



**Misc. notes from an
International Anti-Prisons &
Anti-Repression Gathering,
March 29th-31st, 2024,
Cowley Club, Brighton, UK**

Organised by Anarchist Black Cross Brighton (& random anarchists)

International Anti-Prison / Anti-Repression Gathering 2024, UK

Introduction

Anarchists and other comrades from Spain, Germany, Sweden, Italy, USA, and UK met in Brighton over the Easter Weekend in 2024, to share their experiences of repression and some strategies for dealing with it. The weekend opened with a talk by comrades from Spain about the infiltration of *Colze a Colze* and *Cinetika* squatted social centres followed by a discussion.

From Italy, *Cassa Antirepressione delle Alpi Occidentali* spoke about their project of revolutionary solidarity with both political and common prisoners. The *Forest Case* presented their experience of Operation Adream and the status of anarchist Toby Shone, who was imprisoned at the time. A talk was also given on the repression in Germany against anti-fascists and about the Budapest repression of anti-fascist actions.

On the Sunday, a member of *Plan C* gave a talk about the pathologisation of "offending" and oppositional political ideologies. A comrade from Sweden described how this is already happening there with some anarchists being placed in psychiatric care rather than criminal prisons because their beliefs and resistance to the state is now described as evidence of personality disorder. A long discussion ensued about various state practices designed to

encourage signposting of radicalisation and extremism in schools and communities and how 'risk factors' can be something as innocent as outdoor pursuits. People agreed to research and compile these practices so that a European wide view is possible. In the UK, the prisoner support group *CAGE* and the *Network for Police Monitoring* are already active against these State 'Pre-vent' policies.

There was also a discussion of the hunger strike of Alfredo Cospito in Italy and a brief history of these kinds of hunger strikes, with the announcement that Italian comrades are putting together a history and analysis of using one's own body as an instrument of struggle.

We thank the Cowley Club for hosting the gathering, Brighton ABC for organising it and all those who cooked, cleaned and facilitated the gathering taking place, as well as those who showed up and took part.

Random anarchists

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19/01/26: Now some time has passed since the international meeting, and the solidarity campaigns and networking have waxed and waned. Some prisoners came out, many more went to prison, the political and judicial circus never ceased. Sadly, due to lack of serious volunteers and energy, Brighton ABC ceased activity for now

after years of solidarity work. A report from this gathering was meant to have been published much sooner after the gathering, but again, thanks to various factors, it never happened. Now, after over a year, a few diverse documents that were produced for the gathering and a transcription of Toby's call came into our hands. All this we've salvaged and prepared into a printed brochure, which we hope can be of use to others in the social war against the prison and the state. We want to add on to the anti-prison dialogue and actions which are taking place across many countries, and to solidify the links between us.

We think that stronger international connections between us confront national state repression and also take a stance against cross-border international cooperation repressive regimes seeking to prevent revolutionary movements from gaining ground.

So we present here first of all, an important text which explains the critical approach of revolutionary solidarity, expressed well by Pierleone Porcu in 1993, as our basis text at the gathering. This text and the concept, is key to an understanding of a practical relationship between ourselves, as comrades 'outside' and 'inside' the prison gates, engaged in a common struggle.

Thereafter is a document written from the comrades in Italy about hungerstrikes and some aspects relating to them, looking at some historical examples. Here also is the unpublished transcription of the phone presentation by anarchist prisoner Toby Shone that took place on the Saturday of the gathering.

Sunday saw the deepest discussion with most interest, about the use of “anti-extremism” psychological repression and the anti-psychiatry analysis. Unfortunately, the depth of the discussion was not adequately recorded. On both days Toby called into the gathering in the early evenings and spoke to a variety of comrades personally, which was great with the phone being passed around. Although the gathering was a good first meeting in most cases, feedback from the gathering has to be written that there was a lack of participants from the UK, that the international comrades were more in attendance. Even though the meeting took place at the same time as a large demonstration in London for the Palestinian struggle, we would have expected more groups and individuals to have come. The gathering suffered from the arrest of one of the organisers, as Toby was snatched in the Autumn before the gathering and sent back to prison. Anarchism in Brighton and in the UK is at a lower ebb than years previously, and prisoner solidarity and the anti-prison agitation are sorely neglected as topics. Currently repression is getting worse on many levels, so without wanting to build any inflexible political platform that we cannot be sustained, there is a need to meet and conspire, and to link our struggles, but how best to do this?

We think we should meet again and to get off the internet.

Currently there are multitudes of groups working on prisoner solidarity topics. We do not believe that the use of internet tools is any replacement to meeting face-to-face. Email lists

are not adequate for the relationships we build together when we meet. One problem reported from our gathering was also the practical problem we faced with lack of accommodation, which highlighted again the thin ground of resources from a once bustling city of anachos and the housing crisis where squatting has been made much more difficult and there are less squatting projects and autonomous spaces.

In UK we're faced with the situation of disastrous prison conditions and much more widespread repression across the board. Climate change and Palestinian social activists have dozens of prisoners between them inside right now, they were not represented at the gathering. Neither were the SpyCops campaign activists who have worked on the undercover policing inquiry, although one comrade from *Forest Case* spoke about her experience in the case. Nor present were any members of the anarcho-syndicalist and federation groups who also work on prisoner solidarity topics, such as *Incarcerated Workers Organising Union*. We think these, and other instances, were missed opportunities to see how our groups can find some common points of action. It is evident, that our groups and campaigns are having some successes, such as the focus on the overall conditions of the imprisoned in UK having more traction in recent years, especially since these topics, and often specific imprisoned comrades, became more mainstream news, hence the measures and manoeuvres that the regime has to employ to diffuse and hide the topic, and the lies that the corporate media has to use to confuse the public.

Revolutionary Solidarity

There are many ways to demonstrate solidarity to comrades who are being criminalised by the State, each one of which is a direct expression of the way one intervenes in the social clash in general.

There are those who see solidarity as lending a social service to this or that arrested comrade, and that is the way they carry out their activity: looking for lawyers, sending money and clothes to prison, visiting and so on. This purely humanitarian solidarity also translates itself into the constitution of defence committees and relative campaigns aimed at influencing public opinion.

Then there are those who see solidarity in a strictly political key and play at making a heap of “distinctions” aimed at not compromising the image of their own activity. So for reasons of opportunity, they defend and show solidarity to those who declare themselves innocent, not to those who claim responsibility for their actions.

Others still, if they see there is something to be gained in terms of political propaganda, immediately bring out flyers and leaflets in formal solidarity with the comrade or comrades arrested, i.e. they declare solidarity in words, while in practice there is no trace of it.

Then there is solidarity in an ideological context. This is the case of the marxist-leninists in the revolutionary combatant party version. They show solidarity with those with positions similar to their own, and are in contrast with those who do not share or recognise their political line or strategy, often using censorship and ostracism against those they consider inconvenient.

What do we think we should mean by revolutionary solidarity then? The first aspect is that of seeing solidarity as the extension of the insurrectional social practice one is already carrying out within the class clash, i.e. as a direct demonstration of actions of attack against all the structures of power, large and small that are present in one's own territory. And that is because these should to all effects be considered responsible for everything that happens in social reality, including therefore the criminalisation and arrest of comrades wherever they are. It would be short-sighted to reduce the question of repression against comrades to something strictly linked to the legal and police apparatus. The criminalisation and arrest of comrades should be seen in the context of the social struggle as a whole, precisely because these are always the hasty material means used by the State to discourage radicalisation everywhere. No matter how great or insignificant it might be, every act of repression belongs to the relations of the social struggle in course against the structures of dominion.

The second aspect is that each revolutionary comrade should be defended on principle, irrespec-

tive of the accusations made against them by the State's legal and police apparatus, in the first place because it is a question of snatching them from its clutches i.e. from the conditions of "hostage" they have been reduced to. Moreover, it is also a question of not losing the occasion to intensify the attack against the "law" intended as the regulating expression of all the relationships of power present in constituted society.

The third aspect concerns the refusal to accept the logic of defence that is inherent in constitutional law, such as for example the problem of the "innocence" or "guilt" of the comrades involved, and that is because we have many good reasons for defending them and no one can justify the political opportunism of not doing so. We cannot and must not consider ourselves lawyers, but revolutionary anarchists at war against constituted social order on all fronts.

We aim at radically destroying the latter from top to bottom, we are not interested in judging it as it does us. For this reason we consider any sentence made by the State vultures against proletarians in revolt, and all the more so if they are comrades, to be a sentence against ourselves and as such to be avenged with all the means we consider opportune, according to our disposition and personal inclinations.

The fourth and final aspect concerns our attitude towards the arrested comrades, whom we continue to behave towards in the same way as those not in prison. That means that to revolutionary solidarity we always and in any case unite a radical critique. We can and do show solidarity with imprisoned comrades without for this

espousing their ideas. Those who show solidarity to imprisoned comrades are not necessarily involved in their opinions and points of view, and the same thing goes for us as far as they are concerned. We actively support all imprisoned comrades in all and for all, but only up to the point where what we do for them does not come into contrast with or contradict our revolutionary insurrectionalist way of being. Ours is exclusively a relationship between social revolutionaries in revolt, not that of bartering positions. We do not sacrifice any part of ourselves, just as we do not expect others to do the same.

We think of solidarity as a way of being accomplices, of taking reciprocal pleasure and in no way consider it a duty, a sacrifice for the "good and sacred cause", because it is our own cause, i.e. ourselves.

Starting from these premises, of primary importance in the development of one's anarchist insurrectionalist action, revolutionary solidarity takes on meaning as such, because we would show simple material support to any friend who ends up in prison.

Revolutionary solidarity is an integral part of our very being as insurrectional anarchists. It is in this dimension that it should be demonstrated incessantly, precisely because it contributes to widening what we are already doing.

Pierleone Porcu,
Anarchismo
May 1993

Documents and notes on hunger strikes in the prison system

In this document we will try to outline some of our thoughts and evaluations regarding a series of hunger strikes carried out by different revolutionary experiences - not only anarchist - in prisons in different countries. Only for the sake of needs/limitations in the documentary research, we must begin by saying that we have focused, as far as the field of hunger strikes conducted by anarchist prisoners is concerned, mainly on the experiences within the prisons of the Italian State.

To this work of documentation and analysis of the information collected has been elaborated by some comrades of the *Cassa Antirepressione delle Alpi Occidentali* and from the archive/library "Tomasu Serra" of Guasila (Sardinia).

Firstly, in most of the hunger strikes we have taken into consideration, we can note a substantial difference that characterises the setting, content and objectives of this instrument of struggle depending on whether it has been used by non-anarchist movements or by individuals/components of the anarchist movement. In the first case, and let us take as an example the national liberation movements (Irish, Basque, Kurdish, Palestinian...) as well as the revolutionary communist organisations in several European countries (Germany, Spanish State, France, Turkey, Italy at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s...), the use of this instru-

ment by prisoners was mainly a practice with which, under conditions of captivity, revolutionaries wanted to contribute to the overall struggle conducted outside prison by the movements and organisations of which they were part. Even in the field of specific demands regarding prison conditions, the main characteristic is the strong outside/inside link that, with the hunger strike, prisoners strengthen by "doing their part", complementary to what is done by the movement outside. The choice of the hunger strike, almost in all the experiences taken under consideration, is the result of the impossibility of using other forms of struggle (collective acts of insubordination, revolts...) either because these have not previously achieved the objectives set or because decisive changes have occurred in the conditions of detention to which the prisoners have been subjected (reduction or annihilation of "common spaces" through isolation, ill-treatment and systematic torture...) that make other forms of collective struggle impracticable.

Faced with extreme conditions of treatment implemented by the state in order to bend by means of systematic torture and absolute isolation the revolutionaries who fall into its clutches, in various geographical contexts there have been dozens if not hundreds of prisoners whose perspective has been literally to die of torture or to be annihilated

by special regimes of psychic and sensory deprivation. They have chosen to respond to this prospect by going on hunger strike to the bitter end, putting their lives on the line (in many cases even going so far as to lose them) from a position of struggle, rather than risk death or annihilation imposed and acted upon by the enemy.

In order to 'disarm' the all-out hunger strikes carried out to the point of critical health, the state reacted in many countries (starting in the early 1980s) with the further torture of forced feeding, which, for example in the case of the very long strike of the communist prisoners of *GRAPO-PCE/r* in Spain between 1989 and 1990, was approached by the strikers as a further phase of the struggle in which to insist on the strike, despite the suffering and physical damage it would cause, in order to 'disarm' in turn this aberrant medical treatment imposed by the enemy.

As for what concerns the anarchist movement historically, it is more difficult to attribute to the initiatives undertaken by the prisoners the characteristic of an organic contribution to an overall mobilisation or struggle developed with the components outside the prison. In general, apart from the case of some anarchist prisoners who have used and use the hunger strike as a specific method to express their claims and/or solidarity with respect to existing movements outside (e.g. Marco Camenisch between the 1990s and 2000s in Italy and Switzerland, or Dimitris Chatzivasileiadis today in Greece...), the hunger strike "starts" as a self-determined protest by one or more inmates

for specific demands linked either to the conditions of detention or to the judicial situation the strikers are facing. This does not mean, of course, that there doesn't exist or that there is no will to link to to create a relationship between the hunger strike and solidarity initiatives and practices outside, but in most cases there is a clear adherence by the outside movement to the initiative promoted from within the prison.

In a few cases, exceptions to this could be found. For example, in the hunger strike carried out by Malatesta, Borghi and Quaglino during their lengthy preventive arrest in 1921 (which was however triggered by a specific judicial situation experienced by the comrades in question) in order that their trial could begin, which was part of the mobilisation that the movement carried out in order to pressure the constituted powers to take a decision on their arrest. A choice, that of the hunger strike, which in this case is necessary see in perspective to the problematic conditions in which the social and revolutionary movements found themselves due to the repression of the state and the progressive assertion of fascism after the period of insurrectional agitation of the "*Biennio Rosso*" (Two-Red Year period referring to 1919-1920).

Even the hunger strike undertaken by three anarchists in 1984 (in the context of the judicial proceedings against the armed libertarian area of the 1970s in Italy) was prompted by specific demands regarding the trial events of which they were the subjected to, although it could also be included in the broader inside/outside context that denounced the relentlessness

against anarchists within the judicial logic of the "terrorism emergency" and that sought to tackle the phenomenon of repentance and dissociation by claiming the revolutionary coherence of the other imprisoned comrades.

Analogous to most of the initiatives of this type that have periodically affected anarchist prisoners in Italy in recent decades, the most recent cases of hunger strikes carried out by anarchists in Italian State prisons all stem from specific repressive situations faced by the comrades who carried them out: the strike of the comrades against the particularly restrictive conditions of detention in the AS2 (high security) special section in L'Aquila in 2019 and the strike of Alfredo Cospito between 2022 and 2023, both initiatives also joined by other anarchist prisoners not only in Italian state prisons but also in other countries.

Alfredo Cospito's long strike, however, conveyed a much more significant overall character starting from the contents expressed by the comrade on the motivations his initiative, provoked not only by the objective of the annulment of the decision to allocate him in the 41-bis special prison regime, but of the abolition of this regime and of the regime of life-sentence without parole (life sentence without the possibility of benefits or mitigation of the detention regime – in Italian "*ergastolo ostativo*"). This approach (and the mediatisation that the story received, also for manoeuvres of political confrontation within the institutions) meant that the mobilisation in solidarity with the strike also involved wide areas of support

(not only anarchist), and at the same time it was able to "open the eyes" of many anarchists initially "disinterested" in the criticism against the 41-bis regime until the moment when for the first time an anarchist found himself facing it – they thus found the grounds and necessity to extend their criticism and opposition these specific repressive measures that the state had until then mainly destined against other subjects in society.

As of today, we cannot fail to note that, if at judicial level life imprisonment for Alfredo has been averted so far (next 24th April there will be a further hearing on the matter), the comrade remains in 41-bis and the abolition of this prison regime and of life sentence without parole are still objectives far from being achieved.

Moreover, with Alfredo's interruption of the strike, the attention and capacity for external mobilisation concerning the strike that had been created during his period, dropped.

We should not omit a brief note on hunger strikes, or even just "canteen strikes" (food provided by the prison) or shop strikes (food that can be purchased by prisoners), carried out by prisoners who do not characterise themselves with a political/ideological identity. Over the decades in Italy there have been many such protests, which have mainly sought humanitarian or party/institutional associations as external interlocutors/supporters. Some of these protests were also joined by anarchist comrades mainly in order not to 'separate' themselves and not to fail to show solidarity with the other prisoners during the protests

(even though they may only partly or not at all share its contents and/or claims), just as there was no lack of support from components of the anarchist and revolutionary movement outside the prison for initiatives of this kind promoted, mainly but not only, by inmates sentenced to life imprisonment. Unfortunately - also due to a lack of activation of solidarity on the outside not always only attributable to a lack of interest, but also to the fact that the inmate did not manage to communicate to people outside that a strike was occurring, - since 2017, five people have died in Italian prisons as a result of hunger strikes.

We conclude this first draft document with some rough notes with respect to the criticalities we have been able to find not only in the inside/outside relations but also in the practice of the hunger strike itself.

- The hunger strike may prove to be a compulsory choice when other forms of collective struggle are not considered feasible: this may be extremely realistic in a prison context where the population, both because of the arrangements put in place by the prison authorities and because of the overall social transformations inside and outside the prison, is divided, atomised and often unable to find cohesion and common objectives for which to fight.

- In the event of a hunger strike or other initiative undertaken by the prison population, it is essential to prepare the mobilisation outside in good time so that it can be activated at the same time as the strike and reason in advance of the development that, in terms of prac-

tices and initiatives put in place, the mobilisation outside may take on depending on the progressive phases that will characterise the strike (increase of strikers, worsening of their health conditions...).

- The hunger strike, as a non-conflictual practice, may be able to activate humanitarian sensitivities that may go beyond the purely militant spheres (institutional left, human rights associations...). As much as the activation of these spheres can offer additional bargaining spaces to the strikers, it is very important in our opinion to foresee the attitude and relations to be held towards these spheres so that the revolutionary solidarity components do not flatten their practices and contents to align themselves completely with the dynamics put in place by the non-revolutionary components, and the humanitarian aspect does not prevail over the political identity and claims of the striking comrades. And this does not always prove to be easy.

- It may happen that the hunger strike is seen as the only or the most effective form of struggle in the hands of the prisoners. Certainly, as we mentioned earlier, it has been and is adopted by some anarchist comrades in Italy and other countries as an individual practice of constant confrontation with the state (with periodic and/or repeated hunger strikes over time) and as a means to amplify claims or content related to the overall external struggles. However, making our own some considerations that an anarchist prisoner diffused following the mobilisation against the special detention regime F.I.E.S. in the Spanish state prisons at the turn of the 1990s and the beginning

of the following decade (a mobilisation that also developed through a series of individual and collective hunger strikes), we think it is instead opportune, just as one is called upon to do in the struggles outside, to cultivate a creative lucidity that can offer us a whole series of instruments of struggle in which the hunger strike is one of the possible practices to put into practice.

Conditions of detention, the possibility of communication and sharing within the prison population of the contents and aims of a struggle, coherence between practices and objectives being pursued, are the elements that in our opinion need to be taken into consideration in order to choose which type of initiative to undertake.

Contribution to the Meeting by Toby Shone

30/03/24

Hello everyone this is Toby. I am an anarchist imprisoned as a consequence of Operation Adream. I want to thank my comrade for presenting a talk about the case that we are involved in. Not only has she had to deal with police terror but also the inertia and weakness of the anarchist movement in the UK. This talk is dedicated to her and all those who do not run for cover when the tempest comes. Also before I begin my brief discourse, I want to mention that 2 days ago I was summoned by a managerial human insect of the prison's counter terrorism unit who gave me paperwork informing me that contact with another close comrade of mine had been classified as a threat to national security. And so she will be prohibited from visiting or contacting me whilst I am in prison. She earned this accolade for receiving a recent text of mine by telephone called "*The Subversive Written Word*". Needless to say, I refused to engage with this provocation and kept my hostile attitude. Persecution is an honour for us.

We draw the clear line with the enemy.

Right now I am calling for a cell in Garth prison in north-west England. I expect retribution for the prison administration for this call. I was transferred here from Bristol prison in an effort by the regime to isolate me from my comrades and local environment. Despite having only 14 months left on my current sentence at that time, I was ghosted to this

long-term high security prison as revenge for my participation in the revolutionary struggle and for a fireworks solidarity demon that took place outside the prison.

I want to thank ABC Brighton for organising this event, which I have tried to collaborate with as much as I could, including writing an open letter and callout plus communicating with other prisoners and imprisoned comrades about the gathering and its aims. This is the first time an anti-prison / anti-repression gathering is taking place in the UK since 2009. The previous event had a similar format, also took place here in the Cowley Club, examined the cases of imprisoned comrades and had a special focus on the "prison society"; otherwise known as the surveillance state, of which the United Kingdom is a very good example. In the last 15 years technological social control has only become more embedded in society, to the extent that we can say that we all live in a vast prison. We can find the extensive use of CCTV, facial recognition systems, mass data collection, advanced spyware, digital forensics and artificial intelligence, etc. alongside there is a rollout of GPS-tracking ankle bracelets for imposing curfews, no-go zone and behavioural control orders. There is also the expansion of new laws concerning political activities, demonstrations and social life. Here we also have the creation of new unilateral state entities such as the National Crime Agency and the National Security Division – modern

authoritarianism in its bourgeois democratic variant.

The regime on this prison island locks up more people than any other country in Europe. 88,000 people are incarcerated and there are only a few hundred places left before the prisons will be full. Thousands of prisoners are due to be released to deal with the crisis leading to almost a quarter of a million people on probation who are serving their sentences in the community. The state is embarking on a large-scale prison building programme, planning the construction of another 20,000 cells by 2026 and expanding the power and personnel of the Probation Service. I do not need to stress the fact the criminal justice and penal system has a clear racial and class basis. Mass incarceration is essential to maintain class divisions and the private ownership of the means of production. Prison is designed for political repression and to contain the contradictions of capitalism. These new prison building plans do not address the fact that existing jails are overcrowded and in a state of permanent decay. Most prisoners in the UK share cells only designed for one person and the basic living conditions are squalid with minimal time spent out of cells. Activities and education are hardly functioning and forced prison labour is widespread. Not only are more of us being locked up to provide profit for private companies but we are also being locked up for longer. Average sentence lengths have greatly increased over the last 10 years, with four times as many people serving sentences of over 20 years as a decade ago. The Prisons Inspectorate is regularly condemning the current situation and the social consequences, but to no avail. Recently the UK Health and Security Agency issued an urgent

warning that cases of tuberculosis are dramatically rising in prisons due to the filth and degradation we are forced to lie in.

It is not my aim with this brief talk to present a litany of misery, which is what we are faced with on the topic of prison and the state. With this encounter this weekend we thought it needed to organise a first point of contact in a new round of anti-prison organising and a resurgence of decentralised networks working on common platforms and issues and solidarity to our captured fighters.

What I want to highlight is a need for resistance, to create and reinforce effective practices and responsive structures with the flexibility to fight and overcome state repression. To that end internationalism is essential. To share our experiences and promote direct action and self-organisation, which is intrinsic to our anarchism.

These prisons need to be torn down and we cannot be under any illusion as to the reality we are facing.

The fire of revolutionary solidarity is in my heart and I extend it to all of you. Lastly I want to thank the comrades who attended the vibrant demonstration at the National Security Division Regional Headquarters in Cardiff to express their solidarity with my situation. It fuelled the flame within me.

Here I end my presentation with these stolen moments. I thank you for listening. This connection is important and I will not forget it.

An embrace my friends.

A Note on the Dangerous Role of Insidious Psychology

This next text was the basis of the presentation given by a comrade from Plan C on the imposed psychologisation process some comrades and prisoners are subjected to by the state.

One of the things that became clear whilst talking to Toby [on the telephone] during the course of his case was the role a particular mindset plays within the repressive forces of the state. For those political forces who oppose the state form this can have interesting repercussions worth remarking on.

Broadly speaking we can talk about a psychologisation of incarceration and resistance. There's always been an explicit role for psychological techniques within incarceration and attempts to deploy such techniques against widespread social resistance. To that extent this is nothing new, there has always been some involvement of psychology within state repressive structures. If there is anything new it is the insidious slippage of meaning that occurs when we explicitly state that we understand things in one particular way. Official documents become official policies which become official laws.

As an example take the idea of 'Offender Personality Disorder' (OPD). This is the dominant form in which any talk of rehabilitation within the HM Prison and Probation Services takes place it would seem. It is a joint program with the NHS and involves approximately 35,000 people across community and custody and was originally introduced in 2011. It's reaching its maturity as a policy strategy, almost a

common sense amongst those involved. At the same time it might be reaching its limits.

It's one thing to develop a therapeutic approach to rehabilitating repeat and violent offenders, but in the context of incarceration and repression it can never be simple because the concept of consent, central to any viable therapeutic approach, is compromised at worst and complicated at best. Political resistance to the state and incarceration are withdrawals of consent in large measure, so being clear when a situation is political is vital if consensual practices are to be maintained. If political resistance is treated as psychological resistance then active harm is being done.

This is not to somehow argue for the generalised use of psychology within situations of incarceration. There's much that speaks against treating crime as an illness, disease or situation of distress and trauma, not least the way this process of psychologisation fails to recognise the social and political nature of criminal activity.

Even on its own terms and in situations where there might be widespread agreement as to its value, however, psychology would not want to be found to be causing active harm. So it's important to keep some boundaries in place as to where and when the use of psychology should be consented to and this must involve some sense of self-awareness from the psychological services that their activity can be a disciplinary practice as easily as it can be a caring practice. Whilst the use of psychology will continue, it's

insidious presentation of itself as a friend should not.

The OPD in its recent strategic plan, which lasts from 2023-2028, explicitly offers itself as a route to deal with political situations in some specific situation, not least the extended and extending use of the category of *terrorist* against left, anarchist and anti-state forces. *"The OPD pathway provides advice in relation to people who meet its screening criteria including strategically important groups such as those sentenced to imprisonment for public protection (IPP) and TACT (Terrorism Act) offenders."*

In this situation it's increasingly likely that some imprisoned comrades will be targeted with these psychological services and the way they attempt to pathologise political activity.

Solidarity communication, for example, can be reframed and redescribed in terms of addiction.

It might sound bizarre but solidarity with a prisoner can be treated as a negative factor, keeping them in touch with the community that enables their 'offending behaviour'.

So instead of recognising the social support the prisoner is receiving as a strength, this is reconfigured into a weakness and threat and treated the same way we might treat the community of drug users an addict is part of.

The intimacies of this process of pathologisation can only really be described by incarcerated comrades.

Recognising and perhaps discussing such processes within solidarity work, and enabling incarcerated comrades to talk through the various games they are subjected to, can be useful ways to help maintain the mindset

of resistance in the midst of this gaslighting.

Aside from taking account of these practices comrades can be subjected to and acknowledging them in solidarity work and conversations, it could also be worth pushing back within psychology itself. There is a wide spread of political values within psychology and associated disciplines in health and social policy areas.

Some of this work will already be taking place no doubt, but the everyday policy and training procedures that support the use of psychology within prisons need to be investigated and challenged.

Psychology itself needs to begin to restrain and resist its use in these spaces, which means calling out people in their own discipline, within their own regulatory spaces.

Trained and qualified psychologists are able to be held accountable to some degree by their professional associations and anti-prison work needs to extend its horizon beyond the walls and gate towards the associated paraphernalia of social domestication and control that form the parole, psychological and "well-being" services prisoners are subjected to.

The first step in this process is one of gathering information and developing awareness of the role of these aspects of state repression.

About "anti-extremism" "anti-psychology"...

As an example of the attempted psychological repression that Toby was subjected to, we print here a section from a letter justifying the "anti-extremist/anti-terrorist" conditions by Ashley Fussell "Senior Probation practitioner". The section regards the imposed condition:

Attend all appointments arranged for you with a psychiatrist/psychologist/medical practitioner, unless otherwise approved by your supervising officer.

Fussell justified this use of psychological repression against dissent and anarchism as: *"This condition is necessary to allow further assessments by psychologists, either to facilitate offending behaviour focused interventions or to inform the formulation-based approach to the management of the case. In addition, it allows for Mr. Shone to be directed to mental health appointments if it is considered that his emotional wellbeing is contributing to an elevation of risk in the future. The National Security Division manage cases using a formulation-based approach which is supervised by the unit psychologist. with this condition in place, we can facilitate appointments with the psychologist that Mr. Shone will be required to attend to update the case formulation or to contribute to assessment or delivery of offence focused work."*

This clerk was responsible for enforcing conditions on our comrade, and he works for the National Security Unit - Wales and South West Division. Fussell is responsible for the psychological and material repression of "extremists" - our friends and comrades. How he writes about our comrade Toby shows that Fussell is a willing fascistic servant of the regime, and that this way of treating political activists is routine. It has to be said that the NSD's plans fell apart when Toby just refused to co-operate and mocked and belittled them as the scum they are. The NSD has to be attacked for what it is. Expose and fight the NSD!

Prisoner's report on HMP Garth, C Wing.

1. Dirty, ageing, unmaintained conditions, lack of hot water, heating, windows don't open, or they're always stuck open. It is squalid here. The maintenance contractor is Amey who does not carry out work or carries it out to a substandard level. Multiple areas of the prison have roof leaks with rain coming in and with buckets left in the corridors to collect rainwater. It's either freezing cold or too hot in the cells, and there's no water pressure.

2. Little to no access to basic cleaning products, leading to further dirty conditions of cells and living environment and lack of dignity with no functioning dryer.

3. Little to no access to basic resources such as toilet rolls, forks, spoons, bowls, and plates. No soap, toothpaste, shower gels, etc are available for the guys.

4. Offender Management Unit applications are not getting answered or dealt with, leading to a lack of progression and the ability to move on in the guys' sentences. And there are very few outgoing transfers to category C prisons, which is the lower security designation.

5. The screws are reluctant to give out envelopes and paper for writing to family and friends. There's a waiting list system in place to request envelopes and paper. This often never works. This increases isolation and lack of contact.

6. Healthcare is totally disorganized and negligent. Some guys are unable to access health care due to a long waiting list. There are reports of guys waiting three months for basic requests.

7. No access to the library for all the main wings due to regime mandates and reluctance to include the library in the regime.

8. No consistency with regimes. No routine, often only told what time we get out of cells the day before or on the day. Hardly anything ever starts on time. Visits never start properly and end before the time advertised. There's little access to activities, education, and labour. There's not enough time out cells, not enough gym slots, and there's not enough yard time. There is meaningless slave labour. No vocational training of any use, unimaginative educational courses with no range, and they're only designed to get guys on to prison workshops.

9. Prisoners' property isn't being processed adequately. There are serious delays in getting what we are sent or what we order or what we arrive with to the prison. The catalogue orders are expensive, and they're not processed on time or not processed at all. The approved retailers list is expensive and therefore unavailable for many prisoners. Books aren't allowed to be sent directly from family and friends, which is against national guidelines. Censorship and destruction of books sent here to the prison with spurious reasonings from security.

10. Lack of a functioning complaint service, wilfully obstructive replies to complaints from the regime admins, and complaint forms are usually always unavailable, meaning there's a compounded failure of the complaint service. There is a lack of oversight or recourse to complaints, and this antagonizes the guys, increasing tensions on the wing.

11. The systemic problems with mail, with it not being collected from the wings and not being given out, with arbitrary censorship and a refusal from the regime to explain the censorships, and a denial that prisoners even have post. All mail is photocopied badly in black and white with no care, meaning it's often unreadable and with our photos ruined.

12. The guys couldn't call their families and friends over New Year, despite being told we could. The phone call prices are exploitative and overexpensive, and the phone's cut off overnight. British Telecom is making a lot of money from this.

13. Poor choices in the prison canteen, expensive or without stock, lack of provision of fresh products, lack of range. The prison servery has no variety. There are few choices. Poor quality, the servery takes too long, is disorganized. It leads to tensions and queue jumping, and there are no decent vegan choices or products in the canteen or servery. There's no affordability and no chickpeas, lentils, nuts, and so on.

14. Guys are brought to Garth from far away around the country, out of their area, and find it difficult to maintain external contacts and family ties. There's no public transport to the prison, and visitors are kept waiting too long with seating in cold, sparse holding areas. The visiting booking process is not functioning well. It's almost impossible to book the full allocation of visits for the guys. The visit booking phone line is almost never answered.

Some prisoners of C Wing
HMP Garth, UK
February 2024

Misc notes from.... an anti-prisons meeting, Cowley Club, Brighton, UK, 2024...

- 1. Revolutionary Solidarity by P.P., 1993**
- 2. Documents and notes on hungerstrikes**
- 3. Contribution to the meeting by Toby Shone**
- 4. A note on the dangerous role of insidious psychology**
- 5. About “anti-extremism” “anti-psychology”**
- 6. Prisoner’s report from HMP Garth**

cowley.club
brightonabc.org.uk
solidarity.international

