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An Overview of Political Torture in the Twentieth Century

Abstract:

The present essay focuses on political torture during the twentieth century. It takes a multidisciplinary approach, because it entails insights from history, politics, ideology, anthropology, psychology and literature. The aim of the present essay is to discuss the relation between "Classical" torture (in the past centuries) and "Modern" torture (in the twentieth century), analyzing the phenomena in a comparative perspective and paying attention to the hidden and unconscious motives behind historical facts.

What I am interested in is the mechanism by which, in the twentieth century, torture has been reintroduced particularly for political prisoners - that means torture for ideas and conscience, torture as a technique of power and not merely as a technique of punishment. What torture destroys first is the dignity and privacy of the victim; only then does it destroy the victim's freedom and integrity. For this reason, every torture is an act of rape, even a symbolic one. I mean this in psychological terms, not as a demonstration of feminist vocabulary. Every touching of the victim's body is rape, emphasizing the "virility" of the torturer. First of all, the torturer wants to become a master of his victim's body, and only later, a master of the tortured person's mind. I include imagination in the concept of torture, imagination being one of the tools of the act of torturing. In torture, imagination becomes, in my demonstration, a never-ending weapon.

Torturable v. non-torturable individuals. The twentieth-century breakthrough: brainwashing and electroshocks. The Armenian genocide. The Gulag and the Nazi camps. Experimental torture. Mao, the re-educator. The modern European machine. Fin-de-siecle horror: Chechnya and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Africa: tribal torture and imported torture. South-American "Catholicism." Fidel, the exterminator.

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Arab v. Israeli "lessons." Brainwashing in Korea and Vietnam. The Khmer Rouges and their purification techniques. Common tortures: the "airplane," the falaqa (phalanx), the pau de arara and the picana.

All civilisations are known to have practiced torture. However, it was only during the Middle Ages that its programmatic deployment began. In antiquity, when there existed restrictions regarding the applicability of torture, humans were divided into torturable and non-torturable individuals (Amnesty International 1973, p. 31). In ancient Greece and Rome (the first empires, after the Egyptian one, to have partially systematised torture), slaves were the most likely victims of torture, though in certain cases of "treason," free citizens could also incur such punishment. Furthermore, Roman law permitted the torturing of Christians in public spectacles. In time, the leaders of the empire collapsed all "plebeian" types under the category of torturable humans. Torture was extensively resumed and gradually legalised during the Middle Ages. That in the twelfth century the victim's confession should have served as the "queen of proofs" (*regina probationem*) only further enhanced the legitimacy of torture. The Inquisition frantically used it against "heretics," engendering thus the paradoxical phenomenon of Christian torturers. Since heretics pertained to the category of "infamous" defectors from God, torture could be regulated under criminal law; from the thirteenth century onwards, a certain doctrine of suffering started gaining acceptance. A further essential element emerged in the fourteenth century: the professional, state-authorized accuser, who specialized in exercising physical coercion in order to gather evidence for judicial proceedings. The prosecutor was thus a clog in the wheel of both the penal and the religious systems (Peters, p. 63). Most European countries had abolished torture by the time of the Enlightenment; in the centuries that followed, torture was, nonetheless, far from being completely eradicated, since it continued to be applied, albeit sporadically, in the colonies. The twentieth century managed to compensate, through both concentration and diversity, for the absence of torture in the "enlightened" age: the Armenian massacre, the Gulag and the Holocaust were the most eloquent instances in this respect. The increasing importance granted to the political police was, undeniably, one of the causes that led to the reappearance of torture. In the United States, American policemen who hankered to get confessions from serious felons began practicing torture on a quasi-systematic basis. While officially abolished After WWII, torture uncannily registered an explosive comeback during the latter half of the century, when it was rather consistently employed by the South American Juntas, by the Eastern and African dictatorial regimes, and by Moscow's satellite-countries (which were still caught in the grip of the Gulag).

Daniel P. Mannix considers that it was the Soviets who revolutionized torture in the twentieth century, particularly through their scientifically refined brainwashing techniques. Alec Mellor confirms that torture was reintroduced in the twentieth century primarily because of the emergence of the totalitarian state (with the USSR as its prototype), and because of the development of the National Security services, which relied upon a specific type of interrogation. All torture scholars agree that the history of mankind has been strewn with atrocities. The novelty brought by the twentieth century resided in the hybridisation and refinement of torture techniques. The Nazis' verification of their victims' resilience to torture reached "scientific" precision. In Algeria, the French, with their electrified instruments, were often compared to inquisitors (Mannix, p. 9). Crucifixions have been used since Roman times, while the Assyrians are known

to have practiced impaling. Various cultures have resorted to punitive mutilations. Every type of torture used in the twentieth-century has a precise antecedent in the past. For instance, the rape of humans by specially trained animals was known to the Romans (whose preference, in this respect, was for dogs and horses). Similarly, the practice of "baking" victims in ovens was not confined to some obscure area in South America, since it had also been used in days of yore. With the Inquisition, and then again, with the twentieth century, torture became methodical, being transformed into both an "art" and a "science" (Mannix, p. 45). None of the tortures applied in the twentieth century was new or original: every one of its instruments and techniques had had a long-standing tradition. There were, nonetheless, two exceptions: brainwashing and electric shocks. They only became feasible given the technological and psychological breakthroughs of the twentieth century. Notwithstanding this, torture was practiced both by the so-called non-civilised states and by the civilised, more advanced ones. Atrocities might have been more widespread in the primitive countries, but France, Great Britain and the United States were by no means averse to the practice of torture. Part of the mercenary torturers from South America had, in fact, been trained by British or American masterminds.

The first twentieth-century landmark in the revival of torture practices on a grand scale was, in all likelihood, the Armenian massacre performed by the Turks between 1915 and 1917. Bacry and Ternisien's term of genocidal torture (characteristic of the Holocaust) can also be applied here. What the Turkish authorities undertook amounted to an "ethnic purge", similar to the purification acts carried out by the Nazis (against the Jews, Russians, Poles, and Gypsies), by the Serbs (during the 1992-1995 inter-ethnic war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and between 1997 and 1998 in the Kosovar region), and, once again, by the Turks (against the Kurds). The massive deportation of the Armenians was accompanied by horrendous acts of cruelty: beating of all sorts, eye gouging, nail pulling, food and water deprivation, and genital mutilation.

The second turning point in the twentieth century was marked by the Bolshevik revolution and its gory aftermath. The "red terror", conceived by Lenin and carried out by Stalin, was a prophylactic measure designed to maintain the revolutionary "purity". It was a means of making very clear in whose hands power was concentrated. Insidiously disseminated in the beginning, the "red terror" acquired a rather disciplinary character later on. The emergency tribunals had their own part to play here, and the Cheka (Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage) would accept no higher authority above its own. Lenin had been far from "seraphic": he had been an advocate of mass terror. Torture was applied by the Cheka members on a massive scale, and the district commissions became specialised in various forms of bodily coercion. As this repressive organ underwent several name changes (GPU, NKVD, MVD, KGB), its disciplinary violence became increasingly more accurate and programmatic. It was only well after Stalin's death, perhaps in the post-Khrushchev period, that terror took a more refined turn. The prisons, the concentration camps, the colonies and everything that went on inside them started being replaced with psychiatric establishments that were still part of the punitive regime. The training for this sort of psychic terror, which persistently deployed brainwashing procedures, had been carried out during the infamous mock trials in Moscow. There, through punitive techniques that are still not fully known today, party tycoons had been forced to admit their guilt. For a long time torture had been insistently recommended for obtaining confessions (irrespective of its target). When Iagoda and Iejov were in charge of the repressive organ, terror was blind; Beria, however, introduced the so-called "expert" dictatorship. Although the atmosphere in the Gulag

became more lenient after Stalin's death, terror continued to be exerted to a somewhat blander extent well into the Khrushchev period. The aftermath of the "Thaw" was marked by the onslaught of the trials to which dissidents and alleged "parasites" were subjected. Brezhnev's rule brought about a revival of Stalinist terror (albeit in milder terms): dissenting intellectuals (writers and scientists) were placed under arrest and exposed to various brainwashing processes. Resistance against the Soviet regime was deemed insanity (for this itinerary of terror in the USSR one should see Leggett; Levytsky; Conquest 1998; and Courtois et al.).

The torture practiced by the Bolshevik regime was spectacular at times; even at its most ordinary, Soviet torture was the most widely disseminated, given the many decades during which communism served as a repressive state machine. In its incipient phase and during the great trials, victims were bludgeoned with sand sacks (or with anything else, for that matter), left to hang from their arms (tied at the back), or forced to stand on tiptoes. Very frequent forms of torture included hammering victims with chair legs, sleep deprivation (the conveyor belt), starvation, water denial, blackmail, incarceration in icy-hot cells, and mock executions. There also existed cases of sexual mutilation, nail pulling, slashing, hot-iron burning, skin flaying, eye gouging, rape (mostly perpetrated against "non-Bolshevik" women), maiming by aggressive dogs or rats, submersion into acid tubs, burning one alive. Even nose tickling with a feather was used as a somewhat more "stylish" torment. Torture was tacitly used at the beginning of the Bolshevik regime and gradually acquired legal consistency. Rare were the times when it was provisionally prohibited. Solzhenitsyn has emphasized that since a list containing specific forms of torture was never compiled, it was up to the investigators to make use of whatever techniques they could think of. Solzhenitsyn does enumerate several of these techniques in the first volume of *The Gulag Archipelago*, cataloguing them in terms of their importance and specific paraphernalia. The most degrading form of humiliation (urinating on the victim or into the victim's mouth) was also used. What broke down, however, any resistance from the victim was ceaseless interrogation combined with sleep deprivation. The most efficient techniques for obtaining confessions included severe beating, psychological torments (threats to the victim's family, culminating with recordings of their screams), blinding through continuous exposure to light, ultra salty diets, and water deprivation. In the work camps torture was conceived as slow extermination through exhaustion. No specific torture was necessary in the Siberian area, since the cold added the finishing touch to the victims' suffering. Doctors were sometimes present during interrogation phases. (For various analyses of torture in the USSR, see the works of Leggett; Beck & Godin; Conquest 1990; Medvedev; Courtois et al.) Whereas in the first stages of the repression both physical and psychological torture would have been extremely violent, under the auspices of the KGB there was a certain refinement into psychiatric and pharmacological forms. Dissidents, who were labeled as "schizophrenic", were subjected to strict confinement (interment in psychiatric establishments) and sensory deprivation (their bodies were not violently touched; hence, the apparent absence of torture in their cases). The commissions for psychiatric evaluation comprised KGB-doctors; these hospitals were only apparently run by the Ministry of Health, since they were almost entirely dependent on the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Victims were not tortured as such, but were, together with real psychopaths or common criminals, reduced to a "vegetal" life through medicine-induced brainwashing (Fireside).

The most spectacular - because the most scientific - tortures from the first half of the twentieth century were those practiced by the Nazis. We shall, nevertheless, take a

look at the most common forms of torture first. In the Nazi concentration camps torture almost invariably began with the beatings that accompanied the victims' internment: they would have been slapped, poked with bayonets, forced by the guards to hit one another, and would have had their entire life's beliefs and principles trampled over. No convict who entered these camps would have been exempt from such a treatment, which, lasting for half a day, was meant to traumatize them, by forcing them into all sorts of humiliating or absurd postures. What the Nazis aimed at was depersonalising and transforming the victim's behaviour into that of a perpetually grounded child; furthermore, the convicts would be stockpiled into an amorphous mass, bereft of its future and of any sense of time, for that matter (Bettelheim 1967, pp. 124, 130-131). After this initiation into the concentration-camp routine, the applicability of torture would become more and more individualized. Amongst the ordeals convicts had to go through were the following: the so-called "25-to-the-arse" (the 25 blows could easily turn into 50 or even 100); sole beating; having water dripped down one's ear; physical "exercise" (countless knee bends and broad jumps, endless crawling, somersaulting, racing or boxing, which victims were sometimes forced to practice until they passed out or even died because of sheer exhaustion); "Stalin's crib" (victims would be left to hang on a shaft in a rather uncomfortable position, having their buttocks canned all along); the "bunker" (cells or underground holes with waist- or neck-high water, in which detainees were made to stand for one up to several days); the "tree" (leaving victims to hang, arms tied behind their backs, from a tree: most often than not, this torture killed or permanently crippled victims); hurling inmates down from tall platforms and maiming them in the process. At times, specially trained Alsatian hounds would be used to mutilate prisoners. Although illegal, the beating was applied by guards, by zealous officers or by the *kapo* members. Women were almost as likely to be exposed to torture as men were. Absurd forms of torture were also practiced: genuflecting victims, for instance, had to hold rocks in their hands or to carry boulders from one place to another. Captured escapees and saboteurs "benefited from" special tortures. There were also apparently non-violent tortures, such as the "Saxon salute" (victims would have to stand still, mimicking the salute without flinching, under any weather conditions). Another such torture was "calling the role": checking the convicts' attendance on their return to the camp would last for hours on end. When escape attempts were successful, the prisoners would be "roll-called" for as long as it took to catch the runaways. Quite a few would die from exhaustion, as a rule. (For this infernal inventory, see the works of Lingens-Reiner; Karst; Kogon; Kraus & Kulka.) Generally speaking, the Nazi camps brought about an "end to aesthetic representations of death" (Améry, p. 43): the detainees were terrified not of death itself but of the manner in which they were to incur death.

Intense violence was essential to the Gestapo methods, which comprised electric shocks, hair and nail pulling, snow burial, whipping, brutal maltreatments, the "submarine" (asphyxiation induced by forceful submersion of the victim's head in water), genital injury (immersing the victim's testicles in hot water), chest jumping (breaking the victim's sternum and ribs), the "iron helmet" (basically an instrument known since the times of the Inquisition and adapted by the Gestapo, which consisted in a crown that exerted pressure onto the cranium), hanging by the feet, etc. (Bernadac; Hajsman; Kogon; Saurel). A sort of multiple torture (physical, psychological, and moral), which David Rousset calls "industrial" torture (p. 109), was applied to the victims destined to be gassed in the extermination camps: inhuman transport conditions, thrashing upon arrival at the camp, immediate separation from family members, public undressing, detailed physical exams

meant to deprive victims of their hidden jewels or money, and chasing naked victims to the gas chambers. All these were checkpoints on an infernal itinerary which victims destined to be gassed had to carry out in full (Sereny). The gas chamber had been introduced in the United States in 1924, as a means to enforce the death penalty for serious felonies, but it was the Nazis who gave it such abominable scope. Starvation was universally applied (no wonder that cases of cannibalism existed in the Nazi camps, as well as in the Gulag). When gas chambers were out of order or proved to be insufficiently large, victims were killed by firing squads; any possible survivors were interred alive in common burial pits.

The Nazi regime was also outstanding for the more unusual, experimental tortures it deployed: camp detainees underwent laboratory testing for solutions to prolonging or ending life. In Dachau, Buchewald and Ravensbrück, it was allegedly for "the benefit of science" that Nazi doctors tortured victims of sub-Arian extraction, such as Jews, Russians, Poles, Gypsies, and mental retards. The depressurising chamber tested human resistance to high or low pressure, and the results were then used to improve the performance of German pilots. Human guinea pigs died slowly and in great pain; after their death, their internal organs were sent to laboratories for dissection and examination. Another test entailed the congealment of the human body, but checking blood and skin resistance to the cold was not the end of that experiment: it also had a more perverse touch, since frozen victims (primarily male) were brought back to life with the help of female detainees who had accepted to play the parts of "hot prostitutes." Furthermore, there were convicts who were inoculated with malaria so that vaccines against it could be produced, or who were infected with staphylococci so that adequate anti-bacterial medication could be discovered. There also existed bone- and organ-transplant experiments, meant to assist regeneration research, or experiments with seawater, testing human response to salinity. Typhus experiments did not rank low in this diabolical science laboratory: victims were inoculated against typhus and then exposed to massive typhus infestation. Gruesome sterilization experiments, undertaken with a view to exterminating the "sub-races", were carried out mostly in Auschwitz. They gave vent to myriad sterilizing techniques, which included, for instance, injecting caustic liquid in the genitals, X-raying the victims, or surgically removing testicles and ovaries, which were thereafter studied in laboratories. The irradiation method presupposed that after a certain time, male victims would have their excitability checked either through coerced masturbation, or by having levers inserted into their anuses, which triggered erection. Approximately 200,000 individuals underwent sterilization procedures. Vivisections were also practiced, alongside anatomical experiments on twins and dwarves. In Strasbourg, under the Nazi occupation, one of the eminent German scientists proposed compiling a collection of "Judeo-Bolshevik" skeletons, skulls attached; the collection was supposed to comprise individuals slaughtered in the death camps, whose corpses had been preserved in alcohol and who were destined for scientific investigation. Cases of euthanasia also need mentioning, death by lethal injection being applied to the so-called "degenerates." Euthanasia was also inflicted by starving victims to death: Lifton mentions the example of a Nazi doctor who would go to great lengths to explain this "gentle" euthanasia to his victims, emaciated children whom he gracefully allowed to starve for a few more days (1986, p. 2). It is important to note that one third of the subjects of these experiments died, while the remaining two thirds agonized and were crippled for life (for more information on experiments in the Nazi camps, see Cohen; Feig; Kogon; Lifton 1986; Nyiszli). The German nation would have, however, to pay dearly for the Nazi regime: German

POWs and even ordinary citizens would be interned in the Soviet Gulag, where they would be sentenced to hard labour. Moreover, the people who had suffered under Nazi occupation would wreak revenge on German ethnics after WWII: this is what happened, for instance, to the Sudets in Czechoslovakia (Glaser & Possony, pp. 428-432).

I should like to discuss several more cases of torture from the first half of the twentieth century in Asia. Before the closure of WWII, the Japanese treatment of, especially, American POWs partially resembled the Nazi treatment of victims in the death camps. Immediately after their placement in Japanese custody, American POWs would be beaten, whipped, battered, exposed to extreme weather conditions (sun burns causing them brain disorders), forced to participate in "death marches," and deprived of food, water and sleep (Dyess). Women would have water poured down their throats or up their anuses until their stomachs became bloated, at which point their torturers would pound them until water gushed out. The one psychological torture that was really effective was brainwashing, a technique which the Chinese communist regime used extensively, having borrowed it from the Soviets and refined it to such an extent that many other dictatorial regimes craved it. At the beginnings of communism in China, physical torture was prohibited; what was preferred instead was psychological torment, which was supposed to have a pedagogical effect. It was only in the latter half of the twentieth century that the Chinese authorities resorted to electric shocks (applied to the mouth and the genitals), to physical abuse of all sorts, to searing their victims with boiled water or with cigarettes, to hanging victims by their hands, feet, or arms (the "airplane"), to live burials, needles inserted under one's nails, uncomfortable postures, sleep deprivation, pepper sniffing, etc. Physical violence was really exacerbated on invading Tibet: Tibetan monks and nuns were subjected to genital torture, either through electrification or through the use of specially trained vicious dogs. When cooperation with the USSR was under way, bacteriological experiments were carried out on Chinese political detainees, whose resistance to bullets, bombs and various maladies was also tested (Domenach).

At the outset of Maoism, the Chinese had used a milder form of brainwashing (*his-nao*): the victim had to undergo strict isolation, followed by harassment by other, re-educated fellow convicts. Torture was unhurried and apparently painless. When brainwashing failed, re-education through work (*Wu*) was used. Although imported from the Soviets, brainwashing also had Chinese roots. The *hsiao-tsu* ritual, whereby any social and political deviation could be prevented or critiqued, while purveyors of such anomalies could be recuperated and remedied, dates back to ancient Chinese history. *Hsiao-tsu* is derived from *pao-chia*, rather methodically structured groupings which had proved very effective in enforcing social control. As Martin King Whyte shows, twentieth-century *hsiao-tsu* served to put the "thought reform" into effect. A crucial stage in the rituals of the *hsiao-tsu* (tight-knit social groups comprising farmers, workers, students, family members or convicts) was the voicing of guilt and of the desire to redress it. *Hsiao-tsu* may now seem a less violent form of brainwashing, but it was so insistent on ceremonial self-criticism that it practically degenerated into intoxication. The entire ritual was punctuated by a hierarchy of punishments. Robert J. Lifton considers that another source of brainwashing practices was a perverted brand of Confucianism, grafted on the communist ideology (1989, pp. 388-392, 397). As Lifton maintains, what Chinese re-educators took over from Confucianism, albeit in an altered form, were: an imperious need for the re-educated to be sincere; self-criticism (which for Confucius meant real self-purification and spiritual cleansing); and the progressive rebirth of the purified *qua* re-educated subject. Harmony was to be re-established not between the neophyte and the Earth-

Sky, but between the Pavlovian-conditioned victim and the communist ideology. At the opposite pole from Confucianism was the cult of enthusiasm, which was another prerequisite of brainwashing; this pertained, in all probability, to the new religion which, consciously or not, communism claimed to be. The re-educated were thus enjoined to manifest themselves as zealous "believers." Jean Pasqualini recounts a famous brainwashing case history, which highlights both the instructive and the punitive aspects of re-education (Ruo-Wang & Chelminski). Brainwashing was later on exported into all the major areas of Chinese influence. It was notoriously used against American POWs during the Korean and the Vietnam wars: like the victims of the infamous Moscow trials from the Stalinist period, these Americans would give in to physical and psychological torture and confess. Cambodia also borrowed the brainwashing technique, using it alongside its genocidal backlash against its own citizens.

As far as the latter half of the twentieth century is concerned, I shall proceed with mapping torture into unitary geographical spaces, insisting, where necessary, on a more detailed analysis of certain cases. I shall start with an overview of the European area because of its paradoxical legacy. Although the old continent is credited with being the cradle of human civilization, it has by no means proved immune to the practice of torture. Countries like France (in Algeria), Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, Great Britain (in Northern Ireland), as well as all of Moscow's satellite countries (where communist regimes and, implicitly, torture existed) are outstanding through having programmatically deployed torture practices. Special cases were those of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the last decade of the twentieth century, and of Chechnya, where, on the very cusp of the third millennium, Russian soldiers indulged in veritable torture frenzy.

The French sent their torturers overseas during the Algerian war of 1954-1962, tremendously diversifying the range of physical violence: "grills" (electric beds), "submarines", cigarette burns, the *gégène* (electric shocks applied anywhere on the victim's body, but with special preference for the victim's genitals), sitting on the mouth of a bottle, various other mutilations. All these were also enforced in the midst of Paris, where the "tested" included Algerian students (*The Gangrene*, 1960). According to certain analysts, the French appear to have used brainwashing exclusively on Algerian intellectuals (Fanon, pp. 287-288). Spain launched torture campaigns against the Basque nationalists (ETA members, in particular). Typical tortures included: the "bag" (having the victim's head inserted inside a plastic bag and leaving the choking sufferer to hover between life and death); the "submarine" or the "bath" (submerging the victim's head in a recipient filled with filthy water, urine or saliva); electric shocks; leaving crouching victims to hang on a shaft, followed by beating their soles; and knee crawling. During the Salazarian dictatorship in Portugal, the police resorted to torture against all political dissenters.

Greece deserves special mention here, since during the Colonels' dictatorship (1967-1973) torture functioned as a foundational gesture for the establishment. The heavy bureaucracy served to protect the torturers; of further assistance was the sympathy exhibited by the United States, subject to obvious manipulation by the Greek officials. It was entirely thanks to the Scandinavian states that the truth about torture in Greece was brought to light. Torture had also been practiced during Metaxa's dictatorship at the turn of the twentieth century, but it only violently broke out when the Colonels' dictatorship began. In the beginning, torture was used for extracting information, but in time, what was aimed at was intimidating the population and terrorising the student movements. Torturers relished applying the *falanga* (sole beating), stern and skull pounding (until victims would vomit blood), electric shocks, blows to the genitals, shov-

ing cloths dipped in excrement down the victims' throats (a kind of "submarine"), hair and nail pulling, cigarette burns, pumping water up the anus, putting washing or chilly powder into the victims' noses, mouths, on their eyes, or forcing them to abuse hallucinogens. When torturers stopped short of making their victims crack, they would attempt to turn them into "lunatics" (Amnesty International, 1977).

After the Armenian massacre, Turkey found another minority on whom to inflict torture: the Kurds (together with any political dissenters to the several successive power regimes). The cruelty of the Ottoman legacy had a great impact in this case. The most frequently used torture was the *falaka* (sole beating); also customary were forms of torture that included: electric shocks, maiming the victims' (male or female) genitalia, rape, cigarette burns, or the insertion of various truncheons (whether electrified or not) into the victims' anuses and vaginas (Cousins; Zana).

When in 1961 Alec Mellor commended the British police for not using torture, he was quite unaware of the milder ordeals (compared with those in use in Greece and Turkey) that the Irish, the IRA members and the alleged orthodox nationalists would soon have to undergo. Facing accusations of sanctioning tough interrogations, the British government initially disavowed its endorsement of physical persecution, only to later engage in heated parliamentary debates on what was permitted or not in torture. Quite significantly, the British authorities' refusal to cooperate with Amnesty International was adamant. The Irish who were tortured by the British police experienced the "wall" method (having to stand still, facing a wall, for hours or even for days on end). Electric shocks were sometimes an option. There were, then, other painful postures: among the most remarkable was the "windmill" (arms stretched out, without moving). Victims would have their stomach and head pummeled, their hair pulled out and their genitals smashed. By far the most common were, however, sleep deprivation and aural torture (Murray). All this was only put an end to by the government when the public opinion started voicing serious protests against torture of any kind, that is, only after the British army in Northern Ireland had declared the legality of the so-called "in-depth interrogation".

As for the end of the twentieth century, Europe's attention was especially drawn by two cases: Bosnia-Herzegovina and Chechnya. In the latter region, Russian soldiers tortured the Chechnyan ethnics through electric shocks, cigarette burns, dogs trained to inflict injuries, and rape, which functioned, like in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, as a means of ethnic cleansing. Between 1992 and 1995, the interethnic war from Bosnia-Herzegovina (which was also to break out later on in the Kosovar region, this time between the Serbs and the Albanians) produced a veritable epidemic, or, rather, a routine of torture: in the Serbian concentration camps violent beatings, rapes and emasculations wreaked havoc. Victims would be pounded until mutilated in the, by now, notorious "death camps." Targeting Muslim women, rape became mass torture, hinging on ethnic cleansing. On the other hand, the Soviet Gulag and the Nazi lessons had been learned, and learned well, since victims were tortured slowly, through squalor, starvation and dehydration. Humiliations abounded: the detainees were forced to eat sand or faeces, to sodomise the others or be sodomized (Gutman; Hukanovic). In the same geographical space there were also Croat or Muslim camps in which the Serbs were the victims; however, torture never reached the atrociousness of the Serbian camps, even though excesses were also registered (Marinovic). The Chechnyans' ordeal consisted in violent beating, whipping, genital maiming, electric shocks, and, last but not least, collective rape. The mercenary soldiers who perpetrated such acts were usually under the influence of drugs.

On the African continent, torture was conceived and enforced by the military. Confession was indispensable for conviction; hence, the "justification" of torture. The fact that throughout the course of the twentieth century, Africa was divided by tribal and internecine strife, by *coups d'état*, military putsches and religious discords was also reflected in the way in which various political regimes in those countries resorted or not to torture. African tortures were often imported from elsewhere, but there was also a continental flavour attached, since several of them evinced the heritage of tribal cruelty (particularly those tortures which black people inflicted on other blacks): ritualised cannibalism, for instance, where the item destined for consumption was a live human being. In South Africa, Rhodesia and Namibia, where the dominant policy was that of the *apartheid*, torture was rather methodically applied for extensive periods of time. Torture here was an administrative practice, indeed, given that the police received thorough training in administering pain. The most common forms of torture were electric shocks and the "chopper" (hanging the victim, hands spread or tied behind the back). Conceived as a vent for racial hatred, torture functioned in South Africa as a redoubtable system of ordeals. It comes as no surprise that the police here used Gestapo methods (Foster, Davis & Sandler). It was mostly in South Africa, unlike in most other African countries, that torture was turned into an official state policy.

However, this was also partially the case in Algeria and Rwanda. By the end of the twentieth century, Algeria had learned the French "lesson" and enriched it with specifically Arab atrocities. Torture became sexualised, aiming at the utter defilement of the victim: seared genitalia, emasculation, sodomy (with the help of objects), urination onto the victim's face, or lashing the victim's genitals. Besides these, other forms of torture were also commonly practiced: electric shock (rather widespread throughout the entire African continent), whipping, beating in all shapes and forms (with truncheons, cables, or belts), the *falaqa* (sole beating), the "submarine" (immersion of the victim's head in various liquids), the use of dogs trained to rape, burning the victim's flesh or hair (with cigarettes, or welding lamps), the "chair" (tying victims to chairs, and rocking them so as to cause the victims' collapse and face injury), etc. (Adt'Embarek; Comité Algerien des Militants Libres de la Dignité Humaine et des Droits de l'Homme). By the end of the twentieth century in Rwanda, the civil war had veered into genocide and ethnic cleansing, with Hutu militias consistently mutilating their Tutsi victims prior to killing them. Women would have their breasts severed or their wombs pierced with arrows and spears. Mutilation particularly targeted those bodily areas that were markers of Tutsi ethnicity (fingers and noses); sometimes victims would have their arms and feet cut off, being left to bleed to death (Des Forges). Amnesty International statistics show that torture was practiced throughout Africa, with tremendous upsurges of violence (limited, though, in time). During the dictatorship of Idi Amin in Uganda, a torture deemed to be amusing enjoined detainees to crack each others' heads open. Furthermore, a specifically Ugandan torture, named *kandooya*, was widely used here, consisting of tying victims with ropes so as to cause them paralysis. A case where torture was only used for a limited time period was that of Morocco, where prevalent were: the *falaqa* (sole beating); the "airplane" (hanging victims with their arms and feet tied to metallic poles); cigarette burns; *le perroquet* (the "parrot's perch" - a torture which consisted of incessant blows to the victim, who was hanging head down from a metallic beam, hands tied to the legs); the "submarine" (drowning victims in water); and dog rape (Amnesty International, 1986).

America seized the world's attention through a systematic and generalized enforcement of torture during the military dictatorships from the Hispanic areas. In North

America, the United States did raise occasional problems through sporadic cases of racial torture, primarily through the ritualistic lynching of black individuals by the Ku Klux Klan. The abuses perpetrated by the American police also generated substantial concern. Although the electric chair was introduced in the United States in 1889, it was never used here for torture purposes, being restricted solely to enforcing the death penalty for serious felons. What was rather alarming, however, for the United States, was the implication of its military staff in training approximately 57,000 torturers from Latin America (Feitlowitz, p. 9); if there were any torture manuals, they would have been drafted in Spanish. Another source of concern comes from the role played by the US military in provoking political regime changes in the region, through the support given to the local Juntas. By no means negligible was also the North-American export of torture expertise in the Vietnam War (even though the Vietnamese clearly outdid the Americans in terms of the cruelty to which their POWs were subjected).

Torture had been practiced in Latin America during the first half of the twentieth century, but it was only in the latter half that it became an outstandingly violent phenomenon. Most of the countries in this area authorized the use of torture in the name of national security. Several military regimes promoted torture as a state policy despite their never officially endorsing it. The "death squads" (commando groups specialised in abduction, torture and instant execution) were a testimony to the fact that the military Juntas had assimilated not only the Nazi, but also the Soviet "model", despite most of the victims persecuted, tortured and assassinated here having fostered a leftist ideological orientation. The Church was the most vocal protestor against generalized torture, notwithstanding cases of clerical collaboration or passive complicity with the torturers.

Brazil was amongst the first South-American countries to evince a penchant for torture, in the period between 1964 and 1979. The prevalent tortures (sometimes carried out in front of the victim's family) were of a combined mental, physical and sexual, nature. The military would go so far as to include torture as a "scientific method" in their CVs. There even existed torture training sessions, exemplified to the students on guinea pigs such as beggars and political convicts (*Brasil: Nunca Mais* 1985). The one torture that made Brazil famous and was exported into all the major countries in the region, as well as on other continents (Africa, for instance) was the *pau de arara* (the "parrot's perch"). The victim's body would be tied up, wrists firmly joined to the ankles; it would then be hung and twisted around a "perch" (possibly a lever), and left to dangle in this crouched position (suspended between two tables, half a meter above the ground. The victim would then incur head, feet and genital blows and would have to go through electric shocks. It was a method that left no traces and did not automatically cause the victims' death, provided that they were untied every other hour. Torture victims could also undergo electric shocks; they could be left hanging by their feet, or have their bodies seared. Frequent were: chemical or drug torture (the so-called "truth serum"); the "cooler" (isolating the victim in a frozen cell); the "wooden penis" (used for rape and sodomy); and the skull masher (used by the communists and the Nazis, but in actual fact, inherited from the arsenal of the Inquisition).

During General Pinochet's rule of terror (1973-1990) in Chile, torture was introduced as part of the state policy. Military centres were equipped with torture instruments, and stadiums were turned into gigantic concentration camps, with specially designed chambers where electric shocks could be applied. Chilean torturers were trained by their Brazilian "brothers", and were provided with logistic support by American officers. Torture registered many nuances throughout the Chilean territory: acid and ciga-

rette burns (including the searing of the victims' testicles); execution simulacra; mass rape (beating or molesting pregnant women, as well as dog rape); the forced ingestion of excrements; drowning in oil or hot/freezing water (the "submarine"); mutilations (of the nose, tongue, genitalia, or eyes); the *falanga* (sole beating); the "telephone" (the simultaneous hitting of both ears, often to the point of piercing the eardrums); the "grill" or "chicken on a grill" (known as the *parilla* - strapping the victim to metal bedsprings, connected to electric power); the use of spiders and rats (on the victim's body and inside the victim's mouth); the *picana* (the "prick" inflicted with a metallic pole operating on direct current); and, of course, the *pau de arara*. In time, the torture of choice became the electric one, since it was considered to be "classical" and "clean." Juvenile victims were not exempt from any of the above mentioned: they were kidnapped and interned in re-education camps where they had to undergo torture. There were even cases when the male members of one and the same family were forced to beat one another to the point of disfigurement. Torture was usually assisted by doctors (García Villegas).

Argentina (1975-1983) took over the methods of its neighbouring countries, using torture as a priority police technique and state policy. A new species of victims was created: *los desaparecidos* (the disappeared). They could be tortured in all manners possible and executed thereafter, since their arrest was not officially recorded anywhere. Predominantly used were the *picana* (the electric "prick," whose symbolical function was that of *sparagmos* - dismemberment, like in the myths of Dionysus, Orpheus and Osiris - cf. Graziano, pp. 210, 303); the "telephone"; the "submarine" (combined with electrocution); and the *parilla* (the "grill"). There was even an original torture, whereby a victim's hands and feet would be tied to a chopper, which would take off and fly for an approximate period of fifteen to thirty minutes. Less often, one should concede, were the cases of impalement. Torturers would often practice karate on their victims. Political convicts wearing hoods would sometimes be forced to fight among themselves (Paoletti). The bodies of the *desaparecidos* were often mutilated after execution, so as to prevent their being recognized; an alternative was to drug them and hurl their bodies into the sea, so that sharks could devour them.

Incidents of abominable cruelty occurred all over the South-America continent, yet nowhere was torture as systematically enforced as in the above-mentioned countries. Other areas of torture, however, also deserve special mention. In Columbia, torture victims were mainly farmers, who were suspected of collaborating with the guerrillas, or political convicts, against whom torture was used as an interrogation technique. There also existed cases of "social cleansing", targeting mainly homeless children, drug addicts, tramps and prostitutes. In Uruguay, North-American and Brazilian instructors were brought to deliver torture "lessons." Here torture included: "standing guard" (standing still), the "telephone," the "submarine," electric torture in all its forms, the "airplane" (hanging victims from their arms), the "rider" (forcing the naked victim to sit for hours on end on a metallic rod shoved between the legs), live burial, burns, psychiatric torture, and even aggressive dogs (*Uruguay Nunca Más* 1992). The tortures used in Paraguay were: the *picana*, the "bat" (hanging victims by their wrists), the "submarine," and the "foetus" (forcing victims to adopt a crouching position for hours). Bolivia was the scene of beatings, cigarette burning and hot-iron branding, rapes, mock executions, hanging victims by their feet, head down, and sleep deprivation. The *picana* was the prevalent form of electric torture. Sometimes needles were inserted under the victims' nails.

In Central America three countries stood out through the sheer fanaticism with which they adopted torture as an instrument of state policy. In Guatemala, it was both

the official army and the guerrillas that practiced extremely violent forms of torture: burning, castration, mutilation, skinning, mass rape, and electric shocks. All these were usually performed in front of an audience, since the desired effect was a spectacular one: this explains the incidence of those horrific ceremonies (crucifixions, burnings at the stake, slitting the bellies of pregnant women open and extracting their foetuses). Mutilated corpses were thrown into the sea, into abysses or volcano craters (*Guatemala Nunca Más*, 1998-1999). The customary tortures in Salvador involved scalping, acid burning, castration, rape, evisceration, live burial and burning at the stake. Death, as well as the torture that preceded it, was conceived as an abominable spectacle, and the victims' carcasses were also disposed of into the sea or volcano craters. In Nicaragua, it was not only the Somozists (rightist fanatics) who committed horrendous acts of torture; the Sandinists (leftist fanatics) also resorted to torture, even though to a slighter degree and not in the exalted, savage manner of Somoza's clique. In the last decade of the twentieth century, Mexico waged torture campaigns against real or imaginary Zapatists, who would have to suffer from beatings of all sorts, electric shocks and rape.

In so far as the Caribbean areas are concerned, Haiti under Duvalier's rule stood out through the treatment it enforced upon its political convicts: they were incarcerated in underground cells, where the *tontons macoutes* militias practiced the *pau de arara*, mutilation, or sodomisation(sodomy) (the insertion of a hot iron rod into the victim's anus). Castrist Cuba systematically resorted to torture; a certain kinship between Cuban and South American torturers can be noted here, although Fidel Castro's acolytes were communists, while the latter clearly espoused rightist principles. Torture had also been practiced, though in much milder forms, during Batista's dictatorship. Despite being communists, the Castrist torturers gladly adopted several "classical" Gestapo methods, such as: the "bell" (the victim's head was placed inside a bell that tolled continuously); the "coffin" (confining and leaving the victim to suffocate inside a coffin-size space); electric shocks; starvation; the use of dogs that had been specially trained to maim. Since the country was rife with concentration camps, those who tried to escape by sea were massacred on board the refugee boats, either through shelling or shooting (*El presidio político en Cuba comunista* 1982). Daytime beating orgies became a routine, while summoning detainees to the torture pavilions went according to strict schedules. Also practiced were drug torture, psychiatric abuse and brainwashing (fairly similar to the Chinese method), as part of a re-education, or rather, rehabilitation, program (Calzón; Valladares).

In the Near East, torture was used for extracting confessions; all the countries in that region resorted to more or less systematic uses of torture against primarily, though not exclusively, political detainees. During the Shah's reign in Iran, common forms of torture included: the *falaqa* (sole beating), the electric grill, or sodomy with electric rods. At the time of the Islamic Republic, the authorities aimed to convert the prisons into rehabilitation and re-education schools: here, the convicts were forced to study the fundamentalist religious doctrine, to repent and convert themselves so as to be accommodated by the new society. It was only thus that they could regain the status of human beings (*Adam*). Under duress, re-educated Iranians gave interviews that were broadcast on national television. Repentance was obtained only through long-term torture (Abrahamian). Iraq waged torture campaigns particularly against the Kurds: electric shocks, the *falaqa*, cigarette burning or hot-iron branding, nail pulling, sprinkling salt onto the victim's eyes, ear, nose and eye maiming, and castration. Sometimes detainees were obliged to strike blows at one another (*Saddam's Republic is the Republic of Horror* 1991). In Saudi-Arabia, American counselor for torture were used; torturers resorted

mainly to electric shocks, mutilation, whipping, and, occasionally, a forceps-like instrument for skull squashing. Syria favoured the use of electric shocks (mostly to the genitals), sexual abuse, nail pulling, mutilation, burning, and hanging. Libya also had an affinity for electric shocks (to the genitals or to head areas), as well as for the *falaqa*.

Whereas Arab methods were notorious for their viciousness, an astonishing case in the region, given its systematic deployment of tough interrogation techniques against the Palestinians, was that of Israel. Israel officially sanctioned and legally authorised (through the Landau Report) the use of "moderate" torture - a clear misnomer, given its excessive violence (Human Rights Watch 1994; Gordon & Marton). The legal status of modern torture in Israel was dependent on its acceptance as an administrative practice. The moment torture gained official endorsement, it witnessed a tremendous diversification of techniques, each with its own name or nickname. After the act of torture was completed, both the torturer and the tortured victim had to fill out forms; in other words, Israel's promotion of torture was by the book. Accomplices to torture were not only the police, but also the doctors who assisted with the application of electric shocks to the victims' genitals, with inflicting burns and with seeing to the wounds wrought by attack dogs. The most common technique was *Shabeth*, a combination of ceaseless sleep deprivation with uncomfortable body postures (the "banana" position, for instance). Finally, the Supreme Court (having in view the intervention of the Public Committee against Torture) officially prohibited torture against Palestinians political prisoners (decision no. 5100/94). In the Occupied Territories, the Palestinian fundamentalists tortured, in their turn, the alleged collaborators with the Israeli authorities, copycatting the methods they themselves had experienced at the hands of the Israelis.

As for the Asian continent, we have already mentioned the cases of Japan (during WWII) and China (outstanding for its brainwashing, as well as for its later, more violent, techniques). Torture was temporarily practiced by all the Asian states, but it was in limited areas that aggressiveness acquired a programmatic character: Korea, Vietnam, India and Cambodia. Both South and Northern Korea made use of electric shocks to the genitals, burning, and brainwashing. In Northern Vietnam, American pilots captured during the war were most often made to suffer from excruciating body suspensions, whippings, sleep deprivation, beatings, gangrene-inducing handcuffs, paralysis caused by tight body wrappings, and, of course, brainwashing (for which, like in Korea, a more advanced method was used than in the case of the witness-assisted Chinese re-education). Authorities in Southern Vietnam practiced different methods: the "airplane" (hanging victims by their arms), sole beating, electric shocks, rape, burning, skin piercing with needles (left to fester for days on end), the "submarine", the forced ingestion of salty water and liquid soap until they would be absorbed into the lungs and stomach (followed by heavily pummeling those organs). Political convicts were crammed inside the so-called "tiger kennels". The Indian police used beating, electric shocks, rape (there were even extreme cases, such as those of an eighty-year-old woman or of a one-year-old infant), cigarette, acid and candle burnings, chilli powder introduced into the victim's rectum, nostrils or eyes, whippings, pouring hot wax inside one's ears, faeces and urine swallowing, the "foetus" and the "Z" postures, jumping on the victim's chest and back, the "airplane" and the "telephone" (Amnesty International 1992; Akhtar).

The case of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979) was tragic. At first, the newly empowered radical communist regime practiced torture in an indirect manner (through starvation, forced exodus, and exhaustion of the population); then torture was deliberately inflicted to obtain confessions. In the ostensibly non-violent stage,

the Maoist brand of brainwashing was prevalently applied in order to "purify" victims of their former creed. In the beginning, the Khmer Rouges can be said to have avoided torture proper, preferring executions and genocidal actions instead. In actual fact, the atrocities occurred at such a rapid pace that they could not be assimilated with torture, at least not from a temporal point of view, since executions were carried out rather summarily. The simplest form of torture and extermination at the same time was deportation: the population had become emaciated and skeletal, their bodies were sore with pustules, some went insane, others committed suicide, invalids would be executed and cadavers were left to rot since they were considered to be fertilising the ground! Minors (aged six and above) were constrained to work in concentration camps, very much like slaves; young girls were made to marry illiterate males (a sort of social-political marriage); forced labour camps proved to be extermination camps. All in all, torture became in Cambodia a new form of slavery. Incessant beatings were frequently applied to anyone, anywhere. Amongst the prevailing torture techniques, nail pulling, the "submarine", eye gouging, evisceration, the "airplane" and the "Chinese drop" were customary (Heng & Demeure).

At the end of this long (geographical) catalogue of torture, I should probably outline several techniques shared by the countries and political regimes which practiced torture throughout the twentieth century. Several factors influenced the manner in which certain torture recipes were either transferred or inherited from one country to another (or even from one continent to another): specialised equipment (purchasable or not), and the availability of torture instruction and training. The most frequently applied forms of torture (apart from electric shocks, which were practiced worldwide) were: the "airplane" (with all its variants: the "tree", the "chopper", the "bat", the "dove"); the *falaqa* or *falan-ga* (sole beating); the "submarine"; the *pau de arara* (in all its versions); and brainwashing (in the USSR, in China, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Algeria and Iran). The distribution and dissemination of torture techniques was not haphazard, through paradoxes did occur. For instance, the "airplane" was used by both the Nazis and the South Africans (and their neighbouring countries), as well as in Vietnam, Cambodia and India (and in all the countries entering their sphere of influence). This torture originated in the medieval *strappado*, considered to be the "queen of torture"; its origins, however, also point to its historical usage in Japan, for instance, where it was known under the name of *Gomon*. The *pau de arara* was widely used on the South American continent; outside it, it is known to have been applied in Africa (under the name of le *perroquet*) or, in adapted forms, in Asia. The "submarine" or the "bath" (including their dry version, the "bag") was widely disseminated: a method initially used by the Gestapo, it was later on used by the French in Algeria, as well as by the Greeks, the Turks, or by South-American torturers, reaching as far as the Asian continent (Vietnam and Cambodia). The "Chinese drop" was known in Argentina as "the torture of Tantalus." The "iron helmet," taken over by the Nazis from the torturers of the Inquisition, was later on adapted by the Brazilians and by the torturers in the Near East. Dogs that had been specially trained to maim (or to rape, in certain cases) were used by the Nazis, the Algerians, by South Americans, and by the Israelis. Sodomy and castration were specific not only to the Arab areas, but also to Hispanic America. The "bell" (introducing the victim's head inside a metal container which was hit continuously until deafness installed) and the "telephone" (the twin blow, as it was known in Haiti) were most familiar to South American torturers. Sleep deprivation was particularly favoured by the Soviets and the British. The "grill, a.k.a. "chicken on a grill" or the "crowbar", was used by several African countries, but it also reached

Asia, in the so-called "Buddha's wheel" version" (in Sri Lanka). The Vietnamese, the Ugandans and the authoritarian regimes in the Arab area resorted to a rather peculiar way of tying victims up and causing them paralysis or gangrene. Forced exodus and "death marches" were also typical of Ukraine and Siberia, as well as of Nazi Germany, or Cambodia. Torture and re-education were practices to which minors were subjected in as diverse areas as China, Cambodia or South America. At various times, certain countries, such as the USSR, China, Great Britain or Portugal regarded psychological torture to be the most conducive to the individual's destruction.

That similarities between these torture regimes were more blatant than their differences is rather obvious, irrespective of whether physical suffering, tough interrogation or more moderate torments were the torture technique of choice (for other terms of comparison as to the various forms of torture practiced throughout the twentieth century, see Ackroyd, Margolis, Rosenhead & Shallice; Amnesty International 1973, 1984). It is essential to acknowledge the existence of a certain pattern in torture (as well as of a tradition or, rather, a *Weltanschauung*, as I have maliciously referred to it); nevertheless, creativity in this field seems to be without limits. The jargon used for the various forms of torture is likely to bring, at a simultaneously official and underground level, another, parallel world into being - a world to which "ordinary" human beings (unless they themselves should become victims of torture) are barred access. Whether instantiated in South America as the *parilla* (the "grill" or the electric bed), or in the French colonies as *le petit déjeuner* (the forced ingestion of one's own urine), torture represents an act of deliberate violence, carried out against alleged dissidents by the representatives of a certain power regime. Furthermore, although it is the context that engenders one's turning victim or torturer, individuals nevertheless do have a choice in becoming one, rather than the other.

Degrees of torture: "black" (physical) torture. "white" (psychological) torture. Various blends. Recent breakthroughs in the field. The stages of brainwashing. "Circles" of torture: blood, waste, and madness.

Certain torture scholars appear to go to extreme lengths when attempting to classify torture into twelve categories: inquisitorial (aiming at extracting information); vengeful; intimidating; terrorist; exterminating; indoctrinating (seeking to recuperate "heretics"); therapeutic (purportedly meant to heal the "sick"); ritualistic (designed to meet traditional needs); ludic-sadistic; domestic-didactic (reforming the victim's consciousness); instrumental-didactic (serving as training practice for torturers); demonstrative-instrumental (witnessed by other potential victims, playing the part of spectators); and experimental-scientific (*Domination et torture*, p. 42). For the sake of avoiding such conked-out terminological claptrap, most of the analysts have resorted solely to the two major types of torture: physical and psychological (inclusive of the moral component as well). Physical torture appears to be the most widely practiced, for no other reason than the scarcity of torturers who would be "sophisticated" enough to apply psychological instruments of torture. Michel Foucault tersely calls these "anatomies of punishment" (1977, p. 101). Irrespective of how many differences there might be between physical and psychological torture, their aims coincide: namely, torture should be carried out thoroughly. In the specialists' jargon, psychological torture is sometimes called "white" torture. This is not supposed to refer to its non-violent nature, but to its more astute dissimula-

tion techniques as compared to "black" torture. Psychological torment eschews the so-called liquids of pain, foremost amongst which ranks blood. Kate Millet (p. 92) conceives of psychological torture as part of physical torture, since one's mind and will are supposedly subordinated to the body's capacity to endure pain; conversely, besides flesh injuries, physical torture also includes the components of psychological torture.

Frequently practiced physical torments include: beating (with all its degrees: slapping, pounding, whipping, etc.); electric shocks (applied in whatever manner); difficult postures; sleep and water deprivation (whether after salty meals or not); malnutrition; hot/cold alternation; the "submarine"; burnings; nail, hair and teeth pulling; castration; rape; inserting various objects into wounds; sand or snow burials, etc. The most widely practiced psychological forms of torture are: isolation (against a noise background of pain screams); verbal abuse; mock executions; ceaseless interrogation; denuding victims in front of their torturers; rape threats or menacing victims with the use of aggressive animals; forcing victims to witness the torture of other victims (sometimes members of their own families); making victims consume their own urine and faeces; and, last but not least, brainwashing. It is on this last item in the list that I shall dwell in more detail.

In its incipient form, brainwashing was introduced during the great Stalinist trials staged in the USSR. The method itself was a hybrid between Czarist Ohrane procedures and communist ideology. It envisaged the victims' reaching a stage where they would be at a loss as to their own identity, doubt themselves, and produce genuine confessions, becoming, in a few words, "dead souls" (Lauret & Laserra, pp. 25, 42). The Maoist brand of brainwashing was differently inflected: it was subsumed to the idea of revering a political leader whom the others had to obey unconditionally, since he was the only one capable of convening eternal order. The prerequisites of this order were total obedience and absolute discipline. Re-educated individuals were bereft of their personality, reduced to the level of zombies, to be then recreated as automata deprived of their will (Glaser & Possony, p. 498). Stalin himself endeavoured to achieve this; however, despite his personality cult and grandomania megalomania, he actually failed to keep up with his Chinese neighbours. Edward Hunter suggests that an alternative term might be applied to the Chinese method, distinguishing between brainwashing proper and brain-changing. Whereas the former represented ritualistic indoctrination, the latter was far more dangerous, insistent as it was on transforming and reshaping the victim's personality in accordance with the torturer's aim and intent. What brainwashing stands for today is in fact brain-changing, given that exalted indoctrination was indiscriminately applied to the Chinese, but it was only those victims who underwent re-education in prisons and in camps that experienced personality changing. It is nevertheless true that prison-universities did exist, where re-education was "voluntary," and that all the Chinese theatre plays and films purveyed the notion that re-education was a model to be followed by the entire population. Some of the re-educators would go so far as to boast that the Chinese method could successfully brainwash even God Himself (Hunter, pp. 10, 38, 131-134).

During the Khmer Rouge reign of terror, when informed about brainwashing, Cambodian farmers presumed that they would be knocked dead in the head. Brainwashing was actually understood as annihilation of the self (Sethi, p. 33). The Chinese method though was based on a perverted metaphysical mechanism. Whether known as brainwashing or "thought reform," it entailed the victim's symbolic "death" and "resurrection" via confession. Resurrection could only occur after the stage of confession and the detailed analysis of the victim's "sins." Victims were forced to assess their entire lives, as a sort of recap before death; only then were they allowed to be "reborn." In actu-

al fact, however, by relinquishing their former selves through conversion, victims experienced real psychic "death." Prison wall gazettes illustrated the two paths that the soul of the re-educated could take: the "light" path and the "dark" path; both cases evinced the subtle eschatological maneuvers that re-educators resorted to. The latter were the "priests" taking "confessions" from their victims. All in all, re-education amounted to psychic lobotomy, aiming to eternalise the "gymnastics of obedience" (Domenach, pp. 164, 185, 186). A detailed re-education case-history is recounted by Bao Ruo-Wang, also known by the name of Jean Pasqualini. In his opinion, the aim of the Chinese method was to transform the victim into an android, programmed not only to disavow, but also to forget his past. Prevalent techniques to this end were indoctrination and violent harassment. The detainee was incarcerated together with other, re-educated, prisoners, who would incessantly reprimand and discipline him. Days and, sometimes, nights on end were spent learning the communist ideology by rote, practicing self-criticism and staging exposure sessions. The more advanced, re-educated inmates verbally abused the victim according to well-defined rituals. Subject-detainees had to fabricate monstrous deeds that they had purportedly committed, and to be willing to confess to virtually anything, for that matter. This, which represented the most difficult stage in the re-education process, was called the Trial: those who refused to undergo it or failed to pass it risked going insane.

Psychic torture was prevalently used in the post-Stalinist period. In the USSR, convicts with a conscience were committed to psychiatric asylums and subjected to abusive treatments, by virtue of the disease which was fabricated for them and which was termed "atypical schizophrenia." No longer avowing the notion of political detainees, the Soviet state preferred to consign its dissenters to psychiatric establishments, on the account that "madmen" had to be calmed down. This explains why many psychiatric hospitals in the USSR hosted exclusively dissidents; such asylums were annexes of the KGB, where "socially dangerous individuals" were confined. An infamous case is that of the Serbski Institute in Moscow, where Professor Lunz, whose tasks included diagnosing recalcitrant "patients," was actually a KGB colonel (Lauret & Laserra, pp. 146-147). In other areas such as in Moscow's satellite countries, psychic torture took other forms. For instance, in ordinary prisons, victims were often celled together with truly sick detainees (such as lepers, psychopaths, etc.) The "Russian roulette" was practised both in Vietnam and in South America. In the latter area, victims were forced to watch comedies or films featuring scenes of torture without being allowed to show any facial or emotional reaction (like smiles, laughter, frowning or crying); any breach of this injunction brought about corporal punishment. As Weschler maintains (p. 137), a similar prohibition forbade victims to draw, for instance, flowers (seen as a symbol of defiance against the torturers' callousness), fish (emblematic of the first Christians' resistance), or pregnant women (the torturers saw this as the dissenter's planting the "seed" of revolt inside the woman's womb). Torturers throughout the world are known to have relished torturing members of the same family in front of one another, as well as having them mutually torture each other (the psychological effect targeted both the "spectator" victims and the tortured themselves).

Despite certain differences between them, physical and psychic torture are not always clearly separated, since both involve elements specific to the other (as stated by Amnesty International, the organisation that has most thoroughly studied this phenomenon). The term itself, *tormentum*, has been interpreted as deriving from *torquens mentem*, which means the twisting of the mind (Peters, p. 55); hence, physical torture and psychic torture constitute a bi-cephalic body. I shall resort to the examples of sleep

deprivation and ceaseless interrogation, which are generally considered to be forms of torture that leave no traces. However, the victims' skulls became their torturers' arenas and megaphones: though they were never physically touched, these victims experienced physical and mental torment, including hallucinations. Torture may have been invisible in the case of strict isolation, but it often transformed victims into the "living dead." A rather absurd form of torture was practiced in South Africa: the victim was supposed to picture himself sitting on an imaginary chair: this painful bodily posture was meant as a reminder that his mind and his body underwent simultaneous agony. At other times, psychological tactics supplement physical agony: while having water poured into his nostrils, a victim was told that should one single drop of water reach his brain, he would go insane. Terrorised at this prospect, which went beyond physical suffering, the victim broke down and accepted to make a false confession (Chadha, p. 5). In the case of mock live burials, one question that may arise concerns which side prevails, the physical or the psychological? Real suffocation or psychic terror? "Death marches" were considered to be a subtle form of torture, since the victim's body was not directly touched or tortured, leaving this on the sun, the cold, on famish and thirst to accomplish. What about the "macabre symphonies"? These were staged both by the communists and by the Nazis, then used in South America, and at the end of the twentieth century in the Serbian camps from Bosnia-Herzegovina, where victims were forced to sing incessantly, for half a day, until the "concert" inevitably ended in an uproar of screams, wails, cries, moans and babbles. The "Chinese drop" (applied to the forehead, to the shaven skull or inside the ear) was one of the most consummate combinations of mind-body torture. On the one hand, the body was afflicted and the headache proved to be atrocious (similar to the one inflicted by electric shocks); on the other, the victim risked going insane.

Technological advancement and scientific discoveries made possible a diversification of ostensibly non-violent torture practices. In the case of chemical torture, "drugs" or the "truth serum" were used by the Nazis, the Soviets, as well as by the South Americans or the Vietnamese. Psycho-surgical procedures included lobotomies practiced especially on common-law prisoners. Cases of experimental brain-implants with micro-electrodes (in the United States, for example) have been recorded. Psycho-physiological torture, based on the study of Pavlovianism and behaviourism, appealed extensively to the Machiavellian minds of repressive regimes all over the world. Various punitive systems eagerly exchanged their coercive methods. Analysts have noticed, in this respect, strange cases of synchronism and paradoxical influence. The group psychotherapy practiced in the US prisons, for instance, resembled brainwashing techniques; the so-called "attack therapy", whereby exorcism and liberation were achieved at the cost of harassing the prisoners bore strong resemblances to the Chinese Trial (Lauret & Laserra, pp. 267-268). All this evidence points to the dissemination of torture (in its most sophisticated and camouflaged forms) in all the regimes and institutions bent on the idea of correcting or "healing" the individual (prisons, hospitals, universities and schools with punitive systems).

Torture victims occasionally made reference to the "circles" or "bolgias" of suffering, suggesting the existence of a certain hierarchy of torments, whereby torturers programmatically conceived of various degrees of pain. Electric shocks could be applied from the outset, but they could also follow in a long line of ordeals that the victim had to endure. Rape, for instance, was never used from the very beginning unless it was envisaged as a shock therapy. During the Shah's reign in Iran, there were no less than six stages of torture, as follows: beating, leaving the victim to hang in mid-air, rape, electric

shocks, nail and teeth pulling, and mouth and tongue branding with a hot iron (Baraheni, p. 15). Torturers deliberately planned the cycle of torture, so as to make their victims aware of hovering between life and death. In Uruguay a torture formula known as "1-2-3" entailed forcing the victim to adopt several painful postures, each combined in its turn with other ordeals (*Uruguay Nunca Más*, p. 88).

The clearest example of the "bolgias" is brainwashing. Analysts who have examined this phenomenon mention several tiers of re-education, based on the central idea of the death and rebirth of personality. These would amount to twelve, as follows: 1. the siege against the victim's personality (forcing the victim to adopt the persona of a child being rebuked by adults); 2. compelling the victim to assume a complex of guilt; 3. the victim's self-betrayal; 4. reaching the breaking point when the victim begins to fear self-annihilation; 5. the apparent weakening of the harassment, meant to cause the victim to give in; 6. extracting the self-blaming confession; 7. channeling the victim's guilt; 8. dishonouring the victim, who is shown that he is not what he thinks he is; 9. accommodating the victim with this situation; 10. the final confession; 11. the victim's rebirth and identification with the aggressor; and 12. liberating the re-educated victim (cf. Lifton 1989, pp. 66-85). The most likely stage for the victim to be attacked in was that of confusion, when, through a paroxysmic stimulation of guilt, the victim became incapable of deciding between fact and fiction. The accusers would not rush the victim but adapt to the rhythm in which the latter built on his guilt, up to the point of accepting the birth of the "new man". However, if there was any hesitation on the victim's part, the solution resided in the so-called "fight sessions," during which the detainee was contrapuntally assaulted by various aggressors. "Thought reform" also depended on the creativity of the re-educator (Griffin, pp. 128-134). This, in broad lines, is the story of brainwashing, to which I would nevertheless add a sequel: victims who seemed to be excessively re-educated appeared as suspect to the interrogators. Hence, they had to prove their "enmity" through fabricated deeds, meant to provoke those around to expose them.

Although there is extreme variance in pain-inducement hierarchies, three stages of "circles" seem to rank foremost, irrespective of the repressive regimes adopting them. The first "circle" is that of blood, given that torture usually began with massive physical aggression. This stage of relentless violence lasted for as long as the victim resisted pain. After the victim's physical breakdown, the second "circle" targeted something entirely different, namely, the humiliation, debasement and disparagement of the victim. This was the "circle" of dejection, where prevalent were either a shock excremental attack (constraining the victim to ingest urine or faeces or to defile another victim), preventing the victim from attending to bodily necessities, or leaving the victim in maculated, pestilential conditions. While the first circle was primarily physical and the second was mainly moral, the third "circle" of madness targeted the mental level. Whether genuinely or temporarily losing their sanity of mind, all victims experienced madness (*aboulia*) that was born out of confusion, shame, helplessness and pain. It was only thus that torture could be deemed as accomplished and that persecutors could envisage themselves as "masters" of pain.

Translated into English by Carmen Borbely

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