A. A. BOGDANOV—FOUNDER OF THE SCIENCE OF BLOOD TRANSFUSION

Ninety years have elapsed since the day Alexander A. Bogdanov, prominent Russian philosopher, economist, physician and participant in the democratic movement in the middle 1890’s, was born. In the history of Soviet health services, he has come down as the founder of the world’s first State Research Institute of Blood Transfusion (now the Central Institute of Hematology and Blood Transfusion under the USSR Ministry of Health).

Alexander Malinovsky (Bogdanov was his Party pseudonym) was born in 1873 in the little town of Sokolka, Grodno province, in the family of a people’s teacher. Having finished secondary school (gymnasium) he went to study at the natural science faculty of the Moscow University and soon was taking an active part in revolutionary activities. In 1899, A. A. Bogdanov graduated from the medical faculty of Kharkov University. Already a doctor, he went on with his revolutionary activities and joined the Bolsheviks. After the 1905 revolution had been defeated, however, he broke off from them. Bogdanov’s philosophical errors and ideological waverings were subjected to severe criticism in V.I. Lenin’s book Materialism and Empirio-criticism. After the victory of the October revolution, A. A. Bogdanov was one of the initiators of the establishment of the Socialist Academy of Social Sciences (subsequently the Communist Academy) and remained a member of its presidium to the very last days of his life. However, A. A. Bogdanov was growing more and more interested in medical problems. He was particularly impressed with the idea of blood transfusion which he linked with far-reaching plans for the sanitation “of whole human communities and for the prophylaxis and treatment of a number of diseases.” In 1924, A. A. Bogdanov and his comrades in arms—Doctors S. L. Maloletkov and D. A. Gudin-Levkovich who were also enthusiasts of the new science—commenced with blood transfusions. He performed these experiments first upon himself and then upon his relatives and acquaintances. Within a short time, Bogdanov succeeded in obtaining valuable data on the scientific and practical significance of blood transfusion. He gave an account of them in the monographic paper “Struggle for Viability” in 1927. Bogdanov considered this paper to be a kind of “general introduction, mainly a general biological one, to a series of other works dealing with the problem of blood transfusion from the aspect of medical practice.”

In 1925, A. A. Bogdanov made the suggestion to the Central Committee of the Party and to the People’s Commissariat of Public Health to organize in our country a special medical research and practice institution—the Institute of Blood Transfusion. His initiative found support and the world’s first State Institute of Blood Transfusion was founded in 1926. Alexander A. Bogdanov was appointed its director. In spite of all his mistakes and errors, we honor A. A. Bogdanov as an outstanding organizer and initiator of blood transfusion in our country, as a gifted scientist and fighter who had mapped the immediate and prospective targets of blood transfusion services and hematology and showed the way to attaining them. A. A. Bogdanov was among the first in our country and in the whole world to raise the issue that empiricism in the therapeutic application of blood transfusion must be substituted by scientifically substantiated indications. He strove for thorough clinical and experimental studies of the effects of transfused blood upon the recipient’s organism.

By autumn 1927, the staff of the Institute of Blood Transfusion, which originally consisted of a small group of enthusiastic researchers, was considerably enlarged. Three departments were set up at the Institute—
clinical (hematologic), surgical, and experimental. Beginning from the end of 1929, Bogdanov's ideas found their development in a large-scale reorganization of the Institute which was turned into a center of hematologic research, conducting the scientific and methodologic supervision of the entire blood transfusion service of the Soviet Union.

A. A. Bogdanov did not live to see it. He died in the prime of his important activities, falling victim of a daring experiment which he performed on himself. Bogdanov overestimated the possibilities of blood transfusion. However, in the 1920's he had already realized the great prospects of this method. The scientist was certain that blood transfusion was not just a replacing method, but that it exerted a most complicated physiologic effect which altered the functions of the recipient's organism in a wide variety of directions. A. A. Bogdanov did not live to give this theory a complete clinical and experimental substantiation; it was his colleagues and followers—A. A. Bogomolets, A. A. Bagdasarov and others—who did it. A. A. Bogdanov dreamed of the time when "we shall be able to organize the broad theoretical study of the problems involved in the structure and dynamics of blood by all the modern methods available," when the Institute of Blood Transfusion would be turned into a large research and clinical center.

Alexander A. Bogdanov's ideas have been translated into reality. This is borne out by major research institutes, the vast number of republican, regional and district blood transfusion centers, and by the achievements of Soviet hematology and blood transfusion service. (Meditsinskaya Gazeta, January 21, 1964, slightly abridged.)

THE 6TH WORLD MEDICAL ASSEMBLY IN ISRAEL

The American Physicians Fellowship, an organization of 3100 physicians who are non-resident fellows of the Israel Medical Association, announces that the Israel Medical Association will conduct its 6th World Assembly in Haifa, Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, Israel from August 2 to August 14, 1964.

Some of the expected speakers are Drs. Albert B. Sabin, Cincinnati, Ohio; Joseph L. Melnick, Houston, Texas; Matilda Benyesh-Melnick, Houston, Texas; Robert J. Huebner, Bethesda, Md.; George Barski, Villejuif (Seine), France; J. Berenblum, Rehovoth, Israel; A. Kohn, Ness Ziona, Israel; N. Trainin, Rehovoth, Israel; L. Sachs, Rehovoth, Israel; N. Goldblum, Jerusalem, Israel; A. Hochman, Jerusalem, Israel; Maurice Tubiana, Villejuif (Seine), France; F. Baclesse, Paris, France; Charles Huggins, Chicago, Ill.; David A. Karnofsky, New York, N. Y.; E. Ratzkowski, Jerusalem, Israel; Milton Friedman, New York, N. Y.; H. Ungar, Jerusalem, Israel; E. Robinson, Jerusalem, Israel.

The American Physicians Fellowship is conducting a 24-day jet flight tour to Israel and three European capitals in conjunction with the Assembly. Information about the Assembly or tour can be obtained by writing to the American Physicians Fellowship, 1622 Beacon Street, Brookline, Mass. 02146.