

# Encounter Psi 1994: Parapsychology in Argentina

by

Alejandro Parra

Instituto de Psicología Paranormal, Buenos Aires

On November 5, 1994 the first "Encounter Psi" took place in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The conference brought together many independent parapsychological researchers to discuss history, theory and research, and examine the social aspects of parapsychology in Argentina.

The meeting was held at the Instituto de Psicología Paranormal (Institute of Paranormal Psychology). In his opening remarks, Alejandro Parra noted that what distinguished the first "Encounter Psi" from the usual conference on psychic phenomena in Argentina was its focus on scientific parapsychology.

Psychologist Oscar Marcelo Barros Barbeito (Center for Parasensory Investigations) outlined a research project carried out in a neuropsychiatric hospital in Buenos Aires with schizophrenic patients, and a group of psychologically normal adult subjects, some of whom were blind. Subjects completed a chromatic perception test and a dermo-optic perception task. The researchers had hoped to find a correlation between dermo-optic performance and mood. Significant results were obtained.

In other talks: Juan Carlos Russo, a professional dowser, presented a study in which he attempted to discriminate "dowsing perception" from ESP dowsing rods and other dowsing instruments; Walter Gardini, a professor of yoga and comparative religion at the Universidad del Salvador in Buenos Aires discussed

ESP and yoga, focusing on the place of psi phenomena in Patanjali's yogic aphorisms; and agronomist and physicist Ivan Léspedes, and María Martínez de Léspedes reported on an experiment they conducted in which they attempted to observe psi in the *Drosophila melanogaster* fly, postulating that a colony of flies might be capable of transmitting information about the physical conditions in which they found themselves through a kind of psi ability. Although it was impossible to control for any potential PK experimenter effects, Léspedes and Léspedes were encouraged by their results.

In addition, physician Samuel Tarnopolsky analyzed healing practices from a socio-cultural perspective and lawyer Hector del Valle reviewed the history of psychology and its relationship to the history of parapsychology. Clinical psychologist Daniel Gómez Montanelli speculated about "extracerebral memory" using research on reincarnation-type cases such as those studied by Stevenson. Gómez Montanelli discussed the appropriateness of genetic memory, cryptomnesia, fraud, and ESP as explanations for the results of this research.

The phenomena of the anomalous reception of sounds, voices and even images of presumed paranormal origin, was the topic of Juan Gimano's and Marcelo Di Tullio's paper. Although not convinced by the evidence, they re-

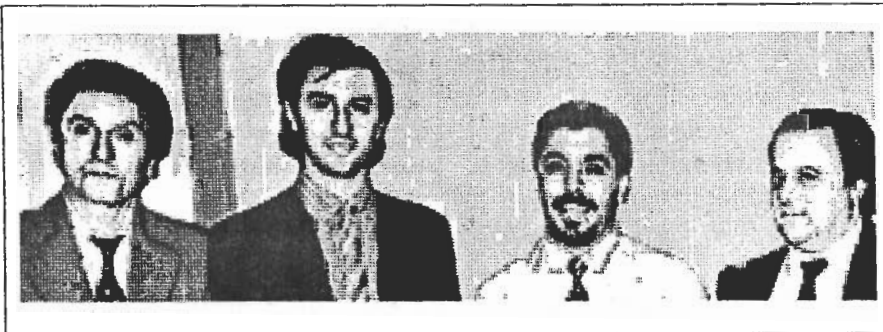
mained hopeful that this area of research might bear fruit in the future.

PA member Marcelo Oliva Moyano, an Argentinian psychologist who lives in Brazil presented a multivariate analysis of a professional psychic. Oliva Moyano found that most of psychic's statements were ambiguous statements and that the psychic relied on knowledge of relevant stereotypes. Nonetheless, some findings, confirmed by the person for whom the reading was given, were suggestive of ESP.

Finally, PA member Alejandro Parra, who edits the *Revista Argentina de Psicología Paranormal*, reviewed national and international developments in the field between 1989-1994. Parra pointed out that parapsychology is a discipline that uses the scientific method to gain an understanding of ESP and PK. He reviewed recent work involving the application of meta-analysis, the use of the Ganzfeld, emphases on micro- and bio-PK, issues of international communication, the problems presented by skeptics, and psychological correlates of belief in the paranormal. Parra also reviewed developments in Argentinian parapsychology.

At the end of the convention, Jorge Villanueva, a member of the editorial board of the *Revista*, summarized the work of Engineer José S. Fernández (1893-1967), who introduced statistical methods into Argentinian parapsychology and was the first to do PK tests in Latin America. Villanueva and Parra presented a posthumous award commemorating Fernández' life work to his daughter, Mrs. Sarah Warburton.

The organizers were cheered by complimentary comments made by presenters and attendees that confirmed their belief that *Encounter Psi 1994* had been a conference of scientific quality, satisfying and encouraging to all who took part.



Conference Participants from left: Jorge Villanueva, PA Members Alejandro Parra and Marcelo Oliva Moyano, and Oscar Barros Barbeito.