LYNDON IN WIENER WORLD: CYBERNETICS, MIT AND THE MACY FOUNDATION

[BOSTON 1948-1953]
After dropping out of Northeastern in 1947, Lyndon LaRouche remained in the Boston area for approximately seven more years. For most of that time, he struggled to become a business consultant like his father. LaRouche also tried to develop some special knowledge of computers and their potential application to business.\(^1\) LaRouche’s interest in both computer and automation came — not surprisingly — out of his family history; more specifically, his father’s work as a business consultant. In the late 1940s LaRouche and one of his sisters worked for the LaRouche, Sr., in the family business. In a 9 November 1979 *New Solidarity* article, LaRouche writes of this time:

> I went into management consulting, which I was in more or less off and on. I found that my father and I got along better if we didn’t work together, so I branched out into other aspects of consulting and became a specialist in computers.

One center of the American computer industry in the late 1940s was MIT, a school LaRouche had longed to attend as a young man. A source once close to LaRouche reports that

> His high school grades were poor, but he wanted to attend MIT. Since he was a genius, his mother took him to meet with the MIT administration people and they agreed to accept him but he could not get a scholarship. His father could not afford tuition, so he applied to his paternal grandmother [Ella LaRouche] for help, or perhaps for some reason the school approached the paternal grandmother before offering him a scholarship because she was a wealthy woman. In any event the story goes that she sabotaged his getting into MIT. This was before the war. As a result he attended the much inferior Northeastern University. However after the war he should have been in a good position to attend MIT using the GI Bill, but instead [he] went back to Northeastern which he hated.
LaRouche’s interests led him to MIT Professor Norbert Wiener’s classic 1948 book, *Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. Wiener, frequently described as America’s “second Leibnitz” following Charles Sanders Peirce, also was very active in what the science historian Steve Heims has dubbed “the Cybernetics Group.” This network of leading intellectuals held regular meetings in the late 1940s and early 1950s that were sponsored by the Josiah Macy Foundation. Once one learns to navigate through the fog of LaRouche’s prose, it quickly becomes obvious how much he took both from Wiener and the Macy Foundation meetings.

One example: LaRouche’s seemingly arcane interest in the “foundation crisis” theories of Kurt Gödel and Geog Cantor’s theory of mathematical sets was not the result of years spent pondering in a garret. LaRouche’s writings followed in the wake of a series of discussions between Norbert Wiener and John von Neumann on these subjects that dated back to the first Cybernetics Group meeting held at the Beekman Hotel in New York in March 1946 when it was known as the “Conference for Circular Causal and Feedback Mechanisms in Biological and Social Systems.” The Macy Foundation published reports of the conferences that LaRouche later carefully studied.

To help explain all this, I am dividing this chapter into four sections. In part one I provide an overview of the postwar world of Boston and MIT in particular while part two specifically focuses on Norbert Wiener. Part three offers a general overview of the Macy Foundation and its relationship to the CIA and the larger military-industrial complex. Part four concludes with an analysis of how events and ideas from the late 1940s and early 1950s would later be strangely mirrored in the early Labor Committee.
Part I

BOSTON: AMERICA’S FIRST “SILICON VALLEY”

In the late 1940s, Boston was the “silicon valley” of postwar America. High-tech academic powerhouses like Harvard and MIT combined with the first venture capitalists to produce breakthroughs in computer technology, automation, and their application to both the military and business. Boston’s transformation into a high-tech research center was the direct result of World War II. Just as the U.S. military’s DARPA-funded experiments in the 1970s laid the basis for the Internet, innovations in science and technology created in places like MIT’s famous Radiation Laboratory (“Radlab”) were by-products of the war effort. As with the Internet, these advances stimulated the postwar boom in the U.S. economy even as MIT became a leading player in the new “military-industrial-academic complex.”

Throughout World War II, MIT specialized in developing better fire control, high quality scientific instruments, and both radar as well as measures to counteract enemy radar systems. MIT benefited from millions of dollars worth of defense research contracts. The Radiation Laboratory alone got the then almost astronomical sum of $100 million during the war years. The historian Jack Nunn points out that many MIT personnel engaged in war work

formed associations with both the military and business communities, and it was natural that they would again be consulted for their technical expertise. In fact, technology was a requirement in postwar defense. The United States had been able to demobilize after previous war; however, after World War II its leaders began to feel endangered by the actions of the Soviet Union.⁴
During the Cold War the Radlab (later renamed the Research Laboratory on Electronics -- RLE) and other MIT laboratories such as the Instrumentation Laboratory and Lincoln Laboratory served as critical think tanks for the U.S. military. MIT’s then-President James Killian later became Chairman of the Board of Consultants on Foreign Intelligence Activities in 1955 as well as Chairman of the Science Advisory Panel for the U.S. Army.

During the war MIT Professor of Aeronautical Engineering C. Stark Draper coordinated the team that worked on improving aiming mechanism on anti-aircraft systems used against fast-moving targets. Norbert Wiener’s initial development of cybernetics was itself a by-produce of war research. While working on an anti-aircraft predictor, Wiener “established parallels between the operation of servomechanisms, analog control devices used in anti-aircraft gunnery, and purposeful behavior of pilots and gunners: in both cases, the goal was being reached via a feedback mechanism.” From this research, Wiener then “postulated that control via feedback and communication via information exchange constituted universal mechanisms of purposeful behavior for both living organisms and self-regulating machines” such as computers.

Cybernetics and information theory then helped shape the civilian “reconversion” of the U.S. economy in the 1950s. Wiener’s book *Cybernetics* quickly became a sensation not just in the scientific community but in big business as well. *Cybernetics* was such a hit that *The Saturday Review of Literature* declared it “impossible for anyone seriously interested in our civilization to ignore this book. It is a ‘must' book for those in every branch of science.” Leading American business circles also became fascinated by Wiener’s work following the 1949 publication of Edward Berkeley’s *Giant Brains or Machines That Think*. The historian Thomas Haigh writes that
The issues addressed by information theory were fundamental to the design of computers that could store data and move it between different internal components for processing. This relation between computer and information was the organizing theme of Edward Berkeley’s seminal 1949 book, *Giant Brains or Machines That Think* – the first to introduce electronic computers and their potential use in business to a general audience. Berkley, a former insurance executive, gave early expression to the idea of information as a ubiquitous presence in the natural and social world. He made the computer less threatening by presenting it as the latest and most powerful in a series of pieces of “physical equipment for handling information” that included everything from nerve cells to writing to human gestures.8

Cybernetics, computers and automation were heralded as the next great leap forward in American production and management. One early print example of the relationship between cybernetics and business management was *Cybernetics and society; based on proceedings of the meeting of the New York Chapter of the Society for the Advancement of Management held in New York on November 16, 1950* (New York: Executive Techniques, 1951). It included essays with titles like “Cybernetics and management”; “Cybernetics and society” (written by Norbert Wiener himself); and “Applications of cybernetics in business management.” Renewed confidence in American business fueled by cybernetics and automation even gave rise to discussion of a “second industrial revolution,” a term first popularized in a 1949 *Scientific American* article on computers. The article was inspired by Norbert Wiener’s statement in *Cybernetics* that electronic computer-run systems would lay the basis for a “second industrial revolution,” and that just as the 19th century industrial revolution was based “on the transformation and transmission of energy. . . . The 20th century revolution is based on the transformation and transmission of information.”9
Seen in this light, there is nothing mysterious or far-fetched about LaRouche’s own interest in computers or in Wiener. In the early 1950s, discussions about cybernetics, automated factories, and computers even entered pop culture after a former worker at the General Electric Research Laboratory named Kurt Vonnegut quit his job to write his first novel, *Player Piano*. First published in 1952, *Player Piano* is a dark satire about a world run by machines, a world in which engineer Paul Proteus (to quote from the book’s back copy) “must find a way to live in a world dominated by a super computer and run completely by machines.”

In a brief letter to the editor in the January 1958 issue of the National Association of Accountants’ *NAA Bulletin*, LaRouche lists himself as “Executive Engineer in Charge of Client Services for the Eastern Division of the May Company.” Although LaRouche never finished college much less obtained an engineering degree, by the mid-1950s he was a member of the new “efficiency expert” business management world that owed much of its post-war existence in a sense to Norbert Wiener.

**Part II**

**“WIENER ENVY”**

In his attempt to present himself as a “genius,” LaRouche did a genius-level job of mimicking the ideas of a real genius, Norbert Wiener, who first achieved fame for his brilliance when he was just a small child. After getting a BA in mathematics from Tufts at age 14 and a Harvard Ph.D. in mathematics at age 18 for a dissertation on set theory, Wiener went on to study under Bertrand Russell at Cambridge and David Hilbert at the University of Göttingen.
Politically, an independent left liberal and later pacifist, Wiener helped sponsor the famous (and famously controversial) 1949 international Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace held at New York’s Waldorf Astoria Hotel with Dmitri Shostakovich as one of the Soviet delegates. During the Cold War, Wiener refused to participate in government-funded military research. He even threatened to resign from MIT if his good friend, fellow mathematician, and Communist Dirk Struik were to be fired from MIT during the McCarthy period. Wiener also came under FBI investigation for his close friendship with the famous British Marxist scientist J.B.S. Haldane.\textsuperscript{12}

In the late 1950s, Wiener’s view of cybernetics would be extravagantly embraced in the Soviet Union and in 1960 he even received a hero’s welcome of sorts when he attended a mathematical conference in Moscow. That fact noted, Wiener was in no way a Communist. Like Albert Einstein, Wiener was a complex humanist who instinctively disliked all monolithic systems of thought. In his last famous posthumously published book, \textit{God & Golem, Inc.: A Comment on Certain Points where Cybernetics Impinges on Religion}, Wiener noted: “For human beings as physiological structures, unlike society as a whole, have changed very little since the Stone Age.”\textsuperscript{13}

One of the more telling examples of LaRouche’s early cribbing from Wiener involved the seemingly arcane crisis over “reductionist” approaches to mathematics and logic. LaRouche boasted that he had a “fundamental breakthrough” in the early 1950s when he said he realized the fallacy of any self-referential forms of mathematical logic attempted by the British philosopher Bertrand Russell and similar logicians such as John von Neumann, then based at Princeton’s Institute for Advanced Studies along with Einstein and Kurt Gödel.\textsuperscript{14}
Although LaRouche cited Gödel’s work refuting Russell, LaRouche lacked the basic training to say anything creative about Gödel’s ideas in a mathematical context, a fact even he admits in *Dialectical Economics*. After confessing that he is not a mathematical physicist, LaRouche then writes that “questions involving the limitations of mathematical procedure are elementary and do not properly involve even such elaborate around-the-barn approaches as were taken by Gödel.”\(^{15}\) (LaRouche essentially claimed that Gödel’s theorem “refuted” formal logic and by so doing validated Hegelian-Marxist “dialectics.”)\(^{16}\)

LaRouche here more or less put his own ideological “spin” on Wiener’s critique of Russell and von Neumann that Wiener had discussed extensively at Macy Foundation meetings as well as in his more popular works. In his 1956 book *I Am a Mathematician*, for example, Wiener writes:

> It is no coincidence that my first childish essay into philosophy, written when I was in high school and not yet eleven years old, was called “The Theory of Ignorance.” Even at that time I was struck with the impossibility of originating a perfectly tight theory with the aid of so loose a mechanism as the human mind. And when I studied with Bertrand Russell, I could not bring myself to believe in the existence of a closed set of postulates for all logic, leaving no room for any arbitrariness in the system defined by them. Here, without the justification of their superb technique, I foresaw something of the critique of Russell which was later to be carried out by Gödel and his followers, who have given real grounds for the denial of the existence of any single closed logic following in a closed and rigid way from a body of stated rules.
To me, logic and learning and all mental activity have always been incomprehensible as a complete and closed picture and have been understandable only as a process by which man puts himself en rapport with his environment. It is the battle for learning which is significant, and not the victory. Every victory that is absolute is followed by the Twilight of the Gods, in which the very concept of victory is dissolved in the moment of its attainment.\textsuperscript{17}

From Wiener’s 1948 book \textit{Cybernetics}:

In short, it has become quite evident, both to the nominalists like Hilbert and to the intuitionists like Weyl, that the development of a matematico-logical theory is subject to the same sort of restrictions as those that limit the performance of a computing machine. As we shall see later, it is even possible to interpret in this way the paradoxes of Cantor and of Russell.

With \textit{Cybernetics}, Wiener inspired the development of many branches of science including computer design, automation, linguistics, information theory, Gestalt psychology, and biology. In the introduction to \textit{Cybernetics}, Wiener discusses different ways to interpret “the paradoxes of Cantor and of Russell”; the role of Cantor’s set theory and the idea of n+1 in mathematics; von Neumann and Morgenstern’s notions of game theory; and even the notion of entropy and its “negative” (what LaRouche would label “negentropy”) in statistical mechanics. From \textit{Cybernetics}:

Just as the amount of information in a system is a measure of the degree of organization, so the entropy of a system is a measure of its degree of disorganization; and the one is simply the negative of the other. This point of view leads us to a number of considerations concerning the second law of thermodynamics, and to a study of the possibility of the so-
called Maxwell demons. Such questions arise independently in the study of enzymes and other catalysts, and their study is essential for the proper understanding of such fundamental phenomena of living matter as metabolism and reproduction. The third fundamental phenomenon of life, that of irritability, belongs to the domain of communication theory, and falls under the group of ideas we have just been discussing.

*Cybernetics* even has a chapter entitled “Gestalt and Universal” in which Weiner criticizes von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern for the limitations of their research in game theory where they assumed that “each player, at every stage, in view of the information then available to him, plays in accordance with a completely intelligent policy, which will in the end assure him of the greatest possible expectations of reward.”

LaRouche took Wiener’s views and mimicked them. One example from *Conceptual History of the Labor Committees*:

Those specialists unfamiliar with the significance of Cantor’s work for Riemannian geometry might know the same problem in the cruder form Frege encountered it, the meta-mathematical paradoxes Bertrand Russell encountered in continuing Frege’s approach, or the elegant specialized form the problem was more narrowly stated by Kurt Gödel. (12)

LaRouche’s 1969 essay *The Philosophy of Socialist Education (From an Advanced Standpoint)* attacks John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern’s 1953 book *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* as being “not just an absurdity” but an ideology. Because of the author’s conceptions of “religious” practice by the victims of capitalist social relations, the absurdity of the *Theory of Games* is the absurdity of that
system of practical behavior and contemplations which von Neumann and Morgenstern attempt to reduce to mathematical consistency, at least in the sense of innovations which preserve the “permanence” of the formal axiomatic structure of mathematics itself. . . . Thus, the devastating errors of formalism in mathematical practice and ideological epiphenomena of bourgeois social relations converge on correlated results.

In *Cybernetics* – a book written some two decades earlier -- Wiener critiques Neumann and Morgenstern’s ideas on game theory more clearly:

This theory is based on the assumption that each player, at every stage, in view of the information then available to him, plays in accordance with a completely intelligent policy, which will in the end assure him of the greatest possible expectation of reward. It is thus the market game as played between perfectly intelligent, perfectly ruthless operators. Even in the case of two players, the theory is complicated, although it often leads to the choice of a definite line of play. In many cases, however, where there are three players, and in the overwhelming majority of cases, when the number of players is large, the result is one of extreme indeterminacy and instability. . . . Naturally, von Neumann’s picture of the player as a completely intelligent, completely ruthless person is an abstraction and a perversion of the facts.\(^{21}\)

The real difference as far as I can tell between what Wiener said and the way LaRouche reformulated Wiener’s critique was that LaRouche “explained” von Neumann’s ideas as an expression of “capitalist” ideology.

Yet another example of LaRouche’s attempt to make his own stew out of the cornucopia of ideas that poured out both Wiener
and the Macy Foundation conferences – which also included extensive discussions about biological developments in cybernetic terms as “self-regulating” ecological systems -- comes in the second part of LaRouche’s exchange with the 4th International in the January-February 1972 Campaigner. In a polemic that must have had Ernest Mandel scratching his head, LaRouche writes:

The entire methodological basis for your version of Marxian economics was finally revealed by the late John von Neumann in 1953 in the postulational sections of his (and Morgenstern’s) *The Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*. These empiricist assumptions would be equally appropriate to the classical Darwinian version of evolutionary reproduction. Von Neumann’s postulates should be obvious enough: they are now generally accepted principles of securing mathematical consistency of descriptive formulation for any “closed equilibrium model” constituted of elementary-discrete particles or sense-phenomena....

The Darwinian school locates the evolutionary and natural-selective process in the discrete biological individual member of the species. Beginning in approximately the 1920s, the holistic-ecology current in biology began to attack and reject Darwinian natural selection in favor of what is sometimes termed the “organismic” view of entire ecologies. . . . This which offers a way of interpreting what has been accomplished by some holistic evolutionary biologists locates the significance of variation in the quality of individual members for the entire ecology: does it increase or decrease the negentropic “value” of the entire ecology.

If Mandel – or any other reader for that matter -- was puzzled he or she had a right to be since LaRouche really was writings about issues that had been hot topics in the early 1950s in the hot
house world of the Macy Foundation meetings whose reports LaRouche closely studied.

PART III

“I GOT IT AT MACY’S”

For decades LaRouche would only make passing references to Norbert Weiner – mostly condescending ones – and ignore the existence of the Macy Foundation. However by the early 1980s, he made at least one or two passing references to the Macy Foundation. Most recently – I suspect after the publication of Steve Heims’ ground-breaking 1990 book – LaRouche has gone far more public. In a 2000 EIR article, for example, he wrote: “My own studies of the activities of the Cybernetics project of the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation, dates from the very early 1950s, a study based, to a significant degree, on backtracking primary sources of the material reflected in the publications of that Foundation.”22 (It was during the time that he was reading Macy Foundation reports, for example, that LaRouche claimed he had his early 1950s “Cantor breakthrough.”)23 Quite simply, when it came to ideas, LaRouche (so to speak) “got them at Macy’s.”

To understand the role played by the Macy Foundation, we are again led back to Norbert Wiener and the Cybernetics Group conferences sponsored by the Macy Foundation.

The Cybernetics Group met regularly throughout the 1940s and 1950s in conferences sponsored by the Josiah Macy Foundation. The foundation was named after a New England Quaker named Josiah Macy, Jr., whose family made a vast fortune in oil and shipping working closely with the Rockefellers. Macy’s daughter established the Macy Foundation in 1930.24 As far back as 1942, the Macy Foundation sponsored a New York meeting with Wiener and a few other scientists to discuss “problems of central
inhibition of the nervous system” that helped lay the basis for what would later become cybernetic theory.25

The two leading lights of the early Cybernetics Group were Norbert Wiener and John von Neumann. Another key member, Warren McCulloch, founded and chaired the Macy Conferences on cybernetics. McCulloch had been a full professor at the University of Illinois before he was recruited by MIT into its old Rad Lab -- now the RLE. Here McCulloch continued his work on how the human brain operated. Over time the Cybernetics Group’s membership fluctuated and by the early 1950s the Macy Foundations meetings grew more concerned with social science issues rather than with hard science.

As we shall see, the Cybernetics Group was composed of highly original intellectuals vigorously debated some of the most complex issues in philosophy, mathematics. Yet the Macy Foundation conferences could seem a bit strange. The historian Jean-Pierre Dupuy describes the Macy Foundation’s role in the Cybernetics Group this way:

   Cybernetics was obliged from the beginning to ally itself with a movement – a political lobby, actually, operating under the auspices of the Macy Foundation – that sought to assure world peace and universal mental health by means of a bizarre cocktail concocted from psychoanalysis, cultural anthropology, advanced physics, and the new thinking associated with the Cybernetics Group.26

THE MACY FOUNDATION AND MK-ULTRA

One reason the Macy cocktail was so bizarre leads back to its covert funders inside the CIA. A remarkable number of the Macy Foundation conference members worked closely with the U.S. government during the Cold War.
The Macy Foundation/military/MIT-CIA world of the late 1940s and early 1950s also included a group of “industrial relations” academics at MIT led by Douglas McGregor and Alex Bavelas. They intensely studied small group social interactions in order to apply their research to labor management techniques as well as the new field of “network analysis.” Their work was inspired by the German émigré Kurt Lewin, whom McGregor had helped recruited to MIT. Shortly before his death, Lewin established the “Research Center for Group Dynamics.” It would inspire MIT’s “Group Networks Laboratory” to study small group dynamics under the supervision of Alex Bavelas. Bavelas also played a leading role in top secret research for the Office of Naval Research (ONR) contracted out to MIT. This same MIT group later worked with the CIA to produce a major study of Communist Chinese “coercive persuasion” techniques more popularly known as “brainwashing.”

Macy Foundation director Frank Fremont-Smith served as the key conduit between the CIA and the Macy Foundation. The Macy Foundation even was used by the CIA to carry out MK-ULTRA (“mind control”) research on LSD. Macy Foundation regular and cybernetics expert Gregory Bateson helped carry out LSD tests in California. Macy Foundation executives Fremont-Smith and Lawrence K. Frank also worked with prominent Macy Foundation conference member Margaret Mead (Bateson’s then-wife) to create the World Federation for Mental Health in 1948. Another friend of Fremont-Smith was Harold Abramson whom Fremont-Smith brought to the Macy Foundation’s Sixth Cybernetics Conference as an invited guest. Abramson was associated professionally with both Columbia University and Mt. Sinai Hospital. He was also a top figure in the CIA’s quest for the development of “mind control programs.” In a memoir, Abramson recalled that:
The Macy Foundation, through Dr. Fremont-Smith’s influence on its Board of Directors, helped me personally to organize a research project, studying in a scientific way the action of LSD on man and on fish. . . . LSD at that time (1950) was a very threatening compound because it was not known what effect it would have on the human brain in repeated doses. To start a project of this type in an institution, one had to get official sanction. It was necessary to get special sanctions from people who were conversant with research, and whose judgment was considered faultless. I therefore asked Dr. Freemont-Smith to approach the hospital where I wished to start these experiments. . . . A multidisciplinary project was accordingly set up. Without Dr. Freemont-Smith’s insight into multidisciplinary problems involving mentation and chemistry, I don’t think the project could have developed as it did.30

The actual extent of MK-ULTRA still remains unknown but it was around this same time that Dr. Frank Olson famously either committed suicide or was murdered in New York after he had been given LSD without his knowledge. The case intimately involved Abramson, who met Olson shortly before his death while posing as a psychiatrist.

The Macy Foundation also promoted the study of “psychosomatic medicine.” In 1939 Fremont-Smith and Lawrence K. Frank used Macy money to launch the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine* as well as to establish the American Psychosomatic Society five years later.

**PROJECT TROY**

While the CIA was covertly working with the Macy Foundation, the Office of Naval Research (ONR) developed “Project Troy” to enlist “prominent social scientists regarded as reliable by the
military and the CIA to develop psychological warfare tactics for use throughout the world.” The ONR organized a series of brainstorming sessions at MIT during 1950-51 for the project. The roots of Project Troy lay in the U.S. military’s Joint Research and Development Board (the RDB). The RDB explored effective means of propaganda and radio broadcasting. After the Soviet Union began significantly jamming Voice of America broadcasts in the spring of 1949, the Pentagon sought advice from civilian experts to help solve the problem. While the government was initially interested in technical ways to thwart Soviet jamming techniques, Project Troy quickly expanded to include sociological and psychological operations as well. MIT’s Alex Bavelas, Max Millikan, and Jerome Wiesner (then the RLE’s associate director) were all members of the committee working with the RDB.

Launched in 1950-51, Project Troy worked on psychological warfare operations inside the Soviet Bloc in particular. A central figure in Project Troy was MIT psychology professor Alex Bavelas, a protégé of Kurt Lewin. In advising the government on the correct propaganda line, the authors of Project Troy also showed their “liberal bias” and argued:

We should avoid the position expressed or implied, that communism is bad, or any implication of contempt for communism. . . . Our line should rather be that Stalinism has betrayed certain ideals of Marxism which have actually had a peaceful evolution in the West. There should be no appearance of an all out overt attack upon the intellectual foundations of the Soviet Union.

After Project Troy was completed, Max Millikan – the son of the Nobel Prize-winning physicist Robert Millikan – went on to serve for a year as an assistant to the director of the CIA before returning to MIT where he ran MIT’s CIA-funded Center for
International Studies (CENIS), which specialized in “area studies” as well as studies on mass communications.33

“OVERLOAD AND DELAY”

Woven into Troy was another top secret “follow-on project” headed by Bavelas codenamed “Overload and Delay.” Although the program remains highly classified and there is a minimal paper trail, the historian Gregory Mitrovich has reconstructed its basic outline. The program -- run under Truman’s Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) -- was explicitly designed to take advantage of the fragility of a Stalinist system that ruled through purges and terror. Because so many party officials had been purged, Bavelas knew that an overwhelming number of lower-ranking apparatchiks were rightly terrified of making any decision at all because they feared they could be purged for any wrong move. As a result, decisions (including seemingly minor ones) were constantly being funneled up to the Politburo level.34 Clearly influenced by Wiener’s idea of “information,” Bavelas now wanted to jam that system and possibly even trigger a new round of purges.35

Bavelas argued that the United States should create an environment where the lower level party officials were confronted with decisions that could not be answered by a simple “yes” or “no” along some clearly defined line that would not endanger their safety. Instead, they should be confronted with questions of an “if yes” or “if no” or “maybe yes” or “maybe no” nature where they couldn’t apply any established rule. They would then send the question up to the next higher authorities who would also have to risk making a decision and possibly losing their life. They too would send the question even higher up the Soviet chain of command. The actual issue could be quite minor and insignificant in nature – what mattered was that it was designed to overload the Soviet decision-making system with complex and unpredictable questions. This “jamming” -- working in tandem with
other operations designed to encourage defections -- could trigger off even more purges. They in turn would only result in the apparat becoming even more brittle and that much more vulnerable to future “jamming.”

FROM MARGARET MEAD TO PROJECT PAPERCLIP

MIT and the Cybernetic Group members’ involvement in the postwar military-industrial-academic complex was for many the logical extension of their role as government consultants for organizations like the Navy and the OSS during World War II. Margaret Mead’s Institute for Intercultural Studies (IIS), for example, received extensive funding from the Office of Naval Research as well as the Air Force’s RAND Corporation. Mead’s involvement with the world of intelligence began with her work at IIS which had been financed during World War II by the ONR. During the entire time Mead played a leading role in the Macy Foundation meetings, she worked on a RAND and ONR funded study of Russia under a project called Research in Contemporary Culture. Mead also worked on another government-backed project with Clyde Kluckhohn, the famous anthropologist who headed the Russian Research Center at Harvard. Both Kluckhohn and another prestigious American sociologist involved with the Russian Research Center, Talcott Parsons, followed the Macy Foundation conferences closely. Parsons had been a member of the “Pareto Circle” at Harvard and the famous Italian sociologist Vilfredo Pareto’s ideas about equilibrium in social systems seemed tailor made for cybernetic theorizing. Through the Russian Research Center, Parsons worked closely with the State Department and Army Intelligence. He also helped bring Russian-born Nazi collaborators to Harvard, including one man wanted by the Soviets as a war criminal.

Norbert Wiener knew all about the U.S. government’s role in importing Nazi war criminals. In October 1948, the FBI received a
report on Wiener from the Chief of the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI). It claimed that Wiener had made statements at a social gathering “indicating a disloyal attitude toward the United States.” One example given by the ONI informant was Wiener’s “unfounded allegation that under the Paperclip program alien scientists who were Nazis were cleared for entry with greater facility and in larger numbers than those who were not Nazis.”

THE RISE OF GESTALT THINKING IN AMERICA

Alex Bavelas was hardly the only member of MIT’s psychology department to work as a top level advisor on Cold War secret operations. The military’s Research and Development Board (RDB) -- established following the passage of the National Security Act of 1947 -- included Donald Marquis, then a University of Michigan psychologist who served as chairman of the RBD’s Human Resources Committee. Marquis helped organize “basic research on the psychology of propaganda, on the nature of various national targets, and on various social groups within nations.” Marquis was yet another participant in the Macy Foundation conferences. A former behaviorist who turned to social psychology, Marquis built MIT’s Center for Group Dynamics by hiring former protégés of Kurt Lewin. Lewin -- who died in 1947 -- also attended the first Macy Foundation conference.

Now a legendary social theorist, Lewin first came to the United States as a Jewish refugee in 1933. (His mother would later die in a concentration camp in Poland.) Lewin’s gestalt approach to psychology, however, was by no means original to him. Lewin, Wolfgang Köhler, Max Wertheimer and Kurt Koffka all had been “Young Turk” protégés of Carl Stumpf, the head of the Psychological Institute of the University of Berlin. In the early 1920s, Köhler became the director of the Psychological Institute and turned it into “the world center for Gestalt psychology, devoted to solving problems of epistemology and cognition by
After the rise of Hitler, the Berlin group found new positions in American universities: Koffka at Smith College, Köhler at Swarthmore, and Wertheimer at the New School. As for Lewin, he first worked briefly at Cornell, and then later at the Child Welfare Research Station at the University of Iowa before founding the MIT-associated “Research Center for Group Dynamics.” When Lewin began teaching at the University of Iowa, Alex Bavelas became one of his early grad students. Under Lewin’s supervision, Bavelas studied how to increase worker productivity while maintaining morale. In 1944 Lewin created the Research Center for Group Dynamics where he tested “autocratic and democratic styles of leadership in small groups.” Some of his studies laid the basis for “training democratic leaders” in postwar Germany where specially chosen former Nazi supporters became born-again democrats under the watchful eyes of Allied Intelligence.

The exile German theorists also brought “gestalt psychology” into the United States. Gestalt models of thinking sharply departed both from orthodox Freudian views as well as from the behaviorist model of the mind based on “conditioning” -- an idea pioneered in America by John Watson and later by B.F. Skinner. While behaviorism “tended toward a radical environmentalism in which the person is only an object acted upon” or “conditioned,” the ideas of Lewin and his colleagues “included the person and the environment as the individual perceives them.” Lewin would become so influential that he has been described as the “most important immigrant to remodel American psychology” from the 1930s to the 1950s. His name also became associated with the creation of “group dynamics” as a tool for social engineering. In the 1940s Lewin worked closely with the American Jewish Committee on issues of anti-Semitism. He particularly was interested in developing methods to alter beliefs through his
particular brand of “social engineering” with the intent of promoting his set of progressive values. Out of Lewin’s network of students, group dynamics ideas such as the so-called T-group (training group) later emerged as well.

SOCIAL ENGINEERING WITH KURT LEWIN

Lewin’s interest in progressive social engineering dates back to the 1920s world of Weimar Germany. In 1919 Lewin wrote a paper entitled “Humanization of the Taylor System: An Inquiry into the Fundamental Psychology of Work and Vocation.” From Steve Heims:

he [Lewin] had formulated the idea that the application of psychology to work had twin objectives: that the work result in high productivity and be psychologically good for the worker. In a socialist journal, Lewin argued that these rational objectives are the same in a capitalist economy as in a socialist one. The applied psychologist’s studies thus may be useful in both types of political systems and in that sense are apolitical. Years later in America when he and his students applied social psychology to industrial settings, it surprised some observers, for it appeared to them that he had let himself be exploited by industrial corporations for their objectives, which were contrary to workers’ interests. However, it is not inconsistent with the ideas expressed in his 1919 article.45

Lewin also offered volkish-sounding praise for farm labor using primitive instruments. The historian Andrea Gabor reports that Lewin noted:

the salutary effects of farming, which, unlike industrial work, engaged “the whole person.” The advent of new farm equipment, which would segment the work of farmers,
would, Lewin predicted, cause new problems. Lewin proposed that psychologists leave the laboratory and team up with farmers to conduct experiments using farm implements such as hoes to improve work methods. . . . “The worker wants his work to be rich, wide and Protean, not crippling and narrow,” he wrote. “Work should not limit personal potential but develop it. Work can involve love, beauty, and the soaring joy of creating.”

In the United States, Lewin championed “the powerful role that social groups play in influencing a person’s emotional and mental well-being.” Lewin, Margaret Mead, and a then-University of Iowa graduate student named Ronald Lippitt (Lewin’s first protégé and principal collaborator) developed a new theory of organizational change based on:

the assumption that a productive workplace depends on both group skills and the self-knowledge of the individuals within the group. They further recognized the potentially symbiotic relationship between individuals and groups – i.e., that group skills can further self-knowledge and vice versa.

In a culture that values individuals above all else, this conclusion was almost subversive; for the Lewinites argued that the group was key to shaping individual behavior “at least as much as the members determine the value of the group.” Indeed, Lewin considered the Horatio Alger myth “as tragic as the initiative-destroying dependence on a benevolent despot.” As he once said to his friend Lippitt, “We all need continuous help from each other. Interdependence is the greatest challenge.”
**“SOCIAL PRESSURE IN INFORMAL GROUPS”**

Following the end of World War II, Lewin tried to change America’s segregationist culture through group dynamics. In 1946 a Connecticut state agency with funds from the National Conference of Christians and Jews decided to hold a conference on race relations and asked for Lewin’s help. The workshop -- held in the working class town of Bridgeport, New Haven -- brought together different members of the community. The two-week project would inspire decades-long social engineering experiments. As for Lewin:

Nothing could have suited Lewin better than the opportunity to put his ideas to work fighting prejudice. . . . The project itself was built on an accepted therapeutic device: participants gathered in small groups to role-play potentially difficult interracial relationships, led by group leaders. In the evenings, the staff, including group leaders and observers who watched the daytime sessions, would gather to discuss the groups’ progress. 49

The team saw that through “group dynamics, an individual could unconsciously adopt a role-play personality.” With the Bridgeport experiment, Lewin believed he had discovered “a new principle with wide application in the analysis and treatment of group behavior.” As Andrea Gabor tells it,

This was a new type of therapy group designed to understand and treat social dynamics, not individual neurosis. Lewin and the trainers called their discovery a T-group (training group). T-groups, which were leaderless, were based on the notion of “action research,” in which participants served as both guinea pigs and researchers; the T-groups would produce behavior, analyze it, generalize from it, and finally look for ways of applying what they had
learned.\textsuperscript{50}

The Office of Naval Research along with the Carnegie Corporation provided crucial funding for further T-group research while the National Education Association (NEA) contributed staff. Lewin’s Bridgeport group formed a Washington-based division of the NEA called the National Training Laboratories for Group Dynamics.\textsuperscript{51} It also established a “retreat” for T-group meetings in Bethel, Maine.

Lewin’s ideas soon were applied to the study of all kinds of social groups with the ONR providing the research funds. One early example was a study of the social relations inside a housing project. The housing project was established in the spring of 1946 for married MIT students who were returning World War II veterans. The researchers -- Leon Festinger, Stanley Schachter and Kurt Back -- were all MIT students and followers of Lewin. Their study was later published as *Social Pressures in Informal Groups: A Study of Human Factors in Housing*.\textsuperscript{52} In the preface to the book, the authors note: “This book owes its existence to the generous interest of two separate organizations.” The first was the Alfred Farwell Bemis Foundation that was established at MIT in 1938 for research on housing. The research was “further continued and carried to completion under contract (N6onr-23212, NR170-698) with the Office of Naval Research.” Festinger and Schachter later helped co-write *When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World*, a 1956 book examining a UFO cult in an attempt to understand how a sect reacts when some colossal prediction fails to come true.\textsuperscript{53} The famous phrase “cognitive dissonance” first entered American discourse from the book.\textsuperscript{54}
THE PAJAMA GAME

After Lewin’s death in 1947, many of his protégés relocated from MIT to the University of Michigan to create a new Center for Group Dynamics which specialized in industrial relations. Alex Bavelas, however, stayed in Boston. In 1948 he obtained an MIT Ph.D. with a thesis on “Some Mathematical Properties of Psychological Space.” Bavelas eventually left MIT in 1956 and worked for Bell Telephone Labs for four years before becoming a professor of psychology at Stanford’s business school. Yet while he was at Iowa as one of Kurt Lewin’s first graduate students, Bavelas followed up on a suggestion by Lewin to directly apply small group dynamics theory to labor-management relations. From The Cybernetics Group:

At Lewin’s suggestion Bavelas had initiated small-group experiments at the Harwood Manufacturing Company in Virginia. The project aimed to increase worker productivity while maintaining good morale, and to provide new knowledge of how to achieve this. These studies were successful, and small-group research in industrial settings became Bavelas’s forte. He moved with Lewin from Iowa to MIT and soon became a member of the MIT faculty.55

The Harwood Manufacturing Company plant was run by the family of another one of Lewin’s graduate students named Alfred Morrow. The plant was largely composed of female workers who manufactured pajamas. The “Harwood experiment” later became partial inspiration for the Broadway show (and later Hollywood musical) The Pajama Game where love blossoms between Babe, the female head of the worker’s complaint committee, and factory superintendent Sid.56

In the late 1940s Bavelas worked in the Industrial Relations Section of MIT’s Department of Economics and Social Science
headed by Douglas McGregor. After Alfred Sloan -- an 1895 MIT graduate and the chairman of General Motors -- gave MIT $5 million dollars in 1952, MIT established the Sloan School which specialized in “industrial management” issues.

In an August 1975 Campaigner article entitled “What Ever Happened to Integration?” LaRouche alludes to this period in a confused manner when he writes:

The most visible entries of MIT into the same [counterinsurgency] enterprises were the outcome of a postwar fusion of the Lewinite rat's nest at that institution [Harvard's sociology department] with the Radiation Laboratory of Electronics (RLE). The emergence of RAND Corporation large-scale “social engineering” sub-contractors' capability in the RLE began inconspicuously with the work of Alex Bavelas and others, beginning during the late 1940s on problem-solving behavior experimentally observed among some varied configurations of task-oriented groups, originally a project which vacillated between Gestalt-holistic and Lewinite-reductionist interpretations and designs of experiments. Later, the Lewinite bias predominated, leading into the hideous “artificial intelligence” brainwashing model-making experiments for which Marvin Minsky and Noam Chomsky are the most notorious MIT designers – linked to direct computer-controlled induced-schizophrenia-brainwashing experimentally by Stanford's Colby and others.

In reality, Lewin had been the leading gestalt theorist at MIT. The real critic of gestalt arguments throughout the Macy Foundation meetings, Warren McCulloch, was a “scientific materialist” whose MIT co-thinkers were Marvin Minsky and Seymour Papert, both of whom worked on Artificial Intelligence (AI). In the 1950s Noam
Chomsky also worked at the RLE as a linguist along with AI researchers like Wiener, Bavelas and Claude Shannon.60

“AD PRAC” ATTACK

In the mid-1950s the entire “human relations” industry spawned by Lewin came under attack as a “pseudo-science.” In 1957 a Harvard Business School professor named Malcolm McNair published a devastating critique in a *Harvard Business Review* article entitled “Thinking Ahead: What Price Human Relations?” McNair grumbled that “the cult of human relations is but part and parcel of the sloppy sentimentalism characterizing the world today.” According to McNair, the human relations industry deemphasized “analysis, judgment, and decision-making.” Even worse, the entire movement was based on lies, the primary one being that it was promoting democratic values. In reality, the basic premise of the group dynamics approach involved creating artificial situation where the affected members of any group could be manipulated by a skilled group leader to reach the conclusions that the group leader wanted them to reach in the first place. As McNair put it:

Consciously trying to practice human relations is like consciously trying to be a gentleman. If you have to think about it, insincerity creeps in and personal integrity moves out. With some this leads by a short step to the somewhat cynical point of view which students in Administrative Practices courses have described by coining the verb “ad prac,” meaning “to manipulate people for one’s own ends.”61

In *The Cybernetics Group*, Steve Heims voiced a more left-liberal objection to Lewin’s social engineering approach:

Lewin’s work on group dynamics and social engineering . . . codified how to use leadership and group pressure to
change individuals’ attitudes. In this respect it has been tested and often found successful. Lewin advocated democratic leadership in social engineering, but the very concept is problematic when the objective is to engineer social change. Change propelled by oppressed members of a society requires leadership, struggle, and militant opposition rather than social engineering.\textsuperscript{62}

Lewin’s “group dynamic” techniques could be applied by any organization or special interest to promote a desired outcome. For just that reason a new generation of business management and industrial relations theorists looking for ways to advance beyond simple Taylorism now seized upon Lewin’s ideas for their own ends. The Sloan School became a beacon for introducing Lewinite ideas into labor-management relations. The Sloan School was then led by Douglas McGregor. In 1937 McGregor first came to MIT to establish its Industrial Relations Department, the precursor to the Sloan School. McGregor became known as one of the first industrial psychologists “to emphasize the strategic importance of personnel policies, including the role of culture, systems, and training.”\textsuperscript{63} At MIT, McGregor worked closely with both Alex Bavelas and Edgar Schein, an organizational culture expert whom McGregor had recruited from Harvard. McGregor – who unexpectedly died of a heart attack in the spring of 1964 -- also worked as a consultant for top Fortune 500 corporations. From 1952 to 1963, for example, he was a consultant to the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey and affiliates in Cuba, South America, and Saudi Arabia. From 1961 to 1964, he consulted for Bell Telephone; from 1963-64 for Union Carbide; and in 1964 he had just begun consulting work for Imperial Chemical Industries of Great Britain.\textsuperscript{64}

To carry out their research, McGregor and Bavelas set up their own psychological laboratory, where they studied groups of managers through two-way glass. In 1964 Jay Forrester --a
leading computer expert and the father of system dynamics who had joined the Sloan School in 1956 – even tried to design a model to create a computer simulation of a T-group sessions. Forrester and McGregor wanted “to literally map out the processes by which people change their views and opinions. The ultimate goal was to form a universal model of group decision-making.”

In 1961 Edgar Schein and his MIT colleagues at CENIS published a classic study of Chinese “thought reform” techniques entitled Coercive Persuasion: A Socio-psychological Analysis of the “Brainwashing” of American Civilian Prisoners by the Chinese Communists. Schein simultaneously worked on labor-management issues for the Industrial Relations Division of the Sloan School. Not surprisingly, the MIT group also adopted Lewin’s “group dynamics” /“T-group” approach as the best methodological model to understand just what the Chinese were up to.

CAPITALIST DISTORTIONS OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS?

Yet not all members of the Macy Foundation/Cybernetics Group were followers of Lewin and gestalt methods. Another leading Macy Foundation participant headed the more strictly Freudian faction at the meetings. This was the psychiatrist Lawrence Kubie, a pillar of the Manhattan-based Psychoanalytic Institute. In the early 1940s, Kubie worked for Army Intelligence on the influence of certain drugs on the ability of prisoners to withstand interrogation, also a subject of obvious interest to the newly created Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

In May 1942 Kubie also participated in a conference on “cerebral inhibition” organized in New York under the auspices of the Macy Foundation, which in a sense was the foundation’s first voyage into “mind control.” The Cerebral Inhibition Meeting starred a
leading expert on hypnosis named Milton Erickson. Besides Kubie, the participants also included his close friend Frank Fremont-Smith as well as Norbert Wiener, Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead. Kubie also explored the nature of psychosomatic ailments. In *The Cybernetics Group*, Heims writes that Kubie believed in making unconscious material conscious and guiding one’s actions as much as possible by conscious purposes. As he said at the sixth meeting [of the Macy Foundation Cybernetics Group], “The degree to which any act is serving conscious purposes has a direct correlation with its essential normality, and the degree to which it is serving unconscious purposes has a direct relationship to its neuroticism.”

Heims adds that in contrast to Kubie, Gregory Bateson:

came to view consciousness and conscious purposes as the source of, not the solution to, people’s troubles in the modern world. He felt that a reliance on consciousness and conscious purposes narrows possibilities and cuts off the direct responsiveness to psychic life.

At the Macy Foundation meetings, Kubie’s fuzzy-wuzzy Freudian-inspired view of the unconscious also came under frequent attack by MIT’s more “materialist”-oriented Warren McCulloch.

Kubie’s views, however, would be embraced by LaRouche. In *Dialectical Economics*, LaRouche describes Kubie’s 1961 book *Neurotic Distortions of the Creative Process* this way: “Together with Gestalt studies of creativity, this book represents approximately the furthest advance in the study of cognition until the work of the author.” In his 1969 essay “The Philosophy of Socialist Education,” LaRouche highlights Kubie’s spring 1962 *Daedalus* article (“The Fostering of Creative Scientific
Productivity”) as a model for the reorganization of the entire U.S. education system. LaRouche would even “out-Kubie” Kubie in *Dialectical Economics* when he argues that the Ego and its related neuroses were actually a capitalist social construct:

[!]In a sane society this sense of (infantile ego) “I” would begin to be superseded by self-conscious “I-ness” during the post-infancy socialization of the individual, and the Ego would essentially disappear at the age of approximately two or three. Hence, the “normality” of the Ego-sense of “I” in adult members of capitalist society is the primary clinical symptom of the pathetic condition known as bourgeois ideology.70

In much the same way he attacked *The Theory of Games* as a product of capitalist ideology, LaRouche claims that human neuroses are more or less a byproduct of capitalism. In LaRouche’s hyper-rationalistic universe, there would be an “I-ness” in tune with the demands of the social “superego” which would also have great access to creative powers located in the “preconscious” – a concept he took straight from Kubie – which itself now would be unfettered by the demons of the unconscious Id.

Steve Heims, however, argues that in *Neurotic Distortions* Kubie viewed the creative process in a far too a black and white manner. For Heims:

Kubie’s dichotomy is Manichean; the “neurotic” process is “sick” and the “creative process” is “healthy,” but “these intertwined but mortal enemies, the creative and the neurotic process are universal.” Psychoanalysis frees the creative process, according to Kubie.
Kubie also stressed that one of the great conflicts in the human mind was the “drive to be both sexes.” Kubie viewed Virginia Woolf’s book Orlando as an expression of this drive and decided that her suicide was caused by her effort “to achieve mutually irreconcilable and consequently unattainable identities.” Reflecting the mores of the time, Kubie also tried (and failed) to cure Tennessee Williams and other leading artists of their homosexual desires.

**MAYO AND DURKHEIM**

As Bavelas, Schein and their colleagues labored at the Sloan School of Management, their counterparts at Harvard’s Business School headed by Elton Mayo tried to apply more sociologically-driven insights to labor-management relations. At Harvard, Mayo highlighted Emile Durkheim’s “solidarist” ideas as holding a key to the management of industrial relations. In his classic essay “Work and its Discontents,” Daniel Bell writes that:

> For Mayo, following the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, the characteristic fact about the modern scene is the presence of constant, disruptive change. The family, the primal group of social cohesion, breaks up as a work and educational unit . . . the key to human satisfaction gives way to anomie. If solidarity is to be re-established, it will have to be done within the corporation and factory.  

Mayo and his followers first tested their theories in a famous -- and famously controversial -- study of a Western Electric Plant known as the “Hawthorne studies.” Playing off Durkheim:

> Mayo acknowledged these difficult times [the Great Depression], praising earlier forms of community life in which work was part of a collective social fabric that provided solidarity and belonging. With the Depression, this
commercial oneness was neglected and had to be restored in the workplace in order to provide cooperation and social collaboration. . . . Managerial emphasis on efficiency stifles the individual’s desire for the group approval, social satisfaction, and social purpose that had previously been gained through communal life.\textsuperscript{72}

The idea that businesses would structure the work environment to help fulfill worker’s “social need” for identity -- as opposed to simply paying them higher wages -- was yet another deliberate attempt to “frame” an individual worker’s sense of “I” in the mirror of his or her relationship to the larger social collective.\textsuperscript{73}

Given his attempt to become a business consultant in the late 1940s and early 1950s, I think it likely that LaRouche first encountered Durkheim’s writings in the context of debates over labor-management issues. LaRouche took ideas from Durkheim, the gestalt psychologists, and Freudians like Kubie and mixed them together in \textit{Dialectical Economics} producing passages such as this:

\begin{quote}
Emile Durkheim – despite his disciples, and to some degree despite himself – covered related ground and investigated the nature of the evidence for such judgments in \textit{The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life}. The work or Ehrenfels, Wertheimer, Köhler, and others has already been noted. In modern psychological practice, Lawrence S. Kubie is outstanding for his studies of the phenomena of creative mentation. In general, Freud and Durkheim replicated to a certain extent the accomplishments of Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx in discovering the principle of “psychophysical parallelism.” The Gestalt psychologists not only discredited the entirety of behaviorist psychology and sociology with the most damning experimental evidence, but also, through Ehrenfels’ recognition of the means for demonstrating
\end{quote}
invariance in this new field of inquiry, were able to design experimental hypotheses which represented unique demonstrations of the existence of creative mentation.\textsuperscript{74}

In \textit{Dialectical Economics}, LaRouche also writes about Durkheim:

This brilliant French chauvinist avoided public account of his enormous and specific intellectual debts to such Germans as Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx. The entire positive content of his major writings, beginning with \textit{Division of Labor in Society}, is chiefly due to the direct influence of German predecessors studied intensively while preparing his first dissertation. . . . Like the degenerated Feuerbach of the post-1848 period, Durkheim seizes upon the “fixed object” and “fixed natural law” as the rationalization for turning “species-consciousness” into the reactionary policy of interclass solidarity.\textsuperscript{75}

\textbf{COERCIVE PERSUASION}

In 1961 the MIT theorists who throughout the 1950s had worked on industrial relations, general network analysis, and secret Cold War projects for the Pentagon now produced a classic study of Chinese “through reform” techniques entitled \textit{Coercive Persuasion: A Socio-psychological Analysis of the “Brainwashing” of American Civilian Prisoners by the Chinese Communists}. The book’s principal author, Edgar Schein, was – as we have noted – first recruited to MIT from Harvard as a protégé of Douglas McGregor.\textsuperscript{76} During the Korean War, Schein served as an Army research psychologist at Walter Reed. He was sent to the Far East as part of a government program to determine exactly what had happened to GIs in North Korean POW camps and to determine whether or not they really had been “brainwashed.” From 1957 to 1959 Schein worked out of MIT’s CIA-financed Center for International Studies (CENIS) on the project that
became Coercive Persuasion. Schein also received support from another CIA front group, the Manhattan-based Society for the Investigation of Human Ecology.

In the 1950s the popular image of ideological conversion -- made famous by Richard Condon’s The Manchurian Candidate -- focused on the “conditioned response” theories of Ivan Pavlov. Schein, however, argues that the “Manchurian Candidate” view of “brainwashing” -- where an individual is conditioned to think along certain lines in response to a behaviorist “stimulus/response” model -- inaccurately described what had actually happened in Communist China:

Hence we have abandoned the term brainwashing and prefer to use the term coercive persuasion. Coercive persuasion is a more accurate descriptive concept because basically what happened to the prisoners was that they were subjected to unusually intense and prolonged persuasion in a situation from which they could not escape; that is, they were coerced into allowing themselves to be persuaded.77

Schein points out that many of the techniques used by the Chinese were by no means unique to them:

The model of coercive persuasion we have proposed is not limited in its applicability to what the Chinese Communists did to their Western political prisoners. Rather it is applicable to all instances of persuasion or influence in which the person is constrained by physical, social, or psychological forces from leaving the influencing situation. The model is also morally neutral in that it explicitly ignores the content of the beliefs, attitudes, values, or behavior patterns which are involved in the influence process. If we preserve this moral neutrality we can raise the question whether the events in Chinese Communist prisons provide any clues to the
understanding of other influence processes, even those which we condone and consider to be valuable, e.g., psychotherapy, reform in prison, etc. It is important in considering such parallel phenomena not to fall into the trap of thinking that because we use methods similar to the Communists our methods are bad and should therefore be abandoned on moral grounds. It could just as well be argued that the Communists are using some of our own best methods of influence and therefore coercive persuasion really has some good features to it. We feel that neither approach helps us to understand the nature of the influence process, hence prejudgment must be avoided in so afar as it is possible.\textsuperscript{78}

In fact,

Chinese Communist coercive persuasion is not too different a process in its basic structure from coercive persuasion in institutions in our own society which are in the business of changing fundamental beliefs and values. By showing the parallels, we hope to illuminate both our version and the Communist version of coercive persuasion, and lay the groundwork for a more general theory of influence.\textsuperscript{79}

Schein explicitly borrows his model for understanding coercive persuasion from Kurt Lewin:

The construction of a model for the analysis of coercive persuasion has three basic purposes: to provide a theoretical structure which will permit the organization of the many and varied prisoner experiences into meaningful categories; to provide theoretical categories which will make it possible to understand the coercive persuasion process and its effects psychologically; and to provide some basic categories for a more general theory of social influence,
which will permit a systematic comparison of coercive persuasion with other kinds of influence processes.

The model we have chosen to fulfill these purposes derives from Kurt Lewin and was originally designed to analyze changes in processes in groups or organizations. It is particularly applicable to the analysis of influence because the kinds of resistance to change which Lewin and his collaborators observed in groups and organizations have their counterparts in the individual if an attempt is made to influence his beliefs, attitudes, or values. In fact, it is a basic assumption of the model that the beliefs, attitudes, values, and behavior patterns of an individual tend to be integrated with each other and tend to be organized around the person’s self-image or self-concept.\(^8^0\)

Hence in order to truly change a person, you first have to break down their old “self-image or self-concept.”

**Part IV**

**GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT**

For almost two decades Lyndon LaRouche led a double life of a business consultant “efficiency expert” by day and Trotskyist by night. We also know from his own testimony that he studied published reports of the Macy Foundation meetings in the early 1950s. It is not surprising, then, that LaRouche developed his own idiosyncratic critique of Wiener World.\(^8^1\)

Shortly after he arrived in the Big Apple, for example, “Lynn Marcus” published a long article entitled “Automation” in the spring 1954 issue of the SWP’s theoretical journal *Fourth International*.\(^8^2\) In the piece – which includes citations from both Norbert Wiener’s *Cybernetics* and Karl Marx’s *Capital* --
LaRouche argues that

a new industrial revolution, automation, has entered upon the scene – a consequence, again, of capitalism’s lust for relative surplus value. Automation raises the contradictions of capitalist industrialization to a new intensity: technological unemployment beyond yesterday’s wildest fears, astronomical quantities of constant capital for each worker directly employed, and a plummeting rate of profit. . . . Automation, a qualitative change in the means of production, hastens the doom of an outdated society. Automation carries with it an intensification of the social and political forces that will drive the working class to take power and reorganize society from top to bottom.\(^8\)

“Lynn Marcus” then tries to show:

why automation represents the beginning of a new industrial revolution, why it is not merely a continuation of the old industrial revolution. We shall show why capitalism, for the most profound social and economic reasons, cannot complete this revolution. Finally, we shall show how automation relates to the problems of the socialist revolution.

LaRouche claimed that with automation it was technologically feasible “to eliminate \textit{most} of the labor force in industry today. This is not science-fiction; it is fact, as more and more workers will realize shortly.” Because of the enormous initial costs it takes to introduce automation – as well as the need to standardize the technology -- only the wealthiest firms will be able to carry it off. Yet with a nationally coordinated “Workers and Farmers Government,” the rapid “development of the means of production” would outdate “the capitalist economically and socially” so that “we can dispense with the boss and his equivalents altogether.” In other words, socialism is the most effective way to manage
THE “SOCIAL BRAIN”

LaRouche also turns to the role of workers as a “group” in such a system using ideas taken – I believe -- from the worlds of Gestalt psychology and group dynamics:

The intelligence of the ant colony is greater than the intelligence of all its members: it is the product of all the ants functioning in a social organism; this intelligence is a social product. . . . A similar “law” holds when individual workers are put together in a factory. . . . This may be instanced in the problem-solving power of certain groups of individuals, in relation to the problem-solving power of the same persons working individually. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts: the intelligence of the group is greater than the intelligence of the sum of its members taken separately. We may say that this organization produces a new intelligence, a social intelligence, a social product, which, for lack of a proper term, we may call a “social brain.”

LaRouche continues:

Needless to say, not all kinds of organizations of human beings produce an efficient increase in social intelligence, just because they seem to be cooperating groups. Fifteen real Bolsheviks organized as a “problem-solving group” in a Bolshevik organization generally present more collective social intelligence than a thousand Mensheviks organized in one of their bleating conventions. This is a historical fact, as any candid and intelligent student of history will admit. The source of the difference lies largely in the fact that Bolshevik organization represents a group integrated about the performance of a function, whereas Menshevik organization
is linked to the performance of no continuous practical function. The cooperation of workers in the means of production forms them into an efficient problem-solving group, evolving on the basis of its efficacy in improving productive output. It is for this reason that we place so much justified confidence in Bolshevik organization and in the social intelligence of factory workers in cooperative productive groups.

With his notion of a specific problem-solving group “integrated about the performance of a function,” LaRouche reflects the new Kurt Lewin “gestalt” labor management paradigm popularized by MIT. Just as Lenin and other Bolsheviks tried to translate Henry Ford’s assembly line and the Taylorist labor management techniques that came with it into post-revolutionary Russia, LaRouche struggled to incorporate the production revolution promised by cybernetics into a modern Marxist context:

What kind of organization of the labor process occurs under automation? It parallels the social organization of a workers’ state. This is not an accident. We have reached the point of historical development where the means of production have outgrown capitalist society. At this point, the working class is impelled [one might say “automatically”] by the unbearable contradiction between social production and private appropriation to take the leadership of society and reconstruct it along patterns compatible with the new development of the means of production – automation.

Once the working class completes its biggest problem-solving task -- revolution -- a brighter future naturally beckoned:

On the international scale, an automated U.S. industrial power will be able to end hunger and poverty on a world scale, to really raise the level of live of colonial peoples to
our own level. We shall be able to break down all national boundaries and make a universal reality of that dignity of man which capitalism preaches on Sunday occasions, that dignity of man which capitalism works so mightily to suppress and corrupt 365 days a year.

Since freedom and culture cannot exist in the face of want and exploitation, automation in the hands of the socialist revolution represents the only real solution to the ills of humanity. With that knowledge it cannot be much longer before the workers and farmers of America exert themselves politically to undertake both tasks.

THE QUESTION OF MARVIN MINSKY

In 2005 a former SWP leader named Barry Sheppard published volume one of his memoir entitled The Party which contains some useful information about LaRouche. Sheppard had been an MIT student in the mid-1950s. He first encountered the SWP through Peter Camejo, another MIT math wiz who also would play a leading role in the SWP. When Sheppard joined the Boston SWP in November 1959, the chapter was still headed up by none other than Larry Trainor, the same SWPer who led the Boston local in 1949 when LaRouche joined. At the time Sheppard signed up, there were exactly eight SWP cadre active in Boston, all of them industrial workers and all pretty much dominated by Trainor. After graduating from MIT, Sheppard was asked to relocate to New York to play a leading role in the newly formed YSA. Sheppard worked as a computer programmer and for a time was employed at a publication called Computers and Automation, a journal which LaRouche almost certainly read. Sheppard recalls that when he was in the process of relocating from Boston to New York in the summer of 1961, he “was billeted at LaRouche’s
apartment, where he lived with his companion” Janice LaRouche. According to Sheppard:

LaRouche told me he was a “time study” person. If true it meant he was hired by capitalists to figure out how to speed up workers. I thought this was not an occupation that a socialist should be involved in. However during the next five years or so before he was expelled, he was never hired in that capacity. He was supported by the women who lived with him. . . . LaRouche’s so-called “socialism” always struck me as technocratic and hyper-intellectual with no relationship at all to real workers’ struggles anywhere.

Shortly before he met LaRouche, Sheppard studied with MIT Artificial Intelligence guru Marvin Minsky. On pages 26-27 of his book, Sheppard recalls his critique of Minsky which I believe LaRouche later incorporated into his own writings:

During the spring semester of 1959 I took a course in Artificial Intelligence, taught by Marvin Minsky. It was an interesting course, and paralleled another I took on the logical foundations of mathematics. But there was one aspect of this course that really bothered me – the assumption by Minsky and others that humans are basically computers. More precisely, they say that we are a computer program run on the “meat computers” of our brains. This view has come to be known as “hard” artificial intelligence (AI).

They were certain, back in 1959, that within a few years they would discover that program or even one superior to it. Once I attended a symposium held by Minsky and other top MIT mathematicians, to which students were invited as observers. They defended this hard AI view, and got around the question of human consciousness by denying its existence! Here were four highly conscious human beings,
consciously trying to communicate with hundreds of presumably conscious students, and the content of what they were communicating was that there is no such thing as consciousness! They also implied that the only possible alternative to this view was religion.

At the time I read Lenin’s *Materialism and Emperio-Criticism*, a philosophical work. One of Lenin’s points was that yes, human consciousness and the human mind are rooted in the material brain, but we don’t yet know how. It struck me as better to just say we don’t know the connections between the brain and the human mind and consciousness than to deny that the latter exists.

It is possible to assert that consciousness and mind are part of material reality and spring from that reality, without claiming that spirit or mind exist apart from the body as most religions do, and without adopting Minsky’s mechanical materialism and reductionism either. Thinking about these philosophical issues drew me closer to the dialectical materialism of Marx.

While I believe LaRouche partly borrowed this critique of Minsky from Sheppard, LaRouche far preferred gestalt models of thought to what he perceived as Lenin’s reductionist view of human consciousness.

“EGO STRIPPING”

The ideas that LaRouche first picked up in Boston would echo throughout the early days of the NCLC both in benign and malign form. From 1966 to 1972 they formed one core component of his classes in Marxist economics. In 1973-74, however, LaRouche employed the very same jargon to prove that Christopher White had been “brainwashed.” Using his “Beyond Psychoanalysis” (BP)
theories as justification, LaRouche also launched “t-group”-style late night gatherings with leading NCLC cadre which were soon dubbed inside the organization as “ego stripping sessions.” Needless to add, at the sessions LaRouche served as unquestioned group leader whose own views were beyond challenge. In his November 1973 *Campaigner* article, “The Sexual Impotence of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party,” LaRouche even brags that he knew how to cure certain psychosomatic illnesses in the “clinical setting” of his “Beyond Psychoanalysis” sessions:

> [there is] a direct connection between this sort of phenomenon [the individual being reduced to a “schwaermerei” of a lost “I” and then being restored to a “self-conscious identity”] and the remedying of even severe psychosomatic illnesses.

Intestinal psychosomatic involvements and migraine headache syndromes are among the most accessible to remedy in this way. (Indeed, the variety of disturbances falsely deemed of organic etiology which are susceptible of remedy or significant improvement through analysis indicates that psychosomatic medicine is of far greater importance and engages much more of the realm of “organic” disorders than is usually admitted even by professionals.)

... The link between psychological disorder and somatic disorders is shown to be connected to this psycho pathology is through the mediation of the fundamental emotion, which is obviously linked to proprioceptive and ACTH dynamics.

Concepts about psychosomatic illnesses and cybernetic-inspired computer jargon also played a prominent role in LaRouche’s famous 3 January 1974 speech during the Chris White affair. In
discussing different “feedback loop” mechanisms connected with the intestines, he stated:

There are certain ways in which, say, pills can be inserted into the rectum and when you get to a certain stage in the program you make a bowel movement of a certain type, with a certain kind of psychosomatic feeling. This disgorges at least one of the two poison pills, you eat your excrement and that’s the way you get the poison in your system.

The Chris White affair proved strange homage to the Cybernetics Group. Take LaRouche’s assertion that White had been “brainwashed” to simulate a computer program. LaRouche claimed that he could “break” any brainwashing program done on a Watson/behaviorist/AI model by either the KGB or CIA because he knew that the human mind was actually structured along “gestalt” and not behaviorist-Artificial Intelligence lines. In contrast, his enemies still followed an inferior reductionist model of the human mind.

In early 1974 the NCLC even produced a William Burroughs-like document entitled “British Program Specifications” that tried to show just how White had been brainwashed in a way that mimicked computer programs. It also came with this helpful diagram:
Program Jumps                                  8 layers
A, not-A                                                                                       B, not-D
not-B(1) A     Not-A                                                        C, not-C
(2)        Not-B                                                        Drugs–Hypnosis
(3)       Not-C                                                        Suggestion
Suggestion
(4)     Not-D                                                        Hypnosis
Drugs
Shock

The document even states that Chris White had been “programmed” to “print out” names and false leads before his “programmed” suicide.\(^7\)

CONCLUSION: THE “INFLUENCE AGENT”

Starting in 1973 LaRouche deliberately socially engineered the NCLC’s transformation into a one-man personality cult. To carry it off, LaRouche now became his own “influence agent.” In Coercive Persuasion, Schein describes the trained psychological manipulator -- or what Schein calls the “influence agent” -- this way:

One of the more interesting strategic problems for the influence agent would seem to be how to make the small groups in his target population work toward his own goals rather than at cross purposes with him. Once he has allowed or encouraged the formation of small groups, he must be prepared for the severe resistance which may be generated if such groups turn against him. . . . For the agent to maintain this coercive atmosphere obviously requires careful management; if he permits open communication to occur
between members of his audience they may discover their shared discomfort and thereby break the coercive tie holding them.\textsuperscript{88}

(The NCLC jargon word for “severe resistance” was “blocking.”)

In his “Beyond Psychoanalysis” group of related essays, LaRouche uses terms like “mass organizer” and “group leader” as the equivalent of “influence agent.” He argues that the leader must strip away the previous identity of the group and replace it with a new persona using “Gestalt” models of the mind to effect this conversion. From the “Beyond Psychoanalysis” \textit{Campaigner}:

The art of the mass organizer depends on knowing \textit{in that way} (the cathexized states of the masses) what the masses “are thinking.” This knowledge focuses not merely on what those masses have been consciously thinking; the art of the mass organizer depends upon \textit{anticipating what they can be induced to call forth by suggestion} (my emphasis).

He accomplishes this result by replicating their mental states within himself and critically examining the process so replicated, so effecting experimental foreknowledge of what further states are susceptible of production by various means of suggestion . . . \textit{To a considerable extent, the mass organizer thus strips away the persona of the mass, creating a new persona for it at the same time.} (my emphasis)

In the PSP \textit{Campaigner}, the “mass organizer” reappears under the guise of the “effective psychoanalytical leader” skilled in Gestalt encounter-group methods:

The effective psychoanalytical group leader depends upon the developed power to abstract Gestalts from the intra-
group dynamics, Gestalts, which correspond to potential images for the unconscious feeling-states of various group participants.

Through knowledge of such Gestalts, the group-leader is able to force the participants to bring forth from unconscious processes corresponding conscious images of their unconscious states . . . The effect on the participant is as if the group leader were reading his unconscious mind, which, to a large degree, is exactly what is occurring.

During these sessions, the trained self-conscious *Gruppenführer* develops almost God-like powers to transform individual identities. In the PSP *Campaigner* LaRouche describes just how the influence agent can accomplish this act of born-again magic “by observing distinct personality-shifts in the affected individuals, and more to the point by the group leader’s ability to lawfully determine the succession of such personality changes.” This transformation can only take place once the targeted individual being “transformed” in the t-group sessions has abandoned any sense of their old Ego or sense of “I.” From the Feuerbach *Campaigner*:

> The essential issue of resistance at such crucial junctures (especially) is the attempt of the Ego to retain possession of the “I” of identity, to retain control of the person, against a threaten take-over by the self-conscious self.

Needless to say, that “self-conscious self” is the same self that the influence agent/group leader had intentionally set out to create in the first place.

It is also very important to state that LaRouche sold his manipulation program under the guise of radical “self actualization.” In the Feuerbach *Campaigner* he writes:
the immediate short-term objective of this program . . . [is] to launch a program of interdependent task-orientation and psychoanalysis through which a plurality of the Labor Committee members proceed toward developing willful powers of creative mentation – what the layman would be obliged to term the deliberate development of “geniuses.”

Only by being so transformed, could the tiny handful of NCLC cadre act in the Promethean manner necessary to realize socialism and free the planet from the imminent threat of worldwide fascism. Thus to resist LaRouche psychologically was to betray the international working class politically.

If the proceeding analysis – fantastic as it might sound – proves more or less correct, LaRouche’s entire “Beyond Psychoanalysis” program (along with much else) traces back to the intellectual world of Boston in the late 1940s. If we examine the tumultuous events of 1973-74 in this light, we are confronted with the ironic fact that LaRouche acted in a sense as an “anti-Lewinite” acolyte of Kurt Lewin. Following in the footsteps of Freud’s famous Group Psychology and the Ego, Lewin understood only too well the all too frequent irrationality of group psychology. Lewin, however, thought he could use the same power of “groupthink” in positive ways through the skilled intervention of trained psychological experts using sophisticated “group dynamic” methods. Yet these very same methods could be used by virtually any actor for whatever goals they wanted to achieve from IBM plant managers to Chinese Communist commissars whose “Comintern methods” of coercive persuasion ironically mimicked Lewin’s own attempt to bring enlightenment to the masses.

Lewin’s social engineering techniques, in short, really were “value neutral.” The same “t-group” method that Lewin wanted to use to fight racism equally could be applied by business “efficiency
experts” to manipulate unions to accept lower wages in exchange for the promise of a more “psychologically validating” experience of factory life. Group dynamic techniques could also be employed by religious or political cults, totalitarian movements, or even governments eager to manipulate their citizens.

As far as LaRouche is concerned, sometime in 1973 he decided to use concepts that he had been pondering over for almost two decades to destroy the old NCLC and transform it into his own personality cult. Thus in 1973-74 the ideas that LaRouche had first been exposed to when he first wandered through Wiener World now returned, so to speak, “with a vengeance.”
While he was still living in Boston, LaRouche reports that he became quite sick. In *Conceptual History*, he cryptically writes, “A protracted illness and convalescence during 1952 created the circumstances in which he was compelled to turn to more sedentary professional work in consulting.” He also reports that in 1952, the same year he was ill, he achieved his first major intellectual “breakthrough” while reading the German mathematician Cantor. He then moved to New York sometime in 1953 or early 1954 to work as a business consultant for the May Company.

LaRouche says he received an early Paris Hermann et Cie edition of *Cybernetics* shipped from Paris courtesy of his father who was in France at the time.


Gerovitch, 547.


On Wiener, Haldane, Struik and the FBI, see the discussion in Conway and Siegelman.


Gödel’s 1931 critique of Russell and Whitehead’s in Gödel’s “On Formally Undecidable Propositions of *Principia Mathematica*” played a major role in the Macy Foundation debates. Jean-Pierre Dupuy describes Gödel’s argument this way:

What Gödel had done was to establish a theorem of “incompleteness”: any formal language system in the logical sense (namely, one that provides a formal language – a set of formulas that are taken as axioms – as well as rules of inference) that is sufficiently rich to accommodate arithmetic has the following property: either the system is inconsistent (i.e., it generates contradictory theorems) or there exists at least on true proposition that is not provable within the system. In the later case, therefore, the formula corresponding to this proposition is not a theorem, nor, quite obviously, is its negation, since this corresponds to a false proposition. Even if the entire set of theorems of the system were to be thoroughly unpacked, neither the formula nor its negation will ever be found. So long as one remains “within” the system, one will never arrive at the truth value of the formula, which is therefore called “undecidable.”


Even here LaRouche’s ideas on Marx and mathematics may have been taken from members of the SWP. One of the world’s leading experts on both Kurt Gödel and Georg Cantor was the mathematician Jean van Heijenoort, a former leading member of the 4th International and an ex-bodyguard to Trotsky. Van Heijenoort broke with the SWP in the 1940s and earned a Ph.D. at NYU’s Courant Institute in 1949. He then taught at the Courant Institute until 1965. He would later help edit Kurt Gödel’s *Collected Works*. While there is no evidence that van Heijenoort believed that either Cantor or Gödel’s ideas “proved” dialectics, such an idea may have been floating around. It is possible that the SWP’s “John C. Wright” (Joseph Vanzler) -- who had been long active in Boston before relocating to New York -- argued along these lines. A polymath who spoke eight languages, Vanzler prided himself on his knowledge of “dialectical materialism” and its relationship to logic, philosophy, and problems of method. Vanzler also studied both Greek and German idealist philosophy. He may have known van Heijenoort since Vanzler also was the main SWP translator of Trotsky. When LaRouche came to New York, Vanzler was the editor of *Fourth International* (later *International Socialist Review*) which published LaRouche’s article on automation. In one of his SWP documents from 1965, LaRouche called Vanzler – who died in June 1956 -- the SWP’s only competent economist.
On Vanzler, see http://www.trotskyana.net/Trotskyists/Bio-Bibliographies/bio-bibl_wright.pdf.

For a biography of van Heijenoort, see Anita B. Feferman, Politics, Logic, and Love: The Life of Jean van Heijenoort (Boston: Jones and Bartlett, 1993). The book includes an appendix by Solomon Feferman that discusses van Heijenoort’s work on Frege, Cantor, and Gödel.


18 This is a thought experiment by the famous physicist meant to question whether or not the second law of thermodynamics was always inevitable.

19 Wiener, Cybernetics, 18-19.

20 Cybernetics concludes with a “note” that discusses the possibility of constructing a chess-playing machine, an issue that Wiener relates to a way of looking at games different from the one promoted by von Neumann. LaRouche was a devoted chess player and he wrote about chess in an early issue of New Solidarity. No doubt he would have been fascinated by this note. In it Wiener alludes to a stage magic trick or what he calls “Maelzel's fraudulent machine,” a reference to “the Turk” a seeming thinking machine built to play chess but which had concealed in it a chess master. On Maelzel, see Tom Standage, The Turk: The Life and Times of the Famous Eighteenth-Century Chess-Playing Machine (New York: Berkeley Books, 2001).

21 Wiener, Cybernetics, 186-87.


23 On the early Macy Foundation meetings and the discussion of Cantor, see Heim, John von Neumann and Norbert Wiener: From Mathematics to the Technologies of Life and Death:

The meeting took place on March 8 and 9, 1946, at the Beekman Hotel in New York City – twenty-one scientists sitting around a table, talking for two days about new ideas. . . . Von Neumann and Wiener were the star performers. Whereas von Neumann described the organization and operation of the most advanced general-purpose computers under construction at the time, Wiener spoke about “purposive” machines and the role of information and feedback in their operation. . . . Von Neumann described his theory of games and Wiener spoke about the undecidability of some propositions (Russellian paradoxes) which would cause a computer to oscillate yes-no-yes-no-yes-no . . . . (203)
The other intellectual current that stimulated von Neumann’s interest at that time was the foundation crisis in mathematics. The crisis arose from a branch of abstract mathematics, G. Cantor’s theory of sets, in which some contradictions had unexpectedly been discovered. This led to the apparent necessity of proving mathematics generally to be free from contradiction, lest they also crop up in other branches. . . . Von Neumann’s works on this program were seminal contributions towards clarifying axiomatic formulations of various branches of mathematics, and in the late 1920s he was confident that all of mathematical analysis could be proved free from contradiction. A few years later, however, it was discovered by K. Gödel that the program of Hilbert and von Neumann was impossible to carry through in practice. (53)

The notoriously reclusive Kurt Gödel was invited to the Beekman conference but he didn’t attend.

24 From the Macy Foundation website:

Kate Macy Ladd endowed the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation in 1930 in memory of her father, who died at a young age. . . . Mrs. Ladd descended from Thomas and Sarah Macy, who immigrated to Massachusetts from England in the late 1630s. In America, the Macys, who were among the first European settlers on Nantucket Island, became prosperous maritime merchants. Six generations, and almost 200 years later, Captain Josiah Macy left Nantucket to establish a shipping and commission firm in New York City. In the 1860s, under the guidance of the retired Captain’s sons and grandsons, the firm opened New York’s first oil refinery, which was later purchased by the Standard Oil Company.

In 1876, prominent philanthropist Josiah Macy, Jr., one of the Captain’s grandsons, died of yellow fever at age 38. The family’s philanthropic tradition was continued by his daughter, Kate, who married the lawyer and yachtsman Walter Graeme Ladd. By the time of her death in 1945, she had given the Foundation approximately $19 million.

Until 1945, the Foundation focused its grant-making on medical research in such fields as traumatic shock and war-related psychiatric disorders, geriatrics and aging, arteriosclerosis, genetics and human development, and psychosomatic medicine. The Foundation’s extensive conference and publication program was also begun during this period.

The Josiah Macy Foundation had no direct relationship to Macy’s department store although the Macy department store’s founder, Rowland H. Macy, came from the same Nantucket based clan.


26 Dupuy, 23.
In *The Cybernetics Group*, Heims reports Fremont-Smith was very close to Harold Abramson, the CIA-linked psychiatrist whom I also discuss in the main text. Abramson’s LSD work had Macy Foundation cover.

In this [LSD] research, the Macy Foundation was for a time used as a conduit for CIA money designated for LSD research. Fremont-Smith organized three conference series: Problems of Consciousness, 1950-1954; Neuropharmacology, 1954-1959; Use of LSD in Psychotherapy, 1956, 1959. Aside from their overt scientific purposes, these conferences conveniently (from the CIA’s point of view) brought leading contractors for CIA-sponsored drug work together with government people concerned with its application. [Harold] Abramson edited the ten volumes for two of the conference series. He also introduced Fremont-Smith to the experience of taking the drug. (167-68)

As an aside, it is worth noting that another psychiatrist linked to the CIA and MK-ULTRA named Doctor Nathan Kline co-wrote an article with Manfred Clynes for the September 1960 issue of *Astronautics* entitled “Cyborgs and Space” which first introduced the term “cyborg” into the English language. Using the problem of deep space travel, they discussed “the cybernetic aspects” of homeostatic processes in the body in order to develop ways to keep astronauts awake for weeks. They also were interested in meditation techniques and the use of hypnosis. From the article: “We are now working on a new preparation which may greatly enhance hypnotizability, so that pharmacological and hypnotic approaches may be symbiotically combined.” For a reprint of the article and an interview with Manfred Clynes, see Chris H. Gray (ed.), *The Cyborg Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 1995). In the Soviet Union, much of the cosmonaut training program came under the control of the Soviet Council on Cybernetics. See Slava Gerovitch, “‘New Soviet Man’ Inside Machine: Human Engineering, Spacecraft Design, and the Construction of Communism,” in Greg Eghigian, Andreas Killen, and Christine Luenberger (eds.), *The Self as Project: Politics and Human Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).


29. One of their key collaborators in that project was John Rawlings Rees of the London Tavistock Clinic. Heims, 176.


32. Allan Needell, “Project Troy and the Cold War Annexation of the Social Sciences,” in Christopher Simpson (ed.), *Universities and Empire: Money and Politics in the Social*

Operation Troy may also have involved the study of Soviet popular culture since Bavelas was a member of a 1952 study group run out of MIT’s CENIS that published a two volume work entitled *Studies in Soviet Communication* edited by Margaret Mead. The project incorporated members of Mead’s network at the American Museum of Natural History and her Institute of Intercultural Studies (IIS) group that included Elena Calas, Leopold Haimson and Mark Zborowski (an NKVD agent involved in Trotsky’s assassination whose past was only exposed in the mid-1950s); Reuben Fine, the great chess player turned psychologist; and members of RAND such as Nathan Leites along with Bavelas and others from CENIS.

In outlining the research that would lead to Operation Troy, MIT President Killian said that the State Department had asked MIT to work on programs to destabilize Russia that would “involve the broad problems of information theory, psychology, and other aspects having to do with the effectiveness of the kind of information we transmit.” Needell, 10.

Interestingly, Gregory Bateson wrote a 1956 paper called “Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia” where he developed his “double bind” theory that claimed that schizophrenia can develop when a child receives ambiguous instructions and then gets punished no matter how the child reacts since any reaction is deemed wrong. “Overload and Delay” tried to replicate a similar “double bind” dilemma inside the East Bloc bureaucracy.

A Harvard sociologist and biochemist named L. J. Henderson in the 1920s and 1930s developed ideas that were an early precursor to the cybernetic notions later introduced through the Macy conferences. For background on the Harvard “Pareto Circle,” see Barbara Heyl, “The Harvard ‘Pareto Circle,’” *The Journal of the Behavioral Sciences* 4 (4) (October 1968). Heyl mentions the Macy conferences on page 183.

Conway and Siegelman, 259.
LaRouche was enamored by Wolfgang Köhler, the author of *The Mentality of Apes*. LaRouche repeatedly used one of Köhler’s pet phrases -- “psychophysical parallelism” -- in his own early writings.

Lewin’s extraordinary influence in the field of group dynamics, however, may not be original to him. J. L. Moreno, for example, argues that he first developed the concepts of “group psychotherapy” and “psychodrama” at his New York City–based Moreno Institute. Educated in Vienna, Jacob Levy Moreno relocated to New York in 1925 where he set up his own institute as well as two journals entitled *Sociometry* and *Sociatry* (later renamed *Group Psychotherapy*). Moreno says that he and Lewin first met in early 1935. Moreno stated that until their encounter Lewin never discussed either group or action dynamics. Moreno further claimed that various young psychologists (including Alex Bavelas) who were associated with Lewinite-identified groupings like MIT’s Research Center for Group Dynamics, the National Training Laboratory at Bethel, Maine, and the Research Center for Group Dynamics at the University of Michigan took their ideas from him without ever acknowledging this fact in print. Moreno claimed that many of them had personally taken his classes. See J. L. Moreno, “How Kurt Lewin’s ‘Research Center for Group Dynamics’ Started,” *Sociometry* 16 (1) (February 1953), 102.


In the summer of 1946 Lewin worked with the Connecticut State Inter-Racial Commission and set up training groups for leaders in intergroup relations. He
developed new, highly effective methods of working with small groups. The National Training Laboratory in Group Dynamics, which has since become a permanent institution, grew out of that program. Lewin noted the importance of heightened self-esteem of minority group members as group members rather than as individuals. (197)


54 On page 26 of *When Prophecy Fails*, Festinger also writes:

> Dissonance produces discomfort and, correspondingly, there will arise pressures to reduce or eliminate the dissonance. Attempts to reduce dissonance represent the observable manifestations that dissonance exists. Such attempts may take any or all of three forms. The person may try to change one or more of the beliefs, opinions, or behaviors involved in the dissonance; to acquire new information or beliefs that will increase the existing consonance and thus cause the total dissonance to be reduced; or to forget and reduce the importance of those cognitions that are in a dissonant relationship.

55 Heims, *Cybernetics Group*, 220.

56 Gabor, 169.

57 LaRouche actually means the Research Laboratory of Electronics which was the 1946 successor to MIT’s wartime Radiation Laboratory.

58 As for “Colby,” he was Dr. Kenneth Colby. A Yale Medical School graduate, Colby spent some 20 years practicing psychoanalysis until he decided that attempting to develop a computer model of the mind would be more scientific. Colby then joined the Department of Computer Science at Stanford where he became a pioneer in artificial intelligence research and wrote a “natural language program” called PARRY to simulate the thinking of paranoid individuals. In 1974 Colby left Stanford to go to UCLA to teach as a professor of psychiatry at the invitation of Dr. Louis Jolyon “Jolly” West, then chair of UCLA’s Department of Psychiatry and director of the Neuropsychiatric Institute. West, as fate would have it, was most famous as a CIA-contract psychiatrist whose work on the MK-ULTRA program in the 1950s involved feeding LSD to elephants. For the NCLC take on Kenneth Colby, see R. Gallagher, “Artificial Intelligence,” in the July 1975 issue of the NCLC theoretical publication, *The Campaigner*.

59 Artificial intelligence projects as well as work on interactive computing and industrial automation were extensively funded by the military. See Conway and Siegelman, 330.

Gabor, 126.

Heims, 219.

Gabor, 163.


Gabor, 179. On Forrester and system dynamics, see David Noble, *Forces of Production*, 55.

Edgar Schein, *Coercive Persuasion: A Socio-psychological Analysis of the “Brainwashing” of American Civilian Prisoners by the Chinese Communists* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961). In 1953 CENIS also became interested in the postwar Japanese Institute of Science of Thought (IST) whose best known member was Shunsuke Tsurumi. The IST was something like the postwar Frankfurt School in its ambition to study Japanese popular culture rather like Adorno studied astrology columns in newspapers.

Shunsuke Tsurumi seems to have launched the IST in 1946 to examine the way former leftist intellectuals were converted to become advocates of extreme Japanese nationalism and militarism. The three volume study that resulted was called *Tenko* (ideological or thought conversion). Tsurumi linked the process of thought conversion to processes that everyone experiences in daily life. He also wrote about the magical or “amuletic” use of words in Japanese culture. It is unclear if CENIS followed up on Shunsuke Tsurumi and his colleagues work on thought conversion. What is known is that CENIS help financed the English language translations of IST writings on popular culture. See Hidetoshi Kato (ed.), *Japanese Popular Culture* (Rutland, VT: Charles Tuttle, 1959). The book comes with an introduction by CENIS’s Ithiel de Sola Pool. De Sola Pool reports that CENIS first became interested in the IST after a profile of the group by Ronald P. Dore entitled “The Tokyo Institute for the Science of Thought: A Survey Report” appeared in *The Far East Quarterly*, 13/1 (November 1953). On Shunsuke Tsurumi, see an interview with him in *The Japan Foundation Newsletter*, 31/2 (December 2005/January 2006). Also see a profile of Shunsuke Tsurumi entitled “Voice of the Voiceless” by Yoshigo Sugimoto available on line.

Kubie wrote the introduction to the first issue of *Psychosomatic Medicine*.

Heims, 125.

Marcus, *Dialectical Economics*, 481.


MIT’s Industrial Relations Section leader James McGregor also became enraptured with Abraham Maslow’s explicitly anti-behaviorist “Third Force” theories about “self-actualization” and other “higher” motives for human action. McGregor argued that business had failed to address these needs in workers.

Dialectical Economics, 77.


Coercive Persuasion, 18.

269-70.

282.

117.

Given the documented intelligence connections of the Macy Foundation and the Cybernetics Group and LaRouche’s obvious interest its operations, it is perfectly valid to wonder whether or not LaRouche developed some deep link to some American intelligence network as well. The simple answer is that I simply don’t know. My sense – rightly or wrongly -- is that LaRouche viewed the lofty world of the Cybernetics Group very much from the outside looking in. LaRouche’s intense interest in the Cybernetics Group and Macy Foundation conferences seems linked to his early attempt to establish himself as a business consultant with a special knowledge of computer technology. His actions, in short, don’t necessarily have to be explained by the introduction of some deus ex machina based in Langley, Virginia. However given his family’s far right background, it is possible that his father viewed the Macy Foundation with suspicion from the far right as “liberal internationalists.”
It would later be renamed *International Socialist Review*.


The SWP had fewer than 600 members in the USA in 1959 with most of them living in either New York or Los Angeles.

Even here LaRouche may pay homage to Norbert Wiener in his use of the odd word “proprioceptive.” From page 14 of *Cybernetics*:

To perform an action in such a manner, there must be a report to the nervous system, conscious or unconscious, of the amount by which we have failed to pick the pencil up at each instant. If we have our eye on the pencil, this report may be visual, at least in part, but it is more generally kinesthetic, or to use a term now in vogue, proprioceptive.


*Coercive Persuasion*, 274-77.