

THE INFLUENCE OF THE GERMAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION
ON THE RESEARCH, ORGANIZATION AND PROFILE OF
PSYCHIATRY

Uwe Henrik Peters

Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, University of Cologne, D-
50924 Cologne, Germany

As far as known the German Psychiatric Association is the oldest in the world. Since 1822 there were regular meetings of psychiatrists at the "Gesellschaft deutscher Naturforscher und Ärzte", and in 1827 Joseph Ennemoser, professor of psychotherapy in Bonn and Wilhelm Ruer, medical superintendent of the asylum for the insane in Marsberg, had the idea of creating a separate association. In 1842 the association was formally founded and had 72 members already in its 1st year. All of these members were at the same time coeditors of the journal of the association, the "Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie und psychisch-gerichtliche Medizin". In contrast to the British association, founded in 1841 by 6 medical superintendents and the American association, founded in 1844 by 13 superintendents, in the annual discussions of the German association the organization of psychiatric institutions, although considered to be important, was not in the center of the discussions, but were questions of classification, diagnosis, pharmacological and psychotherapeutic treatment, training of medical students and psychiatrists. In addition to this there were a number of Regional Associations, some of them still exist. This worked well until Nazi time. In 1933 the Swiss Nazi psychiatrist Ernst Rüdin, a student of Eugen Bleuler, was imposed to the association as forced president (Zwangspräsident) and chaired all the meetings until 1945. During this time and scientifically supported by the association's president, 100,000 mental patients were killed. Exactly 100 years after its first edition, in 1944, the journal of the association ceased to appear and did not reappear until the present day. The association only slowly recovered after the end of WW II, after approx. 600 psychiatrists had emigrated during Nazi time.

It is little known that there are close connections between Danish and German psychiatry. As early as 1751 the German speaking psychiatrist, but Danish subject, Johann Christian Bolten, published the first modern textbook of psychotherapy. Bolten then was *physicus* at Altona, then the second largest town of the Danish kingdom, where he came to by the influence of Johann Samuel Carl, personal physician of the Danish king. Toward the end of the 18th century Carl Ferdinand Suardicani, then personal physician of king Frederik VI of Denmark, planned and founded the first psychiatric hospital in the world, which was built according to therapeutic ideas.