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AS STATE POLICY

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HUMAN RIGHTS/COVER STORY

Torture As Policy: The Network of Evil



No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

—The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Virtually every nation on earth subscribes to that straightforward principle. Yet like most other U.N. pledges, the clause is widely and brutally ignored. It is one of the grim truths of the second half of the 20th century that rarely before in history has torture been in such widespread use. Amnesty International, the widely respected human rights organization headquartered in London, estimates that in the last decade torture has been officially practiced in 60 countries; last year alone there were more than 40 violating states. From Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay to Guinea, Uganda, Spain, Iran and the Soviet Union, torture has become a common instrument of state policy practiced against almost anyone ruling cliques see as a threat to their power. Torture, says Marc Schreiber, director of the U.N.'s Commission on Human Rights, "is a phenomenon of our times."

Throughout much of the world, army barracks, police stations, offices and special wards in hospitals have been turned into interrogation centers, whose express purpose is inflicting hideous and often unbearable pain. There is a new subculture of terror with its own language and rituals (see box). There is also a new technology, involving sophisticated devices that can destroy a prisoner's will in a matter of hours, but leave no visible signs or marks of brutality.

Overwhelming Evidence. Governments that routinely use torture as an instrument of state policy generally deny that such practices exist. At the same time, the difficulty of making unhindered investigations of conditions in closed societies and police states virtually guarantees that many abuses remain uncovered. Torture, moreover, is a most murky area, rife with exaggerated claims, politically motivated propaganda and just plain misinformation. Nonetheless, independent human rights organizations, reporters and others have managed through interviews and onthe-scene investigations to compile a credible and apparently accurate record

receiving U.S. aid. President Ford vetoed the entire bill, but the rider's sponsor, Democratic Representative Donald Fraser of Minnesota, says the measure will come up before the White House again early next year.

Next to murder, torture is the most egregious violation of personal rights one human being can inflict on another. Sadly, the practice is almost as old as history. During the Middle Ages, suspected heretics were racked, scourged and burned by representatives of the Inquisition in order to make them recant, while in this century Hitler's concentration camps and Stalin's Gulag Archipelago institutionalized torture and brutality on a scale hitherto unknown. The 1948 U.N. Declaration of Human Rights condemning torture was one notable reaction to the excesses of the Third Reich. But torture did not stop. The French used it systematically during the eight-year Algerian War. The British relied on torture to gain information about I.R.A. terrorists in Northern Ireland, while the Saigon regime brutally mistreated suspect Communists throughout most of the Viet Nam War.

Worst Fears. Of the dozens of nations accused of practicing torture today, it is difficult to single out the worst violators. The examples most frequently cited by experts are Chile and Iran.

In the three years since the overthrow of the Marxist Allende government, according to respected church sources, an estimated 1,000 Chileans have been tortured to death by the ruthlessly efficient secret police, the DINA. Treasury Secretary William Simon In one wave of arrests 18 months ago 2,000 people were brought in; 370 have political prisoners. Then, at the June never been seen again. These gruesome statistics confirm the worst fears of many Chileans, that certain suspects are marked first to be tortured—generally for information about their political associations—and then executed.

The torture takes place in clandestine and ever changing places of imprisonment; one center is the Villa Grimaldi in Santiago, a former discothèque. Many suspects who live through their tortures are simply transferred to a detention camp, like Tres Alamos in Santiago. According to one report by reliable groups within the country, there



of torture in many parts of the world. In some places the evidence of torture is overwhelming and irrefutable. The brutality of General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte's regime in Chile, for example, has become an embarrassment to the Ford Administration. Last May, helped secure the release of at least 49 meeting of the Organization of American States in Santiago, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made his strongest statement yet on human rights. "A government that tramples on the rights of its citizens denies the purpose of its existence," he declared. "There are several states where fundamental standards of human behavior are not observed."

Carrying Kissinger's sentiments further than he wanted them to go, Congress amended the 1976 foreign military aid and arms sales bill to require reports on human rights conditions in countries

were 85 female prisoners at Tres Alamos as of May; 72 of them insisted that they had been tortured. The most common methods: beating, rape (sometimes by trained dogs), electric shock and burnings with lighted eigarettes.

The DINA is fairly ecumenical in finding victims; former parliamentarians and army officers have been tortured, as well as suspect leftist terrorists. Recounts Carlos Pérez Tobar, once a lieutenant in the Chilean army arrested by the junta after he tried to resign his commission: "I was tortured with electric shock, forced to live in underground

RIGHT, TORTURE ON THE "HORSEMAN"



dungeons so small that in one I could only stand up and in the other only lie down. I was beaten incessantly, dragged before a mock firing squad, and regularly told that my wife and child and relatives were suffering the same fate."

As for Iran, since a coup restored Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi to his throne in 1953, says the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists, human rights violations, including torture, "are alleged to have taken place on an unprecedented scale." Estimates of the number of political prisoners range from 25,000 to 100,000; it is widely believed most of them have been tortured by the SAVAK, secret police, which French lawyer Jean Michel Braunschweig, who in-

vestigated conditions in Iran last January, claims has 20,000 members and a network of some 180,000 paid informers. The country's repertory of tortures includes not only electric shock and beatings, but also the insertion of bottles in the rectum, hanging weights from testicles, rape, and such apparatus as a helmet that, worn over the head of the victim, magnifies his own screams.

Same Methods. Last week TIME Correspondent Christopher Ogden, in Iran with Secretary Kissinger, took up the torture allegations with the Shah. "We don't need to torture people any more," the Shah replied. "We use the same methods some of the very highly developed nations of the world are [usingl, psychological methods. We put them [prisoners] in front of confessions: when faced with a confession of their comrades, they tell us everything obviously." The Shah also rejected claims about the number of political prisoners in the country, saying that it was closer to 3,400 or 3,500. "But [these are] not political prisoners," he added. "These are Marxists, either terrorists, killers, or just people who have no allegiance to this

In fact, however, one group that SAVAK seems to have concentrated its attention on consists of writers, artists and intellectuals. Among those arrested and tortured in the past two or three years: Vida Hadjebi Tabrizi, a distinguished woman sociologist; Gholamhossein Sa'edi, a renowned Iranian playwright, and Writer Fereydoun Tonokaboni.

Perhaps the most terrifying feature of torture in Chile and Iran is its institutionalization, the fact that it has become the almost private domain of huge. semiautonomous police agencies. Once embroiled in the torture monolith, the individual has no appeal, no recourse to the kind of legal authority provided by functioning courts. But whether to an equal or lesser degree, torture is very much a part of life in many other countries as well. Some recent instances:

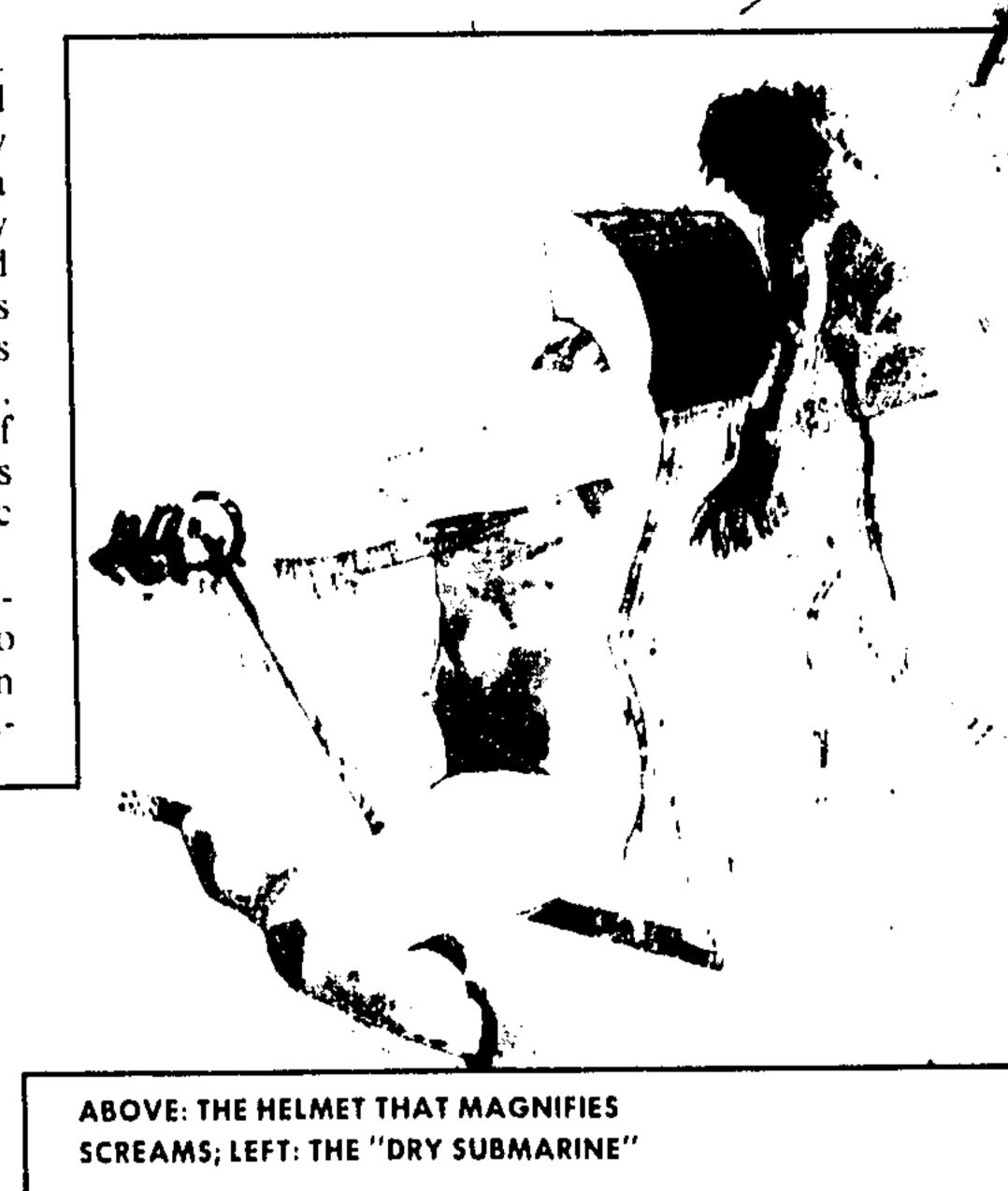
▶ In Paraguay, the dictatorial regime of Alfredo Stroessner this year reportedly launched a new wave of political arrests involving several hundred people; it is the third such wave since late 1974. Witnesses to conditions in Paraguay's primitive jails claim that detainees are regularly tortured. One recent victim was internationally known Anthropologist Miguel Chase Sardi, who was released in June after seven months in prison. Chase Sardi says he was drugged, beaten and dipped upside down in water to the point where his hearing may have been permanently damaged. Other methods of torture include electric shock, the extraction of fingernails and forcing a prisoner to drink water until he faints.

▶ In Uruguay, once the democratic Switzerland of South America, it is estimated that an astonishing one out of every 50 citizens has been either interrogated, detained or jailed since 1972. "Half the prisoners have been tortured," says former Senator Wilson Ferreira Aldunate. "by which is meant they have been submitted to electric shock or submerged in water until they passed out." Another common method is the "planton," whereby a prisoner is forced to stand for hours or even days with his weighted arms out-

stretched and feet spread far apart.

▶ In India, claims of torture used against political prisoners have steadily increased since Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency 13 months ago. The New York-based International League for Human Rights charged last June that Indian jailers have been guilty of "torture, brutality, starvation and other mistreatment of prisoners." Common methods: beatings with steel rods and rifle butts, electric shock and burning with candles.

▶ In the Philippines, President Ferdinand Marcos has declared that "no one but no one has been tortured." An investigation by the Association of Ma-





jor Religious Superiors, representing the leaders of the country's Roman Catholic orders, charged that prisoners in a police and army network of detention centers and "safe houses" have been tortured by beatings, electric shock and other methods. In an unreleased report that was presented to the Philippine government for comment last fall, Amnesty International charges that torture is used in the Philippines "freely and with extreme cruelty, often over long periods."

▶ In Spain, the torture of political suspects, especially Basque separatists,

Macabre World of Words and Ritual mocking language of euphemisms and code words. Some former prisoners report, for

Azudi is just like Genghis Khan when he walks he walks on a pile of fresh corpses

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the Khan did not clean his teeth either the Khan also belched the Khan did not take off his boots either Azudi has shattered the mouths of twenty poets today*

In these savage lines Iranian Poet-Critic Reza Baraheni describes one of the men who tortured him in Iran's notorious Committee Prison, where Baraheni was held without charge for 102 days in 1973. Baraheni, who now lives in exile in New York City, recognized in torturers like Azudi the "typical thick-necked Iranian jahel [ignoramus], fat and tall and dirty and, at the same time, shrewd, irrevocable, irresistibly virile and strong." Azudi insisted that prisoners address him with the honorific title "doctor," as do equally brutal thugs who run torture centers in Brazil and did so formerly in Greece. The title, apparently, confers on the torturer a kind of legitimacy vis-à-vis his victim.

The interrogator's need to be respected by his victims is one notable feature of a vague, inchoate subculture that exists in every country where torture is an established practice. This shadowy netherworld is marked most obviously by a *From God's Shadow Prison Poems, @ 1976 by Indiana University Press, reexample, that at the notorious São Paulo

torture center of the Brazilian political police, a torture session has been called a "spiritual seance," as if it involved a cleansing of impurities. Victims in Chile say that DINA interrogators refer to Santiago's infamous Villa Grimaldi as the Palacio de la Risa—the Palace of Laughter. In Iran, Otagh-e Tamshiyat, or "the room in which you make people walk," is a name for the blood-stained chamber where prisoners are forced to walk after torture to help their blood circulate.

Torturers generally refer to themselves by nicknames, in part because they do not want their victims to know their real identities. Often the nicknames derive from a physical feature, such as "the Tall One," or "the Mustachioed One." In South America, such aliases as El Aleman (the German), Cara de Culebra (Snake Face) and El Carnicero (the Butcher) are common. One particularly brutal torturer at Chile's Tejas Verdes camp near San Antonio used to tell prisoners his name was Pata en la Raja, meaning Kick in the Ass.

The torturer's lexicon also includes mordant, mocking names for their techniques and instruments. The Wet Submarine, for example, means near-suffocation of a prisoner by immersing him in water, or, frequently, urine; the Dry Submarine is the same thing, except that a plastic bag is tied over the victim's head to deprive him of oxygen. In the Grill, the victim is stretched out face up on a metal frame while a "massage" of shocks is delivered to various parts of the body. A Brazilian invention called the Parrot's Perch is used in

many countries; it consists of a horizontal stick from which the prisoner is hung by the knees, with hands and ankles tied together. Another common technique, called the Telephone, consists of delivering sharp blows to both ears simultaneously, which often causes excruciatingly painful rupture of the ear drums. In the Hook, the victim is hoisted off the ground by his hands, which are tied behind his back in such a way that the stretching of the nerves often causes paralysis of the arms. Says one Uruguayan torture victim: "People on the Hook cannot take a deep breath or hardly any breath. They just moan; it's a dreadful, almost inhuman noise."

The torture subculture has its own rules and rituals, which sometimes parody the daily routine of infinitely less brutal professions. "It was just sort of a job to them," says former Methodist Missionary Fred Morris, who was tortured for 17 days in Recife, Brazil, in 1974. "These people had 9-to-5 jobs, except that their business was to torture for a living." There are often specific times of the night or day when victims are picked up by their torturer-interrogators. The prisoner is usually hooded or blindfolded. Sessions often begin quietly; physical torture starts only after the interrogator has built himself up to a feigned or genuine anger, which Andrew Blane of Amnesty International calls "an emotional state of furious selfrighteousness." Some Chilean prisoners have reported torturers calling a prisoner to an interrogation session with the phrase "It's time to go to work." In Iran, where, as in many other countries, women are routinely raped during torture sessions, Reza Baraheni once watched a 13-year-old female prisoner calmly introduce her interrogator to her visiting family as "my rapist."

The prevalence of rape (of both men and women) as a torture technique indicates that the ranks of torturers contain many sexual psychotics as well as sadists. At the same time, some victims testify that their torturers were visibly strained by the routine and took pills to soothe their nerves; Fred Morris says that one of his torturers, a certain Major Maia, used to explain that he was a fellow Christian who went to Mass every day on his way to work.

Why do people willingly torture their fellow human beings? Oxford University Clinical Lecturer in Psychiatry Anthony Storr argues that often the torturer is motivated not by malice or by sadism but by an overpowering will to obey. "Torturers," says Storr, "are hierarchical people in that they accept and seek authority structures. They are people who obey orders without question." Whether leftist or rightist, many torturers link a fervent patriotism with a fanatical self-righteousness. Their victims often describe these torturers as intelligent but unbalanced, full of moral certitude but viciously vindictive toward people who hold beliefs contrary to their own.

Sadly enough, there seems to be no shortage of torturers: dictatorial regimes always manage to find enough people who -convinced of the righteousness of their cause—will maim or murder under orders from an absolute authority. The torture subculture provides these people with a kind of identity. It is also a dramatic and telling proof of what Historian and Social Critic Hannah Arendt called "the banality of evil." The most inhumane cruelty of man to man can become routine if it is surrounded and buffered by an apparatus of normality.

apparently continues despite King Juan Carlos' seemingly genuine wish to liberalize political life. This is in part because the notorious Guardia Civil, the most feared of Spain's law-enforcement agencies, is virtually a law unto itself in the four Basque provinces. One common torture method used by the Guardia is bastinado, the continual flogging of the soles of the feet with a rubber truncheon.

Unfortunately, the list of countries continues to stretch across the globe. There have been several well-documented cases of torture and even death during interrogation in South Korea. According to Amnesty International, there have been numerous charges of brutal. disfiguring tortures in Iraq, especially in Baghdad's Kasr-al-Nihaya Prison. In many black African countries, few torture victims survive to tell their stories. In such one-man dictatorships as Francisco Macías Nguema's Equatorial Guinea, Idi Amin's Uganda, Jean Bédel Bokassa's Central African Republic and Ahmed Sekou Touré's Republic of Guinea, unimaginably cruel, capricious and unpredictable tortures are everyday occurrences. In tiny Equatorial Guinea, which has suffered a reign of terror since gaining independence eight years ago. political prisoners have had their eyes gouged out by torturers of the notorious Macías Youth. Other prisoners have been forced to stand for days in a pit, up to their necks in mud and water.

Intimidating Aim. In Guinea, a common torture is confinement in a cell too small to allow a prisoner either to stand up or lie down. "The cell they put me in was about 4 ft. by 2 ft.," testifies Soumah Abou, 46, one of Sekou Touré's victims who now lives in France. "It had a tin roof and a metal door. There was no window, only some ventilation holes. There was no light, no bed, no place to go to the bathroom. For eight days I

had no food or water."

The aim of torture is virtually the same everywhere: to gain information about subversives, terrorists, opposition groups, and to intimidate would-be dissidents. A show of brutality can be a devastatingly effective way of keeping people in line. Yet in many Communist nations this is simply not necessary: the torture chamber, anti-Communists argue, is countrywide. All-powerful, ever vigilant party apparatus, supported by huge secret police forces, make opposition almost impossible; thus torture on a grand scale is superfluous.

Communist countries like China, North Korea, Cuba and others nevertheless have their networks of "labor re- ardice. But nobody ever gave away imform" camps for "re-educating" dissidents. The harsh life of these camps, man came up to him and said: 'Please with their meager diets, minimum time for sleep and long hours of labor, can produce agony bordering on torture.

torture, the Soviet Union is probably the worst offender. A common method of repression of all opposition. Moreover, dealing with dissidents is to declare them insane and lock them away for genuine terrorists, the network of tor-

years in mental hospitals, like the notorious Serbsky Institute in Moscow. There low-calorie diets and drug treatments produce pain and suffering as acute as more physical methods of repression. One dissenter, Cybernetics in Paris, testified that he was kept in 30 months after getting a spurious di-

"reform-making illusions." Plyushch saw beatings applied to other patients. He himself received insulin and heavy doses of sulfur which caused "discomfort so intense that all you could do was endlessly search for a new position."

How do nations justify torture? The most common argument is that the practice is an unfortunate but indispensable means of combatting lawless elements LUBSTRATIONS FOR TIME BY ALLEN MARDON



HANGING FROM THE "PARROT'S PERCH"

that threaten the security of the state, especially terrorist extremists. The argument draws some support from the reckless brutality of recent terrorist movements and from the massive Communist threat—at least as it is perceived in many countries. "Nobody wants to portant information because a gentletell me what you know.' "

The argument justifying torture as a necessary evil is dangerous and flawed. Among Communist states that use The fact is that the purpose of torture, more often than not, is pure and simple once torture is sanctioned, even against

ture has a way of becoming a Frankenstein's monster, finding reasons for a continued existence even after its initial tasks have been accomplished.

Last January, for example, Brazilian President Ernesto Geisel dismissed Specialist Leonid Plyushch, now living General Eduardo D'Avila Mela, the commander of the second army in São the Dnepropetrovsk Special Hospital for Paulo and a notorious advocate of torture. That seemed to reduce the misagnosis of "torpid schizophrenia" with treatment of prisoners in the city, but there was a flurry of new charges that prisoners in Rio were being tortured. Some civil rights activists believe that the São Paulo torturers simply shifted their operations to Rio. "There is a national network of torturers," says one exprisoner and torture victim; "they coordinate their work. It is a system and therefore very powerful."

> What, if anything, can be done? "Make torture as unthinkable as slavery," answers David Hawk, the executive director of Amnesty International's New York branch. As Hawk well knows, that laudable goal is not easy to achieve—no easier, certainly, than the abolition of slavery was. Amnesty itself has had some limited success in securing the release of individual prisoners by means of letter-writing campaigns and appeals to conscience directed at government officials.

Still Sensitive. Most countries are at least somewhat sensitive to foreign public opinion, if only because they fear that a bad human rights record could interfere with economic and military aid programs or foreign investments. Secretary Kissinger sensibly argues that U.S. foreign policy cannot be based on personal moral beliefs. Nonetheless, it does seem possible that regimes such as those of South Korea, Chile and Uruguay, which are heavily dependent on American support, could be nudged into loosening some of their grip by threats from Washington to withhold aid.

Little leverage, however, can be brought against such largely self-sufficient and comparatively wealthy states as Iran, Brazil and the Philippines—or for that matter even against such smaller countries as the African dictatorships.

One widespread hope is that tortureprone dictatorships will be overthrown, like the junta in Greece. But generally the odds are against such regimes being replaced by more benign ones, especially in countries where democracy and human rights have feeble roots to begin with. Another hope is that dictatorships be called a torturer," says one senior Ar- will gain enough of a sense of security gentine officer. "The word stinks of cow- to cut out at least the routine use of the worst brutalities. Meanwhile, about the only avenues left are publicity and prayer—and, perhaps, keeping alive in memory a statement made by Vladimir Hertzog, a Brazilian journalist found dead a few hours after being detained in São Paulo last October. Said Hertzog: "If we lose our capacity to be outraged when we see others submitted to atrocities, then we lose our right to call ourselves civilized human beings."