

1 October 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Members of the [REDACTED] H  
SUBJECT: Project Proposal on Coercive Persuasion

1. CIA is considering a research project on the above subject. A brief description of the project is attached. May I have an expression of your interest in this project and any comments you may care to make by the close of business on 17 October 1956. The present estimate for expenditure against this project is [REDACTED] I

2. Certain research which has been done in this and related fields will be brought to bear in support of the project in so far as it is pertinent.

3. Please keep in mind that the relationship between CIA and the [REDACTED] where the project will be undertaken, is classified SECRET. B

Office of the Director

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DATE 1 JUN 1978

Attachment

Distribution

3- [REDACTED]  
4- [REDACTED]  
2- [REDACTED]  
2- [REDACTED]

1- [REDACTED] A  
1- [REDACTED]  
1- [REDACTED]  
2- [REDACTED]

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The project proposes to investigate the social role, the techniques, and the effectiveness of coercive persuasion. The study will analyze the methods and the effects of the "brainwashing" applied by Communist regimes to prisoners of war as well as the broader role played by coercive persuasion within Communist societies.

The war in Korea brought home to the United States the urgent need to understand and to combat Communist "brainwashing". If this phenomenon is to be brought into proper perspective it must be related to the techniques of coercive persuasion employed by Communist regimes against their own populations. A study of coercive persuasion must also be related to the psychology of the individuals who submit to or resist efforts to induce ideological change.

Plan for the study. The final product should include the following sections:

The first section should be primarily historical, containing a chapter on the techniques of coercive persuasion employed through the ages (e.g., extraction of confession, ideological indoctrination) and another chapter on the general role of coercive persuasion in Communist societies (e.g., treatment of political prisoners, of prisoners of war, of the population as a whole.)

The second part should discuss the specific techniques adopted by the Russian and Chinese Communist leaders in dealing with their populations, with political prisoners, and with prisoners of war.

A third section might present case material illustrating the various mechanisms underlying ideological change or resistance thereto. Models of ideological change might be constructed through the use of case histories. Data compiled from previous interviews of Americans released from Communist imprisonment should be utilized and, if possible, a follow-up series of interviews organized.

The final section could explain some of the different points of view from which the phenomenon of "brainwashing" can be examined. A series of theoretical analyses should be undertaken to show how the problem would be approached from

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DATE 1 JUN 1978

the psychological, the psychiatric, and the sociological-anthropological points of view. There might be a chapter from the standpoint of a military interrogator. Another chapter would have to make a thorough legal analysis of the problems which confront the repatriated collaborator, the returned defector, and the ideologically converted individual. A chapter dealing with the US program of education for prisoners of war would also be valuable.

Key personnel. The Project Director will be Mr. [REDACTED] C

[REDACTED] C  
The writing of separate chapters will be assigned to about ten persons having special qualifications for certain aspects of the study.

Duration. The project will be expected to continue for two years.

The project will be described to uncleared persons as part of [REDACTED] over-all research program and no reference will be made to its sponsorship. Mr. [REDACTED] has an appointment in [REDACTED] B  
[REDACTED] and this project will be a logical extension of his work. The [REDACTED] will B  
provide the supervision of the project. C