

Le Patriarche Encyclopedia Article

Le Patriarche

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Contents

Le Patriarche Encyclopedia Article.....	1
Contents.....	2
Le Patriarche.....	3



Le Patriarche

Le Patriarche is both the name of an organization treating addicts and the nickname (the "patriarch") of its founder, Lucien J. Engelmajer. The program was begun in Toulouse, France, in 1972, and by 1989 it had spread to Spain, Belgium, Italy, Germany, Portugal, and Ireland.

Le Patriarche focused its work in residential treatment centers, located primarily in rural areas on large farming estates. In addition, the organization operated small intake and community-interaction units in urban centers throughout Mediterranean Europe. During the 1990s, it also opened several centers in large cities in the United States, but most of these closed after several years.

The program's philosophy is vague: remain drug-free and work hard in a semi-Utopian setting. It offers little in the form of organized therapies with measurable outcomes.

Almost from the start, Le Patriarche was embroiled in controversy. Addicts were made to work on projects owned by Engelmajer without salary. Some individuals were relocated from one European country to another while their passports were withheld. Use of force was not uncommon. The organization used illegal immigrant labor for commercial activities.

After a finding of fraud by the French government, Le Patriarche tried to reorganize to gain credibility. However, the organization in Italy with which it began to associate—San Patrigiano—was surrounded by similar controversy. Eventually, Engelmajer was removed from visible leadership, and members of his family now direct the program, renamed Dianova. The headquarters are located in Switzerland, where the finances for all locations are controlled.

Dianova continues the practice of not paying wages for what in essence is forced labor, thereby perpetuating Le Patriarche's structure of creating dependence among the addicts who seek help there.

In the early 1990s, worldwide membership was about 10,000. There is no reliable information about the current number of participants in Dianova.