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PSYCHIATRY, POLITICS AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM

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Introduction: The misuse of psychiatry by politics during dictatorships has mainly happened in the first half of the last century during the Third Reich and Stalinist period in Soviet Union. Even today the psychiatric diagnoses may be changed in an abusive way for politic purposes as they were in the past. This may undermine the credibility of psychiatry. The psychiatric professional organizations only recently start to discuss and investigate this issue.

Methods: The authors made a literature review in historic and psychiatric books. They also visited some memorial sites where psychiatry and dictatorship were sadly connected in history. Using as main example the abuse made by psychiatrists as a politic instrument in the Third Reich period, the authors aim to make a historic review about the relationship between psychiatry and politics.

Conclusion: Abuse and misuse in psychiatry may also easily be done nowadays. Psychiatry is a science with not so clear boundaries, what is normal or abnormal may be sometimes unclear mainly if not seen in a serious and ethic perspective. Because of this psychiatrists should be very clear about their position in ethics, science and society.

The psychiatric professional organizations should face the facts of the tragic relationship between psychiatry and politics in history, discussing this issue more openly for an appropriate understanding of the past and for preventing new errors in the future.