

Critical Moments of the GAS and Generational Change in GAIPAC

This excerpt from Juan Campos' "Milestones in the history of Group Analysis: The European Group Analytic Movement and the Question of Internationality of Group Analysis" (pp. 19-21) is to contextualize his "A Bystander's View" —1979 GAIPAC XII/2— and "Some Afterthoughts to the Copenhagen Meeting" 1981 GAIPAC XIV/1, April, and also explain why the reader will find in continuation some pages of the latter GAIPAC number where the critical moment GAS was going through is described: Reports to the Annual General Meeting from the then Honorary President Jane Abercrombie and the then Honorary Secretary Andrew Powell and related correspondence; (HC September 2010).

Generational change in GAIPAC

This —1979—was a moment of "generational change", since an Institute Member of the first promotion was taking over the baton from old-timer Pat de Maré. I was concerned that GAIPAC may be heading for being a more traditional professional journal and, as I rightly guessed, a sort of international journal of group analysis, and far from the international workshop or large study group by correspondence that it was originally intended to be. So in the first issue under Harold Behr's editorship, a letter of mine to him of June 10th, 1979, appeared under the heading "Group Analysis, International Panel and Correspondence: A Bystander's View", where, after quoting the above mentioned last editorial of Foulkes, I showed my concern for the future of GAIPAC in the following terms:

"What are the prospects of an international association of group analysts? or, without being so ambitious, what is left of our intended international workshop or study group by correspondence? It is my feeling that without face-to-face contact, without free and thorough discussion of all of us concerned with this common adventure, GROUP ANALYSIS runs the risk of becoming institutionalized and the dynamics of power will take out the wit and soul of what it could have been. Hierarchical organization will kill the possibilities of growth that our affiliative association had at its beginning. In the preliminary issue of GAIPAC are the blueprints of what it was supposed to be. It was thought to be guided by group-analytic principles. Are we still running GROUP ANALYSIS on the same track? More active participation among us is needed in order to do the necessary task of reflection to know where our large group will go. I wonder if the next International Congress in Copenhagen would not be a good occasion for the Group Analytic Society (London) and GROUP ANALYSIS to organize a large meeting among overseas members and correspondents.

To my surprise, the Committee of the Society took my proposal seriously, and once at the Copenhagen Congress, an informal meeting was improvised at lunch time where more than fifty people took part. Mrs. Jane Abercrombie, the then President of the Society, asked me to expand on my ideas and a very lively discussion followed. Later, she kindly asked me to report on the meeting in writing for GAIPAC, which I promptly did upon my return home in a paper of November 14, 1980, and which was published under the heading "Some afterthoughts to the Copenhagen Meeting". At that time I could not understand, to save my

life, why the Committee was taking so much interest in my initiative. But, as soon as this article of April 1981 issue XIV/1 appeared, I began to understand. This issue is a sign post of the most important changeover Group Analysis had made since its inception in Exeter in 1938. At the time, there was a great strain in London between two of the organizations founded in Foulkes' lifetime, the London Group Analytic Society and the Institute of Group Analysis. The third of these institutions, the printed arena of GAIPAC, was adopted to debate these issues. Seemingly, the debate between these two organizations had gained a sense of urgency as the pressure to expand and develop met the pressure to cut back in the face of a gloomy economic climate. So, the whole Correspondence Section of that issue was entirely taken up by letters concerning the past, present and future of the groupanalytic movement. The idea of using GAIPAC that way was stirred up by a letter of Robin Skynner of 29th of January, 1981, prompted by the Reports of the President and Honorary Secretary of the Group Analytic Society that were circulated in preparation of the Annual General Meeting of the Society. They were submitting their resignation since they felt that the status of the Society needed critical examination on three issues: the already mentioned financial dilemma, the relationship with the Institute and the relationship with Overseas Members. The general feeling was that the transference relationship with Dr. Foulkes has not yet been solved and that the loss of leadership had not yet found resurrection in their collaboration together. The chain of events, in a very short period, as they can be reconstructed now, are the following: In September 1980, three important things happened at Copenhagen: The above mentioned meeting of GAIPAC correspondents and UK and Overseas Members of the Society; then, two other informal meetings took place on my initiative, one between the Group-Analytic Society and the School of Social Psychology of Enrique Pichon-Rivière of Buenos Aires and another with Diego and Fabrizio Napolitani the organizers of the oncoming European Symposium of Group Analysis in Rome; and, last and most important, Malcolm Pines had been elected President of the IAGP. In December 1980, a joint meeting between the Society's Committee and the Council of the Institute took place where the President of the Society put forward a proposal that the Society and the Institute may combine to become one entity but having a number of facets. The facets would have reflected different aspects of Group Analysis, for instance therapy, training, education, research into normal as well as abnormal behavior. The idea had been debated and finally rejected. Those concerns, as usually happens, permeated the frontiers of the January Workshop of 1981, which curiously was entitled "Group Analysis: A Wider Role?", closely related to the problems with which the Committee had been struggling for the preceding year. It had to do, in the words of the Honorary Secretary Andrew Powell, with the re-examination of the *raison d'être* of the Society in the light of changes that went on all around. My concern was not at all about what went on between these two sister organizations of London but about how much that was impeding a smooth development of the dynamic matrix of the group-analytic community as a whole. As a matter of fact, my report on the Copenhagen meeting with which started the April issue, I closed with the following statement:

"What I actually propose, is that among this broad network of people who have been influenced by Group Analysis, who are group analysts at heart, even if they never heard of it, a small number of them would get together and set themselves to think and to work towards such a sort of a (GAIPAC-like) association. For that I am asking for volunteers, and I think that our panel of correspondents could well serve as a launching point... I was neither qualified as a psychoanalyst - of the International Psychoanalytic Association I mean to say - nor as a group analyst - of the Group Analytic Institute. Regardless of how many formal training certificates I obtained from other qualifying institutions, I feel basically a group-analyst. What is it to be a group analyst? To me it means to face the problems of the individual and of society in the

nodal point where they meet and they may be solved —the small face to face group— led on analytical lines. It is also, to further communication at all levels by frank and open discussion. It is to function in the daily professional and associational life guided by group analytic-principles, as worded by S. H. Foulkes in Method and Principles. That is why he and this way of thinking are so dear and appealing to me and this is the sort of association I aspire to and envision.”