

## Russian medical historian and psychiatrist Mikhail Lakhtin (1869–1930)

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This article presents material on the life and work of medical doctor Professor M.Yu. Lakhtin. Having graduated from Moscow University's Medical Department in 1897, he made substantial contributions to the development of Russian science. One of the main fields of his scientific activity was the history of medicine. In 1901 Lakhtin began teaching as privatdozent at Moscow University's Department of the History of Medicine. On his initiative the department introduced a course on the history of Russian medicine. In his works on the history of surgery Lakhtin devoted special attention not to the operation methods but to the evolution of medical opinions and their influence on surgery. Being the author of a series of works on Russian medicine in the 17th–18th centuries, he published and introduced to the scientific community many archival documents related to medicine in pre-Petrine and post-Petrine Russia. Lakhtin actively translated into Russian foreign scientific publications in various fields. He collected and published extensive material on the history of the military-medical organization for assisting the wounded, on the development of hospital care and on surgical assistance to women in childbirth. He devoted special attention to the history of superstitions, prejudices and misconceptions related to diseases and to their analysis from the viewpoint of psychology and scientific outlooks. Lakhtin studied how various peoples in various eras interpreted obsession. He based his studies of the remnants of primitive outlooks in 20th-century society on scientific research conducted by his Western contemporaries. Of particular interest is his analysis of the symptoms of pathological altruism as a psychological disorder, which he observed in many cases both in life and in literature. As publisher and editor of a series of periodicals Lakhtin helped popularize the knowledge of medical psychology and psychiatry. He was a talented organizer of psychiatric aid to the mentally ill, in particular, to the soldiers and officers who had fought in the Russian-Japanese War and World War I. He also participated in the establishment of sanatoriums for the mentally ill and health insurance in Soviet Russia.

**Keywords:** *Mikhail Lakhtin, history of medicine, psychiatry, medical psychology*

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### About the author

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The modern reader knows next to nothing about Professor M.Yu. Lakhtin, MD (fig. 1). An incomplete list of his works can be found in the bibliographical index [1] compiled by D.M. Rossiysky in 1928. In 1931 a lengthy article by H. Zeiss appeared in German [2], in which there are a number of inaccuracies and in which the activity of M.Yu. Lakhtin is reflected in a fragmentary way. In M.K. Kuzmin's article dedicated to the Department of History of Medicine of the 1st MOLMI<sup>1</sup> [3], there is a small section on M.Yu. Lakhtin, who, according to the author, is responsible for “the initiative

of teaching history of Russian medicine at the Moscow University” [3, p. 729].

The purpose of this work is to present the main stages of M. Yu. Lakhtin's scientific life, based on the archival documents and his works, and to describe his contribution to science and the social life of Russia at the beginning of the 20th century.

Mikhail Yuryevich (patronymic varies as Georgievich or Egorovich) Lakhtin was born on November 6, 1869 (according to the old church calendar) in Moscow, to the family of the Honorary Citizen of the town of Podolsk Georgy Tikhonovich Lakhtin and his wife Olga Alekseevna.<sup>2</sup> The Lakhtin family comes from

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<sup>1</sup> The Russian abbreviation stands for the 1st Moscow Medical Institute, awarded the Order of Lenin, named after I.M. Sechenov.

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<sup>2</sup> Central State Archive of Moscow until 1917 F. 418, list 308, file 567. Order of the Student Inspection of the Imperial Moscow University on admission Mikhail Lakhtin as a student in 1890. Pp. 6, 7, 8.

the merchant class [4, pp. 81, 83, 94], and the surname is of Finnish origin. In Mikhail Lakhtin's student file there is a copy of the certificate issued on Dec. 30, 1867 by the Podolsky county Duma to his father, 48-year-old Yegor Tikhonovich Lakhtin, stating that he really "bears the title of Hereditary honorary citizen and has three sons and two daughters."

According to H. Zeiss, who knew M.Yu. Lakhtin personally, "at the age of 7 he spoke German better than Russian, which he owed to his old East Prussian nanny," and "at the age of eight the boy fell ill with a dangerous eye disease that almost cost him his eyesight" [2, p. 282].

M.Yu. Lakhtin graduated from the 4th Moscow Gymnasium school in 1890 and entered the Department of Natural Sciences of the Physics and Mathematics School of the Imperial Moscow University (IMU), graduating in May 1894 with a 1st-degree diploma. In the same year, at his request, M.Yu. Lakhtin was enrolled in the 3rd year at the medical faculty of the IMU and on October 16, 1897 was awarded the title of physician with honors. In his graduation certificate is the following postscript: "For the essay on The New Directions in the Therapy of Infectious Diseases was awarded the gold medal by the Faculty of Medicine in December 1895".<sup>3</sup> The essay was written during M.Yu. Lakhtin's work in the clinic of Professor V.D. Shervinsky, and the materials used in it became the basis of his first publication — the article "The newest trends in the doctrine of insusceptibility" [5], a critical analysis of academic works on immunity. Following this article in the *Medical Notes* journal, two more of his papers appeared: "History of penetration of syphilis into Europe" [6] and "Toxins and antitoxins according to the teachings of Roux, Mechnikov, et al." [7]. These

first publications show that after his student years the main direction of M. Lakhtin's scientific interests was the history of medicine. In these works, Lakhtin was referred to as Mikhail Georgievich, and in the works written after 1900 as Mikhail Yurievich.<sup>4</sup>

After graduating from the University M.Yu. Lakhtin served as a doctor for about a year on the construction of the Northern Railway, and from July 26, 1898, to December 12, 1899, at the military medical department. At the same time, he actively collaborated with the Moscow publishing house of A.I. Mamontov,<sup>5</sup> engaged in translations of foreign scientific publications. In 1900 he translated and published "Physics for Everybody" by J. Hopkins, "The Basics of Physiology" by M. Duvallé, "The Basics of Zoology" by K. Klaus and "The Maid of Orleans from the Point of View of Modern Psychiatry" by V. Hirsch.

While studying at the Medical Faculty of the IMU M.Yu. Lakhtin attended the lectures of Professor S.S. Korsakov and was fascinated by his new ideas.

From 1901 to 1903 he worked in a private psychiatric clinic (later he himself organized such an institution). During this period M.Yu. Lakhtin showed interest in the history of delusions and prejudices about the origin of mental illnesses and published the article "A Historical Sketch of the Doctrine of Obsession" [8]. At the heart of the doctrine of obsession, in his opinion, lies the view, characteristic of all primitive peoples, of the sick as a receptacle for evil spirits that govern the people in whose bodies they settle. This view was common in both antiquity and the Christian era. M.Yu. Lakhtin was the first to address the



Fig. 1. Lakhtin Mikhail Yuryevich (1928).  
From the personal archive of the author.

<sup>4</sup> Georgiy is a more aristocratic version of the name Georgiy, and Yuri became more popular at the turn of the century, hence the evolution of the patronymic. — *Translator's note.*

<sup>5</sup> Anatoly Ivanovich Mamontov (1839–1905) — book publisher, printer, translator, owner of bookstores in Moscow. The elder brother of Savva Ivanovich Mamontov.

<sup>3</sup> Central Moscow Archives pre 1917, f. 418, list 308, file 567, p. 22–24.

question of the attitude towards the mentally ill in medieval Russia, a topic that was later developed in many of his works.

At the same time M. Yu. Lakhtin was engaged in research on the history of surgery. He published a number of articles on this subject in various journals [9–13], most of them forming the basis of his doctoral thesis “Major operations in the history of surgery” [14]. The papers, as well as the thesis, deal mostly not with “technical” issues of surgical operations, but with the evolution of medical views and their impact on surgery, because, in his opinion, “the history of operational technology sheds little light on the evolution of general ideas.” In the introduction to the thesis he writes, “Relaying the history of large operations, I made an attempt at the same time to trace the great efforts that were made by mankind in search of hemostatic, analgesic and antiparasitic agents.” M. Lakhtin considered the introduction by A. Paré<sup>6</sup> of the ligature to stop bleeding during surgical operations to be the most important milestone in the history of surgery. To an even greater degree, in his opinion, the suffering of surgical patients was reduced by the discovery of pain relievers and antiparasitic agents. M. Lakhtin writes, “The process of historical evolution in the field of surgery consisted of replacing some methods of surgical treatment with other more humane ones, employing which the desire to prolong life and cure the disease did not become a new independent source of suffering” [14, p. III]. At the end of the preface, the author expresses “profound gratitude to Professor Lev Zakharovich Morokhovets” for the valuable advice and guidance that he “used in collecting and developing historical material” [14, p. IV].

Some of the materials on the history of surgery, not included in the thesis, were published by M. Lakhtin in 1901 in “Studies in the History of Surgery” [15]. In the foreword to this work the author writes, “The purpose of the present work is to highlight mainly those aspects of medical activity in the past, in which the main party was a surgeon. It is intended to complement the ‘Major Operations in the

History of Surgery’. The history of surgery and of surgeons are intertwined with such close ties that their joint consideration is certainly necessary for a correct understanding of both” [15, p. III].

The 1st chapter of “Studies” explores the social status of doctors from the earliest times to the early 19th century. The author emphasizes the original relationship of medicine with religion, which has survived at subsequent stages of cultural development. He notes that in ancient times “traumatic injuries ... stand alone, are not connected with religious beliefs and are treated by special healers, far removed from the priestly caste”. This special position of surgeons persisted until the 18th century.

The 2nd chapter examines the history of hospital care. The author pays much attention to the historical aspect of the attitude of society towards the sick and the wounded. M. Lakhtin points out that “paganism thought to save the world from suffering by destroying the suffering ones,” and compassion for the sick appeared only with the onset of the Christian era. In his record of the development of hospitals in different countries, M. Lakhtin ends with Russia: “The first independent hospitals in Russia appeared only in the late 17th century, namely in 1682 ... in Moscow two *shpitalnyas*<sup>7</sup>: one in the Znamensky Monastery, another in the Garnet Court at the Nikitsky Gate ...” [15, p. 109]. He gives interesting descriptions of hospitals in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The 3rd chapter deals with the history of military medicine. The author writes, “The history of the gradual development of humanitarian aspirations to alleviate the fate of wartime victims is closely related to the issues of the general culture of mankind” [15, p. 125]. In ancient times properly organized medical care was an exception; its formation can only be associated with the appearance of regular armies. A special chapter is dedicated to the military medical system of the Petrine and post-Petrine times [15, p. 161–191]. M. Yu. Lakhtin was the first to cite documents of the early 18th century, which he found in the Moscow archives of the Ministry of Justice, that deal with the medical

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<sup>6</sup> Ambroise Paré (born 1510–1590) – the famous French surgeon, who introduced the gripping of blood vessels with tools and their ligature and created his own methods of treating gunshot wounds.

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<sup>7</sup> An archaic Slavicized version of “hospital”. – *Translator's note.*

examination of various persons and demonstrate medication lists from the Military Office of 1703 [15, pp. 178–182]. In conclusion M.Yu. Lakhtin writes that the process of “creating a military medical organization” in Russia “culminated in the founding of the Military Medical Academy in 1798.”

One result of studying a variety of factual material on the history of medicine became “A brief biographical dictionary of famous doctors of all time” [16] compiled by Lakhtin. In the foreword the scholar notes that there was only one prior medical biographical dictionary in Russia, “compiled by Zmeyev about 15 years ago and devoted exclusively to Russian doctors,” whereas the new dictionary includes “biographies of doctors of all countries and times.” The “dictionary [does] not include ... the biographies of living Russian doctors due to the extreme difficulty of collecting the material for that matter.” Lakhtin’s dictionary contains 563 brief biographies, including 88 doctors who served in Russia since the times of Kievan Rus until the 20th century. The shortcomings of the dictionary include the fact that the amount of information presented about doctors is not always relative to their contribution to medicine and there is no indication of sources.

On March 15, 1901, M.Yu. Lakhtin filed a petition to the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the IMU to admit him to the defense of his doctoral thesis. Dean I.F. Klein issued a resolution: “Form a commission of L.Z. Morokhovets, P.I. Dyakonova, K.F. Klein.” In his review of Lakhtin’s thesis Professor L.Z. Morokhovets wrote, “The manuscript ... presented by the physician Mikhail Lakhtin ... deserves attention firstly because for many years it is the only work written by a pupil of Moscow University and specially dedicated to the historical theme... Turning to the evaluation of the merits of this manuscript, it should be noted that the author, focusing on an extremely interesting topic, carefully studied historical data not only on outstanding and secondary general works, but wherever he did not encounter insurmountable obstacles, he resorted to primary sources... In general, the author’s work presents a scientific and literary work not devoid of significant interest, written in good imaginative, literary language, and quite meeting the goal with which

it is presented to the faculty.”<sup>8</sup> At the end of the review is a postscript by P.I. Dyakonova and K.F. Klein on their agreement with the opinion of L.Z. Morokhovets. The thesis defense took place on May 8, 1901.

On November 7, 1901, Professor L.Z. Morokhovets filed a petition to the management of the IMU medical faculty to make Lakhtin a privatdozent<sup>9</sup> at the Department of the History of Medicine.<sup>10</sup> On January 31, 1902, the director of the Moscow Academic District announced that he permitted Mikhail Lakhtin, MD, to be included as a privat-docent at the Department of the History of Medicine of the Moscow University, for teaching of the non-compulsory course “Physicians and Medical Activity in the Past.”

On April 25, 1903, Lakhtin presented to the medical faculty of the IMU the program of the approved course. The 3rd section of this program was called “Development of medical practice in Russia” and included the following: 1) Data on medicine in the ancient patriarchal-pagan period; 2) Medicine in the religious-communal period; 3) Traces of the struggle between Christian and pagan medicine; 4) The era of the Tartar; 5) Medicine under the first tsars from the Romanovs’ house; 6) Reforms of Peter the Great; 7) Post-Petrine period; 8) Russian medicine in the 19th century.<sup>11</sup> Thus, M. Yu. Lakhtin was the first to offer to teach the full history of Russian medicine course to medical students of the Moscow University and to implement it in practice.

Joint activities of L.Z. Morokhovets and M. Lakhtin at the Department of History of Medicine were very fruitful. Lakhtin not only lectured, but also actively joined the collection of the museum of the history of medicine, created at the department in 1899, and helped

<sup>8</sup> Central Moscow Archives, pre-1917, 418–408–79. IMU Medical School file. Dissertation by Mikhail Lakhtin, applying for the degree of Doctor of Medicine, 1901.

<sup>9</sup> Privatdozent – in pre-revolutionary Russia, a teaching post which allowed those professors who weren’t in the staff of a university, to teach and deliver lectures after they submitted their dissertation.

<sup>10</sup> Central Moscow Archives, pre 1917, f. 418, list 409, doc. 35. IMU Medical School. On accepting Mikhail Lakhtin in the ranks of privatdozents.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.



L.Z. Morokhovets in the publication of the journal *Proceedings of the Department of History and the Encyclopedia of Medicine*. To explore the methods of teaching the history of medicine in European universities and medical-historical collections, Lakhtin traveled to Western Europe in the summer of 1902. In a note to the dean of the IMU Medical Faculty of February 28, 1902, L.Z. Morokhovets wrote, "It is my honor to ask Your Excellency to petition the authorities for sending the privat-docent of the History of Medicine department, Mikhail Yuryevich Lakhtin, to Germany, France and Austria on the coming summer break with academic purposes".<sup>12</sup>

Early in 1903 Lakhtin presented a report on his trip, which was published under the title "Auxiliary Means of Teaching and Studying the History of Medicine in Western Europe" [17]. In a separate article on the medical history section of the Nuremberg Museum Lakhtin writes that "the interest in the history of medicine in Western cultural centers has been growing very rapidly lately. It is expressed in the establishment of medico-historical societies, museums, magazines, in organizing congresses, exhibitions, etc." [18]. Mikhail Yurievich gives a detailed account of the medico-historical department at the Nuremberg Museum, noting that "medical and historical collections in Nuremberg are the glory of the entire German museum and enjoy well-deserved renown in the entire medical world." The author also describes the collection of Reber's medico-pharmaceutical museum in Geneva, the Hamonic medico-historical collection in Paris and the medical history museum in Lyon.

Lakhtin also mentions periodicals on the history of medicine that came out at that time in Europe, noting that the oldest among them was *Janus*, published in Amsterdam.

He writes that the International Congress of Physicians, held in 1893 in Rome, was significant for the history of medicine. There, R. Virchow pointed out the continuity between modern views and teachings of the 16th century. M.Yu. Lakhtin noted that at the congresses of German naturalists and doctors a special section

was allocated to the history of medicine, and they usually hosted historical exhibitions, the main purpose of which was "bringing together various exhibits of medical antiquity." Particularly interesting was the medico-historical exhibition, organized in 1898 in Dusseldorf during one such congress. According to M. Yu. Lakhtin, "of great interest was also the medico-historical section at the general exhibition in Turin, which took place in 1897, solely dedicated to the history of Italian medicine" [17, p. 33].

The last section of the report speaks about medico-historical societies in Europe. In 1899, at the physicians congress in Munich, it was decided to found the Society for History and Geography of Medicine, and the final establishment took place in 1901 at the German physicians and naturalists congress in Hamburg. In early 1903, following the example of German historians of medicine, the French Society for the History of Medicine was founded in Paris. Lakhtin cites brief excerpts from the charters of the German and French medical history societies and claims that "the total number of members of the French society currently reaches 141, the German is 150 people" [17, p. 37]. In 1903, Mikhail Yuryevich himself was elected a member of the German Society of Medical History and Geography.

From 1902 M. Yu. Lakhtin turned almost exclusively to the study of history of Russian medicine. His lengthy work "Studies in the history of medicine" [19], published in 1902, to some extent repeats his "Studies in the history of surgery" of 1901 [15], except for the first section, which speaks about physicians, not surgeons. The subject of his two short papers of 1902 is Russian medicine of the 17th-18th centuries: the first is on pharmaceutical therapy in Russia in the 17th century [20], and the second is on pathological anatomy in Russia in the 18th century [21].

M.Yu. Lakhtin notes that in 17th-century Russia medics were obliged to put in the form of protocol all their prescriptions and prescribed medications, which, with the signature and seal of the clerk, were sent for approval to the Apothecary Office. He writes, "Working for a long time in the Moscow archive of the Armory Chamber, I retrieved from it a number of records containing a detailed listing of medications prescribed at different times, indicating the

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<sup>12</sup> Central Moscow Archives pre 1917, f. 418, list 409, doc. 16. IMU Medical School. Overseas Travel. P. 6.

way they were used. Many of these drugs are completely fantastic; others, on the contrary, stayed in medicine to the present day” [20]. In this article, the author provides samples of original manuscript texts of 4 prescriptions and 10 transcribed texts.

In the second article, Lakhtin speaks about the design of the Anatomical Museum in Saint Petersburg, which “served as the beginning, the main germ of the whole subsequent setting of anatomical pathology research and teaching in Russia [21]. It was based on a unique collection of anatomical preparations purchased by Peter I in Amsterdam from the famous anatomist Ruysch for 30,000 guilders.” To ensure the further development of the museum, Peter I issued a decree ordering to send “monsters” from all over Russia to Saint Petersburg. Lakhtin cited this and subsequent decrees of Peter’s and spoke about the problems that arose in their execution.

By 1903 M.Yu. Lakhtin had established himself as a fine speaker and publicist, speaking at the annual meeting of the Therapeutic Society at the University of IMU on “The Public and Medicine” [22, 23]. His report notes that the press had “recently been given a lot of attention to medical issues,” while “the accusatory tone” dominated, but “attacks on medicine [were] not new; they have been at all times and almost all peoples” [23, p. 927]. One of the reasons for this attitude towards medicine, in M. Lakhtin’s opinion, was its historical connection with religion, as well as the almost religious belief in the possibilities of science and medical aid. Another reason for the attacks was, according to Lakhtin, “the unprecedented development of charlatanism,” in which he included homeopathy and sorcery, “with impunity exploiting ... the trust and ignorance of the sick”: “How many people with tuberculosis, malignant tumors and other similar diseases die only because, moving from one witch doctor to another, too late fall into the hands of medical professionals.” M. Yu. Lopatin believed that “medicine in modern society is a social science ... which has a predominant role in regulating social relations.” At the end of the speech, he noted that modern doctors unduly neglect the history of medicine.

During the Russo-Japanese War, M.Yu. Lakhtin organized a private hospital in Moscow for mentally ill soldiers, financed by

donations. It opened on May 4, 1905, and was run by the Special Committee for Assistance to Warriors, organized by Grand Duchess Elizaveta Fedorovna. In his report on the clinic activities M. Yu. Lakhtin wrote, “The need to do something for the unfortunate victims of the war, brought by its horrors to mental illness, became obvious when alarming news began to come from the theater of war about an increasing number of mental illnesses outbreaks. None of the previous wars had as many mentally ill people as in the last Russian-Japanese war, and therefore the practice of previous wars was not usable in organizing assistance for the mentally ill during wartime” [24]. He noted that the psychiatric departments of military infirmaries were very soon full, and the number of patients in them was several times higher than the number of beds. Therefore, he took upon himself the “initiative to establish a temporary psychiatric facility for mentally ill soldiers.” The hospital was located on the premises of the former private psychiatric clinic of Professor S.S. Korsakov. Academic supervision was entrusted to the privat-docent of the university psychiatric clinic S.A. Sukhanov, who organized the extra-curricular psychiatric courses there. All staff, except for the doctor who lived permanently in the hospital, worked for no pay. M. Lakhtin’s medical report contains data on the number of patients and bed-days for various forms of mental illness. Patients were classified according to a number of indicators (age, marital status, ethnicity, class, etc.).

In 1906 Lakhtin published the essay “Medicine and doctors in the Moscow State (in pre-Petrine Russia)” [25]. In the foreword, he notes, “The current work is written on the basis of acts and cases that I found in the Moscow Archives of the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs and the Imperial Court. Some of the documents I found are of great interest, since they shed light on many controversial issues in the history of medicine.” The book consists of eight chapters and an appendix with a list of files stored in the Moscow branch of the Ministry of the Imperial Court Archives.

The first chapter, “Russian medicine before the accession of the Romanovs’ house,” considers the main periods of the development of Russian medicine from the time of paganism to the 17th century. Lakhtin writes that in the pre-Christian

period all diseases were attributed to supernatural forces, the mystery of which was exposed to sorcerers, miracle workers, magicians, witch doctors, warlocks, etc. Christianity changed only the form of belief in supernatural intervention in diseases without touching its essence. The first medical manuscript, the first pharmacy and the first forensic medical examination appeared only in the 16th century.

The second chapter deals with the activities of foreign doctors in Russia. Lakhtin writes that the 17th century was a preparatory period before Russia's inclusion in the family of European states [25, p. 10]. Already during the reign of Mikhail Fedorovich, foreign physicians were so numerous that the Russian government could choose whom to hire. The financial situation of foreign doctors who lived in the 17th century in Moscow was very good.

In the 3rd chapter Lakhtin describes the Russian medicine men of the 17th century and their social and material situation, which was much lower than that of their foreign colleagues, as well as the system of teaching the medicinal craft. It is also reported that in the late 17th century physicians were already practicing privately.

Chapter 4 focuses on the care of sick and wounded Russian soldiers in the 17th century. The author reports that in the second quarter of the 17th century many regiments, especially foreign, had their own doctors, but only in time of war [25, p. 54]. He cites numerous excerpts from archival documents about doctors in the Russian army, starting from 1658 [25, p. 57].

The 5th chapter describes how diseases in 17th-century Russia were recognized and treated. At that time all medical appointments and prescribed medications were recorded in the protocol, which was kept in the Apothecary Office.

Chapter 6 describes the activities of the Apothecary Office and the arrangement of the first Moscow pharmacies.

Chapter 7 describes the preparation of medicinal herbs in the Moscow state. Description of medicinal plants is the main content of folk medicine books, so-called herb-books, tree-books, flower-books etc. Herb-books [*travniks*] represent one of the most interesting types of handwritten folk literature. Based on archival documents, Lakhtin established that the

collection of herbs in the 17th century occupied an important place in the complex system of public service obligations.

The 8th and last chapter contains data on the situation of the mentally ill in Moscow Rus, which, in the author's opinion, is one of the "darkest pages of the history of Russian medicine" [25, p. 102]. It was believed that the mentally ill were possessed by demons and should be under the supervision of the Church. "Evil people" could, according to the concepts of the time, "hex" others, as a result of which people "crumbled in the mind." Lakhtin quotes excerpts from archival documents about "finding and punishing" the jinx perpetrators. These fragments are amazing in their cruelty.

M.Yu. Lakhtin was not the first to turn to archival materials when studying the history of medicine in Russia. Earlier, V. Richter [26] had done the same in his work "The History of Medicine in Russia" [26], and Y.A. Chistovich had used them widely when collecting materials for his extensive treatise. However, Lakhtin significantly supplemented the information (especially relating to the 17th century) presented by his predecessors, and also corrected errors and inaccuracies in their works.

Lakhtin considered the publication of archival documents on the history of medicine to be one of his main missions. In the collection "Materials on the history of medicine in Russia" he put together and published the most valuable sources on the history of Russian medicine, which were stored in the Moscow archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [28]. He writes, "These documents contain mainly information about foreign physicians who came to work in Russia..." Documents about foreign doctors in Russia, their autobiographies and reports of officials to their superiors are listed chronologically in the collection.

In 1912 he published "Materials on the History of Psychiatry in Russia" [29], a collection of archival documents "relating to the situation of the mentally ill in pre-Petrine Russia." Lakhtin points out that the materials reflect the deep misunderstanding, common in the past, of the mental state of those "crumbling in the mind," who "were treated now as seers and ascetics, now as criminals against the Church and the state." In the preface he writes, "In the 17th



century everyone lived in fear of being accused of insulting Majesty, and the individuals especially anxious about those matters ... on the onset of mental illness ... began to see and hear exactly what they were most afraid of in visual and auditory hallucinations... I would like to express my hope that the documents published by me are not without interest for psychiatrists as well, since the history of Russian psychiatry is still an area barely explored.”

In March 1907 there appeared a new monthly journal, *Modern Psychiatry*,<sup>13</sup> edited by P.B. Gannushkin and M. Yu. Lakhtin, with the participation of A.N. Bernstein, V.A. Muratov and S.A. Sukhanov. The journal covered issues of theoretical, clinical and public psychiatry. In 1907 and 1908 it ran an advertisement for M. Lakhtin’s psychiatric clinic (fig. 2). In 1907, *Modern Psychiatry* published an article by Lakhtin in which he criticized the French bill on the mentally ill [30]. In a declaration published at the end of 1908, the “editorial circle” states that the journal was intended “to put the investigative study of mental illnesses in place of the descriptive study... to bring an objective analysis and experimental principles into the study ... to bring back the doctrine of mental illnesses from the field of philosophical and sociological wanderings to the path of general pathological and biological study” [31]. But it was these “sociological wanderings” that interested M.Yu. Lakhtin the most. Having worked for two years, M.Yu. Lakhtin resigned from the editorial board of the journal, apparently because of disagreements with P.B. Gannushkin.

From 1908 to 1909, by decision of the medical faculty, Lakhtin taught a compulsory course on the history and encyclopedia of medicine in the place of Professor L.Z. Morokhovets, who was often ill during this period.

In his historical studies M. Lakhtin paid particular attention to the theme of the “possessed”. In 1910, he made a report at a meeting of the Psychological Society [32] in which he developed his article of 1901 on obsession. His main idea was that “the belief in being possessed by an evil spirit is usually in the closest dependence on the religious beliefs of the people, from the mythology

<sup>13</sup> Published in 1907–1917, known as Dr. Gannushkin’s Journal.

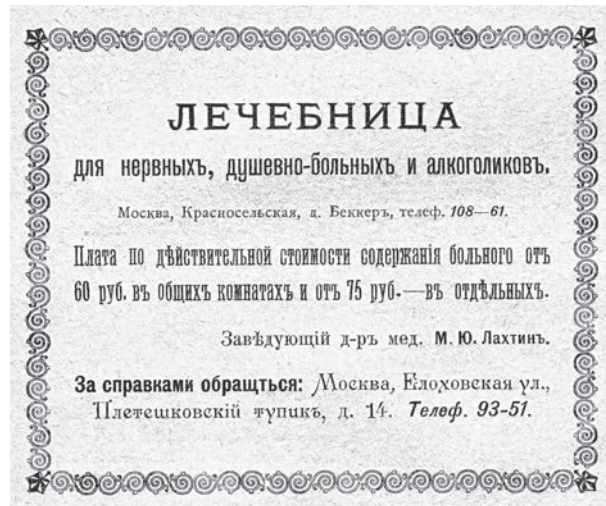


Fig. 2. Advertisement of Lakhtin’s clinic for the mentally ill (“Contemporary Psychiatry”, 1907, No. 6. Reverse side of the title page).<sup>14</sup>

that exists among it” [32, p. 3]. Lakhtin notes, “By the appearance of Christianity, the belief in obsession with dark forces, evil spirits, had reached unprecedented proportions... In the first centuries of Christianity there was an increase in cases of demonic possession, i.e. a mental disorder in which the patient believed that he was inhabited by one or even several demons. Exorcism was also widely proliferated.” Turning to the history of Russia, M.Yu. Lakhtin concludes that “the 17th century, [a period of] religious hysteria, ... has the pre-eminent right to be called the age of witch trials” [32, p. 7].

In 1911 M.Yu. Lakhtin was elected an honorary member of the Archaeological Institute and awarded their prize for the book *Ancient Records of Medical Literature*, which presents the text of an old medicine book preserved in the Moscow Patriarchy Library. This is the only work of Mikhail Yurievich republished in our time [33]. It required great effort on Lakhtin’s part: he had to read the handwritten texts of the 17th century and translate them into modern Russian.

In September 1911 M. Yu. Lakhtin spoke at the First Congress of the Russian Union of

<sup>14</sup> Translation of text in Fig. 2: Hospital for the mentally unstable and mentally affected, and alcohol addicts. Moscow, Krasnoselskaya str., d. Bekker, telephone 108-61. Fee according to the actual cost of patient care starting with 60 rubles in a general ward and with 75 rubles in separate wards. Head of the hospital — doctor M.Yu Lakhtin. For additional information: Pleteshkovsky alley, 14, Yelohovskaya str., Moscow. Telephone: 93-51.



Psychiatrists and Neuropathologists, convened in memory of S.S. Korsakov in Moscow, with a report “From the history of Russian psychiatry.” He focused on the activity of monasteries in charitable care for the mentally ill in the 11th-17th centuries and concluded that the situation of those patients in the monasteries had left much to be desired [34].

In 1912, according to his biography, Lakhtin was appointed advisory member of the Moscow Medical Department for Psychiatry.<sup>15</sup> In April 1912, the journal *Problems of Psychiatry and Neurology* went into print, edited by Lakhtin as well. The following persons were invited to the editorial committee: V.I. Semidalov and S.A. Sukhanov (on psychiatry) and A.M. Greenstein, V.E. Dzerzhinsky and M.A. Zakharchenko (on neurology). In 1912 they published two articles by Lakhtin, which addressed the legal and philosophical aspects of mental disorders. In the article on sanity Lakhtin touches on a number of issues of forensic medical examination: “From the medical point of view, there are different degrees of sanity... As all mankind can not be divided into healthy and sick, so it can not be divided into responsible and insane, and there are still persons with reduced sanity, caused by greater or lesser deviation of their neuro-mental organization from the norm” [35].

In his article on pathological altruism Lakhtin points out that “the instability of the neurocerebral organization ... often leads to mental illness. But this refinement and instability is the basis on which an outstanding talent develops, manifested not only in artistic revelations and scientific creativity, but also in great deeds of altruism” [36]. In his opinion, “the hypertrophy of an altruistic feeling is never an isolated phenomenon — it is always accompanied by a disorder in other aspects of psychic life.” A characteristic feature is the desire to sacrifice oneself in order to “make mankind happy,” and the “altruistic rush of the mentally ill sometimes leads to tragic consequences.” He finds examples in the works of Leo Tolstoy, Henrik Ibsen and Fyodor Dostoevsky and in periodicals: “The life

and activity of many anarchists, as they’re viewed from legal proceedings, are of great interest in this respect. Most of them are spirited dreamers, ready to sacrifice themselves for others, and they commit murders for the sole purpose of hastening the onset of a utopian social order” [36, p. 9]. Lakhtin refers to Joan of Arc as an example of the mentally ill who consider themselves instruments in the hands of a higher power.

In 1913, two historico-culturological papers by Lakhtin were published in *Problems of Psychiatry and Neurology*. In the first one — “Superstition in life and in clinical studies” — he defines the notion of “superstition”: “Only what contradicts the prevailing views of nature should be defined as superstition... From this point of view, the belief of ancient peoples in miracles does not give us the right to consider them superstitious” [37]. He believed that “the spread of demonological beliefs was especially prominent by the end of the ancient world,” and “the other no less significant epoch are the Middle Ages, marked by the frantic pursuit of imaginary witches.” Lakhtin writes, “The vitality of superstition is explained by the fact that to this day many people think in the same way as their ancestors thought in the 16th and 17th centuries... The lower the spiritual level of a person... the more inclined he is to superstition in religion, politics, private life” [37, p. 295]. Superstitions of pathological origin, which “often affect people of the highest spiritual culture” [37, p. 296], belong, according to him, to a special category.

In his work “Suffering as a source of human beliefs” Lakhtin appears as a philosopher and historian of religion [38]. He believed that “Religion has the highest influence on life of the prehistoric tribes ... since the idea of supernatural intervention fills all of their consciousness. In ancient times, religious beliefs ... can be considered as the first hypotheses about man and the universe, and in this respect they precede scientific knowledge” [38, p. 485]. He writes, “Religions arise, develop and fall, depending on how much they are needed and useful to the person professing them. This is their main life value... If... we should consider only what is most characteristic of religious beliefs, then we will have to admit that they are meant to reconcile man ... both with the suffering born out of social relations, and with that caused by the struggle of man with nature, diseases...

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<sup>15</sup> Central Moscow Archives past 1917. F. R-726. Op. 4. D. 77. Medical Institute of Moscow. Research papers by Professor Lakhtin M.Y. History of Medicine department, 1921. L. 1.

To mitigate individual protest against the world's cruelty, inexplicable to the human mind, is what religious beliefs are called for" [38, p. 488]. In most religious systems, according to Lakhtin, there lies a vague expectation of a better future. Thanks to this, "there is a close connection that exists between the present and future generations of people. Accepting this world's sufferings for the sake of otherworldly goods, mankind creates the conditions necessary to prolong life and to raise its level here on earth" [38, p. 491].

Lakhtin's journal *Questions of Psychiatry and Neurology* ceased to exist in 1914 with the outbreak of the First World War. In the Chronicle section of the last (July) issue the editors ran a report on the organization of two psychiatric hospitals in Moscow for mentally ill soldiers and officers: "On August 26, the All-Russian Union of Zemstvos<sup>16</sup> opened a Psychiatric Hospital for 120 people in a well-equipped space (Krasnoselskaya street, the house of Prince Cantacuzene Count Speransky). A 'pavilion system' permits officers and lower ranks to be placed separately and the mentally ill to be grouped in general according to the nature of their disease... Within the next 15–20 days, another psychiatric infirmary for 100 people, created by the Society of the Kazan road, is to be opened. The hospital of the Kazan road meets the most stringent requirements of psychiatric science and practice... The organization of both psychiatric infirmaries is entrusted to M. Yu. Lakhtin, who serves as the Commissioner of both the All-Russian Zemstvo Organization and the Society of the Kazan Railway... Direct care for the mentally ill lies with the nurses of the St. Nicholas community psychiatric group" [39, p. 334]. The article also states the intention to open two more psychiatric infirmaries in the near future in Moscow and its environs for the mentally ill coming from the front.

In 1914 M. Yu. Lakhtin published in the journal *Le Physiologiste Russe*<sup>17</sup> a lengthy article in German, "The study of medicine in Russia before the founding of universities" [40], which describes in detail the history of medical

<sup>16</sup> Zemstvo was a form of local government in the Russian Empire.

<sup>17</sup> The journal *Le Physiologiste Russe* was edited by Professor L.Z. Morokhovets from 1898 to 1914 in German and French and was intended for the popularization of Russian medical science abroad.

education in Russia from ancient times to the creation of the Moscow Medical and Surgical Academy in 1842. In his research, he uses not only the data that other authors cite (J.A. Chistovich, A.N. Alelekov), but also numerous archival documents. Almost all of his works on the history of medicine, written in 1903–1914, Lakhtin published in German in various foreign journals.<sup>18</sup>

During the First World War Lakhtin was engaged in the organization of psychiatric assistance to servicemen. From his autobiography we learn that in 1914 he was appointed chief physician of the 81st evacuation hospital for mentally ill soldiers, which was placed in the famous house that used to belong to the merchant N.V. Igumnov (Bolshaya Yakimanka street, 43).

M. Yu. Lakhtin accepted the October Revolution as a historical inevitability [2, p. 290]. At first he worked in the Moscow Department of Health, where he was in charge of organizing a sanatorium treatment for patients with nervous and mental diseases. Later, he attained the position of an expert in neurology and psychiatry at the Medical Consultation Commission of the Moscow Regional Social Insurance Committee.

M. Yu. Lakhtin resumed teaching at the newly established State Higher Medical School,<sup>19</sup> where he was elected a professor in the Department of the History of Medicine on March 25, 1921.<sup>20</sup> However, he worked there only two years: the department was closed, and in 1924 the institute itself was abolished. Lakhtin turned to medical practice: documentary evidence indicates that in 1928 he worked as a district psychiatrist with patients in the psychiatric hospital named after P.P. Kashchenko.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> H. Zeiss lists these publications in his article. See [2].

<sup>19</sup> The State Higher Medical School (1919–1924), renamed the Moscow Medical Institute in 1923, was located in the building of the Lefortovo Military Hospital. Its rector in 1919–1923 was the famous neuropathologist Professor Liverii Osipovich Darkshevich (1858–1925). In 1924, the institute became a part of the Faculty of Medicine of the 2nd Moscow State University.

<sup>20</sup> Central Moscow Archives after 1917. F. R-276. Op. 4. D. 77. Moscow Medical Institute. Research papers by Professor Lakhtin M.Y. 1921. Department of the History of Medicine. P. 1–14.

<sup>21</sup> Central State Archives of the Moscow Region. F. 842. Op. 2. D. 129. Medical personnel employed in the bodies of special insurance. 1928. L. 5–6.

In the Soviet period M. Yu. Lakhtin did not publish much. In 1921, a single copy of “Psychology of the Russian People,” on which he worked for 20 years, perished in a fire at the sanatorium where he worked [2, p. 285].

In 1928 Lakhtin published a brief report on the international congresses on the history of medicine held in Europe in 1920, 1921, 1922 and 1927 [41]. According to him, international congresses are evidence that “the history of medicine ... is beginning to come to the fore and claims an equal position with the basic medical disciplines.” In the same year, Lakhtin published the article “New Paths in Psychopathology” [42], in which the latest works of foreign psychologists and ethnologists exploring the connection of early forms of thinking with certain mental disorders were introduced to Soviet readers. In the first section, “Thinking and Experiences of the Primitive Man,” he dwells on the basic features of primitive psychology. In his opinion, the general principles of primitive thinking were most thoroughly explored by L. Levy-Bruhl,<sup>22</sup> who defined it as pre-logical and mystical. Another feature of primitive thinking is the collective nature of notions. The study of these and other features of primitive psychology was developed in the teachings of S. Freud<sup>23</sup> who “extrapolated the data of comparative psychology of peoples to the dark region of psychotic states of the human mind ... [and was] the first who pointed to that exceptional role that belongs to the affectivity in associative thinking of both a savage and a psychoneurotic” [42, p. 158]. S. Freud believed that “the primitive mind takes its own thoughts for the phenomena of external nature, and external, natural laws are being replaced with the internal psychological. He projects his feelings and affects outwardly, and the world becomes filled with sorcery, magic,

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<sup>22</sup> Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1857–1939) – French philosopher, anthropologist and ethnologist. Professor at Sorbonne, a member of the Academy of Moral and Political Science. The founder of the Institute of Ethnology of the University of Paris, known for his theory of primitive “prelogical” thinking.

<sup>23</sup> Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) – an outstanding Austrian psychologist and psychiatrist, the founder of psychoanalysis, the theory of unconscious mental activity. Graduated from the Medical School of the University of Vienna (1881) and was Professor of Neuropathology (1902).

spirits, demons, personifying his own mental processes” [42, p. 160]. In the second section, “The Remains of the Primitive Worldview in Modern Civilization”, Lakhtin shows that “the remnants of animistic ideas are interspersed with the world of modern cultural peoples in abundance ... they are preserved in legends, fairy tales, sayings, superstitions and most strikingly in myths, in which the experience of a long series of generations is focused” [42, p. 164]. In the third section, “The recovery of primitive mental mechanisms in schizophrenia and psychoneurosis”, he cites examples from observations of mental patients, in particular those made by C.G. Jung.<sup>24</sup> In the conclusion of the article Lakhtin writes, “The above new concepts in psychiatry testify to how far modern psychopathology has gone from previous descriptive methods” [42, p. 172].

The last work by Lakhtin, “Medical Thinking of a Primitive Man” [43], largely repeats the first part of “New ways in psychopathology” [42]. He concludes that “only in the eighteenth century was the inductive method firmly established in science, based on the principle of ascent from firmly established facts to general concepts” [43, p. 12].

According to the obituary compiled by M. Yu. Lakhtin’s colleagues [44], he passed away on July 12, 1930. Unfortunately, however, the obituary contains a substantial amount of unreliable information.<sup>25</sup>

M. Yu. Lakhtin made a significant contribution to the study and popularization of the history of medicine, and Russian medicine in particular. He published archival documents and was the first to teach the course of the history of Russian medicine at the medical faculty of Moscow University. M. Yu. Lakhtin made many efforts to organize psychiatric care for the mentally ill in Russia. As the publisher and editor of a number of periodicals, he popularized the knowledge of medical psychology and psychiatry. Many of his works retain their relevance in the present day.

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<sup>24</sup> Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) – a Swiss psychiatrist, the founder of analytical psychology. Professor of Psychology in Zurich (1933). Follower of S. Freud.

<sup>25</sup> For example, it says that Lakhtin went to the All Soviet Congress of Neuropathologists and Psychiatrists in Leningrad in 1930. Such a congress was never held.

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