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Psychoanalysis and the Soviet Secret Police: Another Look at the Eitingon Controversy

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Abstract. This article provides a hypothetical damage assessment based on the assumption that Dr. Max Eitingon, a significant early member of the international psychoanalytic movement, was also a Soviet intelligence operative.

After the 1988 publication of John Dziak's *Chekisty: A history of the KGB*, a controversy erupted as to whether Max Eitingon, a significant early member of the international psychoanalytic movement, may also have been a member of a Soviet secret police network and aided in the 1937 (1) assassination of Ignace Reiss, a defector from the Soviet secret police; (2) kidnapping of Yevgeni Karlovich Miller, a White Russian general, from the streets of Paris; and (3) secret trial that resulted in the executions of--among others--the Soviet chief army commissar and eight generals. Although Dziak's book presents, at most, circumstantial inference to the above, other writings--viz., that of Stephen Schwartz (1988)--were frankly sensational. Then again, suspicion as to Eitingon's relationship with the Soviet secret police was nothing new. According to Robert Conquest (1988), it had been discussed at least since 1938.

The public controversy stemming from Dziak's book--and, more strongly, Schwartz's article--played itself out in the pages of the *The New York Times Book Review* and in two articles (April 14 and June 16, 1988) by Theodore Draper in *The New York Review of Books*. The main points of contention centered on (1) the presence, absence, and/or degree of familial relationship between Max Eitingon and Leonid Eitingon, a high-level, Soviet secret service operative often credited with the key planning role in the assassination of Leon Trotsky; (2) how a stellar member of a stellar intellectual movement could possibly be involved in such unsavory doings; and (3) the criteria for evidence of innocence and guilt.

The present article posits that a relationship between Max Eitingon and the Soviet secret police--even one independent of directly supporting kidnapping, assassination, and execution--might well have had significant intelligence collection benefits to the Soviets.

Eitingon had a very close and trusting relationship with Sigmund Freud according to Freud's biographer and chronicler of the psychoanalytic movement, Ernest Jones (1955). From Jones, we learn that Freud wrote Eitingon a letter in 1913 including the sentence: "You were the first to reach the lonely one and will be the last to leave" (p. 32). Also, "he [Eitingon] was of invaluable material assistance to Freud's undertakings..." (p. 161) and "Freud could be confident in retaining his [Eitingon's] friendship in any circumstances" (p. 161). An inference needing rigorous exploration would be that Freud was ripe for cultivation at some point as an unwitting agent of influence or source of information. As far back as before the establishment of the Soviet Union, Freud was already providing opinions on political and military conflict to Eitingon (pp. 187-188). In a different vein, the intellectual movements attempting to integrate psychoanalysis with Marxism later enjoyed quite a vogue at elite universities. And cultivation of prominent individuals with or without important technical knowledge constituted a significant Soviet effort. As a contrast to the possibility with Freud, note Margarita Konenkova's relationship with Albert Einstein (Pogrebin, 1998).

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More importantly, the very essence of psychoanalytic therapy is to induce patients and training analysts to say whatever comes into their heads--attempting as well as possible to evade self-censorship--while the analyst takes notes. What amazing intelligence collection potential! And Dr. Eitingon's intelligence role could have been much more significant than just a single analyst collecting on those who lay on the couch. As a member of the Wednesday Evening Society, the forerunner of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, he was part of one of the earliest nuclei of those who determined how therapy was to be implemented. He was later elected and twice reelected to the presidency of the International Psychoanalytic Society and also headed the International Training Commission. Even if--as others have reported--he was not a significant contributor to the growing psychoanalytic body of knowledge, he, perhaps more than anyone else, was responsible for the creation of training institutes throughout the world and the selection criteria for analysts. Eitingon--in all probability--had a tremendous amount to do with where institutes would be placed, which would be sanctioned, and who could become analysts with the politically correct Freudian imprimatur. The potential for an international network of intelligence collection and transmission speaks for itself. (As but one example, high-level military medical authorities from Austria, Hungary, and Germany became interested as far back as 1918 in setting up psychoanalytic clinics to treat so-called war neuroses (p. 198).)

Dr. Eitingon's motivation? Far be it from IBPP to venture forth with psychosexual premise. It may suffice to posit his own socialist foundations of Zionism that certainly predated his own move to Palestine, as well as the supporting and tortuous self-psychological machinations so well described by Koestler in *Darkness at Noon*. IBPP encourages scholars to follow congruent lines of investigation. (See Conquest, R. (July 3, 1988). *Max Eitingon: Another view*. *The New York Times Book Review*, p. 22; Dziak, J.J. (1988). *Chekisty: A history of the KGB*. D.C. Heath & Co.; Gay, P. (March 6, 1988). *Stalin's killerati*. *The New York Times Book Review*, p. 2; Jones, E. (1955). *The life and work of Sigmund Freud Vol. 2*. NY: Basic Books; Koestler, A. (1941). *Darkness at noon*. Macmillan; Max Eitingon: *Further views*. (September 11, 1988). *The New York Times Book Review*, p. 37; Pogrebin, R. (June 1, 1998). *Love letters by Einstein at auction*. *The New York Times*, p. A10; Schwartz, S. (January 24, 1988). *Intellectuals and assassins-Annals of Stalin's killerati*. *The New York Times Book Review*, p. 3; *Stalin's killerati*. (March 6, 1988). *The New York Times Book Review*, p. 33.)(Keywords: Eitingon, Intelligence, Psychoanalysis, Soviet Union.)