Recently, controversy has arisen about the role of psychologists in military interrogations and other national security operations. The matter has been reported on in the media, including an article in the New Yorker by Jane Mayer; an interview by Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! with Steve Behnke, the director of ethics at the APA; and a piece in The Lancet by British medical ethicist Michael Wilks. In February, the Board of Directors of APA voted to fund a Presidential Task Force on Psychological Ethics and National Security. After the Task Force drafted an initial statement which was dissatisfaction to many in its vagueness, members of our Section were instrumental in getting the Task Force to formulate a more definitive position against the involvement of psychologists in inhumane, degrading or coercive interrogations. [See Letter from the President, this issue].

K. I would like to talk with you about the intersection of your personal and professional life with the larger culture, in this case, our government and the military. If it’s possible I would like to understand what you do, how you think about what you do and whatever challenges you face in trying to make decisions about what you do.

X. Post 9/11, I started doing some work with some parts of the military trying to prevent terrorist attacks. Working with maximum security psychiatric patients, one becomes pretty committed to trying to prevent violence. You think through what you’ve learned about people or about systems that might aid us in preventing violence, whether that be by a person who is mentally disordered or potentially by persons who are trying to attack the United States. My experience was that there’s a whole lot that is more preventable if one conceptualizes violence as part of a process as opposed to discreet or inevitable acts. I ask the question: Can one use clinical understandings in particular kinds of prevention activities?

K. So what is the thinking about prevention? What do we do?

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This has been a very busy period for members of Section 9. Since our last newsletter, our section continued for several months its list-serve discussions of themes related to our Psycho and Culture syllabus. However, our dialogue was diverted by the pressing national controversy generated by the participation of psychologists in interrogations of detainees in U.S. prisons, including Guantanamo Bay. As you may know from the discussion on our listserve, the APA created a task force to take up this issue. After the task force produced its general statement, our listserve provided the Section 9 board and section members an opportunity to discuss our perspectives and our reaction to the task force’s position. The consensus of our group was that a more definitive statement against the use of torture by the U.S. and against the involvement of psychologists in interrogation procedures needed to be made. Thanks to the hard work of Neil Altman, Marilyn Jacobs and other Section 9 members who worked with the Social Justice coalition of APA sections and divisions, this body produced a more definitive statement that was presented to the APA Council in August. It urged the APA leadership to adopt a public stance that states the alliance of the organization with UN conventions on human rights, rejection of the use of inhumane, degrading or coercive interrogations or use of torture on detainees and opposition to the direct or indirect participation of psychologists in such activities. The efforts of this coalition were successful and the APA took a public position incorporating these important principles. In this dangerous period, when the U.S. government is trying to protect its right to torture, we applaud the APA’s progressive public statement and encourage our members to continue to speak out about the responsibility psychologists and psychoanalysts have to make sure our profession advocates the use of our skills exclusively on behalf of individual and social welfare.

Section 9 Board members have been engaged in a variety of interesting projects, several of which I can report here. Lynne Layton’s work on the clinical import of conceptualizing psychological experience in social context was the subject of a PsyBC online seminar during September and October. The exchanges among Lynne and the discussants was so rich that we are thinking of ways to offer Section 9 members access to future PsyBC seminars on relevant topics at radically reduced rates, so watch for updated information about this opportunity via the Section 9 listserve. Frank Summers wrote a paper on fundamentalism, which will be published in a special issue of Psych Revue devoted to that subject, and he presented a paper at APCS on “Fear of Freedom: An Unconscious Societal Representation” November 4, at Rutgers University.

Steve Portuges, Maureen Katz and I presented papers at an international psychology conference, HOMMINIS 2005, in Havana, Cuba, during the first week in November. There were many different sections within the psychology conference, including one devoted to psychoanalysis, which is where we presented. Maureen’s paper was an analysis of the significance of the terrifying spectacles of the beheading of Nicolas Berg and the torture images of Abu Ghraib on subjectivity in post-September 11 U.S. culture; Steve presented a critique of transference-impregnated interpretations that fail to take the analysis of resistance into account; and I spoke on the convergence of unconscious mechanisms and hegemonic ideology in the creation of a bystander population in the traumagenic environment of post-9/11 America.

We learned from our Cuban colleagues about the history of psychoanalysis in their country. Psychoanalysis began a significant reentry into Cuban psychology by the late 1970s as a result of the collaborative efforts of Argentine psychoanalysts Marie Langer and Juan Carlos Volnovich, along with Cuban psychologists whose interest was supported by Fidel Castro. During the 1980s, biannual meetings – “encuentros” – took place in Havana between Cuban psychologists and Latin American psychoanalysts interested in the relationship between psychic and social reality and a psychoanalysis that includes an awareness of the impact of the sociopolitical surround on emotional experience. These “encuentros” were the forerunner of the psychoanalysis section of the larger psychology meeting just held in Havana. We learned that Cuban psychologists are very interested in psychoanalytic principles and clinical techniques, which they have been studying under the didactic and clinical guidance of Latin American and European psychoanalysts for some years now. The Lacanian orientation has become quite influential alongside others, including an amalgam of Kleinian, Bionian and object relations traditions. With regard to the issue of frequency within the state-funded mental health care system, from our discussions with Cuban psychologists we learned that many of them see patients multiple times weekly based on their assessment of patients’ need.

Finally, a coming attraction of our planned events at the April 2006 Division 39 meeting: our invited Section 9 panel will be on Saturday, Apr 22, 3-5 pm, and will be a thought-provoking contribution to the meeting. Titled “Losing a Country: Psychoanalysts Respond to Democracy in Jeopardy,” it features two brief presentations about previous historical situations in which psychoanalysts and their patients were deeply affected by the rise of authoritarian regimes, following these presentations, much of the time will be devoted to a general discussion with the audience about our reflections on the threats to democracy in the contemporary period and their psychosocial impact on individuals and groups. In addition, we have planned an exciting Section 9 reception for Friday, Apr 21, 6-8 PM, co-sponsored with the NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis. It features an art exhibit of Viennese artist Wolf Werdikier, called Hidden Images: Israelis and Palestinians and a dialogue with the artist about psychological trauma and its representation in his art. Many thanks to the hard work of our president-elect, Lu Steinberg, who made this unprecedented program possible.

We are entering the holiday season, so I imagine that most of us will be distracted for the next month or so. Please be sure to check the Section 9 listserve at the beginning of 2006 to see what your section for social responsibility will be up to!! Meanwhile, on behalf of the Section 9 Board, I wish all of you a healthy holiday season, mindful of the hopeful signs in the body politic that critical and progressive ideas are no longer on the margins.
Dr. X., a military psychologist and a member of APA, defines his current role as that of a consultant working on “violence prevention”. He agrees to participate in an interview with Karen Rosica, Psy. D. about this work. Dr. Rosica expresses at the start of the interview her hope to find out how Dr. X’s personal and professional life intersects with the larger culture, i.e., the U.S. government and the military. Dr. Rosica expresses to Dr. X. that she would like to “… understand what you do, how you think about what you do and whatever challenges or struggles you face in trying to make decisions about what you do”.

In spite of Dr. Rosica’s determination and best efforts in this pursuit, from the answers that he gave, I do not think that Dr. X. clearly answered those questions. I did not come to really understand the nature of his work. Instead, his descriptions of his work left me muddled and perplexed. I wondered if this was a deliberate attempt to not reveal information. I am more inclined to think it is because Dr. X. has not thought through the issues involved in what he is doing and thus cannot fully answer these types of questions.

The tone of Dr. X’s narrative reflects an honesty of motive. He really believes that what he is doing is the right thing and that he is making a contribution. He describes his work in a way that imparts his commitment to approaching his work with integrity. He repeatedly describes that he is at work in “preventing violence” and I believe he wants to do good. However, his exact methods are vague. He advises that “there is a lot we can do to prevent this violence”. But again, he doesn’t fill in the details. What can we as psychologists do to prevent violence? What works?

I wondered if he was doing chart review or clinical interviews or both. Or, if he were administering psychological testing or was involved in advising interrogators. I wondered about the behavior of those he evaluated, and their histories. He says he is involved in work “such as risk assessment of a person in U.S. custody”. His discussion of the “information” which he gathers is very general. I was interested to know about the “other information about other populations who have engaged in targeted violence” that he is relying upon in his current work. It would have been helpful to learn more of the details. Without such understandings, one cannot comment on what he does for the military and for the government. And although I believe he believes that what he is doing is good, I would like to make that determination for myself.

The extent to which Dr. X. glibly equivocates to the questions posed by Dr. Rosica was distracting. She asks him about a psychologist “trying to aid lawful authorities” and he responds “Lawful authorities – there is a tricky concept”; and then goes on to reference his faith in the American structure of government. When the question of “advising military authorities” is asked, Dr. X. again splinters the discussion by stating, “The military is a vast concept”. Dr. Rosica asks Dr. X. “How do you understand the debate that is going on?” and he asks “Which debate?”, admitting that he knows he is “tweaking” her but he does so because there are “a lot of different debates.” Dr. Rosica mentions to Dr. X. “the current controversy at APA” and Dr. X. responds, “Which controversy of the many APA controversies”. And so on.

As part of my own research conducted during the anticommunist movement on the 1980’s (Jacobs, 1987), I investigated the history of American psychologists’ involvement in the atomic/nuclear war foreign policy during the preceding forty-five years. I found that the roles which American psychologists (predominantly APA members) created for themselves from the time of the atomic bombings of Japan until just prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall were socially constructed (at many levels) and influenced by historical events both within the profession and in the larger society. These roles were complex and multifaceted. There were those psychologists–clinical, social, experimental and political--who were involved (in the days before the formal designation of “military psychologists”) in helping the military ease soldiers’ fears about atomic maneuvers and the dangers therein. At the same time, there were those psychologists (mostly designated as social psychologists) who believed that planning for atomic/nuclear war was wrong and all efforts by the profession should be directed at ending processes relating to armed conflicts that might be thus resolved. In all cases, there were specific ethical questions, value systems and influences from individual and social systems which determined the way psychologists approached this work. As the profession’s involvement in political psychology grew, so did consideration of these questions.

Upon being asked about “people who are disagreeing with the position of psychologists working at such places at Guantanamo Bay, Dr. X. replies that he is ‘quite puzzled. I don’t spend a whole lot of time studying that but I am hard pressed to … I can’t tell you that I’ve seen a thoughtful, data–based articulation about why psychologists should not be utilizing special knowledge about human behavior to help prevent targeted terrorist attacks.’ He goes on to conclude, “It’s hard for me to see why psychologists should be barred from trying to prevent violence”. He later says that “there are circumstances where psychologists can appropriately use special skills and experiences trying to prevent violence, including terrorist attacks.”

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Thinking about prevention comes to how might the appropriate authorities, be it in a school or otherwise, identify a person who might be on a path toward mounting an attack at the school? How might there be a careful gathering and review of information, particularly recent behavior of the person, so that people can look at communications, possible planning, weapon seeking, to offer a judgment, not prediction, to intervene because we feel uncomfortable living with non-intervening because there is a reasonable risk that without intervention this situation might get worse.

K. So if we can take that thinking into the current controversy at APA….

X. Which controversy, of the many APA controversies?

K. The question that has arisen about ethics and the role of psychologists in information gathering, interrogation and their affiliation with the military.

X. If we pose it as the psychologist trying to aid lawful authorities in preventing a terrorist attack on the U.S. …

K. “Lawful authorities”—there is a tricky concept.

X. I am still old fashioned enough to believe that we have a congress and executive and a judiciary and separate and equal branches of power and a constitution and laws as opposed to Smitty’s anti-terrorist collective or the APA Anti-terrorist Collective or the APA Save the World for Democracy Group or something like that which is going to kidnap people and save the world for democracy.

K. Your official position with the military is?

X. Consultant.

K. Can you give me a sense of what that usually involves?

X. It has involved a range of activities including trying to think about questions such as risk assessment of a person in U.S. custody, what information would you want to know if you had to make a decision or had to assess the risks that this person might pose to the U.S if released.

K. Are you ever confronted with a situation, like Guantanamo for example, where you had to advise the military authorities about prisoners?

X. Well first of all, you’re using a term ‘the military.’ The military is a vast concept. The concept of advising the military is such a wonderful idea. If only one could advise them. One might work with various organizations within the military or various people within the various organizations within the military but there is no one I know that advises “the military.”

K. The way you describe it, one gets the feeling one might feel they are pissing in the wind.

X. Well the question is does one feel that one is making progress. In these big organizations, one hopes that one is providing clear perspectives, teaching, and offering intelligible ways to think about human behavior which can ultimately be of use and be of help…So my expectation is that a lot of things are pissing in the wind but the question for me is do psychologists have something to contribute in these areas and, if so, can we contribute in a clear, data-based thoughtful way and in a way that is not arrogant, in languages that can be understood by people with daily operational responsibilities with the assumption that people, most of the time, are trying to do the best they can do.

K. How do you understand the debate that is going on?

X. Which debate? The only reason I’m tweaking you a little is in the same way that if one says consulting to ‘the military’ or ‘the debate,’ I’m aware of lots of different debates.

K. The debate about the ethical considerations of psychologists consulting, even at a distance, with those who are working in national security. That psychologists are helping those who might be behaving in ways that are inhumane to others.

X. For many years the U.S. government has tried to train the military about how to behave if they were captured.

K. Yes, SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape training).

X. There were a lot of psychologists involved with that over many years and it has had many components. I think the question, for example, that Jane Mayer in her New Yorker article was trying to explore was to what extent, if at all, were things used in SERE training “reverse engineered” in an effort to get some people in Guantanamo to talk….

K. Exactly.

X. OK. I’m not sure how accurate or not accurate she was. I guess I would put the question this way: If one is reasonably convinced that a given person who was in U.S. control had information critical to national security, say at Guantanamo, might there be a role for psychologists, as part of a team, to try and get this person to talk—about ways to get this person to talk. And if the answer to that question is yes, as part of the overall prevention of terrorism, then the question is how might that be done both ethically and technically. And those are worthwhile questions.

K. Do you have a position about that?

X. My position is yes. It is appropriate for psychologists who have particular training and experience to impart their knowledge in the service of trying to prevent violence and, as part of that, there may be knowledge and a perspective that psychologists bring that aid in convincing people who have knowledge about possible terrorist attacks who are in U.S. control to share what they know with the goal of preventing injury to people. My thinking comes from a belief in the importance of and the possibility that under certain circumstances better knowledge can lead to preventing violence. Rather than a more fatalistic attitude of whatever happens happens or as psychologists our role is to help people only after horrible things happen.

K. How do you understand the people who are disagreeing with this position?

X. I don’t know. I’m quite puzzled. I don’t spend a whole lot of time studying that but I am hard pressed to… I can’t tell you that I’ve seen a thoughtful, data-based articulation about why psychologists should not be utilizing special.

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**Embedded Lives**

*continued from page 1*

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The number 51 bus travels the length of Oakland, California, from the low-lying downtown core up to higher ground where the cluster of private psychological practices line College Avenue and onward toward the hills of UC Berkeley campus. The majority of Oakland citizens arrived as part of the Second Great Migration of former slaves and their descendents who left Jim Crow and the South for the wartime opportunities at the vast harbor on San Francisco Bay.

One day on my way to my psychoanalytic session, I had the pleasure of riding along this route with a little girl sitting beside me on her mother’s lap. She was a toddler, big enough by now to have her body run the length of her mother’s torso and her legs dangling even further. We usually think of marking the progress of growth in a child by measuring height from the floor to where their head reaches, as we would with a tree growing up from the forest floor. Many doorways in family homes have been used over the generations to chart the annual growth of children—penciled scratches scoring this year’s height, dated for posterity and accompanied by exclamations of “Look how much you’ve grown!” But unlike trees, children’s development is not exclusively from the ground upward. They begin in our arms and from this dyadic position we witness the lengthening of their body, as it inches gradually toward the floor. In this sense, from the holding environment of the parental embrace, a child’s growth is also downward as the toes make their way toward that inevitable moment when “Honey, you are too big to carry” constitutes a significant shift in the life of parent and child and within the symbiotic field of their object relations—that is to say, their intimate relationship.

The loss of this physical attachment of holding and carrying a child is a developmental watershed which invites as much of our psychoanalytic curiosity as we devote to weaning or language acquisition. The comfort evident in both the child and the mother in whose arms she lay on our bus ride was sufficient to explain why children are carried long after they have the capacity to walk.

The child’s head turned to the side and our eyes met. After a few moments I slowly and gently poked her hand with my finger. She moved her hand but did not act startled so we proceeded to make a little game of it, my reaching over and tapping her hand, as if I was getting away with something and appreciating that she was she was letting me get away with it. Neither of us smiled, for the enjoyment seemed to be in the play with the resistance.

After some of this surreptitious play, the child’s mother, who had been looking elsewhere, turned and saw what we were up to.

“I am having a little fun,” I said to her and smiled at being caught. She smiled and said she was surprised that her little girl was going along with it.

Mother told me that ‘she usually doesn’t let anyone go near her,” explaining that “anyone tries to get near her or Mommy and she puts up a fuss.”

“Well, the red polish on her nails is so pretty and maybe that’s why,” I offered.

“Oh, she saw Mommy putting on nail polish so she had to have some too. Whatever Mommy does, she’s gotta too,” she said with that wonderful mixture of maternal pride and bewilderment in her child’s identification with her.

“She must be a going concern now, walking and all.”

“Oh, yes indeed,” Mother confirmed enthusiastically, “she’s nineteen months now.”

“And getting bigger everyday, I bet.”

“You said it!”

The little girl listened as we spoke. Spontaneously, if tentatively, we had all become engaged with each other, giving our original play a relational context that included her bond with her mother.

Soon, their bus stop came and mother hoisted her bundle of a girl up further into her arms and we said goodbye. As they made their way to the door the child kept her gaze upon me. We watched each other with mutual intrigue.

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as the door opened and the sounds of the street poured in, she turned her attention to the world outside. Further up the hill, I departed the bus and headed for the couch.

Within a few days of this ride on the Oakland bus, black and white neighbors seated side by side, I watched then-President Clinton introduce Rosa Parks as a guest at the State of the Union Address. It was overwhelming to watch her dignified receipt of the thunderous ovation that greeted her. “Ms. Parks,” the President called out to her, “you may stand or sit as you please!”

I recall Freud’s remarks at the psychoanalytic congress assembled in Budapest in 1918 at the end of the war where, as Elisabeth Young Bruehl relates in her biography of Anna Freud, her father’s “address ended with a stirring vision of psychoanalytic physicians working in institutes and clinics, extending the reach of the therapy beyond the confines of the upper classes and into the ‘wider social strata.’ Freud hoped for the time when ‘the conscience of society will awake and remind it that the poor man should have just as much right to assistance for his mind as he now has to the life-saving help offered by surgery; and that the neuroses threaten public health no less than tuberculosis, and can be left as little as the latter to the impotent care of individual members of the community.’”

Yet, the immeasurable distance between psychoanalysis and the poor persists. The expanse between high and low ground leaves the children of Rosa Parks vulnerable to the winds and tides that overtake generation after generation of African-Americans. The absence of transference relationships that include the participation of the poor and integrate perspectives on the traumatic experiences of racism that separate us one from another, impoverishes not only the “poor man” but also psychoanalysis.

On December 1, 2005, we can best honor the fiftieth anniversary of Rosa Parks’ historic bus ride with a deepening conviction that the significance of the dream as articulated by Freud in psychoanalysis, in which we discover the meaning of our wishes and fears in relationships, and the dream as a radial vision of equality professed by Martin Luther King Jr., are as symbiotic as the bond I witnessed between mother and child on the number 51 bus while I was making my way up the hill to the Low-Fee Clinic of the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute.

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Honoring
ROSA PARKS

by Laurie Bell

Laurie Bell practices psychoanalytic psychology in Toronto, Canada

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knowledge about human behavior to help prevent targeted terrorist attacks. I have not seen this case made about why it is professionally or ethically wrong. I can imagine their perspective. I imagine that it says they will help people deal with things afterwards. Even with that analysis, it’s hard for me to see why psychologists should be barred from trying to prevent violence.

K. I want to read you a quote from the Amy Goodman interview. This is Michael Wilks speaking. “Psychologists can buy into a culture that it’s OK to use one’s professional skills in the interest of some higher imperative, in this case national security, at the expense of an individual who may or may not be guilty. So when Dr. Benkhe talks about working within good ethical practices my point is it can never be ethical in any way to help advise the military about how to damage people’s minds. Because they’re designed to destabilize people so that you will get information out of them. It cannot be ethical to engage in techniques even at a distance that are designed to damage people’s mentality when presumably the main purpose of being a psychologist is to heal their wounds.”

X. There’s a double set of assertions here. I’m not suggesting that anyone who has a career as a clinician sitting in an office seeing themselves as a healer ought to be jumping in around prevention kinds of stuff, and I certainly think there are potential role conflicts for someone who works as a healer, for a health care professional to, under those auspices, offer their knowledge in a different setting, to get someone to talk. That’s clearly problematic. That doesn’t speak at all to the questions about psychologists with particular experience and knowledge working to try and prevent violence. It may be he (Wilks) is making (he’s a physician) a sort of Hippocratic oath for us. I didn’t think The Lancet article was either factually accurate or conceptually made a whole lot of sense, particularly as it applied to a psychologist working to try and prevent violence, let alone the assumption about mind damaging or destabilizing. Put it into a different context. Suppose there’s someone who has taken hostages and one is a psychologist who has a fair amount of experience with those who take hostages.

And, there are people trying to prevent violence, trying to prevent the hostages from being injured. A reasonable person might say that this person has some knowledge that could aid the police to talk with the person so that he/she does not harm the hostages. Is that ethical for an appropriately trained psychologist?

K. The hostage taker has already committed a crime. It’s not clear that some detainees have.

X. He has not committed a crime because he hasn’t been charged with anything yet. He hasn’t been convicted. He’s engaged in behavior that has threatened the safety of others. He’s engaged in behavior that is potentially injurious to others but he’s not (yet) a “criminal”. So we’re talking prevention. In that context, would it be ethical to work with the legally designated people in this case, the police? I would say sure. Secondly, suppose we knew that the particular hostage taker started weeping when the subject of his mother was raised. Assume it’s a male. And when weeping he got a little more disorganized. Would it be bad or unethical to recommend to the police negotiator to raise the issue of his mother, which would be distressing to him? Which might permit police to intervene so that no one got hurt? I’m oversimplifying but…this is the quality of discussion. In 2001, in NY and Washington people committed massive violence and there is reasonable information, perhaps supported by the British underground attacks this summer, that for a range of reasons there are some people prepared to give their lives to inflict as many casualties as they can on civilians in the US and other places around the world. So it’s not a theoretical question about are the people prepared to do awful attacks against innocent people. Of course THEY say the attacks are on the World Trade Center are justified because those people are taxpayers so therefore they support the U.S. government so therefore they were military targets. To the extent that people use this as some justification for acts that can kill or injure many you get into a whole balancing kind of question. So, anyway, I don’t mean to get too passionate about this stuff. My patience for some of the public discussion, as in the Goodman interview, the gentleman from England says, “Oh yeah. I was in a building that was blood spattered and if the U.S. and England had not been in Iraq we would not have given them the justification for this kind of attack. And you step back and say, “Listen. Independent of how one feels about the U.S. activities in Iraq, how could there ever be justification for going into subways and killing all these people. And who is this guy to say, “Gee. It’s U.S. And England going into Iraq that, in effect, causes that kind of violence. I mean that’s a big leap to say that we deserve what we’re getting because of these policies. But that’s a very different discussion from are there circumstances where psychologists can appropriately use special skills and experiences trying to prevent violence, including terrorist attacks.

K. The interview goes on to say that in terms of ethics—to get into some idea the APA can always dictate whether its members are engaged in benign psychological techniques when the whole imperative in the Pentagon involvement and Guantanamo is to actually break people down….” As someone you might see as a bleeding heart liberal, these people are being detained with no right of habeas corpus, with no rights whatsoever.

X. Let’s say there is someone who has worked in an Al Qaeda camp and he is training people who are blowing up bombs but he, himself, never blew up a bomb to kill U.S. people. And he gets captured and sent to Guantanamo. Are you suggesting that this person should not be detained until a U.S. criminal court determines that he has committed a crime of bombing people.? I’m meaning to push a little bit beyond the innocent/guilty questions or the assumptions of U.S. criminal court process while not meaning to excuse awful things that dumb and/or not well-meaning U.S. government people have done to others. In fact, I do think some of the things the U.S. government have done are awful and inexcusable but I’m not so clear that all of it is.

K. I must say though, that I hear little conflict for you about these questions and about what the government is doing. You seem very clear.

X. I’m not in a chain of command. As a consultant I involve myself in activities that I judge to be consistent with my belief in the importance of trying to prevent violence. I know that for some people in various chain of command organizations it gets very complicated….As a psychologist I have great anguish about an enormous amount of what’s happening. And what has happened. And enormous disagreements with much current policy. But I believe that there is a genuine threat out there. And I believe that some psychologists have knowledge to help prevent violence mounted

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against our country.

K. I’m just thinking about the idea that none of those people have access to attorneys.

X. I’m not unsympathetic to the notion that people at Guantanamo have rights. I try to encourage as clear thinking as I can around what systems ought to be involved at what point. Having worked for years with various criminal justice systems it’s not always clear that the criminal justice system necessarily applies in the exact same way it might apply to someone who is arrested after committing a crime in the U.S. I think it is reasonable to assume some people at Guantanamo never should have been there and others should have been released a long time ago. I also think it reasonable to assume that there are some people there who, if released, would want to kill as many Americans as they possibly could. Some would not be able to be convicted in a United States criminal court right now because enough of the right kind of the evidence has not been gathered in Afghanistan and other places or because the information about their behavior was gathered using classified sources and methods and therefore cannot be introduced into a U.S. criminal court. So when you try to apply a U.S. law enforcement standard when there is not the same capacity to gather the kind of evidence that if the same behavior had occurred inside the U.S. law enforcement professionals could collect and, it becomes very sticky. These are not simple “guilty” or “innocent” questions, at least as I see it.

K. What standards ought to apply?

X. That’s a tough question and I would not suggest to you that the U.S. government has done a great job on that but I would also suggest that I am not convinced that those criminal standards are the best way to think about that.

K. How do you think psychologists should participate in decisions surrounding the war on terrorism?

X. Well, I think it is reasonable to assume that psychologists should not work for the military or not involve themselves in “violence prevention” through work with detainees or others caught up in the dynamics of armed conflict. But I need to know more about what kinds of violence I think that’s a different perspective.

K. What some might say is that we shouldn’t risk imprisoning even one person falsely.

X. Maybe. They should be glad they live in a country that permits them to say that.

K. Boy, I want to have you on my side.

X. Perhaps if the discussion is cast more in terms of responsibilities to try to prevent certain kinds of violence I think that’s a different argument than the one about whether you are refusing people’s rights. And I have not seen much discussion about this. I’d like to see some of the Guantanamo discussions or the military, intelligence and terrorism discussions put in the context of, “If a reasonable person would say that some psychologists have a particular expertise or experience that might aid in preventing certain kinds of violence, should they be ethically barred from offering that knowledge to legally authorized persons?” I have not seen a lot from that perspective.
psychologists such as Dr. X are doing. My research led me to conclude that there is a very important role for psychologists in matters of war and peace. APA has recognized such a role and both it and the Division of Military Psychology have developed ethical codes which guide such conduct. There is also a sophisticated literature in political psychology which illuminates this domain. It is up to the individual psychologist to decide the role that he/she will assume. Nonetheless, I believe it is important to reflect about one’s role in such complex domains.

I do commend Dr. X for his willingness to speak with Dr. Rosica and to try to answer her questions. His responses underscore how important it is that psychologists devote serious attention to their professional roles in our post-9/11 historical period.

The problems of the “War on Terror” are not going to be easily resolved. And many well-meaning individuals, such as Dr. X, will provide their psychological expertise to the military and the government. What Dr. Rosica’s interview underscores is that we as psychologists/psychoanalysts have a vital role to play in matters of war and peace. This is an area which should not be left to the purely political scientists. Psychological knowledge and in particular, psychoanalytic psychology, both theory and practice, hold the potential for crucial contributions. Dr. Rosica’s interview with Dr. X. suggests some possible directions.

We may want to look at how psychoanalysis fits in with our current national security situation. We might want to sponsor dialogues with military psychologists and national security policymakers to assess our role as psychoanalysts with an emphasis upon how ethical determinations in these roles are made. We might even want to first hold a Town Hall for the Division as to how to proceed.

Reference: