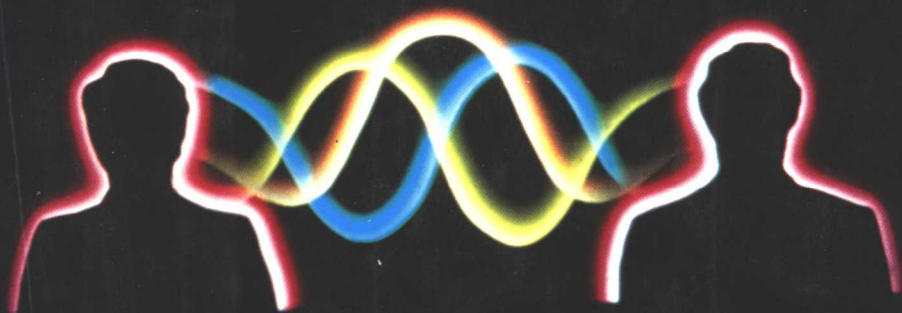


PSYCHIC WARFARE:

THREAT
OR
ILLUSION?



MARTIN EBON

PSYCHIC WARFARE

(THREAT OR ILLUSION?)

by **Martin Ebon**

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PSYCHIC WARFARE: THREAT OR ILLUSION?

by **MARTIN EBON**

While the world lives in fear of nuclear war, the superpowers enlarge their arsenals and search for new technological advantages. Such "Star Wars" weapons as anti-ballistic laser beams are now on the drawing board. As Ebon says, "Open-ended exploration of anti-nuclear weaponry might include 'psychotronic' and other psychic warfare elements."

What is Psychic Warfare?

It is the military utilization of such elusive human faculties as telepathy (mind-to-mind communication), clairvoyance (seeing far-off events through the mind's eye), and psychokinesis (the impact of the human mind on matter).

Ebon documents the Soviet Union's extensive research into directing, controlling, and stimulating human minds, electronically, with drugs, and by hypnosis. He examines the ongoing

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conflict within Soviet science about the feasibility of psychic studies. The tragic role of Soviet parapsychologist Edward Naumov is shown in moving detail.

Yet, this is no one-sided, alarmist selection of facts. Mr. Ebon also explores the hoax that the U.S. nuclear submarine *Nautilus* once engaged in dramatically successful shore-to-vessel telepathy. He summarizes U.S. policy dilemmas, including the role of the CIA in extrasensory perception studies.

Martin Ebon, author or editor of more than sixty books, including the recently published *The Andropov File*, is uniquely qualified to undertake this pioneer study of Psychic Warfare. While a lifelong researcher/writer on Soviet affairs, he has spent a quarter century in the field of psychical research. Thus the two mainstreams of his expertise meet.

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Chapter 1

MOSCOW, JUNE 11, 1977

On Saturday, June 11, 1977, *Los Angeles Times* correspondent Robert C. Toth left his Moscow apartment to buy a jar of sour cream, called *smetana* in Russian. The cream was to be served with caviar to celebrate his daughter's graduation from the eighth grade. Toth was carrying an empty jar, planning to have it filled at a nearby store. But he never got to the store, because his outing had a second aim: a rendezvous with a Soviet scientist, Valery G. Petukhov.

The events that followed were like the plot from the kind of movie that isn't made anymore. It would have been too corny for the sophisticates who write, produce, and view films today. But in real life, melodrama still happens. And it happened on a Moscow street that Saturday morning.

Correspondent Toth hadn't been at all keen on seeing Petukhov that day. He had first met the Russian biophysicist earlier in the year. While Petukhov seemed eager to show his scientific findings to Toth, the correspondent felt that his work was "only theory and far too complicated" for a newspaper story. Toth reported in his paper (June 12) that, as best he could recall, Petukhov asserted that certain particles of living cells "are emitted" when such cells divide, that they can be "detected and measured and that these radiating particles can carry information." Their function could "explain the basis for telepathy" and related phenomena.

To Toth, Valery Petukhov seemed "like a serious scientist."

According to a card he handed the reporter, he was Chief of the Laboratory of Bio-Physics at the State Control Institute of Medical and Biological Research. He had been recommended to Toth by a dissident Soviet scientist who later emigrated. At their first meeting, the *Los Angeles Times* man told Petukhov that, once the scientist had proved this theory, he would be interested in writing about it.

Months passed. In mid-June 1977 Petukhov phoned Toth. The biophysicist told Toth that his experiments had succeeded. He planned to describe them in a formal scientific paper; but, as Soviet authorities would certainly refuse to publish his work, he wanted to translate the paper into English and give it to Toth for publication in the West.

Toth wasn't very interested. A newspaper dispatch on a fairly obscure and highly technical series of experiments in cell function, even if linked to such a popular theme as telepathy, wasn't likely to excite either his Los Angeles editors or his readers. But when, on that fateful Saturday, Petukhov asked, with a note of urgency, to see Toth soon, the reporter offered to meet him the following Monday. No, said Petukhov, they should meet right then and there; he happened to be in the neighborhood. They made an appointment to meet "openly in the street," across from the apartment where the correspondent's family lived.

So, sour cream jar in hand, Toth crossed the street for a second meeting with the Soviet scientist. They talked about their mutual acquaintance, the man who had introduced them; then Petukhov took a manuscript from his briefcase. It consisted of over twenty typewritten sheets, complete with charts and photos of charts. It looked like a complex, comprehensive scientific paper, well-documented, appropriately technical.

Toth never managed to get a real look at the paper; it was then that the melodrama began. He had just left Petukhov and was walking back toward the dairy shop when a Soviet-made Fiat, the kind they call a Zhiguli, braked sharply at the curb. The car was filled with five plainclothesmen who jumped out and quite unceremoniously, as Toth put it, "pulled me and my empty *smetana* jar inside." Robert Toth's account continued:

"We took off, a man on each side pinioning my arms at the wrist. The man on the left, surprised and made uncomfortable by the jar, allowed me to put it on my lap. A half block down the street, Petukhov—a short, balding, nervous man in his middle 30s—turned at the sound of our car, saw a man trying to catch up to him, and began to walk faster. But a black Volga pulled up and he was hauled inside as we passed.

"Our car drove through red lights and down one-way streets the wrong way to a militia (police) station. My captors were firm and polite, offering me cigarettes once we got inside. I was ushered into a room with an inspector who declined my requests to phone the U.S. Embassy but said a Soviet Foreign Ministry official would be called."

Toth's situation was unique. The madcap ride through the city streets had given the incident an air of high urgency. Now he found himself in a minor police station on Moscow's Pushkin Street, isolated from diplomatic representatives of the United States, despite the fact that he had enjoyed the status of full-time correspondent of a major U.S. daily newspaper for a full three years.

He was, at least temporarily, in the position of an outlaw. But what, specifically, were the charges against him?

In addition to the Foreign Ministry official and a KGB agent, a man named Sparkin, the police inspector summoned a senior researcher of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Professor I. M. Mikhailov. Mikhailov was asked to provide expert testimony on the paper Petukhov had given Toth, which the police were now treating as "evidence." But evidence, Toth wondered, of what? It soon became clear that the correspondent was being "detained" because he had obtained "state secrets."

Specifically, Professor Mikhailov stated:

"The article beginning Petukhov, Valery G., from the words 'micro-organism self-radiation . . . ' to the words ' . . . by means of vacuum particles in space,' states that within the content of living cells are particles . . . and these particles are grounds for discussing the fundamental problems of biology in the context of biology and parapsychology. There is also information about the uses of such

particles. This material is secret and shows the kind of work done in some scientific institutes of our state."

It was this last sentence that raised eyebrows among observers of Soviet parapsychological studies throughout the world. Earlier, Moscow authorities on various levels had several times denied that parapsychology was being researched in the Soviet Union. A year before, Leningrad writer Vladimir Lvov had published an article in France's leading daily, *Le Monde* of Paris, in which he asserted categorically, "The truth is simple: parapsychology is not accepted as a legitimate and official branch within Soviet science. No institute or center of research in the Soviet Union is devoted to telepathy, psychokinesis, etc." The Mikhailov testimony in the Toth incident directly contradicted the Lvov statement.

Robert Toth thus found himself in the incongruous position of being accused of receiving "state secrets" developed at a Soviet institute—secrets that, in the view of at least one authoritative spokesman, weren't being studied in such institutes at all. This incongruity didn't help Toth's extremely awkward position. He said later that the charge the Petukhov article contained secret information "was laughable, as if attempts to prove the earth is flat were classified as secret."

This sort of comment certainly doesn't put correspondent Toth in the category of True Believers in parapsychology, or among eager purveyors of parapsychological information, whether secret or open data. He did report that the subject "had its ups and downs" in Russia, and cited the English-language *Moscow News* as stating that, while charlatans and quacks were active in the field, "objective results can only come from rigorous scientific investigation of the phenomena whose causes are as yet unknown." Toth had interviewed Edward Naumov, the Russian parapsychologist with the most extensive contacts among foreigners, but "found the result not worth a story." Toth briefly abandoned his journalistic tough-guy pose after his forcible encounter with "secret" parapsychology material, and wondered out loud whether there might be something to it after all.

Professor Mikhailov's testimony on the Petukhov paper and

Toth's police interrogation at the Pushkin Street Station lasted about two-and-a-half hours. At last, a representative of the U.S. Embassy, Vice Consul Lawrence C. Napper, was permitted to come to the station. The reporter's account of his meeting with Petukhov was read aloud and translated into Russian, but Toth refused to sign a handwritten Russian version of it. KGB man Sparkin then told him he was "free to go."

Toth's Moscow difficulties were not at an end. The following Tuesday, Toth had a telephone call from another U.S. Embassy official, Theodore McNamara, who asked him to come to the embassy immediately. The matter, he added, was "serious." At McNamara's office, Napper and two other officials were waiting. They handed Toth a Soviet note that had been delivered a half hour earlier; it contained these passages:

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is authorized to state the following to the American Embassy:

"On the 11th of June of this year Robert Charles Toth was apprehended at the moment of meeting a Soviet citizen, Petukhov Valery Georgiyevich, which took place under suspicious circumstances. When apprehended, the American journalist was found to have materials given to him by Petukhov, containing secret data.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs informs the American Embassy that in conformity with established procedure, Toth will be summoned for interrogation by the investigatory organs, in connection with which his departure from Moscow until the end of the investigation is not desired."

Toth didn't like the sound of the last sentence, which put a big question mark on his travel plans. The incident had occurred just two weeks before Toth and his family were scheduled to return to the United States. He feared that the planned interrogation might involve an accusation of spying, and who could tell what that might lead to? He telephoned his wife, Paula, to pick him up. She came, along with their seven-year-old son, John, and they went straight home.

Within the hour, a polite KGB agent, wearing a flowered shirt and a gray suit, arrived, asked Toth to identify himself, and told him to come to the State Security's Lefortovo center for interrogation. Toth described the KGB center as located

in one of Moscow's seedier sections, with "leafy trees white-washed several feet up the trunk, street car tracks running through loose cobbles in the streets."

His interrogator, Major O. A. Dobrovolsky, asked, "Do you know why you are here?" and Toth answered, "I assume it is in connection with Saturday's incident." To which the major replied, "Precisely," and warned him of his "rights" and "responsibilities." Dobrovolsky, as reported in a dispatch by Toth, also said,

"According to our law, you may be questioned about everything of interest to this organization [the KGB], and your statements should be real and show the whole picture of the situation. You are warned not to give unreal statements and not to refuse to answer, according to our law, Articles 108, 109 of the Criminal Code. As a witness, you may read the protocol [account of the questioning], make changes or give new statements in addition."

When Toth mentioned that under U.S. law he would be permitted to refuse to answer questions, he was told that this was not acceptable under Soviet law. He was also advised that he had no diplomatic immunity.

Toth then gave his account of the events that had led up to his Saturday encounter with Petukhov.

Dobrovolsky asked Toth how he gathered information, and the reporter said that it fell into three categories, among them "official" and "unofficial" news. He tried to make sure that the Russian translation of his words made a distinction between "unofficial" and "illegal" information, but his interrogator just "smiled and shrugged to indicate there was no difference to him." So Toth added:

"None of the information I have ever received here has been secret, military information. The information from dissidents is aimed solely at helping themselves get out of this country, or of changing it from the inside, as some of the human rights activists want. Besides, how can you possibly contend that parapsychology is secret?"

To which Dobrovolsky replied,

"Parapsychology as a whole may not be secret information. But there could be fields of science within parapsychology that are secret. It is not for me, as it's a matter for experts, to say what is secret, and the scientist has stated that the materials you received are a secret. And you received them under circumstances where your behavior and the information seems to be a breach of our law."

He explained later that it didn't matter whether Toth himself knew that the information Petukhov handed him was secret, but that his "behavior" in the matter "may be regarded as spying." The major left the room, then returned and announced they would prepare a protocol of the interrogation. The writing-up of the protocol took an hour, and arguments about its details lasted for another hour. One point Toth disputed was the allegation that he had told his interrogator that Petukhov once said, in the presence of two dissidents—one of them Anatoly Shcharansky, who was later sentenced for "treason"—that there was a theory "according to which it is possible to pass human thought at some distance." This, Toth maintained, he had never said, since it had never happened. The KGB people told him they would delete it from the protocol.

Eventually Toth signed the paper with this qualifying phrase: "This protocol has been translated for me, and with its essence I have no major objections." By that time, it was six P.M. He was told, "You are finished for today," but the major added with a smile, "until tomorrow; you are required to return at ten tomorrow morning."

The interrogation the next day, undertaken by three KGB officials, centered on Toth's relationship to Shcharansky, whose trial was then being prepared. Toth was told that he was not being questioned as an accused person, but as a witness. At one point, the reporter cut into the multiple queries and asked, "Why am I here? Why can't the American consul be present? What am I charged with? What's the purpose of the investigation? Who is accused? Of what?" The reply was, in effect, that this was none of his business. His testimony would be used in whatever manner, and against whomever, the authorities chose.

After this second interrogation Toth was still unsure of his fate; he didn't even know whether there would be another such

session the following day. But the next morning one of the interrogators, Major Vladimir Chernish, telephoned to say "You are no longer needed." The U.S. Embassy received a confirmation from the Foreign Ministry: "There is no obstacle to Mr. Toth's departure."

The Toths quickly arranged for a flight to the United States, abandoning earlier plans for a trip through Siberia and Japan. The incident ended on what Toth called "a ludicrous note." A Tass reporter at Moscow airport asked him whether he felt he had been "treated fairly," whether he might wish to return to the Soviet Union at a future date, and whether he might feel "nostalgia" for the country. Toth was simply relieved to get away relatively unscathed.

Robert Toth was quite bewildered by what had happened to him. His case had made waves in U.S.-Soviet relations. President Jimmy Carter expressed his government's "deep concern" about the interrogation and the implied threat to Toth's safety. The incident had taken place on the eve of the first anniversary of the Helsinki agreement, which had been designed to strengthen human rights.

Peter Osnos, the *Washington Post's* correspondent in Moscow, described Toth as "an experienced science writer," who dealt with research in Soviet genetics, linguistics, and sociology. In one article, whose contents were "openly credited to Shcharansky," Toth said that some Soviets who worked in seemingly ordinary institutions, such as a meteorological laboratory, had been refused permission to emigrate on grounds of secrecy. Toth suggested that there was some doubt, therefore, as to what really went on in those establishments. Osnos wrote that "this story particularly interested the Soviets."

Before leaving Moscow, Toth said that he expected that, after his departure, "there will be press articles pretending I was a spy or that I was collecting secret information from dissidents." He regarded the whole incident as "a frameup, or worse." He said that his experience had convinced him Soviet authorities regarded "any information about science, not officially released, as secret."

Toth turned out to be right. The Soviet news agency Tass said on July 12, a month after the Toth incident, that "compe-

tent Soviet organs" had established that the *Los Angeles Times* reporter had worked on assignments from "American special agencies," presumably intelligence agencies. The report asserted that Toth had sought the acquaintance of scientists, including dissidents, under the guise of legitimate journalism. Concerning Toth's contact with Petukhov and his parapsychology research, Tass alleged the correspondent had planned to turn the biophysicist into "a regular and clandestine source of secret material from the laboratory of an institute engaged in research of a secret character."

The *New York Times* (July 12) quoted dissident sources in Moscow as reporting that Petukhov had been released after only four days in custody, and that the director of the State Control Institute of Medical and Biological Research had been instructed to reinstate the biophysicist, because he had helped "the KGB expose an arch-intelligence agent from one of the imperialist countries."

The incident was reexamined later in the Moscow weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (August 31, 1977) by V. Valentinov and B. Roshchin, in an article entitled "This Strange Parapsychology." The authors took issue with Toth's "passionate defenders." They said it had "transpired" that Mr. Toth's friend (presumably Petukhov whose name the magazine never mentioned) "is not merely an amateur of parapsychology," but actually "runs the laboratory of an institute." As a matter of fact, this had been clear from the very beginning, when the international press identified Petukhov from the business card he gave Toth. The Moscow weekly added:

"And it was no accident that the meetings with him were fixed conspiratorially in secluded corners. Toth, to use the bare language of the documents of the investigation, was striving to transform his acquaintance into a source for obtaining espionage information. And here he was extremely interested in the activity of one institution—the kind of institution whose affairs ought to be known to only a narrow circle of people.

"The correspondent of the *Los Angeles* newspaper also wanted to learn about these affairs; such was the 'small supplement' to the parapsychological dissertations which Toth had asked the Soviet scientist to bring along and which he forgot to mention in his homeland."

Valentinov and Roshchin, who had obviously been given access to the protocol of the KGB interrogation of Toth, then paraphrased from it to dramatize the "espionage" allegation. They said the correspondent had received information from "various kinds of renegades," who were "perfectly well aware of Mr. Toth's predilection for the sectors of science having a military application." Thus, the paper said, he was "supplied with information about specific projects of no journalistic interest to Toth."

The article concluded with quotations from private correspondence, apparently intercepted, to Toth from Robert Waters, whom the paper identified as "a former officer in the U.S. military attaché's office in Moscow, now an official in the central military intelligence apparatus." The letter was cited as quoting Lieutenant General Samuel Wilson as speaking highly of Toth and saying he had been "pleased that an opportunity to meet with you presented itself." The article identified Wilson as serving, at the time the letter was written, as "director of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency."

The Toth incident was the culmination of a campaign against major U.S. correspondents in Moscow, particularly those who had established personal contact with dissidents. Other reporters had been harassed by Soviet authorities before Toth, and still others had such experiences later on. Certainly the implied policy Toth cited, that "any information about science, not officially released, is secret," had more or less been an established attitude for decades. Exceptions to this rule occurred, but exceptions they remained.

When parapsychologists later asked Toth, who became a *Los Angeles Times* correspondent in Washington, what had actually been in the Petukhov paper, he confessed that during the half-minute the papers were in his hands, he had had no chance even to read a few lines. But the scattered phrases cited by Professor Mikhailov as proving the secret nature of the paper's content indicate that it dealt with areas of major concern to Soviet parapsychologists: the potential of cell particles, possibly photons, to be instrumental in information transfer. If the Petukhov papers actually contained data on efforts in telepathic

experiments to channel such functions, and if methods that revealed military potential were discussed in detail, they could be highly intriguing. However, considering the cat-and-mouse nature of the Toth incident, the papers would seem to have been no more than bait—snatched away before the first nibble.