

THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPERSONAL ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE PRAGUE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA JUNE 20-25, 1992

by Kylea Taylor

SOCIAL, political, recreational, artistic, musical, intellectual, emotional, informational, affirmational, gastronomical, shamanic — the conference was a vortex of new paradigm presence. Prague itself was the container — displaying centuries of human history at our every turn down a cobblestone street and grappling with its own death/rebirth and political identity even as we convened.

The ITA in 1992 was the proverbial elephant which can be viewed from many angles and incompletely described from any of them. I have only my own position to work with vis a vis this pachyderm-sized "Happening."

So from my corner of the elephant, what happened? First, I think it was a wonderful time of renewal. A time to reconnect with many beloved friends and pioneers in the transpersonal field. As always, with that connection came a deep sense of being in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing. I thought I sensed others feeling that affirmation too, rejoicing in their commitment to take, in the words of poet Robert Frost, the "road less traveled" which has "made all the difference."

And the "difference" seems to be coming to fruition in concrete ways. For example, Stan Grof returned to his native Czechoslovakia bringing the ripened seeds of his early work in Prague and his conjoint work with Christina, and called together their fellow pioneers in the new paradigm for a feast of ideas and an impressive array of work-in-progress around the world.

It was the first chance that so many luminaries in the transpersonal field have come to Europe at the same time. As one of my Danish friends said, "Here, we usually hear talks by the students of these people, we don't get to see them personally." Certainly it was a first encounter for many Eastern Europeans and for those from Russia and other former USSR countries. In all, 38 countries were represented at the conference.

There were many, many workshops that I did not attend. There were probably significant themes and shifts for which I was not present or for which I was present, but unable to identify, but I think I did identify two important shifts.

One was that there is beginning to be a change in the way psychology looks at the human being. Multiple personality studies and consciousness research have created a growing opinion that human mind/body health is a function of one's flexibility to enter each of a number (infinite?) of personality and consciousness states as appropriate, rather than a striving to maintain some consistent role, personality, or state of consciousness (and/or its shadow or opposite). It is the kind of shift about which one can say, "Of course, that's been so all along." And it has, but I think it is news that this kind of permission for growth and movement to the full extent of human possibility is being articulated. (Some of you interested in this topic may want to get a copy of the May/June issue of *Common Boundary* magazine which has an excellent cover article on this topic also.)

The second, and not unrelated shift, was that the role played by psychedelics in the personal development of the pioneers, in the development of their part of the new paradigm, and in their commitment to global wisdom and healing, came out of the closet. Many of the speakers spoke openly of the substances which catalyzed the pivotal and inspiring experiences which have directed their life work. One pre-conference meeting and three conference panels, organized by Rick Doblin and Dr. Charles Grob, dealt specifically with psychedelic research (see page 8). Stan Grof, Ram Dass, Ralph Metzner and Richard Yensen spoke of the lessons from past legal research with psychedelics (1950's to early 1970's); another panel spoke of current research with psychedelics now taking place in the U.S. (still very limited), Switzerland, and Russia; and a third panel discussed future legal research possibilities, political

difficulties and strategies. ■ * For those of you who didn't get to Prague in June, there are tapes available of the presentations. (I bought several tapes of workshops which I was not able to attend.) The presentations which I heard and can particularly recommend are: the video or audio of Ram Dass: *Riding the Wave of Change* (#019); Neva Walden: *Sexual Abuse: A Thread in the Tapestry of Divine Sexual Energy* (#029); Jill Purce: *The Healing Voice* (#017); James Fadiman: *Multiple Personalities: A Way of Understanding Successful Personality Growth* (#066); Thomas Roberts: *Multi-State Studies: The Major Intellectual Opportunity of Our Times* (#036); Charles Tart: *Introduction to the Spiritual Path for the Scientifically Handicapped* (#021); and *Psychedelic Panel 1: Past Lessons* (#073). The full list of 102 tapes is available from Conference Recording Service, 1308 Gilman Street, Berkeley, CA, 94706, USA — Phone (510) 527-3600.

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