

# **TORTURE OR TRAINING? - TYPES OF TORTURE IN A GROUP OF REFUGEES FORCIBLY CONSCRIPTED IN SERBIA IN 1995**

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## **SUMMARY**

*A group of refugees forcibly conscripted in Serbia in 1995 represents a specific group of the CRTV<sup>1</sup> beneficiaries because the violence they underwent was carried out by their compatriots, in the form of military training. The purpose of this paper was to establish whether the beneficiaries reported types of abuse that might indicate torture and whether the abuse they had undergone was more similar to torture or to the classical military drill. The second purpose was to compare the types of torture reported with the types of torture reported by the CRTV beneficiaries who had been prisoners of camps in Bosnia and Croatia. The first group included 140 forcibly conscripted male refugees who contacted IAN for assistance from June 2004 to the end of June 2005, while the second group consisted of 115 former prisoners of camps in Croatia and Bosnia. Types of torture were assessed by the “Types of torture” questionnaire, designed in the Center and*

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<sup>1</sup> “The Centre for Rehabilitation of Torture Victims”, of the International Aid Network, Belgrade.

*already applied on several other occasions. Our analysis has yielded several important results: 1) the forcibly conscripted were exposed to the forms of abuse indicating a straightforward torture that departed from any normal military training; 2) the former camp inmates reported experiences from the first two types of torture much more frequently than the forcibly conscripted refugees did, and the patterns of torture differed in a way that offered a basis for a tentative reconstruction of the motives behind them; 3) sexual abuse was relatively rare, but existed in a small number of cases, in both groups. Finally, we discussed the possibility that the results might offer a basis of possible conclusions about the motives of the perpetrators, both those commanding this action and those executing it.*

## INTRODUCTION

In complex wars, such as the ones in the former Yugoslavia, one encounters many individuals who were exposed to various categories of traumatic experiences. In our case, this was partially due to some characteristics of the Yugoslav conflicts such as 1. military operations involving siege and bombardment of cities (which implied considerable civilian exposure), 2. deliberate targeting of civilians within the so-called “ethnic cleansing” strategy and 3. ethnic warfare in ethnically mixed territories. (Radoviæ, 2005). A satisfying explanation of sizeable differences in traumatic experiences of our clients should also include the following facts: 1) these conflicts abounded in camps and detention places characterized by systematic torture of soldiers and civilians of other ethnic belonging (Radovic, 2004); 2) these ethnic conflicts in ethnically-mixed territories implied various, combined types of warfare, ranging from street fighting, siege and bombardment to front combat along the lines that remained stable for years; 3) the training, discipline and structure of the involved military units varied, but we can state that, most frequently, they were unsatisfactory. The armed forces consisted of very various elements: armed local civilians, classically trained former JNA officers, policemen, volunteers from other ex-Yugoslav countries (in the Bosnian case, Serbia and Croatia) and volunteers from foreign countries.

All these factors meant that, from the very beginning of the conflicts, the persons who asked for psychiatric or psychological assistance spoke about various traumatic experiences, ranging from pre-war emigration (with no direct combat exposure) to severe torture in camps. The need to systematically measure and bridge widely different categories of traumatic experiences by some comprehensive self-assessment instrument was satisfied by the War Stressors Assessment Questionnaire (WSAQ). The instrument, which turned out to have quite decent psychometric characteristics, had previously revealed eight distinct categories of stressors (Jovic et al. 2002), with the experience of detention and torture being covered by ten items (Cronbach’s alpha 0,89). Nevertheless, given the fact that the number of former camp inmates and torture victims kept growing, the CRTV personnel began sensing a need for a more specific instrument of measurement of torture-related stressors.

The first important report to rely on systematic measurement of various types of torture was published in 1990 (Rasmussen, 1990). It presented the results of a 1975-82 Danish medical study carried out on a group of 200 persons. In the period concerned, the investigators abandoned the “open-ended questions” method in favor of a more systematic, standardized, questionnaire-based method. Their report demonstrates that examination and measurement were carried out on the basis of the medical model, so that the review of the types of consequences was carried out in view of organic systems. The *Harvard Trauma Questionnaire*

(HTQ), originally constructed to examine torture of Indo-Chinese refugees, was also frequently used in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, and there is a standardized Croatian and Bosnian version, but we do not know their psychometric characteristics. Thus, our quest for a more comprehensive method of measurement of types of torture resulted in the construction of a new questionnaire. Its metric characteristics, as well as the results our clients obtained on it, were presented elsewhere (Jovic and Opacic, 2004).

We have to say that our work with forcibly conscripted refugees revealed to us a different context of the organization of torture. The political, military and social context of the mass action of arrest and forcible conscription of refugees is analyzed in the first article of this monograph. However, the “training” itself (i.e. the short-term stay in camps such as the one in Erdut), spiced with torture and usually ending in transfer to some of the military units on the front line), was completely left to the control of irregular units. We have to ask ourselves about the reasons of torture of these individuals (presumably of the same ethnic background) who, reportedly, had to be transformed into docile fighters to be sent to combat. To answer this question, we have to raise the issue of possible pathogenicity of military training itself. Psychologists have frequently written of some particular practical aspects of their involvement in various phases of military training, from personnel selection and test construction to counseling (Halff et al. 1986; Johnson, 2002). However, there are really a few articles, such as the one from Bourne (Bourne, 1971), which established a link between the specificities of military training and conditioning for war crimes. Military training has to transform the identity (the adolescent one – in the case of American soldiers engaged in Vietnam) through the “process of militarization”. According to Bourne, the training has to make the conscript reject the civilian identity (which stresses the individual initiative) and adopt the docile institutional identity of the military organization, but it also has to accomplish “socialization for war”, and for killing, in particular.

In our case, understanding of this kind of “training” has to be put into the context of the former-Yugoslav military structures. Although we, as former Yugoslav National Army conscripts, cannot qualify that structure as being always purposeful, highly organized or rational, it still did not contain any clear form of torture, and there are several known cases of officers who were punished for having slapped, whipped or flogged soldiers. Psychic humiliation – if we omit military manipulation of the identity and private space, pressure to accept the utterly absurd rules, and exhausting physical exercise (which, as far as we know, is part and parcel of every military training) - was kept within rigidly defined limits and personal humiliation was seriously reprimanded. On the other hand, what the reports of the tortured in Erdut revealed does not resemble at all to this. Whence, then, came this “alien” element? This paper should also answer to what extent this treatment was militarily rational, or, alternatively, to what extent it was just unbridled violence against helpless individuals, carried out by a group of persons

who were capable of psychopathic acting out on others and whose sadistic fantasies were made realizable by the war context.

## **THE RESEARCH GOALS**

The research goals were the following:

1. To establish whether the sample of forcibly conscripted refugees reported types of abuse that indicated torture, i.e. whether the abuse they underwent corresponds to torture or to the classical military drill.
2. To establish possible differences in experienced types of torture between the persons who underwent torture in camps in Croatia and Bosnia (1991-95) and the refugees who were forcibly conscripted in Serbia in 1995, i.e. to establish the latent structure that most accurately distinguishes these two groups.

## **THE METHOD**

### **The sample**

The sample consisted of 255 respondents, divided into two sub-groups: a) 140 forcibly conscripted male refugees who sought assistance from IAN in the period June 2004-end of June 2005; and b) 115 former inmates of camps in Croatia and Bosnia.<sup>2</sup> All respondents were male. The average age at the time of study was 48.13 years for former camp inmates (SD=10.9; the youngest one was 23 and the oldest one was 73) and 44.43 years for forcibly conscripted refugees (SD=8.39; the youngest one was 29 and the oldest one was 66).

### **The instruments**

Analysis of types of torture was performed with the “Types of torture” questionnaire mentioned above (Jovic and Opacic, 2004). The construction of the questionnaire had to satisfy the following demands:

1. All items had to be equally descriptive. For instance, the first part of the Croatian version of the HTQ (which measures traumatic experiences - “Part I: Traumatic events”) contains the following items: “Torture (i.e.

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<sup>2</sup> This sub-group was derived from a larger group of respondents from a previously published survey (Jovic and Opacic, 2004). The sub-group originally consisted of 322 respondents, but we have omitted women and non-refugees in order to match this sub-group with the first sub-group. Non-refugees, torture victims in the original sub-group were soldiers from Serbia - therefore, the domicile population - who were caught, imprisoned and tortured in Croatia and Bosnia.

while in captivity you received deliberate and systematic infliction of physical or mental suffering)” (No. 23), and “Beating to the body” (No. 20) or “Rape” (No. 21), which makes it clear that the first item is more general and can subsume the next two items.

2. All items had to be defined on the level of the “basic categories of stressors”, i.e. in a way that would reflect their behavioral specificity so as to minimize response subjectivity. This problem was discussed in more detail elsewhere (Jovic et al. 2002).
3. The items were chosen on the basis of the torture reports made by a certain number of former camp inmates. We have retained the original terms whenever possible.
4. Every item contains a definition of a particular violent action against the respondent, with no clue to the perpetrator. Some of the items denote more than one violent action (for instance, Item 2: “Beating with a rifle but, whip, belt or stick”), but, in that case, there is always a common denominator such as the type of wound, for example.

All responses were given in the binary form (“did experience” – YES; “did not experience” – NO); the total number of items is 82 (covering 81 types of torture), and the last question is open-ended, which gives the respondent a possibility to state a type of torture not mentioned in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire revealed decent psychometric characteristics and clinical applicability. Factor analysis of items yielded a three-factor solution, which indicated three distinct types of torture. This finding could have an additional meaning that would displace torture indicators from the medical level (somatic consequences) to the psychological level (the meaning of torture). The first factor was defined by 39 items describing psychological abuse, witnessing of the abuse of others, deprivation of the elementary biological needs (food, water, sleep, medication or medical care), or physical abuse that, as a rule, did not result in heavy injury. In our initial discussion, we have stated that these types of torture had been frequent in the former Yugoslav police procedure. The second factor (28 items) consisted of more drastic, destructive and sadistic types of torture, such as hanging by limbs, burning by cigarette/open flame/boiling water, forcible tooth extraction, throwing from above, and limb amputation. These actions were deliberate, carefully prepared and meticulously carried out - for instance, electroshocks - and they resulted in severe injury. Distinction between these two types has a forensic value as well, because the second-type injuries leave material consequences - bone fractures, scars, etc. - that can be confirmed through forensic examination

The third type of torture contained 14 items referring to sexual abuse, and was more reported by female respondents. However, our data and our clinical

experience of work with torture victims indicate that sexual abuse of men in camps was far from uncommon.

In order to avoid terminological confusion, these three types of torture were labeled Type A (“police” or “milder/lighter” torture), Type B (“sadistic” or “heavier” torture) and Type C (sexual abuse).

**The procedure**

A psychologist and a psychiatrist, who had previously been additionally trained for this survey, examined all clients according to the unified procedure, in the sequence of their admission to the CRTV. Prior to the examination, all clients had been given a detailed account of the overall procedure and had all expressed their full consent.

**THE RESULTS**

All respondents, forcibly conscripted refugees and former camp inmates alike, reported at least one type of torture from the questionnaire. However, differences appeared at the very beginning, given the fact that with the forcibly conscripted refugees 16 items had zero variance and were, consequently, omitted. These items are given in Table 1.

Table 1: *Omitted items*

Item
10. burning with boiling water
12. burning with chemicals
13. burning with open flame
17. forcible sexual intercourse, save for the genuine rape
18. rape by a member of the opposite sex
19. rape by a member of the same sex
20. use of animals or physical objects for sexual purposes
21. application of electrical shocks to the genitals
30. hanging by thumbs, arms or legs
31. "Palestinian hanging"
41. forcible drug use
50. pregnancy as a rape consequence
51. genital infection as a rape consequence
73. compulsion to witness sexual abuse of the respondent's family
74. compulsion to witness sexual abuse of others
81. forcible confinement in psychiatric hospital

Table 2 demonstrates the mean values of types of torture, for both groups, and their comparison. The values were obtained when the sum of all positive answers on a sub-scale was divided by the total number of items from that particular sub-scale.

Table 2. *Significance of differences by types of torture*

	M-T	Sd – T	M-FM	Sd – FM	F (df 1,253)	Sig.
Tip A	0,51	0,25	0,23	0,25	85,08	0,00
Tip B	0,10	0,11	0,04	0,07	24,49	0,00
Tip C	0,08	0,11	0,02	0,05	31,54	0,00

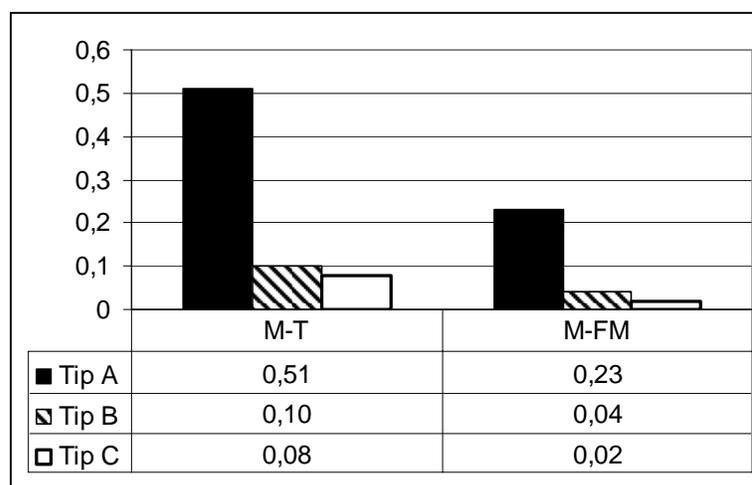
M-T – mean value of the tortured inmates of camps in Croatia and Bosnia;

M-FM – mean value of the forcibly conscripted refugees;

Sd-T – standard deviation of the tortured inmates of camps in Croatia and Bosnia;

Sd-FM – standard deviation of the forcibly conscripted refugees;

Graph 1. *Differences by types of torture*



A review of the omitted items revealed that these are Types B and C items, which was expected, given the fact that sexual abuse (Type C) was more frequent with women and, as it turned out, relatively rare in the group of forcibly conscripted male refugees (Table 2). The group differences demonstrated that all types of torture were less frequent with the forcibly conscripted refugees (Table 2). Given the fact that torture of the forcibly conscripted refugees was organized within a context of forcible combat participation, it is quite clear that a treatment that might result in serious injury (Type B) was not welcome. The table below demonstrates findings about the frequency of particular types of torture in camps in Croatia and Bosnia and torture in “training camps” for forcibly conscripted refugees. As immediately visible, with the exception of 13 indicators, the percentages of those

who had survived various forms of torture were higher among the former camp inmates (T) than among the forcibly conscripted refugees (FM), who had been subjected to the same forms of torture. The table shows that some 50% of the forcibly conscripted refugees reported slapping, kicking and beating, as well as persistent humiliating comments about themselves and their families; 45% had been deprived of sleep, while 39% had been deprived of food or personal hygiene (being prohibited to use the toilet, for example). Between 35 and 38% had been threatened with death or crippling, deprived of privacy and necessary medical care/medication, compelled to witness the torture or killing of others, intimidated by gunshots or explosions and forced to heavy labor, while 23 % had had to carry heavy load. Between 4 and 10% had undergone drastic forms of torture such as roping and fastening of the ropes for several hours, exposure to intense light, immersion in water, beating on the feet, mutilation or bone fracturing, burning by cigarette, stretching of the limbs and body, etc.

Table 3. *Significance of differences according to the type of torture*

Type		T (N 115)	FM (N 140)	F (1,253)	Sig.	w	r	f	RT	RF M	Rd
A	77. compulsion to "squeal" on others	67%	21%	67,55	0,00	0,21	0,43	0,60	7	20	-13
A	59. blackmail or lighter threat to the respondent or his family	75%	24%	85,88	0,00	0,17	0,48	0,65	5	17	-12
A	26. strangulation	23%	3%	25,96	0,00	-0,17	0,27	0,40	40	52	-12
B	27. asphyxiation	22%	3%	24,29	0,00	0,29	0,26	0,38	42	53	-11
A	78. shared confinement with tortured persons	61%	19%	56,16	0,00	0,17	0,39	0,55	13	23	-10
A	49. blindfolding	24%	5%	21,48	0,00	0,20	0,24	0,36	36	46	-10
A	61. signing of a confession	51%	13%	53,16	0,00	0,06	0,38	0,54	19	28	-9
A	60. fake accusation, denial or compulsory self-recrimination	77%	31%	69,72	0,00	0,32	0,44	0,60	4	12	-8
A	44. deprivation of water	58%	19%	51,21	0,00	0,21	0,37	0,53	16	24	-8
B	4. beating on the feet	26%	6%	22,31	0,00	-0,10	0,25	0,37	35	43	-8
A	79. release and immediate recapture	23%	5%	19,97	0,00	0,19	0,23	0,35	39	47	-8

Type		T (N 115)	FM (N 140)	F (1,253)	Sig.	w	r	f	RT	RF M	Rd
A	48. confinement in the absolute darkness for more than two days	38%	8%	39,9	0,00	-0,15	0,33	0,48	31	38	-7
B	6. mutilation or bone fracturing	23%	6%	17,87	0,00	0,10	0,22	0,33	37	44	-7
C	64. verbal sexual abuse or threat	19%	3%	19,51	0,00	0,20	0,23	0,35	47	54	-7
C	68. abuse by excrements	13%	1%	14,35	0,00	0,13	0,20	0,30	53	60	-7
A	76. the torturer fakes a friend to confuse the respondent	47%	11%	47,09	0,00	0,13	0,36	0,51	23	29	-6
A	43. deprivation of food	60%	23%	42,15	0,00	-0,03	0,34	0,49	14	19	-5
A	52. exposure to permanent noise (e.g.. music, screaming...)	41%	9%	40,25	0,00	0,39	0,33	0,48	29	34	-5
A	80. compulsion to decide who is to be tortured or killed next	15%	2%	14,65	0,00	0,07	0,20	0,30	50	55	-5
A	3. flogging with a cord, whip or stick	43%	11%	36,72	0,00	0,30	0,32	0,46	26	30	-4
A	47. solitary confinement for more than 3 days	43%	11%	36,72	0,00	0,30	0,32	0,46	27	31	-4
B	42. dripping of water on the head	9%	1%	7,60	0,01	0,12	0,14	0,22	57	61	-4
A	57. threat of death or mutilation directed to the respondent or his family	83%	38%	64,68	0,00	0,48	0,42	0,59	2	5	-3
A	15. cold water showering	52%	21%	28,89	0,00	0,15	0,28	0,42	18	21	-3
A	63. mock execution	35%	9%	29,61	0,00	0,07	0,28	0,42	34	37	-3
B	29. immersion in filthy liquid	4%	1%	3,65	0,06	0,03	0,10	0,16	60	63	-3

COMPENSATION IN THE CASES OF FORCIBLY MOBILIZED REFUGEES

Type		T (N 115)	FM (N 140)	F (1,253)	Sig.	w	r	f	RT	RF M	Rd
A	58. threat of death or crippling directed to the respondent's colleagues or friends	63%	34%	24,68	0,00	-0,47	0,26	0,39	9	11	-2
A	66. partial stripping	44%	14%	31,71	0,00	0,25	0,29	0,43	24	26	-2
A	5. attack with knife or other sharp object	37%	9%	30,81	0,00	0,06	0,29	0,43	33	35	-2
A	62. blindfolding or hooding	21%	6%	13,83	0,00	-0,13	0,19	0,30	43	45	-2
B	22. electrical shocks to body parts other than the genitals	12%	2%	10,55	0,00	0,06	0,17	0,26	54	56	-2
B	39. forcible tooth extraction	12%	2%	10,55	0,00	0,06	0,17	0,26	55	57	-2
B	32. other types of hanging	3%	1%	2,51	0,11	-0,02	0,08	0,13	62	64	-2
A	2. beating with a rifle but, whip , belt, stick, etc..	61%	31%	25,40	0,00	-0,10	0,26	0,39	12	13	-1
A	40. interdiction of urination or defecation	50%	21%	25,69	0,00	0,14	0,26	0,39	21	22	-1
B	53. exposure to strong light or compulsion to look at a strong light source	23%	7%	14,23	0,00	0,02	0,20	0,30	38	39	-1
B	38. sticking of needles under nails	3%	1%	2,51	0,11	0,00	0,08	0,13	64	65	-1
A	1. slapping, kicking or beating	87%	51%	41,99	0,00	0,41	0,34	0,49	1	1	0
A	46. deprivation of sleep	78%	45%	32,60	0,00	0,04	0,30	0,44	3	3	0
A	36. extraction of hair	59%	28%	27,93	0,00	-0,26	0,28	0,41	15	15	0
A	65. stripping	38%	10%	32,08	0,00	0,06	0,30	0,44	32	32	0
B	11. burning with cigarette	18%	5%	11,79	0,00	-0,07	0,18	0,27	48	48	0
C	67. being photographed while totally or partially denuded	06%	2%	2,61	0,11	-0,17	0,08	0,13	59	58	1
C	37. nail extraction	03%	1%	1,15	0,28	-0,12	0,06	0,09	63	62	1

Type		T (N 115)	FM (N 140)	F (1,253)	Sig.	w	r	f	RT	RF M	Rd
A	55. deprivation of privacy (being squeezed in an overcrowded space)	65%	38%	20,26	0,00	-0,09	0,23	0,35	8	6	2
C	16. touching of the genitals	14%	4%	7,59	0,01	-0,15	0,14	0,22	51	49	2
A	34. forcible posturing for several hours	57%	30%	20,84	0,00	-0,03	0,24	0,36	17	14	3
C	72. compulsion to participate in the torture or killing of others	20%	06%	10,97	0,00	-0,05	0,17	0,27	44	41	3
A	56. persisting humiliating comments on the respondent or his family	73%	50%	14,71	0,00	-0,49	0,20	0,30	6	2	4
A	45. deprivation of medical care or medication	62%	37%	16,15	0,00	-0,15	0,21	0,32	11	7	4
A	8. beating on the ears, with the mouth closed	38%	17%	15,14	0,00	-0,17	0,20	0,31	30	25	5
A	70. humiliation through deprivation of personal hygiene	63%	39%	15,36	0,00	-0,10	0,20	0,31	10	4	6
B	7. severing of body parts	0%	2%	2,50	0,12	-0,15	0,08	0,13	65	59	6
B	35. stretching of the limbs and body	6%	4%	0,89	0,35	0,03	0,05	0,08	58	51	7
A	69. compulsion to humiliating behavior (e.g., barking, dancing...etc.)	44%	26%	9,22	0,00	-0,12	0,16	0,24	25	16	9
C	75. family or friends witnessing respondent's torture	14%	6%	4,03	0,05	-0,17	0,10	0,16	52	42	10
B	24. hanging of weights on the testicles	3%	4%	0,11	0,74	0,03	0,02	0,03	61	50	11

COMPENSATION IN THE CASES OF FORCIBLY MOBILIZED REFUGEES

Type	T (N 115)	FM (N 140)	F (1,253)	Sig.	w	r	f	RT	RF M	Rd
A 71. compulsion to witness torture and killing	51%	36%	5,78	0,02	-0,16	0,13	0,19	20	8	12
A 54. nearby detonation	50%	36%	5,12	0,02	0,02	0,12	0,18	22	9	13
B 33. roping – fastening of the ropes for several hours	19%	10%	4,38	0,04	-0,20	0,11	0,17	46	33	13
B 9. forcible jumping or throwing from above	16%	9%	2,40	0,12	-0,07	0,08	0,13	49	36	13
B 28. immersion in water	9%	7%	0,21	0,65	-0,08	0,02	0,04	56	40	16
A 25. compulsion to heavy labor	41%	35%	0,92	0,34	0,05	0,05	0,08	28	10	18
B 14. exposure to extreme temperatures	19%	14%	1,07	0,30	-0,30	0,05	0,08	45	27	18
B 23. carrying of heavy load	22%	24%	0,23	0,63	-0,26	-0,02	-0,04	41	18	23

T – the tortured inmates of camps in Croatia and Bosnia; FM – the forcibly conscripted refugees; F – Fischers’s F test for analysis of variance with corresponding degrees of freedom; Sig – probability to achieve F that big by chance; w –canonical discrimination function coefficient; r – pooled coefficients of the structure of the canonical discrimination function; f – coefficients of the structure of the canonical discrimination function; Rt – rank of a particular type of torture in the sample of the tortured inmates of camps in Croatia and Bosnia; Re – rank of a particular type of torture in the sample of the forcibly conscripted refugees; Rd – rank difference (a higher number means a higher rank/lower relative frequency in the sample of the tortured inmates of camps in Croatia and Bosnia)

The canonical discriminatory function (w) was mainly defined by the following items: 57. threat of death or crippling directed to the respondent or his family; 1. slapping, kicking or beating; 52. exposure to permanent noise (e.g. music, screaming...); 60. fake accusation, denial or forcible self-recrimination; 3. flogging with a cord, whip or stick; 47. solitary confinement for more than three days; 27. asphyxiation; 65. stripping; 77. compulsion to “squeal” on others, and 44. deprivation of water. We can only speculate if these findings mean that former camp inmates were more frequently exposed to these types of torture because one of the torturers’ goals was extraction of information, given the fact that many of the tortured were military servicemen or were seen as possible enemies, because of their ethnic belonging.

To confirm these assumptions, we ranked the types of torture by frequency within each of the sub-samples, so that the most frequent item occupied the lowest rank, and then we calculated rank differences. In this way, we tried to compensate for the fact that the tortured inmates were, overall, more exposed to torture. They were relatively more often forced to “squeal” on others, exposed to blackmail and threat towards their families, compelled to withstand false accusation, forced to sign a confession, subjected to strangulation, asphyxiation, beating on the feet, deprivation of water, and witnessing of the torture of other inmates. The forcibly conscripted refugees were relatively more often forced to carry heavy load, compelled to hard labor, exposed to extreme temperatures, immersed in water, thrown from above, forced to humiliating behavior (e.g. barking), tortured in the presence of their relatives and friends, and forced to witness the torture and killing of others.

Grouped in this way, the items indicate two patterns of torture that can be distinguished by their purpose: in the first case, it was extraction of information and self-recriminatory statements, and in the second case, it was, presumably, “toughening” (if we assume that extreme physical effort enhances combat capability), but, in reality, breaking of the will and personal integrity in order to achieve complete subordination and insertion into the war machine. We will discuss this point later on.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results presented here can be condensed to several basic points: 1) in the camps that should have served for military training, the forcibly conscripted refugees were, with a specific frequency, exposed to Type A, and, even worse, Type B torture, which clearly indicates a torture that departs from any normal military training; 2) the former camp inmates reported experiences from the first two types of torture significantly more frequently than the forcibly conscripted refugees did, and the patterns of torture varied in a way that could permit a possible reconstruction of the motives behind them; 3) sexual abuse was relatively rare, but existed in a few cases, in both groups. Let us try now to discuss these findings, taking the group differences as our departure point.

First of all, the differences in torture exposure cannot be explained by pure coincidence. What we have here again is the well-known fact that the torture of the ethnically Other in the ex-Yugoslav wars was particularly savage. Frequent murder in the camps was more often prevented through interventions of the Red Cross officials than by efforts of the camp authorities. However, we should seriously consider the possibility that this savagery contained a hint of a rational motive. In their historical overview, Hovens and Drozdek (Hovens and Drozdek, 2002) singled out three variants of torture: “as punishment for a crime, to extract the ‘truth’ or a ‘confession’, and to prevent unrest or put down uprisings”. However,

torture in camps in Croatia and Bosnia was most frequently carried out without any “rational” motive. Its only purpose was to demonstrate the absolute domination over the prisoner’s body and personality, and it was designed so as to inflict the biggest possible psychic harm. Silove (Silove et al. 2002) drew attention to several elements of torture - also recognizable in the experiences of our respondents - that stress the significance of these acts for the development of post-traumatic symptoms: «... *the abuse is deliberate, and the perpetrators use methods that maximise fear, dread, and the debility in the victim; the trauma is inescapable, uncontrollable, often repetitive, and conditions between torture sessions (such as solitary confinement) undermine the recovery capacity of the victim; feelings of guilt, shame, anger, betrayal and humiliation—deliberately induced by tortures—tend to erode the victim’s sense of security, integrity and self worth; and head injury or other bodily damage may add to risk of psychosocial disability*». This torture belongs to Type B – it includes serious injury that undermines personal integrity and physically disables a person, temporarily or permanently.

However, it is frequently forgotten that the Croatian and Bosnian authorities saw the Yugoslav conflict as a *rebellion* of the Serbian population that had to be crushed. This attitude is eclipsed by a constant insistence that the war represented a “Serbian aggression”. This understanding, in fact, represents a displacement of the conflict onto the international and inter-state level, whereby the Republic of Serbia is seen as having committed a military aggression against Croatia, and against Bosnia, later on. We cannot here delve into these essentially political questions, but can confirm that the Serbian armies in Croatia and Bosnia were predominantly composed of the local Serbs, people who had been living in those territories for centuries. The previously described pattern of torture that was more present with former camp inmates - with compulsion to “squeal” on others, blackmail and threat to the victim’s family, false accusation and compulsion to sign a confession - more likely indicates a systematic quest of “the truth” about rebellion, as well as an attempt to halt it through intimidation. On the other hand, we have to point out that, much like the Croatian and Bosnian authorities portrayed the Serbian minority as “rebels”, the political opinion in Serbia saw the breakaway republics of the former Yugoslavia as “secessionists”. All of this illustrates a quest for the “legitimacy” of war actions, as well as an attempt to create an image of “a just war”.

What is the message of the fact that in “training camps” a certain number of persons were subjected to serious forms of torture, while a significant portion were systematically humiliated, psychically abused and subjected to Type B suffering (which included a series of acts inflicting extreme psychic and physical pain)? Did someone really expect that a man who was forced to impersonate a dog would, after such a treatment, fight vigorously for the ideas offered by his torturers? Other “treatments” of the inmates as well, as we said earlier, departed from the framework of “training” of any organized army (e.g., slapping, whipping,

humiliating carrying of a stone, etc.). There are few possible answers to that: perhaps an urgent need to transfer soldiers into the combat zone necessitated brutal handling, so as to achieve the absolute subordination in the shortest possible time; on the other hand, according to the official attitude, these men were “traitors” – i.e. individuals who had left their positions, which perhaps gave the torturers the feeling of legitimacy of their brutal attitude. The next possibility is that “everything’s got out of hand”, i.e. that the commanding structure did not want these men to be tortured so, but that the “chain of command”, nevertheless, broke at its lower end. This explanation, in all probability, hardly corresponds to reality and is worth mentioning only as an example of justification of the higher military circles that is frequently invoked in public. The last possibility we want to consider is a much more complex, harder to prove, but not impossible one: it is the regime’s need to protect itself from a large number of armed and embittered men who had been left in the lurch after years of war propaganda – men who, for good reason, could turn against the very ones who had been manipulating them for years. This is not impossible if we take into account the attitudes towards refugees that the state officials expressed in public (a good example is Milošević’s last interview, prior to his arrest and transfer to the Hague tribunal). It is quite ironic, and almost tragic, that even in those days the same men who sought the culprits everywhere except at their right address still supported the regime.

When analyzing the types of torture that our clients underwent, we have to be extremely careful in interpreting the motives of their torturers. Still, when the torture in training camps is in question, one fact merits attention: behavior of the torturers indeed *imitated* military training in a bizarre fashion that resembled bad Hollywood movies. This remark is not too farfetched and can contain a meaning. Namely, as Bougarel (Bougarel, 1999) stated, “during the Yugoslav wars, a majority of militias and “special units” cultivated an appearance imitating the look of heroes from North American movies (ray-ban sunglasses, sleeveless t-shirts and bullet-strings around the neck), whereas the “Muslim brigades” of the Bosnian army found a sartorial inspiration in the Iranian pasdaran (green bands with yellow Koranic verses tied around the head)”. When comparing the profiles of persons engaged in irregular units one gets the impression that, in the cultural sense, they were somehow *lost* between their village (rural origin, poor education, rural/nationalist ideology of the “blood and soil”) and the “Global village” (dominated by the symbols and iconography of a global culture). Bougarel illustrates this point by quoting the names of irregular units: the Serbian “Kninjas” and the Bosniak “Green berets” – the first name being a blend of the designation of the mediaeval Japanese killer (which is an icon of bad action movies) and the local toponym (Knin), and the second name containing a slang term (again from bad movies) for a Vietnam veteran (with a stress on green color, which in Bosnia should be distinctive for the local Moslems) and the beret, the headdress accepted after interdiction of the Turkish fez in 1950. This jump from the local to global

level could also be seen in the seemingly benign news that all the three former warring parties in Mostar have – finally! - convened on the monument of a common hero, who turned out to be Bruce Lee, a symbol of the fight for justice, in which all believe.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, we embark on the idea that the torture our clients spoke about could be explained by psychological and probably sociological mechanisms that created and supported paramilitary units in the ex-Yugoslav wars, but this is a point that we cannot develop on the basis of the evidence presented here and that has to be left for some other occasion.

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<sup>3</sup> CNN: New Bosnia icon: Bruce Lee (Monday, September 12, 2005; Posted: 9:44 a.m. EDT (13:44 GMT)  
retrieved from: <http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/europe/09/12/bosnia.brucelee.reut/>

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