

TORTURE!

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The CIA finally admits utilising torture on "three" separate occasions, give us a break! 'Waterboarding,' a euphemism for administered slow drowning, is not new to the USA. We can safely add at least two zeros to that hysterically absurd CIA figure. American Nazi torturers may have finally learnt what any good book on the subject or an interview with torture victims would have revealed -- 'information extracted under torture conforms to the torturer's wishes!' Accuracy has little bearing on information torturers wish to hear - though it is common for torturers to confuse wish-fulfilment with accuracy!



Central Torture Agency

We would add that these methods are widely utilised by police and 'intelligence' agencies around the globe. The Australian version of 'waterboarding' is to soak a beach towel in a bucket of water and tie it tightly around the head covering the nose and mouth but leaving the eyes of the victim free to view the delight of the sick sadists who apply these practices!

Prior to leaving you with the excellent article on the subject by Robert Fisk, it should be remembered that torture returns very little information of value - I recall the high ranking member of Al-Qaeda who confessed to everything from 9/11 to stealing my grandmother's false teeth - this 'confession' is now studied in psychology classes as proof of the ineffectiveness of torture methods. However, we should never forget that PSYCHOPATHS and MASS MURDERERS, such as Cheney, Rumsfeld, Bush, Perle, Rice and others, continue to believe in the value and effectiveness of torture - for obvious reasons?

Torture does not work, as history shows

by Robert Fisk

For centuries, torture has been used to make people say anything the torturer wants.

"Torture works," an American special forces major -- now, needless to say, a colonel -- boasted to a colleague of mine a couple of years ago. It seems that the CIA and its hired thugs in Afghanistan and Iraq still believe this. There is no evidence that rendition and beatings and waterboarding and the insertion of metal pipes into men's anuses -- and, of

course, the occasional torturing to death of detainees -- has ended. Why else would the CIA admit in January that it had destroyed videotapes of prisoners being almost drowned -- the "waterboarding" technique -- before they could be seen by US investigators?

Yet only a few days ago, I came across a medieval print in which a prisoner has been strapped to a wooden chair, a leather hosepipe pushed down his throat and a primitive pump fitted at the top of the hose where an ill-clad torturer is hard at work squirting water down the hose. The prisoner's eyes bulge with terror as he feels himself drowning, all the while watched by Spanish inquisitors who betray not the slightest feelings of sympathy with the prisoner. Who said "waterboarding" was new? The Americans are just apeing their predecessors in the inquisition.

Another medieval print I found in a Canadian newspaper in November shows a prisoner under interrogation in what I suspect is medieval Germany. In this case, he has been strapped backwards to the outer edge of a wheel. Two hooded men are administering his agony. One is using a bellows to encourage a fire burning at the bottom of the wheel while the other is turning the wheel forwards so that the prisoner's feet are moving into the flames. The eyes of this poor man -- naked save for a cloth over his lower torso -- are tight shut in pain. Two priests stand beside him, one cowed, the other wearing a robe over his surplice, a paper and pen in hand to take down the prisoner's words.

Anthony Grafton, who has been working on a book about magic in Renaissance Europe, says that in the 16th and 17th centuries, torture was systematically used against anyone suspected of witchcraft, his or her statements taken down by sworn notaries -- the equivalent, I suppose, of the CIA's interrogation officers -- and witnessed by officials who made no pretense that this was anything other than torture; no talk of "enhanced interrogation" from the lads who turned the wheel to the fire.

As Grafton recounts, "The pioneering medievalist Henry Charles Lea ... wrote at length about the ways in which inquisitors had used torture to make prisoners confess heretical views and actions. An enlightened man writing in what he saw as an enlightened age, he looked back in horror at these barbarous practices and condemned them with a clarity that anyone reading public statements must now envy."

There were professionals in the Middle Ages who were trained to use pain as a method of inquiry as well as an ultimate punishment before death. Men who were to be "hanged, drawn and quartered" in medieval London, for example, would be shown the "instruments" before their final suffering began with the withdrawal of their intestines in front of vast crowds of onlookers. Most of those tortured for information in medieval times were anyway executed after they had provided the necessary information to their interrogators. These inquisitions -- with details of the torture that accompanied them -- were published and disseminated widely so that the public should understand the threat that the prisoners had represented and the power of those who inflicted such pain upon them. No destroying of videotapes here. Illustrated pamphlets and songs, according to Grafton, were added to the repertory of publicity.

Ronnie Po-chia Hsia and Italian scholars Diego Quaglioni and Anna Esposito have studied the 15th-century Trent inquisition whose victims were usually Jews. In 1475, three Jewish households were accused of murdering a Christian boy called Simon to carry out the supposed Passover "ritual" of using his blood to make "matzo" bread. This "blood libel" -- it was, of course, a total falsity -- is still, alas, believed in many parts of

the Middle East although it is frightening to discover that the idea was well established in 15th century Europe.

As usual, the podestà -- a city official -- was the interrogator, who regarded external evidence as providing mere clues of guilt. Europe was then still governed by Roman law which required confessions in order to convict. As Grafton describes horrifyingly, once the prisoner's answers no longer satisfied the podestà, the torturer tied the man's or woman's arms behind their back and the prisoner would then be lifted by a pulley, agonizingly, towards the ceiling. "Then, on orders of the podestà, the torturer would make the accused 'jump' or 'dance' -- pulling him or her up, then releasing the rope, dislocating limbs and inflicting stunning pain."

When a member of one of the Trent Jewish families, Samuel, asked the podestà where he had heard that Jews needed Christian blood, the interrogator replied -- and all this while, it should be remembered, Samuel was dangling in the air on the pulley -- that he had heard it from other Jews. Samuel said that he was being tortured unjustly. "The truth, the truth!" the podestà shouted, and Samuel was made to "jump" up to eight feet, telling his interrogator: "God the Helper and truth help me." After 40 minutes, he was returned to prison.

Once broken, the Jewish prisoners, of course, confessed. After another torture session, Samuel named a fellow Jew. Further sessions of torture finally broke him and he invented the Jewish ritual murder plot and named others guilty of this non-existent crime. Two tortured women managed to exonerate children but eventually, in Grafton's words, "they implicated loved ones, friends and members of other Jewish communities". Thus did torture force innocent civilians to confess to fantastical crimes. Oxford historian Lyndal Roper found that the tortured eventually accepted the view that they were guilty.

Grafton's conclusion is unanswerable. Torture does not obtain truth. It will make most ordinary people say anything the torturer wants. Why, who knows if the men under the CIA's "waterboarding" did not confess that they could fly to meet the devil. And who knows if the CIA did not end up believing him.

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