

parties) (Graessner) is excluded; and it is only possible to give attestations about the experiences of the patient. The article about testimonial-political consciousness-raising (Pross) is also very clear and well structured.

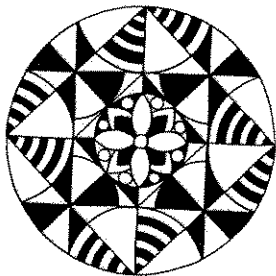
What is the main theme and what are the healing ingredients in this work with survivors of torture? Unconditional engagement of all the collaborators can be felt through the articles, their ethical attitude and the will to help to undo and reverse the effects of persecution.

The therapeutic effect of all the interventions, apart from the empathic and unconditional engagement or holding of the therapist, seems to lie in the fact that the unspeakable experiences are structured and expressed through body or art work or words with the goal of (re)constructing and establishing a history of the ordeals. The participation of the therapist, who is not overwhelmed by helplessness, anxiety or any other negative emotion, is part of the healing process. The belief that torture must not destroy, but can be overcome, even if it leaves scars, can mobilize the resources, healing and resilience capacities of human beings.

One wishes that the book, with all its excellent ideas, had more stringency and less repetition (e.g. theoretical reflections about PTSD). More intensive discussion about vicarious/secondary traumatisation would also be welcome, especially since more and more institutions are working with victims of violence and are confronted with this problem.

As a whole this book can be recommended to people working with persons who are marked by persecution or torture.

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The pain of the priest

Worsnip M. Michael Lapsley – priest and partisan: a South African journey. Melbourne, Australia: Ocean Press, 1996. 167 pages. ISBN 1-875284-96-6. Price: USD 14.95.

Father Michael Lapsley is well known among protagonists of the anti-torture cause. He took part in the foundation of the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture in Cape Town, and before that was a vehement opponent of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

He is now the subject of a book by the prominent South African theologian Michael Worsnip, published in Australia, Father Michael being a New Zealander by origin. The title is somewhat misleading, because Father Lapsley in no way fought violently during the campaign against apartheid. He was, however, a member of the African

National Congress (ANC), the foremost black organization fighting apartheid.

Father Lapsley was a strong supporter of the fight for equal rights for the blacks, who were suppressed for almost 50 years by the white minority in South Africa. He lost both hands when a letter bomb was sent to him in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, in April 1990. Father Lapsley had temporarily left South Africa for security reasons. No wonder that he became a living symbol of all the sufferings after that.

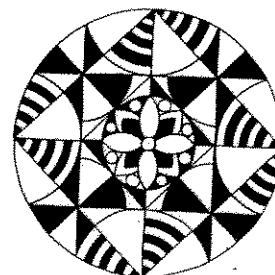
The author is no big writer, I am sorry to say. He describes at length what Father Lapsley has been doing, but gives no vivid picture of his personality. Was he the only white priest to join the ANC? – the book does not tell us. Would the book have been written had he not suffered this terrible fate? It was indeed a wonder that he was not killed.

Father Lapsley, who comes from New Zealand, arrived in Durban, South Africa, at the age of 24 in 1973, was originally a true pacifist. But on arrival his humaneness was lost, and he became a white man in the political sense. He tried hard to remain a believer in non-violence, but the black protest against compulsory school education in Afrikaans, the language similar to Dutch that the then government had decided upon, gradually changed his mind. A demonstration in 1976 against this in the black township of Soweto outside Johannesburg was brutally suppressed, and several hundred blacks lost their lives. These dramatic events forced Michael Lapsley to revise his original opinion.

Father Lapsley later joined the ANC, saying that: "Christians need to do more than analyse ... They need to act." His various quarrels with bishops over where he should work in South Africa, or elsewhere, are conscientiously accounted for in the book, but they make rather tedious reading. When he returned to South Africa, to Cape Town, in 1992 he was offered indemnity by the new government. He truly suffered. He was not a torture victim, but a victim of the widespread violence and terror. In South Africa, violence and torture cannot be separated.

The Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture in Cape Town, which employs the popular and respected Father Lapsley as chaplain, still deals with the victims of apartheid, but nowadays it also treats many victims of actions committed by other South African civilians. Michael Worsnip's book tells a personal story of a courageous man, devoted not only to God, but also to humanity. But it is just a small part of the big drama, encompassing millions of people, forced from their land, persecuted, terrorized, tortured, killed ... by the white man.

Henrik Döcker
Editorial Board
Torture



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