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DR MALCOLM PINES, LONDON, reports:

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY
ZURICH, AUGUST 1973

I had not originally intended to go to Zurich for this Congress, having already had my fill of Congresses for 1973, - the International Congress of Medical Psychotherapy at Oslo in June and the International Congress of Psychoanalysis in Paris at the end of July, and the programme of the group psychotherapy congress did not seem particularly attractive. However, it seemed to us here important that a representative of the Group-Analytic Society should go to Zurich as there were indications that at long last the prolonged gestation period of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy was at an end, and that this Congress would see its birth. For many years Dr Foulkes has been Vice President of the International Council for Group Psychotherapy, and as he was not able to attend the congress I went partly to represent him, but I was also welcomed in my role as Chairman of the Group-Analytic Society of London. There were several informal and formal committee meetings, first chaired by Dr Moreno himself, where he welcomed us all to the foundation of this new Association, but thereafter, being tired, he was ably represented by his wife Zerka. During the week, the members of the old council, together with some new members representing the A.G.P.A. together revised and approved the final draft of the proposed constitution of the new Association and formed its first committee. Eventually the Council of the new Association will consist of 30 members of whom not more than 2, apart from officials, will represent one particular country. On the council of 30 there will be an Executive of 10 members who were nominated at the Congress. They are as follows:-

Honorary President: Dr Moreno, President: Dr S. Hadden (U.S.A.)
Treasurer: Zerka Moreno, 1st Vice-President: George Vassiliou (Greece),
2nd Vice-President: Mrs A. Heigl-Evers (Germany), Secretaries: Dr.
Battegay (Switzerland) and Mrs A. Schutzenberger (France).
Additional members of the Executive: Dr van Emde Boas (Netherlands),
Dr Malcolm Pines (U.K.) and Dr R Schindler (Austria).

The other places on the Council will be filled first by members of the former Council who still wish to remain actively associated with the new Association, and if there are vacancies left these will be filled later on.

Being faced with an actual work task, that of approving a final constitution and setting up the framework for the new Association, seemed to enable the group of us to work reasonably well and efficiently together. Dr Hadden armed with a book on parliamentary procedure written by Henry Davidson, an American psychiatrist who takes his committee work seriously, had us working as a well-disciplined group after an initial settling down period. We did not have much difficulty in agreeing to a final draft of the constitution, which had been produced after much labour by Dr Friedeman and Professor Warner (U.S.A.) The constitution had been radically revised to accept the suggestions that had been put forward by members of the former council over the years.

What are the tasks and prospects of the new Association ? In the first place the aims must be limited and realistic. They are to organise a first international congress for the Association in three years time, and to see whether in the interim or perhaps following the next Congress, Regional Associations can be set up that will enable small local meetings to take place. How would this appear on the European scene ? I was struck, both at this Congress and at the Psychoanalytical Congress in Paris, how much active interest and apparent progress is being made in France and Germany and other of the European countries which we in the United Kingdom, and almost certainly in the U.S.A. are unaware of. The bookstalls at both Congresses contained what appeared to me to be interesting and original documents in the native languages of their countries, as well as containing very up to date translations of works written in English. Alas, the converse is not true at our own Conferences and on the shelves of our own bookstalls. Few translations are made from French and German at present into English and a language barrier is a very real one. For instance, at this particular Congress in Zurich the majority of section meetings were for German speaking participants, there were many in French and relatively few in English, therefore the few of us who came from Britain and America were very limited in the choices that we could make. This of course did not affect the initial plenary sessions of the mornings and the discussion panels in the late afternoon, all of which were served most ably by the most impressive and idiomatic team of simultaneous translators that I have been privileged to listen to.

What of the atmosphere of the Conference ? Zurich was warm and sunny, the Congress was well attended by over 1,000 participants, many of whom seemed young, enthusiastic, spontaneous and not at all like the audience you would expect to attract to a Psychotherapy Conference in this country. This, I believe, was partly because the Congress had been thrown open to all interested participants, whether or not they were professionally concerned with psychiatry or psychotherapy, and therefore many students or lay people interested in social reform and the problems of society chose to come. This definitely affected the atmosphere, as the pressure towards the use of group method radically to change the structure of society was constantly felt. This showed in the way the audience applauded vigorously those passages in the opening paper by Maxwell Jones which seemed to find a source of many problems in modern society and modern psychiatry in the medical model and the position of doctors in a hierarchical system. Jones has moved to the position where he feels that the most useful thing that a psychotherapist can do is to get involved in educational processes and try to enable children to learn to live with and to resolve conflict. The keen interest of the audience showed also in their attentive and vigorous responses to the panel sessions held at the end of each day. Often such panels fail to ignite interest or animated discussion amongst the panelists, but most of these did. I regret to say that the exception to this was probably the panel which I took part in myself, that was involved in a discussion between different schools of group psychotherapy. It seemed that we represented basically similar view-points arising from group-analytic, psychoanalytic and psychodramatic approaches so that we could not provide the audience with sufficient entertainment.

A most interesting panel was the final evaluation panel of the Congress where younger psychotherapists and psychiatrists who had been asked to act as observers at the Conference spoke and interacted quite well with the audience.

I was pleased to attend the intelligent and vigorous presentations of social conflict situations portrayed by the Vassiliou students from Athens. As part of their training in social psychology they are given not only texts to study but are asked to role play situations which illustrate these theoretical principles. Thus we were demonstrated two situations that illustrated clashes between Greek and American cultures. One was a situation of an American housewife settling down in Greece for a year or two and who was having difficulty in adapting to the Greek culture. Her own notions of privacy, self-containment and self-reliance based on the American cultural system seemed constantly invaded and threatened by the warm, maternal, intrusive approach of her Greek neighbour, who was prepared to share many of the confidential matters of her own family life with her new American neighbour and who expected reciprocity from her. The other example was the fact of a Greek employee working for an American boss who was constantly expecting his boss to relate to him in a warm paternalistic manner, whereas the American was really expecting efficient results from his employee without being involved too closely with him in interpersonal relationships.

I also spent a pleasant and interesting evening with a group of psychiatrists from Burghölzli and the social psychiatry service of the University discussing concepts of borderline states and anorexia nervosa. This invitation followed on a workshop on borderline states and group psychotherapy that I conducted at the Conference.

I left Zurich with the conviction that there are many group therapists in Europe who would like to have much closer contact with us and they possibly wish to come to our workshops and symposia and whom we should feel privileged to welcome and to share our proceedings with. On the whole I was left with the feeling that in this country we do possess a standpoint, a body of theory and a body of practice that is both consistent and flexible enough to gain respect and influence developments abroad. Our work is still relatively little known and our European colleagues would welcome seeing us in greater numbers at such conferences. I was asked more than once why no one from the Tavistock Clinic was present, and their presence would certainly be most welcome.

Apart from the enthusiasm and the warmth of the atmosphere and the interesting discussions that took place, I did not think that much of scientific value was exchanged during the conference. This may be partly due to the fact that my inability to share in the German language sections limited my conception of what was taking place, but it is probably true that at present in the group therapy scene enthusiasm outruns considered experience.

GROUP RELATIONS TRAINERS ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

This was also my impression when I attended the annual conference of the Group Relations Trainers Association held in London recently. I was asked to speak together with Bob Gosling on a panel organised by Dorothy Stock Whitaker on the group process approach to group psychotherapy. We had a well attended section, but to begin with they expressed disappointment that we had not clearly exposed to them our notions on group levels, what are they, how are they to be recognised, what use does the therapist make of them and so on. Dorothy, with her usual clarity, had prepared interesting but difficult questions for us to contend with along these lines. Being a social psychologist she is of course aware of the importance of a group establishing norms, values and consensus. I was impressed by the way in which the very disparate members of this audience soon became a disciplined group under her tutelage. After we had finished our presentations she

collected questions from the audience which she tactfully and firmly got them to phrase in such a way that they became answerable questions which the panel then had time to consider and to discuss. The panel served the three of us the useful purpose of being able to compare and contrast some of our ideas, which we may later put to paper. The other interesting panel that I attended was one where Lionel Kreeger from our own Institute spoke, together with three other members, who included Trevor Mumby, a member of our Society, on the Large Group. Our readers will know that local interest in the Large Group has been growing steadily over the past few years and found this symposium stimulating and to some extent rewarding. The initial presentations by the first speakers, particularly those of Trevor Mumby and John Southgate from the North West Polytechnic of London were well thought out and well condensed. Southgate's experience includes attending a laboratory of a large group that has met constantly over a week under the guidance of Max Pagès, the French social psychologist, and their theories are considerably influenced by the notions of Jean Paul Sartre and his concept of seriality. I am not myself well enough acquainted with this notion to be able to present a summary of it here. A discussion of these contributions however fell well below the level of the presentations. One has to talk about a specified group situation in order to compare experience and ideas, and people were talking about all sorts of different situations, ranging from hippy concerts to children's play groups. I gained the impression from the G.R.T.A Conference that the high point of enthusiasm for encounter group techniques has passed, and that people are more prepared now to sit and exchange ideas and experience than constantly to be seeking out affective experiences.

CO-COUNSELLING TECHNIQUES

I went to a session on co-counselling in order to get some first hand knowledge of this approach that I had only heard of, and found that what presented was a situation where abreactive and catalytic techniques are being used in a setting where professionals are not necessary. The partners are urged to seek out and to explore areas of psychic pain and to take turns in helping each other to get to these levels. The value of this approach to many people is undeniable, but I was disappointed to hear the speaker, a professional psychologist, saying that for him the theories behind co-counselling were the most satisfying psychodynamic theories that we yet have available. They seem to me to be simplistic and reductive and shallow. However, the movement seems to have some of the fire and zeal of a new cult and we should expect to hear more of it in the future.

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