



## Within Wars and Revolutions: Helena Antipoff activities in the Bolshevik Russia (1917-1924)<sup>1</sup>

Entre guerras e revoluções: Atividades de Helena Antipoff na Rússia bolchevique (1917-1924)

Entre guerras y revoluciones: Actividades de Helena Antipoff en la Rusia bolchevique (1917-1924)

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### Abstract

The article deals with the professional career of the Russian psychologist Helena Antipoff (1892-1974) in the Soviet Russia, between 1917 and 1924, after returning from her educational stay in Paris and Geneva, and before migrating to Brazil in 1929. During the brief Soviet period, Helena was a witness and an active participant in the grandiose and dramatic changes of the country. Her work, as well as the work of other Russian scientists who migrated to other countries during the years of war and social revolution, is now being extensively studied, and new knowledge reverse some established perceptions and stereotypes about the history of psychology in Russia. Antipoff start-up in the Russian psychological and educational communities was linked to the intensive scientific and social activities of the St. Petersburg school of scientists and psychologists at this period – Vladimir M. Bekhterev (1857-1927), Alexander F. Lazursky (1874-1917), Alexander P. Nechaev (1870-1948), Mikhail Y. Basov (1892-1931), Adrian S. Griboedov (1875-1948) and others. Helena's professional self-realization in this six-year Russian period was developed in real hot spots of practical psychological problems of that time for the country (study of children in conditions of devastation, hunger and orphanhood; testing of enhancement/reduction of child intelligence in conditions of social cataclysm and war; comparison of intellectual abilities of children of different social groups and in different countries; social and psychological diagnostics and distribution of "street children" to different types of care and educational institutions).

**Key-words:** Helena Antipoff. Soviet education. Women in Science. Special Education.

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## Resumo

O artigo trata da trajetória profissional da psicóloga russa Helena Antipoff (1892-1974) na Rússia Soviética, entre 1917 e 1924, após retornar de sua estada educacional em Paris e Genebra, e antes de migrar para o Brasil em 1929. Durante o breve período soviético, Helena foi testemunha e participante ativa nas grandiosas e dramáticas mudanças do país. Seu trabalho, assim como o trabalho de outros cientistas russos que migraram para outros países durante os anos de guerra e revolução social, agora está sendo amplamente estudado, e novos conhecimentos invertem algumas percepções e estereótipos estabelecidos sobre a história da psicologia na Rússia. O trabalho inicial de Antipoff nas comunidades psicológicas e educacionais russas estava ligado às intensas atividades científicas e sociais da escola de cientistas e psicólogos de São Petersburgo no período – Vladimir M. Bekhterev (1857-1927), Alexander F. Lazursky (1874 -1917), Alexander P. Nechaev (1870-1948), Mikhail Y. Basov (1892-1931), Adrian S. Griboedov (1875-1948) e outros. O trabalho profissional realizado por Helena nesse período de seis anos na Rússia focalizou áreas de intervenção sobre problemas psicológicos práticos da época entre as mais relevantes para o país (estudo de crianças em condições de devastação, fome e orfandade; testes de nível mental visando evidenciar aumento ou redução de inteligência em condições de cataclismo social e guerra; comparação das habilidades intelectuais de crianças de diferentes grupos sociais e vivendo em diferentes países; diagnósticos sociais e psicológicos e distribuição de “meninos de rua” para diferentes tipos de instituições de atendimento e educação).

**Palavras-chave:** Helena Antipoff. Educação soviética. Mulheres na ciência. Educação Especial.

## Resumen

El artículo aborda la trayectoria profesional de la psicóloga rusa Helena Antipoff (1892-1974) en la Rusia soviética, entre 1917 y 1924, luego de regresar de su estancia educativa en París y Ginebra, y antes de emigrar a Brasil en 1929. Durante el breve período en Unión Soviética, Helena fue testigo y participante activa de los cambios grandiosos y dramáticos en el país. Su trabajo, como el de otros científicos rusos que emigraron a otros países durante los años de la guerra y de la revolución social, ahora está siendo ampliamente estudiado y los nuevos conocimientos revierten algunas percepciones y estereotipos establecidos sobre la historia de la psicología en Rusia. Los primeros trabajos de Antipoff en las comunidades psicológicas y educativas rusas estuvieron vinculados a las intensas actividades científicas y sociales de la escuela de científicos y psicólogos de San Petersburgo en este período: Vladimir M. Bekhterev (1857-1927), Alexander F. Lazursky (1874 -1917), Alexander P. Nechaev (1870-1948), Mikhail Y. Basov (1892-1931), Adrian S. Griboedov (1875-1948) y otros. La realización profesional de Helena en este sexenio en Rusia se desarrolló en focos reales de problemas psicológicos prácticos para el país de la época (estudio de niños en condiciones de devastación, hambre y orfandad; pruebas de nivel mental evidenciando aumento o reducción de la inteligencia en condiciones de cataclismo y guerra; comparación de capacidades intelectuales de niños de diferentes grupos sociales y en diferentes países; diagnósticos sociales y psicológicos y distribución relevante de “niños de la calle” a diferentes tipos de instituciones de cuidado y educación).

**Palabras clave:** Helena Antipoff. educación soviética. Mujeres en la ciencia. Educación Especial.

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Helena Antipoff (1892-1974) - a distinguished Swiss-Brazilian psychologist, educator and a human rights activist started her career – both as a researcher and as a professional in the fields of psychology and education – in her birthcountry Russia. The city of Petrograd, former capital of the Russian Empire, and the city of Viatka in a distant province – these loci marked not only the geographical shift of the young scholar positions but reflected its great social dimension deeply connected with the 1917 Russian revolution and its influence on the individual trajectories, experiences of scholars and educators and their professional agendas. Helena Antipoff personal and professional activities as a pedologist are very important in these perspectives (Campos, 2012).

Antipoff spent about 7 years in the Bolshevik Russia (1917-1924). Until now, none of her biographers could present a detailed account of her professional life during this period. It was silently believed that it was filled with the struggle for existence during the Civil War and changes of the political regimes. Meanwhile, these years were focused on the quest for “experimental work” and played a significant role in the development of Antipoff's psychological and pedagogical views and practices.

New biographical data from Russian archives and local press shed an important light on the formation of Antipoff as a practical psychologist and educator. It partly explains why in contrast to many of her compatriots and colleagues who shared a view that a just social order would make possible a new human nature – a New Man – Antipoff suggested a much more complicated and complex concept of "environment" including two factors - biological and educational.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Russian science was a variant of the European science, and its development paralleled developments elsewhere in Europe. These parallels were reinforced by a steady flow of people and ideas: upon completion of their university studies, many Russian scientists spent several years abroad, bringing back and re-creating on Russian soil some of the scientific organizations and practices they had experienced in Europe (Krementsov, 1997). As in Germany, the major institutional base of Russian science was a system of state universities and specialized educational institutions. By World War I, the Russian Empire had 10 universities and over 80 other higher educational institutions. A number of scientists took steps toward "big science": Vladimir Bekhterev's Psycho-Neurological Institute (created in 1908), Georgii Chelpanov's Institute of Experimental Psychology (established in 1912), were all designed to advance their respective fields on a wide scale and were created under private patronage.

The first decade of the XX century was a time of the birth of the scientific knowledge about the child and childhood in Russia, the birth of the domestic ideas in the experimental psychology and pedagogics, pedology, psychoanalysis, free education, the period of the awakening interest in the mental life of the child. Before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 the study of the child, or pedology, developed in Russia as a wide public and professional movement, including medical doctors, educators, psychologists, philosophers, etc. – so named Russian *intelligentsia* which was deeply involved in the process of modernization of the Russian Empire (Byford, 2008).

The majority of the Russian scientific community, including psychologists and educators, enthusiastically supported the February 1917 Revolution, which dethroned Czar Nicholas II and created a liberal Provisional Government to ensure Russia's transition to democratic rule. The Bolsheviks *coup d'état* in Petrograd on October 25, 1917, carried out and

declared the establishment of a socialist republic. The government started almost immediately to create a new system for science, establishing special agencies. The new Ministry for Education (Narkompros) – in charge of all universities and institutions of "pure" science – supported the rapid growth of the science system.

With Bolsheviks in power, pedology became one of the most crucial for the future of the regime scientific discipline and practices. They institutionalized it as a Soviet super science, the ultimate objective of which was to direct the social engineering of future generations of citizens — physically, psychologically, and ideologically. Pedology, which began as clinical studies of early childhood, was transformed into a state program of school-testing.

On the other hand, the Civil War (1917–1922) and Revolution stimulated the incredible growth of “street” children, who had lost their parents and families. In 1921, there were about 4-6 millions of homeless or “street” children and their adaptation for a new life was one of the hard challenges for the Soviets. Thus the study of children in conditions of devastation, hunger and orphanhood; testing of enhancement / reduction of child intelligence in conditions of social cataclysm and war; comparison of intellectual abilities of children of different social groups and in different countries; social and psychological diagnostics and relevant distribution of “street children” to different types of care and educational institutions became an urgent problem for state, professional and scientific communities.

The new state and its institutions took active part in the fate of the “special” children too. Before the Revolution 1917, the sphere of “special childhood” existed in Russia mainly under the care of the church orphanages, charitable organizations, private patronage as elements of the state structure. The Bolsheviks called them alien revolutionary ideas and destroyed the prerevolutionary institutions of charity and graciousness. All issues related to the care of children with disabilities, homeless children and those with asocial behavior, Soviet power took over. A large number of new institutions of different types for the care, treatment and training of special children had been organized. All of them were subordinated to the new communist ideology, which evaluated the new Soviet Man by his usefulness for the society. The more child with some mental, physical or behavioural problems can be useful to society/fixed/cured/retrained, the more he/she have a chance of survival and a future.

Sounds interesting that the "street children" were ranked as "defective" children at this time. Moral, physical and mental defective were differed. “Street children” were “morally defective” by this classification. Thus, so different children, with disabilities and asocial personality types, constituted virtually one «defective» group. If in tsarist Russia they were rather taken pity and care, but separated from society, then in Soviet Russia pity was canceled, but those children tried to be sorted as much as possible and included in the general concept of the new “Labor School”. State funding for such institutions during this period was practically absent - the country was at war, hunger and destruction, plus the institution of donations was trampled.

This brief account shows the complicity and multidirectionality of social problems and trends to the time when Helena Antipoff found herself in the forefront of experimental psychology after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Her start-up in the Russian psychological and educational communities and professional environment was formed under influence of the intensive scientific and social activities of the Petersburg school of psychologists – V. Bekhterev (1857-1927), A. Lazursky (1874-1917), A. Nechaev (1870-1948), M. Basov (1892-1931), A. Griboedov (1875-1948) and others.

Because of the learning abroad Antipoff was not strongly integrated into the activities of the Russian psychological community. Helena's professional self-realization in six-year Russian period does not show us active, pragmatic or progressive career building. On the contrary, she finds herself in real hot spots of practical psychological problems of that time for the country, what are more likely to test her for strength than promise stability and rest in professional growth.

The focus of Antipoff's professional activities was concentrated on pedological examination of children (orphans, homeless, and socially deprived children) at quarantine and distribution posts of Vyatka and Petrograd. She started her Russian professional career looking at the physical and intellectual development of the kids who had been through the horrors of social upheavals, and rendered them psychological and social first aid (Masolikova, Sorokina, 2015).

### **Vyatka: an overture to future practices**

Helena Antipoff arrived to Vyatka, a provincial city 1400 km from Petrograd to the North East of Russia, presumably at the end of 1919, with her newly born son Daniel, possibly fleeing from hunger and devastation in revolutionary capital. A small city was mostly known as a place for political exile – famous Russian political writer Alexander Herzen (1812–1870), for example, stayed there. At the same time Vyatka made a great contribution to the Russian psychology at the end of the XIX century – famous Russian psychologists V. Bekhterev and V. Troshin graduated from Vyatka gymnasium. During the Civil War most of the Petrograd intellectuals preferred to move to warm southern places – like Ukraine or Crimea. Only a small group deeply connected with some of the socialist parties moved to the East... But several waves of child homelessness passed through Vyatka as well, led by fantastic rumors that in this place you can find food, warmth and shelter.

In Vyatka Antipoff met doctor Vassily Treiter (1875–1929), who became a very significant person for her pedological work experience. The son of the hereditary nobleman of the Moscow province (according to the family legend, great-grandson of German poet and philosopher Goethe), he was born in Nizhny Novgorod, graduated from the Medical Faculty of Moscow University in 1900, specializing in psychiatry, and returned to the city of his childhood, where he served as a sanitary doctor. An active public figure, in February 1917, Treiter was elected to the Vyatka provincial executive committee, and then appointed a provincial commissar of the Provisional Government. However, his political career quickly ended after his arrest by Vyatka Soviets. Since 1918, Treiter was engaged primarily in pedagogical activities: in 1918–1922 – head of the Pedological office of the Children's collector, in 1922–1929 – assistant professor of pedology at the Vyatka Pedagogical Institute (TcGAM. F. 418. Op. 308. D. 979; Zharavin, 2001).

Helena worked with Dr Treiter for the Pedological office of the Children's collector, studying the physical and intellectual development of children during the Civil War. This Vyatka center was a physical, mental, social and medical filter, through which the mass of normal or relatively normal children - who found themselves without parents and home – passed. The future of these kids seriously depended on the quality of the psychological expertise they had come through in the Centre. If the boy was nominated 'abnormal', he went to the special school with much less possibilities than 'normal'. 99 children were studied in 1920 and 160 children in 1921 using the Binet-Simon scale for the study of the intelligent development (1911) and the Gruzdev formula – for analysis of the growth-weight norms of children's development.

The results were published in the Treiter's article "Results of a study of some groups of Vyatka children in 1919–1921" in 1924 (Treiter, 1924). Here he expressed gratitude to his fellow pedologists, among them Helena Antipoff was mentioned – "the technical part of the study was mainly carried out by E. Vl. Antipova and Ol. N. Lashkevich" (Treiter, 1924, 2, 10).

As a research leader, Treiter stood on the position of bipolarity of causes of developmental disorders in childhood, discussing the influence of heredity and environment, bio and psycho factors: "In any school, – Treiter wrote, – half of the children correspond to the norm, a quarter is lower, a quarter is higher" (this conclusion is drawn from a comparison of the studies of different authors, a comparison is given in the article). The lag is less than 2 years to 9 years and less than 3 years after 9 years – a normal school and constant medical supervision. Everything that is above this calculation is considered by the author as "organic changes in the brain or sensory organs". In this case, a normal school is not possible – a special educational institution is required, where the teacher and the doctor work with the child, "these provisions were established by the work of the Binet scales" (Treiter, 1924, 6–7).

The study showed that in 1920 the weight of all 99 children was below the norm of "proletarian children of pre-war time", in general for two years; backwardness for three years is, as it were, the norm for children passing through the Vyatka collector ...; percentage of children in the norm – 12% from 259 kids for the period 1920–1921; Vyatka children had 1 and 3 years of lagging (against the average value of other authors in 3 years).

Treiter and his colleagues suggested that the indicator of mental retardation was a result of pedagogical neglect to children in the current conditions. Such children had psychological trauma or pedagogical neglect, but were not yet exposed to the physics of the process. Physiological lag directly related to homelessness. The percentage of the obtained indices of mental development in the Vyatka study is "ugly and striking" – the peak falls on 3 or more years behind and even "goes beyond the curves of Binet" (Treiter, 1924, 4).

The main conclusion of this unprecedented study stressed a significant delay in the development of street children, both in physical and mental field, which was interpreted as a result of "extremely difficult conditions for their existence and a colossal morbidity" (Treiter, 1924, 7). According to Treiter, physical development of Vyatka children didn't reach even "the lowest standards observed so far among the proletarian children of large cities"; mental development was also low – 54% of all children surveyed in Vyatka had an "organic backwardness", "which condemns them in advance to the inability to complete a high school course" (Treiter, 1924, 8). Treiter suggested to organize special schools for such children. According to doctor's calculations a number of them in Vyatka was 4145.

We believe that the very thorough European methodological support for this study was made by Antipoff, the only one in Vyatka who received a fundamental education in this field in Paris and Geneva. She worked there as a practical psychologist and used methods of testing known to her since the Parisian times – measuring the level of the physical and intellectual development of children in the conditions of civil war and life difficulties. At the same time Antipoff was a professor and taught an experimental psychology at the Vyatka Pedagogical courses within the framework of the "Program of courses for the preparation of preschool teachers, teachers and educators in children's social welfare homes". She also conducted classes on the methods of studying children at the pre-school department of the Vyatka Institute of Public Education, and the child psychology – in the Society "Learning a Child." Moreover, Antipoff founded a Psychological cabinet, which soon became a pedagogical department of the Vyatka Pedagogical Institute.

In her Russian language correspondence of 1930<sup>th</sup> Helena very often recalled Treiter and Vyatka (not SPb.!) years as a period of important practical preparation for future psychological practice in Europe and Brazil. Even a simple listing of her Vyatka professional initiatives and activities shows there was a great reason for such conclusion.

## Petrograd: new deals

Having returned to Petrograd from Vyatka in 1921, Antipoff continued her intensive professional practices. She collaborated with the Laboratory of experimental educational psychology in the Petrograd Pedagogical Museum, founded as early as in 1901 by Alexander Nechaev (1870—1948), Russian psychologist, one of the founders of experimental pedagogy (Romanov 1996). It was not only a research institution, but also a scientific and organizational center. The relationship of psychology and pedagogy, the problem of the psychological study of schoolchildren, especially the mental work of students, the rational organization of the school day, hygienic requirements to the educational process – these and similar questions were the subject of Nechaev interest. Laboratory staff gathered extensive experimental data on the various aspects of the mental development of the child in a broad age range. The subject of the study performed cognitive areas of the child – attention and memory types, the relationship of attention to the process of memory, perception, observation – the conditions of the development and the functioning of the cognitive processes and their individual manifestations, emotional and volitional characteristics, mental fatigue child and how to avoid it.

Nechaev's works were translated into many foreign languages (German, English, Polish, French, Czech, Hungarian, Finnish, Lithuanian). He was elected an honorary member of a number of Russian and foreign scientific societies and institutions (Guski-Leinwand 2011). In 1914 Nechaev was elected an honorary member of the Rousseau Institute in Geneva. Probably, at that time he became acquainted with Antipoff and then supported her research activities in Russia (Antipoff 1913; Masolikova, Sorokina, 2016). Until the late 20'th the psychologist continued to liaise with foreign colleagues, published several articles in the international journals.

But in 1921 the Laboratory was headed not by Nechaev, but by another graduate of Swiss universities – Polina Efrussi (1876–1942). On her invitation Antipoff conducted in 1921 a study of a group of preschool children of Petrograd (from 4 to 9 years) to "detect their intelligence level" by the method of Binet-Simon.

Making research in Petrograd, Antipoff kept in mind a comparative frame and widely used the conclusions of the French laboratories: "Comparison of the results of this study with similar data obtained by Binet and T. Simon in Paris (1911-1912), – she wrote in the paper, – showed that, despite physical weakness and moral upheaval, the intellectual status of the Russian preschoolers didn't demonstrate sharp deviation from the normal level of mental development" (Antipoff 1924, 46). Antipoff interpreted this result as the consequence of the relatively good preschool education in Russia before the Bolshevik revolution and by kid's self activities: "Forced to navigate in the surrounding environment, children are thus actively practicing those traits of intelligence that Binet called understanding, discussion, direction and sophistication" (Antipoff 1924, 47).

In contrast to many colleagues who believed that a just social order would create a New Man, Antipoff suggested much more complicated and complex two factors concept of "environment" – biological and educational.

"Mental endowment of the child depends on the brain and disposition of the nervous system, which he inherited from his ancestors, – she wrote. But the talent is affected by situation – the direction of interest, life, speech, attitude to himself – in which he grows. Which of these factors is stronger – everyday environment or predisposition – we do not know. We can only say that there is a significant relationship between the child's intelligence and the environment to which it belongs" (Antipoff 1924, 46). She realized that the tests explored not only the natural mental gifts, but the cultural degree of civilization in which the child develops and grows. As early as in 1922 Antipoff concluded that the mental level of children was in direct proportion to the degree of cultural environment to which they belong to.

Brazilian colleagues suggested that Antipoff's work in Russia could be influenced by the historical-cultural approach of Leo Vygotsky (1896-1934) (Campos, 2001). But Vygotsky had delivered his first public speech in 1923 at the Psychoneurological Congress in Moscow and at that time his theory was not formed yet. Antipoff's letters of this period did not contain any mention of her familiarity with Vygotsky and his first works. But the Antipoff's professional interests in early 20th were almost directly related to the issues that interested Vygotsky. Apparently it was like the presentiment of Vygotsky by Antipoff, so to speak, maybe an even premonition in advance, a kind of professional intuitive to follow in this particular scientific field. It looks like, Antipoff and Vygotsky came to the same ideas at the same time. But Antipoff on the base of her personal research experience and medical and educational education. Vygotsky – on the base of philosophy.

Helena Antipoff published in Russia, in 1923 and 1924, only two articles in the Soviet pedological journals. Both deal with the mental development of the Russian children at the time of the great wars and – revolutionary - social and political transition of the country. Thus the social and cultural context strongly surrounded and accompanied Antipoff's work, as the activities of almost all Russian psychologists at that time, from the very beginning of her career.

The title of the first published paper – 'The psycho-pedagogical study of the children in the Centre for orphans and street children' (paper № 1) – reflected its deal to pedology. The title of the second paper – 'The mental development of the preschool children' (paper № 2) – looks more conservative. Written almost at the same time (perhaps, 1922) but for different reasons and for different readers these papers have lots of common features and clearly demonstrate Antipoff's research style and civil and professional priorities.

The paper № 1 was addressed to the staff of the Petrograd Centres for orphans and was published in the volume "Labour School" (Трудовая школа), prepared by the local Soviet educational and social authorities. The paper № 2 was published in the first Russian special "Pedological Journal" organized and edited by psychologist Vsevolod Basov (1892-1937?). Interesting, that from the second volume, the journal was edited by V. Bekhterev himself and in this V. Bekhterev edited volume the Antipoff's article appeared.

It is clear from the distinction of publishers that Antipoff's papers targeted different groups, in terms of professionalisation or auditorium, but both of them were focused on the quest for "Laboratory", for "Experimental work" and for modern scientific techniques reflecting very strongly Antipoff's personal concern and belief to scientific knowledge as an instrument for recharging personal life of individual and social life of the society.

Paper № 1 was written by Antipoff at one of the most dramatic moments of her life – after the expulsion of her husband, Viktor Iretzky (1882-1936), from Russia to Germany. Summarizing in the article the methods of work of the Central Petrograd Centre for orphans and street children, where she has worked herself, Antipoff gave an account of its professional activity with great criticism – very unusual for this time. Like Vyatka Center, the Petrograd Center, established in 1918 under the Petrograd City Board of Education, was a big physical, mental, social and medical filter, through which the mass of normal or relatively normal children who found themselves without parents and home passed.

Antipoff's task was to examine children and to plan their re-education. To study kid's personality she used psychological tests, such as the Binet-Simon intelligence scale and Alexander Lazurski's technique called "natural experimentation" – the observation of children in their natural environment, with the purpose of avoiding the artificial situation of the laboratory or of the tests.



Antipoff was one of the first in Russia applying Binet-Simon tests to the field study. She managed to share this experience and to detect and protest against negative trends in the professional organization of the Center (limitation of liberty, very brief contact with kids, mistakes in the analyses etc.). Ten years later these problems would lead the Center to the full transformation of agenda – from the ‘help point’ for kids to the agency of social control over juvenile delinquency within Soviet Political Police.

In her early analyses Antipoff paid a great attention to the problem of the social and cultural environment and its influence on the mental development of kids. This influence she was able to feel and observe at the example of her own family. Her son, Daniel, in fact, belonged to the same age group of children, who had been studied by his mother in the Pedagogical Museum in 1921 (paper №2). Experience of visual contacts and communication with the Petrograd street filled with "a man with a gun" seriously affected the boy: "Donya goes all armed to the teeth with a view of the evil Chechen," – Antipoff wrote to her husband (Masolikova, Sorokina, 2018, 55).

The letters of the Russian period demonstrate Antipoff’s great dissatisfaction in the Soviet social and professional environment. Her European diplomas had been not confirmed by the Soviet universities and thus rejected Helena’s opportunity to hold a relevant professional position. Having spent a lot of time abroad, being a part of international networks, Antipoff, with her personal contacts, theories and techniques learned at the Rousseau Institute, was not deeply involved into the Russian pedagogical and psychological communities. She hadn’t any patrons within academics and managed – with a lot of difficulties – to publish only two articles in the Soviet pedagogical journals. Moreover, Antipoff with her ‘bourgeois’ origin (daughter of a tsarist general) and very independent lifestyle looked a stranger or even a marginal within new Soviet surrounding, based – on the level of rhetoric – on the ideas and ideals of ‘social justice’ and ‘collectivism’, but practised the severe ‘class’ discrimination. “The ability to apply talents is declining with every day” – Antipoff explained to her husband in 1923. In our opinion, a lack of an intensive and effective intellectual activity, a sense of futility of further efforts, led Helen Antipoff to the idea of departure from Russia in 1924. Studying special children, Helen also fell under all possible sanctions – she was a product of the old world through the family and at the same time a product of foreign education and worldview in the field of special childhood, both characteristics were identified as hostile to the new system of care for the “defective”.

In conclusion. Helena Antipoff’s case is a social story, one of many other personal files which so long were hidden from us, which are beginning to change our historical psychological landscape now (Campos, Lourenço, 2019). At the same time it’s a female story (but not the story of a feminist, by my opinion), where men were soulmates, friends, patrons, respectable colleagues or worthy rival and never a reason of stuck for her careers moving or spiritual development. Helena’s life is an example of unintentional and nevertheless regular missionary work, smaller or bigger at different periods of the life. And it’s a story of scientist, a part of history of one of the oldest and leading Russian scientific psychological schools – the Saint-Petersburg scientific tradition. The special place of Helena Antipoff among the galaxy of famous psychologists was formed precisely thanks to the commitment to their spiritual ideals, scientific views and refraction of this through psychological techniques, methods and tools, skillfully framed by French-Swiss-Brazilian experience.

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