



## COALITION FOR WORK WITH PSYCHOTRAUMA AND PEACE KOALICIJA ZA RAD SA PSIHOTRAUMOM I MIR

### MONTHLY REPORT FOR AUGUST 2019

#### INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This month has been difficult in a number of respects. The state of the region, particularly with regard to internal politics and with regard to the migrant situation, has gotten worse. We expect even more of that with elections in Croatia expected at the end of 2019 or the beginning of 2020. We continue with clients and groups. We are doing what we can to assist migrants. We are working on the Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) program at a slow pace. We now have found someone to revise the videos for the first course.

In the region, it was recently discovered that some of the first people to come to Europe from eastern Asia came to this region. These are exciting discoveries. The Croatian police continue to deal extremely harshly – violently – with migrants at the borders. A number of people have been injured and several have died. This is with the support of the government. Further, Croatia is moving closer to becoming a part of the Schengen region. Also, the President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, has been awarded the Fulbright Association's lifetime achievement award. She will be a candidate for a second term from the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). Further in politics, Milorad Pupovac, leader of the Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS) declared that Croatia had become a factor of instability in the region because it promoted attacks on Serbs and the rehabilitation of the WWII fascist group, the Ustasha. The prime minister Andrej Plenković, denounced him for this. Further, the psychological state of people in the region has remained the same or worsened. We remain the only group in the region providing psychological assistance without charge and without drugs.

We continue with clients more or less as usual. The issues that we see are the usual ones, namely working with the psychological, physical, and sexual abuse that people have undergone as children, this compounded by the effects of the war. The Split group has recessed for the summer. We had groups in South Africa and with an organization in India called Snehalaya, which works primarily with the children of sex workers, some of whom have HIV. Charles Tauber continues with the supervision of Alphonse Kanda in South Africa and Ivan Maslow in Split.

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We see the migrant situation continuing to worsen throughout southern Europe. Governments and others exploit migrants. There is virtually no psychological assistance available to them, and medical assistance is scarce. There are virtually no funds available for such assistance. This also applies to migrants attempting to integrate into new societies. This already is causing violence, that is, external violence as well as violence directed at the people themselves, that is, self-harm and suicide. We expect the situation to worsen considerably. Another part of this issue is that of short-term volunteers, who are well-meaning but untrained and psychologically unsupervised. We are working with Advocates Abroad, a group of volunteer lawyers working in Greece, to supervise their volunteers and to attempt to set up educational groups for migrants. We also are continuing to cooperate with No Name Kitchen who are working in Šid, Serbia and the Bihač-Velika Kladaša area of northwest Bosnia.

The group of students from the University of Belgrade who wish to work with migrants has been suspended for the summer. We are frustrated by the lack of cooperation from official and non-governmental organizations in the Belgrade area.

Further, we have written to Dr. Pietro Bartolo, the former doctor of Lampedusa and now a member of the European Parliament, to seek European assistance in our efforts.

With regard to the Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) program, we have found someone to revise the videos for the first course, namely that on the caregiver-client relationship and self-care.

We have had an article on the migrant situation accepted for the Dutch Quaker monthly, *De Vriendenkring*. The article is available on the website in Dutch and English.

We had an interview with a Spanish student who is working on her masters in international development.

With regard to the next few months, we are looking for funds to meet the urgent needs that we see with regard to increasing capacity to carry out psychological work with migrants and refugees. There seems to be little if any interest in such work, both for those underway and those attempting to integrate into receiving societies.

Our current emphasis on work with migrants doesn't mean that we are not committed to working with victims of war here. Yet, again, there seems to be virtually no interest in this.

We also will continue to work on the PET program. We think that PET can be a major contribution to the world in creating a training program that can be used almost universally in areas of conflict and post-conflict.

Thus, we do not anticipate that the coming months and years will be easy for us. We are committed to continuing.

## **STATE OF THE REGION**

The region of Eastern Slavonia has been known as a crossroads of various cultures during a very long period of history. The Danube River was a well-known way for migration in the past, as it is today.

It seems that some of the earliest presence of people from East Asia in Europe was in this region. To read more see [https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/26/science/deformed-skulls-croatia.html?fallback=0&recId=1PydqnnPnsqusSDyxSw7ay5i1CH&locked=0&geoContinent=NA&geoRegion=NY&recAlloc=control&geoCountry=US&blockId=home-discovery-vi-prg&imp\\_id=568663255&action=click&module=Discovery&pgtype=Homepage&te=1&nl=morning-briefing&emc=edit\\_MBE\\_p\\_20190827&section=whatElse?campaign\\_id=51&instance\\_id=11928&segment\\_id=16504&user\\_id=ce6e953b10e48f2115f935524c8a067e&regi\\_id=60657245ng-briefing&emc=edit\\_MBE\\_p\\_20190827&section=whatElse](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/26/science/deformed-skulls-croatia.html?fallback=0&recId=1PydqnnPnsqusSDyxSw7ay5i1CH&locked=0&geoContinent=NA&geoRegion=NY&recAlloc=control&geoCountry=US&blockId=home-discovery-vi-prg&imp_id=568663255&action=click&module=Discovery&pgtype=Homepage&te=1&nl=morning-briefing&emc=edit_MBE_p_20190827&section=whatElse?campaign_id=51&instance_id=11928&segment_id=16504&user_id=ce6e953b10e48f2115f935524c8a067e&regi_id=60657245ng-briefing&emc=edit_MBE_p_20190827&section=whatElse) .

According to the Croatian Minister of Police, Davor Božinović, the migrant wave actually has never stopped. It is much less intense now than it was in 2015 and 2016. The main difference is that, in 2015, migrants were invited to western Europe, while the situation today is completely different.

While evading a police checkpoint, a driver jumped out of a vehicle and fled towards a suspected area of landmines, and the vehicle fell into the river. The police smashed the windows of the van and rescued 11 people. However, one of those rescued migrants, a female who was receiving medical aid, died at the scene. The fleeing driver was arrested toward the end of the month in a bus at the Serbian border.

Asked if Croatia had the resources to deal with the increased number of people smugglers, 589 of whom have been arrested so far this year compared to 600 in the whole of 2018, Božinović said that the police had the necessary resources and were much better organized in combating illegal migration.

As for Croatia's bid to join the Schengen passport-free area, Božinović said that a confirmation of the country's technical preparedness was expected this month. He said that seven chapters had been closed and one more was expected to be closed within the next week or two, after which a political decision would follow.

The Fulbright nonprofit association will award the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award to President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović for her global contributions as a leader, diplomat, and public servant. She announced her bid for a second term as the country's president as a Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) candidate.

Prime Minister Andrej Plenković labelled as inappropriate and unacceptable the statements by Independent Democratic Serb Party (SDSS) leader Milorad Pupovac as a reaction to attacks on Serbs, that Croatia had become a factor of instability in the region because it promoted intolerance and attempted to rehabilitate the Ustasha (the WWII Fascists), calling on him not to contribute to the polarization of society.

Generally speaking, there has been very little change in the psychological state of people in the period that we have been in the region. The unresolved trauma as well effects of trauma transmission lead to increasing numbers of people coming to us. We are getting a number of quite severe cases. We also note further somatization, that is, the translation of psychological problems into physical disease. We are the only organization in the region offering assistance on psychological traumatization without charge and without drugs. The importance of mental health and wellbeing is still highly undervalued and highly stigmatized.

## **EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **Introduction and Summary**

We had six constant clients this month. The issues were those that we continually see, that is, a large amount of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse in childhood, compounded by the traumas of the war. We note a difference in clients. Some, even some with severe traumas, work conscientiously on their issues. They move forward, albeit sometimes slowly. Others block out their traumas, being afraid to face them and deal with the intense pain of them, we think.

The Split group of relatives of people with psychiatric diagnoses is in recess until October because several of the people work in the tourist industry during the summer. The South Africa group met once this month. The meeting was intense and dealt with how people deal with death and with relations at work. We are continuing our weekly meetings with the Indian NGO Snehalaya in Ahmednagar. They have a home for children of sex workers and are in need of guidance and psychological supervision.

Charles Tauber continues to carry out supervision with Alphonse Kanda in South Africa and Ivan Maslow in Split, both more or less weekly.

The migrant situation continues to worsen. Governments continue to criminalize and brutalize and injure people escaping from war, violence, and poverty. Governments and others exploit migrants. There is virtually no psychological assistance available to them, and medical assistance is scarce. There are virtually no funds available for such assistance. This also applies to migrants attempting to integrate into new societies. This already is causing violence, that is, external violence as well as violence directed at the people themselves, that is, self-harm and suicide. We expect the situation to worsen considerably if nothing further is done. Another part of this issue is that of short-term volunteers, who are well-meaning but untrained and psychologically unsupervised. Unintentionally, they do harm to the migrants and to themselves.

We are working with Advocates Abroad, a group of volunteer lawyers working in Greece, to supervise their volunteers and to attempt to set up educational groups for migrants. We also are continuing to cooperate with No Name Kitchen who are working in Šid, Serbia and the Bihač-Velika Kladuša area of northwest Bosnia.

The group of students from the University of Belgrade who wish to work with migrants has been suspended for the summer. We also are frustrated by the lack of cooperation from official and non-governmental organizations in the Belgrade area.

Further, we have written to Dr. Pietro Bartolo, the former doctor of Lampedusa and now a member of the European Parliament, to seek European assistance in our efforts.

We have begun to revise the videos for the first course in the Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET) program.

We have had an article on the migrant situation accepted for the Dutch Quaker monthly, *De Vriendenkring*. The article is available on the website in Dutch and English.

We also had an interview with a Spanish student who is working on her masters in international development.

### Clients

We had six constant clients this month. The issues were those that we continually see, that is, a large amount of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse in childhood compounded by the traumas of the war. We note that some clients are extremely conscientious in working on their issues, which, in some, are quite severe. These people move ahead. Others block their own work. We realize that such work causes pain. Yet, confronting the core issues is the only way for people to move forward, in our view.

### Groups

The Belgrade University student group, the group with No Name Kitchen in Šid, and the Advocates Abroad supervision group will be covered in the section on the migrant situation.

The Split group of relatives of people with psychiatric diagnoses is in recess until October because several of the people work in the tourist industry during the summer.

The South Africa group met once this month. The meeting was intense and dealt with how people deal with death and with relations at work. There is culturally-based stigmatization of the relatives of people who have died. We will continue these discussions and education.

We are continuing our weekly meetings with the Indian NGO Snehalaya in Ahmednagar. They have a home for about 225 children of sex workers. Many of the children have HIV. The behavioral issues of the children are substantial. Those working with the children are enthusiastic. We are encouraging them by giving them more education and guidance. They are starting education for the caregivers of the children. They also are starting a peer counseling program. The work with this group is going well.

### Supervision

Charles Tauber continues to carry out supervision with Alphonse Kanda in South Africa and Ivan Maslow in Split, both more or less weekly.

### Alphonse Kanda

Alphonse is working very hard and is under pressure from a variety of sources. He continues to work on his master's thesis in medical anthropology, dealing with clients who are migrants, who have HIV, and who are poor. He continues to teach and work with students. He has large responsibilities for working with patients in the hospital. We continue to discuss the issues within his client population as well as those in this region.

### Ivan Maslow

Ivan gives body therapy treatments combined with counseling. He reports that he is seeing a large number of people with sexual abuse.

## The Migrant Situation

### Introduction

The migrant situation continues to worsen. Governments continue to criminalize escape from war, violence, and poverty. They also criminalize those people assisting migrants. People are dying at sea. People are being brutalized at borders, including being seriously injured and killed. Those who do make it are living in official and unofficial camps that are unsanitary and frequently are more like prisons than places for people who are in difficulty. People are being exploited financially, physically, psychologically, and sexually. There is virtually no medical or psychological assistance available. There is a great deal of violence, including assault, suicide, and self-harm. In short, we see this as a humanitarian disaster, with these conditions being supported and encouraged by governments.

As we have reported continually, there is little or no funding available for psychological assistance to migrants. Furthermore, getting access to them in order to give such assistance is difficult.

Additionally, even when they do reach regions of potential asylum, there is little assistance with integration, particularly in dealing with their psychological situations.

Another issue is that of short-term volunteers. We have dealt with that in a separate section below. We feel that, frequently, they are doing more harm than good, both to the migrants and to themselves. They need good training, supervision, and debriefing, none of which they are getting from anyone. We are willing to assist in providing it.

In this region, the situation for migrants is very difficult. Pushbacks by the police at the Croatian borders are violent, and this violence is being supported by the government, including the president of the country. There is little medical assistance and virtually no psychological assistance available.

Thus, we feel extremely frustrated. We see the very great urgency of the situation and we think that we have at least some partial answers but we don't have the resources to carry them out.

### Advocates Abroad

Advocates Abroad is a US-registered organization providing legal assistance and a certain amount of psychological assistance in several locations in Greece. The situations in the areas in which they are working, notably on the Greek islands and in northern Greece, are extremely difficult and frequently quite violent. For the most part, the volunteers are short-term, working for a month or two. The leaders of the organization recognize the need for psychological assistance to the migrants and for supervision with the volunteers. We have started a weekly online supervision group with them and are working with them to strengthen their psychological support component, both to migrants and to volunteers.

### No Name Kitchen

Bruno Alvarez Contreras, from Asturias, Spain, is leading the organization virtually single-handedly. They have groups in the Velika Kladuša-Bihač region of Bosnia and in Šid in Serbia. The turnover of volunteers is high, with people staying for a few weeks or a month or two at most. They are doing the best they can with limited financial and human resources. Please see our commentary on short-term volunteers below.

The situations for migrants in both Šid and Kladuša are extremely serious. As we have mentioned, the pushbacks at the border are violent. In Šid, there is a “squat”, a destroyed factory, run by a smuggler hierarchy, which exploits the residents financially, physically, emotionally, and sexually. No Name Kitchen is giving food and clothing there.

We very much would like to have a daily competent constant presence in both Šid and Kladuša. We don't have the funds to support that.

### Students from the University of Belgrade

The group has been suspended until September.

### The General Situation with Short-Term Volunteers

We are not at all happy about short-term volunteers, that is, people who stay for less than a minimum of about a year, and especially those who stay for a month or two or less. There are many of them now in many organizations. Our issues with them are as follows. First, virtually all of them are untrained. Many are very young, without life experience. This means that they can do harm to the migrants and to themselves. They do harm to the migrants by saying and doing inappropriate things and by not realizing the differences in culture and not knowing how to deal with the very great traumatization that the migrants have undergone. They form relationships that are too close for the time that they are there and then break them, adding one more disappointment and trauma to the huge load that the migrants already are bearing. They do harm to themselves through becoming secondarily traumatized by seeing and listening to the situations of the migrants, currently, from the regions of origin, and along the journey. Frequently, they reject training and psychological supervision, saying that “they don't have time for it”. We feel that training in the issues of migrants should be mandatory *before* they arrive. A minimum for this is our first PET course on working with people and self-care. We also feel that they need training in communication and basic psychology. We are more than willing to give them that online if a small group can be formed and will have self-paced online courses on this in the future. We also feel that psychological supervision must be mandatory at least weekly and that debriefing is required afterwards. All of this applies

whatever the task the volunteer is carrying out. We feel that organizations have an obligation toward their volunteers and that, in many cases, they are not fulfilling it. We are willing to do a certain amount of this work. We don't have easy answers to this. We are willing to work with organizations to attempt to find solutions.

### Miscellaneous Work

We wrote a letter seeking cooperation to Dr. Pietro Bartolo, the former doctor on Lampedusa who now is in the European Parliament and who is passionate about working with migrants. Our aim is to get a European program going.

### Pragmatic Empowerment Training (PET)

We have found a person who is editing the videos for Course 1, that is, the course on the caregiver-client relationship and self-care.

Thanks to Board member Gwyneth Jones, we now have German and Spanish translations of the manual for course 1 on the website. Also, thanks to a volunteer from GivingWay, we now have an Italian translation.

### Courses

Charles Tauber continued learning Arabic through Duolingo.

We also took a free online course on psychological first aid. The course is available on <https://learn.nctsn.org/course/view.php?id=38>.

### Miscellaneous

We wrote an article on the migrant situation for the Dutch Quaker monthly magazine *De Vriendenkring (The Circle of Friends)*. The article, with English translation, is available on our website at <https://www.cwwpp.org/articles-about-and-by-the-cwwpp.html>.

Further, we remembered Hiroshima Day and Nagasaki Day through posts on Facebook.

Charles Tauber had an interview with a Spanish student who is working on her master's thesis in international development. The interview was about short-term volunteering.



**PROSPECTS FOR THE COMING MONTHS, CONCLUSIONS AND EPILOGUE**

Unfortunately, there seems to be little if any interest in psychological work with migrants and refugees, both those underway and those attempting to integrate into receiving societies. We see that as our primary task.

Our current emphasis on work with migrants doesn't mean that we are not committed to working with victims of war here. Yet, again, there seems to be no interest in this, despite what we see as the urgent need for it. It is clear that politics in this region are against reconciliation and that ethnic tension is being maintained and is worsening because of politics.

We also will continue to work on the PET program. We think that PET can be a major contribution to the world in creating a training program that can be used almost universally in areas of conflict and post-conflict.

Thus, we do not anticipate that the coming months and years will be easy for us. We are committed to continuing.