

# Gen. Svetlichny: 'We will let him rot in the insane asylum!'

The following is adapted from an address prepared for delivery today in Toronto before the American Psychiatric Association. Vladimir K. Bukovsky, who is 34 years old and who spent 11 years in Soviet prisons and mental hospitals, was deported Dec. 18 in a trade for the Chilean Communist leader, Luis Corvalán Lepe. This was translated from the Russian by Ludmilla Thorne.

By Vladimir K. Bukovsky

The abuse of psychiatry for political purposes in the Soviet Union has a long and complex history. Prior to Stalin's death, the Soviet regime had no need to cover up political repressions.

The use of torture during the period of investigation made it impossible for the victim to resist by appealing to the law. The long terms of incarceration, the imposition of secondary sentences, hunger, unbearable slave labor and the direct annihilation of prisoners—all of this transformed the labor camp into a place from which a person had no hope of returning alive.

Under these circumstances, when people were declared insane and were sent to psychiatric prison hospitals, they were being saved, and at the time this was a humane manifestation of forensic psychiatry. But the political situation in the country was changing rapidly and in 1959 Khrushchev was compelled to announce that in the Soviet Union there were no longer any political prisoners.

Since I was committed to a psychiatric prison hospital in 1963, I witnessed the breaking point in terms of people's attitude to such institutions as havens of "salvation."

This period also coincided with the increasing administrative influence of the Moscow-oriented Snezhnevsky school, which was not recognized by the Leningrad school of psychiatry, headed by Professor Sluchevsky. All diagnoses of schizophrenia made by the Moscow school were re-evaluated and refuted by Sluchevsky. With the support of the authorities, however, the centralized psychiatric system of Snezhnevsky soon usurped the command posts of forensic psychiatry.

I was arrested in 1963 for preparing two photocopies of [Milovan] Djilas's book "The New Class" and was placed in solitary confinement at the Lubyanka Prison. I was often summoned by General Svetlichny, who was then in charge of the Moscow K.G.B., and was offered [a chance] to repent and tell who gave me the book and who helped me make the photocopies. Then I would be released.

The obvious purpose of these conversations was to turn me into an informer and to make me cooperate with the authorities. But when nothing came of this, I was given a psychiatric examination, was declared mentally ill and was sent to Leningrad. I attribute my release to the fact that the Leningrad school was still trying to carry on its dispute with the Moscow school and to refute their diagnoses. In February 1965 I was freed.



Marshall Artzman

At the end of 1965, I was again arrested for organizing the first human rights demonstration, which took place on Dec. 5 in defense of [Andrei] Sinyavsky and [Yuli] Daniel and was carried out with the slogan "Respect your Constitution."

At that time, there was no Article 190-3 of the Criminal Code, which was soon promulgated, especially against such demonstrations. Up to that time, there had been no demonstrations since 1927 and the legislature forgot to foresee the proper measure of punishment for those who should take part in demonstrations. Consequently, there were no legal punitive means of punishment.

I was simply dispatched to one of the Moscow psychiatric hospitals with the intention that my old diagnosis be confirmed and then, without a new court hearing or investigation, I would again be sent to Leningrad as a person who had not as yet been fully "cured" from the previous time.

The K.G.B.'s calculations were undermined by honest young doctors at city hospital No. 13, who prepared an extensive report stating that I was not mentally ill. In spite of the doc-

will never be released! We will let him rot in the insane asylum!"

In the meantime, my case had attracted public attention and became well known in the West, thanks to the pronouncements made by Valery Tarsis and the activities of Amnesty International. Finally, the authorities were forced to appoint a neutral commission. But four professors who were specially summoned could not come to a unified conclusion. Two of them, representing Snezhnevsky's school, declared me to be mentally ill. The other two, opponents of his school, refuted their diagnosis.

I remained confined amid this situation for eight months, six of which were spent at the Serbsky Institute. You need not think that the dispute was strictly scientific: It was a matter of conformity or nonconformity of doctors, and the authorities could not find a sufficient number of conformists for a case which had attracted such publicity.

I was released after a representative of Amnesty International came to Moscow and went straight to Georgy Morozov, the director of the Serbsky Institute, and told him that if I were not immediately released, my case would be raised before the Bertrand Russell tribunal.

By the end of the 1960's, a well-established methodology of psychiatric repression had evolved. It emerged as a result of a cooperative effort between the K.G.B. and psychiatrists, [wherein] the K.G.B. provided the ideological direction, giving the instruction that opponents of the regime be declared insane, and the psychiatrists worked out an entire system with a diagnostic basis. By this time the Snezhnevsky school was in firm command of Soviet psychiatry.

The following categories of individuals were most liable to be declared "insane":

1. Prominent figures, whose trials would prove to be uncomfortable in the propagandistic sense.
2. So-called revisionists—that is, those who criticize the system from Marxist positions.
3. Persons who stood up for their convictions during the period of investigation, used legal means of defense and insisted on their right not to give any evidence whatsoever.
4. Believers, including those who faced purely political charges, without any "religious articles."

With the forensic-psychiatric persecutions, the administrative-psychiatric method was also simultaneously developing and being perfected. Toward the end of the 1960's, prophylactic hospitalizations became commonplace, which were carried out in accordance with K.G.B. instructions during party congresses, state holidays and visits by Western heads of state.

In the 1970's, political prisoners have been sent more and more often to psychiatric prison hospitals before the expiration of their camp sentences. This practice allows the authorities to lengthen their terms for an endless period of time.

Now another new method has emerged: the practice of giving psychiatric diagnoses to political prisoners prior to their release from camp. After being freed with such a diagnosis, a former prisoner always lives under the Damocles sword of compulsory hospitalization.

How do Soviet psychiatrists attempt to justify their complicity in such a widely developed system of psychiatric repression?

If during Stalin's time psychiatrists were indeed saving people, and for a long period of time sincerely continued to believe in this out of inertia, then any attempt now to suggest that the practice of sending people to psychiatric prisons is a means of "helping them" is an outright lie and hypocrisy.

The main features of today's psychiatric prisons, of which psychiatrists can no longer claim to be unaware, include intensive treatment (with no regard to harmful effects), indefinite periods of confinement, the necessity of showing repentance in order to be freed, the discreditation of the person and his ideas, constant blackmail after the person's release, and his complete lack of any rights (such tested means of resistance as hunger strikes and the lodging of complaints, which are widely used in camps and prisons, serve only to burden a psychiatric diagnosis).

Under these conditions, every person who is arrested is afraid of being declared insane, and the threat of being sent to a psychiatric prison is used as blackmail during the period of investigation and during the course of the psychiatric examination.

Actually, in many cases persons are declared sane because both the K.G.B. and Soviet forensic psychiatry are now forced to work under publicity—they must pay heed to Western public opinion and, in part, to Western psychiatrists.

Soviet psychiatry is not monolithic: The conflict between honest scientists and the authorities' accomplices has never ceased. Consequently, it is not a question of instituting a total boycott against all Soviet psychiatrists. But there can be no cooperation, no professional meetings with people who bear responsibility for psychiatric repression in the U.S.S.R.

It is possible and necessary, however, to strive for contacts with honest Soviet psychiatrists and to give them your support. Only in this way will you be able to take part in the process of healing Soviet psychiatry.

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