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Modern toxic antipersonnel projectiles.

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Abstract: In the spring of 1944, Kurt von Gottberg, the SS police chief in Minsk, was shot and injured by 2 Soviet agents. Although he was only slightly injured, he died 6 hours later. The bullets were hollow and contained a crystalline white powder. They were 4-g bullets, semi-jacketed in cupronickel, containing 28 mg of aconitine. They were later known as akonitinnitratgeschosse. The Sipo (the Nazi security police) then ordered a trial with a 9-mm Parabellum cartridge containing Ditrان, an anticholinergic drug with hallucinogenic properties causing intense mental confusion. In later years, QNB was used and given the NATO code BZ (3-quinuclidinyl-benzylate). It was proven that Saddam Hussein had this weapon (agent 15) manufactured and used it against the Kurds. Serbian forces used the same type of weapon in the Bosnian conflict, particularly in Srebrenica. The authors go on to list the Cold War toxic weapons developed by the KGB and the Warsaw pact countries for the discreet elimination of dissidents and proindependence leaders who had taken refuge in the West. These weapons include PSZh-13 launchers, the Troika electronic sequential pistol, and the ingenious 4-S110T captive piston system designed by the engineer Stechkin. Disguised as a cigarette case, it could fire a silent charge of potassium cyanide. This rogues gallery also includes the umbrella rigged to inject a pellet of ricin (or another phytalbumin of similar toxicity, such as abrin or croton) that was used to assassinate the Bulgarian writer and journalist Georgi Markov on September 7, 1978, in London. During the autopsy, the discovery of a bullet burst into 4 or 5 parts has to make at once suspecting the use of a toxic substance. Toxicological analysis has to look for first and foremost aconitine, cyanide, suxamethonium, Ditrان, BZ, or one of the toxic phytalbumins. The use of such complex weapons has to make suspect a powerful organization: army, secret service, terrorism. The existence of the Russian UDAR spray gun in the present day, however, shows that these weapons are still present. The possibility that one might be used to spray a charge of cyanide is still very real, especially as it would not be very difficult for an informed amateur to produce homemade toxic ammunition by adapting existing civil or military cartridges.

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