

Soviet and Russian Psychology from 1950 – 2000 (from Stalin to Putin)

Psychology in Russia and the Soviet Union has a long history influenced by several changes in the political environment. During the Tsar's rule there was a strong censorship, initiated by the Orthodox church or the Tsar administration. Whenever a publication did not conform with the doctrines of the church or seemed to undermine the Tsar's power, the authors were banished to Siberian villages, sent to Siberian labor camps or sentenced to a death penalty.

This changed significantly after the communist so-called "October Revolution" in 1917. Then there was an unprecedented freedom in science and research, although the economic conditions were partly marked by poverty and hunger of the masses.

In 1930, when Stalin seized power, there was the first wave of repressions against psychologists: Those psychologists, whose theories and models seemed not to fit the Marxist-Leninist theory and the dialectical materialism were expelled from their positions. Some of them were banished to Siberian villages, sent to Siberian labor camps or sentenced to a death penalty. In 1936 Stalin issued the so-called "pedologists-decree" and ordered the closure of all psychology institutes and the dismissal of all psychology professors. Again, some of them were sent to Siberian labor camps and others only banished to Siberian villages. All psychology journals were forced to discontinue publication.

In 1950 Stalin published his paper on linguistics. In that article Stalin concluded that the Russian language, the Russian culture and the Russian nation are the best of all and therefore Russia should lead the world. He banned so-called "cosmopolitanism" and many of the professors and leaders in industry whose names sounded non-Russian were imprisoned and dismissed.

After Stalin's death in 1953 the environment for science and psychology became less hostile. The political climate of the world changed many times from thaw to cold war, although the communist party set the goals for the research in the universities and the Academies of Sciences.

After Gorbachev's election as party leader of the communist party research in the Soviet Union became gradually similar to that of the western countries.

In a bibliometric research we investigated the change of psychological research subjects (according to the APA content classification) since the publishing of the first post-Stalin psychological journal "Voprosy Psichologii" in 1955 until 2000, when Putin became president of the Russian federation. In total, we got 7,049 entries of contributions in the journal "Voprosy Psichologii", which we analyzed with a R-script.

The changes of the research subjects in psychology were then correlated with the policies of the communist party and the political decisions of the so-called central committee of the KPSU.

There are great variations in the research areas and several dependencies of research areas on politics. However, some changes seemed to be dependent on fashions in the psychological science community.