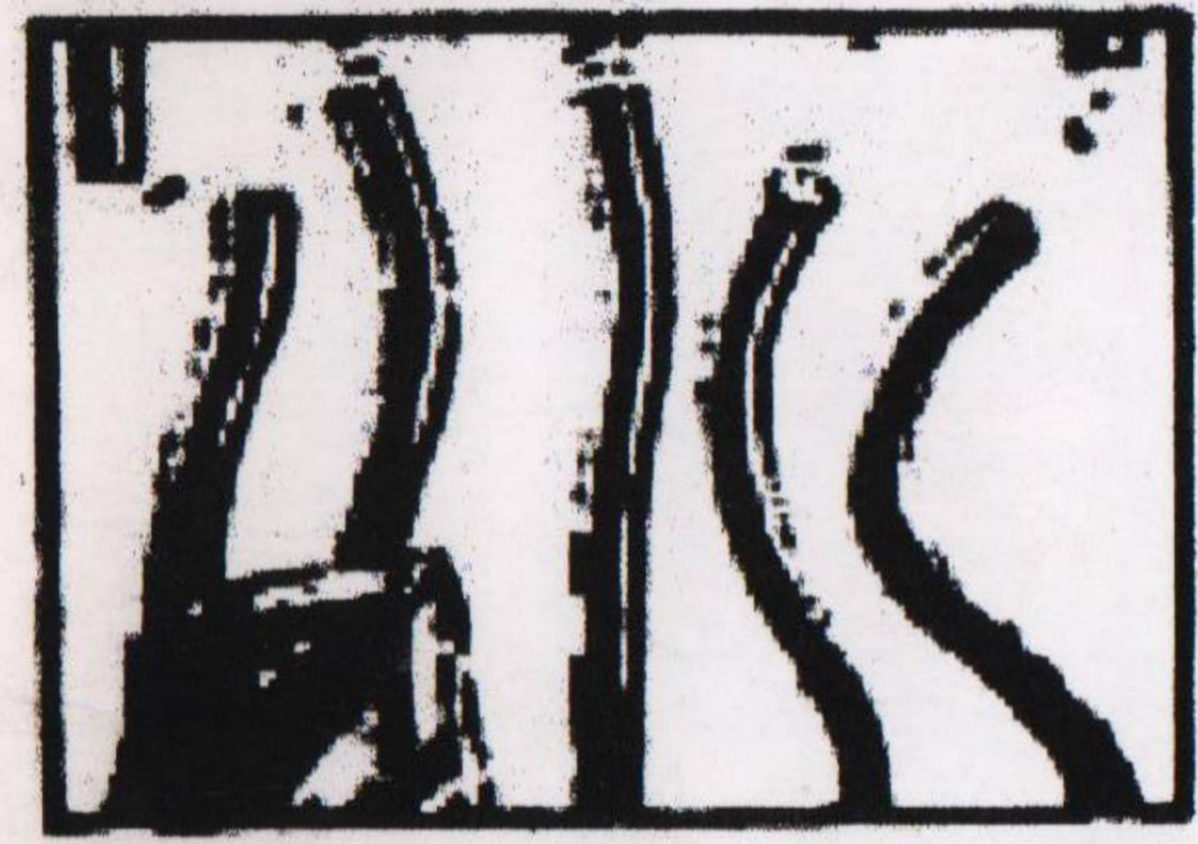


AF + West Midlands ABC Prisoner Support Handbook Spring 2006



This pamphlet was produced by the Anarchist Federation and West Midlands ABC. Please feel free to reproduce and distribute.

Introduction

Welcome to what will hopefully be the first of many Prisoner Support Guides. This booklet is designed to be a quick and easy guide to prisoner support with suggestions on how to communicate with prisoners, lists of some currently incarcerated, as well as a few essays to keep the old brain ticking. It is important to note that an attempt has not been made to produce a list of prisoners the AF supports. Instead the prisoner list includes many prisoners with whom many in the organisation would disagree with either their politics and/or actions. However this does offer up more flexibility to individual members over to whom they wish to correspond.



Brighton ABC

By far the best place for constantly updated news re: prisoners and how we can support those inside, can be found at the Brighton ABC website. They also put out a newsletter called 'Active Solidarity' which is free with an SAE

www.brightonabc.co.uk

ABC

PO Box 74,

Brighton

BN21 4ZQ

Writing To Prisoners

Adopt a prisoner

If you're active in a group or campaign why not choose one or two prisoners to consistently support. Pass cards round meetings, send useful stuff, knock up a flyposter and get their case some publicity if they could use it, get in touch with the prisoner's support group if there is one. Of course you can take this on as an individual, too.

Writing to prisoners / sending things

Prison is isolation, so contact with the outside world, letting a prisoner know s/he is not forgotten, helps break this down. Sometimes just a friendly card can boost their morale. For example, we received a letter from Herman Wallace, after sending him a card from the group. He said " **It is quite essential that I take out a moment to express my gratitude to all the wonderful folk who sent me so much love & support in this one card. I am really touched by the intensity of energy from this card and I just had to stand up from my seat and smile. Thank you. Right now, in spite of my repressive condition you guys have made me feel GREAT!**" Writing for the first time to a complete stranger can be awkward. A card with some well wishes, a bit about who you are and asking what you can do to help is often enough. Don't expect prisoners to write back. Sometimes, the number of letters they can receive/write is restricted, or they just might not be very good at writing back. To help, include a couple of stamps or, if writing abroad, International Reply Coupons (IRC's) that you can get from any post office. Write on clean paper and don't re-use envelopes. Remember a return address, also on the envelope. Ask what the prisoner can have sent to them, as this varies from prison to prison. Books and pamphlets usually have to be sent from a recognised distributor/bookshop/publisher (ask at a friendly bookshop). Tapes, videos, writing pads, zines, toiletries and postal orders are some of the things you might be able to send.

SOME ADVICE ON WRITING TO PRISONERS

One of the main problems that puts people off getting involved in supporting prisoners is a feeling of being intimidated about writing to a prisoner for the first time. It is very hard to write a letter to someone you don't know: people find that they don't know what to say, they feel there are things they can't talk about, or think that prisoners won't be interested in what they have to say. Well this is a problem most of us have had to get over, so we've drawn up some suggestions to help you. Obviously these aren't rigid guidelines, and we don't pretend to have solved all problems here. Different people will write different letters. hopefully they will be of some use though.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Some prisons restrict the number of letters a prisoner can write or receive, and they may have to buy stamps and envelopes: and prisoners aren't millionaires. So don't necessarily expect a reply to a card or letter. A lot of prisons allow stamps or an s.a.e to be included with a card or letter, but some don't. Letters do also get stopped, read, delayed, 'diverted'. If you suspect has been or will be nicked by the screws, you can send it Recorded Delivery, which unfortunately costs a lot but then they have to open it in the prisoner's presence. Also you should put a return address, not just so the prisoner can reply (!), but also because some prisons don't allow letters without a return address. Of course it doesn't have to be your address, but be careful using PO box numbers as some prisons don't allow these either!

WRITING FOR THE FIRST TIME

Say who you are, and if it's relevant that you're from such and such a group. Some people reckon it's better to be up front about your politics as well, to give prisoners the choice to stay in contact with you or not. Say where you heard about them and their case. The first letter can be reasonably short, maybe only a postcard.

Obviously when you get to know people better you'll have more to talk about. If you are writing to a "framed" prisoner, and you believe

them to be innocent, it helps to say so, as it gives people confidence to know that you believe them. Some people when they write to prisoners, are afraid to talking about their lives, what they are up to, thinking this may depress people banged up, especially prisoners with long sentences, or that they are not interested in your life. Although in some cases this may be true, on the whole a letter is the highpoint of the day for most prisoners. prison life is dead boring, and any news that livens it up, whether it's about people they know or not, is generally welcome. Especially if you didn't know them before they went to prison, they want to know about you, what your life is like etc. For people imprisoned from our movements and struggles it's vital to keep them involved in the ongoing resistance - telling them about actions, sending them magazines if they want them, discussing ideas and strategies with them. Use your head though. Some people will just want to keep their head down till they get out.

Remember that all letters are opened and looked through so don't write stuff that could endanger anyone - this doesn't mean you should be over paranoid and write one meaningless comment on the weather after the other. Be prepared to share a bit of your life to brighten up someone's on the inside.

Protest letters

Petitioning Tony Blair asking him to stop being a capitalist bastard might well be futile. But writing letters to relevant places requesting something realistic such as an appeal, transfer, vegan food etc on behalf of a prisoner can help improve their chances. Prisoners who seem to be 'in the public eye' do tend to be treated better.

Other support

There is so much more than can be done, up to you and your imagination and your contact with a prisoner, such as: publicity for the case, visits, financial support, pickets of prisons...

Prisoners List

Class – Struggle/anti-capitalist Prisoners

Ray Gilbert H10111, HMP Grendon, Grendon Underwood, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. HP18 0TL Ray is in for a crime he didn't commit and needs all the help he can get, especially by way of stamps and unused envelopes so he can conduct his campaign from on the inside.

Harold H. Thompson 93992 North West C.CX, 960 State Route 212, Tiptonville, Tennessee 38079 USA. Harold is in for crimes he did commit (against the US State) and won't be getting out anytime soon. He uses his time to aid the vulnerable inside and, in turn, needs all the help he can get to do so. Harold is an anarchist of very long standing.

James Borek LL6803, HMP Blundeston, D-108, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 5BG Sentenced in January 2004 to four and a half years for injuring a cop during the June 18th 1999 "Carnival against Capital" riot in London's financial district.

John Bowden 6729, HMP Edinburgh, 33 Stenhouse Road, Edinburgh, EH11 3LN. Long time prison resister.

Thomas Meyer Falk, JVA Bruchsal, Zelle 3117, Schoenbornstr. 32, 76646 Bruchsal, Germany. In 1996, Thomas was sent down for a bank robbery. He'll be inside until at least 2010. Because of his strong beliefs, he's been subject to very harsh repression – kept in solitary, daily cell raids, suppression and censorship of mail (no packages, and he has recently been denied his regular correspondence with some political groups by High Court Ruling), no access to education. On top of this his cell is in bad disrepair. Protest letters and faxes are needed towards improving his conditions. When writing to him don't mention you are

a political supporter. Besides hand-written letters, the only things he can get in the post are 3 IRC's at a time.

For more info email: thomas_m_f@so36.net

Leonard Peltier, #89637-132, USP Terre Haute, 4700 Bureau Road South, Terre Haute, IN 47802, USA Leonard is an American Indian Movement (AIM) activist framed by a COINTELPRO operation for the murder of two FBI agents in 1975 and is serving two consecutive life sentences. He's gravely ill at the moment and is being denied a transfer to the medical facility. His support group can be contacted: **LPDC, PO Box 583, Lawrence, KS 66044, USA, email: lpdcomite@aol.com**

Robert Lee Thaxton, #12112716, MCCF, 4005 Aumsville Hwy, Salem, OR 97301 Rob, a long time anarchist organiser, publisher and writer, is one of the few from around the world who faced serious charges for the global day of action on June 18th 1999. When it kicked off in Eugene, Oregon in the US, Rob threw a rock at a cop who was charging at him in an effort to escape. He was arrested and sentenced to 88 months in all for Assault II and Riot. He's clearly been used as scapegoat – the one that didn't get away. He appreciates zines (send individually from a recognised distributor/publisher). Donations to and info from: **AAA, PO Box 50634, Eugene, OR 97405, USA.**

Robert 'Seth' Hayes #74A-2280, Clinton Correctional Facility, PO Box 2001, Dannemora, NY, 12929, USA. Former Black Panther imprisoned for over 30 years.

Jerome White-Bey, # 37979, South Central Correctional Centre, 255 West Highway 32, Licking, MO 65542-9069, USA Jerome is an anarchist prison activist who set up the Missouri Prison Labour Union to fight slave labour in prisons. The Free Jerome White-Bey Support Campaign and Legal Defense Fund Committee is requesting your financial support. Please mark your donation for Jerome White-Bey and send it to:

**Anthony Rayson, South Chicago ABC, PO Box 721,
Homewood Illinois 60430, U.S.A**

MOVE was a mainly black revolutionary group with an ecological perspective who were consistently persecuted by Philadelphia police during the 70's. This culminated in the police firebombing of their commune in 1985 in which 11 people died. The 'Move 9' were framed for the murder of a cop and sentenced to up to 100 years each. The 9th defendant, Merle Africa died in prison in 1998 under suspicious circumstances. For more info contact **Friends of Move, PO Box 14129, London WC12 8GR, UK:**

Debbie Simms Africa, #006307, Janet Holloway Africa, #006308, Janine Phillips Africa, #006309, SCI Cambridge Springs, 451 Fullerton Ave, Cambridge Springs, PA 16403-1238, USA



Michael Davis Africa, AM4973, Charles Simms Africa, AM4975, SCI Grateford, PO Box 244, Grateford, PA 19426-0244, USA

Edward Goodman Africa, AM4974, SCI Mahanoy, 301 Morea Road, Frackville, PA 17931, USA

William Philips Africa, AM4984, Delbert Orr Africa, AM4985, SCI Dallas, Drawer K, Dallas, PA 18612, USA.

Mumia Abu-Jamal AM8335, SCI Greene, 175 Progress Drive, Waynesburg, PA 15370-8090, USA: Mumia is an ex-Black Panther, radical journalist and MOVE supporter who was framed for the murder of a cop in 1981. The death sentence for Mumia has been overturned, but his defence team has 180 days, to put together an appeal against his sentence being comuted to life. For more info contact **International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, PO Box 19709, Philadelphia, PA 19143, USA.** Or see www.freemumia.org

THE ANGOLA 3 Still known by their campaign name (The Angola 3), **Albert Woodfox, Herman Wallace, Robert "King" Wilkerson** (King was released at the beginning of 2001). The three of them formed the first Black Panther Party Chapter inside, an for there activities were framed for the killing of a prison guard. All three spent long terms in isolation, Herman & Albert woul appreciate letters of support.

Herman Wallace #76759 Camp J, Cuda 4/Left #9 , Louisiana State Penitentiary , Angola, LA 70712, USA

Albert Woodfox #72148, CCR Upper B Cell 13, Louisiana State Penitentiary, Angola, LA 70712, USA

For more info see www.angola3.org

MAGDEBURG 3 TRIAL: At the end of the summer of 2003, after having been locked up in custody for almost one year, the trial against the three young men suspected of having committed several fire bombings in Magdeburg started: Marco got 2,5 year + all the costs of the trial, Daniel got 2 years, and Carsten was acquitted. This year the appeal trials against Marco and Daniel started. In February, Marco's conviction was confirmed, he will have to go in prison for 2,5 year. On April 5 2005, the new trial against Daniël started. You can write to Marco in prison (he needs our

support now, the prison of Halle is known for the many Nazis imprisoned there!): **Marco Heinrichs, Halle I, Am Kirchtor 20, 06108 Halle, Germany** Sentenced to two and a half years for "membership of a terrorist association" (§129a) after several fire bombings in Magdeburg: on August 21, 2001 against the Daimler-Chrysler concern, on February 18, 2002 against several vehicles of the communication concern Telekom, and on March 18, 2002 against the local public prosecution office and, almost at the same time, an attempt to burn vehicles of the border police.

26th MAY 2005 ARRESTS: The police accuse the following people of being involved in a bombing campaign associated with actions claimed by the Informal Anarchist Federation, and other acts of sabotage. The latest information is that all of the people arrested & remanded were linked in one way or another to the Italian Anarchist Black Cross. The Italian ABC are accused of circulating a press release, from the underground group FAInformal (Informal Anarchist Federation) which claimed responsibility for some of the bombings that have occurred recently against targets such as politicians, prisons and state institutions.

Danilo Cremonese, di Prato, Via La Montagnola 76, 59100 Prato Italy
Valentina Speziale, Casa Circondariale, via San Donato 2, 65129 Pescara, Italy

Stefano del Moro, Casa Circondariale Nuovo Complesso, Via Campoleone /Cisterna km 8,600, 00049 Velletri(RM)

Massimo Leopardi, Casa Circondariale di Roma, Regina Coeli, Via della Lungara, 29, 00165 Roma

Claudia Cospito, Casa Circondariale, contrada Ceppaia 1, 64100 Teramo, Italy

Already on remand accused of involvement with the anarchist letter bomb campaign

Simone del Moro, via Provinciale San Biagio, 81030 Carinola (CE), Italy.

David Santini, c.c. "Le Vallette", via Pianezza 300, 10151 Torino, Italy.

Marco Ferruzzi, c.c. "Poggioreale", via Nuova Poggioreale, 170 sezione Venezia, 80143 Napoli, Italy.

ARRESTS IN LECCE 12th MAY 2005: On the 12th of May 2005 Italian police arrested five anarchists from Lecce; recently they were mostly active against the CPT's (temporary permanence centers for unauthorized immigrants, managed by the red cross, where human rights are frequently violated). They are accused of promoting, constituting, organizing, directing and participating in "an association for the subversion of the democratic order" and other serious crimes. All five are accused of involvement in a series of actions that include: damaging petrol pumps at Esso (Exxon) petrol stations in protest at the war against Iraq; targeting the multinational company Benetton in support of the Mapuche tribe in Chile whose land is being taken over & whose forests are being destroyed; supporting a revolt carried out by immigrants being held at an immigration centre "Regina Pacis"; damaging of several cash point machines of the BCI Banca Intesa because of the banks links to "Regina Pacis". Following the arrests two of the defendants have been placed under house arrest. The other three have all been remanded into custody. Please send letters of support to:

Salvatore Signore, Salvatore Signore/ Via Lamaccio 21/ 67039 Sulmona (AQ) Italy

Saverio Pellegrino, Casa circondariale, Via Lecce, 85025 Melfi, Italy
Cristian Paladini, Via De Mura C2/73100 Lecce, Italy

Annalisa Capone, via Verga, 2 CAP 73100, Lecce, Italy.

Recently released from House Arrest and now on bail pending her trial.

Marina Ferrari, via XXI aprile, 29, CAP. 73042, Casarano (LE), Italy. Under house arrest.

The support group for the five suspects can be contacted via **act_for_freedom@yahoo.com** The person can receive e-mails in both Italian & English.

MARINI TRIAL: The following five anarchists were accused of belonging to a fictional armed anarchist organisation, and fitted up by the infamous prosecutor Marini in a trial ending on April 20th, 2004.

Gregorian Garagin, Via G. Leopardi 2, 61034, Fossombrone (PU), Italy **(sentenced to 30 years)**

Francesco Porcu, Via provinciale San Biagio, 81030 Carinola (CE), Italy **(sentenced to life)**

Carlo Tesseri, now under house arrest **(sentenced to 3 years 10 months)**

Alfredo Maria Bonanno, Via Papiniano 1, 34133 Trieste, Italy **(sentenced to 6 years)**

THE "CORDOBA 4": The Malaga court of appeal sentenced the anarchists Giovanni Barcia, Michele Pontolillo and Claudio Lavaza, already sentenced to 11 years on September 1999, for an incident in the Italian vice-consulate in December 1996. Three persons wearing balaclavas imprisoned the consul and an employee, sending a message of solidarity to the Italian prisoners jailed by the Judge Marini (the judge who built a false accusation against Italian anarchists) and disappeared with passports and some money. These three Italians were convicted of this, as well as a previous bank robbery with sentences of 49 years for Claudio, 48 years for Giorgio and Giovanni, 3 years for Michele.

Write to them:

Claudio Lavazza c.r. huelva mod.16 carretera la ribera s/n 2161 Huelva, Spain.

Giorgio Rodriguez, (Giorgio can speak english), C.P Madrid VI(Aranjuez), Ctra Nacional 400, Km 28, Apdo 2000, 28300 Aranjuez, Madrid, Spain.

Giovanni Barcia C.P.Madrid V (Soto del Real), Ctra Comarcal 611, Apdo 2000, 28791 Soto del Real, Madrid, Spain.

BARCELONA ARRESTS: There are 5 the anarchists arrested in Barcelona end of 2003. They are also accused of participation in terrorist organization, attempted terrorist murder (for

the sending of a bomb package to the Greek consulate in Madrid), illegal possession of weapons and explosives and arson. The first person who declared before the judge was Joaquín, who admitted manufacture and sending of the embassy bomb. Rafa admitted setting explosives in a bank and decided to not answer other questions, as also Roger, Igor and Carol did. Roger was released on bail in Nov 2004.

Carolina Forné Roig, C.P. de Ávila, Ctra. Vicolozano-Brieva, s/n., 05194 Brieva, Ávila

Rafael Tomás y Gaspar, C.P. Madrid III, Ctra Pinto a San Martín de la Vega, Km 5, 28340 Valdemoro, Madrid

Igor Quevedo Aragay, C.P. Madrid V Soto del Real, Apdo. 200, Colmenar Viejo 28791, Madrid

Joaquin Garces Villacampa, C.P. Madrid IV, Ctra Nacional V km 27,7, 28600- Navalcarnero - Madrid

Anti-fascist Prisoners

Tomek Wilkoszewski, Zaklad Karny, ul. Orzechowa 5, 98-200 Sieradz, Poland: Tomek was sentenced to 15 years after killing a nazi in self defence in Radomsko, 1997. He recently appealed against the sentence but with no success.

ECO-DEFENCE PRISONERS

Tre Arrow, CS #05850722, Vancouver Island Regional, Correction Center, 4216 Wilkinson Rd., Victoria, BC V8Z 5B2, CANADA.

On remand accused of involvement with an arson on logging trucks and an arson on vehicles owned by a sand & gravel company. Both arsons occurred in the USA.

Marco Camenisch, Postfach 3143, CH-8105 Regensdorf, Switzerland. Serving 27 years. Ten years for using explosives to destroy electricity pylons leading from nuclear power stations. Seventeen years for the murder of a Swiss Border Guard

whilst on the run. In '02 Marco completed a 12-year sentence in Italy for destroying electricity pylons in Italy.

Ibai Ederra, Carcel de Pamplona, C/San Roque. Apdo. 250, 31080 - Iruñez - Pamplona, Navarra (España), Spain.
Serving just under 5 years for sabotaging machinery at the controversial Itoiz dam construction site.

Manase Furima, Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Manokwari, Jl. Sabang No.4, Manokwari, Papua, Indonesia. On remand for taking part in a road block to prevent illegal logging.

Amanda Cerezo Garcia, C.P. ALICANTE II, Ctra. N-330, km. 66, 03400 - Villena, Spain. On Remand accused of setting fire to a road construction vehicle. Also accused of sending a letter bomb to a Neo-Nazi politician.

Francesco Gioia, Modulo VII, Ctra. Comarcal 611, km. 37, 6; 28770 Soto del Real, Madrid, Spain. Il Silvestre defendant on remand accused of promoting & participating in direct action in Italy. Also accused of escaping from house arrest in Italy. He is currently fighting his extradition to Italy.

Charles Arthur Jordan IV, #68163065, Federal Prison Camp Sheridan, PO Box 6000, Sheridan, OR 97378, USA.
On remand accused of planning to destroy equipment belonging to a quarry company which he allegedly claims is polluting a river.

Ted Kaczynski (04475-046), US Pen - admin Max Facility, PO Box 8500, Florence Colorado 81226, USA. Serving multiple life sentences for the infamous 'Unabomber' anti-technology bombing & murder campaign.

Aaron Linas, 38448083, FMC, PO Box 1600, Butner, NC 27509, USA. Serving time for a series of ELF actions against a number of targets including McDonalds & Burger King; urban sprawl; the construction industry; and an SUV dealership.

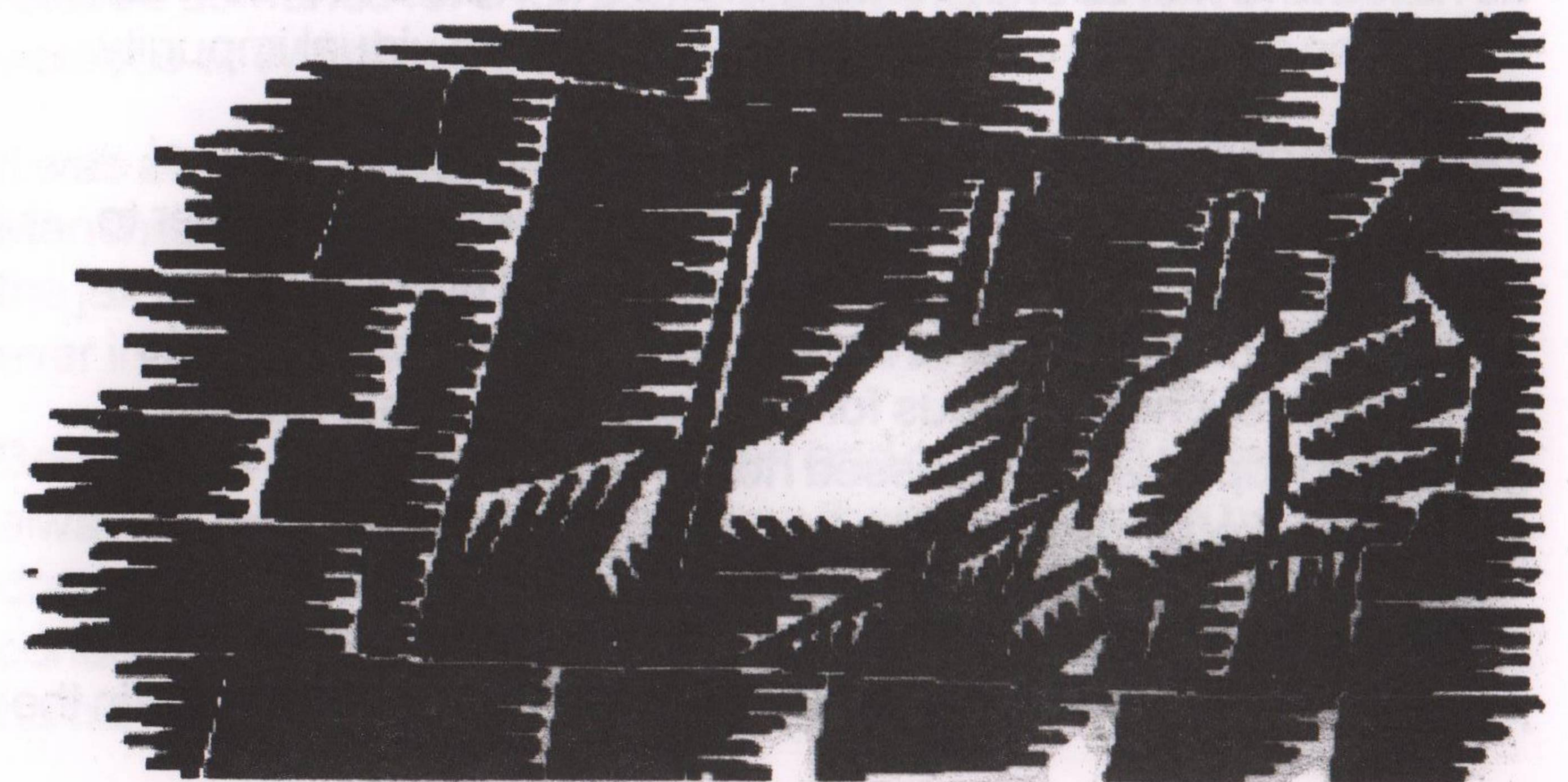
Jeffrey Luers, #13797671, OSP, 2605 State St. Salem, OR 97310, USA. Serving 22 years & 8 months for arson on a car dealership & attempted arson of an oil truck.

Stephen Marshall, #691374, 11540 NW Inverness Drive, Portland, OR 97220, USA. On remand accused of planning to destroy equipment belonging to a quarry company which he allegedly claims is polluting a river.

Christopher McIntosh 30512-013, FDC Seatac, Federal Detention Center, P.O. BOX 13900, Seattle, WA 98198, USA.
On remand accused of a joint ELF/ALF arson attack on a McDonalds.

Matus Nasira, Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Manokwari, Jl. Sabang No.4, Manokwari, Papua, Indonesia.
On remand for taking part in a road block to prevent illegal logging.

John Wade #38548-083, FCI Petersburg Low, Satellite Camp, PO Box 90027, Petersburg, VA 23804, USA.
Serving 37 months for a series of ELF actions against a number of targets including McDonalds & Burger King; urban sprawl; the construction industry; and an SUV dealership.



Some Texts by John Bowden On The Prison System (30/09/03)

□

Is there any legitimacy or political significance in the protests of prisoners? When they riot, climb onto rooftops, take prison staff hostage and engage in collective acts of defiance is there any true justification for such apparent delinquent actions?

As a group, prisoners are the most oppressed and demonised in our society and, probably uniquely, the one group of people who possess absolutely no rights in their relationship with the state. In fact, the legal status, of prisoners is something akin to the completely disempowered condition of the slave in ancient Rome. The prisoner for the duration of his or her sentence (and some are in for life) exists as the exclusive property of the state for it to do with as it pleases. No other group in society is subject to the same degree of state control and ownership, and no other group exists in such conditions of civil death.

The struggle of the movement for Prisoner' rights has always been a formidable one due to the fact that few other groups in society are as hated and feared to the extent where the state believes it can torture, brutalize and even murder prisoners with virtual impunity.

When prisoners at New York's Attica prison staged a political protest and occupation of the jail in September 1971 in order to highlight their ill treatment, the National Guard and armed prison guards stormed the jail and shot dead 37 prisoners. The state considered such murderous force wholly appropriate against a group of people who possessed no rights and whom the ordinary population would care nothing for.

To exist as a prisoner it to exist in a condition of absolute powerlessness, and consequently absolute vulnerability. Here in the

mini-totalitarian society of prison the state and its uniformed representatives, the guards, hold an omniscient degree of power over their captives and will use whatever amount of violence and force is deemed necessary to keep prisoners in line. When so few of these guards recognise any common humanity in those over whom they wield such enormous power, abuse and ill treatment becomes commonplace and institutionalised, and when, as rarely happens, the extent of that abuse is exposed, the system inevitably and immediately closes ranks and bends the rules to protect the perpetrators.

When the lid was blown off the torture and abuse of prisoners in the segregation unit at London's Wormwood Scrubs prison in the late 90's it was revealed that apart from the uniformed guards involved in actual violence, the entire administrative workforce of the jail - Governors, doctors, chaplains, social workers, probation officers - were all involved to varying degrees in the conspiracy of silence that allowed the abuse and violence to continue unchecked for years. In the case of Wormwood Scrubs, it was the prisoners themselves who succeeded in blowing the whistle on their treatment by managing to contact lawyers who in turn persuaded the police to conduct an investigation. Predictably, following the police investigation only a handful of guards were arrested and subsequently convicted of minor assault. The government flatly refused demands for a full public inquiry into the extent of staff violence at Wormwood Scrubs.

It was also the actions of prisoners at Strangeways jail in Manchester in 1990 when they rioted and climbed onto the roof of the jail that resulted in the biggest and most far reaching inquiry ever into prison conditions in England and Wales.

Because of their completely hidden and concealed suffering it's always been the case that prisoners themselves have had to act to draw public attention to their situation when the state inflicts conditions on them that contravenes their most basic and elemental human rights.

There is much wider significance to the treatment of prisoners and the protests they periodically stage against it and it is this: if the state or servants of the state are allowed without fear of consequences to abuse, torture and ill treat any group hidden behind prison walls, then the implications for the whole of society, for the rights of everyone are enormous.

Viewed as a microcosm of society generally, prisons are the one place where the state is able without scrutiny and interference to experiment in methods of group control and manipulation without any reference whatsoever to human rights considerations. When in August 1971 the British army carried out 'Sensory Deprivation' techniques, which amounted to torture of Political detainees in the North of Ireland, the methods used had already been tested on ordinary prisoners confined in control units that operated 'Behaviour Modification' regimes within English jails. A legal action brought by a prisoner, Michael Williams, who had been held in such a unit at Wakefield Prison in 1974 was dismissed by the judiciary who basically maintained that a prison governor was entitled to keep a prisoner in whatever conditions and under whatever regime he considered appropriate.

If the state is able to get away with violating the human rights of prisoners it will eventually feel confident enough to do the same with the human rights of and disadvantaged or 'subversive' group in society.

When prisoners protest therefore in defence of their rights they are in a sense protesting on all our behalf - when the state is allowed to treat any group in society as something less than human, when it is not held accountable for dehumanizing even a single individual, then the civil rights and liberties of everyone is made significantly more fragile and brittle.

Fascism as a system always gets its initial foothold by persecuting and abusing those groups in society with the least public sympathy. The public threshold to its methods are raised by the abuse of

unpopular minorities, until finally methods become generalized and all pervading.

Once the inalienable human rights of any person or group in society is removed and eradicated by the state, the overall consequence of this removal becomes enormous and terrifying.

Angela Davies, the black American civil rights activist and one time prisoner once said "If they come for me tonight, they will come for you tomorrow", and the reality is that one of the first lines of resistance to state violence is within the prisons of this country. If that line is crossed then it will eventually and inevitably be crossed elsewhere.

Uprising At Shotts Prison

On 2 January 2003 at least 80 long term prisoners at Shotts maximum security prison in Scotland staged a mass protest by seizing control of two wings of the gaol for 19 hours. A negotiated end to the 'disturbance' eventually took place, indicating a recognition by the authorities that the use of physical force to end the prisoners' protest would encounter fierce resistance, although the source of the prisoners' rage remains unresolved.

Throughout the protest the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) maintained a conspicuous silence on exactly on what had fueled the prisoners' action, while the media's reporting of the protest focused almost solely on the alleged injuries received by two prison officers, it was claimed, had been hurt while trying to intervene and stop a fight between rival prisoner gangs. This was a total lie as it turned out, and eventually the prisoners hung a banner from a window, saying 'Leave our visitors alone', indicating that the protest had been sparked by the treatment of prisoners' families. An earlier uprising at Shotts in the late 1980s was provoked by the strip searching of prisoners' families, including old people and small children.

Less than a week after the protest on 2 January, a second 'disturbance' broke out at Shotts. This time in a special unit for 'difficult' prisoners, and again the media focused only on the injuries allegedly sustained by prison officers, while the SPS maintained its usual silence on exactly why Shotts was so clearly in a state of turmoil and open revolt. The impression deliberately created was one of violent and unmanageable prisoners attacking and injuring prison staff without reason or cause.

In reality, Shotts as an institution is intrinsically designed to provoke bitterness and confrontation, and since its creation in the early 1980s, its regime has been based on the principle of completely disempowering prisoners and denying them any opportunity or right to peacefully resolve their differences with the administration. It is a gaol purpose built for repression and brutality.

Since 1987 there have been at least five major uprisings at Shotts, and for much of the gaol's

history prisoners there have experienced a virtual lockdown regime. In 1995 prisoner John Brannan described to FRFI something of the atmosphere prevailing at Shotts: 'Each Hall is divided up into six sections, each containing 20 prisoners who are caged as a group into a tiny self-contained area that is sealed almost the whole time by locked grille gates. The screws remain beyond the gates, entering the sections only to lock us in our cells. We only leave the cells for work and are made to walk in strict single file to and from the work sheds. The atmosphere of intimidation is something that you're up against here day and night. Tension within the living sections is really bad and prisoners just pace up and down all the time, full of anger and paranoia. The screws obviously feel safe and in control with everyone locked up on the sections and have dished out so much shit that they're now too frightened to open up the gates and deal with us as a larger group, face to face. People here are being seriously damaged mentally and I think that few of us will ever be able to readjust to normal life again.'

John Brannan's description clearly illustrates how the administration at Shotts was and is itself responsible for creating the conditions for revolt and rebellion.

In 1995 the Scottish Inspectorate for Prisons strongly criticized the SPS for its treatment of prisoners at Shotts. In 2002 the inspectorate again criticized conditions at Shotts. Unfortunately, the SPS has never been particularly receptive to even official criticism of its methods, and the continuously repressive and confrontational nature of the Shotts regime is indicative of this.

The protests and disturbances will therefore, continue at Shotts because of two related factors: the unwillingness of the administration there to treat prisoners with human dignity, and the proven ability and determination of long-term prisoners in Scotland to organize, resist and fight back with courage and tenacity.

Close Dartmoor Prison Once And For All!

'Dartmoor has a large segregation unit (46 cells) in a forbidding granite-walled wing, described by the present governor as "medieval"...[Prisoners] are exercised one at a time in what all staff referred to as "pens". At the time we were there, if they were distressed or suicidal and needed to see a Listener (a Samaritan-trained prisoner)...they were locked in a "Listeners' suite", which was in fact a cage: a wire enclosure with a Perspex square through which they could communicate their problems. Both the pens and the cage were degrading and more appropriate for dangerous animals than for potentially suicidal medium to low prisoners. When we reported our concerns about the cage, we were told that the Governor had instructed that it be closed some weeks previously...

'There was frequent use of control and restraint and special cells... We followed a particular incident[in which a] mentally ill prisoner who had threatened an officer was being moved within the segregation unit to a special cell... Other prisoners in the unit were clearly shaken and frightened... We believe that there may have

been excessive use of Control and Restraint in this incident, and that more officers than necessary had been directly involved. Among them were seven officers wearing Control and Restraint equipment. A Health Care officer and a Governor had been in attendance...After all staff had left the cell the prisoner was left lying naked on the floor'. Report of the Chief Inspector of Prisons into an Unannounced Follow-up Investigation of Dartmoor Prison, published November 2001.

The recent Chief Inspector's report reveals the shocking conditions at Dartmoor Prison, but its publication and the response to it follow a familiar and almost choreographed pattern. Highly critical reports are followed by feigned concern from senior Prison Service bureaucrats, which is followed by standard denials from the Prison Officers Association, which is followed by nothing changing.

Two questions raised by the Dartmoor report: the role of the prison senior medical officer in allowing disturbed and suicidal prisoners to be caged like animals, and the responsibility of the prison governor for allowing such an inhumane practice to prevail. The governor's claim that he had instructed that the cage be permanently removed long before the inspector's visit, yet had been ignored by his staff, raises an even more fundamental question about who was running Dartmoor and who had the final say in how prisoners were treated. It was obviously a question that didn't particularly perturb the governor who, prior to the publication of the report, hadn't felt compelled to inform Prison Service headquarters about a crisis of management.

The reality is, of course, that everyone at Dartmoor was aware of what prisoners were being subjected to, and no-one spoke out or went against the grain.

There are obvious parallels here with Wormwood Scrubs, where prisoners were routinely beaten in the segregation unit, and all levels of staff conspired and colluded to keep the lid on it.

Dartmoor has always been designated as a punishment prison for 'difficult' and 'awkward' prisoners, as well as for a disproportionate number of black prisoners. It is a stick wielded by the prison system and everyone at Dartmoor knows what is expected of them. The prison has a long established culture of brutality, which is so prevalent that officers didn't even bother hiding it from the inspectors: 'This attitude on the part of some staff continued throughout the week with prisoners being variously described to us as the "shit" or "rubbish" of the prison system, or as "these people" or "coloureds"... Prisoners were told that this was "the end of the line".'

Whenever it is confronted with such unambiguous, unequivocal evidence of a denial of human rights in prisons like Dartmoor and the Scrubs, the Prison Service inevitably attempts to push the blame onto a small minority of 'rogue officers', who operate clandestinely. The truth is that where such a minority does operate, it does so in the confident knowledge that it has the tacit support of the system which will never blow the whistle on them. In a gaol such as Dartmoor, all levels of staff collude in the brutalization of prisoners, and in a wider political climate of retribution and revenge, all feel confident that the very top.

Dartmoor was built by and housed French prisoners of war from the Napoleonic War in 1809. It was first used as a civilian prison in 1851. In 1959 a government White Paper declared that it was near the 'end of its serviceable life', and when Albany prison on the Isle of Wight was commissioned in 1961, it was intended as a replacement, however Dartmoor remained open. In 1979 the May Committee again recommended closure, describing the isolated, insanitary, cold buildings as 'nowadays simply against nature'.

Following the wave of revolt which swept through British prisons in 1990, the Woolf Report said that Dartmoor should be given a 'last chance'. A year later a Chief Inspector's report called Dartmoor a 'dustbin', but again said that it should be given a 'final chance'. As that report was issued, police were investigating a racket whereby

desperate prisoners were paying £250 to prison officers to arrange transfers to other prisons.

In 1991 the Prison Reform Trust, usually known for the mildness of its criticisms, called for Dartmoor to be closed: 'It is isolated and rundown and for 200 years has been dominated by a culture of barbarity and punishment. That culture is all-pervasive and repeated attempts to change it have produced nothing but failure'.

It is now 2001, and the new Chief Inspector, Anne Owers, does not even enter the 'final chance' territory. Instead, her conclusion is even more pathetic: 'Dartmoor needs to find a positive role supported by a new culture... It needs to be part of a regional and national strategy for the dignified and decent treatment and resettlement of prisoners'. What makes her think that after two centuries as the punishment block for the prison system and copious reports into its failings, last chances, final chances, recategorization and reclassifications, Dartmoor and the staff who run it will change now?

In the final analysis there is no liberal reformist solution to the existence of brutality and maltreatment in prisons, no piecemeal way of changing something that is so intrinsic to the system. The bottom line is that prisoners only ever achieve a significant improvement in treatment and conditions when they themselves organize and fight for it.

Instead of meaningless debates about how prisons might be made 'better' and thereby more legitimate, the focus should instead be on how prisoners can be supported and empowered in their struggle for human rights. There is no middle ground in the struggle for prisoners' rights: either we campaign and fight for the complete abolition of prisons as instruments of state terror and social control, or we accept their existence and the power of the state to dehumanize a certain section of the working class population

Origins Of The ABC

The Anarchist Red Cross was started in Tsarist Russia to organize aid for political prisoners captured by the police, and to organize self-defense against political raids by the Cossack Army. During the Russian civil war, they changed the name to the Black Cross in order to avoid confusion with the Red Cross who were organizing relief in the country. After the Bolsheviks seized power the Anarchist movement moved the ABC offices to Berlin and continued to aid prisoners of the new regime, as well as victims of Italian fascism and others. The Black Cross fell apart during the 1930s depression due to the incredible



demand for its services and a decline in financial aid. But in the late 1960s the organization resurfaced in Britain, where it first worked to aid prisoners of the Spanish resistance, which had not in fact died after the civil war and were fighting the dictator Franco's police. Now it has expanded and works in several areas, with contacts and other Black Cross groups in many countries around the world, mostly in Europe and North and South America.

The ABC has sought to bring attention to the plight of all prisoners, with an emphasis on anarchist and other class struggle prisoners; and, through contact with and information about

prisoners, inspire an anarchist resistance and support movement on the outside. We fund-raise on behalf of prisoners or defense committees in need of funds for legal cases or otherwise, and organize demonstrations of solidarity with imprisoned anarchists and other prisoners

RÉMEMBER!
We're still here



**support class struggle
& anarchist prisoners**

Useful Websites

Anarchist Federation - www.afed.org.uk

Brighton ABC - www.brightonabc.org.uk - excellent Prisoner Resource site

West Midlands Anarchists + ABC - www.wmanarchists.org

No Border Network - http://www.noborder.org/news_index.php -
A good resource for Asylum Seeker/Refugee related prisoners

Free Mumia - www.freemumia.org - Mumia Abu-Jamal support group

Class War Prisoners - classwaruk@hotmail.com

Earth Liberation Prisoners - www.spiritoffreedom.org.uk

Animal Liberation Front Supporters Group - www.alfsg.org.uk/who_alfsg.html - Animal Liberation prisoners.

Rob Thaxton Support Group - www.defenestrator.org/roblosricos/main.htm

Harold Thompson Support Group - : <http://membres.tripod.fr/HHTHOMPSON/welcome.html>

Angola 3 Support Group - www.angola3.org

Zapatista Prisoners - www.chiapaslink.ukgateway.net

Campaign Against Prison Slavery - www.libcom.org/hosted/caps

Legal Defence Monitoring Group - www.ldmg.org.uk

Miscarrages Of Justice Uk - www.mojuk.org.uk

**If you have any suggestions for future issues
please get in touch at info@afed.org.uk or
wmanarchists@email.com**