

I.P. Pavlov: a scholar and authority

Nikita Yu. Pivovarov¹, Nataliya P. Shok²

¹The Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, Moscow
12 Ilyinka St., entrance 8, Moscow, 103132, Russia

²I.M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University, The Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation
8 Trubetskaya St., building 2, Moscow, 119991, Russia

Using an analysis of archival materials about academic I.P. Pavlov, the authors of the article propose that the historical and biographical information about this leading scientist can present a fuller picture not only of an individual specialization but of medical science in general. The relationship is examined between I.P. Pavlov and the leadership of the Soviet state, which had a particular influence on the development of Russian science in 1920–1930s. The reasons why government representatives allowed him to openly criticize the USSR's domestic and foreign policies are analyzed. The article reveals I.P. Pavlov's main personality traits, which influenced his scientific and political views. Academic Pavlov was forthright, and freely expressed his opinion on a variety of issues, including decisions of the Soviet authorities. However, the authors believe that he did not have political goals: his motives were purely scientific. I.P. Pavlov had a significant influence on the formation of a new concept of scientific medicine based on innovative experimental techniques suggested by him. He managed not only to create a new scientific field in medicine but also ensured its development in the first decades of Soviet power. The authors also note that I.P. Pavlov asserted national science priorities at the international level. It is concluded that studying his biographical data, based on a multidisciplinary approach and working with archival materials, can provide valuable data for future medical history analysis.

Keywords: *history of medicine, I.P. Pavlov, the history of experimental psychology, the Bolsheviks and fundamental science*

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About the authors

Nikita Yurievich Pivovarov – Candidate of Historical Sciences, Chief Specialist, the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (Moscow).

Nataliya Petrovna Shok – Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor at the Department of the History of Medicine, National History and Culturology, I.M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University, The Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation (Moscow).

Academic Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849–1936) became an iconic figure in domestic medicine and was the founder of the theory of higher nervous system activity.¹ Soviet historiography declared him a standard-bearer for science, and all his achievements were the property of the Soviet people. The ideologized image of the scientist came about under the influence of the decisions taken at the joint scientific session of the Academy of Sciences and Academy of Medical Sciences of the USSR

in 1950, better known as the “Pavlovian” session. As a result, Pavlov was transformed into the perfect Soviet scientist – a tireless fighter who worked for the good of the country and the party.

A new approach to Pavlov's personal identity and activities appeared during perestroika. [3, 4]. Researchers paid particular attention to the complicated history of relations between the scientist and the party leadership. At that time, literature reflected the opinion that the academician was an implacable antagonist of Soviet power and was consistently critical of the regime. This point of view is extremely popular in foreign historiographies. This is most fully revealed in the seminal monograph by the history

¹ For more details about Pavlov's scientific achievements, see [1, p. 195–199; 2, p. 31–70].

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of medicine professor D. Todes, who spent more than 20 years working on his biography of the famous scientist. The most colourful and interesting moments in the book are devoted to the Soviet period of Pavlov's life. Todes described the academic as a "prosperous dissident" and one of "the few public and independent voices" in the Soviet political system [5].

However, Pavlov's "dissident" image, established in modern Russian and foreign historiographies, is not exhaustive. Relations between the scientist and the Soviet regime can be considered in the context of the state administration of science in the Soviet Union. In this case, we should shift our point of view from their opposition to the attempt to find points of common interest and an analysis of the socio-political conditions necessary for the development of science. In order to shed light on this general theme, an analysis needs to be conducted on specific issues of Pavlov's personality and outlook, which, of course, influenced the formation of the scientist's worldview and his socio-political views. Pavlov had all the markings of a scientific leader. He not only played a significant role in the creation of new research methods in the field of the nervous system's influence on the activity of internal organs, but was also the author of a new theory for the working of the digestive system, and overall had an impact on the formation of a new identity for scientific medicine based on innovative experimental techniques. Pavlov's methodology was based on his understanding of the body as an entire system. However, he noted that the lack of a scientifically grounded integrated study of digestive functions was primarily due to the fact that "the idea of the body as a whole system is not strongly rooted enough in us" [6, p. 418]. He was convinced that only experiments could provide the data needed to understand "the complete significance of the disease process mechanism from start to finish" [6, p. 275–276]. His interest in the problem of establishing the causes of diseases, which were the methodological and ideological basis for the teaching of etiology, pathogenesis and the treatment and prevention of diseases, allowed him to pay attention to the constant connection between phenomena and a certain inner attitude that influenced the experimental method in medicine that he created. As Pavlov stated,

"method holds research's fate in its hands," it "is foremost, the main thing." [6, p. 25–26]. It was namely these two important circumstances – a focus on the causal link and an emphasis on the role of method – that enabled Pavlov to take an in-depth approach to the understanding of the laboratory experiment's role in medicine [2]. He wrote: "In the overall picture of a disease, only a laboratory experiment is capable of precisely distinguishing the body's important intakes and any compensation for that which is lost... i.e. primary damage, and further on, its consequences ...only an experiment can iterate and evaluate all the true causes of the diseased state. This is because it starts from a reason, which deliberately leads to action" [6, p. 275–276]. Pavlov made an invaluable contribution to the development of medicine, physiology and pathology of higher nervous system activity. He possessed talent as an organizer of science. The example set by Pavlov can help us not only to better understand Soviet science and scientists' relationship with the government, but also to more fully recreate the research picture for the field of physiology and medicine in the USSR in the 1920–1930s.

Sources

In the course of this research, new documents were examined and analyzed. One of the main research sources was materials from the Politburo of the CPSU(b)'s (Central Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) work on the topic – "On Academic I.P. Pavlov," which for many years was kept in the largely inaccessible to researchers Archive of the President of the Russian Federation and was only recently transferred to the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RSACH).² The core of this work consisted of two types of documents – extracts from the decisions of higher party organs and accompanying materials such as discretionary notes, memos, certificates, draft regulations. In Pavlov's case there are numerous Unified State Political Department People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs notes, and his letters to government officials. All of these sources contain new facts

² In 1995, only a letter from Pavlov to V.M. Molotov and a short NKVD message to Stalin dated December 21, 1934 were published from the Politburo's work on the subject from the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation [8].

from the scientist's biography, which not only provide a different view of his relationship with the Bolsheviks, but also a more complete picture of the conditions under which he worked.

Another important source was the recollections of Professor Maria Kapitonovna Petrova — Pavlov's closest student and associate. Researchers have repeatedly referred to these memoirs and published some of their passages, but seldom analyzed them as a whole. [9–11]. Petrova's notes, which are held in the RSACH and with which the authors have worked, consists of five handwritten notebooks. From the beginning of the 1930s she probably kept notes on Pavlov³ that have not survived. It remains an open question as to whether she planned to publish her notes or keep them to herself. After her death in 1948, the manuscript was transferred to Leningrad's M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library (the present-day Russian National Library). Most likely, these notebooks would have remained in the library's collection if not for the "Leningrad Affair" — the most prominent political action of the "late" period of Stalinism, as a result of which the state and party apparatus was purged. The new first secretary of Leningrad's Regional Committee and City Committee, V.M. Andrianov, was under constant pressure from the center. He was looking for any evidence that could be used against anti-party groups of Leningrad. As a result, Petrova's notes drew his attention. In December 1949, the manuscripts were removed and sent to the Central Committee of the CPSU(b). Andrianov wrote that they were supposedly ready to be printed, and asked for advice from Moscow about what to do with them. The head of the scientific section at the Department of Propaganda and Agitation, Y.A. Zhdanov, and the deputy head of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation, V.S. Kruzhkov, sent Andrianov's letter and a typewritten copy of the memoirs to the secretaries of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b), M.A. Suslov and G.M. Malenkov, with an accompanying note that contained the following sentence: "Given that in M.K. Petrova's memoirs much space is devoted to her intimate relationship with academic Pavlov, it would not be considered

appropriate to publish them."⁴ So Petrova's manuscript and typescript notes remained in the archives of the Central Committee.

As with all personal documents, Petrova's notes are a very biased source. However, these memoirs can be attributed to the hagiographical genre, because they contain only a positive image of Pavlov as a scholar and thinker. Over the course of the text, Petrova repeatedly emphasizes: "Iv.P. [Pavlov is referred to as such in the notes — Ed.] is an ingenious physiologist and self-analyst"; "He was able to link not only the past and present, but also to anticipate the future," and so on. Her memoirs contain a lot of personal information, sometimes of an intimate nature: "I never dreamed that Iv.P., the great physiologist, being 25 years older than me, would be able to experience anything other than platonic feelings towards me, and I was thus eager to kiss him. But I immediately felt the passion poured into that kiss, it was not purely platonic. [...] This kiss opened my eyes to something that I did not think of and did not suspect. Love gives birth to love, and with his kiss, he set me aflame, as the kindling had already been laid and only needed the slightest spark. I fell in love with Iv. P. — a true love, devoid of any reckoning. [...] He said: 'You set me aflame, your interest is infectious. In this regard, my wife is completely alien. You are closest to me. She is the mother of my children, you are the mother of my thoughts, and there is not an hour in the day when I am not thinking of you. I fall asleep and I wake up thinking about you'."⁵ Another excerpt from her memoirs reads as follows: "That night was our first coming together. Since then, I was under the spell of this man and constantly dreamed of the sacrifices that I wanted to make for him for the happiness he brought me. He was worth any sacrifice. He was a complete person in all respects — the best example of human nature. I got married, with passionate love, to a young, beautiful, smart and far from ordinary man, who at one time brought me great happiness, but such a complete, such a captivating feeling as that with middle-aged Iv.P.

³ She wrote about this in her memoirs (RSACH. F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 3).

⁴ Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RSASPH). F. 17. Op. 132. D. 172. P. 6.

⁵ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 34–35, 38. Hereinafter quotations are from archival documents presented with their original distinctive features preserved.

I did not experience with my young husband.”⁶ At the same time, the memoirs contain valuable information that reveals Pavlov’s views on science and life, which in turn allows us to better understand the relationship between the academic and the leaders of the Soviet state and to more accurately recreate the scientist’s activities as an organizer of medical science.

I.P. Pavlov: his personality and scientific ideas

Scientific activities took up almost all of the prominent physiologist’s time: it is difficult to separate Pavlov the scientist from Pavlov the man. Only the people closest to him were able to discern the main features of his character. Petrova’s notes are an indispensable source for us. According to her affirmations, the key feature of the academic’s personality was his self-esteem.⁷ She recalled: “His truthfulness, straightforwardness, honesty and passion often led him to major clashes with the head of the Academy. [...] Iv.P. has always stood on the side of justice, often entering into conflict with his colleagues.”⁸ Pavlov was an exceptionally enthusiastic person, especially when it came to issues related to his work. As Petrova recalled: “From the very outset, in leading the work, Iv.P. invigorated me, and all those who worked with him, with his passion for the cause and his boundless energy ... Carried away by some issue, he could interest each and every staff member in it. With youthful enthusiasm and fiery eyes, he ran from one officer to another, announcing an idea that came into his head for further elaboration or a scientific fact which interested him at this moment for further illumination.” Furthermore, Pavlov himself “admired only facts, he had little regard for theories, which, as he put it, can be very easy to invent, as many as necessary, and as easily be discarded, while a fact remains always a fact.”⁹

Another of Pavlov’s important personality traits was the desire to live, as he liked to say, “at the junction of contrasts.”¹⁰ Most clearly, this

trait was reflected in the physiologist’s religious ideas: the son of a priest, and a former seminary student, Pavlov remained an atheist until the end of life. According to Petrova’s memoirs, he said: “The human mind looks for the cause of everything that happens, and when it comes to the last reason – there is God. In an effort to find the cause for everything, he arrives at God. But I myself do not believe in God, I am not a believer ... For me, fate, destiny, God, nature are all the same – call it what you want.”¹¹ At the same time, the academic’s attitude towards religion was rather complex. Pavlov believed religion was the preserve of psychologically weak people,¹² but he liked to go to Easter service, explaining that it gave him pleasantly contrasting emotional experiences.¹³ He called Christianity the most important cultural phenomenon.¹⁴ He told one of his employees why he did not work on the Christmas and Easter holidays: “I’m not a believer, but I am nonetheless a thinking person with some feelings, and I understand that it is possible to be against all kind of rituals, to consider that they are backwards, unenlightened, and so on. But it would be foolish to rebel against these basic things in religion and history. After all, Christmas and Easter are huge historical holidays. They are not associated with religion [...]. We are talking about the greatest man among men – Jesus of Nazareth. Our socialists forget this – with what did the entire ancient world fail, despite huge intellectual success achieved in philosophy, and science, and the arts, and so on..? With slavery. And who ideologically crushed slavery? Lord Jesus of Nazareth. It was he who smashed it, how can this idea be forgotten!! But their communism

⁶ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 40.

⁷ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 14.

⁸ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 15.

⁹ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 12.

¹⁰ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 10.

¹¹ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 5–6.

¹² According to Petrova’s memoirs, Pavlov’s wife, Serafima Vasilevna Pavlova, was a religious person – a “clear-cut churchgoer” and fanatic, and that was one of the main causes of frequent conflicts within the family. [RSACH. F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 8].

¹³ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 6.

¹⁴ At the same time, Pavlov did not accept the religious-mystical teachings (primarily, spiritualism) that became widespread in Russian society at the beginning of the 20th century, believing that they attracted people who were “idle and nervous”, and called communication with spirits quackery. [RGANI. F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 17].

is a small addition, a variation on this idea of the abolition of slavery” [12, p. 58]. Religious beliefs are a perfect illustration of how Pavlov’s sense of duty and necessity were combined with a desire to vent his feelings.

These psychological contradictions are visible in his scientific work and in his views on medicine. Even prior to the revolution, he described his attitude towards experiments on living creatures: “When I begin an experiment involving the death of an animal, I feel a heavy sense of regret to cut short this triumphant life, that I am the executioner of a living being. When I cut, destroy the animal, I hear a caustic rebuke, that with a rough ignorant hand I break this unspeakably artistic mechanism. But I bear this in the interests of truth for the benefit of the people.”¹⁵ Pavlov’s passionate spirit was interested not only in his narrow specialization – physiology – but also in other fields of medicine and science in general, the latest discoveries and conquests. As the specialist in Pavlov’s legacy, G. Kh. Shingarov, notes, the methodological principles put forward at the start of his research activities guided him throughout his life [13]. The fruits borne of these principles are clearly demonstrated by the brilliant scientific results he achieved, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize. Pavlov added an understanding of the relationship of basic and applied knowledge in medicine to the great importance of studying epistemological and methodological fundamentals in physiology [14]. According to Petrova’s memoirs, he focused only on his subject, though this was hard for him to achieve. He confessed to her: “I possess none of the brilliance that is ascribed to me. I just constantly think about my subject, entirely focused on it, and therefore achieve positive results. Anyone who in my place did the same would be brilliant.”¹⁶

According to Pavlov, a scientist who lives for science must make sacrifices for its sake. Often described as a man who was on the whole good-natured, attentive and sensitive to other people’s needs, he became very strict and even harsh in

all that concerned his profession. Pavlov paid particular attention to how alternative hypotheses arise in the development of science and how they are confirmed or refuted. He raised the issue of the evidentiary value of empirical data for alternative hypotheses. In order for empirical data to acquire the character of physiological facts, they must bear some theoretical load, indicative of a biological significance, and find confirmation in future research. According to Petrova’s memoirs, on one occasion the academic sternly reprimanded a lab employee who inadvertently wrecked one of his experiments: “Well, damn, damn it all! For three months we have waited for this experiment, to hell with it!”¹⁷ His love of science was even stronger than his feelings for the woman he loved, which he considered a stimulant necessary for the pursuit of science.¹⁸ So, at one point Pavlov described his feelings for Petrova with his usual passion, and at the end said: “So there it is, my dear beloved, and now show us yesterday’s experiment reports.” She dutifully went to fetch the notebooks, “cast from heaven to earth by his last words” [10, p. 67].

The particular details of the life and work of Pavlov, who played a key role in the development of Soviet physiology, are of great importance for an understanding of this outstanding scientist’s socio-political views in the 1920s to 1930s. These public and private moments could not better demonstrate the most difficult era of the first decades of the Bolshevik regime and allow us to analyze the prevailing developmental conditions for fundamental science.

I.P. Pavlov and the Bolsheviks

Unfortunately, we know almost nothing about Pavlov’s political beliefs prior to the revolution. According to indirect evidence, he once expressed a desire to run for the State Duma representing the Constitutional Democratic Party, but this political project was never realized. At the same time, according to Petrova’s memoirs, Pavlov was a true Russian patriot: “Almost all his work was published primarily in Russian, and only later reprinted in foreign [languages] ...Granted, he repeatedly said, and especially most recently, that digestive physiology is German, even circulatory

¹⁵ A meeting of the Conference of the Military Medical Academy on January 17, 1904, Proceedings of the Military Medical Academy. 1904. D. 8, No. 3. P. 328.

¹⁶ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 13.

¹⁷ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 16.

¹⁸ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 57.

physiology is English. But the physiology of the cerebral hemispheres – this is ours, Russian, and no one else's. You should have seen how proud he was saying it, this great citizen of the Fatherland.”¹⁹

It may be connected with this great love for Russia that he had such an extremely negative attitude to the revolution of 1917, and particularly, to the Bolshevik revolution. During the Revolution and the Civil War, he constantly talked about the death of the motherland and perceived any Bolshevik initiatives negatively. This hostility grew with the increasing anarchy in society and shrinking resources for the pursuit of science. By 1919, work in Pavlov's laboratories had practically ceased. The pool of assistants, the number of dogs and the amount of food decreased to a minimum, and Pavlov used his office for the cultivation of potatoes and other vegetables.²⁰ In a letter to an acquaintance, he complained: “Work has almost entirely ceased, and a dark and cold winter approaches. There are no candles or kerosene. Electricity is supplied for a limited number of hours. It is bad, very bad. When will things take a turn for the better?” [5, p. 395].

Given such circumstances, Pavlov decided to use his anti-Bolshevik sentiment as a form of pressure on the country's leaders. In 1920, he sent two letters (June 15 and 29, 1920) to the People's Commissar of Education, A.V. Lunacharsky, and the executive officer of the People's Commissars, V.D. Bonch-Bruевич, in which he requested assistance to leave the country. In his address dated July 29, 1920, he wrote:

“While I'm still very excited by my many years of work on physiology's higher objectives – the cerebral hemispheres of the brain – for many reasons I have lost hope in satisfactorily conducting it at all. And I would so like to, and I feel it is fully possible, to bring this investigation to a close, before my demise, which is not far off (I am in my 70s). The grounds for my departure from Russia are given in the application. There should be no reason not to honor my request, since my work is scientific – it is universal, international, not specifically Russian.”²¹ These letters can be seen as a prelude to negotiations,

since it was unlikely that Pavlov who was in his 70s, was really going to leave the country. However, official scientific institutions in the West were not eager to help him. For example, in 1921, English physiologist Ernest Starling sent a request for money to support Pavlov to the Medical Research Council at the University College London and was refused. Council members doubted that the 72-year-old academic would be able to lead new research [5, p. 435].

Pavlov's letters led to confusion among the Bolshevik leaders. Lunacharsky sent Lenin a note stating that the scientist was twice offered the chance to leave Russia, and now wanted to know what he should do. Bonch-Bruевич wrote a heartfelt letter to Pavlov: “I was extremely pained to think that in order for you, the pride and glory of Russian science, to finish one of your wonderful pieces of research, you would have to leave our country and go beyond its borders, to bring to a conclusion the work you started. I ask you to immediately inform me of absolutely everything you need to bring your work to the desired conclusion. I urge you to tell me what you need to feel completely at ease in your current activities, before experiencing the fate of journeying abroad, where there is also unrest and which is also unfavorable in terms of food and in other matters.”²²

Lenin responded quickly to the needs of the scientist. By the beginning of July 1921, he had sent a note to G.E. Zinoviev, who was then the head of Petrusovet. Lenin was opposed to Pavlov going abroad. He noted that “the scientist is of great cultural value, it is impossible to allow his forcible detention in Russia under the conditions of insufficient material security [...] it would be desirable, as an exception, to provide him with extra rations and generally provide more or less comfortable conditions.” Then Lenin, in his traditional sly form, which he repeatedly resorted to when communicating with colleagues, consulted with Zinoviev: “I heard that life for those living in the Petrograd health resort has been made very favorable. Something similar should be done for Professor Pavlov at his apartment.”²³ Zinoviev, naturally, could not ignore the order of the leader and sent his note to the executive

¹⁹ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 82.

²⁰ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 36.

²¹ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 8.

²² RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 9.

²³ V.I. Lenin Complete Works (CW). D. 51. p. 222.

officer of the Petrograd executive committee with the following resolution: "I ask you to call the necessary person and arrange this."²⁴

However, the bureaucratic environment that already existed at that time under Soviet power was so strong that, despite Lenin's go-ahead and Zinoviev's direct order, the question of Pavlov's financial situation remained unanswered. Therefore, a letter from the Swedish Red Cross came as a real shock to the leaders of the Communist Party. The Bolsheviks were proposed the idea of allowing the scientist to emigrate to the West in exchange for financial assistance for Petrograd's hospitals.²⁵ On January 2, 1921, Lenin wrote a short note to the Council of People's Commissars' new executive officer, N.P. Gorbunov: "Comrade, Gorbunov! Get in contact with Semashko and M.N. Pokrovsky. This is a scandalous matter. With the agreement of both of these people my answer must be drafted and sent to me."²⁶ Only after this came the Council of People's Commissars' resolution of January 24, 1921, which is well-known to historians of medicine: "About conditions for ensuring the scientific work of academic I.P. Pavlov and his colleagues."²⁷

For Pavlov, the Council of People's Commissars' decision was a kind of writ of protection. Pavlov was guaranteed not only the right to a "deluxe edition" of his work in Soviet Russia and abroad, special rations equal in calories to rations for two academics,²⁸ but also the fitting out of his apartment and laboratory for "maximum comfort." The Council of People's Commissars' decree was a preferential benefit, which provided authority to the scientist and differentiated him from the others.

The difficult socio-economic conditions of the 1920s and the constant financial and food crises created fertile ground for criticism of the party

and the state. Pavlov strove to ensure favorable conditions for his lab, and, realizing its importance and its necessity for the country's leadership, he became actively critical. He repeatedly spoke publicly about the negative situation in the country. For example, in 1929, while speaking at an event marking the 100th anniversary of I.M. Sechenov's birth, Pavlov defiantly stepped up to his huge portraits and, as if addressing him, said: "We live under the domination of a hard-hearted principle: state and power is everything, the individual common man is nothing. Life, liberty, dignity, convictions, beliefs, habits, the ability to learn, livelihood, food, shelter, clothing – all of this is in the hands of the state. Naturally, everyone turns into a trembling slavish mass" [5, p. 577]. In 1933, at a meeting with communist colleagues from the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine, working on similar scientific issues as his Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Higher Nervous Activity, the academic unexpectedly said the following: "The Russian economy is in total collapse. While Lenin was healthy, he was able to put forward issues (this was already a big deal), but he did not know how to resolve them. Only Russian rudeness and subservience created a genius out of Lenin. He was a very talented man indeed, but a realistic man. When syphilis corroded his brain (only Russian rudeness and subservience created that myth that Lenin died of sclerosis of cerebral vessels – there's no shame in syphilis; if a young person satisfied their sexual needs with prostitutes, it is not shameful, but a misfortune) the main ugliness in Russia began."²⁹

In the mid-1930s, the NKVD (People's commissariat of internal affairs) watched Pavlov closely. The scientist's statements were regularly reported to Stalin, as were his complicated family relationships (especially with eldest son Vsevolod, who the authorities permitted to return home from exile) and difficulties in communicating with Communist colleagues. As an emotional person, Pavlov strongly reacted to the Soviet political campaigns, especially when they concerned people close to him. For example, after S.M. Kirov's assassination and the political repressions that unfolded in the country,

²⁴ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 10.

²⁵ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 12–13.

²⁶ V.I. Lenin Complete Works. D. 51. P. 72.

²⁷ Proceedings of All-Russian Central Executive Committee. 1921. February 11 (No. 30).

²⁸ The specially improved monthly food ration was fantastic for that time: 70 pounds of flour, 25 pounds of meat, 12 pounds of fish, 3 pounds of black caviar, 10 pounds of beans, peas and lentils, 4 pounds of cheese, and more. (State Archive of the Russian Federation. F. 130. Op. 5. D. 633. P. 25–26.)

²⁹ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 18. ob.

especially in Leningrad, Pavlov was constantly approached by family members of those arrested. Petrova recalled: "Every moment they beset him with different requests at home, describing the exiles' plight. As a sensitive man, Iv.P. [Pavlov] was highly responsive to all of this, and worried a lot at that time."³⁰

In December 1934, Pavlov sent his renowned letter to V.M. Molotov, harshly criticizing the party's internal and external policies. The academic accused the Soviet government of developing world fascism: "In the cultural world you have not sown revolution, but fascism – with great success.

Prior to your revolution, there was no fascism. [...] Your newspapers write of other countries: 'The time has come, the hour has struck,' but this business constantly leads to new fascism here and there." The academic, of course, was not worried about fascism itself, but what was happening in the country. He stated: "First of all, what you are doing is, of course, only an experiment and a path of grandiose courage even ... and like any experiment, the final result is unknown. Secondly, the cost of the experiment is terribly high (and this is the crux of the matter), the destruction of all cultural tranquility and all cultural beauty of life. We have lived and still live under a relentless regime of terror and violence. If our narrow-minded reality is rendered in its entirety – not skipping anything and including all the day-to-day details – it would be a terrible picture, a staggering impression from which real people could hardly be significantly placated, if next to it is placed our other picture with its wonderful newly growing cities, Dneprostroi, giant factories and countless scientists and educational institutions. When the first picture draws my attention, I simply see that our lives resemble life under ancient Asian despotisms. And we call them republics. What does this mean? Maybe this is temporary. But we must remember that man, having been derived from beasts, easily falls, but arises with difficulty. For those who angrily condemn masses of their own kind to death and are pleased to bring this to pass, as well as for those who are forcibly trained to participate in this, it is hardly possible to remain beings who feel and think humanely. And on the other hand, it is hardly possible to create a being

with a sense human self-dignity out of those who have been reduced to sacrificed animals. When I meet with new cases from this negative swathe of our life (and they are legion), I am tormented by a venomous reproach, that I have remained and remain among it. Am I not alone in feeling and thinking this way?! Have mercy on us and our homeland" [8].

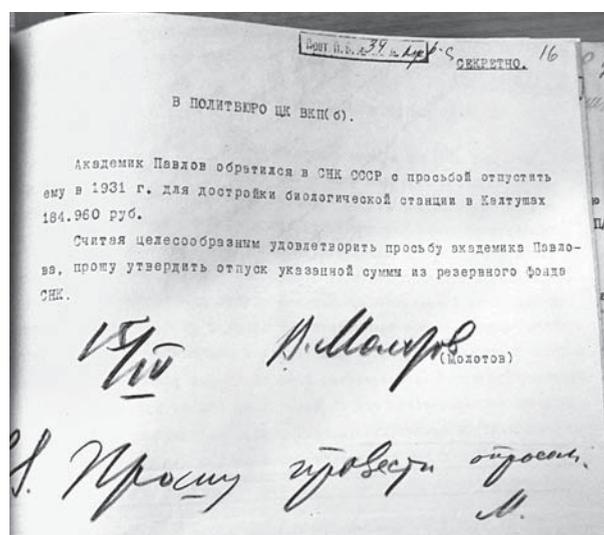
Along with the letter, Pavlov gave a "counter-revolutionary" speech to the Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Higher Nervous Activity, according to the head of the Central Committee of the 4th Department of the Secret-Political Department of the Main Directorate of State Security of the NKVD, R.E. Shtein: "The newspapers fomented Kirov's murder into a political event in which I refuse to take any part. Perhaps jealousy or personal relationships led to this death. And I do not see the point of these piles of corpses. With no defense and no appeal for the convicted. The murderer of the tsar who freed the peasants and did more than a little good was tried 50 years ago by a court with a defense and the possibility of appeal. We have lived 17 years under the terror of the State Political Directorate; in the last few months it seemed to have disappeared, transferred into cultured forms of work, but now once again – brutality and terror. Does the state really lack the resources to identify the culprit? Honorable families that I know, who have nothing to do with politics, have to live under the constant threats and fear. The Russian man is weak by nature, and under the influence of this fear he begins to carry out the most despicable actions" [8].

His letter to Molotov and his speech at the physiological institute were bold actions that demonstrated Pavlov's civil position. However, quite rational behavior was often behind the scientist's openly provocative actions. First of all, he was trying to draw the attention of the country's leaders to their scientists and support their research. Almost all of Pavlov's political declarations were associated with requests to meet the needs of the institute and the laboratory. For example, in 1929, Pavlov's refusal to celebrate his 80th birthday (as well as a speech on the occasion of I.M. Sechenov's jubilee) was a provocative act. The staff at his laboratory and party members appealed to the Central Committee with a request to allocate money for repairs and renovations to

³⁰ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 106.

the biological research station in Koltushi where experiments were conducted to determine the “nervous system hereditary types” and issues concerning the social environment’s influence on the development of these types.³¹ As a result, the Council of People’s Commissars allocated 100,000 rubles to Pavlov – this was a considerable amount for the time. A year later, Pavlov asked the chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars, Molotov, to allocate a further 184,960 rubles for the biological research station.³² Once again, the authorities agreed to the academic’s request: according to an April 15, 1931 decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee, 184,960 rubles was allocated for the biological research station (see illustration) – this was an unprecedented case for Soviet bureaucracy. Party leaders repeatedly tried to establish personal contacts with Pavlov. As I.I. Bukharin’s widow recalled, Lenin first came up with this idea. After the leader’s death, L.D. Trotsky and Bukharin tried to “make friends” with the scientist. Trotsky was the first to begin to communicate with Pavlov. According to Petrova’s memoirs, at the end of 1924 to the beginning of 1925, he sent a rather flattering letter to the scientist: “I spent eight years conducting psychoanalysis with Freud and think that the way in which Freudian psychoanalysts go about acquiring the truth is wrong. I imagine the analyst looking at the truth through the murky water at the bottom of a deep well. He knows that the truth is out there at the bottom of the deep well, but cannot see it. With your conditioned reflexes approach you have raised this truth from the bottom of a deep well to the surface and made it accessible to all.”³³ Pavlov was very proud of this letter and showed it to those close to him, but it was probably later destroyed. Bukharin managed to establish a closer relationship with the physiologist. A real friendship developed between them in the first half of the 1930s: they often exchanged letters on various issues, and paid visits to one another as guests.

When dealing with Pavlov, both Trotsky and Bukharin pursued their own interests: they tried to engage the academic in political struggle, to turn him into a mouthpiece for their ideas. Attention



The Politburo draft resolution on the allocation of funds to Pavlov for a biological research station in Koltushi with V.M. Molotov’s endorsement, 1929.³⁴

should be paid to when it occurred. Trotsky’s letter coincided with the beginning of an internal political struggle, as a result of which he lost all his party and government positions. In 1929 and the 1930s, when Bukharin increased his contact with Pavlov, there was another stage of intraparty

³⁴ The draft decree of the Council of People’s Commissars of USSR “On the release of funds for the completion of the biological research station in Koltushi”. April 15, 1931

SECRET – 1

To the Politburo of the CPSU (b)

Academic Pavlov approached the Council of People’s Commissars with a request to release 184,960 rubles to him in 1931 for the completion of a biological research station in Koltushi. – 2

It is considered appropriate to grant academic Pavlov’s request. Please approve the release of the specified sum from the Council of People’s Commissars reserve fund.

April 15 V. Molotov

Notation:

Beneath the signature in blue pencil is written: “P.S. Please conduct consultations. [Molotov]”.

Stamps:

On the above right is a clerical stamp of the Secret Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) certifying the document belonging to the records of the Politburo.

Note:

1 typewritten underline.

2 As it is in the text.

RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 16. Typescript. Signature in blue pencil.

³¹ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 5.

³² RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 17–18.

³³ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 162.

struggle: this time the “right” opposition (Bukharin and A.I. Rykov) opposed Stalin’s growing dictatorship. Why did Pavlov willingly engage in contact with these politicians? He probably associated with Trotsky and Bukharin in the hope of a relaxation of the regime. Perhaps the academic assumed such contacts would help him get material resources for his research activities. Finally, there was apparently a purely human factor: Pavlov found such informal contacts with the authorities nice.

In the mid-1930s, Molotov was another of Pavlov’s correspondents. The academic and CPC chairman corresponded fairly closely. But, unlike Trotsky and Bukharin, Molotov was not an independent political figure: he sent copies of his letters to Pavlov and Pavlov’s replies to Stalin for approval. In some of them Molotov’s accompanying endorsements survived: “Comrade Stalin, Today the CPC received a new nonsense letter from Pavlov. Molotov”;³⁵ “Comrade Stalin, This is the letter from academic Pavlov. I intend to answer it on its merits. Molotov”;³⁶ “Comrade Stalin, I am sending you my response to Pavlov’s letter. Molotov.”³⁷ Whether Pavlov surmised this is unknown. The scientist never wrote a letter to the leader, and Stalin quite regularly read about him in NKVD summary reports. Stalin’s reactions to the facts contained in documents can be judged by his endorsements, which generally are of a rather tame nature.³⁸

In the 1930s, Pavlov and the Bolsheviks came to a unique agreement. During these years, the scientist received numerous privileges, which he could not have dreamed of prior to the Revolution: his every request was met promptly. When Pavlov asked the CPC to provide him with a car, he chose a Lincoln; when he complained of loud street noises disturbing his experimental dogs, the street next to the institute was rezoned; after a doctor

advised Pavlov to drink imported wine, it was on the academic’s table the next day (sent over from Finland).³⁹

Pavlov, having the opportunity to freely engage in scientific activities, virtually abandoned his criticism of the Bolshevik regime (one exception was his speech after Kirov’s murder). He actively defended national science, including at an international level. In 1934, Pavlov was deeply disturbed by the response of the chairman of the international committee of psychologists and Nobel Prize winner A. Hill, which he received on the day before the start of the physiological congress in the USSR. The British scientist said that the British delegation refused to participate in the congress, as Moscow was forcibly holding P.A. Kapitsa. In his letter of response, Pavlov categorically stated that he fully supported the Soviet government’s decision concerning Kapitsa. In addition, he reminded Hill of the inappropriateness of interfering in the internal affairs of another country when it comes to a Soviet citizen, especially as England could use all his research (Kapitsa worked at the present-day Rutherford Appleton Laboratory) for military purposes against the USSR.⁴⁰

Pavlov’s real triumph was at the 15th International Congress of Physiologists in 1935, where the Soviet government organized a genuine benefit event for him. In response, Pavlov, who was presiding at the congress, said: “I am proud that my mighty country’s government is fighting for peace, for the first time in history it has been proclaimed: ‘Not an inch of foreign land.’”⁴¹ The NKVD’s undercover reports also reflect the changes in the academic’s insinuations. According to the chekists, after the congress the scientist said: “I have become more interested in politics now. I began to read newspapers, which previously I was not given. I find a lot of interesting things in them.” Reading an enthusiastic letter from the French physiologist L. Lapicque, who participated in the congress, Pavlov said: “Lapicque got to the collective farm and I had still not reached it yet. He spoke only with

³⁵ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 44.

³⁶ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 55.

³⁷ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 57.

³⁸ For example, there is a formal endorsement: “Read.” There are some quite lenient endorsements: “In my opinion, this can be ignored.” The last endorsement was attached to a report describing Pavlov’s statement that Lenin died of syphilis.

³⁹ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 30.

⁴⁰ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 39-40.

⁴¹ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 181. P. 123.

farmers on the shore, which is a pity, a great pity.” After the congress he wrote quite a touching letter to Molotov, in which he declared that he wanted to live to see the results of the grand experiments that were to be conducted by the authorities.⁴² The transformation of his relationship with the authorities struck those who knew him well and close acquaintances. According to Petrova’s memoirs, shortly before his death, Pavlov began to admire Stalin: he repeatedly said that he “admires his tenacity, work capacity and strength.”⁴³

Pavlov always concentrated on challenges and problems that were topical and significant for science and society. At the same time, he was able to combine the highest level of civic-mindedness with a passion for science. In all his activities, Pavlov was straightforward and honest, spoke freely and independently on a variety of issues, and was critical of the current situation – especially the actions of the Soviet authorities. However, can Pavlov be called a dissident? The materials available do not allow us to draw such a conclusion. Official documents and sources of a personal nature indicate that Pavlov never set himself political goals. His motives were purely scientific. For the sake of science, he was ready to criticize the authorities – as well as cooperate with them. In the early 1920s, when Pavlov’s laboratory was on the verge of closing, he spoke out against the Bolsheviks. In the 1930s, when the scientist got everything he needed to practice science, he not only ceased to criticize the Soviet leaders, but also began to defend the USSR in the international arena. Pavlov perceived science as an act of civil service. However, he was never a conformist and mercilessly criticized Soviet leaders, if their actions were contrary to his conscience.

Pavlov’s work is an example of how the outstanding scientist’s authority influenced the management of science (including medicine) and its management in the Soviet era. Despite the severe economic crisis that continued from 1920 to the first half of 1930, the state allocated significant resources for the development of the social sphere – science, education and health– and scientists were a special caste,

to which the country’s leaders paid more attention. Of course, Pavlov was permitted far more than any other scientist. The Soviet leaders related negatively to Pavlov as a person, but not as an organizer of science. Indicative in this regard is Kuibyshev’s note written in 1929 on a draft resolution under discussion for the allocation of material resources for a biological research station in Koltushi, and the celebration of Pavlov’s birthday: “Pavlov spits on the council, he declares himself an undisguised enemy, and for some reason the Soviet government will honor him! He should be helped, but not honored.”⁴⁴ In this phrase (“He should be helped, but not honored”) sums up the path of compromise, which the Soviet regime took. Pavlov’s experience and knowledge was needed by a new generation of Soviet scientists, but the unique conditions created for the pursuit of science were nothing more than a “golden cage” for the academic. Nonetheless, Pavlov managed not only to create a new scientific medical field, but also ensured its development during the first decades of Soviet power. From the history of medicine’s point of view, these are two important considerations, as the research interests of academics in our specialization focus on the identification of essential developments in medicine as a science, which includes the history of the emergence and development of specific medical practices, the history of scientific discoveries and the development of medical specializations, as well as the processes that ensure the institutionalization of medicine and individual fields of medical education and science. Pavlov’s ideas on the relationship between basic science and medicine, its basic theoretical principles and discoveries have not lost their importance to this day. The methodological principles of scientific knowledge that Pavlov employed, his life and work remain the subject of pertinent current research.

The Politburo draft resolution on the allocation of funds to Pavlov for a biological research station in Koltushi with V.M. Molotov’s endorsement, 1929.

⁴² RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 67.

⁴³ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 161.

⁴⁴ RSACH F. 3. Op. 33. D. 180. P. 3.

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About the authors

Nikita Yurievich Pivovarov – Candidate of Historical Sciences, Chief Specialist, the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (Moscow).

Nataliya Petrovna Shok – Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor at the Department of the History of Medicine, National History and Culturology, I.M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University, The Ministry of Health of the Russian Federation (Moscow).