

~~SECRET~~  
No Foreign Dissem

*Facets of a program for assessing foreign  
leaders' physical and psychic states.*

## VIP HEALTH WATCH

Myles Maxfield  
and  
Edward G. Greger

An inconspicuous article in a London newspaper of 2 July 1964 noted that a Dr. David M. Wallace had suddenly cancelled pending appointments and left for Bucharest, Rumania. No other information was given. Dr. Wallace, it developed, was a world-famous urologist. Why would a famous Western specialist suddenly be summoned to a communist country? Rumania had adequate medical facilities, including competent specialists in urology, and its propaganda boasted of giving its people the best of medical care. The calling of a non-communist foreign physician was then a major aberration which could only be explained by supposing that one of the highest dignitaries of the regime was seriously ill.

### *Last Days of Gheorghiu-Dej*

Files showed that Gheorghiu-Dej, First Secretary of the Party and actual ruler of Rumania, had a urinary tract problem. Although he now appeared to be in robust health, he had undergone one operation in the fall of 1962 and a follow-up in January or February 1963 for a polyp of the bladder. Official reports stated that the operations had been successful. This type of polyp, however, tends to recur and often undergoes malignant degeneration. If so, it becomes invasive and spreads rapidly, offering an extremely poor prognosis. The British specialist's unknown patient might therefore in fact be Gheorghiu-Dej. This possibility, although there was no direct evidence for it, was reported to the State Department and the White House.

Half a year or so later, although official reports still insisted that he was in perfect health for a man of his age, Dej turned over many of his duties to a chosen successor, Ion Gheorghiu Maurer. On 20 March 1965 he died. The final medical bulletin gave the cause of

~~SECRET~~

53

~~SECRET~~*VIP Health*

death as cancer of the lung and liver, a metastatic extension of a primary urinary tract carcinoma. U.S. officials had had an eight-month warning of the possibility of this change of government.

*The VIP Program*

The importance of foreseeing changes in government is only one of the reasons why an effective VIP health watch is of value to intelligence. There are countless historical cases in which the health of a leader has affected the policy of a nation. Alexander the Great, an epileptic, died at the age of 33 before his conquests could be completed or stabilized; the health of Julius Caesar and of Napoleon, among others, is said to have adversely affected their historical roles. In more recent times, the incapacitation of Woodrow Wilson in his last few months severely prejudiced his programs. The deterioration in Franklin Roosevelt's health toward the end of the war has been linked with the Western failure to check Soviet political advances in Eastern Europe.

Thus the mental and physical health of foreign leaders may often have a significant and sometimes a critical impact on U.S. security and foreign policy. For this reason the CIA maintains a program for the collection, analysis, evaluation, and dissemination of VIP medical intelligence. The collection program is one of the most varied, complicated, and challenging in the intelligence community, a real test of the guile and ingenuity of the collection agencies. Materials range from open unclassified information such as that used in the case of Gheorghiu-Dej to highly sensitive reports with very limited distribution. Personal sources will include some who are trying too hard to please and others who are actually hostile. The accuracy of agent reporting tends to vary directly with the professional calibre of the agent.

It will be instructive to review in some detail several contemporary cases in which the physical or mental health of a world leader has played a significant role.

*The Last Laugh*

Medical diagnostics has opened a new and exciting chapter in the field of medicine. Along with recent advances in bio-cybernetics, symptom diagnosis and the prediction of future illnesses have been greatly simplified for the modern physician. These advances have

~~SECRET~~

VIP Health

~~SECRET~~

given an invaluable tool to the medical analyst who is called upon to make definitive diagnoses on the basis of reported symptoms which are often nothing more than wishful thinking on the part of political opponents or opportunists. A diagnostician of some experience, by utilizing his knowledge of biostatistics, may be able to make a tentative diagnosis as his patient first walks into his office.

A person with a moderately advanced case of cancer, for example, can often be identified at first sight by his pallor, weight loss, and drawn appearance; physical examination and laboratory tests only provide confirmation. The expression *Facies Gastrica*, literally "gastric appearance," has long been in use to describe people with peptic ulcers; it is easily recognized by the trained physician. Recently publicized statistics have made the entire world aware of the higher incidence of lung cancer in heavy smokers. Race, age, weight, climate, and habits are only a few of the factors the physician can use in his diagnosis, prognosis, and predictions.

Yet predictions can be tricky. A simple case where symptoms and statistics pointed to a terminal illness was that of Marshal Radion Malinovskiy, the late Soviet Defense Minister. The 68-year-old Malinovskiy was the prototype of the old-guard Soviet military officer—working-class family, fought as enlisted man for the Tsar in World War I, volunteer for the new Red Army, distinguished command record in World War II, Marshal of the Soviet Union. He succeeded Zhukov as Defense Minister in 1957.

He had been reported in ill health for several years, but the reports became more numerous in about 1964. He began to miss some important gatherings, so there was speculation that he might be out of favor politically if he was not seriously ill. It was known that he was very much over-weight (300 lbs. at 5'7"), a diabetic, a heavy drinker, suffering from hypertension (high blood pressure) and radiculitis (spinal nerve root inflammation). In addition he was reported to have a "weak heart," and there were rumors that he had a heart attack in September 1966.

Such information as this would almost make the medical analyst feel guilty at taking any pay for predicting the outcome. It did not even require the mechanical competence of a computer to add up a prime cardiovascular problem for the ailing Marshal. His age, obesity, hypertension, history of diabetes, and heavy drinking all pointed directly to this diagnosis. Eighty percent of people at the age of 70

~~SECRET~~

55

~~SECRET~~

VIP Health

have arteriosclerosis; this of course predisposes to a cerebro-vascular accident (stroke) or myocardial infarction (heart attack).

An analysis to this effect was officially recorded in February 1967, with the notation that Malinovskiy was indeed ill physically rather than politically and would probably succumb to his affliction in the near future. He cooperated and died on 31 March, but—with characteristic Bolshevik intransigence—of cancer.

#### *False Alarm for Aidit*

Medical misdiagnosis can also play an important part in political developments. A most striking example of this was a mistaken prognosis for President Sukarno of Indonesia just preceding the abortive communist coup in September 1965. Although his bedroom proclivities have almost become legend, Sukarno does have a serious health problem. He has lost the use of his left kidney because of two large stones, and he has a large staghorn stone in his right kidney. He has a moderate hypertension which is aggravated at times of stress. This combination of impaired renal function and hypertension could give rise to sudden complications that might cause his death at any time. On the other hand, he could live five or more years with his condition.

In addition to his kidney condition and possibly related to it, Sukarno reportedly had a urinary bladder polyp, a urinary bladder calculus (removed in a Vienna clinic), and three attacks of coronary insufficiency. He was also reported to have suffered a minor stroke, to have had swollen ankles and feet, and to have numerous other complaints. In short, he would not be considered a good insurance risk. His medical history was of great concern not only to U.S. intelligence but evidently to that of communist China also, as may be seen from what follows.

Sukarno had been receiving medical treatment in Vienna from the internationally known internist Professor Karl Fellingner. It was Fellingner who had diagnosed Sukarno's kidney stones and in collaboration with Professor Ubelhoer, a Viennese urologist, had removed the large calculus from his bladder. Dr. Fellingner strongly recommended that Sukarno return to Vienna to have his left kidney and the large stone in his right kidney removed surgically: failure to do so would result in further kidney damage.

Sukarno, however, had an almost pathological fear of surgery, since a soothsayer had once predicted that he would die by steel. Because

~~SECRET~~

VIP Health

~~SECRET~~

of this fear and at the suggestion of Foreign Minister Subandrio, who was a physician himself, he turned to communist Chinese physicians in Djakarta, who promised help by nonsurgical techniques. Given acupuncture treatments and oriental herb medicines, he was convinced that his condition was improving. This reliance on the Chinese physicians gave the Chinese intelligence service and the PKI (the Indonesian Communist Party) an immediate source of critically important information, for if Sukarno were suddenly removed from the scene they could expect the anti-communist Indonesian army to move immediately to crush the PKI.

Against this eventuality the PKI, with Chinese military aid, were preparing a coup which would eliminate the army threat while maintaining Sukarno as a figurehead. The Chinese physicians in the meantime were to monitor Sukarno's state of health and keep the PKI leader, D. N. Aidit, informed. At this point fate and misdiagnosis played their role. On 28 September 1965 Sukarno, while making a speech, was stricken with such a severe pain originating from his kidney that he was forced to leave the speaker's platform. (It is quite possible that he had passed a small stone from his kidney to his bladder, a process usually accompanied by excruciating pain.) The Chinese doctor who attended him thought this the end; he declared that Sukarno would not live more than a week.

This was the signal for the PKI to move. At that point, however, the coup was only in the early stages of preparation; weapons that had been smuggled in for PKI paramilitary units had not been distributed, were still in their crates. Therefore it failed. Although several of the top generals were murdered by communist execution squads, the army chief, General Abdul Nasution, managed to elude capture. He quickly called up the Siliwangi Division under Generals Suharto and Adjie and prevented a PKI take-over. His aide, General Mokoginta, effectively handled the situation in Sumatra. If the coup had been delayed until the PKI was fully armed and prepared, the outcome could easily have been reversed. Thus a medical misdiagnosis by a communist physician precipitated the miscarriage of a communist bid to take over the largest country in Southeast Asia.

#### *The Resurrection of Segni*

Every newly graduated physician tends to jump to definitive diagnoses and prognoses based on textbook symptoms. Very soon in his career, however, he finds that some patients do not behave accord-

~~SECRET~~

57

~~SECRET~~

VIP Health

ing to hoyle. Those who by all standards should die within hours sometimes live on for months or even years; on the other hand those with a favorable prognosis may die the next day. For the VIP Health Watch analyst this problem is aggravated. Instead of making a physician's direct examination of the patient's subjective and objective symptoms and complaints, he must usually work through a third- or sometimes fourth-party relationship. Symptoms are sometimes reported through a source who may be depending on rumor or even wishful speculation; many sources play amateur diagnostician.

Such was the case of the 73-year old President Antonio Segni of Italy. The silver-haired Segni had a history of circulatory troubles and was suffering from an unspecified stomach ailment, probably ulcers. On 7 August 1964 he had a stroke which paralyzed all motor faculties on the right side of his body and affected his speech. On 15 August, at 1515 hours Rome time, a person close to Segni reported that he was in a deep coma, that the doctors had given up all hope for his recovery, and that he was being kept alive as long as possible for the sake of his family but would die by nightfall. There were other similar reports.

Every medical intern has seen many such cases in which stroke patients suffer permanent brain damage and are kept alive only through the use of drugs and a mechanical respirator. In the light of the familiar symptoms and the reliability of the sources reporting them, the conclusion seemed obvious that Segni would not be with us much longer. This prediction was dutifully made in official intelligence publications; the Italian President was given only hours to live. But a month later he was sitting up in his hospital bed speaking with little difficulty and drinking coca cola. In the halls of the CIA there is now a more cautious and (one hopes) wiser medical prognosticator who is still jokingly reminded of the "grave" finding he made in 1964.

#### *Good Medicine for Wheelus*

The discovery in 1958 of major oil deposits in the young country of Libya, ruled by King Mohammad Idris, has changed it from one of the poorest countries in the world to one of comparative wealth. Before that, ever since its independence in 1951, it had relied heavily on Great Britain and the United States for economic and military aid. In 1954 the United States, in exchange for her economic assistance, had been granted rights for the construction of the Air Force complex

~~SECRET~~

VIP Health

~~SECRET~~

at Wheelus. This base served as an important link in the world-wide network of the Strategic Air Command.

The oil freed Libya from dependence on U.S. aid and at the same time aroused Egyptian President Nasser's interest in the country. An Egyptian propaganda campaign in 1964 against Western bases and "colonialists" aroused considerable Libyan popular protest, especially in urban areas, where there were violent demonstrations. The U.S. Air Force officers assigned to renegotiate the base rights with King Idris that year were quite concerned. Wheelus still served as a valuable tactical base, a storage facility for critical material and weapons, and a key site for U.S. air rescue operations.

VIP Health Watch analysts were able to furnish the USAF some useful information concerning the 74-year-old King. Although his health was fairly good for a man of his age, he tended to be concerned about it, and he had become almost completely dependent on medical care afforded him and his family at the Wheelus Base Hospital. He had great faith in American physicians, openly proclaiming them the best. In 1959 they had treated him for trachoma, from which he enjoyed a complete recovery. In 1960, after he fell and sustained a painful hematoma on his knee, this was likewise treated at the Wheelus facilities (by Dr. Watson Jones, a British physician). Every year Idris receives a complete physical examination there. In addition he is thankful to USAF physicians for a successful hysterectomy on his wife.

Under these circumstances Air Force negotiators were able to conclude a favorable new lease on the base, and in spite of the recent turmoil in the Near East it is still there.

#### *How Does a Gamal Grow*

A study of the character of Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser on the basis of his psychological and medical background provides insight into his behavior vis-à-vis the Soviets, the West, Israel, and the rest of the Arab world. At the age of eight years Gamal was sent for schooling to live in Cairo with his Uncle Khalil, who had recently been released from imprisonment for organizing demonstrations against the British. Here the boy developed a taste for intrigue and became fiercely independent, objecting violently to authority of any kind, whether that of his father, his adult neighbors, his teachers, or the police. He was not told until he returned home for the summer

~~SECRET~~

59

~~SECRET~~

VIP Health

vacation that his mother had meanwhile died in childbirth; this made him very bitter and widened the gulf between him and his father. The father remarried, and Gamal never again lived happily at home.

At the age of twelve, Nasser participated in a riot and was arrested. As a young man he continued his classical revolutionary development, joining the Young Egypt Party, leading demonstrations, becoming disillusioned and switching to the Wafd Party, leading more demonstrations. He became very popular with his fellow students, disputed bitterly with the school headmaster and the police, and spent some more time in jail. When he was refused readmission to school, his fellow students rioted until he was admitted. He refused hospitalization for a head injury received during a riot against the British. His antagonism toward authority and rules was extraordinary.

At the age of 20 he graduated from the Egyptian Royal Military Academy and as a young lieutenant organized the "Free Officers," a secret society of young Egyptian Army officers whose principles were to give allegiance to no one, form no alliances, make no promises, and have no ideology. When he was 34 he participated in an unsuccessful assassination attempt against General Sirry Amir, and then he led the coup unseating King Farouk and establishing General Mohammed Naguib as President. At the age of 36 he deposed Naguib and became President himself.

It would be surprising if Nasser's independence, defiance of authority, and taste for leadership had changed on assuming the presidency, and indeed they have been evident from the first in actions like his repression of Egyptian communists while taking Soviet aid, his seizure of Suez, his attempts to establish an expanded United Arab Republic and exercise leadership over the entire Arab World. Notable on the other hand in the established pattern of his behavior are his quiet and respectable family life and his fond admiration for President Tito of Yugoslavia, although he has few close personal friends.

Physically strong, Nasser is afflicted with a diabetes that is apparently difficult to control. (He is dependent on Western insulin, especially Swiss, for this; Soviet Bloc drugs have not been favorably received in Soviet-aided countries, and even some high Soviet officials prefer Western drugs, including specifically insulin, to their own.) The diabetic's requirement for insulin depends upon his rate of food intake and rate of metabolism, and these both vary with physi-

~~SECRET~~



VIP Health

~~SECRET~~

cal activity or emotional stress. In some diabetics, and apparently this is the case with Nasser, the balance is quite delicate, difficult to maintain, and definitely affected by emotional incidents. There have been at least two episodes reported in which he has been forced to cease his activities immediately and get emergency medical aid—one during the Suez crisis and the second very recently. Such attacks may recur and limit his activities somewhat, but not seriously for some years to come if competent medical care is quickly available.

### *Chinese Puzzle*

The enigma of Red China, the most denied of denied areas, challenges us to make the most of any information we can develop bearing on the hidden springs of the regime's policies and actions. A psychological and medical analysis of its key personality, Mao Tse-tung, may contribute to understanding some aspects of its course in the past, including even the bizarre irrationality of the late "cultural revolution."

Mao was born on 26 December 1893 in Shaoshan village, Hsiang t'an hsien, a rural county some 20 miles south of the Hunan provincial capital at Ch'angsha. He was the eldest of three sons and a daughter. His father was a moderately wealthy farmer who earned a good living trading rice. He was a hard-bitten peasant, however, sharp-faced and bigoted, with a taste for Confucian classics; he had fought for the Manchus and he respected the empress dowager. He treated his servants and farm laborers with contempt, had few friends, and took little interest in his family. He was restless, ill at ease, and hot-tempered, an unattractive exemplar of the type of petty capitalist that was to become a target of his son's revolutionary regime.

On one occasion Mao ran away into the woods for three days, returning only because of the thought that his mother would have no one to defend her. His mother, in contrast to his father, was placid and devoted to her family. She was a deeply religious Buddhist and averse to killing or any kind of brutality. For a period during his childhood Mao attended the Buddhist ceremonies with his mother, who wanted him to be a priest. This early religious experience is still evident in some of his writings and utterances. Only in recent months this archpriest of an atheistic ideology referred to his eventual demise as a "going to God."

~~SECRET~~

61

~~SECRET~~

VIP Health

When Mao was thirteen years old there was a famine in his province. The peasants protested against the local government and demanded that the rice granaries be opened to them. Instead of receiving help they were reprimanded, punished, and the leaders executed. In the same year the Secret Society of Peasants (Ko Lao Hui) was in conflict with the landlords in Shaoshan. They too were repressed and the leaders publicly executed. The young Mao, in strong sympathy with the peasants, was left with an indelible impression of these injustices which must have had an influence on his later revolutionary doctrine.

Feeling the conflict between his studies and working in the fields, he decided, under the encouragement of a school teacher, to go to middle school. After a long argument with his father, who wanted him to stay in the family enterprise, he went off with no extra money beyond his tuition fees. In school he was at first lonely, poor, and despised. He was known as "the dirty little peasant from Shaoshan." When he went to the head of his class for excellence in studies, that made him even more despised among the anti-intellectual students. He became an intellectual, discussing the reform movement with students of like inclinations. He was much moved by a book entitled, "Great Heroes of the World," and especially its biography of George Washington. During the rest of his education periods of excellence were broken by some poor work as his interests developed and changed. He became a leader of progressive movements and excelled in essay writing and debating.

After refusing to consummate an early, arranged marriage, Mao eventually married three times. In 1919, while in Peking attending lectures at the University, he fell in love with Yang K'ai-hui, the daughter of a professor of philosophy, and he married her the following year in Shanghai. She was executed by Ho Chien, a Chinese warlord, in 1928. His next wife, Ho Tzu-ch'un, in the course of seven years bore him five children, three of whom they left in the care of peasants they met on the Long March. Later attempts to locate these were unsuccessful. Eventually this marriage ended in divorce. His current wife Lam P'ui (Chiang Ching), a former Shanghai actress, he married in 1939.

One of Mao's sons by Yang K'ai-hui (probably the one wife he really loved) was killed in the Korean War. This has had a very

~~SECRET~~

VIP Health

~~SECRET~~

strong emotional effect on him and may account in part for his almost paranoid xenophobia, especially with respect to the United States.

A current medical review of the now 73-year-old Mao shows it very unlikely that he any longer has the mental or physical stamina to engage in continued personally demanding activities. His physical health is deteriorating and the prognosis for his life over the next 3 to 5 years is not good. There is acceptable evidence that he has arteriosclerosis and hypertension, with one stroke in December 1965 or January 1966 and possibly others previously. These disorders form a coherent clinical entity, a disease that may account in part for the loss of mental alertness, increasing rigidity of outlook, and stubbornness. The disease itself is serious, limiting his life expectancy and his physical stamina.

There is additional evidence that Mao's condition is compounded with parkinsonism. This is a chronic progressive neurological disorder which is frequently accompanied by mental depression; it will further impair his physical and mental stamina. Heavy sedation is required to control the tremors associated with parkinsonism. This very likely explains the almost vegetable appearance of Mao on public occasions.

The natural progression of these diseases includes a high likelihood of further strokes or heart attacks, increased rigidity of thought, unwillingness to change ideas, and the development of paranoia. These latter symptoms could quite possibly have been reflected in the recent turmoil in China. Continued careful medical analysis will be a factor in determining whether Mao can remain in command or is likely to have power taken from him.

~~SECRET~~

63