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Andrew Kier Wise (Daemen College)

“American Marxists: Boris and Anna Reinstein and the Socialist Movement in Buffalo, N.Y. (1891-1917)”

BIO

Andrew Kier Wise, Ph.D. is Professor of History at Daemen College (Amherst, NY). He teaches courses in World and European History. His publications on the history of Poland and Russia include Aleksander Lednicki: A Pole Among Russians, A Russian Among Poles. Polish-Russian Reconciliation in the Revolution of 1905 (East European Monographs/Columbia University Press, 2003), Cultural Identity and Civil Society in Russia and Eastern Europe: Essays in Memory of Charles E. Timberlake, (co-ed. and intro., Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), and Feliks Koneczny and Civilizational Fundamentalism in Poland (Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, forthcoming in 2018). His current projects deal with the immigrant experience in the US, including a monograph on the radical political activism of Buffalo residents Boris and Anna Reinstein (in collaboration with Dr. Penny Messinger), as well as research on the activities of Dr. Francis E. Fronczak of Buffalo during World War I.

ABSTRACT

Boris Reinstein (1866-1947) and Dr. Anna Mogilova Reinstein (1866-1948) dedicated their lives to serving the people and to promoting socialism as a remedy for the perceived evils of capitalism. In their youth, they enthusiastically adopted Russian populism as espoused by the People's Will movement, along with the conspiratorial and violent methods it employed. After their emigration from Europe to the United States, they fully embraced Marxism and advocated a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism. For twenty-five years they flourished together in Buffalo, New York, where Anna (as one of the first female practitioners in the region) provided crucial medical care for the families of immigrant laborers who worked in the factories in the fast-growing metropolis. Boris briefly operated a pharmacy, but his real professional calling was agitating and propagandizing among the laborers for the Socialist Labor Party (SLP), to which he and Anna belonged. Initially Anna, and then Boris provided the financing, infrastructure, and inspiration for the radical Marxist movement in Buffalo. Throughout their lives as proselytizers for socialism, labor organizers and peace activists, the Reinstains carried with them their earliest experiences from their youth in Central and Eastern Europe – the western regions of the tsarist empire in Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and Western Russia -- as well as their experiences in Switzerland and France. During the First World War, their dedication to serving the people would separate them forever, as Boris traveled back to Russia in 1917 to participate in the revolution and take part in the great socialist experiment until his death in Moscow after the Second World War, while Anna remained in Buffalo to continue her medical practice among the working classes and to stay connected to her expanding family.