

## Congress Report

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### **1<sup>st</sup> Convention of the National Association for Prenatal Education (A.N.E.P.)**

*by John-Richard Turner & Troye Turner*

“La Madre, su hijo, nuestro futuro!”

“La mère, son enfant, notre futur!”

“The mother, her child, our future!”

This was the multilanguage theme of the 1<sup>st</sup> World Convention of Prenatal Education organized by the Association Nationale pour l'Education Périnatale – ANEP in Granada, Spain from 17 to 19 June, 1993. Over 400 delegates convened at the magnificent Palacio de Congresos across the city from Granada's legendary Moorish town, the Alhambra fortress and palaces.

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As a preface to this report, we would like to remember our first meeting with ANEP. We have been members of the International Society of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine since 1986 when Prof. Peter Fedor-Freybergh organized the pivotal Congress in Badgastein, Austria, which raised ISPPM to a truly inter-disciplinary Society embracing all sciences and practices concerned with birth and birthing. There we also met with the founder of ANEP Mme Andrée Bertin and with Dr. Wilfried Jakob who gave a presentation about ANEP. Since then there has only been very sporadic contact between the ISPPM and ANEP. Therefore it was a great pleasure and delight to participate at the 1<sup>st</sup> ANEP Convention. This report will offer some highlights from the Granada Convention and in future issues this Journal will be sharing significant selected papers presented at that meeting.

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The meeting was convened by ANEP President Dr. Angel Mariano Sanz who introduced Dr. Pilar Vizcaino, Chair of the Organizing Committee. Her brief welcome placed the concept of baby into the hands of the delegates as the convention theme. This was followed by an official welcome by Juan Luis Alvarez Martinez in behalf of the Mayor of Granada.

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The keynote address ‘The Concept of Prenatal Education’ was sounded by Chairperson Madame Andrée Bertin. It was after her retirement in 1982 that

Madame Bertin founded ANEP as a bridge between research and the daily life of couples and mothers. "In recent years the direction has been to offer programs and publications for birthing professionals, the public and politicians as the most effective way to bring about policy changes to support mothers." Madame Bertin touched all of us with her image: "It is the memory of love, acceptance and emotional warmth in the mother/child communication which imprints in the baby the ability to solve problems. The first program of life experience which is encoded into the cells is at the moment of conception." Madame Bertin charged us "for babies to be happier and stronger the prenatal education environment of the parents most positively contribute to parent and child rights. There can be no freedom without prenatal education. Imagine if this information was available to all people in all countries. Our main task is to give prenatal information so that all people could choose to be free as adults."

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The second Plenary Address was offered by the founder of the Spanish ANEP, Dr. Alvero Aguirre de Carcer. In a beautifully crafted dissertation Prof. Carcer painted the course of society. "We have labels, roles, social factors which influence, condition and manipulate us. We can only defend ourselves by being authentic. The point which was to prick all the delegates was the word 'authentic'. The trap has been to train the child that it has to be successful because this will lead to power which will lead to happiness. When humanity obtains an image of itself which is not authentic it leads to lost authenticity which leads to lost happiness. The role of the mother is to teach the child 'I want to talk to you! Don't be afraid! It is me your mother speaking to you! Only in freedom can you find happiness!'"

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A basic ANEP principle postulates

"What the mother experiences, the child experiences with her".

What was interesting is that throughout this 1<sup>st</sup> ANEP convention there was no attempt to couch reference to the foetus in obtuse scientific words. Quite simply, the foetus was called baby or child. This echoed one of the main points of ISPPM's Honorary President, Prof. Peter G. Fedor-Freybergh's plenary address. He called for everyone in our discipline to close the semantics gap; professionals and mothers must use the same language. "We urgently need a new way of thinking and language. We must change philosophies which ignore the subjective specifics of each individual and each society with their own soul and spirituality, their own needs, feelings and thoughts." The largely women's audience roared appreciatively when he reminded them that he had never heard a mother call her child an embryo or foetus! "The prenatal stage of life is the first ecological environment where mother/child dialogue leads to preventive procedures and to health in which the human life has to be considered an individual continuum."

One of the most significant thoughts Prof. Fedor-Freybergh offered was his definition of health: "Health is the dynamic movement along the creative path towards self-realization: Self-realization has to be understood to contain the bio-

logical, psychological and social dimensions.” “A living body has the ability to adapt and correct. Damages in early stages can be corrected in later stages of development. By seeing the baby as body, mind and spirit holistically, we can recognize that consciousness precedes matter and not the body precedes consciousness, or in other words, the function precedes structure and not the other way round.” Juxtapositioning the often repeated theme of the importance of love in the mother/child dialogue Prof. Fedor-Freybergh offered a genuine concern that “An unwanted child is morally hindered and this is against basic human rights!”

Prof. Fedor-Freybergh left us with an inspiring image: “We have to strive after the renaissance of individual human uniqueness in a world where the individual and his or her environment should represent a spiritual unity in ecological peace. That is even more true for such a subtle situation as the prenatal stage of human development. But is it not so that from a subtle and delicate process can result large and important movements both in philosophy, practice and world changings? He spoke about ‘butterfly effects’ where the life events are interdependent to the degree that the very subtle and seemingly insignificant movements of a butterfly’s wings are able to set off, somewhere far away a large typhoon. This butterfly effect can be linked to the prenatal stage of human development. With respect to that, lies the unique opportunity to protect the world from evil!”

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Reflecting on mother/child interaction, Dr. Yves Maison of France described how beliefs about babies have changed. “Where the soul had been ignored by medicine, ANEP pioneers had recognized babies as human beings. The prenatal period is in the air. The expanded awareness of the 1970’s and 1980’s has led to a great increase in press articles and TV. ‘Babies as persons’ has even touched film directors and philosophers. There is a new global awareness to overcome mother’s fears. This has created demands by new parents for even better prenatal education.”

Dr. Maison urged that foetal memories should be worked on before pregnancy and he warned that “Not to educate the foetus is a mistake! And, to remove beauty – the richness of spirit, is to deprive the child of its soul!” He reiterated the universal western mother’s complaints that medicine has dehumanized the birthing process. “Men make machines: women make men!” I thought to myself, ‘So who is responsible for men making women into machines?’ Dr. Maison did ask a profound question: “How does the foetus feel when the mother gives love?”

As Prof. Carcer had called for authenticity, Dr. Maison called for love as the object of research to change societal behavior. “Women are filled with pregnancy.” Finally, he linked to Prof. Fedor-Freybergh’s call for health: “Love is vital – as vital as oxygen!”

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Two short presentations were offered on breast feeding and procreation. The point of the latter was the reassurance that nature never asks women to do

more than they are capable of doing and concluded with the ironic medical view that when women give birth it is as if no one had ever given birth before. This raised the often repeated call that women's wisdom about birthing needs to be heard.

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Rebirther Frederik Lehrman from the USA, offered that, "We are unaware of our planetary ecology because we are unaware of our birth and mother. We have a nonconscious longing to return into the womb, but we have not come from inside to outside but to a greater inside. The womb and living in the life supporting envelope of the planet are both states of living inside a life supporting ecology."

Mr. Lehrman accented his ecological insideness with beautiful slides of sacred planetary landscapes which helped us to evolve into a new consciousness about being inside.

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The first day's educational program concluded with a dynamic round table panel. Here are some highlight sentences:

Dra. Enriquetta Barranca-Castillo, Ob/Gyn: "Pregnant women are more afraid that ever because of technology. Women know much more about pregnancy than machines. Women had intuition of baby communication. Babies experience of extreme foetal suffering is not their pain but mother's labor pains."

Sra. D. Pilar Vizcaino, Ph.D.: "Prenatal Education is the most important fact of human advancement. Intuition is awakened. Baby will transmit its needs leading to a wonderful linkage between mother and baby. Women plant seed thoughts and values and so have to be aware of our role as educators of society."

David Chamberlain, Ph.D.: "All babies are receiving an education prenatally: some poor, some good, some bad: Some babies come out exhausted from a crazy mother saying, 'I'm so glad to be out of there!' Babies learn mother's tongue by 26 weeks. Incomplete brain development led to errors in psychological theory and medical practice causing terrible pain and suffering to infants. Doctors said there is no one in there so we can operate without anesthesia. We need a totally new way to describe that there is someone in baby."

Jorge César Martínez, Pediatrician: "I was so exited at my first delivery! My professor said, 'Don't worry, you'll get over it!' My joy was to rediscover women – mothers and grandmothers and their wisdom about birth. After birth, I asked mothers three questions, 'What do you think about doctors? Did we do anything you would have preferred we had not done? Were you expecting us to do something we didn't?'"

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The evening concluded with a moving Mozart piano concert by Mme. Veronique Briel followed by a premidnight moonlit garden reception at a beautiful palace overlooking magical Granada.

*Day Two*

Dr. M. Claire Busnel, of Paris presented comprehensive research about the ability of the foetus to hear prenatally from 4½ to five months gestation. "Babies need a good prenatal environment. Mother needs to educate not teach. She needs to be attentive to reactions of the baby to achieve real dialogue."

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Next speaker was Dr. Michel Odent, now of the Primal Health Centre in London. Dr. Odent was bright and enthusiastic as he gesticulated a veritable encyclopedia of recent significant research in the prenatal and perinatal medical literature. Much of his own research which will be published soon is concerned with nutrition especially the value of fish in the diet. He is focusing on diet because that is one of the easiest factors in enhancing health of mothers and future generations.

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Next was a paper resonating and resounding with common sense authored by Rosario Navidad Rozade Montemurro, D.E. Matrona from Valencia, Spain. She invited pregnant mothers to come together to sing for two hours a week. "We discovered that through singing, we could express our most intimate and profound feelings. Singing mothers liberated ourselves from tension and lightened our spirits. To be able to sing, we must learn to breath correctly . . . to breath rhythmically, to use the thorax and increase lung capacity and some of the same abdominal muscles used in birth are strengthened. Singing leads to shortened and more effective labors – two hours in many cases." Aside from health benefits, "With these musical scores of old lullabies, we have rescued forgotten treasures – old village folk songs and disappearing dialects. Babies feel loved and communicated with and this mother/child communication continues through babyhood. Caesarian rates were lower and breast feeding extended to 7 or 8 months. We believe that all these singing techniques create a fresh and renewing aire to useful and essential birth preparation."

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Dr. David Chamberlain from San Diego, California, President of PPPANA presented the evidence of babies' intelligence and feelings before birth which he supported by 125 references from the medical literature.

In his book 'Babies Remember Birth' Dr. Chamberlain had been focusing on birth memories. "Now" he confessed, "I go back further. The 19th Century view of babies is obsolete. We have 90 million babies born each year who are hurt and mistreated because authorities declared babies didn't feel. We have three decades of science to prove that babies have intelligence and that they do feel."

Dr. Chamberlain asked us to consider four essential points of prenatal education which parents must learn:

- 1) Babies are sensitive and aware.
- 2) Babies learn and dream.
- 3) Babies are social and communicative.

4) Intelligent babies need intelligent parents.

Echoing Prof. Fedor-Freybergh regarding unwanted children, Dr. Chamberlain said, "The worst possibility is to be born unwanted. 35 years of studies in Sweden, Finland and Czechoslovakia showed that all participants unwanted at conception, through gestation and at birth all showed a greater risk for pathology. These persons were failures in everything in life. At the opposite end of the scale, children who were offered Prenatal Education or Enrichment such as through Drs. Rene & Kirsten Van de Carr's model of the Prenatal University have proven successful. Scientific studies conducted in the USA, Thailand, Venezuela and here in Valencia are proving once ridiculed pioneers correct."

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Commenting on the "link of love" theme a professor from a School of Nursing made two interesting points:

- 1) Babies recognize the burst of emotion from mother and father at the moment of their birth.
- 2) At birth, babies have to activate everything they need to know in a tenth of a second in order to create benefits in life.

"Michel Odent mentioned many specific causes of low birth weight. I noticed that separation from mother is even more a negative factor."

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Jeanette Bessonnet presented the hypothesis that giving birth creates links. She cited a French study of 2,000 people. "At home these people used a different language than in hospital. There were 20 words which were repeated: love, happiness, pride, gift of life were at the top." Other astounding results: "50 % considered pregnancy as a disease; 30 % doubted the method of birth; 65 % were not sure that lying down was the best birthing position." Her conclusion, "To change these statistics parents need to be made confident and autonomous through prenatal education."

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The only presentation which created quite an amazing over reaction among some delegates was from Elizabeth Fodor, a psychologist and pedagogue from Madrid, when she led a demonstration on how to play with three young infants. There was the usual giggles and cooings from the audience at the babies being rolled on inflated balls; discovering each other; reaching for noisy clappers. Suddenly, outrage surged forth against mothers having to be shown how to play with their infants. Latin emotions flared: Unfortunately, from Perinatal Psychology, therapists know that some mothers do not know how to play with their babies. In fact, some mothers not only do not love their babies, they do not like their babies and certainly have no intention of playing with them. This topic has the potential for a conference all of its own.

Roberto Fraioli presented an inspiring video of the Study Centre for Natural Childbirth which calmed the ruffled mothers.

*Day Three*

“When you touch baby in the belly he or she becomes aware of its own existence. So when the body is aware of its own physical existence before birth, after birth there is an autonomy – a reflex from its own nature, by the body itself. This means that after birth the baby does not have to be given the breast. It knows itself where to find the nipple. The infant body has its own autonomy.”

That was part of the message Frans Veldman, the Dutch founder of haptonomy, now living in France conveyed to ANEP delegates. “40 years of research shows baby’s ability to create its own reality.” At the next ANEP Convention let us hope that it will be possible for Dr. Veldman to demonstrate the remarkable communication we have seen him do with in utero babies. At an ISPPM Netherland Chapter meeting we saw him teach a baby which had dropped many weeks too early to move back up where it should have been to complete a normal gestation. Haptonomy means touching, means science of affectivity. Touch the baby lovingly before birth and it will experience life after birth as loving. That is the promise from Frans Veldman’s heart.

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“Acknowledge the self-esteem of Spanish Women.” That was the rallying call of Argentinian Pediatrician, Professor Jorge César Martínez. “It all started when I saw the sense of failure faces of new mothers. I had never seen that look before! They should have had a pride in their new babies. I asked myself why they were not proud? In my heart I knew we doctors had not done right. I told my doctors that they had to say, ‘You have a healthy baby!’ The doctors could not understand why they needed to say that. The need was not theirs. The need was for the mothers to feel they had done something meaningful, something they could feel proud about. That simple sentence worked.”

In 1986, after 20 years in practice, Dr. Martínez was determined to reduce 1) Maternal mortality, 2) Neonatal mortality, 3) The rate of premature births, and 4) The failure of the mother/child link. “When I saw those mothers without pride and self-esteem, my commitment was to change the word link or bond to love.” This is when Dr. Martínez recognized the essential part Prenatal Education played in the ability of mothers to link with and love their babies. By educating mothers as to all the miracles which were happening inside their pregnant bodies mothers began to build self-esteem.

An important aspect in helping mothers to build this self-esteem was by involving fathers in the pregnancy. It took patience – 10 years, but the turn around from indifference to enthusiasm moved Prof. Martínez’ heart with joy. “Fathers and I were privileged spectators. We saw that babies do not have to cry at birth. When one baby cried the father said, ‘Let me sing to him!’ The father did and the baby stopped crying!”

Love was the link that bound Professor Martínez to his revolutionary and successful Prenatal Education program. “Love had not been a scientific word. At first I almost whispered the word to my medical students and faculty. The key was when I learned not to just use the word, but to feel love!”

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'La Méthode Tomatis' in reactivating prenatal hearing memories to balance psychological problems was presented by Anne-Marie Vermeulen-Saurel. In her therapy centre in Monaco a womblike environment is created including an eggshaped warm bath with blue light and carefully selected music for mother and child. Orange light is also used to help the child to stimulate the effort of birth. "Hearing is the first sense to be developed. So, it is the sense which has the most prenatal memories. Therefore, hearing is the sense which is very effective to work with in balancing prenatal traumas."

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Next contribution were scientific studies presented by Prof. Carlos Mendez-Bauer, MD, Ph.D. of the Hospital Santa-Cristina in Madrid. Like Prof. Martinez his quest began with a simply observation. When he was in training at a hospital in Paraguay, women in the labor ward were ordered to stay on bed. After many hours of painful labor, in defiance of the Professor in charge and his midwife, one woman got up and went to toilet. As she was returning to bed she said, "When I was standing up I had a strong contraction and it did not hurt". Only Dr. Mendez-Bauer heard her words. It was the contractions when she was lying down which caused pain. "When I examined birthing pictures and statues of Pre-Columbian and dozens of other cultures I realized that there were no beds. I decided to research bed use in birthing."

Prof. Mendez-Bauer designed an experiment to compare scientifically what happened physiologically to mothers and babies during labor, in bed and standing. He also asked mothers "What position are you most comfortable in?" All but one said standing. Another question was, "In which position did you feel less pain?" Again, standing was the answer. Only four women felt no perceptible difference.

In his study of 20 women and a control group, labor in bed lasted 6 hours and 20 minutes; standing 3 hours and 31 minutes. Time of labor was doubled in bed. Another way to say that – standing cut labor time in half. "We proved that uterine efficiency is always greater sitting or standing. Women loose efficiency in bed. Efficiency of the uterus contracting while standing is twice as effective. In light of this research we proved that standing or sitting is also better from the point of view of the baby as well."

In another study testing practices which may do more harm than good Prof. Mendez-Bauer filmed mothers being told to "push" and mothers "not being told to push". "Afterwards, the group who were not told to push smiled and reported that the birth was a pleasant experience!"

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Our previous reports of birthing practices in Russia were that birthing was horrendous. The next speaker, Nina Tchitcherina, helped us to see that there has also been a revolution in birthing as well, with a report from Moscow. Just as incredible, and without doubt as painful a transformation was happening into free market economy in Moscow, there has been an astounding change in birthing



consciousness. Mrs. Tchitcherina explained the professional work of some of the outstanding women at the leading edge of birthing research and practice. Russians have always been aware of wider perception of medicine than in the west, so it is natural for them to be open to wider visions and holistic birthing practices. Lamenting that she and her "colleagues have access to less than one hundredth of the scientific literature from abroad. Even when books are available there is a difficulty in getting adequate professional translation." So, she, as with many other researchers, are trying to gain personal experience by traveling to the west when they can. Working in a team at the Moscow Center of Prenatal Education 'Blagovest or Annuciation', "the next step is to begin teaching prenatal education classes at Moscow University. Another future project is a birthing conference in Moscow for which help is invited." At the end Mrs. Tchitcherina extended an invitation to anyone interested in supporting birthing in Moscow to please contact her.

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Dra. Enriquetta Barranca Castillo offered a study on one impact of ultrasound. She used videotapes to illustrate the reaction of mothers when they were told the sex of their baby. She called for responsibility regarding this tool as in some societies when the sex of the baby was not what the parents wanted abortions were sought. "In some cultures where females are not valued abortions can reduce female infanticide. Revelation of the sex of the child has a very deep psychological impact which is still to be explored. In a study of 23 couples average age 27 all the women wanted girls. Half the babies born were girls. In England hospitals are forbidden to reveal the sex of babies precisely to stop termination of pregnancies based on sex."

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In the final Round Table Dr. Castillo read aloud the World Health Organization's guidelines for mother and child.

Jorge César Martinez: "These WHO recommendations are extraordinary! I like the respect for human beings! Why are they not put into action? What could one person do? For each medical action doctors should ask themselves, 'What would I feel if I was on the other side – the patient?'" Dr. Martinez called for the WHO manifest to be put into practice. "We must act for the future – to be aware of several generations ahead – to fill future generations with love!"

Carlos Mendez-Bauer: "I agree with Dr. Martinez. Also, we need to strengthen midwifery schools – courses should include psychology and sociology. We must be cautious in the use of Caesarians and misuse of foetal monitoring. To help mothers who need to be on foetal monitors I asked manufacturers for five meter cables instead of one meter which had kept mothers trapped in their beds. There had been calls here for less foetal monitoring. We know that at some point 70 % of babies can have the umbilical cord around the neck. I believe there should be more foetal monitoring to protect babies and mothers from untimely tragedy."

John-Richard Turner from the floor: "Yesterday, the question of how to help mothers who had experienced traumatic pregnancy to overcome guilt. At the 9<sup>th</sup> ISPPM conference in Jerusalem, Israel, a study was presented which showed that when mothers experiencing trauma and difficulties during pregnancy do not receive help, the child inherits the inability to handle problems and crises in life. However, if the mother is supported by her family, social services, government policy and learns to cope with her challenges, her child inherits the ability to handle crises. As Prof. Fedor-Freybergh pointed out in his opening address 'A living body has the ability to adapt and correct. Damages from earlier stages of development can be corrected in later stages'. So psychological and social support and love during gestation model coping to the unborn. If loving support did not happen during gestation, after birth it can be done through talking to the baby as suggested by Dr. Martinez; apologizing and changing as suggested by Dr. Chamberlain; or later through prebirth regression therapy."

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Following the third Round Table, Chairman Dr. Angel Moriano Sanz offered a comprehensive validictory to the 400 delegates from 21 countries. He summarized key points expressed by presenters from three continents.

Defending a too positive or idealized attitude of ANEP Dr. Sanz said, "We want to reinforce the positive. I ask why idealize pain? Some women may find this strange but positivity spreads. To transform the negative into an overall joyful experience let women talk in images not in abstracts. Once a person has recognized gestation as important, we have taken a positive step forward. Medicine might be reluctant but prenatal education will be accepted by women and this will increase their self-esteem. High school students will react to positive images. What works is beauty in life. Two years ago in ANEP we were asked to take up the Torch of the Future. Today the midwife who made that call said to me, 'Now the Torch of the Future needs to be passed on to others beyond ANEP'. Let us do that!"

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The 1<sup>st</sup> ANEP Convention closed with inspiration from its Founder Madame Andrée Bertin: "Education means wakening to love. By coming back to our origins we strengthen life. We cannot allow science to destroy life in the name of progress. We have to unite and expand prenatal knowledge to an enlightened science community and the general public to bring us to an enhanced relationship with our children. The happier the mother, the happier the child."

Concerning the role of women in creating this love: "Woman is life. Woman must find her place in a society controlled by men. Woman makes a mistake to try to be like a man. We need both the female and the male. Woman must go back to her inner identity. She will benefit; her child will benefit; her husband will benefit and society will benefit. Let us all help create and develop the authentic woman. We lost authenticity when males became dominant.

You are all invited to the 2<sup>nd</sup> ANEP Convention on the Island of Corfu, Greece, in May 1994."