgiven ourselves by other people, who know about our responsibility and who fully accept us in their lives, without any reproach. We can also forgive when we know of God who forgives when we are not denying our responsibility.

4. There is never abusing in the family and the father never disappears out of a family with deep tensions between the husband and the wife, between the father and the children or/and between the mother and the children. The form of rivalry in the family can be so complicated and hidden, that mostly nobody knows what really is happening. Only the consequence, the abuse, is visible and felt.

Both husband and wife are most of the time reiterating what they learnt when they were young. They use the strategies of their father or their mother. They might be extremely violent or, exactly the opposite, physically, not violent at all. Anyway, as long as the abuse goes on, the power fight is at the base of it and however incredible it might seem the (physical) non-violent partner, the responsibility for what is going on is a fully shared one.

Phenomenological, the causes for the rivalry can be very diverse. There may be anxieties in the husband that he is not nice enough for his wife. She may have wishes to be in control, in fact to make him a child. Jealousy of the man because of the care the children get from his wife. Estrangement from the children, because they are and stay in the orbit of his wife. Fears that his wife will diminish his freedom and of course, very many reasons, coming from outside the family, frustrations, his others, which strain the relationship.