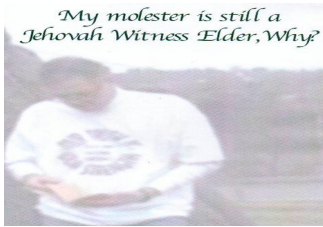


Transcript-German/WDR

Date: February, 16, 2003

"The End of Silence"



The the picture above was when I first met Ewelina in Germany and later filmed the interview.

The End of Silence

Sexual abuse in the Jehovah's Witness faith

01:11 - 01:30 (off screen/original sound) Teda

I was eight, he was grown-up, an adult man, a Jehovah's Witness, and we went from door to door here. And then he went up there with me, and then he assaulted me. I was merely frightened.

01:35 - 01:57 (off screen/original sound) Ewelina

My family belongs to Jehovah's Witnesses, and my father abused me sexually for several years, beginning when I was three, as far as I can remember. My father was not called to account. He is still a Jehovah's Witness in good standing.

1:00 - 1:21 (off screen) Ruth

Things were such that I was abused and raped by my father for years. It began when I was nine, and continued until I was 16 or 17. My mother tried to get help from the elders. She called them in. Nothing was done. It was swept under the carpet.

1:23

(announcer:)

The men who abused Teda, Ewelina, and Ruth, were members of the same denomination: Jehovah's Witnesses.

Sexual abuse is a societal problem world-wide. But the way Jehovah's Witnesses handle it is unique.

1:49 - 2:54 (original sound) Teda

I had to go from door to door like other Witness children. That was mandatory. And there was always an adult accompanying, whether man or women did not matter. And I was assigned to an adult man. And he did everything so that I might always accompany him. It began quite harmless, that sexual abuse. I got more and more frightened since it happened more and more often, and sometime I told it my mother, and that I did not want to go from door to door any longer. And she believed me. And then the body of elders was summoned. And my mother and me and that man who had assaulted me we sat, as far as I remember, in a small room, and it was discussed and he confessed. His punishment was that he need not go from door to door with me any longer.

2:54

(announcer:)

Three times a week Jehovah's Witnesses gather in their Kingdom Halls. Each meeting is led by men, so-called elders. According to the Bible, women must be subordinate. They cannot hold service positions. Conflicts and moral wrongdoing are dealt with internally by the elders in judicial committees. Lay judges without psychological training would interrogate children and pass sentences.

3:23

(announcer:)

Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock. is the title of the internal handbook for elders. It reads:

3:30 Quote

(announcer:)

Certain disputes between brothers should not be carried before worldly courts.

3:34 (original sound) Teda

Question: Was there ever some talk of reporting the man?

Answer: *ĩ½No, it wasnĩ½t. It would have come to public attention in that case.ĩ½*

3ĩ½43

(announcer:)

There had to be kept silence about the abuse even within their own ranks.

3ĩ½50 ĩ½ 4ĩ½45 (original sound) Teda

ĩ½Every Thursday and Sunday we had our meeting in the Kingdom Hall, as it is called, and I had to shake hands with that man. And it was not merely on Thursdays and Sundays, but we met in a small group on Sunday morning, and persons were assigned there to each other. And he was no longer allowed to go from door to door with me, but each time I had to see him. My mother continued to visit his family, and he even tried to do it at his home, saying, ĩ½Little Teda, come onto my lap!ĩ½ Or when he accompanied us to the doorsteps, at night when it was dark, he kept me back, and when you are eight or nine you do not know how to resist.ĩ½

Question: *ĩ½How should the elders have reacted?ĩ½*

Answer: *ĩ½I would have wanted that this man was punished.ĩ½*

4ĩ½47

(announcer:)

Watchtower and Awake! ĩ½ advertising brochures for non-members, mandatory reading for Jehovahĩ½s Witnesses. They show how the members are expected to behave. The guidelines are valid world-wide along the same lines and are pre-determined by the headquarters in the USA .

5ĩ½05

(announcer:)

The Witnesses believe that we are living in the last days; Armageddon, doomsday is just ahead. Only he who follows the strict Biblical rules is a good Witness, will not be destroyed, will enter Paradise .

5ĩ½26

(announcer:)

Ewelina is eighteen years old and a Jehovahĩ½s Witness, she was raised in that faith. Her father destroyed her childhood.

5ĩ½35 ĩ½ 6ĩ½16 (off screen/original sound) Ewelina

ĩ½As a small child, I used to sleep in my fatherĩ½s bed, and he abused me sexually. He gave me booze. The abuse continued since I was three, so far I can still remember anyway. And when I was eight we moved. After some time I told my mother what he had done to me. My mother was shocked and believed me at that moment. My mother turned to the elders, they didnĩ½t believe it and demanded that we keep silent, that my mother doesnĩ½t take the case to court, no reporting, no involvement of the public, and that my mother forgives him ĩ½ on behalf of God, that is.ĩ½

6ĩ½18

(announcer:)

Ewelinaĩ½s mother always stood by her daughter. She fought within the organization, she didnĩ½t want to be silent. But report the own husband? She doesnĩ½t want to say anything in front of the cameras. When she learned that her other daughter was abused, too, she did not turn to the police, but to the elders. Ewelina sought their help, too.

6ĩ½40 ĩ½ 7ĩ½21 (original sound) Ewelina

ĩ½The elders are the contact you trust. You go to the elders if you have got a problem, you turn to the elders with any problem. These are the persons that according to the Bible actually ĩ½ let us say ĩ½ tend the flock, who are in charge, whom you can trust, where you can be sure that these persons, the elders, will help to resolve the problems, will support you. And therefore you will go to the elders and will not turn to the outside world, yes, to counsellors.ĩ½

7ĩ½22 ĩ½ 7ĩ½25

Question: *ĩ½What did you expect from the elders at that time?ĩ½*

7ĩ½26 ĩ½ 7ĩ½55 (original sound) Ewelina

ĩ½I expected the elders to believe my sister and me in the first place, that they support and help us by advising us to go to a counselling centre, to undergo a therapy, or to report the matter. I had hoped that they would have expelled the perpetrator, in this case my father, so that other children might be protected, too. But none of these points was granted.ĩ½

7ĩ½58

(announcer:)

Ewelina could not stand the pressure any more. By chance she learns about silentlambs, an American organization that is committed to abuse victims among Jehovahĩ½s Witnesses. She contacts Bill Bowen, the founder of silentlambs, via the Internet.

8ĩ½16 ĩ½ 8ĩ½40 (off screen/original sound) Ewelina

ĩ½During the past months I was not very well, inward I was not well, actually I dragged out a miserable existence from one day to the next. I said to me, well, just one more day, and then you will see ĩ½ perhaps you will never wake up again. Unfortunately this did not come true, like I wanted it to happen at that moment. And this is good.ĩ½

8ĩ½43

(announcer:)

The contact with silentlambs becomes the turning point in Ewelina's life. For the first time she dares tell an outside person about her abuse.

8i 56 i 9i 15 (original sound) Ewelina

i When I spoke to Bill he said to me the following three words: i believe you! i Never ever has someone said this to me, at least not in that manner, and that made me so happy, that really made me happy since I knew he believes me. i

9i 21

(announcer:)

This man gave Ewelina new courage: Bill Bowen i a Jehovah's Witness for 43 years. In September 2002 he organized a protest march to Brooklyn , the world headquarters of the Watchtower organization. 125 Witnesses broke their silence and demanded that the organization must handle abuse within their ranks openly.

9i 46 i 10i 200 original sound affected woman on silentlambs rally

9i 47

(announcer, over voice:)

i To learn that there are still so much other affected persons encourages us to go public, so that we might help other children, too. i

10i 201

(announcer:)

Bill Bowen wants to break the silence. Therefore he was disfellowshipped from the organization.

10i 206 i 10i 254 (original sound Bill Bowen)

10i 210

(speaker in German, over original voice [retranslated]:)

i In 2000, I encountered a problem in my congregation: An elder I was friends with was suspected of abuse. For ten months I continually turned to the Watchtower organization. It turned out that he had already abused another child in the past. He confessed to it. But while we investigated he obviously continued as an elder, evidence was brought forth that he abused another child in the congregation. After eight fruitless calls at the branch office I turned to the legal department of Jehovah's Witnesses and informed them about the suspicion. I was told to leave the matter for Jehovah, to ask the brother if he had done it, and if he denied I was to let the matter rest. i

10i 258

(announcer:)

Ewelina's wish comes true. Bill Bowen comes to Germany, wants to support her and other victims.

11i 207 i 11i 219 (original sound) Ewelina

i Well, to be honest, i i'm feeling a little bit peculiar, I am excited, for I owe Bill very much, and I am happy that he is here, simply that he can support me during that time. i

11i 220

(announcer:)

For close to twenty years Bill Bowen was a respected elder in the USA , able to see into the organization. The lamb i the symbol of his protest movement. Now he wants to encourage Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany , too, not to be silent any longer.

11i 245

(announcer:)

Bill Bowen encourages Ewelina to tell about her serious experience. With this she might help other children. They decide to turn to the German headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. The very next day they went to Selters.

12i 202

(announcer:)

Selters/Taunus i residence of the German headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. Here are living 1,200 so-called full-time servants in an order-like community. If an elder assaults a child it must reported here. Will Ewelina and Bill Bowen be greeted?

12i 220

(announcer:)

First contact. Werner Rudtke Branch overseer, is willing to speak with Bill Bowen.

12i 226 (original sound Bill Bowen)

(speaker in German, over original voice [retranslated]:)

i Hi, this is Bill Bowen from America . I represent the silentlambs organization. We support child abuse victims. i

12i 237

(announcer:)

The telephone call is put through. Another staff member of Jehovah's Witnesses is to give information. There are hardly such cases in Germany , he says. It is an American problem. He [Bill Bowen] should turn to the American headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. With this, the call ends.

12i 259

(announcer:)

Werner Rudtke, one of the highest-ranking persons in the Witness hierarchy, is at first willing to speak to journalists, and he gives an interview. He confirms that there have been cases of child abuse among Jehovah's Witnesses. Later he forbids the broadcasting in this film.

13i½17

(announcer:)

If Jehovahi½s Witnesses report sexual abuse to the elders, there is an internal procedure. From the elder manual:

Quote (speaker:)

i½There must be two or three eye-witnesses i½ if there is only one witness, nothing can be done.i½

13i½22 i½ 14i½02 (original sound) Ewelina

i½Being a child, they did not believe me. The reasons: First, my age; I was quite young. I seemed to be untrustworthy. Second, at Jehovahi½s Witnesses you need two witnesses for such matters. This means that you need two witnesses at one time, in order to report an abuse or to let someone know something. And that was impossible; I had no two witnesses for the sexual abuse by my father.i½

14i½03 i½ 14i½53 (original sound Bill Bowen)

14i½05

(speaker in German, over original voice [retranslated]:)

i½They ask the perpetrator if he did it. Experts say that 90 percent of the ab user s are lying. But the leadership of the denomination says that no accusation can last, if there arenit½ two eye-witnesses. So, what happens if the perpetrator denies? Then they turn to the child and ask if it can produce eye-witnesses. But children have no eye-witnesses when they are raped. In 90 percent of all the cases that are investigated by the Watchtower organization, the child ultimately is left alone as a liar.i½

14i½54 i½ 16i½04 (off screen/original sound) Ewelina

i½From the outset my mother endeavoured to speak with the elders, she wrote letters, she invested her strength, so that they might believe my sister and me and other children might be protected, too. Continually they said to her she should keep it back, should be silent, should rather stay together with her husband for the sake of God, than to leave him. So, they didnit½ help her, they didnit½ believe her the same way they didnit½ believe me and my sister. We didnit½ get any support. Actually, it was merely a constant struggle on the part of my mother, for she was actually blackmailed, she was forced to be silent. Not to go to the courts, not to go public. They made it clear that she would have no chance, even before court, if she went public, since Jehovahi½s Witnesses had enough smart lawyers to brush the matter off the table.i½

16i½07

(announcer:)

Here in Bavaria, in a small village near Munich, lives Ruth, a former Jehovahi½s Witness. She was raised in a Witness family. Like her sisters, she was raped by her father for many years.

16i½25 i½ 17i½45 (off screen/original sound) Ruth

i½My mother tried to get help through the elders, she got them involved when it became known that this befell my older sisters, too. And the elders came for a conversation. And then they merely asked my father if he repents, and they asked my mother: Do you forgive him? Yes, and that was it. No further steps. So he was able to continue to be up to his mischief in our family, he always went one step further, ultimately abusing and raping me and then trying it with my little sister.i½

i½Why didnit½ the police get involved?i½

i½Well, it is always said that you must not shame Godi½s name and Godi½s organization. And that would have been shame, just at that time. And that was the main reason that nobody was involved, for then they would not have been able to keep appearances that such things do not happen among them, within their ranks; they always mention in their magazines, publications, that this happens in a world which is so degenerate.i½

17i½57

(announcer:)

Danger comes from going outside to the outside world i½ this idea is constantly conveyed. That they are part of this world does not fit in the doctrine of the chosen people.

18i½09

Quote from the Awake! magazine (speaker:)

i½The sexual molestation of children is an ugly reality in our sick world.i½

18i½16

(announcer:)

Paul Kuberek lives in Munich. He was a Jehovahi½s Witness for 45 years. He was a respected elder for more than 20 years. He knows about the internal dealings with abuse and the attitude of the Watchtower organisation.

18i½33 i½ 19i½22 (original sound) Paul Kuberek

i½I know of some cases, as an elder I was entrusted with them and I tried to help. The organization itself wants to hush it up and would like as far as possible that this doesnit½ become known outside. There should be no reports. Once there was a lecture during a training for elders that came out as a letter to the bodies of elders later. It is one of those letters that only elders received, in which it read that we should not report it to the police as far as possible, that if case such things happen we should help the person, that he eventually might keep his position as an elder if that happens. Later this was toned down.i½

Question: i½Does a person, who abuses his children sexually, not automatically become disfellowshipped?i½

Answer: i½No, he doesnit½. Not if he repents.i½

19i½26

(announcer:)

Some women found the courage to speak about their painful experiences in this film. Other ones confirmed their statements, were however not willing to speak on-camera i½ for fear to be expelled by Jehovahi½s Witnesses. For many of them the Internet is one possibility to speak anonymously about their experiences for the first time, to

express themselves about the abuse, to find consolation and support. The figures are alarming. Affected persons from all over the world reported to silentlambs up to now.

20i½01 (original sound Bill Bowen)

20i½04

(speaker in German, over original voice [retranslated]:)

i½Silentlambs knows of 60 to 70 abuse cases in Germany. For the moment this seems to be no high figure. But this figure is remarkable if you consider that the matter was not yet in the headlines here. Therefore I believe that the problem exists here, too.i½

20i½31

(announcer:)

voice over

i½What is different from America?i½

20i½35

(speaker in German, over original voice [retranslated]:)

i½Well, they handle it the same way as in Germany. They put pressure on the victim by requiring two eye-witnesses. They protect the ab user by not allowing the victim and his/her family to inform other members about the abuse. If you go to the police, in most cases the whole congregation opposes them, since the abuse is not proven to them. This is quite deliberate. There are thousands of such stories on my website. More than 5,000 affected persons turned to me and told me that they were sexually molested by Jehovah's Witnesses.i½

21i½19 (off screen/original sound) Ewelina

i½I know of many, many abuse cases among Jehovah's Witnesses, even very young persons, I am in contact with some of them, about some others I have merely heard. These are so many cases that I say to me this enough to knock me over. Because I say to me, if I had been the only one, my life would not matter to me. I wouldn't mind if I say this or if I wouldn't cope with the situation, that I find a different solution and do no longer exist at all. But it has shocked me to how many persons this happened and still happens. Children! I know children who are two years old, other ones seven, another girl is about fifteen, and they are being abused, and the elders, the congregation, know about it, and nothing is done.i½

22i½09

(announcer:)

Jehovah's Witnesses dispute that there are such cases. In a general statement of summer 2002, it reads:

Quote (speaker:)

i½We know of the misrepresentation that our proceedings are said to be not appropriate to the problem of child abuse. This accusation does, however, absolutely not apply.i½

22i½31

Quote (speaker:)

i½Anyone in a position of responsibility who is guilty of child abuse, will inevitably be removed from that responsibility.i½

22i½40

Quote (speaker:)

i½If an accused does not repent i½ and is not determined to refrain from such a behaviour in the future i½, he will not be allowed to remain in the Christian congregation.i½

22i½51 (original sound) Ewelina

i½It is not sufficient to disfellowship the person, for the abuse continues to take place. What person can take the responsibility for being silent? If you are silent, you are partly to blame.i½

23i½04

(announcer:)

i½Among the denominations the consistent procedure of Jehovah's Witnesses in cases of child abuse is unequalled.i½

23i½17 i½ 24i½02 (original sound Bill Bowen)

24i½05

(speaker in German, over original voice [retranslated]:)

i½If you read this you wonder where the problem might be. But the statement is formulated in a way that the main problems of how Jehovah's Witnesses deal with abuse, remain hidden. They conceal much. They don't talk about the way the elders investigate the matter internally, about the two-eye-witness-ruling. I think this statement is not in harmony with their actual dealings with child abuse. Admittedly, they claim to abhor child abuse, not to tolerate such a thing within the organization. But since they protect the perpetrator and silence the victim, this statement is a lie.i½

24i½07

(announcer:)

Since 1991, Jehovah's Witnesses petition for recognition as a public corporation before German courts. They insist on being put on an equal footing with the mainstream churches. If they succeeded, they could even collect church taxes. A good reputation, a positive image are important to them just now.

24i½35 i½ 25i½26 (original sound Bill Bowen)

24i½43

(speaker in German, over original voice [retranslated]:)

Again and again I am being asked: Are Jehovah's Witnesses worse than other denominations? The answer is: Yes, they are! The mainstream churches do not perform internal investigations, they do not require the child to produce eye-witnesses for the abuse. They do not maintain secret files in which they hide perpetrators even from the police. Denominations don't do such things. If you are a Catholic, Baptist, or Protestant, and your child is being abused, the representatives would say: Report him! Jehovah's Witnesses don't do that. They say: Just let us start an investigation and see what the outcome is. If you don't follow the instruction of the elders but report the matter, the whole congregation will oppose you.

25:27 (original sound) Ewelina

Recently an elder clearly pointed out to me that I should mind what accusations I make against my father, or in general, for that matter, since I might be held responsible because of slander and lying before worldly courts, but also within the Witness organization, too.

25:52 i 26:176 (original sound Bill Bowen)

26:55

(speaker in German, over original voice [retranslated]:)

This happens in Germany, in America, it's the same policy world-wide, which is designed to prevent sexual molestation from being correctly investigated and reported to the authorities. I can only give the following advice to affected parents among Jehovah's Witnesses: If your child is sexually molested, don't go to the elders, go straight away to the police.

26:19

(announcer:)

Ewelina has decided to report her father to the authorities. This is her own voluntary decision. To her, this is a further step on the way to break the silence.

26:31 i 26:54 (off screen/original sound) Ewelina

I made that decision since I am aware that I cannot have a clear conscience if I am silent, for I do not protect other children then. By speaking about it I try to make it clear to other persons in the Witness organization that it is important to protect the children and to talk openly about abuse.

27:56

(announcer:)

In the USA, abuse victims were expelled from the organization since they had the courage to go before the courts. Ewelina continues to believe in Jehovah, she wants to remain as a Witness. She has, however lost her faith in the elders and the Watchtower organization.

27:16 (text)

Jehovah's Witnesses declined to give any comment.

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