

Russian/Soviet and Western Psychiatry

**A CONTEMPORARY
COMPARATIVE STUDY**

Paul Calloway

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A Contemporary Comparative Study

Paul Calloway

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FOREWORD

Joseph Wortis, Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry at the State University of New York, has had a long and distinguished career in psychiatry. In the 1930s he had psychoanalysis with Sigmund Freud in Vienna. He is currently the editor of "Biological Psychiatry". In 1950 he wrote the book "Soviet Psychiatry".

A foreword usually focusses on the book it introduces, but because certain issues are involved I shall take the liberty of first reviewing some relevant history. At the close of World War II when a publisher proposed that I write a book about Soviet psychiatry, I asked the late Bob Felix, then head of the National Institute of Mental Health, if he would write a foreword for it. He responded cordially, writing, "We might learn something from the Russian experience," but he soon afterwards telephoned to say his public relations people advised against it because it could embarrass his dealings with Congress, "... and I depend on those guys for my appropriations," he explained. My friend Horsley Gantt, Pavlov's pupil, also backed off because his departmental chairman opposed the idea. They had reason to be cautious. I soon learned that anybody who enters that area is likely to be drawn into a mirky Byzantine complex of intrigue, hostility and suspicion. The John Hopkins Office of Strategic Services wrote to say they heard of my project and were "much interested in learning of the psychological weaknesses of the Communist states." Meanwhile Senator McCarthy was flourishing. The only foreword that the book finally had was an apologetic one by the publisher explaining and justifying the printing of such a book. Soon afterwards he was delighted to let me know that a batch of copies was sold to the US Department of Defense.

Though I was critical of some aspects of Soviet psychiatry, I credited Soviet psychiatrists with serious scientific interests and humane concern for their patients. In spite of the prevailing atmosphere, the book was surprisingly well received, had mostly good reviews, sold pretty well, was chosen for distribution by a small book club, and enjoyed a couple of foreign translations. But it caused me no end of trouble, and I was harried and harassed for years thereafter. Soon after the book's publication I was subpoenaed by Senator Jenner's Congressional committee on subversive infiltration into education.

Who was this Senator Jenner who presumed to monitor a scientific report on psychiatry? He was a small-town lawyer from Shoals (pop.1022), Indiana, who had managed to arrange his discharge from the armed forces during the war just in time to be elected Senator. He then promoted his political career by following the rabid anticommunistic line that was fashionable at the time, calling the highly respected General Marshall "a front man for traitors," and charging in 1951 on the Senate floor "... that this country today is in the hands of a secret inner coterie which is directed by agents of the Soviet Government. Our only choice is to impeach President Truman and find out who is the secret invisible government," It was at this unfortunate juncture that I entered the scene. The committee tried to establish that I was the gullible dupe of Soviet propaganda. When they badgered me with political questions and innuendoes, I quipped that my mother taught me it

was impolite to ask people questions about their politics, and it was this that hit the newspapers, sparing me the ignominy of adverse publicity. Besides, my appearance coincided with the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, which commandeered all the headlines. One week later the committee brought up a refugee Russian psychiatrist who attested that everything in my book was false.

This bit of history should serve to show that nothing about the late Soviet Union can be separated from politics. Though times have changed, Dr. Calloway's excellent book is also likely to encounter similar politically charged evaluations. One foreign observer not long ago remarked that in the USA any opinion, however absurd, obnoxious, venal, false or malicious could be regarded as unobjectionable if paraded under the banner of anticommunism. In spite of the elation over the recent successes of the free market, any slouching towards socialism would be regarded by many as a no-no. What this book is all about is a description of a particular kind of psychiatry that developed in a socialist setting with a philosophically materialistic outlook, and with certain long-standing traditions. The picture that Dr. Calloway describes will not be duplicated in any other country, and will undoubtedly change in the new east European republics in the years ahead. It is practically certain, however, that in all these countries some form of national health service will remain. The USA and South Africa are the only two remaining industrialized countries with no national health program in place, and the time is not far distant when the USA will recognize its necessity, as the American public already does. In Britain even the Thatcher government could not divest itself of its National Health Service.

This book by Dr. Calloway updates and supersedes my own, which was put together in the midst of the cold war. The Berlin Crisis made it impossible for me to gain entry into the Soviet Union, and my account was drawn entirely from secondary sources. Moreover, my Russian was very elementary: I could always get a laugh by saying, "Ya ponyamayu Russki yazik tolko kogda ya goveryu," which means, "I understand only when I am talking." When I first visited the Soviet Union ten years after my book appeared I was curious to discover if what I wrote was true. Essentially it was, but it lacked the breath of life. This lack is corrected by Dr. Calloway, who not only knows the language well, but had ample opportunities to explore the scene. With the transmutation of the former USSR, the animosities have abated, and people may be more willing to learn about the Russian way; but the antipathy to socialism remains, and much that is in the public interest is denigrated as socialistic. This book should satisfy Bob Felix's early hope that "we might learn something from the Russian experience."

JOSEPH WORTIS
January 1992

APPRECIATION

Maurice R. Green, series editor of the Wiley Series in General and Clinical Psychiatry, is clinical professor of psychiatry at the New York University School of Medicine and project director for brain research at the Nathan Klein Research Institute. He has made several observational trips to Russia and has been invited to consult with colleagues at the Russian Institute of Mental Health and the Bekhterev Institute.

As Joseph Wortis quotes from Bob Felix in the Foreword—"We might learn something from the Russian experience." In these brief pages I will try to summarize what might be valuable to learn from the Russian experience detailed in this fine book, which describes psychiatry among the former Soviet republics prior to the rise of Yeltsin and the separation of the republics to separate nationhoods. My recent trips to Russia and the other newly independent republics indicate that although the political system has changed, psychiatric practice has not. Aside from the elimination of its political uses in the interests of the Soviet state, the practice of psychiatry functions in much the same way as it did before the dissolution of the USSR. It is possible that, in the new climate, changes will occur, but they are not yet apparent and not likely to happen quickly.

What is striking about Russian psychiatry is not only the variety of views represented but also the continuity of the behavioral and psychophysiologic mainstream of psychiatric theory from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. But then if we take a hard look, isn't there a similar continuity between the work of Kraepelin, 100 years ago, and today's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R)* of the American Psychiatric Association?

With the amazing growth of neuroscience in the Western world, we have become very mindful of navigating between the Scylla of biologic reductionism and the Charybdis of psychologic reductionism. One can even look now at the effects of psychologic and interpersonal interventions on neurotransmitters in the brain. Adolf Meyer, a German immigrant to the United States at the beginning of the century, is often acknowledged to be the father of American psychiatry; he fought hard and eloquently against mind-body dualism with his psychobiology. Nevertheless, psychiatry in the United States has tended to be dualistic in practice, with its apprehension of organic factors emphasized only in the past two decades in much psychopathology—psychoses, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorders, anxiety disorders, and even adjustment disorders.

By contrast, in the monolithic dictatorship of the old Soviet Union, the materialistic view presided, with Pavlovian theory receiving official support. Even so, there is still great emphasis on harmful environmental factors interacting with genetic vulnerability—not an unfamiliar or uncommon perspective in Western psychiatry today.

One must not forget Ivan Petrovich Pavlov when speaking of Russian psychiatry, as he was the official theorist of the Soviet Communist party, who even after his death in 1936 had the full approval and endorsement of the infamous Joseph Stalin. In spite of this, the value of his experimental work has been recognized worldwide. In 1928, Pavlov began to apply his conditioning theory and account of cerebral activity to psychiatric problems. He was less successful in this endeavor and is no

longer cited much in psychiatric work. However, his emphasis on objective experiment and his rejection of mind-body dualism clearly show their influence even today. This influence is not limited to Russia and Eastern Europe but can be seen throughout the Western world wherever laboratories of experimental psychology and neurophysiology extend the earlier experimental work. The application of animal models to human behavior is most conspicuous in the preliminary phases of testing new drugs designed to help psychiatric patients.

In Soviet psychiatry, as in all of Soviet medicine, the social dimension is given great weight in all diagnoses and treatments “with no distinction between mental illness and physical illness in this respect.” (Calloway, p. 17) Soviet psychiatry follows a longitudinal as opposed to the cross-sectional approach of Western psychiatry. This is reflected in the Western literature on Soviet psychiatry that praises their system of community care, day facilities, partial hospitalization, rehabilitation, work therapy, and restricted use of hospital beds.

Soviet psychiatry, as epitomized by Snezhnevsky, pays much more attention to the variety of changes that occur over a period of years in the presenting phenomenology of the particular psychiatric disorders—tending to become more complex with age. This is becoming more and more appreciated in the West, as longitudinal studies comprising the same set of individuals over a course of twenty or more years are undertaken.

Mental health care has been provided to Soviet citizens through “psychoneurologic” outpatient clinics over the past 70 years. These clinics developed intensively and provided valuable research data from their statistical files. They also offered social as well as medical care to the mentally ill—offering job training and placement, legal services, help with housing, child care, and other social services.

The Russians, who have been interested in providing care outside of hospitals since the nineteenth century, established their first Day Hospital in 1932. Later, a network was developed of outpatient clinics, farm work colonies, and home care. Since the mid-1950s, there has been a decrease in the reported incidence of catatonic states, stuporous conditions, and other forms of severe psychopathology. By the early 1980s, 90 percent of psychiatric patients did not require hospitalization. Also, by this time, the use of psychiatric dispositions for political dissidents had begun to fade as Mr. Gorbachev took power.

This emphasis on caring for patients in their own community, as mentioned earlier, is part of the heavy investment in the rehabilitation of the mentally ill that is rooted in nineteenth century Russian psychiatry. The V. M. Bekhterev Psychoneurological Institute in St. Petersburg has been a leader in laying the scientific foundation for the rehabilitation of the mentally ill, enhancing medical evaluation of the work capacity of the disabled and coordinating scientific research on these problems. The director of the institute, M. M. Kabanov, has been an outstanding leader, worldwide, in the field of rehabilitation psychiatry. This approach involves not only traditional work therapy supported by medication, but also various forms of group therapy, relaxation training, family education, therapeutic physical training, and active use of therapeutic leaves of absence to discourage dependency on hospitals and to encourage resumption of normal work and normal social life.

In line with this emphasis on the social aspect of psychiatry is newly developing research into preventative psychiatry—taking account of age-related characteristics,

nature of the patient's activities and interests, problems of school regimens, working conditions on the job, changes in occupational status, and changes in the life-style and family life of the elderly. This should lead to the delineation of high-risk groups and to prophylactic measures of preventing or minimizing illnesses in these groups.

With the cessation of the Cold War, the Russian peoples have become free and open to the exchange of ideas from the West. Its end has also freed Americans to be more open to Russian contributions without the old fear of being labeled a Communist sympathizer. Given the possibilities inherent in this new era of acceptance and accessibility, we each can learn much from the other.

MAURICE R. GREEN
February 1993

PREFACE

There is an established tradition of psychiatry, dating back to pre-Revolutionary Russia, in the former Soviet Union. This, however, is largely unfamiliar in the West. There are few translations from the Soviet psychiatric literature and, *although there have been articles and books about specific aspects of Soviet psychiatry*, most recent material has focussed on political issues. The primary aim of this book is to introduce Western readers to the theory and practice of Soviet psychiatry. To some extent the book is a comparative account, and, in addition to examining Soviet psychiatry through Western eyes, it includes Soviet criticism of Western psychiatry.

During four years as a research fellow reading articles and monographs from around the world it became apparent to me that a large body of work was not easily available to Western readers. This comprised the research from the many institutes and hospitals in the Soviet Union. Articles which appeared to be relevant were available only in the form of short abstracts which conveyed little useful information. The terminology seemed to be obscure and different. The difficulty in obtaining translations, together with a long-standing interest in the country and the language, prompted me to study Russian and this eventually led to the idea of writing this book. I attempted to establish a link with Soviet psychiatrists but had no response from the Soviet embassy or the various departments within the Soviet Union (this was just after the Soviet Union withdrew from the World Psychiatric Association in 1983). My only reply was from Professor Yuri Nuller in Leningrad with whom I had already corresponded about research. I therefore arranged a trip to Leningrad and made contact with him. This was my starting point. I tried to arrange a formal attachment through the Ministry of Health in Moscow but was unable to do so on the grounds that there were no bilateral agreements. It was made clear that the lack of cooperation was partly the result of the bitterness felt by Soviet psychiatrists, especially with regard to the role of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in what they saw as a politically motivated campaign.

Despite this, or perhaps because of it, I managed to visit and observe clinical practice in many different psychiatric institutes, hospitals and day facilities in three cities: Moscow, Leningrad and Smolensk. I was able to arrange attachments through official local channels and also make unofficial visits through other contacts. In all I made six separate visits to the Soviet Union, spending a total of *four months in the country*. *The theoretical material is derived from the books and journals listed in the bibliography.*

It is clearly not possible to provide a comprehensive account of Soviet psychiatry in one book, and I have tried to present an overall picture, giving more detail on certain topics. There was a tendency for Western observers to use the Soviet Union as a gigantic Rorschach ink-blot on which to project their own ideas and beliefs. To counter this I tried to present the material, read, seen or heard, as it

came to me, avoiding, where possible, interpretation or comment. The opening chapters examine the concept of mental illness and aspects of diagnosis and classification. There are chapters on the delivery of service, aetiology, treatment and specific disorders. Mental health legislation and forensic psychiatry are described and there is a discussion of political issues, both general and those relating to the question of psychiatric abuse.

Some of the issues discussed are as much to do with different approaches within psychiatry in general as with the differences between Soviet and Western psychiatry. There is no single "Soviet" view of psychiatry and even before the era of glasnost there was a heterogeneity of views, some influenced by the West. There are different schools of psychiatry, and, more obviously, wide individual differences in philosophy and practice. This especially applies to treatment where there is probably greater diversity than in the West. Clearly there are likely to be greater differences in theory and practice in future. The material in this book reflects the prevailing tradition of Soviet psychiatry up to the 1990s, in particular the important influence of Snezhnevsky, who died in 1988.

Psychiatry is concerned with how people think and behave. It inevitably touches upon social, cultural, religious and political issues. It is therefore neither surprising nor unreasonable that psychiatry should be subject to wide interest and public scrutiny and that it should provoke controversy.

Note on recent developments and terminology

Although current developments will affect the scope of this book, many theoretical aspects of Soviet psychiatry will remain the same in that they are not simply the product of a particular social or economic system. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union the main changes are likely to be in the pattern of health care and service delivery. What is described here is the basic Soviet system which will presumably be modified to different degrees in the different republics. Some general terms and names have changed and in others there is uncertainty about their usage, but I have retained the names of various institutes and the city of Leningrad and also the general term Soviet. The term West is used loosely to describe psychiatry in the English-speaking world, although there is also discussion of psychiatry in Europe and Japan in this context.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It would be impossible to acknowledge everyone who has contributed to this work over the course of ten years. A full list would include all those who have taught me Russian, the many people who have helped me during my visits to the Soviet Union and the USA, and colleagues, Soviet, American and European, with whom I have discussed aspects of psychiatry. I am especially grateful to my friends and colleagues at the Royal Free Hospital in London and Fulbourn Hospital, Cambridge and to Joyce Rolph, Mike Todd-Jones, Natasha Franklin, Joseph Elgar, Gordon Hyde, Stewart Britten, German Berrios. In the Soviet Union Yuri Nuller, Evgeny Zubkov, Yuri Popov and Modest Kabanov were particularly helpful. Carol Brayne, Ray Dolan and Eric Chen were all kind enough to read the book at various stages and the following read particular sections: German Berrios, Tony Daniels, Richard Latham, Peter McKenna, Jim Birley, Eugene Paykel, Mervyn London, Geoff Shepherd, Adrian Grounds, James Rafferty, John Hodges, Ian Goodyer. I am most indebted to the financial support that I received from the Jannsen Research Foundation, and to Stephen Burton, then of Jannsen, and Gerry Hammond.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The main sources are two multi-author texts, the "Handbook of Psychiatry" (1983) and the "Manual of Psychiatry" (1985), both under the editorship of Snezhnevsky. Two publications from the Ukraine are also referred to. These are "Clinical Psychiatry" (1989) edited by Bacherikov and colleagues and "Manual for psychiatrists" (1990) edited by Voronkov and colleagues. There are monographs and books on more specific topics including "Neuroses" (1980) by Karvasarsky, "The Affective Psychoses" (1988) by Nuller and Mikhaleenko and "The treatment of mentally ill patients" (1981) by Avrutsky and Neduva. There are also references to other monographs and multi-author books, most of which have small print-runs. The main Soviet psychiatry journal is the "Journal of Neuropathology and Psychiatry" (the "Korsakoff Journal"), first published in 1901. There are also references to articles in a variety of journals such as the Journal of Higher Nervous Activity, Clinical Medicine, Feldtscher and Midwife. I have scanned the medical newspaper *Meditinskaya Gazeta* for material on psychiatric topics over a period of ten years. There are a few references to other Soviet newspapers and magazines, including *Pravda*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Izvestia*, *Trud*, *Literaturnaya Gazeta* and *Moscow News*.

English language bibliography

There have been many accounts of Soviet medicine, fewer of Soviet psychiatry. Many are rather subjective, often based on a single visit to the Soviet Union. One of the first comprehensive accounts of Soviet Medicine was that of Sigerist, a Professor of the History of Medicine at Johns Hopkins in his "Socialised Medicine in the Soviet Union", (1937). This is an account of the health care system, with much on its history and development. There is, however, little on psychiatry, although he describes the emphasis on care in the community, commenting that patients are only admitted as a last resort. Field's "Soviet Socialized Medicine" (1967) concentrates on the structure and organization of health care, and there are numerous sets of statistical data. There is a brief section on psychiatry. More recent accounts of the health care system include Lisitsin and Batygin (1978) and Kaser (1976). Hyde (1973, 1974 and 1988) and Ryan (1982, 1985, 1989) discuss various aspects of the Soviet Health Service including mental health issues.

"Soviet Psychiatry" by Wortis (1950) is a comprehensive and learned account of theoretical issues in Soviet psychiatry, although it is limited by the fact that he was not able to visit the Soviet Union at the time. The book gives excellent summaries of the material available to the author and is interesting on theory, concepts, historical aspects and psychology. Accounts in the psychiatric literature of the 1960s and 1970s, especially by American psychiatrists, tended to concentrate on the service and delivery of care (Auster, 1967; Hein, 1968; Sirotkin, 1968; Visotsky, 1968; Fuller Torrey, 1971; Allen, 1973; Holland, 1975). On the whole there were favourable reports on the system of community care, day facilities, partial hospitalization, rehabilitation, the emphasis on work, restricted use of beds, although most described conditions as fairly basic. Kiev (1968) describes some features of psychiatry in various Eastern European countries, but is

mainly concerned with service aspects and is limited on other issues. Holland (1975, 1976 and 1977), an American psychiatrist, describes her experiences of eight months working in Moscow 1972, a visit arranged by the NIMH. Babayan (1985) gives a patchy account of the system and structure of Soviet Psychiatry. Cohen (1989) gives an entertaining, journalistic account based on a brief visit to the Soviet Union in order to make a film. The book is mainly about political issues although there are brief descriptions of the dispensary system and conditions within hospitals.

There are several books on specific topics, for instance Morozov and Kalashnik (1970) on forensic psychiatry and Rollin (1972) on child psychiatry. Corson (1976) concentrates on psychology and Umansky (1989) discusses the work of a neuropathologist, covering some aspects of psychiatry, especially with regard to the organic disorders. Aspects of schizophrenia are given in papers by Snezhnevsky (1968), Shakhmatova-Pavlova et al (1975), Holland (1977) and Holland and Shakhmatova-Pavlova (1977). Kazanetz (1979 and 1989) discusses the concept of sluggish (slow-flow) schizophrenia. In *Schizophrenia Bulletin* (1989) volume 15, number 4, pages 515-571 there is a section on American and Soviet concepts of dangerousness, also an account in English on sluggish (slow-flow) schizophrenia by Smulevitch and a comparison of American and Soviet concepts of schizophrenia by Andreasen. There is a collection of papers by Soviet authors edited by Masserman (1986). "Soviet Neurology and Psychiatry", published by M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, is a quarterly journal of translations, mainly from the *Korsakoff* journal.

Much of the Western material on Soviet psychiatry is confusing, partly because of difficulties in translation, but also because the material is hard to understand without a background knowledge of basic concepts and terminology. Many Western articles and books also contain frank inaccuracies, especially when quoting authors such as Snezhnevsky.

Psychotherapy

There are a number of the books and articles in English about psychotherapy in the Soviet Union. These include Wynn (1962), Salzman (1963), Ziferstein (1966), Rollin (1972), Segal (1975), Lauterbach (1984) and Ponomareff (1986, 1988). In an interesting historical document, Wynn (1962) gives a selection of papers read at the conference on psychotherapy in Moscow in 1956. Ziferstein (1968) spent a year at the Bekhterev Institute in Leningrad and describes wide availability of treatment. In his book "Soviet Psychotherapy" (1984) Lauterbach gives a fairly comprehensive account of psychotherapy in the Soviet Union based on his time at the Bekhterev Institute in Leningrad. Ponomareff (1988) includes extracts from Karvasarsky's book "Psychotherapy" (1985) published by Meditsina, Moscow.

Political aspects

The main works are Bloch and Reddaway (1977 and 1984) and Wynn (1987). Lader (1977) is mainly concerned with political issues, although he does attempt a somewhat broader approach, describing aspects of mental health legislation and forensic psychiatry. There are the personal accounts of Tarsis (1967), Medvedev and Medvedev (1971), Bukovsky (1978) and Podrabinek (1980). There are letters

and articles in newspapers and medical journals, some of which are quoted in this text or in the above sources. The main primary source was the Samizdat publication "A chronicle of current events", produced in the West by Reddaway. Amnesty International relies upon secondary sources, mainly the Samizdat publications. The main Amnesty International publication was their booklet "Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR" (1975). Stone (1984) by gives an interesting analysis of some important theoretical issues.

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