

Requiem for a Utopia

Dr. Leopold Nosek

This is a farewell issue. Perhaps this journal has been the mark of a generation of psychoanalysts, or at least part of those who lived through the resonant years after World War II. Perhaps this generation, aware of never imagined savagery – the Holocaust, the technical and scientific progress at the service of destruction that culminated in the nuclear attack against civilians – well, this generation, taken by reconstructive and reparatory longings, may have embraced psychoanalysis as a banner for the humanization of the world, a possible path to civilized emancipation.

An international institution, such as the IPA, an organization of psychoanalysts that share the conceptual foundations established by Freud, could welcome several of the new utopias and projects. Beyond the barbarism of nationalisms and hegemonic proposals of domination, we saw the birth of homelands for the dispossessed and the unwanted, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (which today seems obvious, as if it had always existed), the United Nations Organization and so many other humanist projects.

But after WWII, they had barely silenced the weapons and another conflict was already emerging: the Cold War which, by the way, had started after a not at all cold event. Wasn't Hiroshima a warning to prevent the Russians from entering East Asia? In the name of a balance between two extermination forces, we began to live in a permanent state of fear for the potential destructiveness of the two political blocks involved.

Two utopian flags were then raised: liberalism and egalitarianism. Ironically, this episode ended with one of the contenders succumbing to an economic and political crisis. The so-called socialist project sank into economic bankruptcy, subjugated to capitalist competition. The idea that the scheme of destruction had its days numbered was once again circulating – the illusion of a new era of freedom and democracy was on the horizon.

A disastrous consequence of international politics (chessboard moves during the Cold War) was the emerging of a new human category: the ones who disappeared under military dictatorships and also a strong diaspora of exiled Latin American analysts, especially Freudian-inspired Argentinians, who were welcomed by our organization. IPA members participated intensely in the agitations of the 1960s and 1970s, in search of alternatives to the two poles of the split world.

I apologize for this *vol d'oiseau* of thought, but I use it as a preamble to this farewell. I recall a song from the recesses of Brazil, my country, whose refrain repeats 'every time I take a step, the world moves out of its place', and I allow myself to unravel some personal memories.

The group of analysts that graduated after the Second World War was essential for the internationalist project to reach maturity and was responsible for the astonishing conceptual and clinical expansion witnessed in the 1960s and 1970s. My Generation, including myself, an immigrant, also, joined the IPA together with the Latin American group, and it is from that time that I begin my recollections.

Horacio Etchegoyen's administrative legacy included among many other projects, the House of Delegates; the publication of board minutes; greater interaction with the ideological and political

world. It was also during this period that we started to develop the project of an IPA journal, which would contemplate all the different regions encompassed by it and also the diversity of thoughts that the Freudian heritage allowed. The idea was supported, among others, by Etchegoyen himself, by Secretary General Ana Maria Azevedo, by Moisés Lemlij, and also by Ethel Person, at the time a member of the board and editor of the organization's Newsletter. I was editor of the Newsletter after Person, and I set out to make it a unifying vehicle for debate-promoting. In one of the issues, we published a memorable debate between Robert Wallerstein and André Green about the place of empirical research in psychoanalysis. Ideological clashes prevented the project of a journal from prospering, but the idea remained for the next administration to follow.

When Stefano Bolognini chaired the IPA, Bob Pyles was at the APsaAs, Peter Wegner presided at the EPF, and I was the FEPAL president. A financial and ideological collaboration finally emerged to lay the foundations of *Psychoanalysis.today*, which now publishes its last issue, this one I am writing for today. Some assumptions had supported the project. In the old discussion about the constitution of the IPA – whether the association should have members or societies – we, from the three federations, argued that societies were more representative than a small group of members. The regional federations at that time had no place in the IPA's governing organization chart, but *Psychoanalysis.today* would help to mediate members' complaints about the distance of the housing body (IPA) in representing them. In any case, the three federations and the IPA agreed to financially support the new magazine, which would be published only in electronic format in order to reduce its cost. The differences between expenses and investments were clearly agreed upon.

A general idea that guided us was the concept and tradition of internationalism. I myself used to joke that, as the internationalist lover that I was, and the only internationalist survivor, I was participating in this project with enthusiasm. Thus, in July 2015, *Psychoanalysis.today* was born, living for seven years and passing away in 2022, having published seventeen issues. I was part of the first editorial committee, consisted of Daniel Alfredo Biebel; Gilberte Gensel; Adrienne Harris; Liliana Pedron; Jane S. Hall; Rui Aragão Oliveira, and Ursula Burkert. I want to emphasize Bolognini's unconditional support for the magazine.

Now I return to the poet, who says that 'every time I take a step the world goes out of place. The world doesn't stop and I run after it.'

After the 90s, when we had the illusion of a peaceful world and witnessed the paradoxical weakening of liberal ideology, we entered the years of neoliberalism and globalization. The old flags have become fragmented into a myriad of sectored banners, with no communication with each other, against the backdrop of growing individualism. Not being able to dwell on the broad discussion about the differences between internationalism and globalization, I would say that, roughly speaking, there were two sides. On one hand there was solidarity, collaboration, closer ties, attenuation of national, racial, and gender differences, etc. On the other hand, there were economic strategies to obtain cheaper chains of production, with the consequent worsening of labor remuneration, as well as disputes over territory, market, and influence. The arrival on the scene of gigantic populations previously alien to capitalism – China and the countries of the former Soviet Union – initiated a cycle of prosperity, with enormous technological developments. The generated wealth is extreme and the distribution of what is collected is precarious. We are witnessing the multiplication of oligarchies everywhere. Populist regimes prosper and a new war looms on the horizon.

We analysts, inevitably inserted in this universe, modulate our thinking and our practice by it. While we observe a growing influence of technique to the detriment of humanistic and philosophical

thinking, our practice sees its prestige diminishing and distancing itself from the young people's projects.

We are devastated by the positivist ideology that distances us from the Freudian metapsychological wizardry and from so many other authors who drank from this source. We, more and more, classify pathologies, genders, ideological flags and associative activities. Today a pandemic accentuates these movements. Surely there will be no returning; we will inhabit another world. Obviously, ideologies are not impermeable to our area, and our perplexity incites us the temptation to abandon this field opened by Freud, i.e., the sexual phantoms of childhood colonizing our soul. On the other hand, we are laborers and producers of knowledge, and reflecting on ideology is a must – we are not colonized by the infantile only but an essential part of our battles should be against subjectivity colonization and its attempt to conform it to groups and nations' hegemonic search. In his correspondence with Einstein, Freud already warned about such challenges. Thoughts on this subject pose a double task and stretch out before us.

I believe that the end of our publishing project is only a drop in the ocean of changes that we have lived and will live through. I regret this outcome: another beautiful internationalist project that will be replaced by a group in confrontation with other groups, in an eternal struggle for hegemony. These groups will claim for themselves not only the material resources, but also the correctness of their knowledge, their sciences, their arts and their flags. The idea of solidarity will remain, but only within one group which will always be in conflict with another. Our analytical group is just like any group and it reproduces in its smallness the macroscopic world. Until now, only the fear of self-destruction in the battle with others has restrained our power of destruction.

I end this article thinking that, in spite of everything, some things such as peace, the universal idea of man, democracy, respect for the public good; in short, the ethical idea of submission to otherness remain essential in our practice. The world moves amidst contradictions, and so I maintain the utopia that we will build new forms of coexistence and that we will inevitably be reborn in the new generations.

Translation: Maria Silvia Setubal

Image: Unknown identity. Credit: Carlos Zilio.

This work was created in 1974 to represent those who disappeared during the military dictatorship in Brazil. Here, the image represents the death of the internationalist dream and ideal of a project built equally among diverse psychoanalytic groups and cultures within the IPA.