

# Psychohistory News

Newsletter of the International Psychohistorical Association

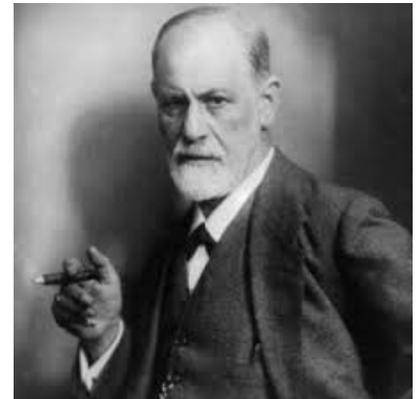
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## *The Politics of Memory: When One is Requested to Shut The Eyes* Book by Faye Snyder, review by Valerie Rose Brinton

I hope this review will inspire readers to delve directly into this work. The dominant narrative of the past two decades gives even an educated observer the impression that there is a real and necessary debate as to the validity of traumatic memories of child sexual abuse. Dr. Snyder's work is a sobering breath of fresh air in its comprehensive analysis of this issue.

*The Politics of Memory: When One is Requested to Shut the Eyes* (2014, 2010) by Faye Snyder, PsyD, dives into the ongoing fight over the repression, retrieval, and reality of traumatic memories. Dr. Snyder offers a vital analysis of the underlying forces driving the supposed debate, reviews the historical context, and sheds light on the reality of

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Sigmund Freud, whose seduction theory and its suppression were pivotal events in the politics of memory.

### *BEHIND THE CIA TORTURE REPORT*

**Sadism, Power, and  
Behavior Modification, p. 8**

### *DISPATCH FROM FRANCE*

**Psychotherapy Profession  
Under Attack, p. 3**

## **How Much Does Child Rearing Really Impact History?**

*In November 2014, the following dialogue occurred in the Clio's Psyche internet discussion group. "Psychology of the Radical Right," an appendix to Brian D'Agostino's book The Middle Class Fights Back, had been posted on the listserv. The article examines cognitive linguist George Lackoff's theory*

*that right and left political belief systems originate in what he calls "strict father" and "nurturing parent" subcultures. D'Agostino relates this typology to the literature on authoritarianism and sketches the psychodynamics that could arise from*

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## CALL FOR PAPERS: IPA 2015 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

June 3 to 5, New York University

[www.psychohistory.us](http://www.psychohistory.us) (click on “Conference/Membership)

*Don't miss Sue Grand's keynote address on White Europeans, Native Americans, Blacks and race relations in American history. Other invited speakers include Jerome Wakefield, who will explode some conventional wisdom about psychoanalysis, and Myriam Miedzian, who will probe the gender psychology of violence.*

### THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

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childhood traumatic experience and its aftermath in ways that are relevant for anyone working with children and families, including psychologists, educators and legal professionals.

Dr. Snyder reframes the false memory debate as a war between child advocates, who are devoted to rigorous research, protection of vulnerable children, and effective treatment, versus those who consistently advocate for parents and against child victims. These pro-parent advocates claim the moral high ground while working to protect perpetrators and even to promote pedophilia, as is the case with two of the four principal founders of the aforementioned foundation (p. 48-50):

*Some children grow into adults who carry the mandate to protect their parents, and ultimately all parents from all blame. I call these children “enlisted” because they are likely to bury the truth of their own experiences for a lifetime, for their parents’ sake. . . . They often act out their drive to protect parents and reenact their childhood traumas from the position of entitlement and privilege, now that they are the adults. They treat their own children as they were treated, requiring them to honor their parents more than the truth, just as they did when they were younger. . . . There are too many researchers who are unconsciously and deeply driven to protect parents and as such, they seek evidence that immunizes parents (p. 259-61).*

This reactionary trend is shown to be an aspect of the ongoing cultural backlash against the increased exposure of previously hidden and sanctioned child sexual abuse.

Dr. Snyder offers a valuable account of the current body of research on recovered and traumatic memories including relevant neurological findings. There is an important

critique of Elizabeth Loftus, the prominent spokesperson for the false memory movement. Finally, there is a review of current approaches to trauma treatment, a refreshing reminder that not only is child abuse a harsh reality that must be faced with open eyes but that recovery and healing are also real.

The subtitle, “When one is requested to shut the eyes,” refers to a little-known, relevant moment in the history of psychology. Prior to the presentation of his findings on child sexual abuse, Freud wrote a letter to his close colleague, Fleiss, indicating that he believed his father had molested his sister during their childhood. As is widely known, Sigmund Freud’s professional presentation of these findings (that adult symptoms often result from early childhood sexual abuse) was not well received. He became the brunt of widespread derision. During this critical period his father died. Soon after his father’s death, Freud had a dream. In it a notice was posted on his front door stating, “One is requested to shut the eyes” (page 29). Soon after this, he disavowed his own findings and it would be seven years before he even began to develop an alternative theory.

This book gives voice to the voiceless, both in its advocacy for a rigorous and realistic response to the reality of child abuse and in its personal account of one clinician’s travails under attack from the well-financed, reactionary forces working to silence anyone exposing that abuse. The account of Dr. Snyder’s harrowing legal encounter with the scientifically sparse but widely publicized movement against child abuse memories reveals the degree to which these forces have infiltrated the field of child abuse research and treatment, and exemplifies the damaging impact this has had on therapists, on protective parents and on children who have been abused. This is echoed in an account of the well-known McMartin Preschool case, and the largely unreported evidence that was literally unearthed after the trial. “There’s a war out there between the children who grew up protecting their parents and the

## THE FF2P: FRENCH PSYCHOTHERAPISTS FIGHT BACK

### by Marc-André Cotton

*In France, the practice of psychotherapy is under attack and legislation has been adopted to restrict the practice of psychotherapy to medical professionals. Fédération française de psychothérapie et psychanalyse (FF2P) held a conference in Paris last November to address this crisis of the profession. I represented the IPA at the conference and facilitated a workshop on psychohistory. This is my report and reflections on the relevance of psychohistory to these developments.*

The first Congress organized by the Fédération française de psychothérapie et psychanalyse (FF2P) took place on 28 and 29 November in Provins, near Paris, and rallied two hundred professionals. The theme for the meeting was: *Identity and belonging, what role for therapists in a world of change?* In my workshop on psychohistory, I presented Lloyd deMause's childrearing modes as well as a psychobiography of Barack Obama. Discussions showed that for the dozen therapists attending the workshop—who were all women!—the psychohistorical approach not only raised interest, but could prove useful in understanding today's upcoming confrontation between French therapists and public authorities.

Founded in 1995 with the aim of defending the right to psychotherapy, the FF2P now gathers 1,500 practitioners

such as psychologists, physicians, psychiatrists, psychotherapists and psychoanalysts. Despite this success, the FF2P is struggling today with the government's intention to standardize the profession under cover of an anti-cult law aimed at combatting "sectarian aberrations."

While 36.8% of all Europeans face emotional distress according to a recent survey, the French authorities decided to reserve the title of psychotherapist to medical doctors and psychologists only, without requiring any personal therapy in their curriculum. Conversely, many certified therapists claiming a long practice but with no medical background are currently losing the right to exercise their profession—in violation of a legal principle of equity.

From now on, the FF2P "will fight against the enemies of freedom," in the words of board member Isabelle Crespelle, and there is a great deal to do. FF2P members are deeply disturbed by the prospect of losing both their professional identity and their sense of belonging—hence the title of this Congress. The Federation now promotes recognition of the new professional title of *psychopractitioner*, knowing too well that the public might get confused with a proliferation of mental health providers.

From my standpoint, psychohistory's framework of interpretation could offer a meaningful perspective on this conflict, reaching far beyond the scope of such professions. On the one hand, we indeed find genuine therapists—mostly women—dedicated to helping their clients heal unresolved grief and trauma by offering trust and empathy. On the other, politicians and bureaucrats, serving the interests of the pharmaceutical giants and organized medicine, are seeking to delegitimize such work, which will most certainly prove counter-productive in terms of public mental health. I see this as a clash of what psychohistorians call "psychoclasses," one of which believes in imposing bureaucratic order, reflecting their intrusive childrearing, while the other believes in the crucial relevance of listening, reflecting their experience of nurturing. Let us hope that the latter prevails!

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**For more information about FF2P, visit [www.colloques-ff2p.com](http://www.colloques-ff2p.com)**

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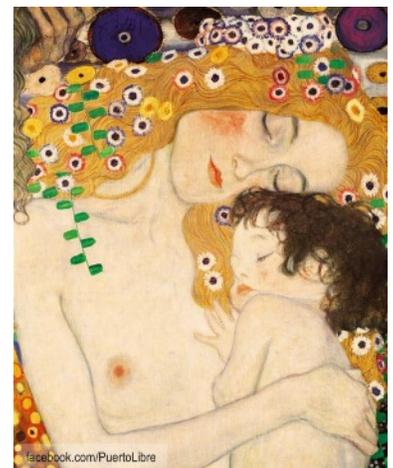
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ones who never had to" (page 263) and a thorough reading of this work is a worthwhile introduction to the battlefield of that war.

***The Politics of Memory* is available at [www.drufayesnyder.com](http://www.drufayesnyder.com)**

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## IMPACT OF CHILD REARING

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*punitive parenting and how they might account for right wing beliefs and attitudes. Some members of the group questioned this theory, and D'Agostino responded. The discussion then moved to the unconscious motivations of leaders and groups, and to a critique of Lloyd deMause's "Psychogenic Theory of History."*

**BARNARD COLLIER:** If the response of children to "strict" (and perhaps "inhumane") parenting—rebellion vs. suppression of their rage—is simply a playing out of predetermined anal and oral, father and mother-centered generic psychological operations, then what difference does a "strict" or "lenient" or "parentally missing" upbringing make?

**KEN FUCHSMAN:** How do we know that children raised by a punitive father will end up on the radical right? First, is there psychological or political science research that shows the correlation of parenting styles with political attitudes? Second, why would the strict paternal upbringing lead to a rightist relation to authority rather than a leftist or liberal rebellion against political and psychological authority, or even obedience to punitive authority? What evidence do we have that shows that one response to punitive authority is more likely than another?

**ALICE MAHER:** I don't think the issue is child-rearing per se; it's about the way individuals and groups of people internalize their childhood experiences and the core conscious and unconscious fantasies and defenses that arise from those experiences. Different children can be

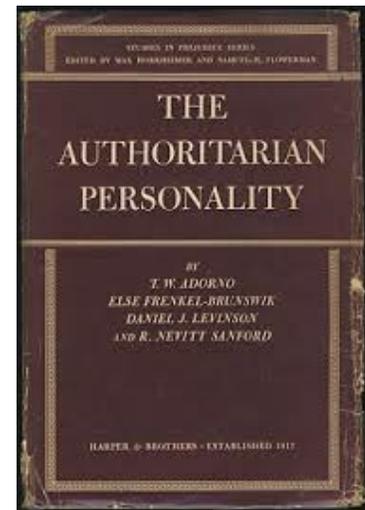
raised by the same parents in the same communities, and develop as very different individuals. People want to run the world, or be embraced by it, or destroy it, or whatever, based on the unique ways that they internalize their childhood experiences. That's related to, but different from, child-rearing practices.

**BILL ARGUS:** I agree with Alice. It is my understanding that it is not so much about the specific abuse but how that abuse is internalized. That will determine to a certain extent what a person's worldview is – how they make sense of the world and the abuse that happened to them.

**BRIAN D'AGOSTINO:** Yes, of course there are individual variations in the way people react to the same childrearing practices. My brother and I were raised in the same conservative Republican household with a strict father. I rebelled and became a leftist while my brother is a conservative Republican to this day. But when talking about history, statistical patterns are paramount and the individual variations—which are so central for clinicians—are unimportant, except for psychobiographers. Survey research has identified a well-defined personality type—authoritarianism—which is strongly correlated with right wing beliefs and attitudes (See Adorno et al's *The Authoritarian Personality*, Altemeyer's *Enemies of Freedom*, and my "Self Images of Hawks and Doves," *Political Psychology* 16, 2). SOMETHING has to account for this personality type, and child rearing is in my view the most plausible factor. If anyone has a more plausible alternative, please say what it is.

Also, it is not a matter of whether someone rebels against punitive parenting, but what form that

rebellion takes. My theory is that in a large majority of cases the person idealizes the punitive father, while internalizing the father's contempt for weakness and dependency, which is associated with the nurturing mother. The punitive introjects and idealization are projected onto the violent arm of the state—the military and police—while the internalized contempt is projected onto the "nanny state," that is, the social welfare and regulatory aspects of government. It is the latter that conservatives generally refer to when they castigate "government"—even as they treat the military and police as sacred cows.



By contrast, someone who becomes conscious of the punitive father introjects as the source of their rage becomes a leftist, rebelling against the violent side of the state and embracing the nurturing side. This is a hypothesis that requires further testing, but Adorno et al's *The Authoritarian Personality*, which combined survey data and psychological testing with clinical interviews, provides substantial data that confirms the hypothesis. Adorno et al get at the abovementioned statistical patterns; this is also consistent with Alice Miller's psychobiography of Hitler in *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child Rearing and the Roots of Violence*.

I think it is axiomatic for most psychohistorians that the evolution of childrearing practices impacts macrohistorical events and processes in important ways. This, in my view, is the essence of Lloyd deMause's "Psychogenic Theory of History." His specific developmental typology of child rearing modes is highly speculative and, like most pioneering theories, will probably be modified on the basis of further research, but the psychogenic theory in some form is in my opinion foundational for the field of psychohistory.

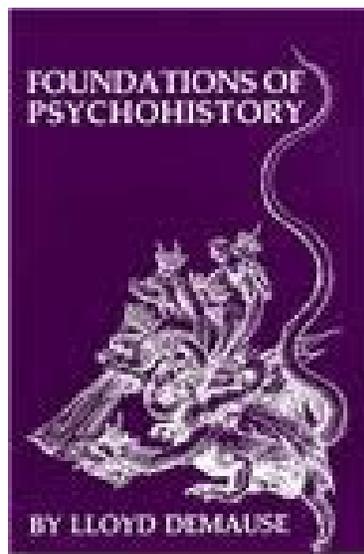
**JOEL MARKOWITZ:** Lloyd de Mause wrote an excellent book on the horrors of child-rearing through the ages. But I disagree entirely with his applications of those circumstances to history. Yes, child-rearing does immensely affect the thinking and functioning of INDIVIDUALS. But other factors override child-rearing in GROUP functioning.

Badly reared individuals tend to expend their psychic energy in trying to survive. Many can't manage even a simple relationship with another individual. Rarely can they manage to rise to a significant position in a group-- unless the group is so troubled that it needs a leader with the special dynamics of the emotionally damaged individual. That's a rare circumstance. Nor does natural selection help those groups to succeed—or even, sometimes, to survive. Healthier, more-confident individuals tend to lead the more-successful groups. And both tend to shape history disproportionately.

In "The Lust to Annihilate" and some of his other books and articles, Eli Sagan focused on AGGRESSION. The problem with that emphasis is that aggression (as Freudian theory

recognizes) is not as relevant to history as is oedipal determinism. Wars were determined not primarily by aggression or hate, as much as by competition. Heroes and nations don't necessarily hate their rivals. They attack to dominate; to control; to possess; to defeat.

Among the earliest and purest examples of that OEDIPAL phenomenon was *The Iliad*—a young man stealing the wife of his older host; and the terrible punishment he brought down on himself and his supporting city. In *The Odyssey*, Ulysses returned to his home and killed his wife's suitors. *Oedipus the King* is of course the ultimate oedipal story, but the theme appears in many other tragedies, most notably *Hamlet*. And consider *Macbeth*, whose oedipal ambition led him to kill the fatherly king, and to suffer terrible punishment. He didn't hate the king.



Territorial disputes may take place for other reasons also. But even there, hatred and aggression tend not to be the primary motivations. Sagan dealt only with the aggressive element in wars and in other human oedipal conflicts and confrontations.

**DON CARVETH:** Joel, killing the King, or the father, or wanting to, is aggressive, even if you don't hate him.

**BRIAN D'AGOSTINO:** Joel, I think you are making a number of incorrect assumptions about the mechanisms through which child rearing most likely influences history. In my view, psychopathology due to inadequate parenting exerts a pervasive influence on groups. Consider the following.

First, you say, "Rarely can they [badly reared individuals] manage to rise to a significant position in a group-- unless the group is so troubled that it needs a leader with the special dynamics of the emotionally damaged individual. That's a rare circumstance." To be sure, severe mental disturbance among top leaders may be rare, but when it does occur it can be extremely consequential, most notably in the cases of Hitler and Stalin. You can say that "natural selection" eliminated the Third Reich, but not before Hitler launched World War II and enacted a major genocide, hardly trivial events in the 20th century.

Moreover, top leaders need not be severely disturbed in order to act out unconscious motivations, sometimes with important consequences. Here are some notable examples. Kaiser Wilhelm II dismissed Bismarck and launched imperial Germany onto a reckless foreign policy trajectory that led to World War I. The Kaiser was not severely disturbed, but his unconscious motivations were arguably a significant cause of World War I. (There were multiple causes of the war, of course, but that does not negate the significance of this cause).

Harry Truman, having to fill the shoes of the larger than life FDR, was arguably insecure enough about his

masculinity to use atomic weapons on Japan, one of the most consequential decisions of the 20th century. There was nothing foreordained about this decision, especially given that Japan had already been defeated by the time the bombings were ordered. I would argue that Truman's unconscious motivations were a critical factor.

George W. Bush is not severely disturbed but his unconscious motivations for launching the Iraq war in 2003 and multi-year military occupation of the country merit some examination, especially since this occupation was the single most important cause of the rise of Islamic State in Iraq. Examples could be multiplied. What psychobiographer can approach these questions without examining the prominent role of the child-rearing that shaped these personalities?

Second, the assumption that history is made only by top leaders acting as individuals is also incorrect. David Beisel's classic *The Suicidal Embrace: Hitler, the Allies, and the Origins of the Second World War* shows through a meticulous examination of historical evidence that the leading statesmen of Europe in the period before World War II were caught up in a group fantasy of Europe as a dysfunctional family, a group fantasy most likely rooted in child rearing practices of European culture at the time.

Third, you are not addressing the empirical findings of survey research, beginning with Adorno et al's *The Authoritarian Personality*. My 1990 survey of the Council on Foreign Relations, the leading organization of foreign policy elites in the U.S., showed that hawks outnumber doves by a ratio of about two to one. According to the cognitive paradigm in political psychology (e.g. Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*

*in International Politics*), these hawk and dove belief systems are rational schemas based on different histories of information exposure, not motivated biases rooted in personality. But my research showed that for males, nearly half the variance in hawk and dove policy preferences was accounted for by individual differences in machismo and authoritarianism. If these personality syndromes don't originate in child rearing patterns, what can account for them?

In summary, while I believe that de Mause may overstate the causal importance of childrearing and his specific theories are certainly in need of testing, I believe that you understate the historical impact of childrearing for the reasons outlined here.

***To join the Clio's Psyche discussion group contact Molly Castelloe at [msc214@nyu.edu](mailto:msc214@nyu.edu)***

## CIA TORTURE REPORT

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today in Egypt were agents of democracy, however imperfect. Their crime was not terrorism, but the crime of having won an election and thereby displeasing the fascist elements of Egyptian society, which the United States previously and currently supports.

### Poisonous Pedagogy

But let us return to the myth that the real purpose of the CIA's torture program was to extract information needed to save American lives. This myth serves a dual purpose—legitimizing torture in the eyes of the American public, and simultaneously providing a noble rationale so that those who ordered and administered

torture could feel good about themselves. This latter purpose relates to what Robert Jay Lifton called "doubling," a term he coined for the dissociation he observed in interviews



*Psychologist Alice Miller, who coined the term "poisonous pedagogy"*

with Nazi doctors and U.S. nuclear war planners. Even while aiding and implementing genocidal policies, these professionals told themselves reassuring cover stories—that they were acting to rid Germany of "life

unworthy of life," or saving the world from nuclear holocaust through Mutually Assured Destruction (Lifton and Markusen, 1990)

This raises the ultimate psycho-historical question—why do people engage in sadistic or genocidal projects in the first place? In answering this question, I draw in the following paragraphs on Marc-André Cotton's "Poisonous Pedagogy: The Contentious Drift of Psychology" <http://www.regardconscient.net/earchives/1303driftofpsychology.html> "Poisonous Pedagogy," Alice Miller's term for cruelty in childrearing rationalized as moral education, is found to shed light on the unconscious, sadistic motivations served by the practice of torture.

The aim of poisonous pedagogy is the use of corporal punishment in its

endlessly ingenious variants to break the “willful” ego of a young child, whose spontaneous behavior is thought to be depraved and in need of moral education. Luther Emmet Holt, one of the founders of American pediatrics, similarly advocated the imposition of order on the unruly impulses of infants. In his best-selling 1894 book *The Care and Feeding of Children*, he advised mothers to ignore the cries of their hungry infants and feed them on a regular schedule by the clock.

B. F. Skinner, who pioneered the modern science of behavior modification, was born in 1904, when Holt’s ideas about infant care dominated child-rearing in the United States. His advocacy of rewards (“positive reinforcement”) for the conditioning of behavior might at first glance seem like the antithesis of poisonous pedagogy, which is based on punishment and fear. Indeed, Cotton notes that Skinner’s grandmother frightened him as a young child with vivid images of hell fire reserved for those who misbehave, and that dread of punishment was probably a salient element of his personality and influence on his work as a behavioral scientist.

But positive reinforcement doesn’t work unless the animal or person is first in a state of deprivation—food is not a reward for a laboratory rat unless it is hungry. So the behavioral scientist must first control the animal’s food supply and systematically withhold food until the animal is hungry and tries various behaviors to end its hunger. Only then can the desired behavior be successfully “reinforced” by the provision of food.

### “New and Improved” Torture

The science of behavior modification brought about a new paradigm for the practice of torture. Unlike old-

fashioned methods that produced enduring physical trauma, these behavior modification techniques produce psychologically and physically distressful states of deprivation that are reversible. Deprive people of their dignity, their sleep, a tolerable room temperature, or even their air supply (in the case of waterboarding). Then, when they perform the desired behavior—in this case, divulging supposedly strategic information—“reinforce” it by restoring a benign environment.



Harvard psychologist B.F. Skinner

While the CIA contended that these experiences cause no enduring harm, psychological trauma is inevitable, the severity of which depends on the severity of the torture. And the severity is escalated, to horrific levels if necessary, until the victim is “broken.” As with old-fashioned torture, this is modelled on poisonous pedagogy, where the parent escalates the level of punishment until he breaks the ego of the child.

And so it was that the CIA employed behavioral psychologists—most notably John “Bruce” Jessen and James E. Mitchell—to design their “enhanced interrogation program” and train torture teams for deployment to the Guantanamo (GTMO), Abu Ghraib, and various other detention centers. These contractors were seasoned torturers, having tested the same behavior modification techniques on Americans

in the Air Force’s SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape) training program. Jessen brought especially strong sadistic credentials to the project, having a reputation among other SERE instructors for being “too aggressive.” The CIA’s top lawyer called some of the interrogation techniques “sadistic and terrifying,” but left it to the Justice Department to determine their legality (Risen and Apuzzo, 2014).

Never mind that as good or better information could be obtained by conventional, non-violent methods of interrogation. That would spoil the whole thing, by depriving the torturers of their sadistic gratification and their bosses of the “deterrence value” of torture. And the latter is a useful tool of power when enacting corporate-friendly policies unlikely to receive the support of democratic electorates at home and abroad.

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# Making Psychohistorical Sense of the CIA Torture Report

## by Brian D'Agostino

Most Americans were rightly appalled when parts of the “Senate Intelligence Committee Report on CIA Torture” were released to the public last December. But they were also shocked, which is a measure of widespread political and psychohistorical ignorance. Mislead by sanitized history textbooks and a media establishment that is itself part of the country’s power structure, the average American has apparently never learned that their government has a multi-decade history of supporting regimes that have practiced torture on an administrative basis. Some still do, such as Egypt, a recipient of hundreds of millions of dollars in US military aid every year.

As far as the general public knows, these are “friendly” regimes, exactly what they are called in the mainstream media. This is code for “friendly to American corporate and state interests.” The use of torture and the people being tortured are almost never mentioned, except on the rare occasions that the victims are Americans, like the nuns who were beaten, raped and murdered by Salvadoran National Guardsmen in 1980.

Since the end of World War II, the United States has provided training in the modern methods of torture to dictatorships in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. Most notorious in this regard is the “School of the Americas,” which has featured perhaps the most advanced torture curriculum in the world. Now known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, it has been located since 1984 in Georgia’s Fort Benning, deep in the heart of America’s Bible Belt. Under Jimmy Carter, the “human

rights president,” 35 countries in the world practiced torture routinely, of which 26 were US allies and recipients of military and “internal security” aid totaling more than \$36 billion between 1946 and 1975 (Chomsky, 1979).



*Photo of torture in Abu Ghraib detention center that went viral in 2004*

What was new about the CIA’s “Enhanced Interrogation Program” is not U.S. complicity in torture, but rather Uncle Sam getting his hands dirty with the direct administration of torture on non-Americans. Previously, torture was outsourced to “friendly” regimes, or was practiced by Americans only on American troops as “training.” The direct administration of torture by the United States from 2002 through 2006 is indeed a new and disturbing development in our recent history, but to understand it psychohistorically, we must put it into the broader historical context I have sketched here.

### **Interrogation or Intimidation?**

There are two points to take away from the CIA torture report: that the use of torture during interrogations doesn’t

produce reliable information and that the CIA did it anyway. The fact that it doesn’t work has been known for centuries. Upholding the ban on torture officially enacted by the French government eighteen years earlier, Napoleon Bonaparte reportedly said in 1798: “the barbarous custom of whipping men suspected of having important secrets to reveal must be abolished. It has always been recognized that this method of interrogation, by putting men to the torture, is useless. The wretches say whatever comes into their heads and whatever they think one wants to believe. Consequently, the Commander-in-Chief forbids the use of a method which is contrary to reason and humanity” (quoted in Cotton, 2013).

Though torture has little or no value as a tool of interrogation, it has enormous instrumental value to ruthless power holders as a tool of intimidation to deter political behavior. In that capacity, it protects “American interests,” though in reality these are corporate and state interests, not the public interest in whose name these violent policies are enacted.

When the United States and its allies (e.g. Egypt) use torture to intimidate civilian populations, this is itself a form of terrorism, which is rightly labelled “state terrorism.” Nor are the people who are being deterred necessarily violent actors. The political activists and clergy who were tortured by fascist allies of the United States in recent decades were not agents of political violence, but of democracy. Similarly, members of the Muslim Brotherhood being tortured

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