

the laboratory, coping with daily life without knowing the language was a serious problem.

To ease the culture shock, the Japanese government is trying harder to make its fellowships more appealing in practical ways. In January, for example, the Science and Technology Agency (STA), which administers one of the new fellowship programs, set up a liaison office in Tsukuba City, which is northeast of Tokyo an hour and a half by train and is known as Japan's "science city" because of the many government labs located there. A staff of six will help visiting foreign researchers and their families arrange housing, locate schools for their children, and offer Japanese language classes, for example. The government is also providing \$3.2 million in fiscal 1989 to begin construction of 54 new housing units in Tsukuba for foreign researchers, says Kaname Ikeda, director of international affairs at STA.

The STA program will even pay rental expenses, no small matter in Japan where up front costs are enormous. According to an STA official, the average rent in Tsukuba is about 130,000 yen or about \$1,040 at current exchange rates. A tenant typically must pay in advance not only 1 month's rent, but 1 to 2 months' rent as "gift money" to the landlord, 2 to 3 months' rent as a deposit, and 1 month of rent as a commission to the rental agent.

Riken laboratories in Wako City are also rolling out the red carpet for visiting researchers. With government funds, they have built new apartment houses that are spacious by Japanese standards and are even furnished with Western beds. (Westerners, however, are politely advised to take off their street shoes and wear slippers inside as is Japanese custom.) Other Riken housing for foreign researchers is traditional in that visiting scientists sleep on futons, but the apartments are equipped with modern appliances, including a computerized iron, television, and a washer and dryer.

One encouraging sign that more Americans may opt to study in Japan in the future is the interest in a new NSF program that subsidizes Japanese language training for scientists and engineers. The half-million dollar program is wildly oversubscribed "by many, many dozens," says Wallace of NSF. "I am dumbfounded at the overwhelming response to learn Japanese."

Japanese government officials say they are trying hard to woo more foreign researchers to Japan. Says Tohru Kikuchi, head of the new liaison office, "The key to success in Japan is flexibility" among visiting scientists. They must have the "mind of a cultural adventurer."

■ MARJORIE SUN

## Psychiatrists Examine Soviet System

Although the number of political prisoners held in psychiatric hospitals in the Soviet Union has been greatly reduced, treatments and conditions, especially in the prison-like "special psychiatric hospitals," leave much to be desired, according to fragmentary reports from an American psychiatric delegation that returned from a recent visit to the U.S.S.R.

Delegation members are not supposed to comment on the trip pending completion of a report in the next 2 months which will then be submitted to Soviet authorities for comment. However, several told the *New York Times* that some patients still appear to be confined for political reasons and that some are being subjected to ineffective, outdated, or harmful treatments. The *Washington Post* quoted delegation member Peter Reddaway of George Washington University, an outspoken critic of Soviet psychiatry, as saying that his concerns remain "basically unchanged."

Soviet authorities were reportedly generally cooperative during the 2-week visit. At a press conference held in Moscow on 11 March, delegation leader Loren Roth, a forensic psychiatrist at the University of Pittsburgh, said "we were able to see virtually everyone we wanted to see." Interviews were held with 27 individuals selected by the delegation, including 15 who were still hospitalized. Roth said "in a few instances" authorities attempted unsuccessfully to discourage patients from being interviewed. Group members also visited seven mental hospitals, including three of the special hospitals.

The Soviets are believed to have permitted the visit in hopes of bolstering their bid to rejoin the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), from which they resigned under pressure in 1983. The next congress is to be held in Athens in October. Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev is also said to be interested in cleaning up the record in preparation for a human rights conference to be held in Moscow in 1991.

The 19-member delegation, including representatives from the State Department and the American Psychiatric Association, was divided into four teams. One team visited hospitals; the other three interviewed and examined medical records of patients and ex-patients who were brought to Moscow or Leningrad. In some cases, family members were also interviewed.

One delegation member told *Science*, "we basically saw what we expected." He said the conditions and treatment at the special psychiatric hospitals were "terrible," with very long hospitalizations and outdated and painful treatments. He said the treatments include subjecting patients to long periods of isolation, keeping them in restraints, injecting them with drugs that cause high fever and other negative effects, and beating them.

Coinciding with the delegation's visit was the formation of a new Independent Psychiatric Association by 18 Soviet psychiatrists and mental health specialists. The purpose of the group, headed by Viktor Lanovoy, is to monitor professional practices and defend the rights of patients. Lanovoy announced after a 2-day meeting of the group in his apartment that it had applied for membership in the WPA.

From the information available, it seems highly unlikely that critics of Soviet psychiatry will favor the readmission of the official Soviet psychiatric society to the WPA so long as authorities continue to deny the existence of abuses. In the view of many, genuine reform will be contingent on the replacement of the country's two top-ranking psychiatrists: Georgii Morozov, head of the Serbsky Institute for Forensic Psychiatry, and Marat E. Vartanyan, director of the All-Union Research Center for Mental Health.

Vartanyan, the chief defender of Soviet psychiatry, apparently remains secure in his position despite a scathing public attack on him written last November by a subordinate, Viktor Gindilis, who is reputed to be the country's top psychiatric geneticist. Gindilis, head of the genetics laboratory of the center's Brain Research Institute, wrote an open letter to the U.S.S.R. Medical Science Academy to protest Vartanyan being given the title of "academician." Among his allegations were that Vartanyan is "completely incompetent" in medical and psychiatric genetics and that Gindilis himself is the author of "almost all" the publications and research initiatives attributed to Vartanyan.

Vartanyan has made no response to the allegations. Both he and Morozov made themselves unavailable to the delegation during its visit. ■ CONSTANCE HOLDEN

# Science

## Psychiatrists examine Soviet system

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