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Why do the Russians smile at us one day and snarl the next? A psychiatrist

By **GEORGE F. SUTHERLAND, M.D.** with **Curtis Mitchell**

Past President, Academy of Psychosomatic Medicine

ONE MONTH, Nikita Khrushchev is hurling threats of atomic annihilation at us. The next month, he is cooing cozily about peaceful coexistence.

It simply does not make sense. Or does it?

I think it does. I believe the seemingly erratic movements of Soviet diplomacy may not be erratic at all. Instead, they seem to be carefully planned to create neurosis on a global scale.

Over the years, I have gathered and analyzed records of hundreds of such twists and turns, and it becomes more and more obvious that there is an underlying timing for each.

A problem is raised; and at first the Russians seem to want a peaceful settlement. But when a solution seems near, they lose interest and raise new objections which make a settlement of the problem impossible.

For instance, throughout 1961 the Russians insisted that we and they discuss banning nuclear weapons in conjunction with our talks on total disarmament. Although we preferred another course, we finally agreed—whereupon they reversed themselves, asserting that our acceptance was a capitalistic trick and that they would no longer agree with their own proposal.

This zigzag technique in diplomacy parallels the methods used by the Red Chinese in brainwashing American prisoners during the Korean War.

In his book, "Battle for the Mind," William Sargant describes how brainwashers subject a victim to alternating positive and negative attitudes. For a time, the victim is treated in a friendly manner—and then, for no apparent reason, he becomes an object of utmost disdain. As the process continues, he grows progressively more and more bewildered. Finally, he will grasp at the slightest promise of relief. In this condition, he is likely to fall for any type of indoctrination.

Although the Red Chinese are the most notorious practitioners of brainwashing, the foundations for it were laid by a Russian doctor and physiologist, Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849-1936). In 1904, he won the Nobel Prize for physiology and medicine. During later studies, he discovered how to alter the attitudes and behavior of laboratory animals to the point of producing nervous disorders in them.

When the Communists came to power in 1917, Nikolai Lenin thought so highly of Pavlov's talents that he awarded the scientist double rations, a country house, an expanded laboratory, and the perpetual use of an apartment.

Lenin hoped to apply Pavlov's psychological techniques to alter the attitudes and behavior of humans. Since then, Pavlov's principles have been used extensively in Russian child training and in the Soviet brand of psychiatry.

BY CONTRAST, the Western world has failed to grasp the deep significance of Pavlov's theories. In consequence, we do not understand what may be happening to us. Instead of responding rationally, we often react compulsively to Soviet propaganda.

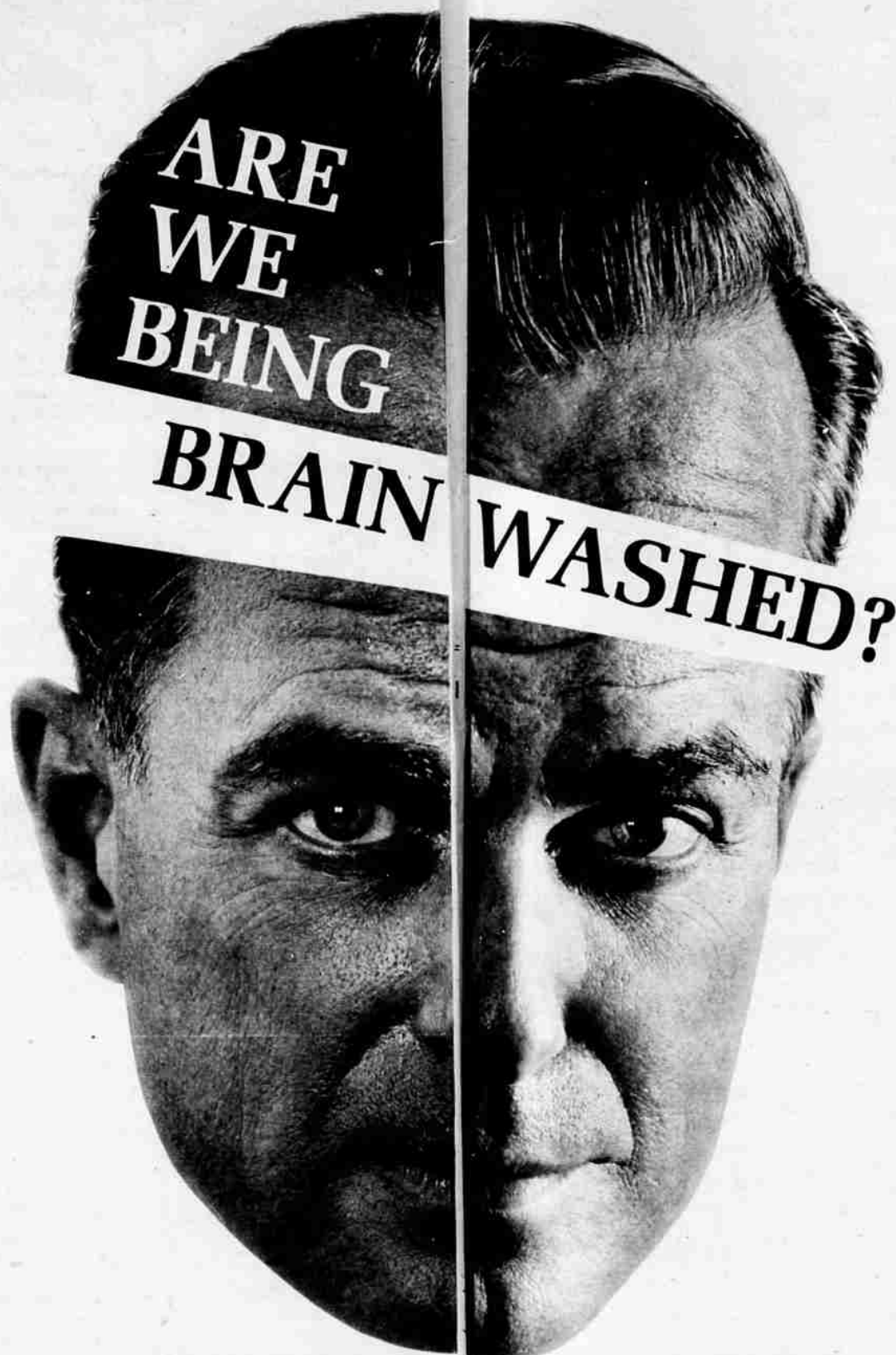
Why should this be? Students of Pavlov advance the theory that a person who is bewildered in attempting to deal with a situation will accept any strong suggestion without question.

Before the first Sputnik, most Americans were convinced of our superiority over the Russians. But when the Russian space vehicle roared into orbit and ours remained grounded, it confused and shocked us. Their success suggested strongly that we had been wrong. Our self-confidence changed swiftly to self-doubt and anxiety, and we have never entirely recovered.

To a psychiatrist, this persistent feeling of apprehension is a symptom of the sickness called psychoneurosis.

A variety of techniques will produce this neurosis in an experimental animal. But all of them involve presenting a succession of alternating positive and negative signals calling for opposite responses. The more difficult it becomes to distinguish between

believes it's not a matter of whim, but a deliberate attempt to unnerve us



the signals, the more disturbing the routine is likely to be.

In my own investigations, I used hogs as subjects. On one day, the interruption of a continuous tone signified that the animals would be fed. On alternate days, the same interruption signaled that they would receive a light but unpleasant electrical shock. After several months of this alternation, two of the three animals used in the study developed neuroses.

In men as well as in animals, such reflex behavior develops almost without the victim being aware of it. A pedestrian jumps at the warning sound of an auto horn before he considers its meaning. He has become conditioned.

FACED WITH the possibility that the Russians are using this technique to brainwash us, can we save ourselves?

Remedial measures are akin to lifting ourselves by our own bootstraps. The first step is to comprehend the mechanism: the alternating current of sweet talk and threats.

A French physician who survived three years of brainwashing in a Chinese prison said: "You are exhausted, and you are annihilated. You can't distinguish right from left. You just wonder when you will be shot—and begin to hope for the end. Finally, you do whatever they want."

Three conditions, if maintained long enough, are expected to create an experimental neurosis in a human being.

1. A continuous state of unpleasant anticipation.
2. Lack of means to combat the situation.
3. Mounting anxiety under inescapable pressure.

Ask yourself: Do you dread the next Soviet threat? Do you have doubts about our ability to fight back? Do you feel we can only sit and wait for the inevitable?

If you have these feelings, reach fast for your bootstraps!

The primitive medicine man controlled his subjects only as long as they failed to see through his "magic." Likewise, once we view the Soviet smile-and-snarl as a kind of "medicine," we can judge it realistically and refuse to be stampeded.

Knowledge is power. In psychotherapy, it is a fact that if a person learns what is wrong and can understand what threatens him, he will make an effort to protect himself.

I believe that an understanding of Pavlov's principles is a key to our national self-defense. But this is merely a first step. We need more knowledge. I suggest three steps:

1. Read more about the threat itself.
2. Dig behind the crisis headlines.
3. Set your sights on an ultimate goal and don't be distracted or diverted from attaining it.

DIGGING behind the daily headlines, you will discover that Kremlin leaders are possibly more dilemma-ridden than we are. After 40 years, their rate of growth is still inferior to that which "dying capitalism" has provided for Japan, France, and West Germany. Soviet agriculture has never fed its people adequately, while ours produces surpluses.

You will also see through the myth of Soviet "solidarity." Long ago, Yugoslavia rejected Khrushchev's leadership. In Africa, Southeast Asia, and Cuba, Red China is openly competing with Russia for supremacy. Even in Russia itself, the Communist party seems to be deeply divided.

Most of us want to live peacefully in a community of nations. If you subscribe to this goal and arm yourself with the facts, your thinking and your actions can assume a realistic direction. You will have an objective which will prevent the undermining of your courage, wisdom, and faith.

When the chips were down, astronauts John Glenn and Scott Carpenter were able to survive both the nerve-racking postponements and the emergencies that threatened their earth orbits.

They had the facts. They knew their objective. Their faith held.

Most of us can be equally strong in our own way. As long as we live, Soviet smiles probably will alternate with snarls, threats, and shoe-pounding. But if we recognize these gestures for what they are, we will not panic. We will be resolute in working toward our goal—a world where men can live in peace and freedom.

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