

The International Picture of Individual Psychology

RUDOLF DREIKURS, M. D.
Chicago

During the month of September, 1950, two meetings of representatives from various Individual Psychology groups were held in Paris, to consider the formation of an international organization. It was decided to ask Paul Plottke of England to serve as temporary secretary and to communicate with the representatives from each national society in regard to the future organization. Mr. Plottke is publishing a monthly mimeographed News-letter, containing all the information he receives through his correspondence. This News-letter is sent to all representatives, but can be obtained by anyone interested in the international picture in regard to Individual Psychology. (Address: 39, The Vale, London NW 11, England.)

The following countries were represented in Paris: Austria, Switzerland, Holland, France, England, Brazil, and the United States. Through conversations with these representatives and through direct contact with the groups in Austria, France, and England, it was possible to get an impression about the work, the progress, and the problems in each country. Strong groups exist in Austria, Holland, and England. In the other countries the work and progress depends on a few individuals who take on leadership.

Two problems seem to be of interest.

There seems to be a tendency in Europe to work closely together with other schools of thought. In England, the Institute of Social Psychiatry, under the leadership of Dr. Joshua Bierer, has psychiatrists and psychologists on its staff with a variety of background and training. The Medical Society of Individual Psychology in England is open to all psychiatrists and physicians who have an interest in Individual Psychology. A friendly relationship exists between the Adlerians and many non-Adlerians. In Switzerland, Mrs. Suzanne Rolo teaches at the Institute for Psychology; in France Madame Andrée works in close relationship with representatives of other schools. It will be neces-

sary to explore further the advantages and disadvantages of this cooperation. Many feel that the time has come where all schools of thought should work together in establishing a broad basis of information and knowledge, for the students as well as for themselves. Others are afraid that such close collaboration will "water down," so to say, and obscure the fundamental principles on which Adlerian psychology is based, so that the Adlerians will no longer remain Adlerians. Some results would indicate the justification for each point of view. It seems necessary that Adlerians keep close personal contact with other psychologists, integrating themselves into the whole field of knowledge, participating in the give and take of scientific development, but at the same time keeping their identity. This is necessary not for the sake of personal interests, for adherence to tradition or loyalty to Adler; it is necessary in order to preserve within the body of knowledge the discoveries and findings made by Adler and his co-workers so that they may not get lost in the violent competition of schools and systems and have to be re-discovered again, to the detriment of science and of all those who can benefit from them.

The other problem confronting the Adlerians in many countries is the relationship between medical and non-medical Adlerians. As Individual Psychology proved to be of great significance to education, to social work and general adjustment, non-medical Adlerians often took and still take a leading role in developing Adlerian groups. Individual Psychology can never be strictly a medical discipline. This presents all Adlerian groups with a serious problem. An adequate equilibrium between the two groups is not easy to find. Some groups regret the lack of psychiatrists and physicians among their trained members. Others, who have a large number of psychiatrists and physicians, find it difficult to integrate these two groups. It is difficult to say which handicap is greater; to have too few psychiatrists or to have friction between them and the professionals in other fields. A future international organization will probably have to consider these problems and to find a policy which will satisfy the needs.

It is deplorable that the type of child guidance centers which were developed by Adler and his co-workers does not exist anywhere in Europe today. There are child guidance centers in Vienna, but they no longer operate on the group therapy basis as was characteristic for the *Erziehungsberatungsstellen* in Vienna.

The task of establishing intensive training courses in Individual

Psychology is not yet accomplished everywhere as far as we hope it will be in the future. The best training program seems to be developed in Holland, and England is beginning to organize an institute for training. In the other countries the training consists mostly of lectures and isolated courses. The three groups in the United States, in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, have organized training institutes. It seems that Los Angeles has the training best systematized.

In many countries we have well trained Adlerians who are yet isolated, without belonging to a group. Some of them are considering the organization of such a group. It must be emphasized that the effectiveness of an Adlerian depends greatly on the fortification which he receives from the association with fellow workers. Belonging to a minority group, the individual for himself cannot successfully resist the social and professional pressure to which he finds himself exposed. Another reason for the advisability of organizing a group is the ineffectiveness of training, unless it is perpetuated by a group adherence. Some Adlerians do an excellent job of training workers in the field. But without keeping them as part of a group with which they can identify themselves, they soon are swallowed up by other groups who have a strong cohesion. We have to realize that in the field of psychology today we find several strong and well organized groups with their pressure and desire for control. It is sad but true that scientific merit and therapeutic efficiency do not guarantee professional recognition, since other social factors overshadow them. When we recommend the formation of groups it is decidedly not for the purpose of striving for monopoly or to overpower others on our part, but merely to preserve our own identity and to give the principles for which we stand, a chance to be known and verified. Potential centers for Adlerian groups are in Belgium, Hungary and Greece, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Argentine. These are countries where we have some individual contacts; there are probably many other countries with trained and practicing Adlerians from which we have not heard so far. It can be hoped that the new international society will strengthen and further develop all these contacts.