

LYDIA SICHER (1890-1962)

PAUL BRODSKY

Hollywood, California

This was Lydia Sicher: to do, to cooperate, to create; to be. This was so much her inner self, that the thought of "not to be" simply did not exist for her at any time, at any turn in her life. Hers was a constant looking ahead, a moving steadily towards her goal. Her mind flowed like a stream towards the distant goal, sometimes haltingly, but never faltering, and in that flowing, obstacles became challenges which had to be overcome. That goal was sharp and clearly conceived: dedication to the progress of humanity; her style of life: accepting actively her share of the responsibility for that progress in all its aspects.

Consequently, for her none of these aspects could not be taken seriously, from the seemingly trivial problems in the daily lives of her friends or patients, to the larger social questions on a local, national, or worldwide level and the broad issues arising from the evolution of human society. She felt herself as part, and she was part of that human society; therefore she was always there where help was needed, wherever a human being was needed to do whatever had to be done; she was there without fail and with the true empathy of man for man.

And then there was her courage. That courage which would not permit her to close her eyes to her own shortcomings and handicaps, nor permit her to offer them as alibies for relenting in her iron-willed task-centeredness. She knew not sacrifice, but because of her constant striving for the fullest realization of her potential, she was serene and humble.

This was Lydia Sicher: a human being, who lived the meaning of life to be a link between the past, the present, and the future generations, and who thus was one of the few who are allowed to experience themselves fully as part of the whole.

Dr. Sicher died of a respiratory ailment on April 2, 1962, in Los Angeles. She is survived by her husband, Dr. Harry Sicher, professor of anatomy, Loyola University, Chicago.

She was born Lydia Back, in Vienna on December 19, 1890, youngest of three children. Her family provided the esthetic and cultural atmosphere of the Vienna of those days, which accounted to a large extent for the subsequent high achievements of the children in the fields of art, science, and journalism. After having finished the gymnasium in 1910, Lydia entered the medical school of the University of Vienna from which she graduated in 1916. At the outbreak of the

first World War she had volunteered for military service. Together with her husband, then professor of anatomy at the University of Vienna, she served with the Austrian army in Bosnia and Montenegro. Shortly after the end of the war Dr. Sicher started to work for her Ph. D. degree, which she obtained in 1922. For six years she worked in the department of psychiatry and neurology of the University of Vienna under professor Wagner-Jauregg, and established herself as psychiatrist in private practice.

As a psychiatrist Dr. Sicher first followed closely the developments of the psychoanalysis of Freud and his circle. She met Dr. Adler for the first time in 1919 in a consultation over one of her private cases. She joined the Society for Individual Psychology in 1923, and soon became a prominent member. Dr. Adler, recognizing her unusual personal and professional qualities, asked her to become his assistant at the Mariahilfer Hospital clinic for nervous diseases, the first Individual Psychology clinic. When he left for the United States in 1929 Dr. Adler made her his successor as the head of this clinic as well as of the Viennese Society for Individual Psychology. During these years Dr. Sicher was also teaching and lecturing not only in her native country but all over Europe.

In 1938 the Sichers left Austria for the United States. However, Dr. Lydia was seriously injured in a car accident while visiting friends in England, thereby delaying her arrival in America for nearly one year. Even before she was fully recovered, she landed at New York and proceeded to Utah to become consulting psychologist for the Family Service Society in Salt Lake City and for the juvenile court in Ogden. In 1941 she made Los Angeles her permanent residence.

In Los Angeles Dr. Sicher established herself as an Adlerian psychologist and soon organized the first Adlerian circle on the West Coast. In 1948 she initiated the formation of the Institute for Individual Psychology, a lay organization, with the primary purpose of establishing the Alfred Adler Counseling Center, a service for the low income group of the community. The Institute also arranged classes for parents and teachers, and public lectures. Dr. Sicher was the chairman of its professional advisory committee. A few years later the Alfred Adler Society of Los Angeles was formed as an organization of professionals to hold training courses in Adlerian counseling techniques for physicians and psychologists, and Dr. Sicher was its first chairman. She also served as assistant clinical psychiatrist with the Los Angeles Psychiatric Service and as staff member of the psychiatric outpatient department of the Cedars of Lebanon Hospital.

As had been the case in Europe, she was in great demand as a lecturer and teacher due to her clearness of thought and eloquence of speech. She was a past president of the American Society of Adlerian Psychology and a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Individual Psychology*.

The proper evaluation of Dr. Sicher's impact upon Individual Psychology, and, through it, upon psychiatry and psychology in general, must be left to the combined efforts of her associates here and abroad.

TO LYDIA

It was not fair;
 this little breath of air
 all that was needed from the universe
 to keep it glowing
 and keep it going
 this candle shining with serenity
 and kindling lights of pure humanity,
 that this had been denied . . .
 this little breath of air.
 Life was not fair.

It was not fair
 to stop this heart of hers
 from reaching down into the inexhaustive depth
 of readiness to give all of herself, and all that was her own,
 and willingness for taking in you, me and all
 into her strength—infusing friendship
 by being there, and always being there . . .
 Life was not fair.

We all are more;
 we all, who knew her well, and whom she knew so well;
 and we, who were allowed to be included in her loyalty,
 who were allowed to call ourselves her friends.
 Mankind is more
 through what she left behind in word and deed and spirit,
 as she continued on and on unflinchingly
 and full of courage . . .
 on to the last, the very last of breath.
Her life was fair.

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