

## PSYCHOLOGY

# Propaganda Is War Threat

**Danger of another world war, with Russia as the opponent, lies in the fact that Russian leaders may believe their own propaganda and may be driven by fear of us.**

► THE chief threat that the United States may be drawn into a third world war against Russia lies in the danger that Russian leaders may actually believe their own propaganda. This is the conclusion of Dr. Ralph K. White, psychologist. He has made a careful analysis of Soviet propaganda and compared it with that of Hitler before World War II and the propaganda of Roosevelt. He reported the results of his study in the *JOURNAL OF ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY*.

Similarities that Dr. White found between Hitler's propaganda and Roosevelt's, he believes, merely point to the fact that both were masters of the art of influencing people.

Points on which Hitler's speeches differed from those of Roosevelt may be considered, he believes, distinctive of the war propaganda designed to prepare the German people for a World War.

Like Roosevelt, Hitler did not make any frontal attack on the values of conventional morality. Both men, in their speeches, painted a simple black-and-white picture in which their own country was always good and great and others—enemies—always bad.

The popular impression that Hitler always glorified war is erroneous, Dr. White found. In fact, after coming to power in 1933, he continually glorified peace and preached against world conquest (by his enemies).

Important difference between Hitler's propaganda and Roosevelt's utterances lies in Hitler's emphasis on paranoid ideas of persecution. Roosevelt did denounce America's enemies with equal vigor, but he did not do it nearly so often. Dr. White found 32% of the samples of Hitler's speeches explicit denunciation; in Roosevelt's he found only 10%. Hitler expressed ideas of persecution more than three times as often. And Roosevelt had more objective evidence for describing our enemies as aggressors.

Soviet propaganda, Dr. White finds, is like that of both Roosevelt and Hitler in that it rarely challenges openly (as it did in the earlier days of Marxism) any of the traditional moral values of Western civilization: peace, democracy, patriotism, religion, the family, etc. It glorifies the USSR. It paints a simple black and white picture. These findings prove nothing except that Soviet propagandists know their business.

But Soviet propaganda shares with Hitler the one characteristic in which he differed most from Roosevelt—frequency of denunci-

ation. In fact, Dr. White points out, its life and breath is denunciation.

"Vishinsky's speeches in the United Nations Assembly, or the Soviet radio's continual attacks on American 'imperialism,' 'reaction,' 'warmongering,' etc. fully equal Hitler's characteristic invective in this respect."

"Chief upshot of our whole analysis," Dr. White explains, "is that conscious intention is not necessary in order to produce aggression. Distorted perception can do it. The real danger lies in the strong possibility that the Soviet leaders themselves may actually believe what they say. Not all of it (any more than Hitler did) but most of it."

"If they do believe most of it (and a great deal of their behavior can be best explained on this assumption) then they themselves may have a thoroughly dis-

torted perception of every crisis-situation, and may blunder into actual aggression, more serious than any they have shown heretofore, in the honest belief that what they are doing is necessary for the sake of long-run self-defense."

Mr. White also finds a parallel between our own line of thought and that of Hitler in our failure to realize that the Russians may be actuated by fear.

Hitler argued that the rulers of France and Britain were actuated by greed, vindictiveness and lust for power; he never publicly credited them with fear. Yet France, Dr. White points out, was demonstrably obsessed by fear of German aggression.

"Similarly, there are persons in the West today who denounce Soviet aggression without even seriously considering the hypothesis that Soviet aggression may be partly inspired by fear of us. In a world obsessed by fear, they fail to see that fear except in themselves. Such persons will not fall into the error of appeasement. They may fall into the error of failing to be fair and reasonable at those times when fairness and reasonableness on our part (combined with firmness) would help to mitigate the paranoid fears with the Soviet Union."

Science News Letter, April 2, 1949

## OPHTHALMOLOGY

# Blindness Victims Sought

► A SEARCH for 800,000 Americans who are going blind without knowing it is getting under way. Object is to get these people to eye specialists for treatment that can save the eyesight of most of them if started in time. Spearheading this search for blindness in order to stop it is the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness which held its 40th anniversary conference in New York.

The 800,000 future blindness victims are those suffering from the eyeball hardening condition known as glaucoma. The number is an estimate based on a recent test study.

Among 256 employees of a Philadelphia department store recently examined, 28 had enough tension in their eyeballs to make the doctor suspect glaucoma was present or coming on and six were definitely diagnosed as having glaucoma, Dr. Solomon S. Brav of the Jewish Hospital, Philadelphia, reported.

Waiting for patients to notice symptoms and come to the doctor is too slow to save many from glaucoma-caused blindness, in Dr. Brav's opinion. He believes there should be routine eye examinations of people aged 40 and over, something as unsuspected tuberculosis and cancer cases are now being sought through routine examinations of people in the age groups most likely to be affected.

The eyeball is not elastic. It is kept nor-

mally firm by nervous system regulation of the constant entrance and exit of fluids into it. In glaucoma this delicate mechanism is upset. The exit channels get blocked and back pressure results. Measurement of the tension produced gives the doctor a clue to whether glaucoma is present or likely to develop.

Searching for glaucoma is difficult because early symptoms and signs are indefinite. First signs that the patient himself might notice are attacks of fogged or blurred vision. He may see rainbow halos around lights at night. Such a sign should be reported to the eye physician at once. Second important warning sign is pain, which may seem to range from a feeling of fullness in the eye to what seems an ordinary headache. Fairly often the pain spreads through the head and there is nausea and vomiting with it. This may be mistaken for a "biliary attack," and the pain around or in the eyes may be wrongly considered due to sinus trouble.

Third important sign is a feeling that the reading glasses need changing. Since glaucoma usually comes at middle age, when people are needing reading glasses anyway, this feeling that the glasses need changing may be misunderstood. If the patient asks to have his glasses changed every few months instead of every two years or so, glaucoma should be suspected.

Science News Letter, April 2, 1949