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WEST GERMANY

DANISH SCIENTIST REPORTS ON OCTOBER '76 ALMA-ATA PARAPSYCHOLOGY CONFERENCE

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[No 6 of a series of articles by Scott Hill: "Psi in the Soviet Union: Truth and Fabrication"]

[Text] The picture that the Western World has of the status of parapsychology in the Soviet Union is essentially shaped by a book published by two American women journalists who met several Russian psi researchers in Moscow in 1968. Not long ago four renowned Soviet psychologists, in a basic official appraisal of parapsychology in the Soviet Union, referred to this book as a "cheap, bungled job." ESOTERA contributor Scott Hill had a chance to see whether this criticism is justified. In this last of his series of articles, he describes the real status of parapsychological research "behind the iron curtain."

An interesting document relating to the official status of parapsychology in the Soviet Union is the article "Parapsychology: Fiction or Reality?" published in the Soviet journal VOPROSY FILISOFII (Questions of Philosophy), 1973, No 9. It was not a journalistic article, but an official appraisal by four prominent members of the academy, who "feel that the time is ripe to formulate the position of the Russian Society of Psychologists with regard to parapsychology, the status of which has been discussed at a meeting of the presidium."

The four authors are among the most important scientists in any field in the Soviet Union: V.P. Zinchenko, A.N. Leontiyev, B.F. Lomov, and Prof A.R. Luriya.

Luriya and Leontiyev studied in the 1920's with the famous Soviet psychologist Vygotskiy, their career thus beginning at the time when the revolution had triumphed in the Soviet Union. Luriya specialized in neuropsychology and is professor of psychology at the Univerity of Moscow. He is the author of a number of books on the brain, and translations of his works are widely used as textbooks at European universities.

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Leontiyev is primarily a theoretician; he is especially interested in human thought and its social and historical development. Leontiyev is director of the psychology department at the University of Moscow.

Leontiyev and Zinchenko are also the authors of the official article on parapsychology in the "Soviet Encyclopaedia" (see ESOTERA, 1977, No 4, "Renaissance der Parapsychologie").

"The authors of this article do not consider themselves specialists in this field," they remark, "...but an increasing number of articles... compel us to devote attention to the matter." In other words, psi research can no longer be ignored in the Soviet Union!

The article continues with a sharp attack on "amateur investigators" and "specialists who change their line of work often and without sufficient grounds" to study the formerly mysterious field of parapsychology; 'they are often victims of fraudulent charlatans."

The four academicians make especially violent attacks on a certain book published by two American women journalists. One might say that they fire at it broadside: "It is necessary to mention certain efforts to make political capital out of the connection with parapsychology. We call particular attention to a book by S. Ostrander and L. Schroeder, 'Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain'... The authors, who are not scientists, combined a low-level work with cheap publicity; that was their main goal... They sell anti-Sovietism... and exaggerate the successes of Soviet 'parapsychologists.'"

During my visit to the Soviet Union I ran into several points that confirmed my own low opinion of the book and its authors. The success of the book, which is supposed to be going into its 17th printing right now, and according to its publishers has had sales of half a million copies, is due more to clever journalism than to original source material. The two journalists, who had previously written detective stories and love stories for women's magazines, apparently decided in 1967 that parapsychology was a subject with which a lot of money could be made. They became regular visitors to the libraries of the parapsychological research societies in New York, which possess extensive material in the form of translations of the books and articles of Soviet scientists, and they read everything that they could find on parapsychology in the Soviet Union.

In 1968 the two journalists, representing themselves as American scientists, succeeded in attending a semiofficial conference on parapsychology in Moscow. They managed to meet with several scientists for informative conversations, but visited no laboratories and observed no experiments. (Even for genuine scientists that would have required a special permit.) In many cases the two women were asked by the scientists in question not to mention what they said, or at least not to give their names or the names of their institutes. When no interview was possible or only insignificant matters were discussed, they did not hesitate to use their own phantasy to make a story out of it

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that sounded more interesting than the truth. They also quoted published Soviet material freely, but dressed it up to appear as if they had gotten it themselves at first hand.

In publishing all the names and addresses and private opinions of certain scientists, Ostrander and Schroeder broke every rule of journalism, but sold a lot of books.

The scientists concerned never got to see what the women had written. After the book appeared, it was banned in the Soviet Union because of its anti-Soviet tone. Many scientists, nevertheless, were sharply critized for their "statements," several lost their jobs, and two especially unlucky ones were sent off for obscure reasons to labor camps.

The journalists did not offer a penny to help the out-of-work scientists whose frankness they had abused, and no textual corrections were incorporated in later editions. Unfortunately, this shabby job is often quoted as an authentic source with regard to Soviet psi research.

Nevertheless, Leontiyev, Zinchenko, Lomov, and Luriya concluded their article in the philosophical journal with a positive observation: "The Psychological Institute of the Soviet Academy of Sciences and the Soviet Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, as well as other psychological institutions, should concern themselves with the possibility of working out programs for a strictly scientific investigation of these phenomena." For that reason they favor the establishment of a state institute of parapsychology to replace the amateur research that exists today. They consider that a thorough study of psychology is needed by investigators, and that some fields, such, for example, as biophysical effects (divining rod research) should be investigated by specially trained researchers, perhaps by physicists and engineers, to "demystify" these phenomena. Parapsychology would then cease to exist as a separate discipline, and would be gradually "absorbed" by existing special fields of study, just as the "dermo-optical effect" (skin sight), for example, has been taken up in the psychology of perception as a rare but real phenomenon.

From Paraphenomena to Science

Many phenomena discussed in the five preceding articles of this series are designated today by western scientists as "paraphenomena." It is only a question of time, however, until such phenomena will be considered as belonging to a new, perhaps interdisciplinary science. The phenomenon of "ultraweak bioluminescence" is very probably one that will find its place in medicine in the future (see ESOTERA, 1977, No 1, 2, and 3). Dr Fritz Popp in his book "Biophoton," published by Verlag für Medizin Dr Ewald Fischer, Heidelberg, 1976, presents 10 "biological riddles" of this field of research, including 3 with "confirmed characteristics":

1. With few exceptions, such as some algae, bacteria, and protozoa, radiation has been detected in all plant and animal cells studied.

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2. The intensity of the radiation is of the order of magnitude of a few hundred to a thousand photons per cm^2 per second.

3. The energies of the photons radiated from the cell formation form a continuum in the spectral range of visible light up to the longwave ultraviolet limit. The maximal intensity is in the range of 550 nm (1 nanometer = 10^{-9} meters), which decreases constantly to a limit wavelength of 350 nm. The energy is in the range of 2.3 to 3.5 electron volts in the ultraviolet range.

And there are also some indications that:

4. The mitochondria generate ultraviolet radiation while consuming oxygen;

5. Special importance attaches to the fluorescence of tryptophan (an enzyme that is very important to vital processes) at 350 nm (3.5 eV);

6. Radiation influences cell division (Mitosis);

7. In contrast to bioluminescence, ultraweak luminescence is more marked in higher organisms than in organic species that are comparatively low phylogenetically;

8. Radiation is used for communication between the cells, and may possibly transmit genetic information;

9. Before mitosis the cells have the strongest emission, and a secondary radiation may also be generated in the tissue, which is propagated at some tens of meters per second;

10. Cancerous tissues are intensive sources of radiation.

Might these properties perhaps establish the connection between phenomena traditionally designated as parapsychology and the biology of the future?

For example, the capacity of the "hidden senses," called "cryptesthesia" by the french Nobel prize winner in physiology, Prof Ch. Richet, by which we understand ESP -- clairvoyance, telepathy, etc. -- may be based on weak biophotons, picked up by the experimental subject, which carry certain data.

In the same way, Soviet scientists have accepted the biophysical effect as a special sensitivity to "terrestrial radiations" which may be shown by the deflection of a divining rod or twig held in the hand.

Similar arguments can be advanced with regard to paradiagnosis, in which precise data on the diseases (including internal diseases) of a person may be obtained by a sensitive person (paragnostic). Here, again, biophotons may play a part.

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In the same way that clairvoyance may be explainable as a kind of "cell radiation" from living objects, telepathy might be regarded as "biological radiocommunication," as the Soviet radiation researcher B.B. Kazhinskiy called it in 1928. (His book "Biological Radiocommunication" was not published, however, until 1962.)

Kazhinskiy observed that various neural structures are startlingly similar to parts of a radio, such as tubes (triode tubes), inductive antenna elements, or condensers. The human body, therefore, or small components of it, may be regarded as biological resonators for electromagnetic waves, which presumably can be communicated over a certain distance.

In the 1960's the Moscow "Popov Society for Radiocommunication" supported a research program on biological communication under the direction of the Soviet radiation physicist Ippolet Kogan. Kogan developed a theory of how bioelectromagnetic waves generated by muscles or by the brain can be transmitted for short and medium distances through the air, in a straight line and even following the curvature of the earth, being reflected by the ionospheric layer like short waves.

Some experiments were done to test this theory. The results were published in 1967 and 1968 in the Soviet journal RADIOTEKHNIKA. But in 1973 the Moscow group was dissolved and it no longer exists. The concept of electromagnetic biocommunication remained, however, and is still worthy of research today. Here, too, biophotons may play an important part in the final explanation of the phenomena.

Domination of the Bioelectric Field

The problem of the fine tuning to the "cryptesthesia" or ESP of distant events includes the reception of biological signals. Psychokinesis or telekinesis, on the other hand, requires the radiation of energy outside the body. Could any field of biology explain this phenomenon equally well?

In 1972, at the Twentieth International Congress on Psychology, the American psychologist Stanley Krippner read a report by the Moscow physicist Viktor Adamenko on "Human Domination of the Bioelectric Field." Adamenko observed a kind of bioelectrostatic field around the human body, which can be used to move small objects at a certain distance. That is basically telekinesis, although the bioelectric energy has various unusual characteristics. Adamenko found that the experimental subject can be trained in such a way that he can control this bioelectric field by feedback of the voltage that exists between two acupuncture points in the subject's body. The voltage between the two acupuncture points was measured by means of a galvanometer, which showed by deflection whether the left or right side of the body (meridian) was more highly charged. Adamenko's wife Alla Vinogradova is also a trained PK subject for this bioelectric effect. The Russian houswife Nina Kulagina, whose name has become known in the West, also practices a kind of telekinesis, which may also be of an electrical nature with respect to the biofield.

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In Leningrad, Dr Pavel Guliyev (pupil of Kh.Kh. Vasil'yev; ESOTERA, 1977, No 4) has measured the bioelectric fields around insects, frogs, and birds as well as man. He uses a very sensitive, efficient probe that draws the outline of the biofield even at a distance of 2 meters; this drawing is called an "electroaurogram." It may be possible by studying the electroaurogram of a person who is in a state of mental concentration during a telekinesis experiment to learn more about the nature of the PK phenomenon.

It is not possible within the scope of this article to discuss exhaustively all the interesting research subjects that exist at present in this field in the Soviet Union. I will go into selected subjects later in individual contributions to ESOTERA.

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PHOTO CAPTIONS

1. p 494 Aleksey Nikolayevich Leontiyev, Director of the Psychology Department of the University of Moscow

2. p 495 Aleksandr Romanovich Luriya, Professor of Psychology at Moscow, calls for the integration of psi.

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