

**From Russia
with
Mushrooms—
A Sketch**

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**Swiss
Psychedelic
Research
Update**

FROM the psychedelic literature, I was convinced that divine psilocybin mushrooms grew only in far-away Mexico and were only available to such lucky persons as Gordon-Wasson and Carlos Castaneda. Here in St. Petersburg, Russia, we poor altered states investigators of necessity content ourselves with ketamine. But recently, I learned that God had taken care to grow mind-altering plants everywhere on Earth.

I made acquaintance with a person who called himself a magician. He told me that he uses psychedelic mushrooms growing in the forests of the Leningrad region in his magic practice. I doubted that it was really psychedelic mushrooms and he gave me some amount of dried specimens. He also told me the instructions for use and promised to take me in the forest in summer to show me the places they grew.

Though he assured me that the mushrooms were absolutely safe, I wanted to identify it scientifically. I opened a xerox copy of *Psychedelics Encyclopedia* by Peter Stafford (this book is my pride; even Lenin's Library in Moscow doesn't have this book!) and identified the specimens as a *Psilocybe semilanceata*! They looked exactly like the picture in the book. I read that *Psilocybe semilanceata* grow in North American, Britain and even in Scandinavian countries. The Leningrad region is near Scandinavia. I carefully studied the Encyclopedia's chapter about psilocybin mushrooms.

The magician told me that the initial dose is about 8 mushrooms which should be eaten dried without boiling. On February 7, 1992 I ate 10 dried mushrooms. The action began in 15 minutes as a physical and emotional relaxation. Then I noticed that my usual stream of thoughts ("inner dialogue") had stopped. Sensations of the body became more precise. My awareness and mindfulness were strong and lucid. I was absolutely "here now" in every moment. I noticed that when I began to do something I was fully involved in the action forgetting all else. At the same time I felt an inner surrender from all actions. The experience was gently going deeper. I felt myself miraculously serene and in a contemplative mood. I had no desires and needs. I simply was. Bodily sensations became blissful. Periodically, waves of indescribable bliss were going through me. In this period, I saw an "as if" white light shining through ordinary reality while the feeling of individual self dissolved. Later, I called this experience "the unbearable bliss of being." In the last part of the trip, the intensity of bliss gradually decreased but I had a miraculous experience of Suchness (or Is-ness). Pure existence. The world is perfect; all happens in the proper way. There is nothing to improve, nothing to add and nothing to take off. Just to be.

It was late. I lay down to sleep while the action was not finished and had an interesting experience. I was a pure observer, a witness non-identical to my body and mind. I was observing that my body began to fall asleep and then how my mind was sleeping and experiencing dreams while I continued to observe this! An hour later the Observer entered into dreams of sleeping mind and lost himself. ■

SEVERAL PSYCHIATRISTS in the Swiss Association for Psycholytic Therapy (SAPT) have permission from the Swiss Health Office to continue to treat a limited number of patients with LSD and MDMA. In late January, the members of SAPT, who are primarily clinicians and not researchers, met with Professor Ladewig, a supervisor and consultant appointed by the Swiss Health Office to monitor their use of psychedelics. Professor Ladewig is helping the members of SAPT design a research protocol so that they can begin work with a larger number of patients. The design of the protocol is currently in process and is expected to be completed around the end of the summer.