

AFOSR 68-1410

AD671004

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON CHINESE COMMUNIST INDOCTRINATION
OF MILITARY PRISONERS OF WAR

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JUL 8 1968

This research was supported by the
Behavioral Sciences Division, AFOSR,
SP10

under Contract/Grant AF 49(638)1344

BUREAU OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH, INC.
1424 Sixteenth Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20036

September 1963

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I. General Concepts

The Chinese Communists continue to adhere in theory to the belief that systematic indoctrination of prisoners of war can yield positive and predictable results. The basic techniques used by the Chinese during their revolutionary struggle against the Japanese and Nationalists in China and the United Nations in Korea provide the model for current indoctrination techniques, although, as will be stated in Section 2, certain doubts have arisen in the light of failures of indoctrination during the Korean war. In my opinion, the psychological aspects of Communist indoctrination are best analyzed by Schein and others in Coercive Persuasion. The basic Chinese Communist rationale behind indoctrination is described in my book Leadership in Communist China. The distinction must be made, however, (and this distinction is not made properly in the Lifton study of brainwashing) between indoctrination of personnel from foreign countries whose basic reward for satisfactory indoctrination is release from prison and Chinese personnel whose "reward" is reintegration in the Communist-led Chinese society. That is, the Chinese Communists have far greater expectations for their indoctrination of Chinese than for the indoctrination of foreign military prisoners.

The Chinese believe that both the immediate rewards and the general environment of indoctrination will provide some lasting benefits even though they expect most of the "positive effects" of the benefits to wear off in time for personnel released to their native homelands beyond Communist control. Thus, at the time of release when some prisoners are willing to make pro-Chinese statements and are willing to sign various confessions and to

denounce their own governments the Chinese will make their most significant propaganda effort. After that effort has been made they will fall back on the published statements and attempt to create an ambiguous picture of what "really happened" in the prisoner of war camps.

II. The Korean Experience

In general the Chinese reappraisal of the Korean war experiences with prisoner indoctrination has led them to rely on actual indoctrination much more selectively than before. This reappraisal coincides with a rising concern by Chinese leaders concerning the lack of effectiveness of general indoctrination of the Chinese population as a whole. The Chinese leaders since 1956 have shown a much greater apprehension at the lack of "revolutionary consciousness" among the so-called new generation of party members and cadres. Their general attitude toward the political training of youth is at present almost one of despair. Although the Chinese believe that the prison indoctrination of Nationalist military leaders captured before 1949 has been fairly successful, they have been discouraged by the fact that the few who turncoated among U. N. forces have been so unreliable and that in sheer numbers Western indoctrination of prisoners of war was far more successful both in quantity and lasting effects. I believe the changed attitude that has come from the complex ingredients of the post-Korean war reappraisal can best be seen in the handling of Indian POW's since the Chinese invasion of the Indian frontier in October 1962.

III. The Indian Case

According to Chinese statistics, approximately 4,000 Indian officers and men were captured after October 22, 1962. Almost immediately after the

invasion and especially during the Hindu Festival of Lights the Chinese began routine propaganda statements on the marvelous conditions which allegedly existed among Indian POW's in the prison camps. Simultaneously they released a flood of statements on how poorly the Chinese internees in India were being treated. On the one hand Indian troops were reported as saying that "they had never had such a good life as with their Chinese Brothers" and on the other hand the Indians were accused of burying Chinese alive, forcing Chinese prisoners to go mad and particularly mistreating sick and pregnant Chinese women. Four major themes were stressed concerning the conditions within the Indian POW camps:

1. The high standard of livelihood of the Indian troops.
2. The religious freedom promoted in the camps and the absolute absence of any brainwashing.
3. The allowance of the practice of Hindu national customs in the camps.
4. The aid to the sick and wounded.

Chinese statements stressed that China was cooperating with the Indian Red Cross and that China desired the quick return of all prisoners of war.

In 1963, the Chinese appeared to change toward a more lenient line on the Indian POW's in order to muster Asian-African support against India, the United States and the Soviet Union. The Chinese attacked India for alleged border provocations, accused the Indians of collusion with Chiang Kai-shek and condemned Soviet and U. S. aid to the Indian "warmongers." Many more statements were released which denied that the Chinese had resorted to brainwashing

among the Indian POW's. On April 2, Peking radio announced that all prisoners not yet released (716 prisoners were released in December because of illness) would be released in the next two months. The release of prisoners and the associated propaganda offensive began on April 10 and were completed on May 25. This release coincided with Liu Shao-chi's visit throughout South East Asia and with general Chinese maneuvers in their dispute with the Soviet Union.

IV. Factors in the Changing Practices Toward POW's

A systematic appraisal of Chinese statements and attitudes toward POW's has not been undertaken due to the lack of time. My remarks above are based on a fairly careful reading of Chinese statements over the past fifteen years but this reading was not undertaken with the topic of POW's in mind. Generally speaking, Chinese theories of indoctrination remain firm, but new practices in the Indian case represent significant changes in the content of the old theories. These new practices are responsive, of course, to the fact that the prisoners are from India, which China has hardly considered in the same category as the U. S. To the extent that the Indian case may indicate increased moderation toward POW indoctrination, most of the pressure has come from the Afro-Asian countries, whose leaders took some interest in charges of brainwashing and maltreatment of prisoners.

Because of this pressure and because of their judgments on the use of indoctrination of Korean war prisoners, the Chinese would be likely to use indoctrination techniques much more selectively than in the past. Certainly they are sensitive to Western denunciations and exposures of prison indoctrination as used in Korea and have been forced to exaggerate Indian "atrocities" to offset the hint that they have used "brainwashing." Direct pressure from

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the U. S. has in this case been far less effective than pressure from Afro-Asians, however, and this pressure has in general been reinforced by the feeling that the massive Korean war type of indoctrination was not too effective anyway.

Security Classification

DOCUMENT CONTROL DATA - R & D

Security classification of title, body of abstract and indexing annotation must be entered when the overall report is classified

1. ORIGINATING ACTIVITY (Corporate author) Bureau of Social Science Research, Inc. 1200 Seventeenth St., N.W. Washington, D. C. 20035		2a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED	
2b. GROUP			
3. REPORT TITLE PRELIMINARY REPORT ON CHINESE COMMUNIST INDOCTRINATION OF MILITARY PRISONERS OF WAR			
4. DESCRIPTIVE NOTES (Type of report and inclusive dates) Scientific Interim			
5. AUTHOR(S) (First name, middle initial, last name) John W. Lewis			
6. REPORT DATE September 1963		7a. TOTAL NO. OF PAGES 5	7b. NO. OF REFS --
8a. CONTRACT OR GRANT NO. AF 49(633)-1344		8b. ORIGINATOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
9. PROJECT OR PROGRAM NO. 6144501F 631313		9c. OTHER REPORT NO(S) (Any other numbers that may be assigned) AFOSR 68-1410	
10. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT 1. This document has been approved for public release and sale; its distribution is unlimited.			
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TECH, OTHER		12. SPONSORING MILITARY ACTIVITY Air Force Office of Scientific Research 1400 Wilson Boulevard (SRLB) Arlington, Virginia 22209	
13. ABSTRACT <p>This brief report on POW indoctrination was prepared under this contract for a special conference on training programs conducted on required captivity behavior. The report is based on limited data from the Korean War and the Chinese invasion of the Indian frontier in October 1962.</p>			

DD FORM 1473
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Security Classification

Prisoner of War
Communist Indoctrination
Coercive Persuasion