

## Editor's Page

### BRAINWASHING

More than fifty years ago Ivan Pavlov<sup>1</sup> demonstrated that a dog could be conditioned to salivate in response to a flashing light even though no food was offered. The same response was then obtained from human beings—a grotesque and disturbing performance.

In 1936 the world was perplexed and horrified by the abject confessions and self-castigations of former Russian officials during purge trials. Everyone realized that this represented something new and sinister in the field of justice.

Since that time this practice of brainwashing as utilized by Hitler and by the Chinese Reds in Korea has become an established, if not well known fact. Not enough individuals realize that this technique can be, and has been, adapted to influence the thinking of most of our citizens.

In Korea our soldiers were exposed for the first time to the technique of brainwashing. This included the tools of hunger, fatigue, tenseness, threats, violence, and in more important cases—drugs and hypnotism—all geared to putting the mind into a fog. The tortures applied to our men were diabolical, but can not be enumerated here. Those interested in the technique—and all should be—may refer to the original sources.

Hunter<sup>2</sup> describes the essence of brainwashing as a "system of befogging the brain so a person can be seduced into acceptance of what would be abhorrent to him. In brainwashing, a fog settles over the patient's mind until he loses touch with reality. Isolation, physical violence, semi-starvation and lack of sleep were all utilized to induce surrender. Such methods were quite effective except for those who had strong, deep-rooted beliefs."

All too few realize that these techniques of mind control are applicable to mass populations. According to Hunter "The tendency of the good-willed mind is to cast off such shocking information by the safety valve of disbelief. Pavlov called this type of reaction, 'conditioned inhibition'."

Dr. Freedom has said, "When exposed to the light of day, people instinctively would want to fight it, if only out of a sense of self-preservation. That is why a totalitarian state can only survive by maintaining an iron curtain—a conditioned or controlled environment."

It is difficult to believe that our intellects are being subjected to any such influences. Nevertheless, this is so, and the sooner we appreciate it the better for all of us.

According to Meerloo<sup>3</sup> "Every human communication can be either a report of straight facts or an attempt to suggest things and situations as they do not exist." "Logic can be met with logic, while illogic cannot—it confuses those who think straight. The Big Lie and monotonously repeated nonsense have more emotional appeal in a cold war than logic and reason.—There actually exists such a thing as a technique of mass brainwashing."

The only defense against the engineering of consent is a knowledge of the techniques, together with good old-fashioned "horse sense." Let us hope that dentists and physicians retain enough of this to act as a bulwark against totalitarianism.

#### REFERENCES

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3. Meerloo, Joost A.M., M.D.: *The Rape of the Mind*. (The Psychology of Thought Control, Menticide and Brainwashing.) World Publishing Co., New York, 1956.