

## **Director's report**

**"The past is never dead. It's not even past."**

Faulkner, Requiem for a nun

### ***This conference in the context of PCCA***

This conference, marking 80 years to the beginning of WWII, was the 12<sup>th</sup> Conference in the "Nazareth project" (the 7<sup>th</sup> of PCCA's), taking place 25 years since the first conference in Nazareth in 1994.

The last four PCCA's conferences moved the focus to recent developments in Europe.

These 4 conferences targeted a different and widened population in Europe.

The 2019 conference was a U-turn/re-turn in this trajectory, focusing on the fallout of the Holocaust, appealing again mainly to the two original target populations: Germans and Israelis/Jews.

The invitation in the mini-site of the conference reflected this:

"Dear Prospective Participant,

*If you recognize in yourself that you are carrying the residues of past atrocities, either as one who participated in or as the carrier of the trans-generational transmission of such traumas, and if you share the assumption that this burden is influencing present events on personal, national and international levels, you may wish to benefit from participating in PCCA's next conference:*

***80 years later, will history repeat itself?***

***The fallout of the Holocaust on those affected,***

***Looking back, moving forward.***

*This experiential conference provides an opportunity to recognize the influence of the Holocaust and other atrocities on the present and to do this work in the presence of the Other in order to move on and get out from under their pervasive influence. If we do not recognize what haunts and influences us as individuals and members of our societies, we are doomed to repeat our history. If this resonates with you, you are welcome to join us in this unique opportunity of shared work" (M.E-G, 2019).*

In this sense it was a trial conference to check if indeed the original focus is still relevant or has it run its course.

The title reflected this aim: noting the 80 years since the beginning of WWII, and stressing the fallout of the Holocaust over those effected.

### ***Sponsorship***

Aside from the PCCA initiative and ownership, the conference had an impressive list of sponsoring organizations: The German Psychoanalytic Society (**DPG**), the German Psychoanalytic Association (**DPV**), the Israel Psychoanalytic Society (**IPS**), the **Tavistock** Institute and Supporting organization:, the Polish Psychoanalytic Society (**PTPA**), the International Psychoanalytic Association (**IPA**), The European Psychoanalytic Federation (**EPF**) – for the first time, **OFEK** (Israel Association for the Study of Group and Organizational Processes), and **OPUS**.

## ***Pre-Conference Stage***

### ***Venue:***

Cyprus - a crossroads of inter-racial contact with both a benign and a very troubled background seems a right place for our conferences. The forest Park Hotel in Platres, Cyprus, which hosted the 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010 conferences seemed to be the right venue to return to for a conference that returns to the original topic. The price offered to us made it possible to offer an affordable conference.

The charm of the venue, secluded but reachable from two airports, with its beautiful balcony overlooking the pine forest and the sea, did not fade out, and provided the right container for the stressful work.

### ***Administration:***

As in the past, Geber and Reusch were the pre-conference administrators, processing the registration and the collection of fees. They also helped members to arrange shared ground transportation from the airport. We appreciated the service they offered.

### ***Staff Recruitment***

The staff was comprised of:

**Mira Erlich-Ginor** (Israel), Director  
**Olya Khaleelee** Associate Director (UK)  
**Christoph Freytag** (Germany), Administrator  
**Moshe Bergstein** (Israel)  
**Louisa Diana Brunner** (Italy)  
**Jolita Buzaitytė-Kašalynienė** (Lithuania)  
**Oren Kaplan** (Israel)  
**Hüseyin Özdemir** (Germany)  
**Iwona Sołtysińska** (Poland)  
**Dorothee C. von Tippelskirch-Eissing** (Germany).

The staff group represented both continuity with those with experience of previous conferences and those new to PCCA, diversity in relation to: age, nationality, ethnic, religion and organizational affiliations. 6 were PCCA members, 4 were Ofek members, 3 Israelis, 3 Germans, 1 each from Italy, Poland, Lithuania, and UK.

This was a relative small staff but was enough for the size of membership. It is important to note, in view of past experiences, that recruitment went easily and all registered staff arrived on time.

### ***Membership Recruitment:***

Recruitment efforts followed the usual paths of sending the flyer to PCCA and to our sponsors' mailing lists. The flyer was handed out in several conferences. A personal letter was sent several times to the presidents of all the European psychoanalytic societies. The conference had its own website and it was also featured in the IPA website's Events Calendar. It was on Face book, which did not justify the investment.

The cover letter to the Israeli Psychoanalytic Society and to Ofek stressed that this may be the last conference in its kind, inviting members to join in this time and not postpone to a further date.

### ***Fee Structure:***

| <b>*Double<br/>Occupancy</b>           | <b>Single<br/>Occupancy</b> | <b>Registration<br/>Date</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Early Bird I</b>                    |                             |                              |
| € 1.300                                | €1.400                      | until 25.5.19                |
| <b>Early Bird II</b>                   |                             |                              |
| €1.500                                 | €1.600                      | 26.5.19-<br>25.6.19          |
| <b>Regular</b>                         |                             |                              |
| €1.600                                 | €1.700                      | 26.6.19- 1.9.19              |
| <b>East<br/>European/<br/>Students</b> |                             |                              |
| €600                                   | €700                        |                              |

Due to the generous contribution of the psychoanalytic societies in Germany and Israel: DPV, DPG, IPS, we were able to lower the overall price for all participants, thus making the conference affordable. We had 6 requests for bursaries which we were able to provide, also because of our agreement with the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. The vast majority of the members registered in time so as to profit from the bigger reduction.

### ***Composition of Membership:***

The final number of members was 43 members.

The composition was: 18 Israelis, 15 Germans, 3 Polish, 2 Danish, 1 from China, Spain, Russia, France and UK.

Female to male: 32 to 10; The majority of members were middle aged: The age range was 46 to 76, only 2 were under 50, most of the members were 60-76.

The notion of the "Nazareth project" as a series, is reinforced by the fact that members are repeatedly attending these conferences. In this conference 40% had come to one or more conferences before (some in most of the conferences, two had participated in the first conference, 25 years ago). This phenomenon is

especially marked in the German group in which **73%** participated in one or more conferences before. The Israeli group had **28%** of members attended one or more conferences before. Only **20%** of the "other nationality" group had previous PCCA experience. This is a remarkably high number in comparison with previous conferences: in 2016 there were 25% of returning members, in 2018 – 24%.

This data shows that the conference did appeal and provide an opportunity for further work to those who are already familiar with the topic and methodology but did not create a big interest in new members and in a younger generation.

It was the first conference in which Israelis outnumbered Germans. Israelis were 42% of the membership. In comparison: in the 2016 conference 27% were Israelis, in 2018 conference= 6.4%.

### ***Structure and design***

#### ***Primary task:***

*The primary task is for participants to explore feelings, fantasies and conflicts about personal and cultural identities related to the past, their impact on relationships within and between individuals and groups in the conference and toward the conference as a whole, and how they affect perceptions of the past, present and future.*

We used the same basic structure as in previous conferences, including: 2 Plenaries, 5 Small Study Groups, 5 Large Study Groups, 4 Social Dreaming, 7 sessions for the Conference Event, 4 Review and Application Groups.

Two changes were introduced: the addition of a RAG session instead of one Conference Event session, and a format of a separate but related Social Dreaming Matrix and Large Group: The morning opened with a SDM, of one hour, with the entire staff participating, and three hosts. Following a 15min intermission we had the Large Group with 3 consultants. This format (who came about because of a mistaken memory) created a semi permeable membrane between the two events, yet left them as distinct events – dreams brought up by members or staff served as shared material in the LG.

#### ***Methodological considerations - the specificity of PCCA:***

It is important to stress that PCCA's methodology is built on the basic Group Relations methodology: systemic thinking, concepts of boundaries, primary task and issues of authority that, even if not at the foreground, are always at work. These concepts and the stance of the staff is of immense value.

Having said that, there is specificity to PCCA conferences:

1. The conscious contents, as well as the unconscious processes, are the focus of work. Yet, similarly to other context we use ourselves in our roles in the service of decoding the unconscious processes.
2. Members are colleagues that came to do a joint work ("partnership in search of understanding"). Hence the stance of the staff is less remote.
3. Our national identity is declared and is worked with. It has an immediate relevance to the primary task of the conference; hence our involvement is different. We are activated to a noticeable degree much more as our own agents and not so much by projective identification as in other settings.

In a "regular" GR conference, the staff will have had the experience of being a member in such a conference. This is different in a PCCA conference: as new staff members have not necessarily had a member experience in such a conference.

It is a challenge to find the right balance of transmitting the specificity of the methodology and past

learning (via oral or written material), without compromising the discovery and the here and now experience. Some unlearning of GR staff role has to be done on the boundary of the conference.

### *Themes:*

A conference is too complex and too rich to sum up, it is better told by individual participants. The following are some points that were unique to this conference.

- As in previous conferences there were many painful and moving stories from all members, whether related to the "fallout" of WWII or not. Yet there is the "hierarchy of pain", the relative weight of tears: in this conference the Holocaust-related Jewish tears are the heaviest, then comes the German tears, only then the "ordinary human suffering" tears. The dilemma was: is it possible to get rid of the poisonous past without denying it (father's heritage with Swastika, getting rid of undesired part of self).
- It seemed that members came to do the work on behalf of their parents (Mothers, in particular) and their children, and only secondarily for themselves, as if they are too damaged to care about change, feeling trapped between the generations. "My daughter told me that it is good that I go to the conference, we may understand why sometimes I am sad and don't know the reason".
- Although participants came to "Work in the presence of the Other" it appeared to be more challenging when the Other was not the expected German for the Israeli or of another nationality but appeared, this time, as an identified "right wing" member who got the projections of a Jewish-Nazi, or as an East European "new" consultant, who became the abandoning Nazi mother, or the German next generation administrator who defies blind authority and was not ready to accept the expected Nazi projections, opening a place for resentment and anger in the conference.

The fantasy was that "if we only get rid of these unwanted individuals" we can have a proper conference.

- Identities are complex and do not lend themselves to a good/bad split. One thought that arose was: you cannot trust a German doctor (Mengele), but you, also, cannot trust a Jewish doctor who can abuse your trust and your body. Can you trust the consultants to provide safety and understanding, to work with when these projections are at play?
- The special relationships between Germans and Israelis, in the mind and in actual past connections did not leave space for other nationalities to have a space. They were pushed to role of bystanders to the main drama, if not by standers, at least they occupied a minority position.
- The conference was occupied with the possibility that this may be the last conference in the series of the Past in the Present.
- Some of the working hypothesis presented in the Conference Event:

1. "The institution in the mind is a totalitarian regime.

In which the children are neglected by fathers needing to undo their past, leaving, the children to fend for themselves with needy cruel mothers, and are trapped in a transgenerational repetition".

2. Building the hypothesis on the titles of the groups in the event:

"Unspoken explosive issues are related to the left/right split of the past repeating itself in the present. Has led to complex identities, which are at the same time problematic but also carry hope for the future.

Happiness is hard to find but treasured. The reparation may come through creating a politically efficient alternative management – that will undo the possibility that this will be the last conference in the series."

- The last input in the Closing Plenary (always significant) was by an Other: a Chinese woman

asking: Where does the future lie?

- Societal trends that come out in the conference:

Difficulties with taking ownership for our institutions in our societies = difficulties of members taking over ownership for the conference as their learning institution either looking out/creating an authoritative leadership to organize the institution or retreating to inner world and happiness instead of engaging and learning with the "other" = loss of importance of (traditional) political parties.

- Demeaning East European as "2nd class Europeans".

A valid question for all of us to reflect on whether at the level of PCCA, at the level of the Fallout of the Past, or looking forward to the fate of our planet.

### ***25 years later, what has changed***

This conference taking place 25 years after the first Nazareth conference allows us to ask: What has changed (Ma Nishtana)?

Few striking differences (limited to the German-Israeli special tie):

- While Nazareth 1994 was an opportunity for many Israelis to meet, work and learn to know Germans for the first time, now many of the Israelis had a German passport and have turned Berlin into a desirable place. Many more Israelis have other European passports. This was inconceivable 25 years ago.
- While in 1994 the identity of the Israelis was clearly that of the victim, it has now moved to being the victim/perpetrator. The changes in the identity of the Germans are more subtle, it certainly takes on a different meaning vis-a-vis the now mixed Israeli identity.
- The working through of the Nazi past that has been done by the German society during this period makes these conferences less crucial for them.

### ***In conclusion***

To succeed in mounting and carrying out a conference is not self-evident. Every conference involves risks that the director as well as the staff and the members take. We know where we start, it is unknown how we will fare or where we will end up.

It was a good conference, so it seemed to me and to the staff, it was worthwhile having it.

I was glad to be there and have the opportunity to work with a willing and competent staff and with members that gave themselves to this unique learning experience which is

In my view to be a staff member in a GRC or PCCA conference requires generosity - putting the members first, letting them use the staff without immediate rewards. This is not to be taken lightly.

As PCCA has to think about these conferences and to return to the original reason for holding them in terms of the overall strategy of PCCA.

I will end with a quote from the epilogue of : *Fed with tears, poisoned with milk*. epilogue, (p.189) which is our credo:

*"... PCCA is very mindful and committed to the centrality and uniqueness of the Holocaust and its aftermath. While expanding its horizons and focus, it remains convinced that the Holocaust and what it stands for have*

*enormously and irreparably affected the present world, and that its radioactive fallout reaches areas far removed from the original site of the devastation. The adherence to this view continues to inform our understanding not only of what was done already, but what still sorely needs to be done."*

I am grateful PCCA for giving me the opportunity to build and direct this conference to a conference I had in mind for a long time and was given the opportunity to actualize.

Respectfully submitted,

Mira Erlich-Ginor, Conference Director

Grief weeps on the shoulder of History.  
The Peace Monument near the United States Capitol.