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Address of Welcome, Jerusalem Congress

Erich Gumbel 

Mr President, Friends and Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me tell you a few words about the beginnings of the Israel Psychoanalytic Society. Its roots go back to December 1906, when a 25-year-old medical student working under Bleuler at Burghölzli asked Freud for permission to visit him and to learn as much as possible about psychoanalysis. He was Max Eitingon. His attendance, in January 1907, at the Psychological Wednesday Society was the beginning of a profound relationship between the master and his ardent disciple, the creator of psychoanalysis and his enthusiastic follower, between colleague and friend, the great father and his most loyal and devoted son. For the rest of his life, psychoanalysis became Eitingon's vocation. Yet he had another affection: the love of his people and of the land of his forefathers. It was such that, in the summer of 1910, he visited Palestine. Freud wished him to have the most beautiful impressions in the remarkable mother-country of the religions. At that time Palestine offered no chance for psychoanalysis. Eitingon went back to Berlin to take up his illustrious career in the psychoanalytical movement. He became a member of the Inner Committee of the ring-bearers. He founded and directed the first Psychoanalytic Institute in Berlin. He was President of the I.P.A., controller of the Publishing House, and Chairman of the International Training Committee.

Then came Hitler, 1933. Psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts in Europe were exposed to persecution, destruction and annihilation. It was a time of utter shock and pain. Eitingon turned it into a new achievement, combining his two great affections and realizing his highest aspirations: to live in Jerusalem and to introduce psychoanalysis to Palestine.

In the autumn of 1933 six analysts met here and founded the Palestine Psychoanalytical Society. Four of them were originally from Russia and came via Berlin: Eitingon, who had lived in Germany from childhood; Moshe Wulff, 1925 President of the Russian Psychoanalytical Society, who left Russia two years later and worked at Simmel's psychoanalytic sanatorium; then Ilja Schalit and Anna Smelianski, the first secretary of the Berlin Institute. Half a year later in the spring of 1934, Eitingon opened the Palestine Institute for Psychoanalysis in Jerusalem. It was the eleventh Institute of the I.P.A. To illustrate the historical situation, I want to remind you that this happened two years before Anna Freud published *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* and five years before Hartmann's *Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation* appeared.

At once psychoanalysis was practised in three cities: Eitingon and other colleagues were in Jerusalem, Wulff and Smelianski in Tel-Aviv, Schalit in Haifa. We met monthly for a scientific meeting, held in German for many years. Psychoanalytic training was taken up immediately, of course in line with the conditions, at first in the old way of master-apprentice, the same teacher being training analyst, supervisor and seminar leader. Only later were courses in theory arranged. No wonder that Freud's tradition was upheld, in spirit and even in such detail as Eitingon giving his seminar on Wednesday evenings at his home. For many years he maintained the Institute on his own – later some of us took over – exactly as he had supported the Berlin Institute. Different as external conditions were, the Institute in Jerusalem became for a while the successor to the Berlin Institute. It had part of its library and furniture. And it was conducted in the same humane spirit. No patient who could

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possibly profit from psychoanalysis was ever sent away, no matter how overworked the candidates were and irrespective of whether the patient could pay or not. We even raised a small fund amongst ourselves, the Institute's Loan Fund, so that needy patients could have a daily lunch, as we considered an empty stomach not conducive to analysability. We had the most unusual and difficult problems with language. Some analyses were carried out in a language in which either the patient or the analyst, or both, were not fluent, and sometimes they used different languages. We gave lectures and seminars to physicians, school and kindergarten teachers and youth leaders. In short, psychoanalysis was solidly implanted and it soon flourished, often in the most adverse circumstances.

We certainly did not live in an ivory tower. But whatever we did, we did as psychoanalysts. We had no identity problems, doubts or crises. It was very hard. But we were happy, we were proud: we felt ourselves pioneers in a new country, for a new science. Psychoanalysis was our profession. Freud has hoped that the Hebrew University in Jerusalem would introduce psychoanalysis. But when the University declined, he wrote: 'It is good to know that Dr Eitingon is determined to take charge of psychoanalysis in Palestine independently of the University.' This indeed Eitingon did, never daunted. And we owe it first of all to him that psychoanalysis has stood on its own feet here for so long.

Since the beginnings, 44 years have passed. Tremendous political, social and cultural changes have occurred. We went through unrest and wars. Today you are the guests of the Israel Psychoanalytic Society. It has grown and expanded. Its new members were trained and graduated here. Analysts have taken up many positions. Soon there will be a Sigmund Freud Chair of Psychoanalysis at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. It seems a success story. Nevertheless I want to conclude on a note of caution. Here, as elsewhere, the identity of the psychoanalyst is somehow blurred and undermined. Here, as in most of our centres, the stability and continuance of the science of psychoanalysis is taken for granted. But I wonder whether correctly so. It seems to me that no less than at the beginning of the century, today too, psychoanalysis needs pioneers, people who are involved and willing to search and to work courageously and independently for a better understanding of humanity.

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