

Welcoming Address by the President of German Psychoanalytic Association
Gertraud Schlesinger-Kipp, Berlin , 25 July 2007

Dear Mr. Eizirik, dear colleagues, and guests

I would like to welcome you to the 45th congress “Remembering, Repeating, Working–Through in Psychoanalysis and Culture Today”. The German Psychoanalytic Association (DPV) is delighted and feels honored to welcome psychoanalysts from all over the world here in Berlin. This particular topic has been chosen with the intention of providing an opportunity to establish historic connections not only in the way we are accustomed to in our analytic work and clinical discussion, but also by considering cultural, social, and political aspects.

Georg Bruns has introduced Berlin as a former center of a comprehensive and lively scientific and psychoanalytical life and its destruction by National Socialism.

After dissolving in 1938, the German Psychoanalytic Society (DPG) was re-established after the end of the war in the autumn of 1945; however, two psychoanalytic organizations established themselves in Germany afterwards: During the IPA Congress in Zurich (1950), it became obvious that a much stronger renunciation of the National Socialist past was required for international acceptance and re-entry in the IPA. Hence, several psychoanalysts separated from the DGP and founded the German Psychoanalytic Association in 1950, which was accepted as component society by the IPA in 1951.

The DPV began to transform internally when, in 1977, the IPA refused Berlin’s application for the International Congress in 1981. The weight of the past still seemed to bear too heavy on Berlin and German psychoanalysis. The first congress held again in Germany took place in Hamburg, in 1985. Working through the role our own founding fathers had played in National Socialism helped us solve projections on the DPG in relation to the past. After 1985, both organizations began converging by renouncing to call themselves the sole tradition-bearer of psychoanalysis in Germany.

More than 20 years ago, Hamburg's Mayor Klaus von Dohnanyi used the following words to open the IPA Congress: The one who says "our Bach" and "our Beethoven" also has to say "our Hitler".

Here in Berlin, remembering must, therefore, also mean remembering...

- the place where black boots stamped and where arms were outstretched in blinded rejoicing,
- the place that sent out death and destruction to the world and into the hearts,
- the place that also brought desperation, fear, and destruction to us Germans, guilt and shame, later on separated by barbed wire, the Wall, and the strip of death,
- the place where this division was considered normal by my generation, where we did not know it any differently, where we accepted it given the acknowledgement of guilt,
- the place where we enthusiastically saw the Wall falling by means of a peaceful revolution in the former DDR and where we started the difficult process of reunification with new hope and confidence.

In spite of all of this, today Berlin has again become a cultural and intellectual center as well as a psychoanalytic one now. Those of you who have come here, some of you maybe returning for the first time after surviving in exile, after emigration and unutterable sorrow, all bring back life to this place.

All of us – if I may speak on behalf of the Local Organization Committee – have put an effort into offering you intellectual, cultural, musical, and personal medium in order to allow for you to have a good experience in Berlin during the course of this congress. At the same time, the local organization committee's work has helped close the gap between both psychoanalytical associations, the DPV and the DPG. Today, the DPV consists of 13 institutes and 1082 IPA members and is one of the biggest IPA associations making manifold scientific and clinical contributions to current day psychoanalysis. The members of the DPV work partly in private practice, at universities, in clinics, and out-patient centers. Based on an evaluation procedure, a large part of the patients' treatment is covered by all types of health insurance.

Today, psychoanalysis is wide-spread in Germany. This is a result of the fact that, for many of us, psychoanalysis had become essential for survival, e.g. in order to overcome inner splitting by means of, individual and collective, self-reflection. Freud not only recommended psychoanalysis to us as a method to treat, but also as cultural analysis. The separation into an ideal, on the one side, and into nothingness without the right to live, on the other side, the separation into good and evil, exists in all of us. Patients with a grandiose self and the coinciding feeling that their lives are forfeited with guilt and shame, patients who perhaps want to commit suicide and kill others along with them, who only know good and evil, “all or nothing”, but not “both the one and the other”; we know that these humans should not be left alone and should be offered a room in which they can encounter their selves, their abysses, but also their strengths, and their love, together with another person, their analysts. After the war it was the IPA colleagues who did not leave us German psychoanalysts alone, who returned and helped us overcome the separations.

Even though the rooms here in Berlin will be very full today and in the course of this congress (I am not referring to the rooms for the self, but to the rooms on-site) – because an unforeseen large number of colleagues from all over the world have accepted our invitation – we would have felt the absence of each and every one of you, just as you might have regretted not being able to meet us, to come in contact with our language, and our culture.

“Remembering, Repeating, Working–Through” means to not only recognize our inner conflicts, as we could rephrase Sigmund Freud, but also to give the other one time to deepen in the now known resistance, to work it through, to overcome it, by continuing in defiance of it, which is how psychoanalysis effects the greatest changes.

I wish all of you an enriching experience, an exciting congress, and lasting memories of Berlin 2007.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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