



**NEWSLETTER N°1 SUMMER 2009
BY VERONIKA GRUENEISEN / CHAIRPERSON**

This is the first edition of our newsletter. Its aim is to provide a means of communication and to inform you of our current activities.

PCCA today

Partners in Confronting Collective Atrocities was established to work towards developing strategies to engage with the internal and social legacy of past atrocities that can contribute to opening up the possibility of a more hopeful future.

The aim of the organization is to work through the effects of the Holocaust and of national and international conflicts that lead to destructive escalation, in the service of a better understanding among the nations worldwide. This goal is attained through planning, preparing, organizing and evaluating of Conferences in accordance with the Group Relations model, which serve the purpose of working through events at a personal and especially at a group level, as well as through publications which make the concepts and outcomes of this work public. The first three Conferences of this series (two in Nazareth and one in Bad Segeberg) focused on the past in the present relationship between Germans and Israelis.

Since 2004 the scope of these Conferences was widened in the three Cyprus Conferences as to include Diaspora Jews and Affected Others. After the establishment of PCCA, also the Palestinians were included in the 2008 Conference.

PCCA is a learning organization. We are deeply committed to learn from our experience both in terms of contents and of methodology, also in the perspective of widening our scope to other conflicts, for example in Eastern Europe or other atrocities around the world.

PCCA is managed by its nine Founding Members. During our 2009 annual meeting it was decided to create committees as needed that work on specific topics.

Next conference

Repeating, Reflecting, Moving on - Germans, Jews, Israelis, Palestinians, Others Today

A Working Conference (in the "Nazareth" series) 1-6 June 2010, in Platres / Cyprus

You are all invited to attend it, and we recommend that you apply at geber-reusch@t-online.de as soon as possible!

Evaluation of Cyprus 2008

In spring 2009, we sent round a questionnaire to 2008 participants, asking for their reflections on the conference.

Publications and Events

Our aim is to publicize PCCA and to reach a wider audience. With this aim in mind we are initiating presentations as well as responding to call for presentations.

As most of you will know, the book "Fed with Tears – Poisoned with Milk" about the first three "Nazareth" conferences has been published by Psychosozial Verlag Gießen, both in English and in German, earlier this year. It is a milestone in the development of PCCA and our conference work since it makes available not only the history and conceptualisation of our conference work but gives an insight into members' experiences. We have successfully organised book launches and other events in order to introduce it to a wider public.

Here is a list of some of the events:

OFEK, Israel, presentation **in March**

EPF Conference, Brussel, book launch **in April**

DPV spring meeting in Heidelberg, Germany;

book launch **in May**

IPS in Jerusalem presentation **in June**

DPG Annual conference in Magdeburg, Germany. Book

Launch **in June**

A discussion was published in the spring IPA

Links to public discussions of the book:

E. James Lieberman:

http://metapsychology.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=book&id=5078&cn=395

Leo Rangell:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-leo-rangell/understanding-conversatio_b_257037.html

In the following months there will be:

a presentation at the Club of Berlin in Bonn, October this year

a special event about the conferences in London, organised by the British Psychoanalytic Society, in November this year; an introduction into the conferences in Milan as part of a public event, organised by the Milan Psychoanalytic Institute, in November this year;

a paper on the 2008 conference at a meeting of Group Relations experts in Belgirate, Italy, in November this year

A new book is going to be prepared in the near future to continue documentation of this type of PCCA activities.

Call for Contributions

As you know PCCA is a non for profit organization which does not have any means. Up to now the sponsoring organizations which supported us with money helped to keep the fee of the conferences as low as possible. This was with the aim to allow a wider participation. As we aim to encourage the participation of younger people as well as we offered last time personal bursaries on top of keeping the general fee at the minimum. We plan to continue with the same policy. We are greatfull for the support of Robert Bosch Stiftung.

If you wish to support our work, we are grateful for any contribution.

Bank account: Postbank Berlin No 0 523 542 102, BLZ 100 100 10;

IBAN DE67 1001 0010 0523 5421 02, BIC PBNKDEFF; **Purpose:** Bursaries 2010

New in PCCA web

See Hermann Beland's paper:

"Collective mourning - Who or What frees a collective to Mourn?"

Pcca Board and members:

Veronika Grueneisen Chair, Germany

Mira Erlich-Ginor Secretary, Israel

Louisa Diana Bruner Treasurer, Italy

Hermann Beland Germany

Fakhry Davids UK

Shmuel Erlich Israel

Karin Luders Germany

Anton Obholzer UK

Jona Rosenfeld Israel

Appendix

Reviewing the 2008 Cyprus Conference – Reflections on Responses to the Questionnaire

Several months after the 2008 Cyprus conference took place, a questionnaire was sent to all participants. Of the 70 conference participants, 27 sent in their responses, representing the groupings that made up the membership of this conference: 8 Germans, 9 Israelis, 3 Palestinians and 7 "Others". The responses were often quite detailed and always candid, highly personal and generously revealing, providing thoughtful feedback. This is a suitable point to express our gratitude to all those who took the time and trouble to answer and to send in the questionnaire.

Although the nature of the conference makes for personal and subjective experiences that cannot readily be translated into generalizations, it seems important to attempt to glean some overall trends and characterizations suggested by these responses. Obviously these reflections are equally subjective and represent my understanding and interpretation and should be taken as such.

What then can be said?

Evidently most and perhaps **almost all participants had deep personal experiences** of one sort or another. The conference set **off a wide variety of experiential learning**, which is what is hoped for. Furthermore, the experiential learning continued in time and for many was apparently continuing at the time of their writing. Perhaps the act of writing down their thoughts

and experiences further stimulated and contributed to this process.

If I have to single out the **themes** that run through these responses, I would focus on the following as the major ones: One encompassing theme is that of **"identity"** – struggling, suffering, discovering, integrating, attacking and surviving attacks. One might almost say that the search for clarification and delineation of one's identity seems to be the most potent motivating force bringing people to this conference. The other, semi-underlying theme is **"hope"**: the extent to which hope as a quest runs through the responses is quite striking, whether one speaks of peace, reconciliation, personal growth, overcoming personal problems and shortcomings, or learning new skills. I suggest the possibility that these two themes – identity and hope – are interconnected – the quests for identity and for hope seem to have much in common. A third theme, less conspicuous but nonetheless present, is **"curiosity"** – about the other, about different cultures and histories, about how others have resolved their difficulties, and also about how groups operate and how one may come to internalize the conference methodology.

Let my extraction of the above themes makes it appear as if the responses were all of a kind, I want to underline that this is not true: they were actually quite variegated, **representing a wide range of opinions about almost everything** and ranging from extremely positive (the overwhelming majority) to extremely negative (very few) on some of the points.

The responses were clearly colored by **two powerful "critical events"**, both of which were unforeseen at the time of the conference: The first was the post-conference e-mail exchange among members. Several voices pictured this exchange (initially) as the failure to work through issues of enmity within the conference, and as a sort of flight into a wished-for peaceful, loving and communal (or family) feeling and existence. The other critical event was the Gaza War, which shattered these wishes and aspirations and released a good deal of aggression, hatred and enmity, again suggesting that perhaps these were suppressed during the conference.

The disappointment and frustration, and perhaps also the disillusionment and despair that followed these two critical events led some to have deep doubts about the value of the conference. In most respondents, however, it strengthened the realization of the depth and scope of the issues involved and the need for the long term approach and work which the conference may offer. But it also underscores another issue: the great extent **of the expectation – indeed, hope – for the conference to be a "peace making" enterprise, and the disillusionment and frustration that followed when it did not (could not) live up to these expectations.** But it also raised the question whether within the conference itself the issue of enmity was sufficiently addressed or glossed over, eventually to erupt in the startling manner it did.

The last point is **the issue of triangulation**: almost everyone responded in some way to the shift from a dyadic conflict (Germans-Israelis/Jews) to the tripartite presence of the three conflict groups, resulting from the introduction of Palestinians (or Israeli Arabs). Opinions were sharply divergent on this: most respondents experienced the presence of Palestinians as pertinent and meaningful and as what livened up the conference. But some felt it obfuscated other conflicts (mainly the German-Jewish) and made it difficult to work. Still others found ways of working with their emotional responses to the new situation and could derive historical understanding and personal meaning from it. Undoubtedly the participation of Palestinians for the first time was a major innovation and impact, and poignantly introduced the issue of **the difference between historical and present conflicts** and whether the conference was able to work with such different problems.

Instead of the impossible task of summing all this up, I would only say that the 2008 Cyprus conference seems to have shaken up many persons and issues and to have raised a slew of new ones. I believe this is actually what it is meant to do.

Shmuel Erlich