

Letter from Jerusalem Related *H. Shmuel Erlich* 

The Israel Psychoanalytic Society (IPS) is a thriving society. Its membership has more than doubled in the last decade and there is constant demand for the training it provides (about 12-15 new candidates admitted annually). Its members teach, publish, train and lecture, and a good number are active on the international scene. At the same time, the IPS has in the last two decades been a society torn from within by acute theoretical divisions and seemingly contradictory postures with far-reaching divergent clinical and therapeutic implications.

Historical, Social and Cultural Background

There are deep historical currents as well as emotional ties connecting the IPS with the colossal tragedy that befell European Jewry in the 20th century. In numerous ways this parallels and partakes of the history of the emergence and development of the State of Israel. Although the Zionist movement and Jewish settlement in the land (then Palestine, first under Ottoman, later under British Mandate rule) preceded the Holocaust by at least half a century, it is unquestionable that the persecution and destruction of Jewish life in Europe by Nazi Germany and its allies and events subsequent to World War II played a major role in accelerating the creation of Israel as an independent state, both from within and from without. From within, Jewish presence in the land was augmented by the massive arrival of refugees who had survived the war and death camps; and from without, the same tragic events contributed to the nearly universal readiness in 1948 to create a Jewish alongside a Palestinian state.

The psychoanalytic parallel to these events can be seen in the tender beginnings of interest in psychoanalysis of a small group in the 1920s and 1930s. This received a tremendous impetus with the arrival of Max Eitingon in 1933. Eitingon came to Palestine after he was forced by the rising Nazi tide in Germany to resign his membership in the Berlin Society and Institute, which he had created with Karl Abraham in 1920, and which served as prototype for subsequent models of psychoanalytic training. Several other European Jewish analysts arrived in Palestine at about the same time. In the spring of 1933 Eitingon founded the Palestine Psychoanalytic Society (later renamed the Israel Psychoanalytic Society) and in 1934 it was accepted into the IPA as a component society.¹

The history of Israel during the past 100 years is marked by massive waves of immigration, recurrent wars, stubborn survival and almost unbelievable growth and development. Very similar trials and tribulations characterized the course of the IPS. Max Eitingon brought with him the spirit and aura of the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute, including some of its furniture, pictures and library (which was largely his own). The analysts in

¹ For a detailed account of these early stages, see **Rolnik (2007)**.

the group were mostly German speaking and many had a German university education. Well into the 1940s German was the language in which formal and informal meetings and presentations were conducted. The Institute and the Society were often perceived as a *Berliner*-enclave or outpost within the larger society, dominated at the time by East European, mainly Russian and Polish Jewish immigrants. The psychoanalytic culture within the young Society tended towards safeguarding classical orthodoxy, unity and survival in the face of some rivalry and discord.

Subsequent social developments and new waves of immigration undermined this real or professed unity. Over the next decades, especially since the late 1960s, the Central European Germanic influence gradually gave way to other influences: American Ego Psychology was followed by British Object Relations, later replaced by Self Psychology and, still more recently, by the Relational, Intersubjective, French and Lacanian influences. Just as Israeli society became increasingly pluralistic, variegated and prone to internal splits, intense ethnic rivalries, persecutory relatedness and a sense of victimization, so did the IPS. Depending very much on one's point of view, the atmosphere within the Society could be described as an enriching diversity of opinions and approaches, or as hopeless schisms between equally fundamentalist views of the nature of man and of psychoanalysis. The overt and covert differences are not merely theoretical, however: they have real impact on the daily life in the Society and, in particular, affect its training enterprise, which I will describe shortly.

At present there are very slow, partial and painstaking attempts to deal with these schisms. An expression of this development, as well as a possible contribution to it, is the appearance of more or less structured groupings. A number of 'schools' have emerged which offer psychoanalytically-oriented instruction, training and/or study outside the Society, for example: Self Psychological, Winnicottian, Primitive States, Relational, etc. Within the IPS there are several study groups, focusing, for example, on Freud, Klein or Bion. A recently formed Group for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis has the aim of pursuing the study and exploration of Freudian and Kleinian approaches. On one hand, these organized groups and 'schools' express, and possibly further entrench, the deep theoretical and clinical splits and differences that are the hallmark of the IPS at present. On the other hand, they play a positive role in serving as a 'home' and 'psychic retreat' for people of similar orientation and thus provide relief from the strain of constant controversy and divergence. A further byproduct of these self-defined groups may perhaps be a slowly emergent readiness to debate more openly and meet the 'other', rather than avoid and project, but the word is not out as yet on these developments.

As an aftermath of the Holocaust there was an influx of survivors of death camps, forced labor and other concentration camps, and others who survived by escaping, hiding or joining partisan groups. This tremendously varied, yet on the whole deeply traumatized population formed a large and decisive grouping within Israeli society in all walks of life. The overriding desire and motivation of most of them were to start new families and a new life. Often there was no capacity to deal with the past and open the wounds

of trauma (coupled with a parallel reluctance in the larger society to address it). Their traumatization presented Israeli mental health professional with a real challenge — to understand their pathology, symptoms and adaptation in ways that reached beyond well-worn concepts and to offer help and therapeutic understanding with newly fashioned tools. These efforts extended beyond the first generation to the second generation of offspring, and even currently to the third generation. A number of Israeli psychoanalysts were leaders in expanding the understanding and treatment of the residues of transgenerational post-Holocaust traumatization.²

The IPS and its Institute

The last decade has seen a remarkable growth of the IPS: it now has nearly 200 members and about 100 candidates. This rapid growth and the corresponding change from a small, family-like group to a large and partially anonymous community has brought with it new dilemmas.

The IPS offers psychoanalytic training through the Max Eitingon Psychoanalytic Institute, which belongs to the Society and is operated by it through an elected Education Committee. As with all other committees, only the chair must be a Training Analyst, and TAs, full members and associate members serve with full equality. A former structure, in which there was a separately elected Institute Director and Committee, was abolished about 20 years ago in the face of personal clashes and duplication of effort. Admission to the Institute is based on interviews and committee evaluation. The professional prerequisites for admission are university training and licensure in one of the three mental health professions: psychiatry, clinical psychology and clinical social work. The number of medical applicants has drastically declined in recent years, and most candidates are psychologists and, increasingly, social workers. Typically they have an average age around 45. Training follows the Eitingon Model: three supervised cases are required (one of which may be a child or adolescent); the curriculum spans a base in Freud's writings as well as later developments and includes clinical and theoretical seminars; and a personal analysis is required. At least one year of analysis is a prerequisite to admission; and once the candidate starts to conduct analyses s/he need to be in analysis with a Training Analyst during the period of clinical training.

The lines of demarcation between Institute and Society are often fuzzy. Major decisions (e.g. policy changes regarding selection, admission and training) are brought before the General Assembly of the Society, in which all have an equal vote. This may lead to the Education Committee being uncertain about its mandate and authority. A pertinent illustration of this dynamic is the evolution of the current mode of appointment of Training Analysts.

Training Analyst Appointment

Like most societies in the Eitingon Model, the IPS has always appointed TAs. For many years the appointment was done exclusively by the

² See, for example, **Gampel (2005)**, **Klein (2003)** and **Kogan (1995)**.

Education Committee, which was composed only of TAs. In the face of expanding demands and the dearth of available TAs, and a rebellion against the concentration of power in the Education Committee, a process of structural change was begun in the late 1980s, the first step of which was to remove the appointment of new TAs from the Education Committee. Some of its other functions were subsequently also removed, notably the Admissions Committee (the newly formed committees are not part of the Education Committee; they are independently elected and responsible to the Society's General Assembly). After a heated debate that lasted over a decade and trying out various solutions, a compromise was reached which has since become the practice: the appointment of a TA is contingent only upon meeting the formal minimal requirements stated in the by-laws, i.e. full membership; five years of postgraduate experience in which at least three analytic cases were simultaneously treated; interest in and contribution to psychoanalysis; and good ethical standing. The majority feeling was that meeting these requirements provides a sufficient indication of merit, and that any other or further attempt to evaluate merit is bound to be subjective and prone to bias, and hence best avoided.³

The consequences of these developments and their implementation are instructive. The appointment of new TAs is contingent on a self-declaration enumerating how one meets the above standards, which is circulated to the Society and, if there are no objections, takes effect after 30 days. Quite naturally, there has been a steady increase in the number of TAs and their proportion within the Society, about 50%, is by far the highest among European IPA societies. In actuality, however, the number of active TAs (with candidates in analysis or supervision) is around 25%, which is roughly the same as in many other countries. The apparent implication is that the actual appointment of TAs has shifted from the Society to the candidates.

The Evaluation of Candidates

The inability or reluctance to evaluate analysts' merit in order to become TAs has had its serious parallel in the sphere of training. For nearly two decades the evaluation of the progress of candidates by the Education Committee has all but stopped. On two occasions in which the Education Committee decided to terminate the studies of candidates who had been brought up on ethical charges for abusive (non-sexual) non-psychoanalytic practices, confirmed by the Ethics Committee, the Society was in an uproar and on the verge of splitting. Charges of persecution and returning to 'the dark era' of paranoia and abuse of power were laid against the Education Committee, and some members heralded the behavior of one of the candidates as heroic, groundbreaking and worthy of emulation. The tenor and quality of such attacks clearly stem from and reflect the acute theoretical divisions. These divisions and the attendant fears of criticism and dismissal of one's psychoanalytic work made it nearly impossible to conduct any evaluation of candidates' progress, which was immediately regarded as potentially persecutory. It is

³ For an account of these developments, see **Berman (2004)**.

evident that at least a portion of the membership harbors strong feelings of persecution and suspects any kind of central authority.

More recently, there have been attempts at establishing discourse, dialogue and a modicum of mutual respect. The Education Committee was able to insist on clarifying certain procedural issues which had been nebulous, and is cautiously moving ahead with a plan to initiate some tracking of the candidate's progress through structured meetings of his/her supervisors. The Scientific Committee initiated a number of society-wide meetings in which the disagreements and conflicts were the theme. As I said above, I believe these moves may have been enhanced by the emergence of the various self-defined groups within the IPS, which provide a measure of security in adopting a specific identity, and counteract the prevailing feeling of isolation and loneliness.

The IPS and its Environment

The IPS and its Psychoanalytic Institute were founded in Jerusalem, which for many years was the stronghold of psychoanalysis, having by far the greatest number of psychoanalysts and candidates. This has contributed to the mistaken impression that it is the 'Jerusalem Institute'. In fact, the Society and Institute, as their name indicates, serve the entire country of Israel. As psychoanalysis developed in Tel Aviv and Haifa, the center of gravity gradually shifted. For many years now, one semester of classes takes place in Tel Aviv and the other in Jerusalem, to accommodate candidates from outlying areas. The shift is reflective of the major demographic changes that took place in population, economics and cultural milieu among the three major cities in Israel.

The hegemony of the IPS was seriously challenged 10 years ago when the Tel Aviv Institute of Contemporary Psychoanalysis was founded with the active support of a group of IPS members. The establishment of this institute fed into the already existing divisions within the IPS, mainly because it did not follow the route of seeking IPA study group status, and because its standards of training are well below those of the IPS. Several debates in the IPS did not result in the adoption of a formal stance, probably because of the fear of a split. Some of those who supported the new institute and were active in it have since left, but a number of IPS TAs and office-holders still hold training roles in the Tel Aviv Institute, while others in the Society regard this as a serious breach and conflict of interest. Interestingly, despite initial fears of what the competition might do, the rate of applications and admissions to the IPS Institute has not decreased.

Like many psychoanalytic societies, the IPS is often accused of being inwardly directed and not sufficiently concerned with its social and cultural environment. At least in some respects, this is inaccurate. In its early days, an IPS free kitchen offered food to the needy, affected by the dire conditions at the time. And like its Berlin ancestor, an ambulatory clinic offered low cost psychoanalytic treatment. In the 1960s the IPS was the first to offer a three-year course in psychoanalytic psychotherapy to mental health practitioners in the field who were often without such instruction. This course still runs today and is aimed at young practitioners. Alongside it two more

courses have emerged, directed at experienced therapists and others with interest, but little or no acquaintance with psychoanalytic thinking and treatment. IPS members are sought-after teachers in the several postgraduate psychotherapy programs that have sprung up around the country.

On at least two occasions in which Israel was involved in war or faced an Intifada the IPS held discussions that addressed the dilemma of taking an open political stance or engaging in protest movements with other mental health professionals. The discussions were lively and searching and, although no unified position was reached, it seemed to be the majority stance that, while it was possible to act as individual citizens, as a psychoanalyst one could not take a political position.

A number of IPS members have indeed acted as individuals. Some have worked with Palestinians in the Gaza strip, others with Israelis exiled from their homes when the Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt. A number of IPS analysts, in collaboration with German colleagues, founded a series of Group Relations Conferences that dealt with the residual impact of the Holocaust on Germans and Israelis. This activity, which received the steady support and sponsorship of the IPS as well as of two German psychoanalytic societies, has lasted over 17 years and gradually expanded to include Diaspora Jews, Affected Others and, more recently, Palestinians.⁴

In addition, the IPS sponsors a series of book publications on psychoanalysis, including new and badly needed translations of Freud's writings and other leading contemporary analysts.

The IPS and the University

Until almost the mid-1980s IPS members were directors of most mental hospitals and held professorial positions in departments of psychiatry. The situation reversed itself with the swing towards biological psychiatry: nowadays there are precious few psychiatric applicants, and a number of medical doctors who were members resigned from the IPS. A handful of psychologist members hold professorial appointments in the leading universities in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa.

The most significant development in this area took place when the Sigmund Freud Chair in Psychoanalysis was established at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1977 as a gift from the IPA. This was soon followed by the creation of the Freud Center for Psychoanalytic Study and Research, headed by the Freud Professor until **2005**, when the university disbanded the association between Chair and Center. The Freud Chair was occupied for varying periods by several leading psychoanalysts from Israel and abroad. The Chair achieved university-wide presence and international prestige by sponsoring an impressive number of psychoanalytic doctoral dissertations and several successful international conferences. The IPS was represented on the search committee for the Chair, but the relationship between the Chair and the IPS was never formalized, each Freud Professor teaching and contributing to the IPS as he was inclined.

⁴ For an account of these conferences, see Erlich, Erlich-Ginor and Beland (**2009**).

The Freud Center in collaboration with IPS sponsored a number of international conferences. To mention but a few: *Projection, Introjection, and Projective Identification* (1984); *In the Best Interest of the Child: Contemporary Perspectives* (1996); *Freud at the Threshold of the 21st Century* (1999); *The Secular and the Sacred in the Beginning of This Century: This Unbelievable Need To Believe* (with Diderot Paris-7 University, 2006); *The Missing Voice: The Feminine Side of the Oedipal Triangle* (2008).

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