

Jewish Analysts in Eastern Europe

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Sigmund Freud, the originator of psychoanalysis and the founder of the psychoanalytic movement had his roots in eastern Galicia as did all of his original followers and as did many of those who contributed to the development of psychoanalysis in subsequent decades. To this day many important psychoanalytic contributors are second or third generation descendants of eastern European Jews.

Psychoanalysis flourished in some parts of eastern Europe, especially pre- and post-Bolshevik Russia until the late twenties and in Hungary until 1939. In 1919 Freud wrote to Jung “In Russia there seems to be a local epidemic of psychoanalysis.” The Russian translation in 1904 of Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* was the first in any language and before WWI more copies of Freud work were sold in Russia than in any other country. Freud’s father’s family was from Tzimemez and Bulczoz and his wife Martha’s family were from Brod country in Europe.

The two most important Jews who practiced psychoanalysis in pre- and post-Bolshevik Russian were Sabina Spielrein and Moishe Wolff. Sabina Speilrein’s story began in 1907 when she arrives in the Bleuler’s clinic in Zurich Switzerland having been sent there from Rostov-on-Don by her parents for treatment of a serious mental illness. Although it has not been established whether she was a psychotic or not, she was treated and cured by Gustav Jung and seems to have had an affair with him as well. She was introduced to Freud by Jung and became a Freudian psychoanalyst and contributor. She is credited with originating the concept of the death instinct which became an important part of Freud’s psychoanalytic theoretical structure.

She analyzed Piaget in Zurich before returning to Russia in 1923. She was encouraged by Freud to move to Moscow rather than Berlin and according to a personal communication from a niece she had the idea that she would “treat and cure Lenin.” Lenin died before she was given that opportunity. In 1924 she moved from Moscow to Rostov-on-Don where she remained until she and her two daughter were murdered by the Germans in 1942.

She trained, taught, or analyzed two members of the Russian Psychoanalytic Society, Alexander Luria and Lev Vigotsky, who were to become among the most important psychologists of the first half of the 20th Century. Moishe Wolf, a Russian Jewish psychiatrist who was analyzed by Karl Abraham in Britain returned to Russia in 1909 where he found considerable interest in psychoanalysis. He published several translations of Freud’s work which included Russian psychoanalytic terminology. He was President of the Russia Psychoanalytic Society which had been founded in 1910 from 1924 until 1927 when he left the Soviet Union and emigrated to Palestine. In Palestine he and Max Eitingen, also a Jew of Russian origin, founded psychoanalytic societies.

A strong supporter of psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union was Leo Trotsky. He had personal experience with psychoanalysis in Vienna in 1908 and sent his own daughter for psychoanalysis in Berlin in 1931. Trotsky tried to encourage psychoanalysts to integrate Freud and Marx and contribute to the construction of the new mass man. A side bar to the story of psychoanalysis in Russia is the relationship between Max Eitingen to the prominent Berlin psychoanalyst, one of Freud’s ring bearers and the founder of Berlin’s psychoanalytic free clinic (and his brother, or brother-in-law) General Nathan Eitingen who until 1952 was the head of Stalin’s counterintelligence and was responsible for several assassinations in the 30s including

the murder of Trotsky in Mexico. Max Eitingen personally financed the Berlin Psychoanalytic Society and some believe this money came from his family fur business which maintained connections with the Russia bolsheviks. The revival of psychoanalysis began in Russia in the 70s and gained momentum after glasnost in the eighties. Several important figures in this revival were Russian Jews including Aaron Etkind, and Aron Belkin.

In 1889 three editors of Freud's work were published with a total print-run of more than 500,000 copies the same year that the Psychoanalytic Association of the USSR was formed and renamed the Russian Psychoanalytic Association in 1990. There are also more psychoanalysts in St. Petersburg and Rostov-on-Don.

Psychoanalysis in Hungary, like Russia, has a long history. The Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society (the seventh local group) was founded in 1913 at the suggestion of Sander Ferenczi (Friedman) who was elected its first President. It was forced to dissolve in 1948 by the Communist regime but was revived in a study group in 1975 and was given full membership in the IPA in 1989.

During the next decade prominent psychoanalysts in the society included, Harnik, Herman, Melanie Klein, Sandor Rao, Roheim, Hollos, Alexander, and Pfeiffer. Ferenczi was the first professor of psychoanalysis in the world. At the outbreak of World War II twenty-five percent of the membership were Jewish including the Balints, Robert Bak, Edith Gyomordi and Andrew Peto. Herman, Pfeiffer, Hollos and Szekacs (Schoberger) remained in Hungary. But the list of emigre Hungarian psychoanalysts is a who's who of psychoanalysis and includes the Hungarian Jews Balint, Rado, Bak, the Ornstein, Alexander, Beres, Bela Gruenburger, Margaret Mahler, John Gedo, Melanie Klein and several others.

Lithuania's claim to a place in psychoanalytic history is the fact that Freud was a member (1930) of the Praesidia of Vilnovich was found in Vilna in 1975. The most prominent Polish emigre psychoanalyst was Herman Nunberg.