

Book Reviews

TSAR PAUL AND THE QUESTION OF MADNESS: AN ESSAY IN HISTORY AND PSYCHOLOGY. By H Ragsdale, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988, xviii, 266 pp. \$39.95.

Reviewed by Ralph Slovenko, LLB,
PhD

In one story, a man says to his wife, who is on her deathbed, "I want you to tell me honestly. Is Johnny really my child? He's so different from the other children. He's unattractive." The wife replies, "Yes, he's your child. The others are not."

Something like that is the way it was with Paul, the subject of this book. When Russia's Catherine the Great gave birth to Paul, her first son, rumors persisted that the father was not Peter, to whom she was married, but a courtier named Sergei Saltykov. Catherine shared her bed with a number of lovers, usually for political purposes.

Catherine ignored and humiliated Paul all his life. He was a figure of pity and ridicule. He turned out as an obsessive. He had a mania for military dress and exercise. He supervised endless drilling of soldiers, tapping on the ground with a special cane that had a watch embedded in its head.

On the day of his coronation, when Catherine died, he changed the law of succession—henceforth only males

could rule Russia. He tore down the beautiful wooden Summer Palace where he had been born. He was a bizarre and eccentric ruler. He was so widely detested that in the fifth year of his reign, in 1801, a group of officers killed him.

In this study of Russia that ends with chapters on psychohistory, University of Alabama history professor Hugh Ragsdale applies the medical criteria of madness of the time as well as of today in assessing the Tsar as mad. (Most of the monarchs of the age were mad—George III of Great Britain, Maria I of Portugal, Christian VII of Denmark, Felipe V and Fernando VI of Spain.)

Psychiatrists who have an interest in political leaders will find this book of some interest.

TREATMENT CHOICES AND INFORMED CONSENT: CURRENT CONTROVERSIES IN PSYCHIATRIC MALPRACTICE LITIGATION. By J G Malcolm, Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1988. xi + 119 pages. + index. \$30.75.

Reviewed by Gregory B. Leong, MD

Attorney John Gulston Malcolm authors this engaging work about potential malpractice pitfalls in current psychiatric practice. The case of *Osheroff v. Chestnut Lodge* serves as the basis for the discussion of legal issues, particularly negligent diagnosis and informed con-

sent. Physician-plaintiff Osheroff's clinical history is provided in sufficient detail to illustrate the complexities and nuances of the various medical and legal issues that are involved. After a comprehensive, yet succinct, discussion of medical malpractice and informed consent, Malcolm delves into the possible consequences of *Osheroff* with their potential devastating impact on psychiatric practice.

Although *Osheroff* has been settled out of court with undisclosed terms, its issues have generated considerable controversy, especially with regard to biological versus psychodynamic treatment of mental disorders. Thus, notwithstanding *Osheroff's* nonprecedent-setting legal significance, it could greatly affect the delivery of psychiatric treatment. This alone is reason for high recommendation of this book.