MEETINGS WITH REMARKABLE MEN AND WOMEN

by Igor Kungurtsev, M.D., Research Associate,
Bekhterev Psychoneurological Research Institute, St. Petersburg, Russia
and Olga Luchakova, M.D., Ph.D.
Lab of Functional Neurochemistry, Pavlov Institute of Physiology, St. Petersburg, Russia

VAST SPACES of the Atlantic Ocean were moving underneath. We were preparing to meet America — not the malls-and-car's but the entheogens-and-meditation's America. JFK International Airport appeared to be a place of "mechanical" energy and gave us a first impression of emotional separateness. The same feeling of emotional isolation and rough rationality accompanied us in New York during our first days. Fortunately, Massachusetts, where we next visited, had a more relaxed and soft energy.

The voice of the MAPS president sounded very enthusiastic and inspiring in the telephone. We were more than curious to meet him. Since we thought of him as an important figure, we dressed very officially for our first meeting. Rick appeared to be a smiling, handsome, youthful, relaxed man, informally dressed. His eyes were shining with humor and cunning. Later, after we had known him for awhile and heard some stories about him, we came to feel that he is one of the most accepting and generous persons we've ever met. He is like the embodiment of the spirit of MDMA. We also understood that MAPS is not only an organization but a circle of people attracted and interconnected by Rick's optimistic magnetism.

We liked Boston. It appeared to us to resemble the spirit of our home of St. Petersburg (Leningrad) with its mix of intellectuals, students and colleges and similar architecture in its old buildings. Rick introduced us to the small local professional psychedelic community. Professor Lester Grinspoon of Harvard Medical School is one of the most knowledgeable psychiatrists in the US concerning psychedelic research and writes books on drug policy, medical marijuana, and other drugs with his associate James Bakalar. Lester confessed to us "My opinions have cost me a full professorship." We also met with Tom Reidlinger, a writer and associate at the Harvard Botanical Museum. Tom and his wife June are a complimentary couple: academic and serious-looking Tom is capable of sudden flashes of inspiration while attractive and laughing June reveals academic and serious knowledge of pharmacological sciences. Later, in California, we understood and re-evaluated how conservative the East Coast really is in comparison to the West Coast. Lester and Tom then appeared more bright to us, like two lighthouses in the midst of conservatism.

In Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts we passed 10 days in a silent meditation retreat. The approach was Vispassana as taught by Goenka, intensive body scan practice with 12 hours of sitting meditation every day. The idea that body sensations are connected with deep subconscious levels appeared to be true in practice: a lot of suppressed subconscious material came out during these days. One of our discoveries was a deeply rooted fear resulting from our lives in a totalitarian country. The spiritual outcome of this retreat was mainly pessimistic for Igor, who realized how far he is from enlightenment in spite of years of spiritual readings, practices and use of entheogens. Olga, being more pragmatic, just learned the meditation technique carefully and used it for stress reduction during our further extremely intensive journey.

Richard Yensen was the first person we met who was actually involved in the legendary psychedelic research at the Maryland Psychedelic Research Center. We felt Richard to be very dynamic and compassionate. He is a really talented psychotherapist who lives in a beautiful home in Baltimore with his handsome, clever, and humorous wife Donna, who is a psychotherapeutically oriented psychiatrist. Richard, when governmental polices made it impossible for him to continue his psychedelic research, created a system of sensory overload therapy which includes a tremendous slide show. The set of slides is an artistic masterpiece. The selection and high frequency of slide changes induces an altered state close to an LSD

One of our discoveries was a deeply rooted fear resulting from our lives in a totalitarian country.

experience. But more than his inventor's talent, we were impressed with Richard's sensitivity to human suffering. Richard is not so much interested in higher states induced by psychedelics, he is interested in using those states to help relieve the suffering of patients. That is why we called him the psychedelic Boddhisatva.

New Mexico appeared to us to be a place with more relaxed and alive energy than the East Coast. Surprisingly, we felt more at home here. We fell in love with Santa Fe with it's red and brown colors of earth and buildings, Indian art, mountains and close sky. We felt sadness in the Anasazi ruins, we felt grace in the miraculous church Sanctuario de Chimayo. George Greer and Requa Tolbert, who were among the first researchers of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy, live here. George is tall, looks younger than his age, and makes sudden jokes in the middle of serious conversation.

L.A., the flashy vanity fair, was just recovering from the riots when we arrived. Robert Zanger, a powerful and careful psychotherapist and businessman and President of the Albert Hofmann Foundation, had organized our public lectures. At the first lecture, which was about keta-mine-assisted therapy for alcoholics in Russia, we were surprised by the number of people who came to hear us and by their enthusiasm. We encountered a large, lively psychedelic community here, as if the 60's had never passed away. The core of this community are the legendary pioneers, the living history of psychedelic research.

Oscar Janiger, still strong and energetic in his 70's, has a rare combination of scientific approach and spiritual understanding. We admired his curious and inventive mind which we saw when he described his original experiments with psychedelics in the 50's and 60's. It seems that he already had completed or at least begun all kinds of experiments with entheogens that we could and even could not imagine. Much of this material was never published. Oscar's fantastic archives, which he donated to the AHF, could form the basis of much further research and publications.

Laura Huxley is unbelievably alive and gracious woman in her essence more young and alive than many people in their 20's. She is also very subtle and noble, truly aristocratic. We recall our meeting with her with warmth and great respect.

Timothy Leary seemed to be a little bit bored with psychedelics. He is more involved with the computer world now. On the question of America's future, he told us the following scheme, "60's... "be" generation ; 70's... "me" generation; 80's ... "de" generation; 90's... "re" generation ."

John Lilly was in Hawaii but through his secretary in L.A. he allowed us to float in his famous isolation tank. Probably it is easier to meet John in other realities.

Some early reseachers are undeservedly unknown like Betty Eisner, who conducted ketamine-assisted therapy in the 1970's.

In Ojai valley, full of orange trees, we couldn't get rid of the feeling of subtle sadness, something like lost paradise. We visited Meditation Mount where old noble ladies are living and meditating above the world, trying to bring to earth the higher energies described by Alice Bailey. We visited the oak grove where Krishnamurti used to give his talks and where old oaks still keep silent choiceless awareness.

A new generation of scientists is really to continue and deepen the scientific research. A wonderful team of young and energetic medical professionals is gathering together with the assistance of MAPS for the MDMA project. We spent some time with accurate and precise Charles Grob, calm and reliable Gary Bravo, and hard-working and enthusiastic Jerry Beck. We hope they will begin actual research soon, and that they can start collaborating with our associates in Russia.

We must be very careful with our dreams because sometimes they will become our reality. In his childhood, Igor had dreamt of visiting San Francisco to see its beauty and to feel its spirituality. Reality did not disprove dreams this time. San Francisco appeared for us to be the most beautiful and the most spiritual city in the United States. We were glad to meet the large and sophisticated spiritual and psychedelic community here. We met "everybody who is somebody", as somebody of those everybody put it. We shall

(continued next page)

L.A., the flashy vanity fair, was just recovering from the riots when we arrived.

The topic of psychedelics appeared to be our secret password in America.

describe our impressions in our future book since we don't want to turn our sketch completely into a catalog of "Who's Who." But whom we can't avoid mentioning here is charming Alise Agar, princess of the Bay area psychedelic community. We spent beautiful and joyful hours together with Alise and her elegant husband Bryan Whittine, a Jungian psychotherapist.

It was very interesting to us that, in general, the people from among the psychedelic community appeared to be the most friendly, open, personally developed and educated of those whom we met. In comparison, some representatives of the New Age movement seemed to be more superficial and sometimes involved in more personal problems. The people whom we met through MAPS were usually socially successful: they had good educations, good jobs, a wide spectrum of interests and social contacts. Plus they are just wonderful people. These observations support our research findings: correct use of entheogens induces positive changes in basic beliefs, life values and personality.

The topic of psychedelics appeared to be our secret password in America; in any place and any circle it immediately revealed for us interesting people. Psychedelics were not necessarily the main interest of these people but our knowledge and experience in this field formed the initial basis for their confidence in us. By this way, we met a lot of people in addition to those whom Rick and others had arranged for us to meet.

Concerning the country in general, there is still, unfortunately, masses and masses of people with a Budweiser consciousness. But we also see the arising of forces of ecological, spiritual and psychedelic consciousness which we hope will somehow determine a future America.

As for us, it seems we are on an endless journey. We can't stop travelling. It's beyond our control. ■

Note: To build rapport between the US and Russian research teams, MAPS contributed funds toward the travel expenses of Olga and Igor.

What's New in Psychedelics Encyclopedia, Edition 3

by Peter Stafford

Ronin Publications' new version of *Psychedelics Encyclopedia* (in bookstores spring '92, $24.95) contains all of the text and nearly all of the graphics of this book's 420-page second edition. An additional hundred pages deal with developments in the psychedelic field over the last decade. There are 230 illustrations.

The compound given the full-dress treatment this time is MDMA ("Ecstasy"). As for each of the nine psychedelic clusters described in edition 2, I recount MDMA's historic advance, its chemistry, physical effects, mental effects, and sources, forms and preparations. To illustrate my breakdown technique, the topics in the MDMA "mental effects" category are : predictability and reliability; power and subtlety; dosage considerations; general comments on psychotherapeutic use; rape, childhood abuse and post-war stress syndrome; couples in therapy; depression, suicide, autism, etc.; creativity; spiritual development; sensuality and sexuality; recreational use; and aftermath.

The editor this go-round is Dan Joy, who has largely specialized in psychedelic journalism. In a lengthy introduction, Joy comments about ketamine and a host of recently synthesized molecules that we will, no doubt, be hearing more about. He also offers thumbnail sketches of a dozen outstanding members in the current scene — both seasoned and newcomers.

This update includes obituaries for some of the (mostly) "great white shamans" who have died since the second edition went to press (1983). This is a reminder of how lucky some of us feel to have been alive while such giants of consciousness change have walked this earth. ■