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# The Man Who Closed The Asylums: Franco Basaglia And The Revolution In Mental Health Care



## Synopsis

When the wind of the 1960s blew through the world of psychiatry In 1961, when Franco Basaglia arrived outside the grim walls of the Gorizia asylum, on the Italian border with Yugoslavia, it was a place of horror, a Bedlam for the mentally sick and excluded, redolent of Basaglia's own wartime experience inside a fascist gaol. Patients were frequently restrained for long periods, and therapy was largely a matter of electric and insulin shocks. The corridors stank, and for many of the interned the doors were locked for life. This was a concentration camp, not a hospital. Basaglia, the new Director, was expected to practise all the skills of oppression in which he had been schooled, but he would have none of this. The place had to be closed down by opening it up from the inside, bringing freedom and democracy to the patients, the nurses and the psychiatrists working in that âœtotal institution.â •Inspired by the writings of authors such as Primo Levi, R.D. Laing, Erving Goffman, Michel Foucault and Frantz Fanon, and the practices of experimental therapeutic communities in the UK, Basaglia's seminal work as a psychiatrist and campaigner in Gorizia, Parma and Trieste fed into and substantially contributed to the national and international movement of 1968. In 1978 a law was passed (the âœBasaglia lawâ •) which sanctioned the closure of the entire Italian asylum system. The first comprehensive study of this revolutionary approach to mental health care, *The Man Who Closed the Asylums* is a gripping account of one of the most influential movements in twentieth-century psychiatry, which helped to transform the way we see mental illness. Basaglia's work saved countless people from a miserable existence, and his legacy persists, as an object lesson in the struggle against the brutality and ignorance that the establishment peddles to the public as common sense.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Man Who Closed the Asylums by John Foot is a free NetGalley ebook that I read in mid-August. Being stewed in incarceration history and rehabilitative principles in school for the past four years and into the present day, I knew that this book could be terrific, transportive, and rich in resource. First, I'll most definitely recommend this book to my Italian-born criminology professor. She wouldn't likely be put off by its dissertation appeal and mountains of footnotes. I didn't find it to be my cup of tea for the reasons mentioned formerly, nor the (and sorry if this comes off as suplicative or incredibly stupid) way that historical research interviews are mentioned in hearsay, instead of being in the moment and from a place of certainty and definition than as a has-been who is so forty to fifty years ago.

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