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Government by the Insane

By EDWARD HUNTER

Communist leaders are suffering from a form of actual insanity. Only by recognizing this fact and studying the methods of their madness can we learn how to cope with them and their adherents.

Rows of Communists, the hard core of the North Korean prisoners, stood with their arms locked, swaying from side to side. They whipped their minds with music borrowed from the jungle and the church. "Their eyes were glazed, they were so wrought up, so hypnotized by their own singing," said the American officer who saw it. Prisoners on other compounds on Pongnam island joined in. The horde, drunk although no man had tasted liquor, was on the verge of smashing through the fence that confined it. The small force of guards, once reached, would have been trampled upon and torn to pieces. Orders to cease this mad self-infurcation were ignored. The guards, mainly Koreans themselves, fired. The wounded were lifted up by their comrades, and the riot continued until nearly 200 had been shot, two thirds of them fatally.

Then, within the hour, in the same drunken stupor, they picked up their dead and wounded, and carried them away. Like the drunk, too, they afterwards tore savagely into those who had not wanted to join, or who had not entered into the spirit of this crazed spree. Several horribly mutilated bodies were handed out.

There have always been riots and demonstrations that get out of hand, but this wasn't like any of those. There was something crazily streamlined about it, singularly modern and yet primitive as the first man. There had been no spontaneity; these new tribal chiefs were moved by an impeccable discipline. The effect on the uninformed is morale-shattering.

There was that young American soldier I met in Tokyo, who had been shot close to his heart in Korea, whose life had been saved by the miracle of our wartime surgery. His battalion had been

attacked by what the Shintoist Japanese call a banzai charge and the Communist Chinese a human wave. "Children rose up in front of me," this youth explained. "Some couldn't have been more than twelve or fourteen. You hesitated using your bayonet on kids; somehow you couldn't. By the time you found you had to, you were dead—or like me, had your chest slashed open." He, too, described the glazed eyes of the charging horde, eyes that seemed to pop out of their heads. The only explanation he could figure out was that these Chinese had been drugged. "We found a pot of heroin in one captured tent," he said.

The pot of dope was probably for the medics. The mental condition he spoke of had been induced by the mélange of fake evangelism and quick psychiatry that passes for education under Communism—the regular, official indoctrination, better described as brainwashing.

Fixations and Obsessions

Who are these people? We know the posts they fill, but we live in such a different environment that we can't grasp the meaning of their performance. Our customary reaction has been bewilderment. Yet there are persons among us who do not find such phenomena, the glazed and popping eyes, the fixations and obsessions, extraordinary. They come across it in their daily work. They are our psychiatrists and alienists. Psychiatrists see it in their studios, alienists in their insane asylums. What is extraordinary is not this mental condition, but the deliberate induction and exploitation of it for political purposes. A recent, much publicized case in American society can perhaps help us a

little to comprehend this situation—the case, namely of Bayard Peakes, who dominated headlines for a few days not long ago. This man was no Communist or Nazi; he was a student type, a frustrated, would-be scientist who walked into an office at Columbia University and emptied his pistol into a girl whom he had never seen before. Peakes had written a book entitled, "How to Live Forever," in which he tried to show how electronics could extend life to 500 years. He could never get it published, which proved to him that American scientists were reactionary. This was what drove him to murder. Only in this way could he arouse enough interest to bring his message to the people. Peakes did not know but there are ways and places nowadays for the unstable and the mentally unbalanced to satisfy their urgings and inflate their egos. Peakes went about it in the old-fashioned way, and that is why he is now incarcerated in an asylum for the insane. With very little variation in type and history, he would fit into the upside-down society of Ho Chi-minh's Viet Min People's Democratic Republic, or Mao Tse-tung's New Democracy, or in Soviet Russia itself. His peculiar talents would be perfectly normal in such an environment.

Persons like Peakes—and Hitler—may have sane, even superior faculties in some field, yet suffer from a delusion in others. They are possessed by an all-consuming grievance. They are positive that they are being unfairly persecuted, and that they have the right to punish the guilty. Their escape is into fanaticism.

Fanatics used to roam temple grounds, and were rarely a danger. The word fanatic, originally fanaticus, meant someone possessed by a demonic, religious fervor. When such people became violent, a short shift was made of them, in the callous manner of their time. They were stuffed into cages, dropped into dungeons, or decapitated. Whenever possible they were tolerated, because they were supposed to be the mediums through which divinity spoke, providing omens that merely required deciphering. Such were the oracles of Delphi. Medical men in those early days did not have sufficient experience to distinguish between the man who was mad, and the deep, spiritual thinker. Scholars did not know enough about natural phenomena to separate superstition from fact. It is a field in which we are tragically deficient even today.

Religious Overtones

The same insane attitudes, recognized as such in olden days, have reappeared in modern politics, in what we call ideologies. We realize by now that the new political ideologies have religious overtones, but we still shy away from the consequences of recognizing that they have become actually a religion. Only recently I heard an American missionary, who for years has followed the party line,

refer to Communism wholly in theological terms, calling it Marxist Christianity, presenting this as a new, reformed religion, like the Buddhism that was the outgrowth of Hinduism, or the Christian faith that was derived from Judaism. Yet he failed to comprehend the connection between this and what Robert T. Bryan, Shanghai-born American, caught a brief inkling of when he concluded his recent series of *Saturday Evening Post* articles about his arrest and brainwashing with the observation: "The insane asylum has broken open and madmen are in the streets."

In *Mein Kampf* Hitler told how he strove to give Nazi fanaticism "the form of faith," so as to make it, like faith, "able to move mountains." The Reds do the same. Again and again, at some Communist gathering, I have been struck by the recourse to the Protestant order of service; even the music is identical, with only the words changed.

Hitler boasted that he and his party members were fanatics. Yet though we regarded him as evil, we considered him nonetheless sane. But on the final afternoon of his life, when sharing a dismal, subterranean bunker with his strange love, Eva Braun, the Fuehrer could no longer have doubted the imminent, total collapse of his Nazi state. If at that moment Hitler could have placed his hands on a super-hydrogen bomb whose chain reaction would have destroyed the world, he would have used it. He would have done so knowing that once shattered, nothing could ever collect the pieces out of space and put them together again. For he would have sincerely felt that there was no point in living in a world without Nazism, that he must spare the earth this agony. The veins of his fervid brain could nearly have burst with the Wagnerian pride of achieving such a sacrificial ending to what otherwise he would visualize only as infinite disorder and futility.

This was insanity, of course, a delusion of the most pronounced sort. Hitler was a crazy man.

Hitler is dead, though some minds have not been cleared of Hitlerism. But Stalin has left a host of little Stalinists, all thoroughly impregnated with the conviction that Communism is mankind's inevitable destiny. A world without Communism would seem a complete refutation of all the "laws" of nature that they call dialectical materialism.

The "logic" in which Communist mysticism is wrapped makes it appear superficially a new form of science, as practical as the multiplication table. This keeps the true nature of the Red gospel hidden from the uninitiate. What is exhibited to the world is a logical and reasonable person, who appears as a good citizen and kindly friend. Yet in sane asylums are full of madmen who are perfectly calm, self-possessed, and even impressive in their appearance. Sadists, rapists, are often thus. A common trait, too, of those suffering from hallucinations, is the logic of what they say or do; they are completely reasonable, once you accept the basic

premise, the line, with which they are obsessed, for they live in a dream world—they are Napoleon, or Joan of Arc, as the case may be.

Dostoevskian Ecstasy

We would be tempting fate, indeed, if we were to take for granted that Stalin's highly fanatical successors would not be drawn to the same insane extremes as Hitler if confronted with the same prospect of inevitable, total defeat. Already Communism has been swept to the same mad anti-Semitism as Nazism. Shattering a large section of the earth, or the entire planet, could very well appear to such obsessed minds as a Dostoevskian ecstasy worth a whole eternity of struggle.

This is a madness that can clinically develop out of the obsessions and the fixations of Mao Tse-tung and Li Li-san and Liu Shao-chi, our own William Z. Foster, and the other Red extremists. It is why Mao and his cohorts, although Chinese, never gave a second thought to the interests of China or the Chinese people when they threw their armies across the Korean frontier, against the troops of the United Nations, on orders from the Kremlin.

In the past there have been many madmen in the seats of the mighty. Tsarist Russia had its Ivan the Terrible; Japan's recent Emperor Taisho was insane. Madmen among sovereigns were easily detectable. The damage they wrought was usually circumscribed by national borders and the loose controls exercised in early historic periods. Precise arrangements exist in protocol for regents tactfully to assume power in such contingencies.

The mental cases that concern us now are different, for they lack the disappointed notions by which we have come to identify the crazy. If a man chews glass or runs amok with a carving knife, any one can see that he is mad. If he insists he is the Messiah come to earth, even a simpleton knows it is a case of derangement.

The truly dangerous madmen of the mid-twentieth century, who have managed to fool us and gain unprecedented power, are not such simple cases. Their excesses are not the spasmodic, unpredictable cruelties imposed on those within easy reach. With the same curious adherence to a strained legality that characterizes totalitarian regimes, these madmen go through all the motions of sanity. They put whole populations under subtle and sinister pressures to make them act with the same madness as themselves.

This is a conception so grotesque that we just can't bring ourselves to believe it. Even when the facts stare us in the face, we close our minds, because normal, decent people refuse to admit such extremes of abnormality. We don't want to admit, too, that whole peoples, including some of our greatest scholars, have been so easily hoodwinked

A Streak of Madness

We refer to the fascist and Communist ideologies, but not to the democratic ideology, thus inferring that there is a difference. The difference is that a streak of insanity is attached to every ideology. Any "true believer" in Communism or fascism has this streak of madness in him. Ezra Pound, whose obtuse, polyglot poetry received universal plaudits, has been properly committed to a Washington mental institution. His capacity as a poet was not in question, any more than Van Gogh's genius as an artist was disproven when he went into an asylum.

Where, then, can we draw the line between the fanatic and the madman? What is obvious is that our present distinctions include many of the latter in the category of the former. We know that man is an ambivalent animal. He can have a blind spot in one part of his mind. This explains such unhappy cases as that of France's Joliot-Curie; it explains Einstein's consistent blundering in politics; it certainly explains Chaplin.

Between those persons who totally lack social responsibility, such as hermits, crooks, and madmen, and those who have been mentally deranged by an excessive sense of their responsibility, like the cranks and political assassins, there is a wide range of political interest, starting with the man who is selfish about his social responsibilities, who "doesn't give a damn," ranging to the person who takes his politics with intense seriousness, a zealot or a fanatic according to the degree of intensity, the sense of mission, he brings into politics.

We have no difficulty in understanding the enthusiast and even the zealot. Only when we enter the field of the fanatics do we cross the border into unexplored territory. Fanatics refuse to be budged from their concentration on some panacea or pet hate, and the point on the horizon where they focus their attention is their whole world. They can not be deterred by flattery or bribery, but willingly use both, judging morality by whether it advances or retards their political objective.

Dividing Line

Where we have erred is in our understanding of when fanaticism ends and insanity begins. We have regarded too many of the insane as mere fanatics. The dividing line between fanaticism and insanity should be shifted. A large proportion of those whom we have been considering fanatics are actually insane in a clinical sense. They are madmen, suffering from delusion or fixation, with its resultant persecution complex. We have been too tolerant. The hard core of Communists, those who have been screened through all the artifices and betrayals of their party, until no feelings remain but a desperate clinging to the party, is a new phenomenon in our society, the occupational hazard of our overtense twentieth century; it is an ideologi-

cal madmen.

This fact is too gigantic for most of us to accept, which is why the free nations have been trying so pathetically to negotiate with these criminals and leaders as if they were sane people, who respond to normal reactions and think normally. All we achieve by such makeshifts is to go round and round in circles. If we insist on the pretense, we should at least proceed as one does in humoring a dangerous madman. Otherwise we have only ourselves to blame for the consequences.

Crazy people have been able to maneuver themselves into positions of extraordinary power without their madness being recognized, because we have not yet dared, in the subtle reaches of ideology, to distinguish between the mere fanatic and the actual madman. We call both fanatics, and we regard the fanatic as sane.

The appalling fact is that many millions of sane people have marched to the polls in our so-called practical age, and voted madmen into office and kept them there. On such naïveté have the Hitlers and the Stalins built their empires, and innumerable men not very different from Peakes have usurped influential jobs. Under them, insanity has become an adjunct of national policy. Madmen hold the most important posts wherever the dictatorship principle has developed into the materialistic mysticism of totalitarian philosophy. Such totalitarianism presupposes an infallible authority, which can not be held responsible to man or God. This is sheer irresponsibility, the distinguishing mark of the mad. Normal procedures are futile in dealing with such a system.

The gullibility of the average man is responsible for the comparative ease with which these people have seized power. Until our average citizen is put on his guard, the world will continue sliding, as if fatalistically, down the Damsday path. The prestige that Communism wields in the Soviet bloc by virtue of its power and unrestricted propaganda confuses the normal, sane individual into looking around him and wondering whether he isn't out of tune with the times. He is made to feel abnormal. Under this pressure, numbers of people voluntarily exchange their sanity for insanity. For those who hesitate, there are the brainwashing establishments where the insane treat the sane. More and more madmen—clinically mad—have constantly to be created, and a whole technique has been evolved to

do just this.

Psychiatric Research Necessary

Because of the existence of Communist parties outside the Red belt, there are more insane people walking the streets today in any free country than are lodged in all its insane asylums. There is no greater problem facing us today than to keep these demented people out of public life, to differentiate between the passionate enthusiast and the mentally unbalanced fanatic. Our psychologists and psychiatrists have no greater responsibility than to investigate this entire field of political fanaticism and ideological madness. Above all, the findings should not be restricted to medical or professional journals. This subject must be clarified for the public.

Society nowadays has to choose not only between persons of varied qualifications for any job, but has to detect those suffering from delusions, to put the insane where they can not harm others. Honest liberals and true intellectuals, because of their prestige, have a particular responsibility to help guard the plain people of the world, as well as themselves, against the embryo Hitlers, Stalins, and Maos who are infiltrating positions of importance in many lands.

We can take a cue here from the experience of the Northwestern University professors who tried to coax logic into Peakes' head. One of them expressed the common experience of all who try to argue with such people when he said, "Peakes simply drove us mad; he was a crackpot." Peakes "couldn't be pinned down," said those who dealt with him. "You can't do business with Hitler," became a maxim in the Free World. You can't deal with the Communist leaders, either—only submit to the excesses caused by their mental imbalance.

At the moment, some crazy political leader may be playing with the dangerous new toys we have made the totalitarian world to get hold of by treachery and deceit. We are confronted with an armed insanity; only by recognizing this, and adjusting our policy accordingly, will we have the chance to save our country, the captive nations, and the world.

The world paid a stupendous price for failure to detect Hitler's insanity. We are now paying a stupendous price for other failures; the eventual cost may be annihilation.

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