

IMPRESSIONS OF BRAZIL

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In 1969 I had the opportunity to speak at the Second Brazilian Congress for Mental Deficiency in Brasilia and to address the Brazilian Association for Pediatric Neuro-Psychiatry in São Paulo which I combined with a brief stay in South America. At the Congress I was impressed by the diversity of subject matter presented. It ranged from "Psychiatric Aspects of Mental Deficiency in Underdeveloped Countries"¹ to "Underdevelopment and Mental Deficiency: Neurological Aspects."² My own presentation on "Minimal Cerebral Dysfunction" at an evening meeting in conjunction with the showing of the film "Why Billy Couldn't Learn," which I had brought along, was well-received.

I am presenting these impressions in the hope that this comment will stimulate professionals in the United States to contact individuals in Brazil for the purpose of exchanging ideas.

During my stay I was invited by the Brazilian Association of Pediatric Neurology on two occasions to speak at *Hospital das Clínicas*, the medical school hospital of the University of São Paulo. It is a large institution that has a good kidney transplant team, and they also have completed a heart transplant. Prof. Dr. Antonio B. Lefevre, called the father of Pediatric Neurology in South America, and Dr. Aron J. Diament are presently engaged in a normative study of the "soft signs" in neurology. The Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics is Dr. Marconi. Dra. Dulce Marcondes Machado is a psychiatrist and heads the Mental Hygiene Service within the Department of Pediatrics. The "Pediatric Allergy Clinic" and the Section for the Rehabilitation of Asthmatics impressed me as being most progressive; cf., the publication "Some Psychological Contributions to the Clinical Treatment of the Asthmatic Child." Other clinics in the hospital that are efficiently organized along multi-disciplinary lines are "The Institute of Rehabilitation" and "The Psychiatry Clinic."

The Catholic University of São Paulo operates the "Instituto de Ortofrenia" headed by Dr. Mauro Spinelli, who has a major interest

¹Pinto, Luiz Fernando. Aspectos psiquiátricos da deficiência mental em países subdesenvolvidos. (Paper delivered in Brasilia, 1969.)

²Lefevre, Antonio B. Subdesenvolvimento e deficiência mental: Aspectos neurológicos. (Paper delivered in Brasilia, 1969.)

in working with aphasic and deaf children. Dr. Ana Maria Popovic lectures in Psychology and operates the diagnostic clinic with a medical-psycho-educational orientation.

The *Lar das Crianças* is a residential setting for approximately sixty children who come from homes where there is no mother or where the social, financial, emotional, or medical problems are so severe that the children cannot be cared for adequately. The house-parents are Mr. and Mrs. Peter, originally from Bolivia, and they supervise this institution with the main purpose of making it "a home for all children." Problems center on how to best utilize therapeutic facilities available to the Home.

The *Oficina Abrigado de Trabalho* (Sheltered Workshop) is operated by the "Liga Feminina Israelita do Brasil." The director is Mrs. Edith Heilbrun. Adolescents, adults with emotional and social problems, as well as mentally subnormal individuals work here in a limited amount of space. However, the operation is extremely efficiently organized, a fact which testifies to the director's previous experience in industry. There is also a "Pestalozzi Workshop," a branch of an institution in Belo Horizonte. One must admire these efforts.

The *Centro Israelita de Assistencia ao Menor* (CIAM) had invited me to Brazil and appointed me as Consultant for their Technical Commission in the United States. CIAM operates a school for retarded educable children and also a Psychiatry Clinic, which offers diagnosis and treatment and consultation services to schools. They have an excellent staff: Annelise Strauss, M.D.; Dr. Aron J. Diamant, a pediatric neurologist who is conducting research in metabolic studies; Dr. Carolina, a psychiatrist who has just spent three years working with J. de Ajuriaguerra in Switzerland; Dr. Margarida Hofman Windholz, who just published Rorschach norms for Brazilian children; a learning therapist trained by Romain as well as a coordinator and teachers trained in special education.

The techniques developed by J. de Ajuriaguerra and Romain are widely used in Latin America;¹ i.e., major emphasis is on "pschomotoricidade." They consider Kephart and Frostig as an adjunct to the above. J. de Ajuriaguerra developed a flexible system of visual-motor training with the purpose of developing "body schema" in France and Switzerland. He writes primarily in French and has a training school for learning therapists.

In summary, although I presented the American viewpoint and our way of doing things to my Brazilian colleagues, I feel that I did most of the learning. I deeply appreciated their hospitality and kind-

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ness in showing me their institutions and facilities. I hope that my American colleagues make available any information or material which they might consider useful to these organizations to further the spirit of cooperation that I felt during my stay in Brazil.