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ACID DREAMS

suggestion that LSD-25 will produce hysteria (unaccountable laughing, anxiety, terror)... It requires little imagination to realize what the consequences might be if a battleship's crew were so affected."

The CIA never got in touch with Bercel again, but they monitored his research reports in various medical journals. When Bercel gave LSD to spiders, they spun perfectly symmetrical webs. Animal studies also showed that cats cringed before untreated mice, and fish that normally swam close to the bottom of a water tank hovered near the top. In another experiment Dr. Louis Joylon ("Jolly") West, chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Oklahoma, injected an elephant with a massive dose of 300,000 micrograms. Dr. West, a CIA contract employee and an avid believer in the notion that hallucinogens were psychotomimetic agents, was trying to duplicate the periodic "rut" madness that overtakes male elephants for about one week each year. But the animal did not experience a model elephant psychosis; it just keeled over and remained in a motionless stupor. In attempting to revive the elephant, West administered a combination of drugs that ended up killing the poor beast.

Research on human subjects showed that LSD lodged primarily in the liver, spleen, and kidneys. Only a tiny amount (.01%) of the original dose entered the brain, and it only remained there for twenty minutes. This was a most curious finding, as the effect of LSD was not evident until the drug had disappeared entirely from the central nervous system. Some scientists thought LSD might act as a trigger mechanism, releasing or inhibiting a naturally occurring substance in the brain, but no one could figure out exactly why the drug had such a dramatic effect on the mind.

Many other questions were in need of clarification. Could the drug be fatal? What was the maximum dose? Were the effects constant, or were there variations according to different personality types? Could the reaction be accentuated by combining LSD with other chemicals? Was there an antidote? Some of these questions overlapped with legitimate medical concerns, and researchers on CIA stipends published unclassified versions of their work in prestigious scientific periodicals. But these accounts omitted secret data given to the CIA on how LSD affected "operationally pertinent categories" such as disturbance of memory, alteration of sex patterns,

Grove Press  
1986

IN THE BEGIN

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The CIA was particul gesting that LSD could this raised the possibility temporarily altered a pe belief system, CIA doct could be cajoled into sw The brainwashing strate weakest point (his "squ combination or synthesi of suggestion to a degr would be employed to down and tame him, to there forever.

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Cameron's methods gave up on the notion was little consolation CIA's secret mind con tients have sued the claiming that they are through at Allain. Th scientific experiment-

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS MADNESS...

CIA documents describe experiments conducted by Isbell in which certain patients—nearly all black inmates—were given LSD for more than seventy-five consecutive days. In order to overcome tolerance to the hallucinogen, Isbell administered "double, triple and quadruple doses." A report dated May 5, 1959, comments on an experiment involving psilocybin (a semi-synthetic version of the magic mushroom). Subjects who ingested the drug became extremely anxious, although sometimes there were periods of intense elation marked by "continuous gales of laughter." A few patients felt that they "had become very large, or had shrunk to the size of children. Their hands or feet did not seem to be their own and sometimes took on the appearance of animal paws.... They reported many fantasies or dreamlike states in which they seemed to be elsewhere. Fantastic experiences, such as trips to the moon or living in gorgeous castles, were occasionally reported."

Isbell concluded, "Despite these striking subjective experiences, the patients remained oriented in time, place and person. In most instances, the patients did not lose their insight but realized that the effects were due to the drug. Two of the nine patients, however, did lose insight and felt that their experiences were caused by the experimenters controlling their minds."

In addition to his role as a research scientist, Dr. Isbell served as a go-between for the CIA in its attempt to obtain drug samples from European pharmaceutical concerns which assumed they were providing "medicine" to a US Public Health official. The CIA in turn acted as a research coordinator, passing information, tips, and leads to Isbell and its other contract employees so that they could keep abreast of each other's progress; when a new discovery was made, the CIA would often ask another researcher to conduct a follow-up study for confirmation. One scientist whose work was coordinated with Isbell's in such a manner was Dr. Carl Pfeiffer, a noted pharmacologist from Princeton who tested LSD on inmates at the federal prison in Atlanta and the Bordentown Reformatory in New Jersey.

Isbell, Pfeiffer, Cameron, West, and Hoch—all were part of a network of doctors and scientists who gathered intelligence for the CIA. Through these scholar-informants the Agency stayed on top of the latest developments within the "aboveground" LSD scene, which expanded rapidly during the Cold War. By the mid-1950s numerous independent investigators had undertaken hallucinogenic drug studies, and the CIA was determined not to let the slightest detail escape

## ACID DREAMS

ber of scientists who were engaged in mind control research for the CIA and the US military.\*

While writing *Heaven and Hell* (the sequel to *The Doors of Perception*) in 1955, Huxley had his second mescaline experience, this time in the company of Captain Al Hubbard. They were joined by philosopher Gerald Heard, a close friend of Huxley's. "Your nice Captain tried a new experiment—group mescalination," Huxley wrote to Osmond. "Since I was in a group, the experience had a human content, which the earlier, solitary experience, with its Other Worldly quality and its intensification of aesthetic experience, did not possess. . . . it was a transcendental experience within *this* world and with human references."

Later that same year, with the Captain again acting as a guide, Huxley took his first dose of LSD. Although he consumed only a tiny amount, the experience was highly significant. "What came through the closed door," he stated, "was the realization—not the knowledge, for this wasn't verbal or abstract—but the direct, total awareness, from the inside, so to say, of Love as the primary and fundamental cosmic fact. These words, of course, have a kind of indecency and must necessarily ring false, seem like twaddle. But the fact remains . . . I was this fact; or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that this fact occupied the place where I had been."

Huxley and his LSD mentor were a most improbable duo. The coarse, uneducated Captain lacked elegance and restraint ("I'm just a born son of a bitch!" he bellowed), while the tall, slender novelist epitomized the genteel qualities of the British intellectual. Yet the two men were evidently quite taken by each other. Huxley spoke admiringly of "the good Captain" whose uranium exploits served "as a passport into the most exalted spheres of government, business, and ecclesiastical polity." In a letter to Osmond he commented, "What Babes in the Wood we literary gents and professional men are! The great World occasionally requires your services, is mildly

\*In his letters Huxley mentioned "my friend Dr. J. West," a reference to Jolly West, who conducted LSD studies for the CIA. At one point, while West was engaged in MK-ULTRA research, Huxley suggested that he hypnotize his subjects prior to administering LSD in order to give them "post-hypnotic suggestions aimed at orienting the drug-induced experience in some desired direction." Needless to say, the CIA was intrigued by this idea. Huxley also lectured on parapsychology at Duke University, where J. B. Rhine (with whom Huxley communicated) was engaged in ESP studies for the CIA and the army.

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## THE CAPITAL OF FOREVER

when he referred to Haight-Ashbury as a "human guinea pig farm."

And what better place to establish a surveillance operation than the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco? A dozen years earlier in the same city, George Hunter White and his CIA colleagues had set up a safehouse and begun testing hallucinogenic drugs on unwitting citizens. White's activities were phased out in the mid-1960s, just when the grassroots acid scene exploded in the Bay Area. Suddenly there was a neighborhood packed full of young people who were ready and willing to gobble experimental chemicals—chemicals that had already been tested in the lab but seldom under actual field conditions.

In addition to the spooks who inserted themselves among the drug dealers, there were scientists with CIA backgrounds who stationed themselves in the acid ghetto for "monitoring" purposes. Dr. Louis Joylon ("Jolly") West,\* an old-time LSD investigator for the Agency,

\*West was head of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Oklahoma during the 1950s and early 1960s, when he conducted research into LSD, hypnosis and "the psychobiology of dissociated states" for the CIA. (It was West who administered a massive dose of LSD to an elephant as part of an ill-fated drug experiment.) In 1964 he was called upon to examine Jack Ruby, who had murdered Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged assassin of President Kennedy. After visiting Ruby in his jail cell, West concluded that he had sunk into a "paranoid state manifested by delusions, visual and auditory hallucinations and suicidal impulses." Ruby was not faking these symptoms, West asserted, since he had vigorously rejected the doctor's repeated suggestions that he was mentally ill. "The true malingerer usually grasps eagerly at such an explanation," said West. Since Ruby would not admit he was crazy, West concluded he was nuts. Catch-22.

Ruby's "delusions" included the belief that an ultra-right-wing conspiracy was behind the death of the president. On the basis of Dr. West's diagnosis, Ruby became a candidate for treatment of mental disorders. Another doctor soon put him on "happy pills," although these drugs did not seem to cheer Ruby up. Two years later he died of cancer while still in prison.

West, meanwhile, moved to Los Angeles, where he served as director of UCLA's Neuropsychiatric Institute, a position he still holds. In the early 1970s he became embroiled in a heated controversy over plans for a Center for the Study and Reduction of Violence. Originally proposed by Governor Ronald Reagan, the violence center would have exceeded even Jack Ruby's worst paranoid nightmares had it not been scuttled by the California State legislature after information about it was leaked to the press.

West, who helped formulate plans for the center, described the program as an attempt "to predict the probability of occurrences" of violent behavior among specific population groups. "The major known correlates of violence," according to West, "are sex (male), age (youthful), ethnicity (black), and urbanicity."

The violence center was to have been housed in a former military base located in a remote area of California. The medical facility at Vacaville prison, the site of a major CIA drug testing program during the late 1960s and early 1970s, was listed

rented a pad in the heart of Haight-Ashbury with the intention of studying the hippies in their native habitat. The hippie trip must have held a strange fascination for Jolly West and other CIA scientists who had devoted their talents to exploring the covert potential of mind-altering chemicals during the Cold War. Numerous spies had tried LSD long before flower power became the vogue. They had administered the drug to test subjects and watched unperturbed as the toughest of specimens were reduced to quivering jelly, their confidence and poise demolished under the impact of the hallucinogen. No doubt about it—LSD was a devastating weapon. Richard Helms, CIA director during the late 1960s and early 1970s, had once described the drug as "dynamite"—a word often used by hippie connoisseurs when praising a high-quality psychedelic.

Indeed, it must have been quite a mind-bender for the elite corps of CIA acidheads who ran the secret behavior mod programs when young people started fooling around with the same drug they had once thought would revolutionize the cloak-and-dagger trade. At first they may have passed it off as some sort of twisted fad comparable to goldfish swallowing or cramming a telephone booth, a kind of hula-hooping of the inner self. But soon the number of drug-indulgent youth reached epidemic proportions. The whole thing seemed downright absurd. Why would anyone willingly flirt with psychosis?

Needless to say, the spooks never anticipated that LSD would leave the laboratory this way, but now that the cat was out of the bag they had to ask themselves whether an incredible blunder had been committed somewhere along the line. There was no denying that the CIA was partly responsible for letting loose upon the land an awesome energy whose consequences were still difficult to fathom. As men of science and espionage they were obliged to consider every permutation of havoc that acid might wreak upon a generation of restless juveniles. If LSD makes a person insane—and surely that was what the tests had shown—then would a collective mass not

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among the facilities that would have been used to develop treatment models and implement pilot and demonstration programs for the violence center.

Treatments discussed by West included chemical castration, psychosurgery, and the testing of experimental drugs on involuntarily incarcerated individuals. Furthermore, the activities of the Center were to have been coordinated with a California law enforcement program that maintained computer files on "pre-delinquent" children so that they could be treated *before* they made a negative mark on society.

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