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Ex-CIA Doc Leads Fight to Limit Hypnosis

by Jeff Goldberg

Hypnotherapist Dr. Milton V. Kline, former consultant to the CIA's supersecret behavior-modification project Bluebird, is currently campaigning for strict legal constraints on hypnosis, limiting its use to trained members of the health professions. During the early '60s, when the CIA was covertly funneling millions of tax dollars into a variety of brainwashing experiments involving LSD, other hallucinogens and electroshock, Kline provided expertise on hypnosis.

He was outspoken in his belief that one of the central goals of these experiments—to create a hypnotized, remote-control assassin—was entirely possible, though he denies knowledge of any "terminal experiments" that would have tested his theories.

The fictional Manchurian candidate, presented in Richard Condon's thriller and later in a movie starring Frank Sinatra, is, in Kline's mind, still a frighteningly real specter. "It cannot be done by everyone," he argues. "It cannot be done consistently, but it can be done." Kline claims that given the proper subject and circumstances, by using hypnosis he could produce such a killer in three to six weeks.

His strong beliefs about the use of hypnosis as a technique of coercive persuasion to produce antisocial or criminal behavior are one reason he advocates legal restrictions on the practice.

Kline spoke to *High Times* in his posh office suite overlooking Central Park in Manhattan, where today he conducts private hypnotherapy sessions. The antiseptic, subdued atmosphere of the office resembles that of any successful doctor or psychiatrist, though Dr. Kline is neither (he has a Ph.D. in education).

Commenting on his fears of unwitting Manchurian candidates roaming the streets of the world's political troublespots, he cites the example of Paul Ritter, a young Danish man accused several years ago of committing a particularly brutal and senseless triple homicide.

"The authorities were baffled," Kline explains. "He had no motive, didn't even know the people and couldn't remember committing the crime. The room was ransacked, as though robbery might have been the object, but nothing was taken. He was slightly retarded but didn't seem deranged. He was a petty criminal, with a jail record, but didn't seem like a mass murderer.

"Then it was discovered that during a two-year term in prison, he had shared a cell with an ex-Nazi who was a hypnotist and wanted these three people killed. During that time he was able to program Ritter to commit the murders and disguise it as robbery."

In American cloak-and-dagger circles, a plan to create a hypnotic zombie to assassinate Hitler was proposed by Stanley Lovell of the CIA.



War. In 1954, Bluebird director Morse Allen discussed a terminal experiment on a 35-year-old double agent who talked too much and was to be hypnotized to assassinate a foreign official. The attempt was calculated to fail. Capture and interrogation were written into the scenario because Allen was equally interested in how well hypnosis would hold up under torture. It is not clear from files released through the Freedom of Information Act whether this plan was carried out.

It appears that eventually CIA interest in the subject waned when it became clear that a zomboid assassin was inefficient compared with the perfectly adequate supply of candidates available from the Mafia (for a price) who would do the job and keep their mouths shut.

Dr. Kline's concern, however, is not based only on his reaction to his CIA experiences. "We must eliminate untrained hypnotists," he urges, "especially in the field of entertainment. Hypnosis as a means of entertainment is in every aspect undesirable. It can severely alter a subject's emotional balance and produce traumatic reactions.

"For example, there was the case a few years back of a man who was suffering from psychosomatic paralysis of his right arm. There was nothing physically wrong. Well, a friend of his, an amateur hypnotist, was able to relieve the symptom in one session. The man went home and strangled his wife with his right hand. Clearly the paralysis was a hysterical reaction to the deep, unexpressed hatred he felt for his wife."

"Another time, a 16-year-old girl in Israel was hypnotized by a stage hypnotist. She lapsed into a deep trance, became catatonic

to cure. You can't tell what traumas you may uncover."

To support his argument that laws should be instituted to guard against the future use and abuse of hypnosis, Kline cites the 1975 law passed in Oregon making stage hypnosis illegal and the 1964 National Association of Broadcasters decision to ban hypnosis from television as a form of entertainment. Ironically, many psychologists, scientists and social critics (including Kline) have argued convincingly that television is a hypnotic medium.

Even more ironic is the fact that had such laws been in effect 30 years ago, Milton Kline might have been out of a job in the '60s. Morse Allen, creator of the Bluebird program and a hypnosis freak, was the student of a stage hypnotist whose boasts of sexual conquest using hypnosis turned on the CIA's chief Svengali. Allen went on to pioneer the first Manchurian-candidate experiment in which he hypnotized one of his secretaries to kill—with an unloaded gun of course—a second secretary. The success of this experiment provided the impetus for later CIA efforts in hypnosis and Dr. Kline's subsequent involvement.

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