

## History of the IFP 1998 – 2002

Since the congress in Hannover in 1991, I have been involved with the Board of the IFP, at first as General Secretary and, since the congress in Warsaw in 1998, as President. Please allow me to recapitulate the past four years of the IFP from 1998 to 2002. What happened during this short period in the history of the IFP was determined primarily by the general economic and political changes affecting Europe.

Given the increasingly **tough economic situation**, members from the more affluent countries were no longer quite as willing to attend IFP congresses as they had been in earlier years. At the same time, there was a proliferation in the total number of congresses held between the world congresses in Warsaw (Poland) in 1998 and in Trondheim (Norway) in 2002, on account of the congresses arranged within the various chapters: in Sokoto (Nigeria) in 1999, Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) in 2000, Barcelona (Spain) in 2000, Kunming (China) in 2001, followed by Singapore in 2003. It must, however, be added that, financially, these other congresses would not have been viable undertakings without the participation of IFP members. The deteriorating economic situation also meant that it was no longer possible for the IFP to practise its “**solidarity principle**” to the same extent as in times of economic boom, in using its congresses as a vehicle for assisting member societies based in economically weaker countries.

At the same time, the IFP congresses have been (and will continue to be) more and more in **competition with the international and regional congresses** of the other international societies, such as the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), the European Federation for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in the Public Sector (EFPP), the Society for the Exploration of Psychotherapy Integration (SEPI), the International Association of Group Psychotherapy (IAGP), the Society for Psychotherapy Research (SPR), the World Council for Psychotherapy (WCP), the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP) and others, which have also staged international congresses in the period 1998-2004. In future, it is going to be crucial to arrive at sensible forms of cooperation in this regard.

The **political changes**, which in this part of the world have meant, above all, the dismantling of the formerly insurmountable barriers between East and West have, have led to a clear shift in the member societies. The IFP has worked for the setting up of national psychotherapeutic societies especially in the countries of the East and often provided energetic help. However, no financial input into the IFP was to be expected from those societies; rather it was they that looked to the IFP to provide them not only with moral support but with material assistance too.

The countries in which **societies were set up** and then joined the IFP include Russia and China. In the course of the past four years, several seminars and lectures have been organised by those countries in the name of the IFP with speakers from western countries, with a view to promoting psychotherapy in them. In addition, it has also been possible for doctors and psychologists from university establishments in Moscow and Nisny Nowgorod (Russia) as well as Beijing and Wuhan (China) to be invited to sit in on tuition at German university hospitals for periods of several months, and, in the case of China, this has also included nurses working in the field of clinical psychotherapy. The IFP has campaigned strongly to have virtually all the costs of these stays borne by the host countries and/or the host hospitals. Taking all the Russian and Chinese guests together, the total period of tuition made available to them added up to more than a year. This project has now developed further into lasting forms of cooperation, including clinical programmes and joint research projects for the promotion of psychotherapy.

It is also worth mentioning the IFP's **website**, which has had large numbers of visitors in recent years and has been instrumental in setting up numerous international contacts. My view is that the IFP's website is going to be of major importance for international communication in future, but it is going to need to have more invested in it.

If I look back over the 1998–2002 period in the history of the IFP, then probably the best way of characterizing those four years is that they have seen the IFP lose its role as the sole big international society in psychotherapy. Another way of interpreting this situation is that it demonstrates that the IFP has contributed massively to the fact that today psychotherapy is accepted worldwide as a scientific method for the treatment of psychiatric, neurotic, and psychosomatic disorders as well as a method for enhancing wellbeing in somatic diseases. The other side to this is that the IFP now relies very much more than in the past on good cooperation with other big societies. It is also to be hoped that the “solidarity principle” will manage, once again, to move more firmly into the foreground at the IFP.

PROF. WOLFGANG SENF, MD  
President IFP 1998-2002