

A path toward becoming IPA psychoanalyst as a brick in the wall of psychoanalytic nucleus in Slovenia

Bernard Rojnik

Before the fall of so-called communism, opportunities for the development of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy were much obstructed. As far as I'm concerned, I joined the Slovenian Psychoanalytic Society two years after its establishment, i.e., in 1993. At that time, the meetings were attended by the crème of Slovenian psychotherapy, mainly of an psychodynamic origin, which then dissolved and scattered into what are now called 'horticulturalists' (Group Analysts, the Association of Psychotherapists, Developmental Analytical Psychotherapy, Family Therapy, Behavioral Cognitive Therapy), without the strong authority figures like those in Zagreb, such as Klain, Cividini, Nikolić, and others, who could act cohesively for the common good.

Dr. Škerlj, Dr. Lunaček, and I initially attended supervision in Trieste with Dr. Fonda, which became the seed for psychoanalytic education as we participated in the first East European seminar after the fall of the Iron Curtain, which took place in Lohosal, Estonia. At that time, Lunaček and I decided to join the analytical training, for which we conducted 1st interviews in Italy (Milan, Bologna).

Without the initial involvement of Dr. Fonda with training and the study of psychoanalysis, nothing would have happened. Dr. Lunaček then went to study in Rome, while I, after completing second interviews, was given the opportunity to become a candidate, thus beginning a four-year study of theory in Amsterdam along with most of the colleagues who now lead Croatian PA society. I successfully completed the studies in 2008. Along the way, Dr. Saša Rojc, a Slovene, joined me, who also eventually completed the study and became a psychoanalyst.

Previous Slovene candidates and applicants, however, did not finish this study. On the way to the team of educators, we were joined by Lilija V. Rajko and Dr. Ilze Rojnik, both of whom are now psychoanalysts, with the former also being a training analyst. Of course, there was also the indispensable trio from Trieste and Padua: Dr. Polojaz Vlasta, Dr. Jogan Hektor, and Dr. Pavel Fonda, who was also the director of the Psychoanalytic Institute for all of Eastern Europe, which was a great honour for us. For some time, Dr. Igor Okorn, a psychotherapist and training psychoanalyst, was also involved, but he recently withdrew.

In short, in 2014, we (Pavel Fonda, Hektor Jogan, Vlasta Polojaz, Lilija Varjačić Rajko, and I), not unanimously, decided to start psychoanalytic psychotherapy training in Slovenia because at that time no training in our country met the standards applicable in the developed world. There was a lack of adequate personal experience, which can only be provided by suitably trained therapists, who were not present in our country.

We divided the functions so that Lilija V. Rajko became the President, and I became the President of the Education Committee. For the theoretical curriculum, we took as a model the psychoanalysis study program from the Amsterdam Institute for Psychoanalysis (2003), which we partially modified and added content that created a bridge to the field of psychiatry. The head of the study in Amsterdam PA Institute at that time was Ton Stufkens and Han Groen Prakken.

The preparation for the study and the establishment of the society took two years until we started in 2016 with the first generation of five students. The educators, in addition to our team, included Dr. Rus Maja and Dr. Borut Škodlar from Slovenia, and then Dr. Eduard Klain and Dr. Stanko Matačić from Zagreb, with the rest coming from Italy, mostly from the University of Trieste and the Institute for Psychoanalysis in Padua.

I would also like to add that our struggle for the recognition of this study at the Ministry of Health lasted a full six years, until the Chamber of Clinical Psychologists gave the green light and thus verification at the Ministry of Health. My term in the Education Committee ended in January 2020.