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May Meeting, 1983

Dear Jane,

I am addressing this letter to you in your capacity as President of the Society. I take that the proposal made by me during the May Meeting in London has reached you safely and the Committee is giving due consideration to it. I would appreciate being informed of the Committee's decision on this issue and what future course of action is contemplated, if any.

Unfortunately, we could not count with you on this occasion. I feel that it would not be out of place if I expanded on the argument that led me to formulate the proposal, since the brief wording of it required by Colin James forcefully had to be written on the spur of the moment. Also, I will expose how I see those Constitutional amendments may affect the development of Group Analysis in my country and in our language area.

Basically, on the agenda of the May Meeting there were two main topics: The "Overseas Membership" status of the Society, and the relation of GAS (London) with other European societies, associations and institutes in the field. Although, there were three other questions: The next Symposium; the scheduling of the AGM made to coincide with the May Foulkes' Lecture; and the possibility of enlarging the correspondence media amongst various interested groups—all of them related and subsidiary to the decision taken regards the first two.

To dispense with the Overseas membership category—regardless if substituted by a complementary category or not—if well it eliminates a problem, it opens new ones. Better said, the so far "non-problem" of indirect accreditation by a "learned" non-qualifying, non accrediting Society reaches trans-national proportions. The Society will go on unsuccessfully dealing with serious "pressing problems"—money problems, inadequate premises, internal struggles among the three sister institutions which once were chaperoned under the umbrella of the Trust, teaching rights, standards for

membership, etc. etc.— unless it is decided to take this "non-problem" seriously.

Let me explain to you, and to the rest of the Committee, how we envision from here in Barcelona the approval of the May Meeting proposal could affect us.

As far as myself is concerned, no longer an Overseas member, I will have to decide on the alternative options of membership which now are left open to me. I assume that the Committee will most likely invite me to join as a Full member. I would, of course, not settle for any kind of association that does not confer me full democratic rights. It is enough that my lot—or my choice— has been to pertain to a second-class profession—groupanalysis versus psychoanalysis— as, on top of it, voluntarily accepting a "second class membership" within a foreign groupanalytic society. I did not used to feel that way as an unconscious overseas member, but now that the social unconscious of our group has been translated into articulate language, I feel different. ☺

There are other people in Spain who, like me, have been overseas members of the Society for many years. What options for membership are to be offered to them now? I am fully qualified as a psychoanalyst and as a groupanalytic psychotherapist by an American training institution of high prestige, the Postgraduate Center for Mental Health of New York. Most of my Spanish colleagues are not formally trained. I am a Fellow of the AGPA, but many of them not even meet the standards set up by this Association to qualify for membership. Do not misunderstand me. This is not a personal question. I am bringing it up as a case just to illustrate my point. The two or three people I am thinking of, even if they did not have formal training and neither ever sat in a group as a patient, by personal experience and dedication well deserve Full membership and I would not be comfortable in a Society with them unless they were co-members and colleagues with equal rights. The problem is that in Spain there are many other people like them, equally qualified but without formal training. (The same happened with the founders of this Society and with most of the teachers at the London Institute). The number of associates to this Society in my country may well be substantially increased in case that membership to the GAS was available and the service it renders becomes attractive enough for them to apply. This way by increasing the input in membership dues some of our chronic financial problems of the Society could be reduced.

Let us suppose this was to be the case. Which are then to be the procedures for applying and of conferring them membership? Which the standards for them to be met? Who is to judge these standards? I do not feel it would be fair to us, nor to the Society, if somebody on merits of social acquaintance during a General Course in London, in the U.K. Provinces or even by attending a sporadic groupanalytic workshop or Symposium, regardless where, could be sponsored for membership. Neither would it be fair if you, only on the grounds of political reasons and not of shared training were to sponsor membership or object to it of people residing in other countries than the U.K. Obviously, it is up to the Committee to decide, but, we of course, we —the Spanish members of the Society— would like to have some say on this matters.

As you see, going trans-national is quite a complicated business. Since transnational, according to the Webster's, means "*transcending the limit, the interest, etc. ... of a single nation*", the problem the Society has been facing in London and in the U.K. Provinces, now becomes enlarged at a European or worldwide scale. Of course, Foulkes always thought that one of the functions of the Society was to serve as a model, an example for other possible future societies in the world. Do we really want to go into having this headache? Do you people in England care enough for the development of group analysis in any other country than yours as for really going transnational? Let me add some further considerations regard teaching, regards money, and regards representation which are equally related the topic.

For example, somebody in my country invites a U.K. member to participate in a teaching activity there. It could be just a seminar, a workshop or a general course. These activities could even be sponsored by Spanish members of the GAS. The Society, of course has no other control over the activities of its members than the explicit prohibition of using the membership to the association as a professional qualification, this applies to non-British members as well. At least that is what we understand and the reason why neither Hanne nor myself use our association and affiliation to the Society this way. Though, this will not deter other Spaniards or British members to do so. Do you imagine what would happen in case that tomorrow I come to the British Islands or to any other country in Europe and set up shop and start a program or a series of workshops and qualify people as group-analysts on the only weight that I am a MEMBER OF THE LONDON SOCIETY?

This, as a matter of fact, has happened and not only by members of the Society but also by members of the Institute. When we had organized training activities, we have done so with the approval of the Institute and we are very happy we did so. And even we paid the levies asked for. But, are other people likely to be so scrupulous? Or else, now that the Trust has been dismantled, where do the levies we pay go to, to the Institute, to the Society, to both?

Let us enter then into the hottest problems of them all: moneys. As you are well aware the subscriptions to the Society are not a bargain at all. As Overseas members we had a discount, no longer applicable I imagine as Full members residing abroad. What do we get in return? The City dwellers of London have advantages regards the people living in the U.K. Provinces and more still regards those living across the Channel, the Ocean or across the Seas. They, the Londoners, have easy access to the Monday Evening Scientific Meetings; they can use the Library and the tape and videotecs, the Wellcome Archives and the rest of the Society's events, without having to make night in a hotel, take the train, the plane or booking a package trip. Logically, following Islamic teachings, if the mountain doesn't go to Mahoma, Mahoma has to go to the mountain. But we are rather in a Judeo-Christian tradition here in Europe. Could not the subscription be less in order to ease communication and interaction among people living in other localities? For example, in having better information and mail access to the materials in the Library. Not only audio but also videotaped materials can easily be reduplicated and transferred. Also, when bringing people from over there, should we go on top paying expenses and fees and levies, or else could we aspire to having some financial support from the Society?

The amount of general information received here or anywhere else in Europe should be equivalent in amount and promptness to the one received in London. Airmail has already been started by the Wright Brothers of the World. Cable and satellite TV is to be in operation soon. Telephone group supervision or teaching was experimented between N.Y. and Seattle, 1000 miles apart, by Wolf and Schwartz, back in 1961-65 (*Beyond the Couch*, 1970). Public subsidy for those enterprises may be assured. The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations has managed to do so, why no take example since it was decided to move up to Hampstead?

The aim of the Society is to further the development of groupanalytic psychotherapy, as S. H. Foulkes said once in his address to the First General

Meeting of the Society back in 1955, 1) as an experience, 2) as a technique for treatment and prevention, 3) as a method of research, and 4) as a body of theoretical constructs applicable to treatment, to groups, and to social sciences (I am quoting by heart from News and Views number 1, 1961). So far, point 1 and 2 had priority in the Society's endeavours. Teaching, training, transference of knowledge skills and of the groupanalytic attitude grew in importance so as to become a differentiated body —the Institute. What about systematic research and theory building of our practice, teaching, or our social organization? Do we think it fair that a scientific society like ours neglect these challenging problems? Don't you feel that it is the unspoken real “non-problem” behind money, premises, standards, qualification and, god knows, the meta-problem we still have to face cooperatively? Is it not a sad thing that for lack of thinking deep and big enough we had to recur to the old fashioned model of the IPA as the one of our social organization and societal life? I leave it to your imagination to figure out the price of following this model of organization.

We count with other means to allow us do different. I am thinking of the international study group and continuous workshop on group analysis towards which GAIPAC was initially heading for. The journal, case I understood well the last Editorial of GROUP ANALISIS is heading towards a formal International Journal of Group Analysis. I do not object to it, prove being that I accepted Harold Behr's invitation to join its Editorial Advisory Board. How to preserve though GAIPAC's original spirit, how to adapt it to the times without losing its flavour and operativity, are the challenges we will have to meet! The networks of correspondents interested in special subjects, the language area networks to facilitate communication and face to face periodic interaction through meetings, the ways of promotion within this informal body which is at the core of a groupanalytic movement with no intention of turning into a Cause, are still matters pending to be solved!

After this long letter I do not feel like going into the question of representation. I just want to remind you that it was Malcolm's slogan "No taxation without representation!" what brought us from September 1981 in Rome to London in May 1982. The details will be worked out just by faithfully following the General Group Analytic Principles as we have done so far.

Some people will wonder which are my intentions and the reasons for so much work, dedication and investment in a Society which I still do not

know if I am entitled to consider as “mine” (see my letter to the Honorary Secretary, GROUP ANALYSIS XIV, 1981 April). Well, leaving behind very intimate reasons not quite appropriate for publication here, I will concentrate on those ready for public action.

Here in our country we have started a movement among trained psychoanalysts of different schools seriously interested in the analytical approach to group psychotherapy not only from a theoretical and pragmatic point of view but from the social and ideological one as well. We have a circular letter «Convergencia Analítica» and we meet every three months for a whole day. We are not groupanalysts in the proper sense, but we all have had specific specialised training in analytic group psychotherapy and social psychology besides psychoanalysis. We have not yet decided which sort of social organization we are finally to adopt. For the time being we adopted tentatively the name of CONVERGENCIA ANALITICA GRUPAL, and we may well finish up by calling it SOLIDARIDAD, who knows? People from as far as Sweden and Latin America are joining our circle. We work as an autonomous group and we found we needed the help of a conductor sitting on the boundary to help us find the way. Fabrizio Napolitani, from the Institute of Group Analysis Roma (IGAR) has helped us so far in this role, and for the next academic year we hope to arrange a continuous workshop centred on the four aims recommended by Foulkes. If we succeed, coinciding with the June 1983 International Congress of Psychoanalysis of Madrid, we also intend to set up an International Colloquium between Psychoanalysis and Group Analysis, of the kind the London Society hosted in London in 1975. We are eager to start working as a group towards the next European Symposium on the topics and according to the methodology suggested by its working party.

Finally, most of the people in our group are professionally qualified, meeting the standards of the AGPA—which are as high as those required by the GAS (London), and who are already members of other group or psychoanalytic associations. We either will have to constitute legally a new Society ourselves and join as corporative members the IAGP or the AGPA, or else find an alternative solution to this need. I would prefer it if we could join the foreseeable movement of transnational group analysis. This I imagine can be done two ways: one, by becoming members of the GAS (London); two, just by adhering ourselves to the existing network of GROUP ANALYSIS INTERNATIONAL PANEL AND CORRESPONDENCE, short for GAIPAC, understood, of course as a group by correspondence and face to face

encounters. I would like to hear how those ideas sound to you, to the members of the Committee and to the Editorial Board of GROUP ANALYSIS, before making any definite proposals to our group. Our next meeting is scheduled for September but since our method of working implies the reading of papers and initiatives ahead of time I would much appreciate having from you an answer before the end of July.

With my best regards to the Committee members, with best wishes and hoping to hear from you soon,

Cordially, Juan