

Abstract

This master's thesis focuses on the weaponization of psychiatry for political repression in the Soviet Union and Francoist Spain. The theoretical part of the thesis is based on two foundations that structure this research: firstly, it describes the relationship between psychiatry and social control, and how the discipline's characteristics make it assume a normalizing role that is accentuated in a totalitarian context. It secondly explores the framework of transient mental illnesses as a tool for the historical evaluation of mental illness. The analysis focuses on the adoption of the normalizing task by psychiatry in these regimes and the constructed character of the nosologies that they produced, as well as on the evaluation of the fitness of the category "transient mental illnesses" for their study. The results show how medical institutions fulfilled a disciplining role and provided a "scientific" justification for the repression of political dissidents by pathologizing their political beliefs and associating them to the nosological categories of "sluggish schizophrenia" —in the USSR— and "marxist fanaticism" —in Spain. It further proves the clear involvement of psychiatry in the repressive task and the possibility of referring to these diagnostic categories as "political transient mental illnesses".