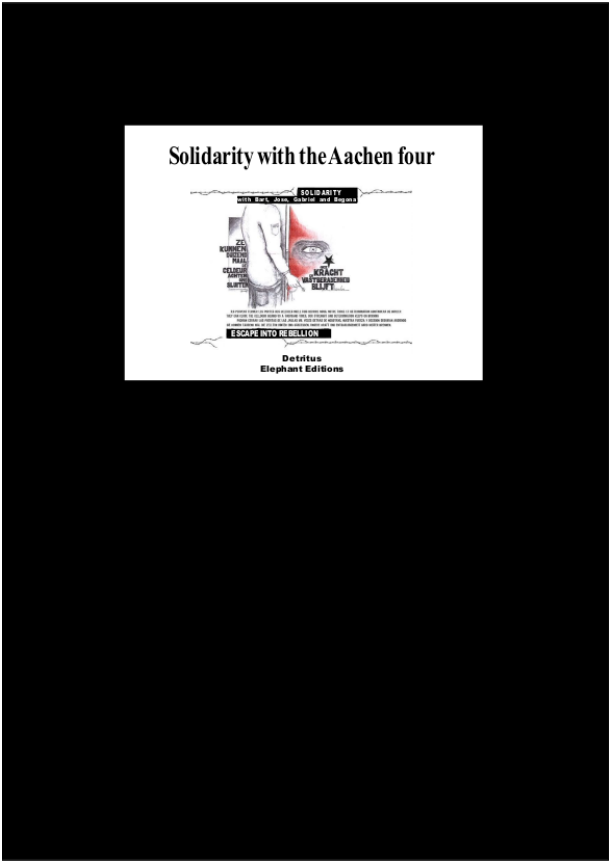


# Solidarity with the Aachen 4



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Detritus: an accumulation of disintegrated material, the passion for freedom captured in moments already lived, now thrown back into the wilderness of life untamed.

Not quite random testimonies of great and small events in the turmoil of projects, dreams and illusions, struggles for freedom and the retaliation of the enemy faced with coherence and solidarity, illuminated and inspired by the indomitable spirit of the anarchists.

## Introduction

Life has deserted the soulless labyrinth of man's daily doings. So seemingly ecumenical, so apparently volatile, she is not so cheap. Attempts to encounter her by the slaves of democracy remain just that. The apparent choices in the shop windows of capital come down to one: you can inhabit the swamp with the frogs, wallow in the global quagmire of participation and help spread the mud till even your dreams become grey. Or you can go. Take flight with the vagabonds of the spirit, let the glow of freedom ignite your passions, kindle your spirit, illuminate your mind. Throw away all the prostheses and venture into the abyss of a world without limits.

Here rebellion ceases to be an abstract choice, it becomes necessity.

Once roles and identities are discarded and the confines of patience and hope deserted, humiliation gives way to anger. No longer mere outsiders in this world of swindles and conjuring tricks, we become its sworn enemies. We burn all the maps. Freedom becomes our only compass and there is no turning back.

The struggle becomes reality, and this reality is not the same for all. It is conditioned by concrete structures, the various forms that the enemy gives itself to exploit and extract profit and submission. The apparent freedom enjoyed in the 'comfort zones' of capital contrast sharply with peripheral areas in old-fashioned material poverty. There is no blueprint for struggle, and rebels and freedom fighters make their own decisions, working things out as they go along.

The vast treasure of anarchist ideas and action past and present belongs to us all and is there for the taking – critically, of course.

The guard dogs of the State do not look on passively. By arresting, sending to trial, torturing and imprisoning, they try to break the revolutionary's activity as a whole, not just their physical person. This it does this by keeping them away from this activity for as long as possible. To defend one's freedom with every means, with the coherence and correctness that the revolutionary him/herself must decide is therefore not a choice but a necessity towards one's project, the other comrades involved in it, and the exploited and oppressed who from this project might (or might not) find their own freedom.

And when the enemy succeeds in taking the rebels hostage, locking them up, framing them as terrorists and enemies of the people, there are comrades everywhere for whom solidarity is a fundamental, inextricable part of the totality of the struggle.

## Solidarity with the Aachen 4

**On June 24 2004**, just over the border from Belgium, the German police stopped a car carrying three men and a woman for a routine 'drugs control'. The reaction of one of the passengers was immediate: he pulled out a gun and fired a shot in the air. The woman was jumped upon and arrested whereas the three men took flight in another car, taking a couple as hostages. A car chase ensued and shots were exchanged. When the car broke down the men let the hostages go and took another. Finally the three hid in a garage where they were surrounded by police, and eventually gave themselves up. They were arrested and taken to separate prisons. After nine months of complete isolation they are now on trial in the court of Aachen.

Who are these people? Why go beyond a generic sympathy towards all rebels who, having extracted themselves from the logic of slavery and submission, find themselves face to face with the guard dogs of capital? The reason is simple: these men, Bart De Geeter, José Fernandez Delgado and Gabriel Pombo da Silva, have something in common with us: they are anarchists, lovers of freedom and sworn enemies of exploitation. The woman, Begonia Pombo da Silva, is Gabriel's sister.

Bart De Geeter is a Belgian anarchist, 26 years old, who has been active within the anarchist movement for several years, particularly in solidarity work with prisoners (as a member of the Anarchist Black Cross, Ghent, Belgium) and immigrants.

Gabriel Pombo da Silva is a well-known Spanish anarchist, 36 years old, who has spent 20 years in prison, 14 of which in the infamous FIES isolation regime. In October last year he escaped from prison and ran away from Spain. Gabriel is one of the social rebels/anarchists who struggled for years against the brutal conditions, the isolation, torture and mistreatment inside Spanish prisons.

José Fernandez Delgado is another Spanish anarchist who escaped from prison recently after spending 8 years inside.

Begoña is 34 years old and is Gabriel's sister. She lives in Germany and has a 7 year old daughter. Apart from being Gabriel's sister, she has no relation with the anarchist movement. She was released on bail on October 12 but is still

accused of committing several robberies although there is lack of evidence for most of the dozen bank robberies she was charged with.

The three men have been charged by the public prosecutor of Aachen with attempted murder (9 charges), hostage taking (2), armed robbery, planning a robbery and serious traffic violations. Begoña will probably be given less serious charges.

As well as these arrests and charges an international investigation is now underway: Spanish,

Belgian and German anarchists are under investigation and are considered an 'international network'. In August, in Dresden, Germany, police raided the house of two women comrades, long time activists within the prisoners' solidarity movement and organisation *Rote Hilfe* (Red Help). They had been asked by the Ghent anarchist Black Cross to find lawyers for the accused and now find themselves suspected of having planned a robbery together with the arrested!!

The case was treated by the media as a spectacular event, good to fill the front pages and satisfy the thirst for sensation as well as to spread further fear of all those 'dangerous criminals'. As always when Spain is involved, there were stories of possible links with ETA etc by the media who know no more than what they learn from governments, police and the courts...

But we know that it's our comrades who have been captured and that they wage a struggle, as we do, against repression and prison, against poverty and exploitation, against exclusion and exploitation.

They did what they did because their lives and freedom were at stake. Because freedom is too dear to them. Because they do not want to return to the cells and torture chambers in Spain, because solidarity and comradeship are stronger than fear, because friendship and love binds them.

We have no doubt that they will continue the struggle inside prison, and we will be on their side outside. We are all outsiders because we neither want nor accept nor are resigned to this miserable world full of injustices, lies and suffering.

We call for international solidarity with our comrades captured because they struggle, by the force of circumstances and by the force of the will, to break down all walls and frontiers and for freedom for all.(ABC Ghent)

The trial is now taking place in Aachen where many comrades from Germany, Belgium and other countries are there to show their solidarity and support as well as to protest against the conditions that the comrades are being held under. The imprisoned comrades are taken to court in chains, blindfolded and earmuffed. José, who is suffering most from the brutality and isolation, has staged a protest, cutting his clothes off and appearing in court twice in his underpants. All of the accused have protested in court about the conditions of the trial.

## **International Action Day of Solidarity with the Prisoners of Aachen**

**4/5/05**

Since the 23rd of March 2005, our comrades Gabriel, José, Bart and Begoña have been on trial in Aachen, Germany. Since the day of their arrest, on the 28th of June 2004, it is clear that they are and will be treated with a special vengeance –for months José, Gabriel and Bart have been imprisoned in almost complete isolation, for months they have been painted as dangerous criminals, for months part of the so-called radical left movement have kept silent. All this is standard procedure for the defenders of the existing order, normality, morality.

All this has not changed with the opening of the trial. But while this spectacle of justice is played, it hides very real repression.

On the second day of the trial, José pointed to the prosecutor and screamed "*No mas tortura. Libertad para todas*". Later, he declared that he had suffered enough and could not take any more. All of us could clearly see that José felt very bad, he was pale and completely absent. On the 31st of March, Gabriel ripped off his clothes and entered the court half-naked in protest against the treatment he (just as José) had to endure, on top of the months of isolation in prison: on trial days standing naked before a dozen cops to be strip-searched, transported with blind and ear-folds by masked special cops, with shackles on hands and feet, etc. The lawyers and the comrades in the public have protested every day in court against the security measures imposed, in vain.

Today, it was the 5th day that Gabriel had to sit half-naked in the courtroom; nothing has changed. We cannot and we will not accept this any more.

Gabriel, José and Bart have attacked directly the pillars of this society: property and prison, money and law. Their struggle continues before the court and inside prison. By denouncing the prison system (particularly the FIES in Spain)

and the society that produces it. By denouncing all those who still think that robbing a bank is worse than owning one.

Therefore they have to be punished.  
And therefore we are in solidarity with them.  
STOP ALL TORTURE  
AGAINST ALL PRISONS  
FREEDOM FOR ALL  
Some comrades 'sin rejas'

## A Letter from ABC Gent

Dear friends and comrades,

In less than two weeks, on the 23rd of March, the trial against Bart, José, Gabriel and Begonia will start. At that moment, they will have languished 9 months in different German prisons: long months of isolation, and of continuing harassment in the form of arbitrary transfers from one cell to the other, or (in José's case) from one prison to the other, of continuous observation, control and censorship, of obstructing the visits when they were allowed, ...

There is no need to say they face years of imprisonment. The stage is set, after an aborted attempt to implicate more people into the game, police and prosecutor and judges have retreated in silence behind the scene. It remains to be seen if there are some more surprises to come... . Will there be more accusations and/or more accused and/or more arrests? We don't know. And will the judge order comrades to testify before the court (according to German law, refusal to testify may be sentenced with high fines or up to 6 months' imprisonment)? We don't know. We only know it is possible. And we know we have no faith at all in this 'Justice', its police and courts and media, which will do all it can to criminalize and condemn our comrades, and, when it sees a chance, all anarchists and all dissidents who show solidarity, and refuse to speak its language, to accept its order, to follow its rules, to act and live without the passion and the dream and the struggle for a new and free world.

We know our passion for freedom is stronger than their prisons.

Since their imprisonment we have tried to support and defend our comrades as well as we can. We provided for lawyers, organized benefits to raise still bitterly needed money, poster, leaflets and talks to explain and inform the people about what happened, about the prisoners (who are they, their situation in prison, etc.), about the context (FIES, etc.), about what we can, should, must do... . We are glad to be able to say that we were and are not alone in this work: many individuals and groups (here in Ghent, in Belgium, and internationally) showed their support and made solidarity real. We wish to thank all of them; it's too long to list you all, but we know and you know.

We also know that more can be done. Therefore we answer and want to reinforce the call of the comrades in Galicia, Spain who made an appeal to organize, between the 13th and 19th of March, days of actions and public exposure of the prison system, in memory of Paco Ortiz and Xose Tarrío, and in solidarity with all prisoners in struggle.

This call has been answered and extended by the comrades in Madrid and at this moment also in Barcelona, Almería, etc. activities are prepared. In Germany on March 18 is the international day of political prisoners, and on that day there will be activities in many cities. In Berlin a text will be read in support of the Aachen 4; in Vienna, Austria, a demonstration in solidarity with all anarchist prisoners will take place.

We of course hope that in other cities and places activities and actions will take place.

Here in Belgium we're having an info tour and are speaking in different cities in the country, ending on the 18th of March, in Ghent, with a demonstration and meeting against repression and prison, in solidarity with all prisoners in struggle.

It's at the same time the start of our mobilisation for the trial. We will be present there during the whole time the trial takes, but we hope many people will come to show their solidarity, especially the first and last day - but people are welcome the whole month the trial takes. We have some places where people can stay, in Aachen itself or in the region; please contact us if you want to come.

Finally, let's make it clear that this trial is not the end; it's the beginning, or not even the beginning, but a continuation of the struggle we are committed to; a struggle to overcome our fears, to give up our privileges, to take hold of our own lives, to win our freedom and the freedom of all.

Dare to struggle, dare to win!  
Neither victims, nor martyrs.  
Solidarity with those who struggle.

## A Very Democratic Trial

The trial in Aachen against Gabriel, José, Bart and Begonia started on March 23 2005.

What is particularly brutal in the procedure adopted by judges and cops in this trial is the way the prisoners are mistreated and abused: they are taken to court blindfolded, ears plugged, and in chains.

It is certainly brutal, but not at all surprising.

As Bart states in a recent letter, 'prison is the reflection of society' as it is intended by power and its guard dogs.

In fact, our comrades on trial in Aachen refuse such a concept of society, they refuse it in their life and in their deeds.

The unacceptable treatment inflicted on them is therefore power's logical answer to their rebellion without reserve. It is the logic underlying 'our virtuous democracies', to quote Bart once again. The same logic that justifies the existence of the infamous F.I.E.S. regime in the Spanish prison system, the one Gabriel and José endured for many years before ending up in Aachen. José in particular, who has serious heart problems, is now suffering most for being held in total isolation and taken to court in suffocating '*sarcophagi*'.

Such treatment is not reserved for the captured rebels, it is also imposed on the comrades coming in great number to show their solidarity to the prisoners: visitors are meticulously identified, filed and submitted to metal detector controls and body searches.

Moreover, a massive police presence, with cops both in uniform and civil clothes, is continuously maintained inside and around the court.

These intimidatory tactics, however, do not produce the intended effect. On the fourth day of the trial, for example, Gabriel tore his clothes apart and entered the court in his underpants in protest against the absurd conditions of the trial; and José shouted that the torture must stop. Supporters too, are doing their part – on the 8th day of the trial seven comrades undressed in protest, one was even arrested and held in jail for 3 days as he refused to put his clothes on again.

It is the judiciary's revenge against those who dare challenge them; the same which makes them systematically ignore the many protests and petitions against the mistreatment of prisoners in this trial.

## The Trial

The chronology that follows brings out some of the salient moments of this public execution. We have left out the tedious technical aspects – confused 'testimonies' by cops who repeatedly contradict themselves – which can be found in the [escapeintorebellion](#) website.

March 23, 2005: 1st day of trial. About 50 comrades have come from Belgium, Germany, England, Holland and Spain, and a spontaneous solidarity demo takes place with great emotion and involvement. A banner 'Solidarity with all Prisoners in Resistance' is displayed.

Security controls include the copying of identity cards, but the court continues to fill up with supporters.

The imprisoned comrades are brought into the court separately, and each one is welcomed by a song '*A las barricadas por el triunfo de la emancipación!*', and loud clapping. Gabriel and José have masks over their heads and their hands and feet are chained. The chains are left on throughout the trial.

Lawyers protest about the chains and when the accused are invited to talk, lawyers declare that Gabriel will make a statement later on in the hearing.

March 24, 2005: 2nd day of trial. Numerous comrades noisily greet the prisoners as they enter court, Gabriel and José in chains. José shouts: '*Nunca más tortura! Libertad para todos! Por l'Anarquía!*' (No more torture! Freedom for all! For anarchy!)

March 30, 2005: Third day of trial. Various witnesses are questioned. Mrs Schultz, one of the hostages, tells how she and her husband were taken into the red BMW by two men, Gabriel and José. She declares that Gabriel was the driver, Mr Schultz was sitting at the front passenger seat, while she was on the rear seat between José and Bart. Mr Schultz is asked about his feelings during the opening of the trial with the singing and clapping. He reckons that there is a lot of rage and hate, but that since the events he has read background information of Gabriel and José's story. One of the comrades in the public explains that they understand their situation and that they are sorry about it.

After hearing the witnesses, the judge declares that Bart and Begonia played a secondary role in the events. Gabriel tells what happens before he is taken into the courtroom: he is compelled to undress in front of 15 cops in a garage of the prison.

March 31, 2005: Day four. Despite several complaints by lawyers and protests by the public, the mistreatment of the prisoners when taken to the court continues. Gabriel tears his clothes apart in protest and enters the courtroom almost naked. The comrades in the public gallery welcome him with shouts and greetings, then stand up shouting 'ear and blindfolds off!', 'shackles off', 'stop torture', 'all Stasis out!'. José too stands up and shouts that it is time to end torture and that he can't take further isolation after 8 months of it.

The judge tries to ignore the protests and starts the hearing. The lawyers immediately ask that a doctor examine José. The doctor's report is clear: José is suffering from serious heart problems.

The lawyers object to the prosecution statement that 'the accused would not have the right to be treated differently because they caused great suffering to the hostages'. It is a violation of the principle of 'fair trial' and the lawyers express surprise that the judges do not take this into account.

The tension in court is considerably high.

At the end of the hearing, some comrades declare, 'We will not wait until another of our comrades dies in custody. José's situation is critical. The treatment inflicted on our imprisoned comrades is unacceptable. We do here what we can. Please act now wherever you are...'

April 1, 2005: Fifth day of trial. Once again Gabriel enters the court in his underwear. Comrades hold banners saying 'Torture is a reality' and shout 'Stop Torture!'

The lawyers protest about the way visitors are searched and judge Nohl, who had previously allowed police to check and photocopy visitors' identity cards for security reasons ('defence from danger'), orders that the identity cards be seen only by the court guards and not by the police.

April 7, 2005: Sixth day of trial. Gabriel appears in his underpants again. He and the other defendants are welcomed with loud clapping.

The lawyers protest against the prosecution application asking that Gabriel be 'excluded because of his lack of respect towards the court and because he intentionally tries to cause illness to himself'. Prosecutors had not cared about his health during the first day of the trial, when it was clear he had breathing problems due to his asthma and the bag put over his head during transport. Detective Bergs, who had questioned José and Gabriel after their arrest, says the former had been calm and had cleared Gabriel from responsibility about what had happened. He also says that a map of Dresden with signs on it had been found in the prisoners' car. For that reason two women comrades in Dresden of *Rote Hilfe* (Red Help) had their houses searched. Detective Bergs also claims that all the stuff confiscated from that house has been returned, which is not true.

A witness of the Spanish prisoner support group SALHAKETA, Mr Hernandez, declares that in 2004, 203 prisoners died under torture inflicted in prison. He adds that under the F.I.E.S. regime Gabriel hadn't been allowed to see his mother since 1986, he had been beaten regularly and continually moved to prevent any contact with other prisoners. Mr Hernandez states that these methods are normal in the F.I.E.S. jails.

13 April, 2005: Seventh day of trial. Gabriel appears in court in his underwear with a sticker on his forehead: 'Attention! Wild!'

April 20, 2005: Eighth day of trial. Seven comrades undress in protest. One refuses to put his clothes back on, stating that his protest will go on as long as Gabriel is forced to sit in court in his underwear.

Gabriel makes a statement in which he states the court's interests and the truth clash against each other and that everything that happened in Aachen cannot be understood without considering the past.

April 22, 2005: Ninth day of trial. Gabriel appears once again in his underwear. Comrades sing: '*Abejo los muros de las prisiones*' (down the prison walls).

The owner of the workshop where the escape ended is heard as a witness. He greets the accused on entering the room. He tells how he made tea for the accused to calm them down. Then he blames the police for damaging his fence and car and losing his passport. Before leaving the court, the witness shakes hands with the accused and asks Gabriel when his birthday is because he wants to send him a present.

April 27, 2005: 10th day of trial. Gabriel appears in underpants again followed by an applause of solidarity for the accused and the usual refusal to stand up for the judge's entrance. 6 witnesses are cross-examined, DNA reports given and contested. A statement by Gabriel was read by his lawyer declaring that he escaped during a break from prison on 28.12.2003 and travelled all over Europe to do political meetings. He was financed by solidarity. Bart and Begona didn't know they were carrying weapons in Aachen. He and José were armed because they were escaped prisoners. The hostage-taking was not arranged but a result of overreaction. As he said 'José and I went through too much in Spanish prisons to go back there.'

Bart's charges could be changed from hostage-taking to abetment of the same and resistance against police, as well as a lowering of the robbery charges.



The charge of attempted murder has been dropped for all the accused. José and Gabriel are now accused of hostage-taking, aggravated extortion, resisting arrest and assault. Bart's application for bail was rejected.

#### The Charges

1. José and Begoña are charged with a bank robbery that was committed on 18/06 in Karlsruhe.
2. Begoña, José, Gabriel and Bart are charged with planning one or more robberies in Dresden.
3. Begoña, José, Gabriel and Bart are charged with armed resistance against the police (it's about the stop at the gas station).
4. Gabriel and Bart are charged with kidnapping, aggravated theft of a vehicle, quadruple attempted murder (during the chase, Gabriel would have shot 4 times directly at the policemen), heavy traffic violations endangering other peoples' lives and health, wounding a person (one person was wounded by a collision).
5. José, Gabriel and Bart are charged with double attempted murder (when they left the car, Gabriel would have shot three times at the police car), threatening a person with violence and death, aggravated theft of a vehicle (they fled with another car after they forced the driver to get out).

Begoña has been charged with 'violent resistance' after her arrest (it seems that in the course of the afternoon, during the procedure for identification, etc., the police officers had to use 'direct force and physical violence'(!?!)).

## Anarchy on Trial

A bourgeois observer will share the opinion of a paid journalist (by State-Capital that is) and a paid journalist might put as a title in his paper: "ANARCHY BEFORE COURT ON TRIAL".

But let us not say we have been deceived... For the aseptic journalist as well as the uncritical "citizen", the sense and significance of these words are not the same as for us; neither in depth nor in form...

For the first ANARCHY is CHAOS; for us it is a NATURAL ORDER not perverted by hierarchies, authorities, authoritarianism...

The interests of these "replicates" (or clones, or subjects fabricated in series) coincide with those of the BOSSES who feed them; who tell them how they have to think-believe-feel and act... They are slaves on a long chain that binds and enslaves them (voluntarily or involuntarily, in a conscious or unconscious way) to all that which makes our Orwellian World...

In the Temples of "Democracy" (call them Church, Parliament, Tribunal, etc.) new Priests control space, ritual, time... All those who in one way or another "break" with the "conventions" or "rituals" of these Authorities are not only "demonized" (ergo criminalized) but also "castigated" (be it by paying money or by paying with his/her freedom).. (...)

On the 20th of April 2005 seven anarchists undress (as I myself have done) to protest against the torture and the Justice of the bourgeoisie and Capital...

Vade-Retro!! ... Oh! what a beautiful scandal, what social poetry, what human and rebellious love, what dignity!!

This, Mr. and Ms bourgeois, Mr. and Ms Priest is called anarchist activism, is called revolutionary activism, social and human dignity; something that you for sure do not possess...

This is called Freedom, of expression, of opinion, of action. This is speaking and showing to the Powers that be that SOLIDARITY is not a dead-static concept, something that can be manipulated and bought on the Market as just another product or fashion... That Solidarity is not Christian charity or hypocritical begging.

And talking about Solidarity... I do not understand how there can be halfway-solidarity?

In this sense I reject "solidarity with excuses" or solidarity which needs to be justified because of what others could say or think about us...

We are anarchist rebels, antagonists and revolutionaries, with our own combative, political and social History.

We come from a determined and concrete context; with our deaths (assassinated), prisoners, exiles and fugitives...

We struggle against State-Capital; against prison society and prisons, against repression and poverty marginalisation and dogmatism...

And in this sense we do not beg for the "solidarity of the Authoritarian or Humanist LEFTISTS" who play at being revolutionaries.

To you as to the others we say without any consideration: GO TO HELL!!

(...)

Friends and foes, although you cannot know it I smile in the dark because I know our accomplices in the extension of the Revolt are multiplying all over the world and because our Heart is the proof that "something" is on the move...

We don't have anything and we want EVERYTHING...

TILL WE ARE ALL FREE!

Gabriel

## A Letter from Bart

*Ce qui est vivant bouscule  
tout pour vivre et crée, pour vivre,  
ses propres lois, c'est irrésistible.*

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Some comrades have asked me to write something about myself. I'm not one to write a lot. But well, being isolated from any interaction, from any human intercourse, many ideas are coming into my mind.

I'm an anarchist, 26 years old, I've held these ideas for about 3-4 years and live a kind of symbiosis with them, reality being their only nourishment. They make me in the same way that I make them, in function of my personality and experience. Thus the nature of our relation passed from simple knowledge to passion, accompanied by daily discussions and doubts concerning the conflicts we seek with the existence imposed upon us.

Anarchy has become a necessity for existence. I have tasted freedom both as an individual and collectively, free from the daily routine of capitalist existence. I still have the taste in my mouth and everything else inspires nothing but disgust in me.

Each day we move around in a network of relations of power, a 'matrix' that imposes a role on us that has become extremely important concerning the singularity of our personality and our desires. We have to divide our day between a gasping economy and a bureaucracy that's tangled up in itself, that ends up making us forget any propensity to spontaneity. We go to the doctor, the psychiatrist for drug problems, depression, to find ourselves once again in a cellar with a rope around our necks. 'But why then?' the zappeur convulse asks himself.

All time and place for the collectivity has been taken from us. But we have become freer, haven't we? Our virtuous democracies kick us below the belt every day but we don't even feel it any more. All desires or feelings of dignity are diluted into the 'common good'. Each one carries their brick to the edifice in an honest day's work, that is to say, bends their back to maintain the privileges of the bourgeoisie. Blinded by a false work ethic, we lose ourselves inside our own lives. We don't even notice that the world is burning. We have got so immersed in our own image that the social war has lost any meaning for us.

That is exactly where our struggle begins, getting rid of the modern despair that does us in. Recognise our struggle as individuals and by that struggle find accomplices in order to discover our collective strength.

The worst thing - and I'm coming back to my own story here - is that I have also seen this prostration in anarchists throughout the years, and that is really contagious. It's enough to see how they ruminate over old formulae and leftist traditions. About the combativeness of the 'left' we don't have to say much. It has become a prelude, a part of this system which democracy throws up to demonstrate its tolerance. Others apparently lose themselves because they don't manage to organise the masses, grimacing at the authoritarian communists and reformists. We know that reality is rotten but we can't let ourselves fall into the trap. We know we are a tiny minority... Our lack of effectiveness is no reason to turn our gaze from the light on the horizon, it is all the more reason for remaining extremely critical and struggling all the more. 'Hope'

is in us and in our struggle. To wait in hope is nothing but a Christian reflex that pushes us into impotence. The struggle is permanent and will always remain a constant. Even if only to preserve our dignity. That is what anarchism and reality have taught me.

Now, in the hands of the enemy, I see the inside of the repressive apparatus for the first time. They told me that prison is the reflection of society. If that is so, then it is sometimes very sad. I've already written to someone that I had the impression of being back at school because of the mean mentality here and the imposed routine. Hmm, that tells us a bit more about the school system or about the prisons...

It's crazy. If you think about it, it's like pigeons on a roof, this situation. I've just come back from a short exercise period and my guard dog is waiting in front of the open door. He says '*Chius*', sometimes even in a friendly way, and locks me up for 23 hours... Good democratic manners. Yeah, of course, it's a job like anything else. Obey the rules, no matter what they are. If they are to beat me tomorrow, they won't have many scruples about doing it. Here again the work ethic reigns... After all, I'm the prisoner here. Now I've been hearing the guards singing for a long time in the corridor: '*Ja, er lebt noch, er lebt noch*'<sup>1</sup>. And I think of the news of suicides that are regular topics of conversation during the day here. Cynicism and fatalism fill the corridors... But they only strengthen my beliefs.

Prison will always be a part of the experience of an anarchist and of the anarchist movement. If we don't give it a clear place in our actions and organisations, we are dedicating ourselves to an illusory 'struggle' and to living the betrayal of our ideas.

OK, I want to end up by saying that if you don't feel the need to struggle inside you, stop talking about it. Anarchism will just become an abstraction. It will perish in a spectacle of fashion for some or in a vanguardist state of mind for the others. Revolutionary solidarity, the connective tissue of our struggle, only lives in recognising our struggle in that of others, because it is action that it springs from. The rest is nothing but bourgeois chatter.

I take the chance here to greet my three comrades with a warm embrace. Until the judicial theatre. I wait impatiently to see you. Just thinking about it brings a smile to my face.

I also want to wish lots of courage to all the others who struggle against the isolation of the prisons or who are locked up as a consequence of their rebellion against all forms of power and manipulation. May we grow like weeds through their concrete structures.

Once again a warm embrace to all those who are with me. My heart is with you.

For anarchy and the end of the spectacle.

Bart

## A Letter from José

Bielefeld, 18.01.05

(...) I am Catalan, but my grandparents, who were 'red ones', had to flee during fascism. Thus my mother came into the world in a small Basque village. I am therefore very much in love with Euskadi (the Basque country) and as a poor farmer miss its people, the beach and my area. I do not understand the language here... I am held in conditions of hardest isolation which prevents me from having any human contact and from learning to understand the language. I have work - here in the cell where I am held - which is poorly remunerated. However this is not because of the money (to be without money does not matter to me)... it is that for months I have been asking for a normalization of my situation - and this 'therapy for the underdeveloped', ...which is now being offered me would be their first step ... (but not necessarily) I think that they should let me share activities with other prisoners; let me have sport and participate in the educational facilities. For seven months I have hardly ever left the cell except for meals. In all three prisons the same thing is taking place: ISOLATION. In addition, linguistic theory without practical application does not help me to understand or learn to make me understandable...

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<sup>1</sup> "Eh yes, he's still alive, still alive."

## From the Other Side

*Gabriel Pombo da Silva escaped at the end of 2003 from prison Nanclares de la Oca (Langrätz) in Spain. From the other side of the prison walls he wrote this message, which was put on the net in February 2004.*

*Gabriel spent close to 20 years in prison, of which 13 years under the FIES regime.*

*As a son of Spanish migrants, he grew up in Germany, but when he was very young he left home and went to Spain. At the age of sixteen he was condemned the first time for robberies. He became an anarchist in prison and is one of those who struggled against the FIES from the beginning; he wrote many letters and articles, participated in all the collective actions, the hunger strikes, etc.*

To my comrades and my family: I would have liked to make an end for once and for all to this dead weight of prison, persecution and evasion... I say this with a burning heart, yet I fear that I am obliged to live constantly with a past conditioning the present and the future, which pushes me always further into a desperate and surrealist situation of tension and confrontation with all and everything that configures, structures and comprises the world, existence and life in all its aspects.

I cannot, I do not want and I do not have to submit myself any more to the dominant logic of those who, during all those years, have tortured my/our bodies/souls/existence and have pretended to orient/control and regulate me/us on the so called way of "socialisation-normalisation".

TO THE OTHERS...

You have tortured me/us to the limits of the unbearable; you have broken all your law books of alleged ethical-moral-political values by the use of your formal-concrete laws/norms/institutions and representatives... so be it... I would have liked to have been able to do things (all things) from a more relaxed and free situation-perspective... Nevertheless, not satisfied with taking from me/us 20 YEARS (the supposed limit for the deprivation of freedom under the old criminal code in the Spanish state, today elevated by the Aznar government to 40 years working retroactively) of my/our existence, they also want to take/rob my/our MEMORY-WORD-LIBERTY-EVERYTHING...

It is enough!!! Finished with the commandments, the farce, the silence, the humiliation, the torture... Today I am FREE (as free as a human being can be who lives exiled from his land and his loved-ones) and I can SPEAK and ACT... I can sleep with a good conscience able at least to support-share with all those persons/collectives who just as me have suffered, suffer and will suffer the VIOLENCE of the INSTITUTIONS-GOVERNMENTS-LAWS...

When LAWS-NORMS turn into instruments of VENGEANCE in the hands of the powers that be, there is no other remedy left for us than to ignore-despise-denounce and fight them in all their expressions/manifestations... When Rights only serve the interests and the ambitions of a few, we ourselves are the only Left...

I will not here and now explain all the concrete cases which show ALL the abuses of power that have been done, are done and will be done against us by the past and coming CONSTITUTIONAL STATE...

In the Spanish state, my brothers and sisters rot in Special Units which were illegal in the beginning, then semi-legal, and later legal... A regime, the F.I.E.S., C.D.1, in which since its instauration (year 1991) 13 COMRADES in struggle and rebellion have lost their lives; the last one, Paco Ortiz; brother and friend... There is no truce!!! We will never rest in peace until you have done away with your military secrets! We will not cease to scream-express our disgust-rage for your democratic fascism, so that, in the end, you neither will be able to sleep peacefully!!! I know that we are almost alone in this struggle against you and your institutions/representatives; that the times have changed so that almost nobody cares when some criminalized persons are driven crazy and die under general or quasi general indifference... Personally, I am so convinced and in love with FREEDOM, all FREEDOMS, that I will struggle with all my energy, feelings and passions to (at least try to) change, destroy this world and create ANOTHER WORLD than the one you have left for us with your AUTHORITY/AUTHORITARIANISM.

TO THOSE WITH US

I make an appeal to all those persons-collectives-organisations and people who today, in the 21st century, struggle for more Dignity, Autonomy and FREEDOM... I nourish no hope to come out-standing out of this "adventure", therefore I would like that I/we in our struggle against tyranny and tyrants could become a reference and sign of continuity for all persons-groups-collectives who declare themselves lovers of freedom...

I make an appeal to all these journalists (not to those who are spokespersons for the state) to be courageous, fierce and responsible and that they enter into these Special Units of Spain, France, Germany, the USA, etc. and see with their own eyes what I am referring too...

Evidently, I don't nourish any hope that the States will renounce their instruments of domination and torture; neither that they give in to the goodwill of these groups/organisations/etc. who denounce these concrete FACTS/SITUATIONS and other... such as the F.I.E.S. ...the D.E.R.T. and, further away geographically but closer in time, the

situation of the Taliban war hostages in Guantanamo (juridically absolutely and manifestly unjustifiable), the legal assassinations of Yankees, especially against the Afro-Americans and Latinos.

On the 12th of October, Begoña Pombo da Silva, sister of Gabriel, was released on bail. She is still accused of having committed several robberies and so will still have to stand trial. But apparently there is lack of evidence for most or all of the initially more than a dozen bank robberies she was charged with (witnesses could not recognize her, etc.), and so was granted bail.

## Letter from Gabriel Pombo da Silva

Dear comrades,

I write you to let you know about my situation, and about the situation of the two other comrades and my sister Begoña. Given the censorship I can't tell anything about the reasons of my detention. Neither do I know anything about the others, because they have dispersed us over different prisons. They keep us in solitary confinement and isolated from all and everything. They keep us in a grey and blue uniform locked up in the cell 23 hours a day. Every half hour they appear at the spy hole installed in the door and prevent us from sleeping. Damned, like the Taliban...

My sister is detained although she has nothing to do with our anarchist activities, only because she is my sister.

With me they can't do anything, I am guilty of being an anarchist and developing activities in that sense.

I do not expect anything from German Justice nor from any bourgeois court. In fact, today they not only want to charge me with what I did here, but also with something in Spain (I ignore what accusations because I got away from there), and we'll see what more they will invent. It's of little importance that I didn't do anything illegal during the time I was out, they will accuse me of anything they want, so I don't think to participate in whatever farce...

What can I expect from a tribunal as an anarchist? Ask Granados and Delgado, ask Sacco en Vanzetti, ask Severino di Giovanni, ask all from the Marini case... More than enough examples, and historical memory is there to be consulted.

I am the only one responsible for all that has happened here; the others are prisoners because they are anarchists. And she because she is my sister.

Know that I never flee from my moral responsibilities; my anarchist ethics do impede me from doing that. It only fucks me that they take others without their having done anything.

Spread this. Be strong... anarchy is inevitable!!

A big hug

Gabriel Pombo da Silva.

## A Boy's Story

I know the story of a boy born under the fascist dictatorship. He was the son of a very poor family who spent his days surrounded by animals, he was always dirty because he liked to climb trees, explore caves (where he thought he would find treasures from ancient kings or pirates) and play at being a red Indian.

One day the artless boy fell from a roof while chasing a coloured butterfly. When he tried to catch it, he forgot where he was and... ended up in hospital with a broken jaw. At school the teachers beat him because he spoke a native language and the dictator didn't like that. Also, whenever he could the boy escaped into the forest where he was filled with wonder about everything.

One day his parents decided to go away to another country where the men, women and children were whiter. A country where (his parents said) they would be able to live more freely, where they could earn money and get out of poverty, buy a big house and be happy. The parents said to the boy, 'There is something called snow in this country, that is white and cold and falls from the sky for your birthday'. The boy couldn't understand why he should leave his woods, the sunshine, the rain, the sea, the rivers, his land... He didn't understand what poverty was, perhaps because he didn't need material things and he didn't care about wearing reprises clothes. And he didn't understand freedom because he was already free.

At first he was happy to leave his country because he wanted to see the 'snow that falls from the sky for your birthday' as his mother said. And also because he had never seen 'white men and women, very white with blond hair like gold'... and because he wouldn't have to go to school where he had been beaten because he spoke the native language... That is how the boy went away to the land of the white people with blond hair like gold and where the snow fell from the sky for his birthday...

It was true... the snow fell from the sky for his birthday, the people were very white, many of them had blond hair like gold and red like tomatoes, orange like carrots and brown like chestnuts. They spoke a language that was more difficult than that of the dictator. It was a dry, cutting military language. The people were cold and sad like the snow. Very soon the boy the colour of autumn leaves wanted to go back to his country... He didn't like this place where he didn't understand the other children, where people didn't look with gentleness in their eyes, where no smile brightened up their faces. But he stayed there and learned the language of the people with light hair and skin with no smile on their lips.

The boy grew up and learned the story of his country through the tales of the political exiles.. that is how he knew that his land didn't belong to the dictator and his friends but that they had won a war, that they had suppressed the revolution and filled his country with blood and misery... and for that the natives like us were condemned to flee from one country to another...

The boy listened with sadness to the stories of tears, blood and oppression of the exiled. He knew that they didn't believe in themselves and drank *l'eau de feu* to forget and began to sing the songs of the republic, the popular front and the revolution. One day the boy spoke with one of the old combatants defeated by the *eau feu* and said to him very seriously, 'Don Antonio, I'm going to fight for the revolution, I will never forget the songs of the revolution, I'm going to make my life an example of courage and avenge our dead, the tortured and defeated people.. I swear to God, Don Antonio'. Don Antonio started to cry with emotion and the boy didn't understand why this old man was crying like this, the old man who sang the revolutionary songs. The boy went off alone singing in his native language, his fist clenched, an old revolutionary song.

Negras tormentas agitan los Aires,  
Nubes Oscuras nos impiden ver  
y sangre nos espere el dolor y  
la muerte contra los enemigos  
nos llama el Deber  
El bien maspreciado es la Libertad  
hay que defenderla con fe y valor  
alza la bandera revolucionaria por el  
Triunfo de la Emanzipacion  
A las barricadas. A las barricadas  
Por el Triunfo de la Emanzipacion

That is how the adult-child went back to his country to fight for the Revolution. After many battles, the adult-child became a boy-man and was forced to survive twenty years torture without Sunshine, Water, Trees and Animals.

One day he managed to escape and continued to struggle and talk of Life, Love, Revolution and Dreams. Locked up once again, this child-man continues to smile; and his eyes are two black olives with the sun for pupils. And all the (white) men are scared of him because he doesn't cry or tremble, he doesn't want anything of them.

He only wants his smile to be contagious and that his heart give strength to those children who have forgotten that laughing recomposes choices and that a New World exists for those who look at the Rose des Vents with love. And Colorin Colorato this tale is far from finished...

## **A Short History of the Struggle Against the FIES**

At the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies there was a revival of social and revolutionary struggles in the whole of Europe, also in Spain. Strikes, occupations of factories and the formation of independent workers' councils ("*asambleas*") rose together with the renewed armed struggle, like the one of the MIL and the Autonomous Groups. The transition of the fascist dictatorship to a "democratic state" in the middle of the seventies made no difference at least on this point: the repression was severe, and the prisons were overpopulated. The struggle for the liberation of political prisoners altered quickly toward a struggle for the liberation of all prisoners and the abolition of the prison system.

...

As a reaction to these revolts the state installs the FIES. ...a lot of those who now have started the fight again, are already in their 10th, 15th or 20th year in the darkest dungeons of the Spanish prison system.

F.I.E.S.

The FIES was introduced through a simple circular under the management of the General Director of the prisons Antonio Asuncion, now leader of the Socialist Party of Alicante. Although the Constitutional Court temporarily put an end to the FIES regime in 1994, after a complaint of 2 prisoners, it still exists until this day. The new penitentiary regulations, under article 93, provides a regime that consists of: ISOLATION: airing in an individual cage during max. 3 hours with max. one other person.

UNLIMITED IN TIME: normally the statute gets revised every 3 months, but in reality it gets prolonged every time so that the isolation can last years, even decades.

LIVING CONDITIONS: totally handed over to the whims of the penitentiary centre. They can introduce censorship and limit correspondences, refuse visits, only airing in a cage, complete search with arbitrarily use of X-rays, continuous physical and psychological torture,...

F.I.E.S. in struggle

Struggle against the FIES has always existed by individuals or small groups, but just recently a number of FIES detainees have realised the necessity of coordination, and through letters to other prisoners and support groups they started to organise the struggle. Their first action consisted of 'txapeos' (refusing to leave the cells for a walk), but they saw quickly that if their struggle didn't expand to other prisoners and if there wasn't enough radical support from outside, the consequence of their action would only be a sharpened repression. Through the actions, letters, communiqués the struggle spread to other prisoners and groups outside the walls ...and after a while there existed an agreement on 3 basic demands:

1. Abolition of the FIES regime and every form of isolation
2. Against the dispersion of prisoners (towards prisons far from the place of residence, family and friends; spreading of prisoners over different prisons, and in the prison itself)
3. Immediate release of all incurable sick prisoners.

In Barcelona, Madrid, the Basque country and Galicia information was spread and actions of solidarity carried out. ... Also in France, Belgium and Italy support groups have been set up, and information is spread accompanied with actions. Here prisoners also join through solidarity statements, or, especially in Italy, by turning to action themselves.

The actions in and outside the prison walls continue. The reaction of the state makes itself felt of course. On the one hand there is hard repression: massive transportations, censorship, beatings, torture,... the prisoners' communiqués are alarming, there have even been deaths. On the other hand there is a media campaign full of lies: the prisoners in struggle are represented as dangerous criminals, it is claimed that they are led by the ETA,...

...

It is thus clear that the struggle will be long and harsh, and that such a prolonged struggle will ask determination and a whole range of action methods that leaves room for individual and local initiatives, according to the circumstances (i.e. many prisoners are seriously ill and most of them cannot participate in long term hungerstrikes). All prisoners can take action, talk about their own situation and put their own demands forward, but they will always connect with the movement by adding the principle revendications: end of FIES, end of dispersions, release of all incurable sick prisoners. In the beginning of 2001, also a 4th demand is agreed upon: the release of all prisoners who have completed 20 years of imprisonment (which should be, according to the Spanish law itself, the maximum time), and a call is made to go on fasting every month. The unity and continuity of the movement are thus secured by the four basic demands, punctual collective actions (as the monthly *chapeos* and hungerstrikes), broadening and strenghtening of the coordinations inside and outside, debates about the prison struggle and its place in the social and political struggles going on. ...one can see a steady stream of letters, communiques, testimonies, ... of prisoners in struggle, talking about the daily horrors and repression they have to endure and about the resistance and struggles going on inside (*chapeo's*, hungerstrikes, workstrikes, letter campaigns, sabotages, ...). Also in the streets a whole range of actions take place all over Spain - demonstrations, info-meetings, conferences, direct actions, ... Internationally, the prisoners connect with prisoners and support groups in France, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Belgium, Great-Britain, the U.S., where prisoners join by writing solidarity statements and/or by participating in the monthly hungerstrikes.

...In March 2002 another collective hungerstrike takes place in 38 prisons in which close to 500 prisoners participate.

On the 28th of May 2002, a huge uprising takes place in the Quatre Camines prison in Catalunya. Following another senseless beating of two young inmates by the guards, more than 250 prisoners decide to start a work strike. A strike committee is formed which formulates 12 demands and asks to speak to the Director of the Penitentiary Institutions,...The next day the Mossos (Catalan anti-riot police) storm the prison and the rebellion is crushed with brutal force.

...Till now, except for some small armed attacks on the outside (such as those carried out by 'International Solidarity'), all actions have been non-violent. The answer of the State though is nothing but violence. Inside, the repression continues unabated, with constant transfers, censorship, denial of visits, humiliation, abuse, beatings, torture, death.

...

On the 15th of October 2002, 4 anarchists active in the squatters' movement are arrested in Valencia. They are charged with "disturbance of the public order" and "property damage" (related to an anti-fascist demonstration a week before) and later, after interference of the chief of the Information Brigade of the Spanish Police, with "terrorist association" ... They risk 10 to 15 years of imprisonment. The evidence seems, again, to be based on the contacts the 4 had with some prisoners. It is clear that the State once more tries to frame some comrades, and to intimidate all those working in support of prisoners and the prisoners' struggles.

With the appearance on the European continent of the so-called "anti-globalisation" movement (Prague, Göteborg, Genoa, Brussels, Barcelona, ...), the second Intifada and the brutal military assaults by the Israelian army (which moved and mobilized also the Arab and Muslim communities in Europe), the popular revolts in Latin-America, September 11 in the States, ... , it seems that the party of the ruling classes of the world is over, and that they seriously start to worry and to prepare themselves for a next reactionary assault. The new laws against "terrorism" mean undoubtedly a fascisization of the whole state and society, and it is no coincidence that it were Spain and Italy (and Turkey) who eagerly followed the United States and urged the European Union to accept the laws - as such they can now legitimize and intensify a "dirty war" which has in fact been going on for years.



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