

International Commission for the protection of prisoners and against isolation torture c/o 35 Wellington Street London W.C.2

Introduction

The Commission was formed in the summer of 1979 during a hungerstrike in the prisons of the FRG.. Over 60 prisoners participated in an act of resistance which lasted for 9 weeks against conditions of isolation and techniques of imprisonment which had been developed by the German authorities over the previous ten years. Within the Federal Republic there was no possibility of bringing effective pressure on the authorities. The lie of the mass media and the intimidations of "Sympathisers" with political prisoners, made it impossible even to spread information about prison conditions. An international support for the prisoners in their resistance to isolation conditions was essential.

The Commission has considered it necessary to analyse and understand the political causes for the repression of prisoners. Prison repression is not an aberration which can be ended merely by humanitarian intervention, nor is it restricted to the Federal Republic of Germany. The techniques of prison repression have been deliberately planned, on an increasingly co-ordinated basis throughout Western Europe. They must be seen as a whole with other forms of repression through the courts, police and security forces.

The response of the Commission is founded upon the analysis which it makes of the development of imperialist strategy dominated by the USA at the present time. There is to be an increasing unification of European States with the FRG as the model. The aim of this strategy is two-fold: within Europe to break up and nullify every form of fundamental opposition; and in the Third World to create more effective and concerted forms of intervention.

The FRG is the centre within Western Europe for the scientific research into, and implementation of new forms of repression, which from there will be adopted in other Western European States. Therefore the International Commission begins its work in the FRG, and there concretely with the prison conditions of political prisoners, who are directly and deliberately exposed to this repression.

The pinnacle of this repression is demonstrated at the present time by the prison conditions of those prisoners who define themselves as fighters in an armed anti-imperialist resistance. Through the extent and the perfection of these prison conditions - in particular the different forms of detention in isolation - it is intended to break the political identity of the prisoners.

Prison Repression in the Federal Republic of Germany

Prison repression must be seen as part of a complete arsenal of laws and practices which have been introduced or perfected during the 1970's with the stated aim to establish "inner security", i.e. to eliminate all fundamental opposition. The process has been well researched and documented in publications and the published findings of the Russell Tribunal in 1978/9. These methods include:

- the expulsion of a wide spectrum of left activists from their jobs (berufsverbot).
- the development of an all pervasive security police service comprising both the regular police forces and the Verfassungsschutz (office for the protection of the constitution).
- the use of sophisticated techniques of surveillance.
- the wide use and encouragement of informers.
- the amassing and circulation of computer stored information, about left organisations and individuals, probably through the BKA Computer at Wiesbaden which now serves the police forces of all West Europe.
- the introduction and use of laws against "defamation of the state", against "approval of criminal offences", "support of terrorist organisations", and others.
- police round-ups of alleged "terrorists" or "Sympathisers".
- the "Contact-ban law" permitting prisoners to be totally banned from all human contact for a renewable periods of 30 days.

It would be a mistake to suppose that these developments are a response to any particular

actions. They are the result of prolonged planning, as was admitted by Mr. Genscher Federal Minister of the Interior, in a speech to the Bundestag of 22 June 1972: "The global conception of internal security has not been dictated by the anxiety felt in the face of recent acts of terrorism. They are a result of long series of very extensive, objective and sober consultations."

Within the prisons the repression reaches its pinnacle. The principal weapon is isolation, either in complete solitary confinement, or in small group isolation where the only association is with one or two others, stretching over indefinite periods. In the treatment of political prisoners two ~~categories~~ different categories of torture can be discerned: 1)

- systematic torture, i.e. all the forms of isolation torture, forced feeding, the use of high security wings, and the introduction of the contact-ban law, by which political prisoners can be totally banned from all outside contact.

- incidental torture, applied in different situations in different prisons in an apparently arbitrary way.

The reality of these forms of prison repression can be understood from some examples: Guenther Sonnenberg received a severe head injury from a bullet at his arrest in 1972. He was kept in complete solitary confinement since then despite the vital need of human contact for his recovery.

Knut Folkerts was refused to sleep for several days after his arrest and threatened to be shot during the interrogation.

Angelika Guder, Gabi Rollnik and Gudrun Stuermer were stripped naked and searched for weapons by male prison warders. They were also heavily beaten up by a male police squad.

Irmgard Moeller was refused water for 31/2 days. The light in her cell wasn't switched off during the night for a period of 3 months. In May 79 her medicine for a thyroid gland disease was withdrawn. At the murder attempt on 18.10.77 she received severe stab wounds in her chest.

Manfred Grashof who received severe injuries during a shoot-out at his arrest was intensively interrogated by police before treated by a doctor (shoot injuries in his lung, arm and jaw). In 1975 he had a suspected skull-fracture after being beaten up by a police squad inside prison.

Bright light was kept on during the night in the cells of Klaus Juenschke for a period of 2 months by court order.

This same type of light-torture was also applied for two months to Hanna Krabbe and for a period of two weeks to Gerd Schneider.

Karl-Heinz Dellwo was held several times in a special control unit (bunker) for up to ten days. On 23.9.78 he was chained down onto the cell-floor and kept in this position for 42 hours. The treatment for burn-injuries he received before his arrest were systematically neglected. Light-torture was applied for two months.

The political prisoners have resisted this repression. They have constantly refused to abandon their political position. The hunger strikes have been used as the ultimate way of fighting the prison regime and conditions of isolation collectively.

Some political prisoners have died inside the prisons. In the cases of Ulrike Meinhof, Ingrid Schubert, Gudrun Ensslin, Andreas Baader, Jan Karl Raspe, the authorities claimed that they had committed suicide. The commission does not accept this claim. There is evidence in each case that they had retained their political identity and that they were determined to continue their fight against western imperialism. It was in the interest of the German state, particularly at the time of the Schleyer kidnapping, that the political prisoners should be eliminated. At the time of their death all of these prisoners were in complete isolation, and it is of course a prerequisite of any attempt to liquidate a prisoner and to disguise the cause of death. Thus isolation torture can be used both to break the political identity of prisoners, and if necessary to eliminate them physically.

The International Commission for the Protection of Prisoners and against conditions of Isolation began its work by collecting detailed information about the facts of prison repression in the F.R.G. Its members asked to visit political prisoners. In all cases they were refused, because the Commission was "waging a battle against the state and its institutions" (Ref. to letter).

The Commission in its early meetings established its political principles and determined to extend the scope of its work to prison repression in other countries, particularly in Italy and the United Kingdom.

The Commission next objectives are to build up a movement of support for its work in different countries of Western Europe and to campaign on an international basis to spread information and support political prisoners in their struggle.

The members of the commission, who come from different countries in Europe, can only be effective if they work closely with the support groups in their respective countries, who are engaged in developing their own revolutionary perspectives and will examine the situation in their own countries.

- I) ^{Memo} In May 1980 Amnesty International released a dossier on the prison conditions of political prisoners in the FRG. Their research which took place over a period of two years concludes that political prisoners are held under conditions which are of concern to AI under its commitment to oppose "torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of punishment" of prisoners. Surprisingly enough that it took AI eight years as they have been given detailed evidence about torture of political prisoners and have been asked to intervene on their behalf since 1972; AI also repeats and therefore sanctions unquestioned the German official version of the deaths of Meinhof, Ensslin, Raspe and Gaader, the Stammheim murders.

- openly condemned prison conditions
- it took AI 8 years to come to these conclusions

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES. *of the Commission*

- 1) The Commission is motivated in its work by the consciousness of its members of the development of imperialist strategies, dominated by the USA, at the present time. There is to be an increasing unification of European states with the FRG as the model. The aim of this strategy is two-fold: within Europe to break up and nullify every form of fundamental opposition; and in the Third World to create more effective and concerted forms of intervention.
- 2) The FRG is the centre within Western Europe for the scientific research into, and implementation of new forms of repression, which from there will be adopted in other Western European states.
- 3) Therefore the International Commission begins its work in the FRG, and there concretely with the prison conditions of political prisoners, who are directly and deliberately exposed to this repression.
- 4) The pinnacle of this repression is demonstrated at the present time by the prison conditions of those prisoners who define themselves as fighters in an armed anti-imperialist resistance. Through the extent and the perfection of these prison conditions - in particular the different forms of detention in isolation - it is intended to break the political identity of the prisoners.
- 5) The Commission will maintain the closest possible collaboration with the political prisoners themselves and will seek to publicise and support the demands which the prisoners may make concerning their conditions of imprisonment.
- 6) The perspective of the Commission is that it should not only be engaged on behalf of political prisoners in the FRG, but of all prisoners who are part of the anti-imperialist resistance in Western Europe. The members of the Commission will work together with groups in their own countries which are engaged in fighting repression in their countries and its connection with the FRG.