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COMMUNIST CONTROL METHODS

APPENDIX I: The Use of Scientific Design and Guidance,
Drugs and Hypnosis in Communist Interro-
gation and Indoctrination Procedures.

The startling and dramatic confessions of persons who have been arrested, imprisoned and brought to trial by the Communists, and the intensely pro-Communist sentiments expressed by Americans released from Communist prisons, has led to much speculation and theorizing about highly organized scientific methods employed by the Communists. The effectiveness of their methods has been variously ascribed to modifications of Pavlovian conditioning techniques, drugs, hypnosis, and other exotic and devious means of controlling human behavior.

The main study (to which this is an appendix) demonstrates that no such methods need be postulated to explain and understand the apparent successes of Communist methods of interrogation and indoctrination. However, because of the widespread interest in the possible participation of scientists in the design and development of Communist control methods, a specific investigation of this question was undertaken. The findings of this investigation are that scientists have not participated. The uniformity of control methods throughout the Communist countries makes it apparent that they have been organized into a more or less formal body of doctrine, and it is known that those who use the methods are trained in the doctrine and try to follow it, but all of the evidence points to the fact that the doctrine was developed and organized by the police officials themselves.

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It is true that from time to time Russian psychologists have made public statements to the effect that Soviet training is producing a new breed of men, generically referred to as the "Soviet man". These statements appear to be designed for public consumption and are not based upon any organized body of data. Much of Soviet psychology is concerned with adaptations of the conditioned reflex concepts of Pavlov, one fundamental aspect of which is the belief that men can deliberately be made to develop predesigned types of thought and behavior under appropriately controlled environmental conditions. Soviet laboratories have experimented with a variety of situations for the acquisition of conditioned reflexes. The conditioning method has proved useful in describing and predicting the learning of simple behavior sequences, and Pavlovian psychology has been promoted by the Communists to bolster the "scientific" basis of Communist theory. But so far as can be ascertained the limited scientific applicability of conditioning to intelligence operations has never been exploited by the Communists.

Soviet and Satellite police officers have an earthy contempt for psychology in general and for psychologists and psychiatrists in particular. To be sure the KGB has a medical department which is organized along the lines of the medical department in one of our armed forces. The mission of this medical department is to take care of the illnesses of prisoners and KGB personnel. This department does include a few psychiatrists. However, no medical officer or psychiatrist is ever used in the interrogation process itself. Their function in relation to prisoners under interrogation is simply that of evaluating the state of their physical and mental health, advising the interrogator when men are too ill for further interrogation, and treating prisoners for the effects of the tortures which have been carried out upon them. They sometimes administer stimulants to tired or sleepy prisoners to enable them to continue with prolonged interrogations. They may give sedatives to excited prisoners. They use antibiotics,

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vitamins, and any other available adjuncts of medical therapy in the treatment of wounds and illness. But we have no reliable evidence of any direct medical or psychiatric participation in attempts to elicit information from prisoners or to produce confessions.*

The central staff of the KGB and its predecessors does not have any section devoted to psychological or medical research. No scientists are known to have participated in the planning of any of its procedures. It is said that during World War II, Beria maintained a highly secret laboratory section in Moscow, in which physicians and other scientists attempted to develop new methods of covert poisoning and other means for eliminating or disabling target individuals. He and his associates were inspired by the activities of the Gestapo along these lines, and established their laboratory primarily in order to keep up with technological advances in the field. It is reported that the results of this work were disappointing and the whole outfit was abolished shortly after the war. The physicians who took part in the work were not considered top flight and were looked down upon by KGB officers in general.

The former secret police informants are unanimous in affirming that no training in psychology or psychiatry is given to officers who attend the KGB schools.

Since the time of the Purge Trials there have been recurrent reports that the Communist secret police use drugs as a means of obtaining confessions. All of the reports which could be found have been reviewed. In no case has it been possible to obtain any substantial evidence that any drug played an important role in a known interrogation or confession. Our informants, former Communist secret police officials, state that no drug had been issued to the MVD for use in interrogations as late as 1953.

*Communist intelligence services do, of course, utilize physicians as agents, and these physicians may use drugs for purposes such as abduction, demoralization, etc.; but this is a different matter.

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There is, however, good reason to believe that secret police in the Communist countries, especially those of Czechoslovakia and Russia, have experimented with the use of all the commonly known psychochemicals and so-called "truth drugs". This belief is based upon recurrent and scattered reports to this effect, some from sources regarded as reliable. Furthermore, nearly all of these drugs and most of the scientific literature describing their effects, are readily available to the Communists. It is, therefore, important to consider the possible role which drugs and psychochemicals might play in interrogations.

The drugs which are of potential importance in interrogations are:

- (1) Stimulants
- (2) Hypnotics
- (3) Hallucinogenic Agents

The stimulants, in general, have the effect of increasing wakefulness and alertness at the expense of creating tremulousness, feelings of anxiety and overactivity. Caffein, benzedrine, and dexedrine fall into this category. There are a number of derivatives of benzedrine which have essentially the same action. "Aktedron", a synthetic benzedrine derivative, has been used in Czechoslovakia and Southeast Europe. Coffee and benzedrine derivatives are sometimes administered to tired or sleepy prisoners in order to wake them up enough so that the interrogation can be carried on. They have been used in this manner in Eastern Europe, in Russia, and in China. They, in and of themselves, have no important effect in producing confessions. Used in combination with the system of psychological and physiological pressures (as described in the main report), such stimulants as benzedrine will, in many cases, accelerate and exacerbate the profound fatigue, confusion, loss of critical judgment, and breakdown of resistance which is a consequence of the full course of control techniques.

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The so-called "hypnotics" do not actually produce hypnosis. They are sleep producing drugs which have a moderately intoxicating effect in small doses. The barbiturates such as nembutal and phenobarbital fall into this category. So-called "truth serum" is sodium amytal or sodium pentothal, both of which are rapidly acting barbiturates that are administered by vein. When these drugs are given in the proper dosage, they have a relaxing and befuddling effect similar to that produced by moderate amounts of alcohol. Under some circumstances, individuals intoxicated by these drugs become loose in their talk. But these drugs have no effect in producing truth, and persons under their influence can resist their action to the same extent that they can resist the action of alcohol. There is no evidence that the Communists have effectively or extensively used amytal interviews as a means of extracting confessions, although it is quite probable that they have experimented with this maneuver. The hypnotic drug which is most frequently mentioned as a Communist tool is Scopolamine, a naturally occurring substance long known in medical science. It is one of the ingredients in the "twilight sleep" medication used by obstetricians on women in labor. It, too, has an intoxicating and befuddling effect in small doses, an effect which would be difficult to distinguish from that of the profound fatigue, sleep loss, undernourishment, anxiety and confusion produced by the usual Communist control techniques.

In every instance in which there is direct evidence that Communist police have given hypnotic and sedative drugs to prisoners, they have administered these drugs for the purpose of calming and relaxing excited and fatigued individuals. American physicians would be likely to use these drugs in a similar manner for the same reason.

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The hallucinogenic agents have likewise been known for a long time. Marijuana falls into this category. Persons under the influence of these agents have a disturbance of their thought processes which can be profoundly disorganizing to them. During the past few years LSD-25 and Mescaline (a derivative of a Mexican plant) have attracted much attention because of their use in experimental psychiatry. All intelligence services have been much concerned with them. It is known that the Russians have investigated both of these substances but there is no evidence that they have ever used them in attempts at operational interrogation.

Before concluding this statement on the operational use of drugs, it should be emphasized that the covert administration of any drug (stimulant, hypnotic, or hallucinogenic agent) can produce an impact on the individual undergoing the stress of prolonged imprisonment and interrogation which goes beyond merely accelerating the fatigue, disturbed judgment, and other effects of the usual prolonged control pressures. The covertly administered drug can make the prisoner feel that the interrogation is affecting him more than it really is. The drug effect may make the prisoner feel that the interrogator is more powerful or more prescient than he really is, or that the situation has become more intolerable and inexorable than it is in fact. We know that this impact can be exploited by an interrogator to increase the prisoner's cooperation, providing the interrogator is sufficiently perceptive and appropriately flexible in his approach. To what extent this fact is known to the Communists we cannot say. It is likely, however, that so long as they continue to employ the doctrinaire approach which seems to characterize the imprisonment-interrogation procedure described in this report, that they will not be able to exercise sufficient flexibility to exploit this aspect of drug effects.

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Another question that recurrently arises is whether prisoners at the time of police confession are in a state of hypnosis. No evidence of the use of hypnotists or of hypnosis in any of the Communist confession procedures has been found. At the time of his Gestapo-like experiments, it is said that Beria experimented with the use of hypnosis also. Our informers state that the experiments were a failure and the attempts did not continue.

Although formal hypnosis is not used, the confession routine as it has been described does create in those exposed to it an increased degree of pliability and suggestibility. It is not clear to what extent the Communists are aware of this and purposefully exploit it.

Conclusions:

The Communist secret police organs have experimented with hypnosis, drugs and various scientific training techniques, but they have not exploited their potential operationally. Soviet and Satellite police officers are biased against the use of psychiatrists and psychologists, and no reliable evidence has been found of their direct guidance or participation in attempts to elicit information from prisoners or to produce confessions. This does not mean that these scientific resources will not be exploited in the future. For this reason, attention has been given to types of drugs and techniques which are potential instruments and aids to Communist interrogation-indoctrination procedures.

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