

FOREWORD

International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy (IAFP) talk, 13 May 2022

Harriet Wolfe

Thank you very much. It's an honour to be here. I've become acquainted with the mission of the IAFP and your work. Carine Minne and Ronald Doctor are also leaders in my organisation, the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA). I'd like to share something of their work in the IPA as it is related to violence and to psychoanalysis and the law, and to think with you about our shared commitment to societal issues. Your theme for the conference is extremely relevant to today's global environment—"Violence as a public health emergency: preventing, treating and humanizing the dangerous mind" since the theme holds the goals and values that the IPA shares with you—prevention, treatment, and the humanising of all kinds of troubled minds, including those who are a danger to the public.

We live in the context of a shocking level of death amongst children that illustrates the public health emergency created by violence. A 15 February 2022 report by the London-based charity *Save the Children* estimates that more than half a million babies may have died as a result of conflict over the past five years. That's 100,000 babies annually or, shockingly, 300 babies every day. The death toll of children does not include only those killed directly by fighting, but children who die of starvation, outbreaks of disease, or damage to ambulances/hospitals. The data is alarming, so alarming as to be hard to grasp. They reflect human beings' potential for deadly violence and its indirect as well as its direct consequences.

Allow me please to tell you a bit about the IPA's activities in areas of social concern and need. The mission of the IPA has traditionally focused on clinical psychoanalysis as practised in the consulting room, creating standards for training of psychoanalysts, and developing the science of psychoanalysis. But in 2017, however, the IPA President Virginia Ungar and Vice-President Sergio Nick created a branch of the IPA called *IPA in the Community*. In 2021 the Vice-President Adriana Prengler and I, as IPA President, in response to the international rise of populist governments, autocratic leaders, inhumane policies, and false facts, felt a dire need for a psychoanalytic commitment to understanding how these societal issues impact on individual and group development. Also, we felt outreach that offered practical interventions that were psychoanalytically informed had never been more needed. I know your psychotherapeutic work with offenders is psychoanalytically informed. It is difficult to work with very troubled minds, which spring often from very troubled family and social systems. It is exactly the formative interaction of internal mind and external environment or culture that interests us too.

The new IPA division, further developed as *IPA in the Community and the World*, has the mandate to have a notable and constructive impact in the world. There are currently eight committees that operate under the umbrella of a steering committee consisting of eight committee chairs and a steering committee chair. The steering committee chair has the task of creating a collaborative work group that shares the different committees' experiences, insights, and new learning. The goal is to develop psychoanalytic theory further and to design outreach that supports successful psychosocial interventions. I'd like to tell you about the eight committees in the order they were constituted.

First there's *IPA in Education*. This pursues interdisciplinary collaborations with specialists, educational workers, and others to explore the difficulties and challenges that children's development and overall growth present in different settings. The committee represents a psychoanalytic tradition of engagement with families and children, especially in times of crisis. One thinks of Anna Freud's and Dorothy Burlingham's war nurseries as an example of how well this has worked in the past. The committee places great importance on issues of diversity, poverty and deprivation, social injustice and bias, conflict and war, and their impact on families.

The next committee is *IPA in the Humanitarian Field*, which has two sub-committees, *IPA at the United Nations* and the *IPA Migration and Refugee Committee*. It develops networks with psychoanalysts working in the humanitarian field, and between them and humanitarian organisations. The committee has a recent excellent book, *Migration, Trauma and Flight: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*. The IPA is recognised by the United Nations (UN) as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) with special consultative status since 1998. Having a voice at the UN makes it possible to sensitise the international collective to the importance of the emotional impact and psychic consequences for those who have their human rights threatened or violated. I'll say more about the Migration and Refugee Committee later.

Third, we have *IPA in Health*. Among other important activities, this committee was dramatically helpful at the beginning of the pandemic. It created a Covid crisis IPA Listserv for members' support and exchange of experiences and ideas and it organised webinars on a psychodynamic approach to healthcare in the context of a pandemic; one that supported healthcare providers, and, through them, their patients.

Fourth is the *IPA and Violence* committee, chaired by Carine Minne. This is committed to examining individual, group, and mass violence as it presents in the external world, and to examining its different manifestations psychoanalytically. In addition to playing a major role in the creation of this conference, it mounts webinars, podcasts, and publications. Also, the violence committee works to investigate and bring to our members the hard-to-bear awareness that the potential for violence is in us all.

Fifth, we have the *Psychoanalysis and Law* committee, chaired by Ronald Doctor. It has worked with the violence committee and IAFP to put together this conference on violence as a public health emergency. The committee

has recently published a book on *Psychoanalysis, Law and Society* and is currently working on another book, *Anxiety and Society during a Pandemic*, edited by Ronald Doctor, Plinio Montagna, and Adrienne Harris.

Sixth, we have the *IPA and Culture* committee. This investigates and shares with members examples of all aspects of culture. For example, art, writing, music, film, theatre, and their potential for connection and healing.

Seventh, and relatively recent, is the *IPA Climate* committee. It investigates the psychological roots of climate denial and develops approaches to corporate and political bodies that sustain the carbon footprint despite clear evidence of its damaging impact.

Eighth is *Psychoanalytic Assistance in Crises and Emergencies* (PACE). It is a committee that works with groups in local emergency situations that affect children, young people, families, and health workers and professionals who are in a helping role. It also carries out coordinated and cooperative work with international institutions and organisations dealing with emergencies and crises. For example, the Red Cross, UNESCO, Caritas, Doctors without Borders, amongst others.

Finally, there is a ninth committee in the planning stage on *Prejudice, Discrimination and Racism*.

Each of these committees has a balanced membership of psychoanalysts from the three official regions of the IPA, Europe, Latin America, and North America and also members from the developing Asia-Pacific Region, which encompasses India, Australia, Korea, Japan, China, and Taiwan.

You will not be surprised to learn that all the committees of the IPA in the Community and the World have been paying active attention to the war in Ukraine. The IPA as an organisation committed \$100,000 of its reserves to an emergency fund for relief of Ukrainian members and analysts in training impacted by the war. The money is being used, for example, for legal help for immigration and for relocation and displacement expenses. Individual IPA members have donated over \$40 000, as well. The IPA has partnered with the European Psychoanalytic Federation (EPF), whose members are helping the helpers on the ground and are providing counselling to individuals, families, and children. About 360 IPA members from around the globe have volunteered to do pro bono counselling. We are learning how complex it is for a membership organisation to create a humanitarian aid platform. We are partnering with established organisations in order to match our volunteer caregivers with people in need.

The committees of IPA in the Community and the World have focused on Ukrainian members and analysts in training. They've equally focused on children at this time of war; provided guidelines for volunteers; and recruited volunteers who supply emotional support, hospitality, and donations. PACE has created a network of assistance for the psychoanalyst contact in each IPA Society, who receives intervention tools ranging from articles about crisis intervention, to information, to contact translators. The Migration and Refugee committee deals with the international population that is most impacted by the global threats of the climate crisis, the unfair distribution of resources,

and the circumstances of war. These circumstances are dehumanising. The committee highlights the importance of whether or not refugees are welcomed. Such a circumstance has a profound impact on further psychic and social development. It is not always easy to welcome a highly traumatised person from a totally different culture. I will quote the committee's words:

The refugees who have lost everything make us inwardly touch our own fear of being lost in the world, of loss of identity, of never being at home again. Working with them professionally or voluntarily or both requires the willingness to face this shock and to be drawn into this helplessness, hopelessness, and homelessness.

These words echo for me the nature of your work through the IAFP, your work in the Criminal Justice System, in courts, prisons, and secure units, with personnel including probation officers, police, criminologists. These activities, combined with your therapeutic work with offenders, is the model for the integration of individual and group intervention in settings where violence is a constant variable. You demonstrate that the public health problem is complex. It can be hard to determine whether the biggest problem lies with the system, or the individual who lands in the system, but in fact violence is always both internally and externally determined. The IPA is grateful for specific bridges with the IAFP through Carine Minne and Ronald Doctor and we look forward to continued collaboration.