

Escape from Oblivion (first attempt)

by **Giannis Dimitrakis**

Giannis was arrested, heavily injured, after a bank robbery on the 16th of January 2006. He was first condemned to 35 years, reduced to 12,5 years in appeal. After 6 years of prison, he came out on conditional release.

I always keep in mind that image of myself, passing by the prison, unconsciously looking up at the high walls and the barbed wire on top. Which prison was it? Whenever I went with some friends by motorcycle to the Nikaia neighborhood, we rode down Grigoriou Lambraki Street, and the stone walls of Korydallos Prison mesmerized me. I don't know why. Was it because there were times I found myself on the nearby streets – breathing room, but never too close, since all the approaches were completely blocked by the police – simply because of one of the marches in solidarity with comrade prisoners? Or was it perhaps because that enormous, imposing building, so diligently concealing everything going on inside its heart, an entirely unknown world with its own laws and rules, full of heroic stories and human torment, merely piqued my curiosity?

Now that I think about it, I remember another time when I was in front of a prison. It must have been in the spring of 2003, when we were demonstrating outside the Larissa “penitentiary” institution. Yet another dungeon located in the suburbs of that city, next to a school. There, prisoners have the unfortunate privilege of being able to test the Thessaly countryside’s paranoid climate on their own skin. In the summer, you stew in your own juices, with temperatures around 43°C.

And in the winter, you search frantically for a little heat beneath a mountain of blankets in order to escape the cold, which sometimes dips below -10°C. Pure madness. I learned this first-hand from prisoners who did time there, and Vangelis Pallis confirmed it to me in the summer of 2008, when we were talking to each other every day.

The demonstration was held in the city’s main square, which was surrounded by cafés. I had the impression that the locals were staring at us in bewilderment, as if they were seeing something completely foreign or extraterrestrial. We had come to Larissa because rumors were spreading about the construction of a new prison wing – a solitary confinement wing – intended for the people implicated in the case of the November 17 Revo-

lutionary Organization. This meant that they would be transferred from the special wing at Korydallos, which would cause many problems for them, their families, and their lawyers, given the distance from Athens. It's not easy to cover 700 kilometers round-trip for an hour-and-a-half visit. I immediately noticed the combative-looking black bloc gathering in the square. Then, the march moved toward the prison. When the demonstration began, it naturally continued to draw stares from the locals. As expected, two or three buses full of riot police — plus rows of green uniforms containing something resembling human beings — were waiting for us at our destination, thus preventing us from getting any closer to the prison.

Our slogans and cries were joined by some loud whistling, and from the other side hands reached out as far as they could between the cell bars to greet us by waving shirts and sheets. Because of the distance, we couldn't see their faces, so each one of us imagined someone desperately trying to give back what they were receiving. Was it solidarity, or just the simple presence of human beings? Who knows.

The march left us all feeling good. There were plenty of people, and it had "impact," enthusiasm, and tension. However, what remains etched in my memory of that day is an image I don't know how many others could have seen. As we were covering the last stretch before the prison — passing the last few houses in the city, our slogans echoing in the air—my gaze fell on a silhouette on the balcony of an old two-story home. Taking a closer look, I was astonished to see a little old man — about 80 years old, and clearly moved — saluting our march with tears in his eyes. Had we perhaps reminded him of something? What kinds of memories had we coaxed from the depths of his mind to make him compare them with what he was seeing at that moment? I don't know, and it really didn't matter. What mattered was the event itself and the flood of emotions it unleashed, on all sides. It's extraordinary to realize that what you do in the present can cause someone you meet by chance in the future to shed at least a few nostalgic tears for their past. You and your comrades are creating and changing the present, yet you also experience it alone, as a separate and unique being within the group.

In the end, regardless of why that image of prison stuck in my mind, "curiosity killed the cat." And what a cat! Armed to the teeth and ready for anything, or at least that's what I thought. To tell the truth, as a "promising" young anarchist in the twilight of 1997 and the years to come, I immersed myself in the shock wave of social ferment without giving it too much thought, convinced that they would never catch me. I was just like that cat! Oh, what a mistake! Although, looking back at my record, the cold light of hindsight can confirm that "I was around for a minute," like they say on the streets. It wasn't a very long time, but I did hold on for more than eight years, like a fakir walking on hot coals until my skin finally caught fire. I was treading those hot coals in a certain way, and I decided to transform my stride into preparatory work, which in my opinion was necessary to pave the way for the arrival of the eagerly awaited future revolution.

But it didn't take long for "the worst" to finally catch up with me, which was also partially the result of some bad luck that hung me out to

dry at one of the most critical moments of my life – when I had to face three rabid pig bullets that seemed to be engraved with my name, destined to accompany me on a one-way trip. However, like a real cat with nine lives, for some unknown reason I remained on the dock without setting foot on that infamous black-clad boatman's ferry.

Instead, I found myself in the exact place I was so curious about, so curious to see what went on inside. Like I said, it was a place I never expected to enter when I was a promising young anarchist.

Behind bars...

A new chapter in my life opened, and it doesn't look like it's going to close anytime soon.

They nailed me for a “felony,” according to what their penal code says. A bank robbery worth 110 million euros, expertly framing me for six other similarly mysterious cases and a stack of other crimes that the police jackals will easily be able to charge me with—serving their holy office with the flawless sense of professionalism and decency they've always been known for – plus three arrest warrants for my friends and comrades. For Marios, Grigoris, and Simos, who were called my accomplices and in time came to be known as the “master thieves,” the “iron links” that would help “dismantle the armed guerrilla groups.” Who knows what else has been written in the different putrid and “distinguished” newspapers, or said by the “unquestionably noble and ethical” TV reporters – stooges of police propaganda, all of them. The result? In October 2009, the newly-formed parliamentary terrorist organization PASOK put a price of 600,000 euros on the heads of all three, thus making their lives even more difficult, as they were already on the run from the law and hidden from the scrutiny of the prosecutorial organs, refusing to recognize the arrest warrants.

And had the worst stopped there, the difficulties may have certainly continued, but perhaps one would have been able to swallow that bitter pill. But that's not how things played out, and the devil stuck his foot in again. This time it had nothing to do with me. Rather, it was about Simos. And he didn't just “stick his foot in.” They actually cut it off entirely. An armed robbery at the Praktiker hardware megastore on Pireos Street in the Gazi neighborhood. Screams, shots, injuries, commotion. The police arrive at the scene of the crime and hear an eyewitness say that “one of the criminals was tall”. A butterfly flaps its wings in Vietnam and a hurricane slams into the Athens neighborhood of Keramikos. Not once but twice, because apart from Simos being found by chance and then seriously wounded and arrested, another friend and comrade, Aris, is caught in the same area and subsequently locked upon totally fabricated and ridiculous charges. The prosecuting authorities bury their findings in the district attorney's report and delay their disclosure until just before Aris is released thanks to a lack of evidence regarding the charges he was arrested on. And as if robbing him of his liberty at the last minute wasn't enough, they also deprive him of his father. He was a father to Aris, a comrade to us, and his heart couldn't bear such inju-

stice, indignation, and rage. He has left us forever. If I'm making an effort to narrate everything that's happened recently, from the day this wretched 2010 dawned through all the horribly unsettling developments within the anarchist milieu, it's only because of the names involved. At the very least, it's a cautionary remembrance, so we don't forget a single comrade. It's so we don't forget Lambros, stripped of his life by yet another police bullet in the alleyways of Dafni while he was expropriating a car for use in the general context of class war. It's so we don't forget Haris, Panayiotis, Konstantina, Ilias, Giorgos, Polykarpos, Vangelis, Christos, Alfredo, Pola, Nikos, Vangelis, Costas, Christoforos, and Sarantos.

For now, setting aside the tragically sad appraisal of 2010 and returning to the dark days of my past – to the beginning of a life caged by iron bars – I initiate a “search” of my biological hard drive and find myself at the end of January 2006.

I can still recall that sunny morning in Athens General Hospital, when the pigs notified me that I had to get ready for my transfer to Agios Pavlos Prison Hospital. I remember it well because it had finally stopped snowing. All of Greece was covered in snow that year, prompting chaos and confusion in the urban areas, bringing nearly everything to a standstill, dismantling – although only for a few days – the well-organized infrastructure of the great cities, and halting transportation as well as planned and routine construction and other work throughout the public and private sectors.

We had been waiting for this very snowfall – or at least some spell of bad weather, which according to the news had to arrive – to help us achieve our unholy objective. The goal was to rob the National Bank at the corner of Hippocrates and Solonos. It's a spot right in the middle of Athens, and we optimistically anticipated a big haul – although clearly accompanied by enormous, almost prohibitive risk. It's not like we would have postponed the day of our escapade if the storm hadn't helped us out. We weren't a bunch of kids. We had already decided on the date: Monday, January 16. It was a rather nasty day to attempt pulling off such a feat, because at the beginning of the week everyone is at their post and ready to do their duty, especially the pigs. Nevertheless, some madness pushed us to the edge of the abyss.

In the end, the storm played a dirty trick on us, and the sun – triumphant, and proud of its victory in the dead of winter – rose to the heights that Monday morning, effortlessly shining its warm rays on the citizens of Attica. On the one hand, this brought everyone out to do their jobs and errands, which worked in favor of our sacrilege since downtown resembled a viscous human river in which you could only get around with difficulty. On the other hand, like the others in the car, I was decked out in a sweater, a winter coat, and the martial tools of expropriation. Flushed and sweaty, I took off my scarf, cursed our bad luck, and watched all the smiling foot patrols march through central Athens under the warm sun.

Pensive and nervous upon seeing the first bad signs, we reached the rendezvous point, from which we had to set off toward our final destina-

tion. We met the others there. All of us definitely had the same strange feeling. We were like a little black hole of conspiracy, far away from everything going on around us, alien to the general atmosphere of pure joy radiating from those who had come downtown just because the day was bathed in sunlight. At that moment and in the moments to come, our own universe was light years away from the one everyone else belonged to. In a just few minutes, our universe was going crash into theirs – violently, of course – making our presence visible and disrupting our different yet parallel lives, which rarely crossed. Our lives and theirs. One world’s instant intrusion into another, setting off an uncontrollable chain of events. One more slap in the face of normality, one more slap in the face of the flat, rectilinear, coordinated sequence of things. Something like a multiple-car accident on the highway, when a lapse by some hurried, distracted driver drags the fate of everyone else on the road along with him, disrupting and blocking the flow of traffic all over the place.

The people waiting for us at the rendezvous point had some unpleasant news. As they were coming to meet us, they passed a police checkpoint that was close enough to the site of our action to pose a serious threat to the whole endeavor, making it almost impossible to pull off. The immediate reactions – ranging from “Fuck it, let’s do it and whatever happens happens” to “Let’s put it off and try again some other time” – balanced out, so we decided that some of us would go over to see if the pigs were still there, and we would then take action accordingly.

Finally, the pigs were gone, although “gone” is somewhat relative if you’re talking about central Athens, even more so given the location of the bank. One has about as much in common with the other as a frozen supermarket pizza has with a pizza made at a good pizzeria. But like I said, something was pushing us to the edge of the abyss, and since the pigs were “gone,” we decided to go ahead. Of course, what happened next must have had something to do with Murphy’s Law, which says that “if a piece of toast with jam falls on the floor, nine out of ten times it will fall jam-side down.” The fact that everything fell apart is just like the anecdote about the toast – it’s those infernal, incalculable factors that can ruin everything, especially the unpredictability of human nature and behavior. A whirlwind of people and things that, after stopping its maddening twists and turns, overwhelms the cityscape; a stupid bank guard – with a totally mistaken and twisted perception of the extent of his duty – wounded because of his equally stupid and excessive determination to stop the escape of four bank robbers; a car that wouldn’t start; a bag full of weapons and money; three people frenetically scattering into the featureless crowd; and finally me, wounded and in the hands of my pursuers.

The sun that didn’t care about what was going on hundreds of millions of kilometers away, the sun that warmed a winter day in January, was the same sun that appeared again that morning in the hospital, stirring up that parade of memories.

I was waiting to see what would happen. I knew they were applying pressure to get me out of the intensive care unit as soon as possible, and I found out they were in a rush to bring me to the prison hospital and be done with me. My stitches – little pieces of metal in the shape of a Π

(Greek “P”), like those things that fasten upholstery to the frame of a couch – were still in, running from my chest to my groin. Generally speaking, I still needed a bit of work, but no matter how strongly I objected to them moving me from the hospital, the pigs already had orders from above. “And if the boss says so, what can I do?” With a lot of pain and effort, I began to gather my things, even though my wounds didn’t allow me to stand upright. Those details didn’t matter to the boss. Evidently, this was also included in the price I now began to pay for my decisions.

Nevertheless, the final touches to my hasty expulsion from the hospital were yet to come. Before the police masterminds could even begin to calculate how many radios, weapons, boots, etc., they would need in order to coordinate the “secure transfer” operation, just at that moment, my mom showed up, arriving very early for the regular visit with her spoiled son.

My mom, Mrs. Eleni, separated from her son by just 17 years. In the 90s, whenever someone from the water or power company came by and we opened our door together, they would always ask: “Is your mother home?” Mrs. Eleni, who almost had a nervous breakdown when she heard the news that I was mixed up in a bank robbery and wounded during the shootout. Although she must have gotten over it, because the pigs at Police Headquarters were ultimately unable to get a single statement from her in the interrogation room due to the fact that she began to wail desperately: “I want to see my son!” Even the pigs were at a loss in the face of my mom’s reaction. What could they do? She was a mother fighting for her son. Beat her up? Send her to the dungeon so they wouldn’t have to listen to her? It would have been like that or worse 60 years ago during the dark civil war period of 1946, or even 35 years ago during the years of the arrogant Junta scum. However, it was now 2006, and we had already been through 30 years of the parliamentary oligarchy’s fake democracy, in which fascist and blatantly authoritarian arrangements were concealed behind other forms of violence – more flexible and perhaps more efficient. In any case, my mom’s wailing brought her – like it or not – to the hospital I was in, and her reaction was a given. That crazy woman wasn’t going to let them forget her!

Feeling that one of her little ones was being threatened or in danger, a woman with strong maternal instincts became a real hyena, a ferocious beast (especially when compared to her day-to-day attitude toward institutions, authority, and codes of conduct). Seemingly unprepared for everything that was going on that morning, she was actually so combative – like any true mother – that she opposed anything that could have endangered my physical and psychological integrity.

As you can easily imagine, the matter of my abduction/transfer to the prison hospital was now up in the air for a while until “the responsible power” – in other words, my mom – could see the doctors who were taking care of me. Like she said, they were the only ones who should decide if I was to be discharged. And that’s how things went. A throng of white coats – flustered and clearly surprised – appeared in the distance with my mother leading the way, heading for the stretcher that was already prepared for departure.

“Who ordered the patient’s transfer?” one of the doctors asked the pigs.

"We have orders from above, sir. It's not our decision."

"Perhaps I could speak to your superior?"

"Just a moment, I have to get authorization."

And while the responsible people in charge were literally fuming, my stretcher was brought back to my room so that — in keeping with the outcome of the battle between the doctors and the pigs — they could take one last look at me. They said they were going to remove the remaining stitches and prescribe some medications that I should keep taking. They also explained that the most difficult and important part of my recovery was over, and now the only thing left was to recover my strength by resting and eating a lot. Incidentally, that was something of a half-truth, or more accurately a lie wrapped up in "not quite ready" packaging. I was able to listen in on the fight between the doctors, my mom, and the pigs, with the doctors insisting that I still wasn't ready to be transferred, and the pigs monotonously repeating that they were "simply following orders." "Following orders" obviously won, as expected.

But this wasn't the first time the scales tipped in favor of the pigs and their fucking orders. Something similar happened before over the issue of guarding me in the intensive care unit, when the medical team managed to resist the pressure of the security forces — who wanted to invade my room — for two days, their basic argument being that such an invasion would pose a danger not just to me but to the other patients as well. Still, it would have been naive to believe that basic human values could prevail over the new "repression and security" dogma.

It was the same when the head of the ICU — shaken and beside himself — came to tell me he couldn't keep me under his personal supervision anymore, even though my condition required it, because he was being severely pressured by the persecuting authorities, who wanted him to sign off on my release from the 24-hour intensive care unit and approve my transfer to the ophthalmology wing. Why there and not surgery? "Security reasons" again, of course. The pigs were demanding that an entire operating room be cleared and the other patients thrown out, just so they could keep a closer eye on me. They really believed that's how it had to be, even though it would have been impossible for the hospital. So instead, they brought me to a specially "prepared" room in the ophthalmology wing, which I was told was where Dimitris Koufodinas had his "accommodations" during the hunger strike he carried out to make them remove the security netting that covered the yard of the prison wing he was locked up in. The room was certainly prepared, since there was nothing in it. They had removed or bolted down anything they thought a prisoner could use for an eventual suicide attempt or vigilante attack, and the balcony door was barred, naturally. The rigid logic of heightened stupidity.

Wasn't it the dogma of security and intimidation that, in the blink of an eye, wiped away the last traces of the room's dignity and humanity? Wasn't it pure sadism and vengeance that pushed those subhumans to watch my mother while she cleaned the shit off my bedridden body, without looking away for a single moment? Wasn't it their harsh behavior the whole time I was in their suffocating "embrace" that led to my being withdrawn, edgy, and exhausted when the interrogator and prosecutor came by to take my statement? Or was it perhaps a sign of compassion when head torturer

and prosecutor Diotis, not just ignoring but jeopardizing the disastrous condition I was in at the time – intentionally or not – visited me for my statement while I had a tube stuck down my throat and was visibly incapable of uttering a complete sentence?

These are obviously rhetorical questions, and I ask them not to moan about the trampling of democratic rights, but to reveal the context in which the conflict between two counteracting forces – two completely different worlds – is developing. On one side we have those who dream of a totally subjugated and enslaved society that serves the oligarchic desires of a few insatiable idlers. And on the other side we have those who are fighting for real equality, justice, and freedom; those who are creating a new reality far away from terms like profit, competitiveness, exploitation, and hierarchy.

While the wheels of my stretcher rushed over the little bumps in the hospital floor, each time transferring a sharp pain to my freshly operated-on back, the ruffian herd – in between a shouted stream of orders, and to their great relief – brought me toward my final departure from Athens General Hospital. When the first few rays of warm sunlight struck me in the courtyard – where an ambulance and its packed escort cars were already waiting to securely transfer me to Agios Pavlos Prison Hospital – it felt truly liberating, and seemed to make up for my three weeks of cohabitation with uniformed guard dogs. Those few seconds I spent outside before they put me in the ambulance were my last opportunity to breathe fresh air and see the sun without bars and barbed wire between us. With the sun as my comrade, I bid a final farewell to freedom, and entered the longest winter of my life.

End of installment...
 Giannis Dimitrakis
 Domokos Prison
 September 10, 2010

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Nikos Romanos - An interview

Tell us a little bit about what has happened concerning the academic leave of absence you have demanded within the new judicial framework after your hunger strike in November-December 2014.

It goes like this: I completed 1/3 of the course as required by the new regulation and I made the request for educational leave. From that point on began the theater of the absurd. The prison board decided that the new regulation cannot be put into effect, it requires a joint ministerial decision and so it sent the request to the special appellate magistrate E. Nikopoulos, in line with the previous law. Nikopoulos issued a negative response because there is no ministerial decision and one cannot get into the merits of the application as the new judicial framework annuls and takes the place of the prior one. Based on the negative opinion of Nikopoulos, the Board rejected the leave request in its turn as the decision of the trial judge is binding.

In light of this fait accompli, SYRIZA – which during the hunger strike concentrated on electioneering and brutal political exploitation on the backs of the people who made up the polymorphic solidarity movement – plays the role of Pontius Pilate, just like its predecessors. But of course this should come as no surprise since we are talking about politicians- that is to say, total bastards, political swindlers, opportunists, hypocrites and professional chameleons, who for a small time wore the costume of the humanist to serve certain political purposes.

Of course there are more important reasons for that development, but I'll keep this explanation for a later question. Concerning the progress of my case, theoretically speaking, there should be a ministerial decree to implement the new regulation, but I don't think there is much possibility for that to happen.

Do you think that behind the “delays” on the electronic monitoring wristband, there are political considerations or vindictive behavior directed against you?

I believe that in this instance there is not even a really existing electronic monitoring wristband, because regardless of the claims of the Department of Justice, we who are in prison know that there is not a single prisoner in any prison in Greece who has been released in this way. Every day many prisoners come and ask me about this issue and they all wonder why there is no one who has received an answer from the judicial councils to which they have made their applications. Because the inmates communicate with each other in prisons and keep updated on issues that concern them, I can say with confidence that there is no prisoner who has set foot outside of any prison in this way. Because this type of news would certainly create a scandal in such a well-known case,

the seemingly faceless monster bureaucracy provides a solution to this problem. Bureaucracy, however, is not something impersonal, rather this is the alibi of persons in positions of authority to pass off their responsibilities to something that supposedly surpasses them- to an invisible ally hidden behind legislative committees, technical consultants, stacks of papers, complex interpretations and false hopes. What I am saying, namely that there is no electronic monitoring bracelet currently available, and the Ministry of Justice is mocking prisoners to avoid a scandal is simply a fact that leaves no room for doubt and cannot be contradicted by anyone or any fact, since there is no prisoner who has been released or taken sabbatical leave in this way.

Although unnecessary, I will bring up an example from Korydallos prison, of which I have had a personal view. There were some prisoners who are studying in various technical universities and, given the new judicial framework, wanted to ask for educational leave as now is the time for exams. Those who passed by the judicial council (and in order to avoid responsibility everyone on the council can hide behind a magistrate) were told really ridiculous lies- that the council could not get in touch with the secretariats of their schools and so asked them to come back in September. This fact means that the Prison Board has taken specific instructions from the Ministry of Justice in order to conceal the matter and to not allow to the surface the real causes of all of these maneuvers.

How do you judge the attitude of the new SYRIZA government?

To take things from the beginning, Syriza was a hostile arrangement long before it became government. Their role was to absorb social tensions, to gain political capital from participation in intermediate social struggles by presenting themselves as their institutional hand, to operate anti-insurrectionally in transferring the field of confrontation from the streets to bourgeois democratic politics. In a few words, they embodied in the best possible way the important political role of reformism.

Moreover Tsipras himself before becoming prime minister had declared that without Syriza there would have been much more unrest and riots in Greece during the years of anti-government demonstrations. This shows that the implementation of a leftist political agenda in the opposition was, among other things, a political strategy selected to ensure social peace and to rebuild the damaged social contract upon new bases. Democracy hides many aces up its sleeve to maintain social cohesion, and one of the weapons in its arsenal is the rapid alternation of roles on the political stage, reshuffling the deck, and also the assimilation of radical propositions that can turn against it. Turning to today, after the rise of Syriza to power, there are structural changes in rhetoric and huge internal contradictions.

Of course, despite all of its contradictions, the reality that it imposes is one that still keeps in force the C-type prisons which continue to exist, since outside Domokos remain special police vehicles

and isolation wards are still holding comrades, and since migrants continue to be marked with numbers before being sent to concentration camps. Furthermore, the invasion of occupied spaces, torturing hunger striking comrades, being responsible for vindictively keeping hostage relatives and partners of the CCF - like in Salamina where it launches the first place of exile in era of democracy - in signing trade partnerships with the murderers of the Palestinians, and which shortly will implement all the neoliberal policies that they were opposed to as the opposition; in short, Syriza fully retains all those geopolitical, economic and military commitments of a state that belongs to the capitalist periphery, while at the same time to throw dust in the eyes of leftist voters it actively supports some moth-eaten bureaucratic officials who maintain a leftist rhetoric, and yet when the hour comes for the political mutation of Syriza, they will be thrown out.

Seeing things from our point of view, the fact that we are anarchists means that even if Syriza was really a leftist government with radical politics it would still find us opposing it without any intention to sign a truce with these well-schooled magicians of illusion and organized oppression, and in opposition to the neo-communist gangrene that infects some anarchist circles, we long ago cut the umbilical cord of anarchy with the left. But it is important to be precise in our characterizations in order to analyze the reality that we have facing us. Therefore, Syriza is a social democratic government, with pseudo-radical rhetoric that exploits a left political profile to gain control and influence over movements and subversive projects which potentially could turn against them. And let's not forget that historically the political representation of capitalism with socialist forms has implemented the harshest economic and repressive policies in taking advantage of the endless and culpable sleep of the social majority.

The most infuriating to our own circles is that there are several clowns who play at being anarchists, and who have the audacity to invite members of Syriza into "social centers" [untranslatable pun here: could also read 'centers for the society of syriza'] and discuss with them profoundly ideological issues promoting a perception that whitewashes Syriza- which as we speak is the administrator of the state. A sad and similar thought-process as those who want to educate the fascists of Golden Dawn - as if the issue with the fascists or the managers of the state machine is to discuss our disagreements and not to fight them wherever we find them.

All this would be a nice literary conversation for those who believe in democracy and its ideals, sleeping on pink clouds and dreaming of post-capitalist societies- except for the fact that anarchists have war with democracy and its exponents. In consequence of where we find ourselves, all who operate in whitewashing Syriza have no excuse. Moreover, it has been only a short while since Stavros Theodorakis gave a tribute to some "protagonists" for the legality certificates which they have given to the state. For this threadbare opposition government and the crypto-Syriza, pseudo-ideological anarchists, as well as other hangers-on, the solution is simple: a stout tree and a strong rope.

We stand by all those who remain friends of anarchist revolt and still

insist on throwing Molotov cocktails at cops in Exarchia, who go on demonstrations to vandalize representations of sovereignty, who arm their minds with subversive plans and their hands with fire to burn the structures of the new order. To all who organize their deeds through informal anarchist direct action networks, where destructive intentions are joined horizontally and informally in a chaotic front that goes on the offensive by targeting persons and infrastructure that administer and defend this sick world that surrounds us.

What in your opinion is the place of violence in the anarchist movement?

Once again in recent times we have reached a turning point of the modern historical process. A bankrupt Greek capitalism has to cater, even if inconsistently, to the European Union and the global economy. And the reality is that it will continue to do so regardless of its political managers. The borders of Greece and Italy as the first host countries of migration from war zones are drenched in blood from the bodies of migrants. Transnational rivalries of powerful states increase and conflicts of geopolitical interests trigger outbreaks of unrest in many parts of the world. For anarchists, instability and worsening systemic violence across the diffuse spectrum of exploitative social relations is a challenge to organize effectively to become a powerful destabilizing factor of normality.

An anarchist counter attack against the world of authority, of economists, of politicians, of cops, fascists, journalists, scientists, officers, managers and executives of multinationals, judicial officials, directors of prisons, bankers and their associates, the vigilantes and their willing servants of power. Faced with all these bastards who are the heart of the capitalist machine that beats to the rhythm of the social majority (who either out of indifference, fear, or complicity, contribute to protecting the heart of the beast), anarchy responds with the language of absolute violence, fire, explosions, armed rebellion, in this key assumption we begin formulating our strategies, deciding to rebel and join in the battle for total liberation.

A revolt in the present time will be all-in, it will release within the revolutionary community real human relationships and will know to organize its attacks. This will be the vehicle to travel uncharted paths of freedom, enabling us to exist and live without receiving and giving instructions, without obeying, without crawling, but in a genuine way creating a new reality in the capitalist metropolises - the season of fear for the rulers and their minions, the dawn of our era, now and forever, until the end. Thus the position of organized revolutionary violence within the anarchist movement is the Alpha and Omega, it is the driving force for the qualitative evolution of an internal enemy that will cause nightmares for authority and bosses.

Do you consider that prison is a field of struggle for a political prisoner?

First we have to knock down the myths that hover over such places, such as the collective fantasy that wants the social identity of the prisoner to be a potentially revolutionary subject. Social identities - migrants, prisoners, workers, students - are societal subgroups that are dependent and feed in their own way the functioning of the capitalist world.

In my view, free humanity appears where societal identities and their properties collapse, at the point where the individual decision for freedom creates a new unique and separate identity: the insurrectionary and iconoclast who attacks by any means necessary the enemies of freedom.

For an anarchist who has decided to actively participate in the adventure of anarchist revolt, prison or even death are possible consequences of the choices made in the real world and not in a virtual reality where verbosity and fantasy are common.

The prison is a temporary way-station for those hit by repression. It's where our internal metal is tested in practice, the final point of major decisions and major internal changes. It's a rotten social structure within which reigns brutality and subjugation, it's the dark realm of power, the place of betrayal, the place where freedom is not only captured but for many humiliated and dragged bleeding between drugs, discipline and dirty corridors, where people learn to hate themselves.

Thousands of analyses exist concerning prison and its inhabitants, so I'll just repeat what Jean Marc Rouillan, an urban guerrilla of Action Direct, has said: the most appropriate people to talk about prison are those who spend a small portion of their life inside. For the truth is that the more you spend your life in here, the more difficult it becomes to describe the function and structure of this really miserable community. In summary therefore, prison means slow death, social cannibalism, resignation to weakness, psychosomatic destruction, hard drugs, psychiatric pills, human waste piled in state landfills, discipline, hierarchy, religious fanaticism, tribal groupings and pervasive racism, nationalistic notions of every shade, confined waiting, self-destruction, deadlocks, murderous feelings, covert coercion, general immobility, and fixation.

It is no exaggeration to say that the society of prisoners is the bastard child of capitalist society, a well-oiled killing machine made of ice wherein lies the entire surplus ugliness of the modern world. This does not mean that within the prison there are not minorities of people who have oriented their lives towards dignity, and with whom we can develop friendly relations or even comradeship.

Returning to the original part of the question, I think that in this test there should never be forgotten responsibility towards the final goal and dedication to the common cause. Never regretting, never with bowed head, forever dangerous to this civilization of voluntary slavery and submission.

For this reason anarchist struggles in prison can surely find a way to create chances to become a danger for the enemy. With texts and analyses,

with small and large refusals, with hunger strikes, the thread of anarchic revolt continues to be woven so long as the flame of destruction burns in our hearts. With this understanding prison becomes a field of struggle for the promotion of subversive struggle and anarchy.

Nikos Romanos was one of the few anarchists whose name was known to the wider Greek public. He was 15 years old during the 2006-7 mass mobilisation of high-school students against educational reforms. On 6 December 2008 he saw his friend Alexandros Grigoropoulos murdered by the police, the event which started the revolt. Romanos disappeared during the trial of the murderer, only to surface in early 2013 as part of an armed raid on a bank. He was captured along with three others, and sentenced the following year. Few people in the anarchist movement here have been under as heavy surveillance, long-term, as the comrade Nikos Romanos. Because he is a living witness to the shameful conduct of the state, he has been labeled a terrorist by politicians and the mass media many times over. Of their many accusations, however, the only crime the judiciary has ever pinned on him is a bank robbery, for which he served a prison sentence. During the time he was imprisoned, Nikos went on hunger strike for 31 days to (successfully) demand access to education, something he was entitled to under law but which the state had refused him. His steadfastness in this matter inspired solidarity actions throughout Greece and internationally, and is still well remembered. He was released in 2019. Since the 18 November 2024 he has been imprisoned again, as he is suspected to be a member of an armed guerilla group in the context of the Ambelokipi-Case.



Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin

Back From Hell: Black Power And Treason To Whiteness Inside Prison Walls

The federal penitentiary at Terre Haute, Indiana had the reputation of being the most racist and brutal prison in the federal prison system. The city of Terre haute itself had been known in the 1920s as one of the strongest base areas for the Ku Klux Klan in the Midwest. As I was to discover later, many prison guards were Klan members or sympathizers. There were no black guards at the time I entered it, in the summer of 1970.

The most famous inmate to do time at the prison was the 1950s rock and roll singer, Chuck Berry, during the early 1960s, and reportedly he spoke disparagingly about the state of Indiana for years afterward and said he would never have a concert in the city of Terre Haute. I do not know if this is true.

Usually racism is the best tool of the prison officials to control volatile prison populations. The warden and his guards intentionally keep up racial hostilities through rumors and provocation, and give a free hand within the prison to groups like the KKK and the Aryan Brotherhood to maim or kill Black prisoners. They use the racist white prisoners to confine both themselves and others, in return for special privileges and the fleeting feeling that they are "helping" the "white race" maintain control. This is how the system imprisons whites and uses them in their own oppression. The officials can usually count on recruiting a steady supply of racist murderers and henchmen from the white prison population. But an important part of the plan is to beat down or silence anti-racist whites, in order to make sure all whites toe the fascist line. In fact, without this conformity the whole plan would not work.

For years many black inmates had been beaten or killed at Terre Haute by both white prison inmates and guards. I knew from the stories I had been told by black prisoners in Atlanta that this was true. In fact, the black prisoners at Terre Haute had lived in total fear of the whites. I said "had" because by the time I got there things had started to change.

A group of young militant black prisoners had formed an organization called the Afro-American Cultural Studies Program (AACSP), which met every week and discussed black history and culture, as well as world current events. The prison officials hated the group but had to grant their charter because of a lawsuit filed against the Warden and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. But the Warden, John Tucker, said that if the started "acting militant," he would grant a Klan charter for the racist white inmates — as if they secretly already didn't have one! Warden Tucker had a well-earned reputation for brutality against black inmates. The older blacks told us "young bloods" all kinds of horror stories about Tucker, and about the Blacks killed or mutilated over the years by white

guards and inmates. Black men were hanged, stabbed, thrown into a threshing machine, beaten with pipes, burned alive in their cells and murdered in every other way imaginable. tucker even had a group of white inmates who acted as his "hit men" against whites who refused to conform to the racist line. But the "young bloods," and especially the black inmates from AACSP, would not be intimidated and vowed that they would fight back to the death. Shortly after I arrived in the prison, I threw in my lot with them.

At one of their meetings held each Thursday, I asked what I had to do to join. The gentleman who had been acting as the moderator, a short, dark, bald-headed brother from Detroit, whose name was Nondu, told me all that was necessary was to actively take part. I was introduced to all the brothers there — fifty in all — but especially to Karenga, a huge but affable brother from Cincinnati, along with his prison rap partener, a relatively smallish brother named Desumba, and then Hassan and Nondu from Detroit, all of whom were the principal AACSP officers.

They along with the general members, all welcomed me into the group and treated me like family. Karenga, the President of the group, actually became my best friend, and saved my life on more than one occasion.

These brothers all wore shaved heads, and were influenced by the 1960s cultural nationalist figure, Ron Karenga, along with the Cleveland, Ohio black nationalist Ahmed Evans (who, with his second in command, Nondu Latham, was serving life in Ohio state prison for killing several policemen in 1968), but their greatest influence was Malcolm X. I was not greatly enamored of Ron Karenga, who headed a Los Angeles-based group called "US" (United Slaves), which was implicated in the murder of two Black Panther Party members in 1969 and purportedly engaged in other internecine violence against the BPP. The Panthers believed that Karenga was a police agent, or knowingly allowed the crimes to take place because of some political sectarian reason. But my initial doubts did not stop me from taking part in the AACSP. It became my all-consuming passion while at the prison, and I would fight and die to defend it. In fact, I almost did make the supreme sacrifice.

We had to fight both the racist authorities and the white inmates on behalf of the black prison population, many of whom were intimidated into silence. We were bold and audacious, and carried on a virtual guerrilla war to strike back at the killers of black men, whether they were guards or inmates. The whites hated and feared us because we were ruthless in defending ourselves and punishing racists. There was no mercy. Our retaliation was always swift and bloody.

Our kind of revolutionary blacks had never been seen before at Terre Haute, and it changed the status quo when we fought back. Many of the prisoners were white radicals who were in prison for anti-war cases, and they in turn began to educate other whites. The anti-racist organizing by white radicals was important because it ensured that white prisoners would no longer be indoctrinated or intimidated by the Klan as they had been for the previous thirty-five years at that prison. This re-education was something black revolutionaries could not effectively do alone, and prisoners began to check out books from the Black Culture library, to attend joint political study groups, and to try to understand

in theoretical terms how racism was a way of enslaving us all – blacks and other non-whites as inferiors, whites as oppressors. They understood now how the Klan had been doing the bidding of the prison officials for years, just like the white workers in society do the bidding of the capitalists. Fascist politics became not only unpopular but unsafe.

Guards used to the old regime decided to suddenly “retire,” and racist inmates begged to be transferred. The Warden and his staff were greatly alarmed, but powerless to take any action lest they precipitate a full-fledged riot, which would also get guards and staff killed in large numbers. The prison officials realized they were losing control, and began to panic. All prison officials know that if racism is surmounted, revolt is inevitable.

Then in September of 1971 the Attica prison revolt erupted in upstate New York, and riveted the attention of the entire world on the U.S. prison system. Revolutionary prisoners – black, Latino, and white – had taken guards hostage at Attica and were running the prison. This terrified prison officials all over the United States. It also pushed forward the prison struggle and made it a red-hot issue.

Even after the repression of Attica, sympathy rebellions broke out all over the country, including at Terre Haute, where for the first time black, white, and Hispanic prisoners rose up to fight the prison officials. Buildings were torched or bombed, people tried to escape, strikes and industrial sabotage went on, and desperate hand-to-hand combat between guards and prisoners in the high-security L-unit was taking place, along with other acts of resistance which seemed to break out daily.

Warden Tucker and his staff panicked, and rushed to start building a new wing of high-security cells in L-unit to hold the “malcontents” in his prison. He then tried to provoke a confrontation, a “race riot” among inmates, but this didn’t work because we had chased away most of the racists, and had made alliances with progressive white and Latino prisoners. These prisoners, many of whom were schooled in revolutionary politics, wouldn’t fall for the old tricks.

The Warden could not convince the white prisoners, who had now struggled and suffered next to us, to accept the old racist “hate bait.” They knew they were prisoners, and would not accept white skin privileges or resurrect the Klan to help the Warden run the prison. These white prisoners were standing up against their masters, and they were a different people entirely. They no longer saw anything in common with the Warden, not even “whiteness.” The black prison population had overcome its fear and insecurity to become the vanguard and the backbone of a serious threat to the organized racial violence and repression which had ruled unchallenged for years.

Frustrated, Tucker then just told his officers to begin rounding up the AACSP leaders and throw them into the new security unit. But we had prepared for this eventuality, and had decided not to go down without a fight. So the first time they came for our leaders, it precipitated a twelve-hour standoff when we took over one of the prison units where most of them were, booby-trapped the doors with explosives and other traps,

and held the unit guards hostage. The prisoners armed themselves with spears, knives, home-made dynamite, and other weapons.

Realizing how serious the situation had become, a truce was negotiated by Tucker for protection of our so-called constitutional rights to have disciplinary hearings for the leadership instead of just summarily throwing them into solitary, and for no reprisals over the protest. But this agreement for amnesty and standard disciplinary hearings with outside legal representation was swiftly broken as soon as the authorities re-took control of the institution. All of the known leaders of the AACSP, and their white and Latin Allies, were snatched up and rammed into high-security cells.

The officials were thus satisfied that they had removed the threat, and that the absence of the first level of leadership would cause the group to collapse. But on the contrary, the organization never missed a beat. We had set up AACSP as an organization which had several levels of leadership; there was no primary leader. So as soon as the original founding leaders were removed, the secondary leadership took over. I took over as President, and the other slots were quickly filled by a new wave of leaders. We kept up the struggle, continued our weekly meetings, and began sending out a monthly newsletter to tell our outside supporters and the press what was going on.

We had always had a number of programs to help prisoners: a library of radical and black books, political education classes, literacy classes and job training, and we kept these going. We even demanded that officials allow us to take books and materials to those leaders in the solitary confinement units. The officials had to agree, since they saw they had failed to destroy us in the previous incident.

Finally, after several months of this standoff, officials created another provocation by attacking one of the leaders in solitary, Brother Hassan. He was badly beaten when he objected to a guard spitting and blowing his nose into the prisoners' food. We knew this was a set-up, so we did not violently respond. We demanded that the harassment cease, circulated a petition, and filed a lawsuit in the local court system. Even though we did not attack the guards like they wanted, they began to round us up anyway, claiming that we were "planning" to create a disturbance. The truth was the officials concocted this "conspiracy" to try to destroy the organization and justify these harsh security measures.

We were all thrown into the special security cells in L-unit and were only let out for showers and the law library. For twenty-three hours a day we were locked down in these cells, which were about the size of your bathroom. The guards taunted us by calling us racist and offensive names, and spitting and blowing their noses in our food. They would do this right in front of you hoping you would object so they would have an excuse to call you a "smartass nigger" and beat up on you. They would gang up and beat prisoners bloody, especially those they did not like.

After a discussion among the comrades in the unit, we decided to rebel against these conditions before things got worse and somebody got killed. As it was, Hassan was so badly beaten he required stitches and a back brace.

One day when they opened the doors to take me to the law library, I knocked the handcuffs away, leaped out of the cell, hit one of the guards in the face with my fist and stabbed the other one in the hip with a knife. I tried to force them to open the security door to let all the prisoners out, but the guard who had the keys ran and threw them out the window into a hallway. So I was trapped along with them, and decide, in frustration to kill our keepers who had been tormenting us for weeks.

I jumped on the guard I had punched, and stabbed him several times until the knife broke in his side. He screamed, "Don't kill me! Don't kill me! I've got a wife and three kids." I hit him again and again until he fell to the ground. Then I picked up a mop wringer to crush his skull, but the other guard attacked me from behind. I turned to hit him in the chest, and then we started to wrestle. Meanwhile the pig on the floor jumped up and sprayed my face with chemical MACE. I also had cut my forehead on the mop wringer, and blood flowed into my eyes, blinding me. I fought on in a blind rage!

By this time the other guards in the hallway had been alerted and ran into the unit with riot equipment. they started to beat me, but the other prisoners in the unit broke their cell windows out and started throwing coffee mugs, glass jars, and other things at the riot squad as they dragged me out of the unit, feet first, like I was some lifeless animal. But they were more afraid than I was, to see this stuff flying in the air at them, so they refrained from hitting me any more in front of the inmates.

I was dragged down the hallway by about six guards to the hospital where I was thrown into a "mental observation" cell on the second floor. They were treating me as if I had gone "crazy." They ripped all of my clothes off of me, and then threw me naked into the cell.

There was no bed, linen, toilet, or even a sink to wash my face — just a door, a window, a hole in the wall to "do your business," and padding all over the floor and walls to either cushion these "crazy" inmates from injuring themselves when they run their heads into the walls, or to cushion the sound of blows by guards when they beat prisoners.

For the week I remained there, they would neither feed nor clothe me, and except for when they would open the doors to spray me with a high-pressured water hose, and then open the windows to freeze my ass off with a blast of wintry air, I was left alone night and day. I caught pneumonia as a result and almost died. When they saw I was real sick and that my death would cause the other prisoners to revolt, they decided to see that I got some kind of medical attention. They made arrangements to send me to the prison hospital in Springfield, Missouri.

But even though I was being transferred by prison officials, who hoped to end the uprising, this did not happen. Although the prison officials ultimately took back administrative control from the "rioters," the prison was never the same place. Because of the united prisoner population at Terre Haute, the prison had strikes and violent protests for years afterward. The unity of the prisoners made many things possible: the creation of the Indiana prisoners' labor union, which fought for better working and living conditions, an end to the racially motivated killing and organizing by groups like the Klan, and of course

better overall treatment. Some of the most brutal guards were fired or prosecuted after they had beaten or tortured prisoners, something which had never happened before.

Although I was to go through many years of torture at Springfield, Marion (Illinois), and other prisons, I lived through it all. I remember many things about those fifteen years in prison, but the struggle at Terre Haute, and how even whites who had been following the Klan line for many years rose up with the blacks against the prison officials was one thing I will never forget.



EXCERPTS FROM:

Huye, Huye, Hombre

by Xosé Tarrio Gonzalez

I went into the cell and took all my books and other materials I had on the table and put them on the bed with all my clothes. Then I sat on the table. Some guards, wearing their plastic gloves started to search through my possessions while others searched the windows from outside. One of them talked to me from the other side of the window.

"Are these clothes dry?", he asked, pointing at the boxers.

I took my things in hand and answered him: "No, they're still damp. Why do you ask?"

"Because you can't hang things on the windows."

"I didn't know."

"Ok, but from now on dry them in your cell alright?"

"Yes sir."

I had soaked them that morning before leaving the cell. For now I was in the clear. The following night I acted. I hung a towel between the bars to block the view of the Guardia Civil sentries in front. Once it was covered I started working on the side of the bar that wasn't cut. I pulled it in above the bed and slid myself outside through the hole in the window. Then I went forward, crouching down until I reached a small wire fence which I got over quickly and skilfully.

From there I went down the stairs of the entrance unit and, after jumping over a wall, towards the infirmary in the centre, across several gardens. There in the infirmary I climbed onto the roof of the entrance and from there onto the low roofs towards the centre and onto the high roof. I slid like a reptile towards the bridge area until I was underneath it. I had to jump on top of it and drag myself about 60 metres to the one place it was possible to jump without breaking my feet. I waited about half an hour and taking advantage of an error of the Guardia Civil provoked by the patrol car which did the rounds on the outside of the walls.

I jumped to the ground without being seen, hitting the right hand side of the gangway. Once there I opened my mouth slowly. I was in full view of the guard on the left, hoping for the luck of another oversight. Some minutes later it came. The guard turned his back on the bridge to look around at the grounds and the barracks. I continued on without hesitating with the taste of escape in my mouth and with my heart pounding a

possessed rhythm. I had cleared the grounds and below me was the countryside. There was only a few metres to go to regain my freedom.

"If you move I'll kill you like a dog you bastard," shouted a guard, aiming his gun at my head. He had come up the bridge from the first checkpoint before I had time to react.

"I have it under control," he shouted to his mocking companions who now pointed their guns at my back. I wanted to die. Several floodlights lit up my position illuminating me kneeling on the concrete with my hands on my head, 4 beaten and desolate. Hours later I was transferred again to the unit and put in one of the cells. I felt despair for the moment that had escaped me. I had calculated it all well but hadn't known that there was a hidden camera on the first checkpoint which looked over all the bridge and it had detected my last movements. They had fucked me. It would be a long time before I had an opportunity like this again. The director of the prison ordered me into isolation. Again I had to walk on the yard alone. I got bitter with them, shouting insults constantly for no real reason. I took out on them all the frustration and impotence I felt trapped in this absurdity.

I left the kitchen and went to see the hostages. Among them there was a psychologist, two teachers, three guards, some assistants and two eighteen-year old guys, one a waiter and one a sports assistant. It would be very difficult for them to assault us with so many hostages. Tenerife was a small island and soon their families were at the door of the jail. The administration thought a lot about the timing of the assault. It was curious, but now that my beast had arisen they all clamoured for reason and humanity. Now that the violence came from us, everyone wanted to talk.

They left us to die in prison without any care except for isolation and batons, murdering us democratically without consideration and then they ask us for humanity when they had remained arrogant and unapproachable at the time of sentencing. What humanity did these people deserve, who lacked fundamental feelings in their hearts where there was only room for a bunch of keys which still echoed with the screams of men being beaten in punishment cells. They deserved to be stripped, and after being handcuffed, given a good beating so that they suffer in their flesh the fruit of their honourable work as society's executioners.

We would ponder this at the height of the standoff. Between us and them there existed important differences, it was easy enough to abuse a naked handcuffed man when you had the power. It was difficult to not do it. It was more noble. No, we would not harm them, except if the police tried an assault and this they knew. It is in these moments that those who have power over others become as they are. Whoever is a brute, acts like a brute, whoever is stupid acts as is necessary, whoever is noble, acts nobly, whoever is sadistic, inevitably with sadism; the nature of people is no more than what manifests itself. For us, simply, reaching this moment, we act with a purpose against a counterpurpose, without revenge.

An hour later we freed the blonde girl who I had given my word for and thanked the doctors for the good treatment they had given me. Also we took off the ropes of the rest, allowing them to go to the washroom if they needed to. I took charge of watching the hostages while Juan took charge of negotiations, which were going nowhere. They didn't want to make the demands public because of their importance. We then asked to negotiate with the deputy of United Left, Cristina Almeida, who was responding to the situation on the radio. She asked us to release the hostages and put an end to our protest, alluding to democracy and reason. It was a deception. She was not helping us and not because we didn't possess as much reason as she had brandished in her radio interview, but because we held some public legitimacy that could cost her votes. The insincerity of this political pachyderm was insulting, so we decided to continue on with the kidnapping and the demands. We gathered up blankets and covered the windows so as to make it impossible for them to observe us or for a sniper to get a shot at us.

It was a question of nerves. We knew that in the end we would have to surrender, but not before getting the necessary publicity to make our demands known to the outside and over the airwaves, to the other prisons where other companions could take their own measures.

In the isolation unit of Tenerife everything continued the same. We didn't know it but we were to be the first to be subjected to the FIES regime and they prepared to transfer us to jails in Badajoz and Valladolid. Several nights, bored, Juan entertained himself with the guards inside the sentry box guarding the unit.

"Surrender!," he shouted at them underneath the cell door, "put down your clubs and handcuffs, we have you surrounded!"

I then joined in and helped him out.

"Open the door and come out with your hands up you crooks!"

We would break out laughing. These moments of humour helped us in a notable way to overcome the isolation that we were being subjected to, with the exclusion of the exercise hour. We spent twenty days without leaving these dungeons whose iron slabs only opened to give us food and always in the presence of a large group of guards armed with clubs and iron bars. In these circumstances, the act of constant rebellion and the company we were both dedicated to, full of humour and words of encouragement, constituted our only possession in life, together with a pair of saws and the hope of leaving this hateful insensitive underworld.

Xosé Tarrio Gonzalez spent 16 years imprisoned in Spain, most of these years in isolation under the FIES regime. He responded to the brutal circumstances of prison with dignity and courage. He became involved in riots, hungerstrikes and hostage taking in order to draw attention to and change the callous treatment the prison administration deemed fit to rehabilitate those defined as criminals. He was an active member of the group APRE ('Association of Prisoners under Special Regime'), which sought to make the country aware of the vicious realities of the prison system.

Xosé Tarrio suffered from AIDS, and struggled to change laws so that prisoners with incurable diseases could be released during the middle stages of illness. He consistently demonstrated his solidarity with those around him, helping to build a resistance movement in violent and depressing circumstances.

On January 2, 2005, Xosé Tarrio Gonzalez died in prison, not from AIDS, but from all that he fought against: isolation, torture, lack of medical attention and separation from loved ones.

The following texts are excerpts from the book "Huye, Hombre, Huye" written by Xosé Tarrio Gonzalez while imprisoned in Spain. He writes of escape plans, struggle inside prison, suffering and strength. His words expose painful details of a life behind bars.

guelphprisonersolidarity.wordpress.com