

Ivan Petrovich Pavlov and the Authorities

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Many publications on I. P. Pavlov have appeared recently and have been seen as revelations. This is associated with the appearance of new documents previously kept strictly secret but now made accessible for perusal. These documents, which are kept in our museum, rebut the view that Pavlov was totally immersed in science. No, like any modern scientist, Pavlov was a citizen of his time. For many years he led an incessant battle against the determined will of the authorities for his freedom of belief, for human dignity, and true democracy.

Many visitors to our museum raise the question: how did Pavlov avoid Stalinist repression? True, Pavlov escaped the tragic fate of many scientists, but this does not indicate that he had an idyllic relationship with the authorities in power.

Doctor of Medical Sciences V. O. Samoiloov believes that the Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of January 24, 1921, signed by V. I. Lenin, "On the creation of special conditions for research for Academician I. P. Pavlov," "made him immune to the organs of repression for the whole of his life" [4]. This view seems unconvincing. Stalin needed Gor'kii to be at the head of Soviet literature and Stanislavskii to lead the theater to help justify his "autocracy." Academician Pavlov, a Nobel laureate, top-rank scientist, and the world's leading physiologist, served as the "shop window" of Soviet science. This view is supported by the 1950 Session, at which Pavlov's studies were announced as scientific policy, and Russia's best physiologists – L. A. Orbeli, P. K. Anokhin, A. D. Speranskii, and others, and the names of those who believed that "science and the freedom to comment are synonymous" were vilified [1].

At the same time, new accessions of the Commission for the Documentary Heritage of I. P. Pavlov at the Leningrad Division of the Archives of the Academy of Sciences allow

the special role played by N. I. Bukharin in relation to Pavlov to be evaluated. These secret materials were first published by V. O. Samoiloov and the President of the Commission for the Documentary Heritage, Yu. A. Vinogradov, in 1989 in the journal *Zvezda [Star]*, No. 10.

Ivan Petrovich Pavlov is known to have welcomed the fall of the autocratic government in 1917 with enthusiasm, though he took no part in the October Revolution.

His lecture "On slavery and nobility" at the Military Medical Academy in September 1923 started a prolonged dialog between Pavlov and Bukharin relating to the core questions of the October Revolution. Being very familiar with Bukharin's views, as laid out in the book *The ABC of Communism* and other works, Pavlov was, fundamentally unable to agree with the thesis that the revolution was worldwide in nature.

"It is impossible for Russia to withdraw from the whole of the world economy, including the western European economy," he wrote [2]. Having visited various European countries and the USA in 1923, Pavlov had good grounds to say: "I see nothing indicating any possibility of revolution. There are no signs of revolution in the major powers: France, England, America. The Revolution has imposed enormous costs on us and has caused terrible disruption. And it may all have been for nothing." In response to Bukharin's comment – "Although we have fallen behind, we retain the qualification of having revolutionary energy" – Pavlov exclaimed anxiously: "I fear this disruptive energy, it leads to the degradation of Russian culture" [2].

Pavlov spoke with great anxiety about the ease of dealing with science when universities close, educational programs are revised, doctoral degrees are degraded, and hurried training for workers in rabfaks [Workers' Educational Institutes] is introduced. Pavlov regarded rabfaks as an attempt by ignorant people to produce phony specialists.

Academician I. P. Pavlov Memorial Home Museum.

Pavlov's lecture ended with the words: "If you take science seriously, if you acquaint yourself with it carefully, then even though you are communists, rabfak attendees, etc., you will nonetheless recognize that Marxism and communism do not provide an absolute truth, they represent one theory, which may not be true, and which you will see all your life from your own point of view and not as seen by a member of a cabal" [5].

Transcripts of the lecture were provided to Smol'nyi and the Kremlin, where it caused a furor. Zinov'ev and Trotskii published articles strongly criticizing the leading scientist.

Bukharin responded to Pavlov's lecture with the article *On World Revolution, Our Country, Culture, and More*. The main argument advanced against the unflattering views of this omnipotent scientist was Pavlov's ignorance of Marxism. In Bukharin's words, "Being a revolutionary in science, Pavlov is a conservative in general matters and is a type of cabinet scientist, a representative of bourgeois science, frighteningly distant from the working class, unable to understand its historic mission" [1].

In April 1924, in the building of the former City Duma, Academician Pavlov read a further lecture, entitled *Some Applications for the New Physiology of the Brain to Life*. Pavlov did not try to explain the whole complexity of human nature in terms of the theory of conditioned reflexes, but nonetheless readily applied some of its positions to the surrounding world. Pavlov related the following anecdote: "There was one unusual dog among the many studied in our laboratory – it had a strongly developed instinct for freedom. While the other dogs entered the apparatus and tolerated the experiments relatively willingly, this dog had absolutely no wish to take part in the experiment. Neither it, nor its parents, nor its grandparents, nor its great-grandparents had taken the leash. We put food in the apparatus. The dog did not eat it for two weeks. However, once in the apparatus... it would nonetheless take it: hunger won out over the instinct for freedom" [5].

Pavlov's conclusion was: "The dictatorship of the proletariat obtains freedom through terror. But if terror combined with hunger can completely suppress the freedom reflex, the nation will be defeated, destroyed; what good is there in that?" [5].

Rybin produced an article, published in *Leningradskaya Pravda* in response to the lecture, which ended with a direct threat: "Do not interfere with our building life the way we want it... otherwise... you never know... there is no need to suffer!" [5].

Unlike other kinds of denigrator, Bukharin mounted a constant struggle against the great scientist, helped with organized activities, and tried very delicately to influence him. In 1931, he wrote in one of his letters to Pavlov: "I have heard on the grapevine that you are republishing your work (*Twenty Years of Experience of the Objective Study of Higher Nervous Activity*) and are leaving the old foreword with all its 'invectives' about revolutions and so on. Dear Ivan

Petrovich, do not do this, for everyone's sake. Or at least hold on until I come on vacation and talk to you, why do you want to stir up trouble? For whom? We are willing to meet your needs, we are all ready to accommodate all your work, and you have to put the revolution to the pen. Do not do this for the sake of God!" [2].

Replying to Bukharin, Pavlov wrote: "I cannot agree to discard the words on revolutions from the old introduction.

For me, revolution is actually something terrible because of its cruelty and violence, including violence to science; indeed, your dialectical materialism in its current vital proposition does not differ from the theology or cosmogony of the inquisition by even a hair's breadth. You yourself of course know all this and see it, but you justify it by your faith, which at this price must be something enormously strong. However, I do not share this faith, and of course no-one has to, I am inspired by another faith, a faith in science, which ultimately reaches all corners of human nature and teaches people to seek true contentment not only for themselves, but also certainly for others" [2].

After 1932, Pavlov argued against repression. After the arrest of relatives of his wife, he wrote indignantly to Bukharin: "My God, how heavy it is now for any decent person to live in your socialist paradise" [5].

Pavlov repeatedly addressed the Council of People's Commissars with supplications and representations on behalf of the innocent arrestees: "As a citizen of my native country I consider it my duty to draw your attention to the following: these continuous and innumerable arrests are making our lives completely impossible. I do not know their purpose (overly zealous seeking of the regime's enemies, or a method of frightening them, or something else), but there is no doubt that there is not even the slightest reason for arrest in the vast majority of cases, i.e., actual guilt. And the life consequences of the fact of widespread arrests are entirely obvious. Everyone's life is made completely random, nothing can be planned. And this unavoidably eliminates life energy and interest in living. In what way is this a normal way to govern? I am profoundly persuaded that this gives rise to the so-called subversiveness" [5].

Thanks of Pavlov's intervention, the lives of the innocent victim of repression D. N. Pryanishnikov and tens of other scientists were saved. In December 1935, in a letter to Molotov, Academician Pavlov made a strong protest against the persecution of a group of Leningraders for their social origins. In a note to the Council of People's Commissars, he called persecution of religious governing bodies and patronage of militant atheism the "great and harmful result of a mistake" [5].

At the same time, there is no doubt that Pavlov's views underwent some evolutionary changes under Bukharin's influence, particularly with respect to the question of the interactions between science and the authorities. How could it be otherwise? It was not without Bukharin's involvement in the 85-year-old Academician Pavlov that the award of a million

rubles was made for the upkeep of the Koltushi biostation, with a further two million a year later at the XV International Physiological Congress, presided over by Pavlov.

During the short period from 1923 to 1935, Pavlov's classical work, *Twenty Years of Experience of the Objective Study of Higher Nervous Activity (Behavior) in Animals* was published six times; *Lectures on the Work of the Cerebral Hemispheres of the Brain* was published three times. In 1925, the Physiology Laboratory of the USSR Academy of Sciences was reorganized into an institute; the annual 20,000-ruble Pavlov Prize and stipends for students at medical institutes were established in 1934. Starting in 1923, Pavlov and his son travelled abroad annually, taking part in international congresses in physiology, medicine, and psychology. Finally, with complete sincerity, Pavlov said: "The Soviet authorities have given me millions." The scientist could not have failed to recognize the benevolence of the government, especially given that his classical studies of digestive physiology and higher nervous activity, performed before the Revolution, resulted solely from the enlightened philanthropy of Prince Oldenburgskii.

However, the government's concerns did not allay Pavlov's conscience, and to the end of his days he was unable to remain unaffected by all that had happened in the country. As he himself recognized, "he was sensitive to politics to the level of suffering physically." In November 1934, Ivan Petrovich Pavlov wrote to P. L. Kapitsa, whom he saw as his successor: "Know, Petr Leonidovich, I am the only one here who says, who thinks, I will die here, this is needed for the motherland, and now I have especially fallen in love with this motherland in its current terrible state" [4].

In his *Memoirs*, which are kept in the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and touching on the relationship between Pavlov and the authorities, A. L. Chizhevskii presents a monolog from Pavlov, developing the principles of Pavlov's interaction with the Bolsheviks. "I am not a Bolshevik and do not share their programs, which I believe they have composed too soon, human society is not yet mature enough for communism... But if we have already come to this, if two hundred million human lives have been drawn into this dangerous game, then reason requires one to help them, to weed out the relations between animals when they do not fit. Educational activities are now obligatory for every member of the Russian intelligentsia and especially for every scientist. I, despite my age, carry the burden of science – and not only for science – but also for whoever celebrates Russia, even Bolsheviks, so that we can be recognized the world over rather than be seen as savages who are trampling on all that is human. Many believe that Pavlov was bought by the Bolsheviks – but do not believe this. Pavlov is not for sale, but Pavlov came to the logical conclusion – that Bolsheviks must be helped in all the good they do, and there is some" [2].

Pavlov saw great positive changes in his country in Ryazan at his last visit on August 19, 1935. And at the reception in his honor he said these words with complete sincerity: "Science was previously detached from the populace, but now I see a difference, that science is respected and valued by the whole of the people" [3]. A year earlier, on September 27, 1934, the city of Pavlov's birth had celebrated the 85-year-old Pavlov. The Ryazan authorities made the resolution: "In recognition of the scientist's valuable works, the city sanitary station will be named after him and Kurganskaya Street will be renamed Academician I. P. Pavlov Street." And although Ivan Petrovich believed that "every contributor is at present evaluated only after his death," he wrote in response to the Ryazan authorities: "I am deeply touched by my countrymen's decision and feel heartfelt gratitude to them for everything. My long-held wish to visit dear Ryazan has intensified, to visit my parents' ashes, to see the places where my dreams were first conceived, some of which turned into my life's work, and to remember the lives of those who provoked my dreams" [3].¹

In 1949, the love of the "authorities in power" almost appeared in the curious decision to change the name of the city of Ryazan to Pavlov and to erect a memorial to Pavlov in the city of Pavlov to celebrate the great physiologist's centenary. Fortunately, this point in the plan was overruled by the administrative director of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party G. M. Malenkov. Thus, the attitude of the country's leadership and the Soviet government was determined mainly by ideological considerations. Bukharin once wrote about Pavlov: "Although did not sing the Internationale, with his works he poured water on the mill of materialism" [6].

The materialist character of the scientist with respect to higher nervous activity reinforced the Marxist position on the social determination of behavior and responded to party politics in the matter of bringing up a new human. In a series of articles, Pavlov touched directly on the question of rearing, the formation of socially useful reflexes and goals, and freedom. Pavlov's relationship with the authorities resulted from his social-political views.

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¹Museum Archive, RMP KP 3303, OF No. 3363.