

1950s–1960s: Dr. Ewen Cameron Destroyed Minds at Allan Memorial Hospital in Montreal

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Cameron was an internationally prominent psychiatrist who developed torture techniques on his involuntary hospitalized patients — mostly women. His brutal techniques involved a three-stage method for “*brainwashing*” in order to eliminate the will and establish control: first, “*mental depatterning*” achieved through drug-induced coma; massive neuroleptic drug cocktails induced extended sleep lasting up to eighty-six days. The second stage involved extreme, high voltage multiple electroshock “*treatments*” three times daily. Finally, while the person is in isolated confinement, in LSD altered states of consciousness, and deprived of sensory stimulation, adequate food, water, and oxygen, the subject would be bombarded by “*psychic driving*” by use of a football helmet clamped to the head with taped messages played for hours non-stop “up to a half-million times, messages such as “my mother hates me.” (McCoy, 2007)

Cameron’s techniques have no therapeutic validity whatsoever; they were comparable to Nazi medical atrocities. After his “*treatments*” patients were unable to function; they had been reduced to a state of infancy. Case of Gail Kastner: “*The shock treatment turned the then 19 year old honours student into a woman who sucked her thumb, talked like a baby, demanded to be fed from a bottle and urinated on the floor.*” At that point her affluent family abandoned her and she lived in poverty. John Marks observes,

“Ewen Cameron did not need the CIA to corrupt him. He clearly had his mind set on doing unorthodox research long before the Agency front started to fund him. . . In Cameron, the CIA had a psychiatrist, conveniently outside the United States, who was willing to do terminal experiments in electroshock, sensory deprivation, drug testing, and all of the above combined. By literally wiping the minds of his subjects clean by depatterning and then trying to program in new behavior, Cameron carried the process known as “*brainwashing*” to its logical extreme.”

The dehumanizing nature of his methods were published in premier medical journals without any complaints from other psychiatrists; Cameron read papers about “*depatterning*” with electroshock before meetings of his fellow psychiatrists; and they rewarded him, electing him president of the American, Canadian, and World Psychiatric Associations. The human significance of his dark legacy was brought to public attention when nine of his Canadian victims filed lawsuits in 1980s — twenty-one years after Cameron’s death. Despite the horrific abuse, the American and Canadian psychiatric establishment closed ranks. A Canadian government dismissed the CIA’s role as a “*side issue*” or “*red herring*”; Ottawa’s Justice Department denied legal responsibility, offering each victim a nugatory \$20,000 “*nuisance*” payment. (McCoy, 2007)

According to Leonard Rubenstein, an attorney for plaintiffs [Mrs. David Orlikow et al. v USA, 1988] Tom Beauchamp, a leading American bioethicist was an expert witness for Cameron's estate, arguing that Cameron's "treatment" complied with the norm and practice of the day. (Rubenstein LS. "Psychiatric experimentation: the lessons or history," The Journal of the California Alliance for the Mentally Ill, 1994, Vol. 5, p. 22-27) As a result of the lawsuit, the CIA agreed to pay \$750,000, the maximum allowed under U.S. law, to settle a case without conceding liability. (Beyond Nuremberg, *ABA Journal* March 1997; News accounts of five legal cases at: [The Law and Mind Control — Mind Control Through Five Cases](#))

Donald Hebb and Ewen Cameron were competitors; they did not collaborate, though Cameron incorporated Hebb's sensory isolation techniques into his own diabolical arsenal of psychiatry's instruments of torture. What Hebb and Cameron both have in common is their "contribution" in establishing the scientific foundation for CIA's two-stage psychological torture method. (McCoy, 2007) Indeed, Hebb and Cameron's "contribution" as "pioneers" who designed the psychological paradigm for torture used by the CIA was acknowledged by *The McGill Daily*, in 2012.