

DANICA DEUTSCH AT EIGHTY

This past summer Danica Deutsch, executive director of the Alfred Adler Mental Hygiene Clinic, New York, completed her 80th year of zestful living—her 52nd year of devoted commitment to the cause of Individual Psychology and of close association with the Adler family. The occasion was celebrated most festively at the International Congress of Individual Psychology when she was taken completely by surprise, congratulated, presented with a bouquet, and toasted. On behalf of her many pupils, clients, colleagues, friends, and relatives she was given an emerald- and diamond-studded gold broche in the shape of an owl, since she likes to call herself, as others do, a wise old owl.

Mrs. Deutsch was born in 1890 in Sarajevo, Bosnia (then a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, now in Jugoslavia). Her story in her own words follows:

* * *

At that time Bosnia was a “melting thimble” of many different nationalities and religions. So, I had the privilege of witnessing how people with diverse cultural backgrounds lived and raised their families—Moslems, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, and Greek Orthodox. Street signs were in three letterings: Arabic, Cyrilitza, and Latin. Poles were employed in the courts, Hungarians in the military, Croats and Serbs in the educational system. The only non-participants were the Moslem girls who lived in hiding in the nearby hills, behind veils, taught only housework and needlework. Their houses were surrounded by walls that contained a tiny window known as an *ashikluk* (flirting window). The father arranged their marriage, and the prospective couple had to content themselves with a peek at each other through this window. Moslem men were permitted to have several wives.

Although women of Western cultures were still under the influence of the Victorian tradition, I was especially fortunate in that my mother had an emancipated outlook. Born in Zagreb, Croatia, she was the only one among the girls, the youngest among two brothers and seven sisters, who studied for a profession, that of teacher. She was one of the first women in Sarajevo, where she settled, to insist

that her daughters have an education for a profession in order to be able to contribute to the support of the family when necessary.

As the oldest of five children—three of them girls—I was the pace-setter in every area, whether it was sports, education, or social events. I was soon entrusted with the responsibility for the others, as my mother helped my father in his business.

After high school I was sent to a convent school to begin my teacher training, as girls in Bosnia had not other opportunity for higher education. In 1909 I went to a special school in Vienna to study for my certificate as a language teacher. Here I met a group of students who, like most intellectuals at the time, took courses with Freud at the University. After taking my examination, I returned to Sarajevo where I started teaching. But I remained in touch with this group of students who sent me psychoanalytic literature. Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* was a revelation to me. However, I disagreed with his subsequent writings, particularly with his concept of the inherent inferiority of women, and his dream interpretation with its emphasis on sex symbolism.

In the summer of 1911 I went to the University of Geneva for intensive courses in French and psychology. On my return home, I stopped off in Vienna. In the course of animated discussions about Freud, pro and con, Leonhard Deutsch and I became engaged. In 1912 we were married and I moved to Vienna.

The first group of people I met in Vienna was the circle around Alfred Adler, in his home. I was most impressed by the informality of the discussions which provided sharp contrast to the stiffness of scientific meetings customary at that time. Adler's outstanding characteristic was the benevolence with which he considered every idea expressed. No one was ever afraid that he might be ridiculed or belittled for his point of view. Adler would look directly at the speaker, listening intently to his comments and make an immediate response. Then, his entire attention would be centered on the next discussant. His wife, Raissa, who had come from Russia as a young student, was always present, and served tea. In her warm and charming way, she saw to it that everyone felt comfortable. The evenings were marked by the intellectual brilliance of the members of the circle who, in hours of discussion and dialogue helped evolve the theoretical foundation of Adlerian psychology.

The discussion groups were interrupted by World War I in 1914, when Adler and others entered military service. After the war in

1918, meetings were resumed. Monthly lectures for the public, courses at the Pedagogical Institute, and training in Individual Psychology by Adler and his co-workers were initiated. Later, examinations were introduced for which certificates were awarded. A growing number of study groups and guidance centers in the schools were formed.

My own individual activities included starting weekly discussion groups for mothers, held in a women's club. Upon the initiative of my daughters, I also started the first youth group, called, "Knowing Yourself and Others."

After Hitler's occupation of Austria, March 11, 1938, my family and I had only one goal: to leave and to find another haven. After some detours, my husband and I arrived in the United States. We settled in New York where we resumed all our previous Adlerian activities. I started as a counselor in a nursery school. My husband continued to teach and apply Adlerian psychology to music education. We found Americans who had studied with Adler during his residence in this country, and together with other emigres, including Drs. Alexandra and Kurt Adler, established public lectures under the auspices of the newly found Individual Psychology Association of New York.

* * *

This far Mrs. Deutsch has been telling her story, and here we take it up. In 1932, in Vienna, she had begun to publish the *Mitteilungsblatt für Individualpsychologische Veranstaltungen*, the first Individual Psychology newsletter. This had become necessary for keeping Adlerians informed about their rapidly multiplying activities. The newsletter reported speaking engagements; gave excellent summaries of lectures, the programs of the Individual Psychology Society's weekly meetings in Vienna; the contents of Adler's journal, *Internationale Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie*; the clinics at which Adlerian psychiatrists practiced; the various courses—private, public, in connection with schools, for beginners, advanced, in English, etc.; the various study groups, boarding schools, homes, kindergartens, and child guidance centers of which there were 27 in Vienna at the time. This newsletter had to cease publication in its second year because of political events, but it is to this day a model which other newsletters could well emulate.

In New York, Mrs. Deutsch started in 1948 what was eventually

to become the Alfred Adler Mental Hygiene Clinic. "It modestly opened its doors, in a nursery school, with an administrative staff of one, one desk, one typewriter, and one filing cabinet, as a consultation center planned for community service to low-income groups. Two years later it moved into its present location, 333 Central Park West, and in 1954 it became licensed as a clinic. It has been growing in the service it renders every since." This now includes individual psychotherapy; group therapy for mothers, married couples, adolescents, children, college students; family therapy; social clubs, music, art, physical education, and dance therapy; leading discussion groups in a near-by community center; demonstrations of child guidance in the public schools; and a remedial reading program. Today the clinic is about to move to its own building, a gracious five-story former private house at 18 West 86th Street.

Mrs. Deutsch has written many articles and book reviews, several of which have appeared in this *Journal*. One paper, in particular, set forth her concept of "family life style," an original contribution which is at the same time a further development of Adlerian theory and practice. She has co-edited, with Dr. Kurt Adler, the volume, *Essays in Individual Psychology: Contemporary Application of Alfred Adler's Theories* (Grove Press, 1959). She belongs to innumerable professional organizations whose meetings she loyally attends, representing the Adlerian approach whenever she can. She has served on the board of directors of the American Society of Adlerian Psychology.

Mrs. Deutsch has two married daughters, Mia H. Glazer, a photographer, and Ruth E. Ronall, a social worker who practices Adlerian psychotherapy. She has four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Regarding the honors tendered her on the occasion of the International Congress banquet, Mrs. Deutsch considers it the greatest of all possible tributes that Alexandra and Kurt Adler included her in the celebration of their father's centenary. And she feels it the highest honor of all, for which she is ever grateful, "that one lets me continue to work."

— R. R. A.