

## PSYCHIATRY

# "Brainwashing Methods"

Russian and Chinese Communists differ in their aims in "brainwashing." Root of the method's temporary success is the disturbance of man's relationship with his environment.

► THE MAJOR DIFFERENCE between Chinese Communist and Russian Communist "brainwashing" is that the Chinese Communists aim at developing a long-lasting change in attitude and behavior that will continue after release from prison.

The Russian Communists, on the other hand, aim at getting a "confession."

These differences and also many similarities between the two Communist methods are reported by Drs. Lawrence E. Hinkle Jr. and Harold G. Wolff of New York in the *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry* (Aug.).

The two psychiatrists collected their information while serving as consultants to the U. S. Department of Defense.

The general impression that "brainwashing" is a new, scientific method of "thought control" giving guaranteed and permanent results is entirely false, the two psychiatrists report.

This general impression is, however, good propaganda for the Communists, they state. "Brainwashing" generally succeeds in causing a prisoner to change his attitude just enough to satisfy his captors and relieve the "intolerable pressures under which he labors."

The exception to this is the case of U. S. Air Force POW's who "confessed" to bacteriological warfare during the Korean conflict. These men were not "brainwashed" into believing their confessions. They confessed to things they knew were not true, only because they were submitted to extreme brutality and physical torture, which are not usually a part of the indoctrination process.

In the case of Western civilians, successful brainwashing is limited. Prisoners who are "converted" usually readjust when released.

At the root of the method's temporary success is the fact that man's relation to his environment is disturbed. Man is a living system, the psychiatrists explain. He is entirely dependent on keeping a satisfactory relationship with his environment, including maintaining a satisfactory body temperature; adequate intake of food, liquids and air; elimination of waste; rest; activity, and satisfactory relationships with other people.

When any of these relationships are disturbed, the resulting unpleasant feelings make a man want to act to restore the balance. If the disturbance is strong enough, a man will "do anything" to end it.

Before deciding to end it by "confessing," the prisoner goes through a process of rationalization in which he convinces himself that what he confesses is true and not

just an escape. Something he remains convinced, but generally he returns to his original thinking once he is released from prison.

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## CHEMISTRY

## Finds Way to Better Insect Repellents

► BETTER insect repellents should come through a discovery by Dr. R. H. Wright of the British Columbia Research Council, Vancouver, Can.

Incidentally, scientists will no longer have to test repellents by letting mosquitoes or other insects feed on their arms to see whether or not the repellent actually repels.

Chemicals do or do not repel mosquitoes and probably other insects according to the low-frequency fundamental vibrations of the molecules of the chemicals, Dr. Wright reports in *Nature* (Sept. 22).

The molecular vibration can be determined from the chemical's absorption of infrared light. Those chemicals with infrared absorption of a certain pattern repelled mosquitoes. Others of a different pattern did not. The only exception found was dimethyl phthalate, a well-known repellent. Its structure probably explains this.

Besides giving a physical test for mos-

quito repellents and a clue to the kinds of chemicals to make and test, Dr. Wright's discovery lends support to the theory that the low-frequency vibrations of molecules provide the physical basis of their odors. Such vibrations may be able to trigger nerve discharges so that the sensation of odor reaches the brain.

Science News Letter, October 6, 1956

## MEDICINE

## Antibiotics to Prolong Life of Leukemia Patients

► LIVES of some leukemia patients might be prolonged by "more enlightened" use of antibiotics, or so-called mold remedies, the International Society of Hematology at its Sixth Congress in Boston was told in a report by Drs. John Louis, William R. Best, Mark H. Lepper and Louis R. Limarzi of Chicago.

The fever that is common in leukemia, especially the acute variety, is generally thought to result from the leukemic process. Infection is generally considered unimportant because of the "prophylactic" use of antibiotics. The Chicago scientists questioned these common ideas and, to learn more of the subject, reviewed the course of 30 consecutive patients dying with leukemia. All but one had fever at the time of death.

In one group, making up 44% of the patients, they found that infection on top of leukemia apparently precipitated death.

In a second group, 34%, infection was present at death.

In the third and smallest group, 22%, no infection was found at death.

The ear and lung were the most frequent sites involved in the infections.

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**BANK DEPOSIT**—In the plastic bag is a frozen blood vessel placed beneath the nozzle of an electron beam generator at the General Electric Research Laboratory to sterilize it before storage in a blood vessel bank. From left to right are Dr. William J. Farrell, Dr. William F. Westendorp and Elliott J. Lawton.