

Moreno and the IAGP

The beginnings of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy*

After being elected to the IAGP Board of Directors, I became interested in promoting the organization in Brazil. So, I spoke with the organizers of the next Brazilian Congress of Psychodrama and asked for an opportunity to explain what the IAGP and its mission are. The organizers promptly arranged a place for me in a section of the Congress called “Speaking of . . .” Well, I had the space, so I needed the content, but I knew very little about the history of the IAGP.

At the next IAGP Board meeting, I happily communicated to our Secretary and to our President that I had found an important space to promote the organization in Brazil and that I needed information about the history of the IAGP. Initially they told me that we had some historical information on file, but I responded that I needed more. So the President suggested that I be the person to organize this data. I accepted the task and thus became a member of the Archives Committee (from 1995–1998). The following is the result of my work.

I began my research reading some texts about the beginnings of the IAGP in the few sources of literature available. I also wrote to people who had, in one way or another, participated in the origins of the organization, many of whom provided important information on the subject. At the International Congress of Group Psychotherapy, which took place in London in 1998, there was a day designated for interviews, discussions and round-tables with ex-presidents and ex-members of the Executive Committee. The IAGP also began to record interviews with key people in its history. In this way, additional information was gathered. Future researchers will have at their disposal, in addition to the Moreno Archives at Harvard University, new archives that are being organized under the supervision of René Marineau at the University of Trois Rivières (Canada) consisting of Anne Ancelin Schützenberger’s personal library and files.

* J. Fonseca, The beginnings of IAGP: an historical approach, *The International Forum of Group Psychotherapy*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1997.

Moreno created a series of publications (journals and magazines) and associations throughout his career. He felt the need to organize the psychodramatic and the group psychotherapy movement. Moreno is credited with establishing the following organizations: the Society of Psychodrama and Group Psychotherapy in 1942, renamed the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama in 1951; the American Sociometric Association in 1945; and, what interests us particularly, the International Committee on Group Psychotherapy in Paris in 1951, the International Council of Group Psychotherapy in Milan in 1963, and, finally, the international incorporation of the IAGP in Zurich in 1973.

In fact, in his later years Moreno recognized that, more important than his battles – first with psychoanalysis, then with S. R. Slavson in terms of pioneering group psychotherapy – would be to have an organization where all the trends in group psychotherapy were represented.

With the end of the Second World War, international scientific meetings began to take place again. The First World Congress of Psychiatry was held in Paris in 1950. After this, psychotherapists felt prepared to have their own congresses, so in April of 1951 Moreno founded the International Committee of Group Psychotherapy, also in Paris. The objectives of the Committee (*Group Psychotherapy*, 1951, p. 126) were:

- (1) to define the professional standards of group psychotherapy and to work towards a consensus of terms and operations;
- (2) to prepare for the international congresses;
- (3) to sponsor the International Archives of Group Psychotherapy.

Besides Moreno, other leaders of the group movement participated on the first Advisory Board: Foulkes (UK), Bierer (UK), Favez-Boutonier (France), Snowden (UK), P. Senft (UK), Delay (France), Heuyer (France), Lazelle (USA), Montassut (France), Porcher (France) and J.H. Pratt (USA). Zerka Moreno (1954, p. 91) notes:

The objective was a World Federation of Societies interested in group psychotherapy and allied subjects. Thanks to the combined efforts of Drs. W. Hulse, W. Warner, J. L. Moreno and S. R. Slavson, the International Committee on Group Psychotherapy took its present form, representing twenty-four countries.

The result of the formation of this Committee was the First International Congress of Group Psychotherapy in Toronto, Canada, in August of 1954, coincidentally the same city in which, in May of 1931 under the initiative of J. L. Moreno, the first organizing step on behalf of group psychotherapy was made during the meeting of the American Psychiatric Association. This was followed by the Round Table Conference on the Application of the

Group Method to Classification in Philadelphia in May 1932. It was during these meetings that the terms “group therapy” and “group psychotherapy” were defined by Moreno.

In 1957, the International Committee met at the 2nd International Congress of Group Psychotherapy, in Zurich, and made important decisions: the first step was to compose a provisional council for the future international association. Another matter was to enlarge the membership so as to make the future association more representative. An election would be held by mail ballot to name a new executive committee and a new set of officers. These representatives would write the constitution for the organization.

In Milan, in July of 1963, during the 3rd International Congress of Group Psychotherapy (organized by Enzo Spaltro), the International Council of Group Psychotherapy was founded and, as Anne Ancelin Schützenberger* observed, “group-analysts and psychodramatists [were] together, finally”. The election of officers, by mail ballot, had taken place before the Congress. Moreno was made President, with S. H. Foulkes (UK) and Serge Lebovici (France) as Vice-Presidents, Berthold Stokvis (Netherlands), Secretary, and A. Friedemann (Switzerland), Treasurer. In the *International Handbook of Group Psychotherapy* – the proceedings of the 1963 Milan Congress – is the following report:

Over 100 delegates attended the council meeting. The discussion centered largely on the proposed constitution of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy. Dr. J. L. Moreno opened the discussions and pointed out that only the entire membership of the International Council can make ultimate, binding decisions by anonymous ballot.

The discussion brought out a number of valuable suggestions as to what form the constitution of the International Society should take.

(Moreno, 1966, p. 727)

The 4th International Congress of Group Psychotherapy in Vienna, 1968, was the last congress before the international incorporation. It permitted debate on the developing association. A lively discussion ensued over the structure of the constitution to be adopted. According to Moreno (1968, p. 89), “the range of opinions was wide and most constructive”. He added, as President of the International Council, that the task must be completed within a reasonable time and the material circulated. In fact, the final incorporation, five years later, was the result of more than ten years of meetings and correspondence to establish the by-laws. The entire process took more than twenty years, from 1951 until 1973.

At the 5th International Congress of Group Psychotherapy in Zurich, August 19–24, 1973, the long awaited event finally happened. R. Battagay,

A. Friedemann and A. Uchtenhagen organized it, and a comprehensive book on the proceedings of the Congress, under the title *Group Therapy and Social Environment* (Uchtenhagen *et al.*, 1975), was published.

By 1973 Moreno was 84 years old and had suffered several minor strokes. He was not in the best condition to travel, but he insisted on going. It was to be his last international trip and, as Zerka Moreno* pointed out, "Yes, it was J. L.'s very last trip abroad; he died 9 months later. So this was his last baby, so to speak." A few weeks prior to the trip to Zurich, Moreno called his student, translator and friend, Grete Leutz, in Germany, to inform her of his poor physical condition and ask her to find an assistant to help him get around the hotel while Zerka was at the Congress.

There was excitement in the air. The decision that there should be a balance between group analysts and psychodramatists was met on good terms. Candidates for the first executive committee were discussed. Samuel Hadden (USA) was suggested as the first president by the group analysts. Moreno had had some difficulties in the past with Hadden (who was a follower of S. R. Slavson, with whom Moreno had argued over the foundations of group psychotherapy) and would have preferred Adolf Friedemann (Switzerland), but he declined due to a serious heart condition. Despite this, according to Zerka Moreno, considering that Sam Hadden was one of the least offensive opponents, and as a conciliatory gesture regarding that old battle, Moreno agreed and Hadden was designated. Malcolm Pines*, who was there representing S. H. Foulkes, comments that Sam Hadden "was a good choice because he was conscientious and honorable", and remembers that "he used to carry a little pocket book of parliamentary procedures and so every step that we took was legitimate". Adolf Friedemann was made Treasurer-General Secretary. Anne Ancelin Schützenberger (France) was International Secretary, and later International Co-Secretary with Raymond Bategay (Switzerland). Anneliese Heigl-Evers (Germany) was one of the Vice-Presidents. Adolf Friedemann and Raymond Bategay prepared the registration of the institution under Swiss law.

The first session of the international incorporation of the IAGP took place at the Grand Hotel Dolder Berg, in Zurich, in late August 1973. Grete Leutz* describes this memorable day poetically:

Moreno, sitting at the head of a long table, presided the assembly; at least twelve persons sat by his side. Facing the afternoon sun, he did not speak much, but smiling benevolently, he was very present and appeared satisfied. In the evening he refrained from participating in the second session. Instead, he had dinner with the wife and daughter of Dr. Raoul Schindler (who played an outstanding role in the founding of the IAGP), and me. Inspired by the Viennese voices of the Austrian ladies, he became very spirited and in the most sparkling way, related anecdotes of his time in the literary circles of Vienna . . .

Important people from the group psychotherapy and psychodrama movement were present. Some of them became officers of the association in the years to come, including the four subsequent presidents, Raymond Battegay (Switzerland), Malcolm Pines (UK), Jay Fidler (USA) and Grete Leutz (Germany), and the two next vice-presidents, Anne Ancelin Schützenberger and Zerka Moreno. Also present were Heika Straub (Germany) and Joshua Bierer (UK). Bierer, who sat next to Zerka Moreno, told her that she should have been designated president. Zerka* responded that this would be a mistake because “they obviously wanted both a man and a psychiatrist at the helm”. In fact, of the nine elected presidents until now (1997), there have been only two women (Grete Leutz and Fern Cramer Azima), and only two psychologists (Fern Cramer Azima and Earl Hopper) as presidents.

Soon after taking his post as President, Samuel B. Hadden published the following communiqué:

Formation of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy

During the Fifth International Congress of Group Psychotherapy in Zurich in August 1973, a new organization, The International Association of Group Psychotherapy, was formed, a Constitution adopted, and an Interim Board of Directors elected.

The Constitution provides for National Organizational and Individual memberships to join the planning of future congresses and other measures to advance various forms of Group Psychotherapy. Because of your demonstrated interest, we are inviting you to complete the application and join us at this time.

(Hadden, 1974, p. 240)

J. L. and Zerka Moreno had an active role in all of the first international congresses of group psychotherapy and psychodrama up to 1973, and, obviously, in the foundation of the IAGP. They sometimes even funded the events, as they did with the first three international congresses of group psychotherapy (Toronto, Zurich and Milan). The publication of the *International Handbook of Group Psychotherapy* (1966) co-edited by Battegay and Friedemann, also came out of their own pockets.¹ As Grete Leutz* said: “In all these events, Moreno was the most powerful motor, the ‘spiritus rector’, and Zerka was totally involved in all those steps.”

¹ Many pioneers put their own money into the first congresses of group psychotherapy and psychodrama. Anne Ancelin Schützenberger, for example, paid the deficit of the 1968 Congress of Psychodrama that was moved from Prague to Baden when the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia.

A series of coincidences happened in Zurich in late August of 1973. As mentioned earlier, it was Moreno's last international trip and, presumably, his last public presentation. Returning to Beacon, he wrote an open letter that was probably his last published text. He died a few months later (May, 1974). He was passing the baton, conscious that his mission had been fulfilled. We can interpret his words as both a farewell and a request for the continuation of his work, together with the international community of group psychotherapy. This open letter is still relevant today, so I would like to conclude with its transcription. In the contents of *Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama*, vol. XXVI, no. 3–4 (Moreno, 1973) the following appears: "Open Letter from J. L. Moreno in behalf of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy" (p. 131):

International Association of Group Psychotherapy
Registered under the Swiss Civil Code, Art. 60 ff

Dear Friends:

The newly established International Association of Group Psychotherapy is one of the major goals I have been trying to attain since 1951. Now that it is a reality, I hope you will give it every support. We need support of both a moral and financial nature if we are to maintain a high level of academic pursuit and continued contact at International Congresses with colleagues all over the world.

The enclosed membership application is your chance to give evidence of your interest. It is a crowning achievement of my life's work.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

J. L. Moreno, M.D.

Honorary President

References

* Indicates personal correspondence with Raymond Bategay, Juan Campos, Grete Leutz, Zerka Moreno, Malcolm Pines and Anne Ancelin Schützenberger.

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