

48th IPA Congress – Prague, Czech Republic
“Ecumenical, Transparent, and Transcendent”

By David Jachim, PhD FIPA

October 2013

The adjectives Ecumenical, Transparent and Transcendent describe, in a general way, my experience in attending the IPA Congress this past summer.

First: Ecumenical. I was thirteen in 1962, struggling with both the shackles and freedoms offered by a Catholic school education, when Pope John XXIII announced the convening of the Second Vatican Council in Rome. It was being called to address the relations between the Catholic Church and the modern world and it was to be an ecumenical gathering. It was the first time I had heard the word ecumenical and I thought little of it, only later having the erroneous idea that the ecumenical meeting only meant I no longer had to speak Latin at Catholic mass. Of course, since that time I have come to understand one of the true meanings of the word, a representation of diversity.

This representation of diversity permeated the IPA Congress in Prague. Over two thousand attendees were present from many corners of the world and their variety instilled the convention atmosphere with electricity. Newly elected IPA Vice-President Alexandra Billinghamurst extrapolated from this mass gathering in describing IPA as a whole:

"...It (IPA) houses 12,000 members in 63 countries divided into three regions....It has 70 component societies, 6 provisional societies, 19 study groups, three models of training, many ways of viewing what psychoanalysis is, many different cultures and 4 official languages."

Second: Transparent. I was moved by the sense of openness and disclosure available at this convention. Attendees were remarkably inviting and friendly and ongoing work groups operated in an attitude of honest interaction. Many panel presentations such as one that I attended entitled "The Analysis of Pain: The Management and Utilization of Troubling Affects in the Analyst," revealed the analytic commitment to open self-exploration within the analytic setting. Moreover, the mood of the convention as a whole conveyed something even beyond this, as highlighted by IPA President Stefano Bolognini in his inaugural speech. President Bolognini placed strong emphasis on

improving the way in which our organization of analysts presents itself in an open way to the modern world. Bolognini's speech can be accessed on the IPA website.

I was reminded of this movement towards transparency during a brief stop in Berlin on my return trip to the US. There I was able to visit the historic Reichstag Building, the seat of the German Parliament. It has been restored since the bombings of WWII but its most remarkable asset is the newly designed glass dome that sits atop the building. One can have a 360-degree view of the entire city on the circular walkway within the dome but one can also, at the same time, look down into the government Debate Chamber and observe the deliberations occurring there. This architectural and governmental transparency reminded me of IPA's newly elected administration and its emphasis on looking within and without our organization and its changing relationship with the modern world.

Third: Transcendent. IPA is in a transcendent phase of increasing outreach, both within and without our organization. President Bolognini and Vice-President Billingham are strongly invested in facilitating communication between IPA groups and improving long ignored outreach efforts of collaboration with, and education of, parallel organizations. Such efforts by IPA include: an improved, interactive website as a public meeting place for members; emphasis on and communication to members about ongoing psychoanalytic research sponsored by IPA; creation of an IPA Regions Electronic Journal; development of an IPA Encyclopedic Psychoanalytic Dictionary; increased investment in the welfare of children and adolescents; and a stronger bridge-building with other non-psychoanalytic specialties such as medical psychiatry.

In all, I was infused with a new sense of optimism and enthusiasm for IPA as the Prague Congress imbued an atmosphere of not only increasing communication and cooperation within its own membership but also with the intention of actively bringing our analytic contributions to other professional communities and the general public. Vice-President Billingham put it best when she said, "We now need to stand up for psychoanalysis rather than defend psychoanalysis." This is a more active posture for psychoanalysis in contrast with a static position of the past.

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