Reviving Red-Baiting


According to this important new book, the "left" is actively trying to destroy social morality in America, and has succeeded in at least one important sector: public mental health care. They describe vividly how that care has been wrecked, especially in New York, and the uncontrolled and seemingly uncontrollable mental patients who then engage in crimes, first against their families and then against society. Blaming this destruction on an anti-moral conspiracy by the "radical left," aided by civil libertarian anti-psychiatric attorneys, these authors claim that by the 1970s, "the left had been working on a variety of fronts to affirm the individual's freedom from standards of behavior imposed by the community."

Neither Isaac nor Armal has professional training nor experience in mental health care. They totally ignore the doctor-patient relationship, the therapeutic core of medical practice. Instead, they blindly trust psychiatry as a science imposing treatment upon patients rather than working with them. The concept that mental patients and others thinking differently from the majority are permanently and biologically different from the rest of us was central to Nazi ideology. Discovering those alleged biological differences was the rationale for the infamous "research" carried out in concentration camps upon Jews, communists, and gypsies. The authors say nothing of this.

The book omits much relevant information. After endorsing lobotomies, its discussion supporting electroshock cites the irrevocable harm caused by the late Dr. Ewen Cameron's mind-wrecking depatterning treatment of chronic paranoid schizophrenic patients, giving them 12 electroshock treatments per day [italics in original] for a total of up to 60 treatments. But the book fails to mention that some of these allegedly "chronic schizoaffective psychiatric patients" were really outstanding citizens, including the wife of a Jewish member of the Canadian Parliament and the father of a law student. The outstanding California psychiatrist, also Jewish, who had been hospitalized for mild schizoaffectiveness, that Cameron was a president of the American Psychiatric Association, and that his "treatments" were funded by the CIA.

NATHANIEL S. LEHRMAN

Recognizing Some Of Psychiatry's Errors

Dr. Marc Waldman, a resident in psychiatric training, claims that psychiatry is as much a science as any medical specialty [Jan. 5]. But his letter criticizing Grace Ann Inyard's earlier comments [Dec. 8] demonstrates that sometimes it is not. Science demands recognition and correction of past errors.

Ms. Inyard emphasized how lobotomies, so perceptively described in "Lingering Effects of Lobotomies of 40's and 50's" [Nov. 3] were among psychiatry's worst errors. Dr. Waldman responded by erroneously equating intent with effect and thus denying harm caused by the actions of these psychiatrists.

Let us hope Dr. Waldman's supervisors at Hillside Hospital-Long Island Jewish Medical Center will some day teach him also about the Nazi psychiatrists who murdered the patients they had sworn to heal; the Soviet psychiatrists who prostituted their professional skills for political ends; the CIA psychiatrists like Prof. Ewen Cameron of Montreal, a past president of both the American and World Psychiatric Associations, who destroyed unknowing patients with huge amounts of electroshock, and today's American psychiatrists, whose preoccupation with new medications has permitted the destruction within public psychiatry of continuity of care and the doctor-patient relationship, two indispensable aspects of effective treatment.

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