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# Mental Hygiene for Geniuses: Psychiatry in the Early Soviet Years

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*In this paper, I deal with one episode from the early history of Soviet psychiatry, the project of the Institute of Genius. Though the project never materialized, the idea was characteristic of the very beginning of the Soviet era, when the wildest experiments in the human sciences seemed possible. The author of the project, the psychiatrist Grigorii Vladimirovich Segalin (1878–1960), followed in the steps of another prominent psychiatrist, the architect of the Soviet mental health care system, Lev Markovich Rozenshtein (1884–1934). Rozenshtein, a proponent of social medicine, introduced a new system of psychiatric help that, by contrast with the prerevolutionary one, was preventive and based on outpatient units — neuropsychiatric dispensaries. In a similar way, Segalin planned dispensaries for geniuses, where these otherwise "socially ill adapted" people would receive professional help and care. Having failed to establish such an institution, he founded a journal, the Clinical Archive of Genius and Talent (of Europathology),*[1] *where he and his like-minded colleagues discussed the supposed pathological origins of talent and published pathographies of outstanding figures. The article traces Segalin's project till its end in the early 1930s.*

**Keywords** Soviet psychiatry, mental hygiene, genius and madness

The story of Soviet psychiatry is yet to be told. As in the West, the prerevolutionary system of mental health care concentrated on hospitalizing people after they were diagnosed mentally ill. This system constantly demonstrated its shortcomings and caused frustration to many Russian psychiatrists. After 1917, a new ambitious plan to transform psychiatry was developed. Mental health care was to be preventive, based on outpatient units — dispensaries — and to cover the entire population. In other words, the plan was for every person in the country to be checked for possible mental illness and to register with the local neuropsychiatric dispensary. In spite of the postwar and postrevolutionary shortages, this ambitious project was realized as early as the mid-1920s. A large-scale system of mental

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[1]Klinicheskii arkhiv genial'nosti i odarennosti (evropatologii), posviashchennyi voprosam patologii genial'no-odarennoi lichnosti, a takzhe voprosam odarennogo tvorchestva, tak ili inache sviazannogo s psikhopatologicheskimi uklonami. Vykhodit otdel'nymi vypuskami ne menee 4 raz v god pod redaktsiei osnovatelia etogo izdaniia doktora meditsiny G. V. Segalina, zaveduiushchego psikhotekhnicheskoi laboratoriei i prepodavatelia Ural'skogo universiteta (further: *KA*).

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health care was established in a country still in ruins. Yet the first achievement of Soviet social medicine was not free of faults. The ubiquitous character of the mental health care system made everybody in the population suspect for psychiatrists, a potential patient for the dispensaries. Some physicians expanded their ambitions so far as to enroll people of talent in their clientele, as they supposed a connection between "genius" and "madness." In this paper, I tell this particular story, part of the fascinating history of building a new psychiatry in a new country.

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In Russia at the turn-of-the-century, many people, from psychiatrists to politicians, believed in social engineering, though they envisaged different methods. The reformists invested their hopes in the improvement of social conditions, the radicals in communist revolution. In contrast, the professionals insisted that special measures are indispensable to alter human nature, not only economic and political changes. These measures, under the names of eugenics, psychotechnics, and mental hygiene, had already been proposed in the West. After the Revolution their proponents in Russia gained the chance to implement them on a scale unseen before.

In 1921, when the psychiatrist Lev Rozenshtein (1884–1934) was contemplating his plans for social medicine and preventive psychiatry, another similar project appeared. It proposed to take care of talented people who, as the author of the project claimed, were often exploited and abused in the past. "Who does not know the sad pages from great people's biographies," he rhetorically asked and listed these pages himself:

> Complete misunderstanding of new ideas of a talented person by his contemporaries; prosecution of any creative innovation if it contradicts the tastes and wishes of the powerful; incredible exploitation of artists' work by editors, resellers, agents of different kinds; abuse of *wunderkinds*; talented people living in poverty and dying early as a result of inability to adapt to social and economic conditions, to be servile and please their patrons, to advertise themselves and sell their souls; their abuse by the corrupt media; or the opposite—when talented people have to serve the vulgar tastes of the petty bourgeoisie, produce pseudo-art, prostitute art, literature, science, theater, when they clown, pose, arrogantly advertise themselves. All this in order not to starve. (Segalin, 1928, p. 53)

Though socialism should eliminate the conditions that made abuse of geniuses possible, the author assumed that the situation would not improve automatically. Geniuses, he argued, owing to their individualistic, asocial nature, and frequent ailments, find adjustment to any society difficult. Asocial by nature, they easily fall victim to society and may be incarcerated in asylums and prisons. If, however, they are cured of their illnesses and socialized on a par with everybody else, they may lose their creative abilities. The author suggested that a special branch of medicine—aesthetic medicine—should protect geniuses from occasional abuse and increase the output of their work (Segalin, 1925, p. 10).

Only in a socialist society, where protection of the weak is state policy, could aesthetic medicine become a reality. Alongside general departments of social welfare, the state should establish special institutions for geniuses: dispensaries and "departments of social welfare for mad geniuses" ("*sobez genial'nogo bezumtsa*"; "*sobez*" is an accepted abbreviation for a social welfare department). The institutions would assist in protecting talented people from hostile environments and in placing them in favorable conditions for

the completion of socially valuable work. The new policy towards the so-called bourgeois specialists, a category that included scholars and engineers, encouraged this plan. The government changed from attacking them to "winning them over." The introduction of the New Economic Policy in 1921 eased scholars' conditions, and the establishment of the Central Commission on Improving the Life of Scholars promised state support and privileges such as sanatoria.

The new man was an ultimate announced objective; preoccupied by counteracting the disastrous consequences of wars, famines, and revolutions for children, the Soviet government worked out a number of educational and care-programs. The plan for institutions for geniuses was designed to take care of children— both *wunderkinds* and those who appear mentally retarded at school but nevertheless grow up as talented people—within this framework. It suggested that children should be either directed to special schools or be provided with individual developmental counseling. Apart from these welfare institutions, the author proposed a program of research coordinated by an Institute of Genius. "Since a talented person's brain and body have not yet been objects of systematic study," he wrote, "the Institute is to decree the compulsory dissection of brains of all outstanding people without exception, and, if necessary, also a post-mortem on the corpse, which then will be kept in the anatomical theater for subsequent study" (Segalin, 1928, pp. 55–56).

Other tasks assigned to the institute included experimenting with stimulants that are known to produce creative states of mind, and to control artistic production. The author warned that in contemporary bourgeois society art was degenerating into "almost hysterical forms" ("*pochti sploshnoe klikushestvo*"; *klikushestvo* was considered a particular Russian form of hysteria that affected peasant women). An objective expertise in art would help museums and galleries distinguish a genuine work of art inspired by a "real creative illness" from a fake made by a pretended "mad artist." Parallel to the work of a forensic psychiatrist, a specialist in "aesthetic medicine" would provide expertise for the courts in questions of pornography and "anti-social" art in general (Segalin, 1928, pp. 57–58). This was relevant under the freer conditions of the New Economic Policy, when artists' groups and movements proliferated, and private publishing houses reappeared. Trying to control them, the government readjusted its policies towards literature and art and established a new institution of censorship— *Glavlit*, the Main Administration for Literary and Publishing Affairs (1922).

The project for aesthetic medicine was strikingly similar to the earlier psychiatric ideas to control art and aesthetic education formulated by, amongst others, G.I. Rossolimo (1860–1928), one of the first proponents of mental hygiene in Russia. Rossolimo, who developed these ideas early in the century, stayed in Russia after the Revolution, and his work in child neurology, psychiatry, and psychology gained state support. Having recognized his own ideas in the project of an unknown psychiatrist from the provinces, Rossolimo helped arrange for the project's presentation in his Institute of Child Neurology in Moscow. He also helped establish a commission that included the painter Vassily Kandinsky, the literary critic Iu.A. Aikhenval'd, the psychologist N.A. Rybnikov, and the psychoanalyst I.D. Ermakov. The commission, however, never functioned. The project was abandoned, and its author disappeared from Moscow (Vol'fson, 1928, p. 52).

## Progeneration in a New Country

The author, Girsh (Grigorii Vladimirovich) Segalin (1878–1960), was a son of a wealthy Jewish manufacturer from Moscow. For many years, he studied arts and anatomy in Russia and Germany. He had already become an "eternal student" of the type so

well portrayed by Chekhov when he decided to take a medical degree. He studied at the universities of Jena and Halle. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Jena gained a reputation as a "citadel of Social Darwinism" owing to Ernst Haeckel and his followers. In 1898, the Jena historian, Ottokar Lorenz, published a book on genealogy relating his approach to Weismann's concept of the ancestral germplasm — an early version of genes (Weindling, 1989, p. 231). In 1905, when Segalin arrived in Germany, Haeckel founded his Monist League with the goal to reform life, art, and psychology on a biological basis. Segalin may have been particularly attracted by the correspondences that contemporary artists found between Haeckel's organicist ideas and their own art, like the natural forms fashionable in art nouveau and in the eurythmic dances of Emile Jaques-Dalcroze.

In 1904, Jena hosted a competition for the best essay on the application of the laws of evolution to society, which stimulated a variety of sociobiological projects. The same year, the Jena psychiatrist Wilhelm Strohmeyer launched a research program for psychopathology based on statistical genealogy, an idea soon enthusiastically developed by Ernst Rüdin. The racial hygiene movement established itself a year later. Though Segalin could not sympathize with the project of purifying the Aryan race, he became enthusiastic about another eugenic idea, the cultivation of geniuses. The Nietzschean aphorism that "the way forward led from being a species to a superspecies" inspired Alfred Ploetz to write the first monograph on racial hygiene, but it also inspired a cult of geniuses that penetrated medicine and biology with the help of such authors as Max Nordau and Otto Weininger (Weindling, 1989, pp. 141–154, 234, 123).

In 1913, Segalin returned to Russia where he converted his German medical degree in order to qualify for state employment. He was already 37 when he started teaching psychiatry at the University of Kazan, but three years later his career was again interrupted when he was mobilized and worked in a psychoneurological hospital of the Red Cross in Kiev. After the Bolsheviks had taken over the Ukraine, Segalin worked in the Red Army medical commission organized to fight the typhus epidemic. Demobilized, he settled in a town in the Urals, Ekaterinburg (after 1925, Sverdlovsk), where he helped organize a medical school at the newly established University of the Urals. He taught psychiatry and neurology at the university and founded a laboratory of psychotechnics at the Polytechnic College. He was also active in the public sphere as a member of the local government commission on minor criminals, as an expert in political trials, so common during the Stalin years, and as a consultant to a variety of institutions from the Institute of Work Hygiene to the opera theatre. Having become part of the Soviet medical establishment, Segalin did not give up his artistic interests. In the university clinic, using patients as models, he painted a gigantic tableau, "Madhouse or Victims of the War." During the Second World War, he founded a portrait gallery of local celebrities and veterans for which he painted several portraits. Segalin also wrote journalistic sketches and was even elected to the National Writers Union, the sign of the highest official recognition.[2]

In spite of acquiring local influence, Segalin's main project remained an unfulfilled dream. The reason did not lie in the project's unreality, since it paralleled such developments as the introduction of hereditary databanks by German psychiatrists for research on the inheritance of both negative and positive qualities—mental disease and fitness, leadership and genius. Segalin's contemporaries also believed that his idea to collect outstanding

[2]The painting and the biggest part of Segalin's literary archive were lost after the war, when he moved from the Urals. His last medical work on "pre-cancer syndrome" is dated 1948. This and other biographical information about Segalin is from (Sorkin, 1992).

people's brains anticipated Bekhterev's idea of a "Pantheon of Brain."[3] But, unlike Bekhterev, Segalin was an eccentric provincial who, after having spent many years abroad, had not sufficiently established himself in Russia. Though the presentation of his project in Moscow went well, he failed to maintain the interest of those physicians who had access to power. He reoriented his project towards a journal, which he launched in 1925 and published almost single-handedly.

To his townsmen, Segalin appeared "a mad original, bearing some fantastic ideas," but an observant contemporary found him "though not without oddities, a most interesting person" (Sorkin, 1992, p. 4). Segalin was in correspondence with Maxim Gorky, who "loved to collect such people," as well with other celebrities. He also arranged contributions from August Forel, Wilhelm Lange, and Walther Riese for his journal. The journal had a long and loud title: *Clinical Archive of Genius and Talent (of Europathology), Dedicated to the Questions of Pathology of a Gifted Personality As Well As of Creative Work With Any Psychopathological Bias*.[4] It consisted of two main divisions, a theoretical one, filled mainly with Segalin's own writings, and a section of pathographies. In the first theoretical article, Segalin announced the creation of a new academic discipline that he termed interchangeably "ingeniology"— the study of creative work of any origin, "healthy" as well as "pathological"— and "europathology"— the study of the effect of mental illness on creative work. The latter term was derived in part from the Greek word "*Eureka*" (from which "heuristic" also originates), but it also resembled such neologisms of the time as "eugenics" and "eurythmic." Whatever the name, the new discipline was to study creative people, from children to mad geniuses, under a variety of conditions, and from normal states to bouts of momentary madness. As one of his purposes, Segalin mentioned the construction of creativity tests, so-called schemes for "practical semiotics and diagnostics," in order to distinguish "the inspirations of an epileptic" from those of a hysterical person. By looking at a person's artistic style, a psychiatrist would be able to diagnose the disease "as easily as a chemist detects the composition of minerals in the sun by its spectrum" (Segalin, 1928, p. 55).

But Segalin's main focus was on mental illness, which, as he firmly believed, can produce and stimulate creative abilities. In Germany, he was exposed to the cult of genius and the ideas of race hygiene. He read the authors who elevated genius above the average healthy person and believed that mediocrity rather than disease is the cause of degeneration. These authors thought that geniuses, whether ill or healthy, showed the road to humanity's future and should be worshipped and cultivated (Iudin, 1924, p. 72). In the same way, in prerevolutionary Russia a pessimistic vision of decline gave way to belief in an unconstrained progressive evolution of the human species. In the 1920s, in the entry on genius in the *Soviet Medical Encyclopedia*, the psychologist L.S. Vygotsky and the psychiatrist P.M. Zinov'ev defined genius, referring to the work of the Italian psychiatrist Enrico Morselli, as "an evolving, progressive variation of the human type"(Vygotsky and Zinoviev, 1929, p. 612). Segalin suggested that by examining, analyzing, protecting, and stimulating geniuses, the human species could cultivate itself and rise to as yet unknown heights.

He announced that the division between the normal and abnormal should be abandoned because "nature … knows only one division—between repetitive and creative

[3]In 1926, Segalin's journal published an article by A.A. Kapustin, who reported on his dissections of the brains of the famous physicians, S.S. Korsakov, A.Ia. Kozhevnokov, and P.I. Bakmet'ev, which were kept in the collection of Rossolimo's Neurological Institute (Kapustin, 1926). See also (Spivak, 2001).

[4]There is a recent reedition of the journal's issues by A.N. Kormushkin, a psychologist from St. Petersburg.

work." The distinction, he argued, should lie not between illness and health but between productive and unproductive illness. Segalin compared creative illness with birth. He had in mind, perhaps, the common image of Russia as a woman giving birth, as the country lay in ruins and awaited regeneration. Many believed that revival was impossible without sacrifices, and that the country would have to pay a heavy cost for its communist rebirth. In 1926, a psychiatrist wrote: "in the course of human development some individuals are ahead of others, and because of that they are unstable and vulnerable to mental diseases… Humanity makes sacrifices, leaving in its path of development individuals who fall down in a disordered state" (Karpov, 1926, p. 7). The phrase "when you chop wood, chips fly" became proverbial in the language of the day and was often used to justify political repression. Using the same metaphor, Segalin compared human evolution to a gigantic building site where pathology—"the chips"—are the inevitable cost of progeneration. Segalin's own project aimed at minimizing the amount of "chips"—the number of geniuses who perish in this process (Segalin, 1928, p. 56).

## A Soviet Genius

In the atmosphere of early Soviet iconoclasm, previously sacred names were reconsidered. The old culture found itself cast into purgatory by proletarian critics. The literary associations, the Futurists and *Proletkult*, who were the first to declare themselves on the side of the new regime, launched a nihilist attack on the past, threatening to "throw Pushkin and Dostoevsky overboard the ship of modernity."[5] As before the revolution, the new cultural criticism readily found support in psychiatry. If Pushkin was a model poet for the prerevolutionary critics and an example of perfect mental health for psychiatrists, after the revolution the literary young Turks denounced the classics, and psychiatrists of the younger generation questioned Pushkin's mental health. Zinov'ev wrote that "in order to understand Pushkin … correctly, it is necessary to accept that from the psychiatric point of view he was, though a highly valuable person, yet a psychopath" (Zinov'ev, 1935, pp. 411–413). Similarly, Rozenshtein assumed that Pushkin was a cycloid, according to Kretschmer's classification of character, and that Pushkin's famous irony resulted from his occasional "hypomaniac states" (Rozenshtein, 1926, pp. 5–28). Another psychiatrist argued from the position of a fashionable endocrinological theory according to which individual differences are a function of glands. He classified Pushkin as an erotoman with hypertrophied gonads, and Gogol as a "hypogonadial type" accompanied, in his case, by schizophrenia (Galant, 1927, pp. 50).

Psychiatrists of the younger generation found "absolutely unjustified" their predecessors' unwillingness, out of respect for the writers' suffering, to speak about the writers' mental illnesses. In his dreams about the Institute of Genius, Segalin planned for one of its departments to rewrite old-fashioned biographies, which avoided exposing the weaknesses and illnesses of outstanding people. He also encouraged contributors to the *Clinical Archive* to write pathographies of outstanding figures. A psychiatrist, N.A. Iurman, insisted on a thorough examination of Dostoevsky's "shadowy as well as bright sides" (Iurman, 1928, p. 62). This was soon undertaken by a psychoanalytically oriented author, Tatiana Rozental', who interpreted Dostoevsky's disease as hysterical epilepsy (Rozental', 1919). Segalin agreed with her that Dostoevsky's epilepsy was not genuine but "affective," that is caused by traumatic influences (Segalin, 1926b).

Alongside the ongoing reevaluation of the past, the revolution initiated extravagant literary experiments, and in the atmosphere of relative political freedom literary and artistic

[5]Quoted in Struve, 1971, p. 14.

movements and groups proliferated. The Symbolists' successors, the Akmeists, coexisted with the militant Futurists, the visionary Imaginists, the peasant poets fearful of growing urbanism, and the proletarian writers, who glorified industrialization and argued that the new culture should be based not on art but on science and technology. The Communist leaders recognized the existence of nonproletarian writers as "fellow-travelers," but they wanted to reform or break "bourgeois" authors such as Alexander Blok, Andrei Bely, and Anna Akhmatova. Not coincidentally, these poets became objects of psychiatric attention. Referring to a literary critic who argued that Blok's poetry was "ill" and his romanticism "unhealthy," a Moscow psychiatrist "diagnosed" Blok as epileptic (Mints, 1928, p. 53). His colleague from the town of Smolensk, V.S. Grinevich, quoted the prerevolutionary view, repeated by proletarian critics, that Symbolism and decadence are an escape from reality. Grinevich diagnosed as a "psychopath," a poet who boasted that he "quarreled with the commissars in the Cheka" (the security police, "Extraordinary Commission") and predicted that one day he could be hanged for his "anarchist yeast."[6] Grinevich, who presented himself as an "objective psychopathologist," concluded that the unstable, pessimistic, doubting, and schizophrenic "bourgeois" poets should give way to healthy proletarian writers (Grinevich, 1928, p. 49). Responding to Segalin's invitation to rewrite biographies as pathographies, a young Moscow psychiatrist reassessed even Jesus Christ. Pathographies of religious figures were not a new phenomenon, but psychiatrists felt especially encouraged to write them when atheism became state policy. The psychiatrist Ia.V. Mints diagnosed paranoia in Jesus Christ and attributed it to his asthenic constitution. Exercising Marxist analysis, Mints concluded that the founder of Christianity, who originated from a craftsman's family, had a "petty bourgeois" social background (Mints, 1927, p. 245).

Writers with established reputations were not excused from pathographies. Gorky's mental health was questioned on the grounds that the writer made a suicidal attempt when he was 18 (Galant, 1925a, 1925b, 1928 ). Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Nekrasov, Byron, Balzac, and Nietzsche underwent the same scrutiny (Segalin, 1926a).

Segalin diagnosed Tolstoy's "affective epilepsy," discovering traces of the disease in the "epileptic intensity" of his literature as well as in the writer's supposed conservatism (Segalin, 1929c). He followed the earlier radical critics who had reproached Tolstoy, writing that in his struggle with tsarism he did not go far enough and accept the need for revolution. Segalin's article persuaded his colleague from Baku, V.I. Rudnev, who reported that it "clarified for me both Tolstoy's world-view and his sudden change [in the late 1870s] which took all of us by surprise." Rudnev wrote that he found further evidence of Tolstoy's epilepsy in his *Memoirs of a Madman* (Rudnev, 1929, p. 69). This only confirmed Segalin's diagnosis (Segalin, 1929a).

It is possible that Segalin's articles on Tolstoy was the last drop that had finally brought the journal to an end. By late 1920s, the nihilist spirit and wild experiments that followed the revolution were tamed, and the Soviet literary establishment returned to the classics. Both Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were accepted into the Soviet literary pantheon, though not without reservations. The leading critic of the 1920s, A.K. Voronskii, planned "to limit Dostoevsky's pessimism with Tolstoy and to adjust Tolstoy's optimism with Dostoevsky."[7] He reminded the nihilists that at different times various Marxist thinkers had demonstrated their appreciation of Tolstoy. One of the older Russian Marxists had

[6]The poet in question was Nikolai Tikhonov, a member of the "fellow-travelers" group, "The Serapion Brothers." Grinevich died from consumption at the age of 24 the same year when his paper was published.

[7]A.K. Voronskii (1923), quoted in (Maguire, 1968, pp. 280–281).

called Tolstoy "a realist in the genuine sense of the term" because his "work rests on experience, just like scientific investigation".[8] Lenin, though he viciously attacked Tolstoy's philosophy of nonresistance, respected his unique stature in Russian culture and preferred him to the new Soviet writers. He supported the publication of the unprecedented 90-volume collection of Tolstoy's work. The Tolstoy centenary in 1928 was the first large-scale government-sponsored event celebrating a prerevolutionary writer. It included a seven-hour celebration at the Bolshoi Theatre, with the keynote address by the minister of education, Lunacharskii.[9]

Segalin's article on Tolstoy appeared in the fourth volume of the *Clinical Archive* in 1929; the following issue, though announced, never came out. Following the pattern of Stalinist political campaigns, the journal's end was prepared and was then followed by a series of critical articles written not by political leaders but by psychiatrists. A psychiatrist from the provinces, N.I. Balaban, published a critical review of Segalin's article on Tolstoy in the official organ of the Society of Psychoneurologist-Materialists, *Soviet Psychoneurology* (*Sovetskaia psikhonevrologiia*). He argued that Segalin's diagnosis of Tolstoy would confuse the reader familiar with the writer's international reputation. Lenin's and Lunacharskii's view of Tolstoy as a sober realist stood in a sharp contrast with the image of a hallucinating writer created by Segalin. The latter had argued that Tolstoy, before he was 50, was at a "manic stage," and that later his "affective epilepsy" switched to a "depressive stage." In Balaban's view, Segalin repeated the outdated cliché about Tolstoy's "sudden crisis" that had already been rejected by literary historians. Balaban insisted that Tolstoy's changes should not be explained by illness, and he criticized Segalin for reproducing suspicious Lombrosian views without enriching medical knowledge (Balaban, 1933).

Balaban's article confirmed the end of Segalin's initiatives. In the late 1920s, Segalin still believed that the Institute of Genius stood a chance. His hopes were revived when he had heard that "some psychological circles" in Moscow discussed an idea for an "eurological institute." He also learned about the Academy of Sciences's decision to establish a "central organ" superintending the conditions of scientists' life and work. Further, the success of neuropsychiatric dispensaries encouraged Segalin to raise the question of "special dispensaries for creative people." The ambitions of social hygienists had indeed grown, and they campaigned to place all medical institutions under the control of the "united dispensary." Their objectives were to screen the population, to introduce health passports for every worker, "to calculate the coefficient of work capacity," and to provide "timely prophylactic, curative, sanitary and social aid" (Smirnov, 1930, p. 5). In Segalin's mind, dispensaries for geniuses were similarly to control "abnormal and asocial art" and to stimulate "unproductive euroneurotics" with the help of "eurotherapy" (Segalin, 1929b, pp. 70–72). Yet, together with the Institute of Genius and aesthetic medicine, this plan had to be abandoned in circumstances that in fact were becoming unfavorable for mental and social hygiene in general.

## Cultural Revolution and Mad Genius

In spite of its widely publicized strategy for public health, which attracted the attention of socialist-oriented physicians in the West, Narkomzdrav (the Soviet Ministry of Health Care) was in crisis in the 1930s. It lacked the funds to cope with the consequences of

[8]L.I. Aksel'rod-Ortodoks, quoted in (Maguire, 1968, p. 299).
[9]On the jubilee see Frank (1928/1996), 455–459.

forced industrialization and collectivization. The welfare services were not able to match the growth of the urban population that followed famine in the countryside. The gap between the ambition of preventive medicine and the social reality was obvious. In 1931, a government decree indicated the grim situation in the understaffed and undersupplied mental hospitals, where the number of patients many times exceeded the intended population. The decree directed Rozenshtein's institute to coordinate mental care, which diverted the institute from its preventive strategies. The decree also ordered that no other institutions of preventive psychiatry were to be founded. The dispensary campaign slowed down, and its main proponents disappeared from the stage. In 1930, the patron of social hygiene, N.A. Semashko, was removed from his post as Commissar of Public Health. The new Narkomzdrav strategy was more class oriented and concentrated on establishing medical facilities for workers at their workplaces (*Zdravookhranenie*, 1973, pp. 174–176).

Segalin's marginal position as a provincial psychiatrist protected him from physical repression, but his europathology was destroyed in embryo. Its association with eugenics, which had in the meantime in the West acquired racial connotations, made it especially vulnerable. In 1928, both the German Society of Mental Hygiene and the Eugenic Society in London initiated a campaign for sterilization as a preventive measure against mental illnesses. Three years later, National Socialists in the Reichstag petitioned for the sterilization of hereditary criminals. The founding father of German racial hygiene, Alfred Ploetz, as the historian Paul Weindling remarked, "metamorphosed from being an admirer of Kautsky[10] to a supporter of Hitler" (Weindling, pp. 451–452, 579). These developments were completely unacceptable in the Soviet Union, and they endangered the position of eugenics. In 1930, the Russian Eugenics Society was disbanded and its journal terminated, almost simultaneously with Segalin's journal. The "Great Break" in the Soviet history — and the Stalin's Cultural Revolution — directly affected eugenics, the idea of mad genius and all other theories that linked the biological and the social. The connection between the social and the biological, a sensitive issue for Marxist philosophy, became the focus of political battles in life sciences.

The Lombrosian idea of ill geniuses became completely unacceptable. The psychiatrists who defended it could not excuse themselves by claiming scientific neutrality. When Lombroso's contemporaries reproached him for "compromising" genius by his theories, he wrote in his defense: "but has not nature caused to grow from similar germs, and on the same clod of earth, the nettle and the jasmine, the aconite and the rose? The botanist cannot be blamed for these coincidences" (Lombroso, 1910, p. ix). In the 1930s, it was no longer possible to argue that scientists only reveal the laws of nature—the myth of politically neutral psychiatry ceased to work.

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[10]Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) — a socialist, at one time close to Marx, and a leader of the Second International.

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