

PSYCHOLOGISTS STILL UNITED BY THE DANUBE

This metaphor can certainly be understood by many psychologists from the so-called eastern part of Europe; but experts from west European regions can grasp it as well. For the others, this metaphor symbolizes the Xth meeting of psychologists from the Danubian countries which took place from August 30 to September 5, 1993 in Slovakia, in the High Tatras. What preceded this geographically limited event? That it was nine such meetings in all other Danubian countries (excluding Romania) does not reveal the root of the matter. We must reveal the beginnings of these meetings and try to tell the whole historical truth. Therefore:

The meetings of psychologists from Danubian countries were not started only because of a natural motivation to communicate internationally in a certain broader region. One of the main motives (more or less concealed) of the initiators was to make direct contacts with the psychology as it was developing in the rest of the world because in Slovakia and other Soviet block countries, the totalitarian system allowed only one, ostentatively or at least formally stated Marxist psychology. As we can see from some papers read at the Danubian meetings of psychologists the event became a conspicuous example of some psychologists' escape from that particular ideological guardianship.

These Danubian meetings of psychologists were not planned to be prestigious scientific events dealing with defined subjects of current research. Usually, these meetings were like "omnibus" conferences of a party-like character with the leading personal-

ities of the psychological life (at least from the host country) as participants. Such a more or less representative sample of participants facilitated overcoming geopolitical communication barriers from which the psychologists from the so-called "socialist" countries profited the most.

Because the meetings of the psychologists from Danubian countries took place in a form of one week living under one roof (tradition at the Smolenice castle), colleague relationships among the participants spontaneously and quickly developed into friendships. So gradually an informal community of personality-wise similar psychologists developed in central Europe which, unlike the power struggle tendencies of the psychological lobby, was typical with its mutual assistance. This was evident, for example, in rare books donations, conference invitations, study stays abroad, etc.

To sum it up, the congresses of psychologists of Danubian countries became one of the few bridges (unofficial border crossings) between the geopolitically divided psychological Europe across which information, scientific materials as well as individuals travelled in both directions without a border check but generously and hospitably.

As early as at the IXth meeting of the psychologists of Danubian countries in Polčje, Slovenia (September 18-22, 1989) several psychologists from the "eastern" countries read presentations emphasizing "perestrojka", i.e. crossing over the line of ideological autocensorship. True, none of us even imagined, at that time, that soon an unprecedented historical event will take place: a sudden decomposition of the world com-

minist-totalitarian power from within as a result of its own contradictions.

However, the euphoric shock from the newly attained freedom was soon replaced by harsh reality. As a result of economic deterioration in posttotalitarian countries the governments began to limit subsidies to science and research which, of course, affected psychologists as well. Some institutes were abolished, others restricted and there are no financial means for scientific information, research technology, trips abroad, etc. Which one of us, under these circumstances, thought of a meeting of the psychologists from Danubian countries? Maybe only nostalgically. But...

At one informal meeting with German colleagues at the 38th congress of German psychological society in Trier, Germany (September 28-October 1, 1992) someone mentioned the meetings of Danubian psychologists. To my surprise there was an unanimous opinion that these meetings should continue and the Xth congress should be in the very country in which they started. The dice were thrown, although the risks were not small, considering the short time for preparations.

Sixty persons participated at the anniversary Xth meeting, dominated by participants from the German regions and Slovenia. Colleagues from Bulgaria, Romania and countries of the former Soviet Union were missed. The organizer received a number of letters from previous participants of these meetings stating that they are very interested in the meeting but because of the "lack of funds" cannot attend. To improve matters, rare personalities again attended the conference: prof. Dr. David Magnusson - the vice president of the Royal Swedish academy of sciences, Prof. Dr. Jan Strelau - a

member of the executive committee of the IUPsyS, prof. Ida Kurzc from Poland as well as six previous organizers.

In this double number of *Studia Psychologica* we are publishing the proceedings from this congress, i.e. 39 abridged contributions (with one exception of an integration of 5 papers). Unfortunately, not all participants managed to send their contributions in a written version and, moreover, the printed word cannot sufficiently show the atmosphere at the meetings to the ones that did not participate.

It began as usually with "addresses". The president of the International Union of Scientific Psychology (IUPsyS) Kurt Pawlik apologizes in his letter for his absence (several of his activities collided) and among other things writes:

"Please take these lines as a formal statement on the part of the IUPsyS: As you may know from the exchanges during the Brussels Congress, the IUPsyS likes to support activities also at the regional level, if such activities prove useful and essential to promoting the development of psychology in that region. The Eastern Central European countries are one region in which the IUPsyS would like to be as helpful as possible in this sense. I would appreciate if you shared with me thoughts, ideas, and proposals that you and your colleagues may have in this connection. And I would like to suggest that you bring this letter to the attention of the participants in the Tatra meeting, inviting them to make suggestions about the way in which the IUPsyS may contribute to the development of our science and profession in their countries".

The presidium of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, whose vice president had to excuse himself from participating at the meet-

ings because of unexpected duties, send the following fax:

"Dear participants of the Xth Meeting of Psychologists from Danubian countries!

Allow us to greet your important meeting. We are happy that it is taking place on the premises of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and that it resonates with the current pressing needs of the extensive social transformation, which is going on in many Danubian countries. The development of democracy and market economy is the turning wheel of this transformation.

Such development is characteristic also for the new Slovak republic which is presently forming its new concept of scientific and technological policy. Psychology holds an important place among the individual priorities of this policy.

Aristotle, in his writing 'About the soul' - which was a fundamental psychological essay of his as well as future times - wrote: "We consider each science to be something beautiful and valuable but one science more than another - either for its exactness or because the subject of its study is more valuable or curious".

In the spirit of this, we can and must emphasize the current and future development of psychology. Today, of all times, because we are in a certain, worldwide crisis of sciences. Whether we admit to it or not, this crisis is one side of a connected jug. The other is made of global population, energy, raw materials and environmental problems of man at the threshold of the 3rd millennium. Thus, we should reevaluate our perception of the world and our approach to the environment.

Therefore, for psychology and other sciences the present world is becoming one great laboratory in which science has not

only a diagnostic but therapeutic role as well.

Tacitly said, we should contribute to a positive moral development of our environment, ourselves included. Let us wish ourselves success in this mission!

Branislav Lichardus - president, Vladimír Bakoš - vice president, Štefan Luby - vice president.

"The course and results of two planned and one spontaneous discussions are not in the "Proceedings" of the Xth meeting of psychologists from Danubian countries. The first two dealt with the current position of psychologists in central Europe (lead by P. Rókusfalvy) and the second with the possibilities of international cooperation in research (P. Vitouch). After certain confrontations of the representatives of the old and the new federal republics of Germany there appeared the need to say more but the planned schedule did not permit it. In a sharp but friendly polemic discussion, where the moderators were mainly psychologists from the Slavic regions, a certain consensus was reached on many debatable issues; this is, perhaps, symptomatic of the meetings of psychologists from the Danubian countries.

The anniversary meeting of the psychologists - the community of researchers from the central European region is behind us. What will the future bring, in spite of the positive and optimistically sounding toasts at the good-bye party?! Will the Danube continue to really unite the psychologists in the newly forming Europe?

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