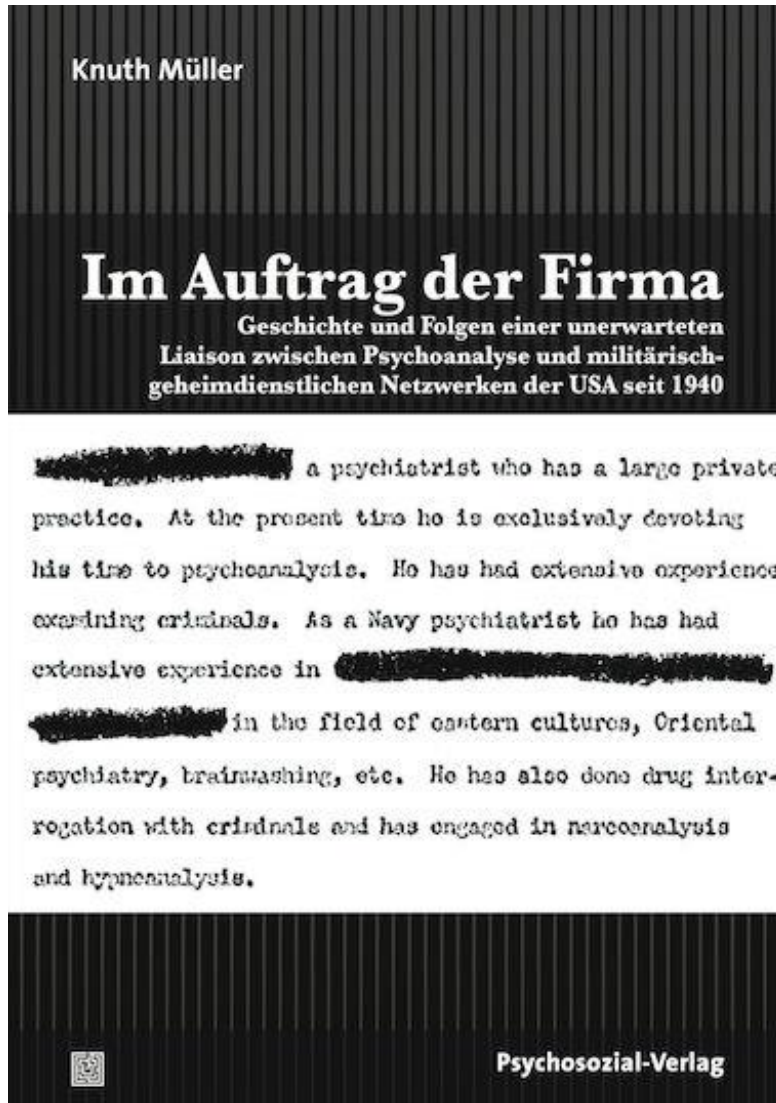


„Im Auftrag der Firma.“ Book essay

by *Andreas Peglau*



[Im Auftrag der Firma. Geschichte und Folgen einer unerwarteten Liaison zwischen Psychoanalyse und militärisch-nachrichtendienstlichen Netzwerken der USA seit 1940](#)

(On behalf of the company. History and consequences of an unexpected liaison between psychoanalysis and military-intelligence networks of the USA since 1940) by **Knuth Müller**.

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Unpolitical psychoanalysis?

The psychoanalyst Felix Schottlaender wrote in 1931: "Psychoanalysis is of course 'apolitical'. It [...] is [...] a natural-scientific discipline which, by its very object of research, can enter into the great social questions only as an impartial authority serving the truth."²

¹ Please cite as Peglau, Andreas (2023): „Im Auftrag der Firma.“ Book essay (<https://andreas-peglau-psychoanalyse.de/im-auftrag-der-firma-book-essay/>). I thank Knuth Müller who helped me with the translation. The text was originally written for SozialGeschichte.Online and published there in a version shortened and changed by the editor: https://duepublico.uni-duisburg-essen.de/servlets/DerivateServlet/Derivate-46971/14_Peglau_Rez_Mueller_Im_Auftrag.pdf.

² Schottlaender, Felix: Aggressionstrieb und Abrüstung (Aggression instinct and disarmament), Die psychoanalytische Bewegung 1931, issue 5, pp. 386-407, here p. 387.

Thus Schottlaender was in line with Sigmund Freud who increasingly wanted to see the doctrine he founded as an objective "research method, an instrument without partiality"³. "Psychoanalysis is also a natural science. What else should it be?" asked Freud shortly before his death.⁴ After all, he never wanted his creation to be reduced to a mere treatment technique. But this is exactly where the journey was headed.

Current self-representations of mainstream analysts organized in the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA), such as the 2011 volume "100 Years of the IPA," give the impression that psychoanalysis is essentially a medical method of treatment, committed solely to the welfare of patients and to scientific ethos.⁵



Knuth Müller, born in 1970, holds a degree in education and a doctorate in psychology, and works in Berlin as a psychoanalyst in private practice. After years of research in international archives, he tells a different story - one that lies hidden behind the "apolitical" image of psychoanalysis. On this he notes in advance:

"The present work makes an attempt to apply an essential aspect of psychoanalytic thinking to its history, integrating what has been denied, making conscious what has been repressed" (Müller 2017, p. 27).

He shows: While a supposed neutrality was defined as the bedrock of psychoanalysis' self-image, it was often a matter of adapting to political circumstances or of exploiting them purposefully. This was already true soon after the international breakthrough of psychoanalysis at the beginning of the 20th century.

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From World War I to 1933, Europe

Already during World War I, analysts acted ambivalently, including Freud. On the one hand, the latter saw himself as a pacifist throughout his life. He found the apt image of "machine guns behind the front" for those doctors who made "war neurotics" fit for murder again by administering electric shocks (p. 40 f.).

³ Freud, Sigmund: Die Zukunft einer Illusion, in Freud: CW vol. 14, Frankfurt/M.: Fischer 1999, pp. 325-380. here p. 360.

⁴ Freud, Sigmund: Some Elementary Lessons in Psycho-Analysis, in ders.: GW Vol. 17, Frankfurt/M.: Fischer 1999, pp. 139-147. Here p. 143.

⁵ For example, Loewenberg, Peter/Thompson, Nellie L. (eds.): 100 Years of the IPA. The Centenary History of the International Psychoanalytic Association 1910-2010. Evolution and Change, London: Karnac 2011.

The involvement of analysts in the dictatorial regimes in Brazil and Argentina is largely ignored there, and only the behavior of the Viennese and German analysts between 1933 and 1945 is subjected to a partly critical appraisal. Of all that Knuth Müller has brought to light - not least based on documents that have been publicly accessible for some time or always, but which he has evaluated for the first time - not a word.

Nevertheless, Freud and his followers tried to sell psychoanalysis to the military as a gentler and more functional method of accomplishing exactly the same task, while hoping to benefit from the armies' money pots and gaining more international reputation.

The culmination of these efforts was the 1918 IPV Congress in Budapest, attended by official government representatives of Germany, Austria, and Hungary. Freud later summed up: the "hopeful result of this first meeting was the promise to establish psychoanalytic stations where analytically trained physicians should find means and leisure to study the nature of these [supposedly! - A.P.] puzzling diseases" - the "war neuroses" - "and their therapeutic influence through psychoanalysis." With obvious regret he added: "Before these intentions could be carried out, the end of the war came" (pp. 41-45).

By 1933, then, the institutions of the analytic mainstream were already so corrupted that a psychoanalysis stripped of its social-critical aspects could be swiftly integrated into the Nazi health care system, later inspiring the psychological warfare of the Wehrmacht and helping the Luftwaffe maintain its combat readiness.

Not a single analyst was persecuted by the Hitler regime for being an analyst; renowned "Aryan" analysts provided their knowledge to the regime - with the approval of the IPV - until its end, participated in euthanasia and homosexual persecution, and continued to work officially in their private practices. Psychotherapy, including depth-psychological-analytical treatments, was co-financed by the Nazi state and indirectly by the NSDAP. The term "depth psychology," already used by Freud for psychoanalysis, became a central vocabulary of Nazi psychotherapy.⁶

USA after 1933: Scientists against Nazi Germany.

However, the greater part of the analysts - many of them of Jewish origin - left Germany after 1933, then also Europe; most emigrated to the USA. And here Knuth Müller picks up the thread again. On both sides of the Atlantic, psychoanalysts acted in politically explosive contexts during the period of National Socialism.

In the USA, this was essentially done "on behalf of the company" - that is, in collaboration with the secret services. Since numerous documents evaluated by Knuth Müller were often heavily censored, and text passages and names were blacked out, it cannot be ruled out that far more people were involved than he was able to identify. What is clear: Almost all prominent analysts who had emigrated to the USA were on board, as were numerous US analysts.

This cooperation was not limited to psychoanalysts, as Knuth Müller points out elsewhere:⁷

"The list of well-known anthropologists, sociologists, biologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and other representatives of academic and non-academic origin who cooperated with U.S. military-intelligence agencies is quite long (e.g.): Theodor Adorno, Gregory Bateson, Ruth Benedict, Felix Gilbert, John Herz, Herta Herzog, Max Horkheimer, Morris Jannowitz, Otto Kirchheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Paul Massing,

⁶ In detail on this: Peglau, Andreas: Unpolitical Science? Wilhelm Reich und die Psychoanalyse im Nationalsozialismus, Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag 2017 [2013].

⁷ Müller, Knuth: Im Auftrag der Firma. US-Nachrichtendienste und die „Psychoanalytic Community“ 1940–1953 – ein Werkstattbericht, Jahrbuch der Psychoanalyse, vol. 64, 2012, pp. 41-90, here pp. 44f.

Margaret Mead, Robert Merton, Barrington Moore, Franz Neumann, Talcott Parsons, Edward Shils, Hans Speier, Paul Sweezy, Carl Zuckmayer."

And: "Finally, Allen Dulles' personal Agent No. 488, C.G. Jung, also served the OSS and provided his very own war-relevant assessments - including Hitler's psychobiography." As did the father of person-centered therapy Carl Rogers who also became involved in clandestine work for the CIA in later years.

Between 1940 and 1945 several U.S. and émigré analysts worked for the first centralized US-intelligence service COI (later baptized OSS): Boston based Henry Murray wrote several intelligence studies containing "personality analyses" of Adolf Hitler; Erik Erikson, who came from Vienna, provided contributions on the "Nazi mentality" and the "interrogation of German prisoners of war"; Ernst Kris, a former Austrian, produced a study on Nazi radio propaganda; German émigré Ernst Simmel developed the concept of "propagandistic 'shortwave radio psychotherapy' for the German people," which he explained as follows:

"The essential aim of psychological pre-attacks is to create panical [sic!] conditions, paralyzing [...] effective defense [...]. It is smuggled into other radio programs. But it affects the listeners' mental condition the more the less he is aware of [...] these sendings [...]." (pp. 79, 175f., 199, 204, 974 [Fn. 1375]).

This enumeration of concrete projects in the context of psychological warfare could be continued.

A separate, admittedly short-lived, intelligence department was created in 1941 for psychoanalytic ancillary work under the direction of the analyst⁸ Walter C. Langer (p. 56), which initially tried to counteract the widespread rejection of wartime operations.

(One of the many places in the book where thoughts about the present arise: Is psychoanalytic knowledge again being used to make direct German war involvement in Syria or German nuclear bombs palatable to the population? Has such knowledge long been in the background of the war rhetoric of the local leading media and the concealment of the real character of the "War on Terror"?)

The memoranda written by Langer in 1941 show how extensive the cooperation between analysts and US intelligence was. These show that "more than 42%" of all members of the "American Psychoanalytic Association" (APsaA), the U.S. analyst umbrella organization, were involved in intelligence activities (p. 115). Moreover, Langer reported in the same year that "the APsaA [...] unitedly declared itself ready for intelligence cooperation" (p. 59).

At an intelligence-organized and financed series of conferences on "Germany after the War" held at Columbia University in New York from April to June 1944, participants included well-known analysts Erik Erikson, Franz Alexander, Erich Fromm, Heinz Hartmann, Ernst Kris, Marianne Kris, and Robert Waelder. They discussed, for example, "questions of German character structure and possibilities of its change, as well as [...] perspectives of politics in occupied Germany in connection with political moods in the United States" (pp. 211-219).

Admittedly, assignment work for intelligence agencies raises fundamentally difficult moral questions, which is underscored for the U.S. from 1924 to 1972 by the fact that the FBI was

⁸ Knuth Müller points out that although Langer was not a member of the American or International Psychoanalytic Association, he had undergone analytic training and is referred to as a psychoanalyst in relevant professional publications. On Langer in detail especially pp. 135-173.

headed by the proven anti-democrat and fanatical communist-hater J. Edgar Hoover. Nevertheless, the described behavior of the above-mentioned analysts is very comprehensible, as they sought to support anti-fascist efforts by offering their specific knowledge of the human mind.

Thus, international psychoanalysis could be partly proud of what Knuth Müller has unraveled. Could - because it still does not appear in their official historiography.⁹

From 1941: Against Communism and Social Criticism

However, the story of this cooperation is not complete. In May 1941, the newly formed "Committee on Morale" of the APsaA decided to draft a questionnaire for all 472 official, honorary, and associate APsaA members (pp. 60, 64). The committee publicly announced this undertaking in the journal *Psychoanalytic Review*. One of the predetermined questions was:

"Have you any analytical or historical material of importance dealing with the presence of Fascist, Communist, or similar attitudes among patients in your practice, or in that of any of your colleagues?" (p. 914 [Fn. 256]).

A request was made to send this material. In a second survey sent soon after to the same group of persons, this question was then varied thus:

"Can you supply the Committee with analytical data or case history material bearing on the problem of revolutionary attitudes or dissatisfaction with the social and political status quo[!]" (p. 65 f. p. 914 [Fn. 260]).

This question was coupled with a clear reference to APsaA's intended cooperation with U.S. intelligence in this regard.

272 questionnaires were returned. Almost every third analyst was in favor of the project and prepared to support it. In 1942, under the leadership of Franz Alexander, part of the therapy reports and additional patient data received by the Morals Committee was sent to the secret service in anonymized form. Alexander stated in this context that the war "has certain stimulating effects which certainly enriches our regular work" (p. 117) - an attitude with which he would have fit well at the Budapest IPV Congress in 1918.

Although, as Knuth Müller points out, the Moral Committee "hardly missed an opportunity" to "advertise psychoanalysis for military and intelligence use" (p. 100), and although parts of the "psychoanalytic community" even renounced financial support to be allowed to work for the intelligence service (p. 153), interest on the opposite side was rather low - although this was to change later. Apparently, state authorities preferred psychiatry to psychoanalysis (p. 110 f.).

It remains to be noted: On the one hand, leading US analysts or their representatives found it justifiable to pass on information about patients and their most intimate revelations to secret services. On the other hand, communist attitudes were equated with fascist ones, and revolutionary attitudes and attitudes critical of the U.S. system were equally pathologized. This synchronization was accepted without protest by the majority of analysts associated with the APsaA.

⁹ Cf. Loewenberg/Thompson 2011 (as note 5).

As a result, the genuine psychoanalytic "non-tendential" or "evenly suspended attention" practice in US-psychoanalysis, both core principles of ego psychology trained during these years, seized to exist. Instead, the activities of many analysts were aimed at "advancing the strengthening of war morale". The aim was the transformation of neurotic pacifism into "patriotic readiness for action - in some cases even up to service at arms": "A 'yes' to the appraisal and commitment to the war effort was thus the hallmark of a reality-based and thus less neurotic experience" (p. 134).

Human experiments, also based on concentration camp experiments.

From 1942 on, additional projects were to be initiated by the secret services, for which psychological and medical competence was also needed. And again, they found what they were looking for - not only, but also - among psychoanalysts. On the one hand, Henry Murray, supported by other analysts, developed, and tested "stress interviews" for the selection of future agents. Their use led to "paralyzing [...] anxiety attacks" and "fainting spells" in some subjects. In addition, US intelligence agencies undertook human trials to find a "truth serum." Among other substances, mescaline, barbiturates, scopolamine, and cannabis were used. The administration of these substances led in some cases to violent physical defensive reactions and "severe psychological impairments" in the test subjects, and in at least one case to prolonged inpatient treatment. Lawrence Kubie, at that time a very prominent psychoanalyst, participated in the experimental design and implementation of human experiments on behalf of the secret service. (pp. 224-236).

Internally, too, one did not want to do without analytical know-how: The CIA, for example, used it for the selection of agents, for the treatment of "psychiatrically conspicuous" personnel, for the "remote analysis of political functionaries of other nations," and for the "optimization" of interrogation methods (pp. 376 f.).

When after 1945 the fight against fascism was won, the battle against communism began to reignite within the (later baptized) Cold War era in the US. And again the US-psychoanalytic community began to team up with US-intelligence services. For this purpose, programs for behavioral and consciousness manipulation which begun during WW II were expanded and led to the infamous ARTICHOKE, MKULTRA, and MKSEARCH projects, all of which were serving an interrogation and torture paradigm "based primarily on psychological factors" that served "as a blueprint" for the U.S. torture methods and techniques used after 9/11" (p. 405).

Parts of those research programs were based on and continued "National Socialist human experiments" (ibid.). In what I consider the most stirring passage of his book (pp. 251-412), which is rich in shocking facts, Knuth Müller describes in detail which "human experiments and torture methods of the Nazi regime" in the USA after 1945 were "collected and evaluated through the use of documents and smuggled-in Nazi personnel" and tested on groups of people, some of whom were also classified as "inferior": "Thus Nazi experiments and isolated Nazi personnel had a share in the development of modern US torture techniques" (p. 250).

And again: psychoanalysts.

From 1947 on, equally illegal and inhumane human experiments with "truth drugs" such as mescaline or LSD were carried out, partly before or after psychosurgical interventions. The experiments, conducted by the "Department of Experimental Psychiatry" of the New York State Psychiatric Institute and again subject to secrecy, were now financed by the chemical corps of the US Army; there was close cooperation with the CIA. The patients were not informed about the

true nature of these experiments, and instead probably hoped for a cure of depression, for example.

On January 8, 1953, one patient fell victim to these experiments: Harold Blauer, a 42-year-old professional tennis player. The ultimately fatal injections administered to him against his will were given by the analyst James P. Cattell. This, too, remained without legal repercussions. Cattell went on to have a brilliant career (pp. 455-481).

CIA torture manuals: also, by means of depth psychology

Collaborations with US intelligence agencies did not end in the 1950s, however. Various studies, also supported by psychoanalysts, among others with electrodes implanted into the brain for the emotional and behavioral remote control of humans finally found their way into a CIA torture manual called "KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation Manual", created in 1963 (pp. 412-426). Through KUBARK, the U.S. became "the global exporter of psychological torture techniques" (p. 426, cf. p. 710).

KUBARK also became the model for "the recent CIA torture of the Bush and Obama administrations as part of the so-called 'War on Global Terror,' as it systematically synthesizes the scientifically studied aspects of core psychological traits to break down a person's personality."^{10]}

Finally, how the decades-long collaboration between psychoanalysts and "company" continues to flank worldwide US terror measures to this day is outlined in the chapter "The Consequences. From Watergate to Guantánamo Bay" (pp. 697-736).

Historian Alfred M. McCoy of Wisconsin-Madison University stated in 2006: the "most famous of photographs from Abu Ghraib, of the Iraqi standing on the box, arms extended with a hood over his head and the fake electrical wires from his arms [...]," allows conclusions to be drawn about the "entire 50-year history of C.-I.A. torture."¹¹ Knuth Müller specifies:

"By creating a situation of total helplessness, combined with the resulting sense of powerlessness, dependency forced by regression, lack of any hope for an end to martyrdom, implementation of self-inflicted pain [...], additional techniques of disorientation (manipulation of time and space perception, sleep deprivation, etc.), and the use of sensory deprivation and isolation, a rapid regressive personality deterioration is achievable that cannot be induced by physical torture methods alone" (p. 716).

The CIA also had "interest in psychohistorical biographical designs by psychoanalysts into the recent past" (Vol. 2, p. 972).

Already in reference to KUBARK, Knuth Müller had predicted: The future application of these depth-psychologically based ordeals also "seems assured: President Donald J. Trump is a convinced supporter of torture - and thus there seems to be little in the way of extending the [...] line of tradition of torture" (p. 426).

¹⁰ Müller, Knuth: Im Auftrag der Firma. Begegnungen der "Psychoanalytic Community" mit US-amerikanischen Geheimdiensten am Beispiel der Jahre 1940-1963. Unpublished manuscript of a lecture at the 25th Symposium on the History of Psychoanalysis, March 2-4, 2012 in Berlin, o. p.

¹¹ Democracy Now (2006, Feb. 17). Professor McCoy Exposes the History of CIA-Interrogation, From the Cold War to the War on Terror. URL:

http://www.democracynow.org/206/2/17/professor_mccoy_exposes_the_history_of (02.14.2005).

Is this still psychoanalysis? Conclusion

Knuth Müller has presented this web of topics so comprehensively that his book will remain the authoritative work on this topic for a long time. Its size should not deter one from dealing with it. The separation of the text volume (744 pages) and the appendix (413 pages) makes it much easier to use. In addition, it is written in a comprehensible manner, which makes it clear that the author is not only addressing a specialist audience. The fact that the publisher has made it possible to search the book online makes up for the lack of an index. It is to be hoped that hopefully it will be published as an e-book in future times, so that this treasure trove of information can be evaluated as effectively as possible.

But above all: Whoever reads "Im Auftrag der Firma" has taken note of an important, exciting, and hitherto unknown chapter in the recent history of science and secret services. And one will become aware of the perfidy psychological and psychotherapeutic knowledge is used to flank inward and outward directed state terror and global plans of conquest.

Just as physics can be used to create ecological energy concepts or to build an atomic bomb, psychoanalytic knowledge can also be used - depending on the user, intention, and social framework - for diametrically opposed goals. Either, in the best case, for healing, enlightenment and meaningful shaping of individual and social processes. Or for stultification, manipulation, suppression, and torture. The latter use is demonstrated in Knuth Müller's book by the example of the USA, which also has an undoubted supremacy in this respect.

But it would be naive to believe that other secret services or other states would basically proceed less criminally here, Germany, for example, would somehow be immune to this.

And anyone who previously thought that at least psychoanalysts could work within a system without having a share in its culpable aspects will inevitably lose this illusion after having read this book.

It is even arguable whether the sad remnant left after so much conformism and (self-)castration still deserves the name "psychoanalysis." In [an interview with the *NachDenk.Seiten*](#), Knuth Müller comments: Psychoanalysis "when misused for these purposes, simply no longer exists, loses its justification."

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