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How Concentrative Movement Therapy (CMT) came to Slovakia and could be established there – Facts and personal experience

Abstract
Since its humble beginnings, which required a lot of improvisation and also a high level of commitment from everyone involved as well as generous donations, CMT (in German: KBT) in Slovakia has seen the foundation of an independent, well-functioning CMT association as well as the development of solid work in connection with the psychotherapy association of Slovakia. CMT is well-recognised and well-reputed in Slovakia as well as state-accredited. Since its beginning 17 years ago, the SSKPT (Slovenská spoločnosť pre koncentratívnu pohybovú terapiu) has grown more autonomous in its work, yet continues to be supported by Austrian and German therapist lecturers. Everyone’s belief in the effectiveness of CMT helped overcome language and other barriers. I wish the Slovakian association for CMT continued growth in its autonomy, which also allows for our friendship to continue to flourish. Whether this model for the introduction of CMT could be replicated in other European countries is a difficult question to answer. Certainly it would not be possible in the same manner. The particular circumstances present in the respective country and the presence or absence of sister organisations willing to support the development of CMT play a significant role. However, I am confident that the task of spreading CMT in Europe is something our flexible and well-functioning associations can manage.

Keywords: CMT, SSKPT, pioneering work, commitment, guest lecturers, donations, translation

History of the foundation of CMT
When the Iron Curtain fell in 1989, there was a lot of mistrust and suspicion in former Czechoslovakia under communist rule, also towards psychotherapy. Those in power at the time felt rather hostile towards the search for truth in psychotherapeutic work. There were official guidelines as to how medicine and psychotherapy should be understood. Thus, the desire for honest insight into the inner workings of humans grew, especially among psychotherapists, and a number of works of so-called blacklisted literature appeared, especially in the Czech language. Among them was the book by Christine Gräff, Konzentратivní Bewegungstherapie in der Praxis, which was published in Czech at the time, a language variant understood by Slovaks.
After the Iron Curtain had come down, a wave of enthusiasm was set off by the prospect of advanced training in psychotherapeutic methods, in depth psychology as well as as in psycho-dynamics.

Earlier, in 1980, the Slovakian psychiatrist Dr Josef Hasto had attended the Lindau Psychotherapy Weeks in Germany. His experience with CMT with Dr Helmuth Stolze (the founder of the method) and Dr Ursula Kost (founder of the German Association for Concentrative Movement Therapy, DAKBT) had awakened the desire in him to bring this method to Slovakia. Therefore, after the political changes of 1989 had made it possible, he invited therapist lecturers from Germany and Austria to Slovakia.

This led to the first training group being started in Slovakia in December 1996, instructed by Austrian therapist lecturers: Dr Veronika Pokorny and DSA Markus Hochgerner, both of them residents of Vienna and thus only an hour’s drive away from Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. This first training group with 19 participants (12 of whom are still active in the field today) included the following professions: psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, social pedagogues, remedial educationalists and speech therapists. All of them were around 30 years of age. Even in this first training group, the number of physicians and psychologists stood out, constituting a higher percentage of the participants than what we were used to from our German groups. This is most likely to be attributed to the fact that Dr Josef Hasto was able to have CMT recognised by the Slovakian government as early as 1996, with the commencement of the first training group.

The next steps

After 260 self-awareness group sessions, Dr Veronika Pokorny was very committed to getting the methodological and theoretical CMT training courses set up in Slovakia as well, along with supervision, in order to gain therapist lecturers there and in order to stay within the framework of the Austrian curriculum.

This was how I came to be invited to Slovakia for the first time in 1999 to conduct a CMT seminar. I accepted with great enthusiasm, having already made some friends in that country during the communist era and having been very impressed by their warm-heartedness. It was pioneering work.

Upon my arrival in Bratislava, I was taken to a suburb by car and offered an old, dusty, derelict cinema as a seminar room. There was hardly any CMT material. My accommodation was a larger version of a garden shed, the owner of which had gone away for the weekend. This rather unusual set-up was more than made up for by the 15 participants who were ready for an experience, eager to learn and exceptionally friendly, caring and grateful. This reminded me very much of the early days of the DAKBT and I felt touched and enriched.

On 7 March 2003, Bratislava could boast 8 fully-fledged CMT therapists. In the same year, the first book on CMT in Slovakian was published: Hochgerner-Pokorny: CMT in Theorie und Praxis.
In the meantime, the second training group led by Hedwig Illichmann (DAKBT) and Waltraud Uhlier (ÖAKBT) had commenced in 2000. This time around, the Slovaks already took care of organising their own lecturers.

The exams then took place in 2006, chaired by Markus Hochgerner (ÖAKBT) and by myself (DAKBT), as had been the case with the first group, only this time with a representative of the association of psychotherapists in Slovakia. This meant that we as therapist lecturers were also under close examination.

In 2005, Natalia Kascakova, one of the participants of the first group, had started working as a co-therapist with Markus Hochgerner in Vienna in order to be trained as a therapist lecturer. In 2006, Norbert Uhnak then started his co-therapy work in the third training group commencing at the time under my leadership. With two therapist lecturers of their own, the Slovaks could now gain a higher level of autonomy in CMT training. Parallel to my own group, another CMT group was started under the leadership of Elisabeth Schurier (ÖAKBT) and Christa Baier (ÖAKBT), with its remaining 80 hours then being completed by Norbert Uhnak and myself. In the meantime, a fourth training group run exclusively by Slovaks has completed its training and a fifth group is soon to commence. Supervision as well as individual methodology seminars are also being offered under Slovakian leadership nowadays.

Since 2006, meaning since the start of the third groups, training has been conducted in the same, highly suitable venue equipped with good materials. This has made it a lot easier.

**Where is CMT used in Slovakia?**

CMT is used in private independent practice, in psychiatric wards, in hospitals, in day care clinics, in the re-socialisation of drug addicts, in counselling centres for children and youths, in speech therapy practices as well as in university courses and prevention programmes. In all of these areas, CMT is offered as group and individual therapy.

**The association and the official recognition of the method**

While the first training group was running, the Slovakian association for CMT (SSKPT) was founded in 2000. One of its tasks is to offer orientation for specialisation, in particular for its certified members. For others who become involved with CMT, it offers the possibility of a membership. The association also provides interpreters and specialised literature. The goal of the association is to offer scientific, international CMT conferences as done by the CMT associations in Austria and Germany. This type of work has already seen its humble beginnings. CMT has been made known through targeted PR. Through its foundation, the SSKPT also became a member of the EAKBT (European Association for CMT).

In July 2000, the SSKPT became a member of the Slovakian association for psychotherapy. This association offers some modules of its own required by psychotherapy-related legislation.
within the framework of CMT training. With the SSKPT having become a member of this psychotherapy association, CMT training has received official accreditation through the Slovakian ministry of health.

The Slovakian psychotherapy association also makes sure that accredited training programmes and methods cover enough theoretical ground in training. For this reason, a representative of the association has always been present at CMT exams since 2006. It can be said, therefore, that both, the Slovakian association for CMT as well as the Slovakian psychotherapy association take great care to ensure high quality for the 1,850 sessions which comprise CMT training in Slovakia.

On the whole, CMT is highly regarded in psychotherapy circles in Slovakia and, as already mentioned, enjoys the status of a state-accredited method. This means that doctors and psychologists can bill the health insurance companies directly for CMT treatment. For all other professional groups using CMT, the method of settlement has yet to be clarified.

Dealing with language barriers
All of the seminars, some of the supervision sessions and all exams were conducted in German and translated by expert interpreters, most of whom were psychologists, psychotherapists or pedagogues. There were also some German-speakers among each group of participants who helped out whenever difficulties arose.

Practically, this means that CMT offers were formulated in German and then translated into Slovakian. Plays on words which came across as humorous in German were often lost on the Slovakian recipients since humour does not translate well. The participants then put the offer into practice, which went along with what had been said in German most of the time, but not all of the time. Body language usually made it very clear if the translation had or had not managed to get across what was originally intended. Clarification was needed at times, which took the flow out of it, but most of the time everything went smoothly. The rounds of talks after the offers were often long and tedious, also for the interpreters, since what was said in Slovakian had to be translated into German for us as the lecturers, and our questions interpretations and ideas referring to what had been said then had to be translated back into Slovakian and so forth. This often took the spontaneity and directness out of it. Emotions only become clear after some time had already passed. However, they did not have to be translated. Translation meant that one-third had to be added to the average time frame for a session.

Funding for CMT in Slovakia
The question of how CMT training became possible for future CMT therapists in a post-communist country with very low income levels is significant.

From the very beginning, there were numerous private donors, but the two sister organisations
DAKBT and ÖAKBT also made donations. In this way, it is as though every member of these associations contributed personally to the development of CMT in Slovakia. It needs to be emphasised that all of the lecturers involved worked for only a very small fee or none at all. It took the donor's generosity, the commitment of German and Austrian guest lecturers to work free of charge as well as the sincerity and resilience of the Slovaks to make the project of developing CMT in Slovakia possible.

What does the field of psychotherapy look like in Slovakia today?
Among depth psychology methods, the ones which garner most interest in Slovakia as far as further training is concerned are:
• psychodynamic psychotherapy
• guided affective imagery (KIP, Leuner)
• relaxation and symbolic psychotherapy (imagery based on Hungarian methods), CMT, Gestalt therapy
Among the less frequented depth psychology methods are: psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy (based on Hungarian methods), psychoanalytic psychotherapy (connected with Prague)

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