

THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

STATE OF GROUP ANALYSIS IN CATALONIA AND SPAIN

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If I am not mistaken, the first time we ever heard of group analysis in Spain was during the 1958 Congress of Group Psychotherapy in Barcelona. Michael Foulkes was there and so were Pat de Mare, also I think Malcolm Pines and maybe others I do not remember. The spotlights were not of course on group analysis but more on the line proposed by "The Morenos". Some of the Catalans there, however, were clever enough to catch a glimpse of group analysis.

I followed Michael Foulkes to the Maudsley that same year and there I went through the most exciting experiences of my life. Working for him at his Unit was like a breath of fresh air. Circumstances, though, did not allow me to continue my training in London and I had to leave for the U.S.A. In the middle of the 60s I returned from America to my home town of Barcelona with a title of Psychoanalyst and another of Analytic Group Therapist from the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health under my arm. By that time, I think, at least four of us [in Barcelona] had joined the Group-Analytic Society of London. The people who were active in group therapy in Barcelona then decided to set up a group that would meet weekly; something very similar, I think, to what S. H. Foulkes did in London after World War II when some people there were interested in groups. Our experiences lasted for a whole year and unfortunately did not jell into a continuous working group.

For several circumstances, among them of no little importance Franco's regime, group work in Spain was difficult during those years. Totalitarian states do not gladly accept psychoanalysis and still less, I think, group analysis on group analytic lines. Even so, I was able to build up a busy private and hospital based practice in group analysis and family therapy and managed to set up a Family Oriented Psychiatric Unit at a charity Children's Hospital. The latter enterprise was set up and conducted in a spirit following the steps of both what I had learned with S. H. Foulkes at the Maudsley and with Asya Kadis and others at the PGCMH in New York. It took me almost all my time for seven years and partially diverted my attention from the field of group psychotherapy and other teaching for the time being. I was not able to attend the First European Symposium of Group Analysis in Lisbon to which I had been specially invited, because I was busy heading a project which was to take all my time for a while. The project was an attempt to introduce dynamic concepts in the teaching of psychiatry and medical psychology at the Schools of Medicine and Psychology in the then newly founded Autonomous University of Barcelona. As the first psychoanalyst appointed Professor of Psychiatry and Head of the Department I thought if there was a chance, I had one. To no avail though. There I learnt a lesson: not only are totalitarian states reluctant to allow analytic views, but neither Medical Schools and traditional hospitals are too prone to take on the "Personalized Psychiatry" I have learnt through Foulkes and my American colleagues.

Fortunately for the Spaniards, Franco was not as immortal as he would have thought to be. After putting up a long fight he reluctantly said "good bye" to us. Before departing, however, he did his best to leave everything "*atado y bien atado*" – *well tied, and securely tied up*, an attempt in which he neither succeeded in. During the last years of his dominion, psychoanalysis like a virus was creeping into the psychiatric culture and atmosphere. By then, with a brand new democracy coinciding with the fall of democracy in South America, we

started to have an invasion of Argentinean psychoanalysts who had heard of group therapy and had had experiences as group psychotherapists back home. These two single patterns, the end of Franco's era and the transfusion of South American blood, helped us get out of the standstill.

Meanwhile, as far as group analysis is concerned, some things started to happen during the last five years. I got back in touch with the Group-Analytic Society in London; Fernando Arroyave has been in Seville at a Congress of the SEPTG and started to travel to Santander and trained people there; I did the same in Bilbao, some visits were also paid by Ana Maria Patalan and Mario Marrone to Leon and Hanne Campos, my wife, was flying to London on a weekly basis to get trained at the Institute of Group Analysis and at the Tavistock Clinic in psychoanalysis and individual, family and group psychotherapy. In the middle of March 1980, once Hanne had qualified, with the help of Malcolm Pines, Fernando Arroyave, Ana Maria Patalán, and myself we set up a Residential Spanish Workshop on Group Analysis, in the Hotel Jaime I de Aragon in Castelldefels --the year before that type of "block training" first started in Denmark. Forty people came from all over Spain and there something unknown in Spanish history happened. To think that forty Spaniards, with different levels of training and different therapeutic models and theoretical orientations could live for three days and a half in the same place and go through a workshop without bloodshed is something unthinkable. But we did, and we did it so well that after that we still are on talking terms. That was possible among other things because for a whole year before, here in Barcelona, a group of people had been working with us on a group project. The project was to prepare the main topic of the Annual Symposium of the Spanish Society for Group Psychotherapy and Group Techniques, SEPTG, the senior of professional group associations founded in 1972. We have decided to carry this study on group lines and the theme was A Group Approach to a National Health Service.

We succeeded in both, the study and the presentation at the Annual Symposium. So much so that the Spanish Society decided to take as the main theme for its next Annual Symposium the Institutional Analysis of the Society itself and two of the members of the Barcelona group were elected for office, one as President of the Society and the other as Representative of its Catalan Section. It is my feeling that the Group Analytic approach in Spain, at the moment, is serving as a safe umbrella under which group psychotherapists of all kinds can meet and conduct a dialogue.

I do not think that we Spaniards are going to be "converted" to group analysis. However, I do think that group analysis is a safe environment where group psychotherapeutic ideas with an analytical orientation can finally be introduced in Spain. The Spanish Society of Group Psychotherapy and Group Techniques is changing. In Catalonia our work group is considering by now to start a general course in group work for people in the health services. In Madrid, Seville and Bilbao they are working towards similar models of development. We are heading towards a Second Spanish Workshop in Group Analysis and also we will soon start a circular newsletter which could lead to a national Panel of Correspondence. I am sure that when the Rome Symposium of Group Analysis will be held and the Workshop that precedes it, many things will be said in Spanish and some of it, I am sure, will be worth hearing.

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