Evidence is detailed and argument well reasoned, although the style sometimes errs into the journalistic, popular or polemical. The message is for us to employ all reasonable means to end Soviet abuse of psychiatry, yet also to put our own house in order if needs be. Dr Lader recommends: (1) psychiatry's restriction to its 'legitimate frame of reference'; (2) clarification of the relationship of psychiatrist to society; (3) the relentless pursuit of research. Are there any dissidents?

ROBIN JACOBY


Professor Andrei Sneshnewski is the best known living psychiatrist in the USSR. Since 1962 he has been director of the Institute of Psychiatry of the Academy of Medical Sciences in Moscow where he has organised a large-scale programme of research into the clinical and pathogenetic problems of schizophrenia. In 1972 he and eight senior colleagues prepared a monograph which contained the ideas and findings of his group of investigators. Five years later the material has been reissued by a publishing house of the German Democratic Republic in a German translation which renders it more accessible to Western readers. In style and content it proves to be curiously old fashioned. The clinical chapters are neo-Kraepelinian in flavour, much concerned with a complex, private system of classification; the investigative approach is heavily biological, with an emphasis on genetics, immunology, neurochemistry, and pathophysiology. Very little is included about contributions from the social sciences, pharmacology, or therapeutics.

The interest attaching to the book, however, resides less in its content than its implications for what we now have to acknowledge as the abuse of psychiatry in the Soviet Union. As Bloch and Reddaway have recently documented in their book Russia's Political Hospitals (Gollancz, 1977), the diagnosis of schizophrenia carries ominous forensic overtones when applied to Russian political dissenters who may be said to suffer from such 'symptoms' as 'paranoid reformist delusional ideas', and 'poor adaptation to the social environment'. As the current Soviet approach to schizophrenia is dominated by the Moscow school, the views of its representatives will, unfortunately, be studied more carefully than would otherwise have been the case.

M. SHEPHERD

Child Psychiatry Modern Approaches

This book is an excellent and comprehensive up-to-date review of child psychiatry. Its coverage is more complete than most textbooks and its approach is eclectic. It comprises 41 chapters in five sections which deal with influences on development, some developmental theories, clinical assessment, clinical syndromes (20 chapters), and approaches to treatment. The style is direct and easy to follow so that a large amount of research data is clearly reviewed, assessed, and presented in a fully digested form, without turgid and difficult methodology clouding the picture. The layout is good with a clear print, effective use of subheadings, and references at the end of each chapter. It is difficult to offer criticism. There are 23 contributors and the editing provides a good levelling out of style. The chapters on polygenic influences and dynamic treatment are among those that, reasonably enough, have their characteristic styles but even here there is very little use of jargon and the material is easily readable. The chapters on psychoanalytic theories present a potentially difficult material in a very concrete form.

Drug taking and clinical aspects of drug misuse are separated into two chapters and a useful appendix follows the latter giving details of recently described population studies. It would have been in keeping with the rest of the book to incorporate this material into the text of the former chapter. There is a little inconsistency in the use of subheadings in medical aspects of mental retardation, and the author has a difficult task in knowing what to present as background information and how much to focus on modern trends.


The main part of this book is an examination of the evidence for the alleged abuses of psychiatry in the USSR. Also, and without shirking criticism of named persons, the author describes the controversial involvement of the World Psychiatric Association, whose pusillanimous response to the allegations led to Dr Lader's resignation from a WPA post in 1973. The verdict is unequivocally guilty, and the judgment is that psychiatry everywhere is tarnished.

J. S. GILLESPIE


Acetylcholine and noradrenaline are so firmly established as neurotransmitters that only recently has serious attention been given to the possibility of others. Of these the polypeptides and especially substance P are firm favourites. Substance P, an undecapeptide, has recently been the subject of intense research, and it is appropriate, therefore, to stop and take stock. This volume, the collected papers given at a symposium in Stockholm in June 1976, does just that and does it admirably. The value of such a publication depends on the quality and the representative nature of the contributions. On those grounds these proceedings are excellent. The series of short articles reflects the work of all major research groups, and the contributions themselves are comprehensible even to the non-expert.

Substance P may be important in the alimentary canal; in posterior spinal nerve roots where it may be the neurotransmitter of the primary afferent nerve fibres particularly those responsible for pain. It is also a powerful vasodilator and may be involved in cardiovascular control, and, finally, substance P is widely distributed in the brain. These functions all have important clinical implications and extend the interest in this book beyond the specialist in physiology, pharmacology, or neurology. To all it may be highly recommended as an excellent up-to-date account of an exciting and rapidly developing field.

J. S. GILLESPIE
The chapter contains a useful table of investigations which can be performed.

The book is so thorough that it is able to highlight deficit areas of basic knowledge. This is especially apparent after reading the excellent chapters on adolescent disorders and delinquency. Similarly the chapter on non-delinquent conduct disorder mentions that responses from parents, school, and community are not adequately studied, and it does not take much reading between the lines to realise that we do not know how best to manage conduct disorders in society. Each chapter is an excellent review bringing the reader right up to date without assuming too much basic knowledge and many of the chapters contain well over 100 references.

D. S. JAMES

The Neuropsychology of Learning Disorders: Theoretical Approaches

This book incorporates the Proceedings of a NATO Conference held in 1975 to discuss various aspects of the neuropsychology of disorders of learning. The contributors were from a very wide variety of disciplines including biochemistry, physiology, and neuropsychology. The book is divided into seven sections of which the last is a summary and each of which is self-contained, discussing such aspects as Epidemiology and Social Implications, Genetic and Maturational Variables, Cerebral Dominance, but each illuminating important aspects of the overall problem.

In a short review it is not possible to consider individual papers in detail, and it is more appropriate to comment upon common themes throughout the book. One is impressed by the wide variety of models of learning disorder proposed by the contributors, ranging from developmental lag, through hemispheric asymmetry and cognitive and perceptual deficit, to attentional and arousal deficits. Although these models and theories each deal with very different aspects of learning disorders, the topics have been well chosen to integrate together in supplying an impressive conceptual overview of what is currently a very diffuse area. After reading this book, the most convincing model for studying the neuropsychology of learning disorders would seem to be a multi-variate one allowing for many different kinds of learning disorders, each of a different underlying nature and each with a different presentation. Given that kind of model, the book serves as an excellent introduction to the problems of the neuropsychology of learning disorder, both for researchers who are new to this area, and to those who are familiar with some aspects of the problems. Although the conference was held in 1975, the papers have not, by and large, dated seriously, and at £13.95, this book should find a place on the bookshelves of paediatricians, neurologists, and clinical psychologists who work with learning disordered children.

D. N. BROOKS


The first half of this book is devoted to an extensive and detailed summary of Luria's views on the neuropsychology of communication, the second to a reconsideration of three types of aphasia. Despite its title there is next to nothing in the entire work on other equally important topics in neurolinguistics such as developments in the study of the neuropsychology of language and in the study of non-aphasic disturbances. It is regrettable also that Luria is led to make a number of misstatements and inaccurate statements in the name of linguistics which at times seriously distort the import of his message.

A failing in the first half, to my mind, is the way in which he maintains that the speaker-hearer of a language uses the main features of a generative grammar in the production and comprehension of speech. Nowhere does he refer to the evidence that has been accumulating over the past 15 years or so which casts doubt on the validity of such a belief. Nevertheless, there are some thought-provoking formulations of various aspects of linguistic performance and these deserve attention by anyone seriously interested in this perplexing area of enquiry.

The second half introduces new material on conduction, transcortical motor and amnestic aphasia by way of lengthy and informative case discussions of selected patients, and the reader will probably find this part of the book the more rewarding as it extends and elaborates on views Luria has expressed elsewhere.

Basil Haigh deserves warm praise for the way he has expeditiously translated the 1975 Russian text even if the occasional blemish remains to obscure Luria's meaning. The publishers, on the other hand, should be taken to task for the fact that they have allowed a book to go on the market containing several alarming features of production: items, often important ones, which are quoted in the text simply do not appear in the bibliography, misprints are legion, some of the figures lack even reasonably adequate explanatory legends, and on a humdrum level, the search for the notes at the end of each chapter requires a good deal of patience.

There is no doubt that in his long professional working life Luria contributed much to a firmer awareness by clinicians and others of the potential nature of neurolinguistic disturbances. But it is open to discussion whether we have in this book all the ‘basic problems’ or even the solutions thereto.

M. K. C. MACMAHON

Books received

Rational Diagnosis and Treatment By Henrik R. Wulf. (Pp. 182; illustrated; price not stated.) Blackwell: Oxford. 1976.


