

THE BULLETIN

OF THE

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PSYCHIATRISTS

COLLEGE NEWS

ANNUAL MEETING, 1978: Preliminary Report

As was explained last year, the full Minutes of Annual Meetings are not published in the *Bulletin* until the following year, generally in the May issue, this having been found most convenient for members who wish to raise any matters arising from these Minutes at the subsequent Meeting. This summary of the proceedings at the Business Meeting on 5 July is based on notes taken at the time. A selection of papers presented on the other days will be published in later issues of the *Journal* and the *Bulletin*.

After confirmation of the Minutes, the obituary list was read out. Our losses since the May meeting have been specially grievous, all the deceased being psychiatrists of great distinction and some very dear to us. A tribute to 'Ben' Monro will be found on another page, and we have also lost our Past-President,

T. Ferguson Rodger, whose death followed several years of illness and incapacity. Henri Ey, an Honorary Fellow, has already been commemorated in the *Bulletin*, and his former colleague in Paris, G n l-Perrin, had been a Corresponding Member since 1955. At home we have lost Clifford Allen, well-known for his work on the sexual deviations, and J. V. Morris, for many years a prominent figure in the Mental Deficiency Section. Last on the list was the name of Aldwyn Stokes, whom many of us remember from his Mill Hill and Maudsley days, which were followed by his appointment as Professor of Psychiatry in the University of Toronto and the Clarke Institute.

The Registrar's Annual Report and that of the Treasurer had been circulated, and Dr Markowe's

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supplementary report contained little that was new. The abuse of psychiatry in relation to political dissenters is still, unfortunately, a matter for grave concern, and a new Committee, under the Chairmanship of Dr Peter Sainsbury, has been appointed to deal exclusively with instances of such abuse and their implications. Dr Markowe read to the Meeting the text of a letter concerning the recent arrest in Moscow of Alexander Podrabinek. On receipt of this, the President had sent a personal letter to President Brezhnev. The text of both letters is printed below.

This was the last Report presented by Dr Markowe, and he announced the result of the ballot for the election of his successor. The new Registrar is Dr G. C. Timbury, of Gartnavel Royal Hospital, Glasgow, who was elected by a majority over Dr. P. H. Connell.

Neither the Registrar's nor the Treasurer's Report gave rise to any comment or discussion, and the proposed increases in members' subscription were approved.

The formation of a new Section for the Psychiatry of Old Age was also approved. Professor Tom Arie, in returning thanks to the Meeting, on behalf of the Group from which the Section had evolved, mentioned the support and sympathy the Group had received from the Officers and staff, especially from the President himself, and went on to express the Group's gratitude to Dr Felix Post, without whose distinguished and effective Chairmanship the Group would never have made the progress it had, and to the outstanding work of Dr Brice Pitt as Secretary.

At this point, Dr G. A. Low-Beer gave an account of his recent visit to Russia, first thanking the President for his tolerance when he, the speaker, had shown some lack of restraint when raising at previous meetings the subject of the abuse of psychiatry and the victimization of dissident psychiatrists. His visit had followed a challenge by Soviet psychiatrists at the Honolulu WPA Congress. He had met dissident groups in Moscow and had visited mental hospitals there. Although some of those detained had a previous psychiatric history, none appeared to be in need of treatment, and no British psychiatrist could have signed a compulsory order for any of them.

We hope to publish the substance of Dr Low-Beer's report in a later issue.

After the coffee interval, Professor Linford Rees relinquished the Chair and installed his successor, Professor Desmond Pond, as President. Departing from custom, and perhaps creating a new precedent, Professor Pond did not deliver an Inaugural Address. The timing of the election of President does not allow the successful candidate a sufficient interval before

his installation—under the RMPA he had about 14 months in which to prepare an Address—and it is obviously better to make the Address a feature of the President's second year of office.

For the first time for over 45 years the Gaskell Medal and Prize had been won by a woman, Dr Pamela Taylor, of Guy's Hospital, and she received the prize at the hands of the President. It is remarkable that the three previous women winners, Mary Barkas, Elizabeth Casson and Muriel Northcote, all achieved their success in the short period between 1924 and 1932.

The winner of the Bronze Medal, Dr S. A. Checkley of the Institute of Psychiatry, was unable to be present.

Foreign and Commonwealth representatives and guests were next received by the President. Most of them were satisfied with a formal exchange of compliments, but one American delegate pleased the meeting with an amusing speech in the course of which he presented Professor Rees and Professor Pond with parchments signed by the Governor of Louisiana and declaring them to be Colonels in the Militia of that State.

Next came the introduction, with appropriate citations, of five new Honorary Fellows.

Dr Heaton-Ward paid tribute to Professor LINFORD REES. When Professor Rees had assumed office the College had had to cope with the assaults of 'anti-psychiatry', and there were cracks in its own structure. Now the status of psychiatry had been enhanced and unity had been achieved. The Mental Deficiency Section was particularly grateful to Professor Rees for obtaining from the DHSS their recognition of mental handicap as a psychiatric specialty. It was Professor Rees who had led the protest against the abuse of psychiatry for political purposes.

Dr W. Warren spoke of Dr MORRIS MARKOWE's services as Registrar, and praised especially his wisdom in council and his modesty and invariable courtesy.

Professor Rees cited Dr EDWARD HARE, reminding the Meeting of how Dr Hare had maintained the high scientific standard of the *Journal* but also, during his Editorship had made the *Journal* into a source of substantial contribution to the College's resources. He recalled Dr Hare's scientific achievements in epidemiology, birth order and season of birth studies, and other fields.

Dr P. G. McGrath, in presenting Professor T. C. N. GIBBENS, said that Professor Gibbens' career had throughout been marked by the quality of compassion. The foundation of his work had been laid while he was a prisoner of war. At the Institute of Psychiatry he had had the title of Professor con-

ferred on him in a personal capacity, but his achievements had led to the establishment of a permanent Chair of Forensic Psychiatry. He had been a great stimulator and inspirer of research in that field.

Professor Linford Rees presented Dr NATHAN KLINE, the head of the Division of Research at Rockland State Hospital, where he had gathered round him a brilliant team of scientific workers. Dr Kline was a pioneer of psychopharmacology, having been the first to introduce reserpine and the MAOI drugs into psychiatric use and more recently had been one of the first to investigate endorphins in the human brain. He had given most valuable advice on the setting up of psychiatric services in different countries.

Letter from Mr I. R. Shaferevitch*

On the 14th of May this year Alexander Podrabinek, a member of the working party for investigating the use of psychiatry for political ends, was arrested in Moscow. The working party issued bulletins (eight had been issued) in which cases of forced psychiatric treatment were recorded which in the opinion of the working party was for political and not medical reasons; the names of the doctors involved in the therapy and the addresses of the hospitals were given. Of the four founder members of the working party, two have been arrested, and one had left the working party. Alexander Podrabinek is the author of the book *Punishment Medicine* which was used as evidence at the International Congress of Psychiatrists in Honolulu.

In November 1977 Podrabinek, his father and brother were brought before the KGB who offered them emigration within 10 days, the alternative being the threat of arrest. Podrabinek in a public pronouncement declined to emigrate. His brother Kyril was arrested and in March this year was sentenced to 2½ years detention on the charge of illegal possession of arms (he was found to have an underwater fishing pistol which in the opinion of the court was an extremely dangerous weapon). Alexander Podrabinek is accused of slandering the

The last piece of ceremony at this session consisted of a presentation to myself in recognition of my 50 years services to the RMPA and the College. I was given, together with a cheque, a handsome glass bowl engraved with the Arms of the College, my monogram and the figure 50. In returning my heartfelt thanks for this most generous gift, I quoted largely from a speech made in 1895 by Dr J. H. Paul, Treasurer for over 30 years, on a similar occasion (*Journal of Mental Science*, October 1895, p 749). In return I presented to the College two plaques bearing the College's Coat of Arms, to be hung in the Council room and the entrance hall; it has also been suggested that one of them might be displayed at College Meetings wherever held.

ALEXANDER WALK

Soviet system, which threatens him with imprisonment for three years, although it is highly likely that (as was the case in the recently completed trial of Yuri Orlov) during the course of the trial the charge will be changed, which would mean a longer imprisonment—up to seven years.

I appeal to the public opinion of the West to defend Podrabinek because I am certain: *that the matter implies danger for all of us* equally threatening both the East and West. The event which Podrabinek was fighting was not simply the misuse of power or the inadequacy of legislation. It was the completely logical outcome of a deeply rooted materialist-derived outlook on the essence of man. If one cannot see in man any more than the results of social or biological evolution then the point of guilt or punishment loses all meaning as they would be if applied to a machine. And as a faulty computer is neither judged nor punished but mended, it follows that a man should be mended in the same way, having acted not in accordance with the laid down programme.

For this there exist psychiatric hospitals of a special sort, the outcome of this is so inevitable, that even the predecessor and teacher of Marx—Veitling—drew a picture of the future society “Harmony and Freedom where there would not be trials or prisons, but ‘where all’ who were afflicted with ‘sick tendencies’ would go to hospital, and those who could not be cured would be isolated in special colonies on islands. This is the typical Utopia imagined by a gloomy fantasist. But a far more horrifying Utopia is evinced in real life: for the present small models show us what we can expect in the not too distant future. For instance, when medical psychiatrists seemingly quite openly

* Translated by Dr G. A. R. Giri, Assistant Secretary, BMA.

In his covering letter to Professor Linford Rees, Mr Shaferevitch writes, ‘I follow with appreciation and gratitude the humane activity of your group. This activity encourages me to send to you the enclosed letter and to ask for your help to bring it to the public attention.’

explain about patients who have forcibly been put under their care, that their religious convictions or their critical attitude towards life—(as medical men say '*absence of social adaptation*')—are the symptoms which show they have become psychiatrically ill.

The outlook leading to this conclusion, did not appear in Russia it grew and blossomed on Western soil. For this reason I am certain that it is just as much a threat to the West, though perhaps in a different aspect: contemporary perfection of techniques for manipulating the human psyche the conversion of man into a 'a common denominator' deprives the human being of spiritual freedom.

I turn to those who are fearful of this danger, and who believe their life would lose its meaning, if evolution from ape to man is crowned by man evolving into a robot. For these people the fate of Podrabinek will not be none of their business. And I hope they will understand that inactivity in this case is inconceivable because it produces fully definite action. For instance, when the last Prime Minister of Britain, Mr Wilson, on the very same day as Orlov's trial signed an agreement with the official Soviet propagandist Surkov and went on to say that he was proud of what he was doing, he with that act took on himself part of the blame for the harsh sentence passed on Orlov and for the fate of those who will follow him along this grievous path, and among these the fate of Podrabinek.

Signed: I. R. SHAFEREVITCH
Member—Correspondent of the Academy of
Sciences, USSR, and Honorary or Overseas
Member of several Scientific bodies in Europe
and the USA

Letter from the President to President Brezhnev

Professor Rees had already sent the following letter:

Dear President Brezhnev,

I have been asked by the Council of my College to write to you to express our members' concern at reports of the arrest of Mr A. Podrabinek. This College has always been concerned about the safeguarding of Human Rights and was especially pleased to see the signing of the Helsinki Agreement by our two countries.

It would appear from reports we receive that Mr Podrabinek has now been arrested because of his efforts to ensure that the conditions of the Helsinki Agreement are being observed and his concern regarding allegations about the abuse of psychiatry in the USSR. My College is also most concerned about any reports of the abuse of psychiatry wherever it may occur, and my own personal concern at reports from the Soviet Union is heightened by my Honorary Membership of the All-Union Society of Neuropathologists and Psychiatrists.

We hope that you might take a personal interest in this case and ensure that if Mr Podrabinek is brought to trial the trial is conducted openly.

The circumstances of this case puzzle us. We realize that the laws of our two countries are different, but it is difficult for us, on the reports we have heard, to understand what Mr Podrabinek has done that is in any way criminal.

Yours sincerely,
W. LINFORD REES,
President

[*Note.* Alexander Podrabinek has since been sentenced to 5 years of "internal exile"—Eds.]