

## Chapter 4

# Freedom Is the Crime That Contains All Crimes

We have many friends in prison; we ourselves have been among the fucked jailbirds. This is why we have felt the wave of revolt, which began on Sunday, May 5 with the mutiny of a part of Fleury-Mérogis, coming for some time.

Prisoners could no longer tolerate the crap to which prison guards more and more openly dedicate themselves. Two specific events were probably too much:

In March, the murder of Bruno Sulak by guards after a failed escape. The liars that talk on television and write in newspapers have presented it as an accident, despite the fact that a few guards in Fleury have bragged about killing him.

At the beginning of April, a guard was punched during an escape attempt at a prison in Lyons. His colleagues responded by proclaiming a strike. A few days later, still in Lyons, some prisoners reacted to this arrogance by beating two of these shits. A national strike of all prison guards followed this. It further aggravated the unbearable conditions by eliminating the hour of air, visits and leaves (multiplying the discomforts, daily vexations and beatings that were already part of ordinary administration).

Those who speak to us of overcrowding in the prisons are the very ones who have filled them until they burst! Obviously they are turning the question upside down. For us, it is not a question of building more prisons, but of emptying those that already exist.

The need of prisoners in revolt is obvious: freedom! They don't negotiate this with the prison administration, but rather start to take it for themselves: climbing up on the roof is freedom snatched from the state. "Let's take air," they exclaim. For a few hours they can chat, protected from indiscreet ears, dialogue with their comrades outside over the walls, insult and throw roof tiles at the dirty skunks who oppress them, and finally talk about themselves. Here they are, the real free conversations!

The prison administration and the media attribute the revolt of Fleury-Mérogis to a handful of political militants (specifically of *Action Directe*) who, preoccupied with their notoriety, have always participated in this lie, not stopping these statements. All these liars had already done the same thing during the hunger strike proclaimed in Fleury at the end of 1984. Let's abandon the

militants to their lying, wooden language. . .

But there has been real solidarity among prisoners (at Bois D’Arcy, prisoners in the cells were ready to wreck everything if those on the roof were evicted. This is why the GIGN<sup>1</sup> did not intervene and the others were able to remain in the open air for about forty hours, fed by their comrades in confinement. Meanwhile in Bastia, a hunger strike was announced in solidarity with the rebels in other prisons). The same solidarity has been expressed outside as well. On May 19 in Montpellier, a group of people lined up on the side of the prisoners in revolt and attacked the cops from behind. The cops dispersed them by unleashing dogs on them. The main concern of the prisoners has been that of communicating with the outside, shouting their protests against imprisonment, the daily terror that is exercised against them. “They want to kill us.” “They gas us, they cudgel us.” These are the things that could be read on the banners at Bois d’Arcy.

Prisoners take an enormous risk when they rebel. Everyone knows beforehand that the prison administration will immediately make them pay dearly for this: with custodial sentences, the suppression of sentence reductions<sup>2</sup>, transfers, beatings, murders disguised as suicides. In Douai, three prisoners (one of whom was supposed to be released in June) had climbed onto the roof and demonstrated their rebellion by throwing down roof tiles. As soon as they came down, an emergency tribunal condemned them to 15 months and 6 months additional time without parole. This sentence was intended to be exemplary.

The anxiety engendered by repressive terror, and the despair of returning to the oppressive isolation of the prison, are so present even in the moment of rebellion that some of the prisoners turned against themselves, mutilating themselves. In Fleury and Montpellier, some prisoners took possession of some barbiturates and gulped them down, smashing everything in their path. Twenty-five of them were seriously poisoned. Others slashed their wrists, calling on their comrades to do likewise. One of them died. Meanwhile several prisoners in different yards hanged themselves. At this very moment, in St. Paul in Lyons, some prisoners try to mutilate or hang themselves every day.

“Freedom is the crime that contains all crimes,” and it is against this crime that the old world defends itself. The state is physically eliminating all the beautiful young people who aren’t resigned — the same young people who die, murdered by cops or reactionary pro-cop vigilantes. The state buries those that the law can trap alive in its prisons as long as possible while terrorizing those who manage to stay outside. For these, it pays educators and other pests to demoralize them and make them forget their comrades in jail. . .

Poor neighborhoods on the outskirts<sup>3</sup> are emptied of their youth, while prisons fill up. This is the secret of overcrowding. The state’s lackeys would like us to believe that it is a budgeting problem! Overcrowding is supposed to be caused by a malfunctioning of the prison system, but it is actually a result of the optimal functioning of the judicial system.

Obviously, the only way to deal with overcrowding in prisons is to empty

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<sup>1</sup>Groupe d’Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale: an autonomous special division (used in riots, seizures, . . .) subordinate to the Ministry.

<sup>2</sup>Another clever con: sentence reductions are actually increases in the sentences of those who stand up for themselves. Judges calculate sentences in terms of potential concessions. If they want a prisoner locked up for nine months, they sentence him to a year.

<sup>3</sup>In the big cities of France, poor neighborhoods tend to be comprised of horrendous projects built in the suburban outskirts of the cities, in an attempt to make the poor invisible in the city centers. — WL

them, as the rioters in Fleury maintained — on this point they couldn't have been clearer. In a declaration signed by “the six hundred leaders”, they opposed the building of new prisons. On the other hand, the prisoners in Montpelier furnished a concrete solution to overcrowding. They destroyed almost all the cells!

The prisoners are rebelling against the justice system and, more specifically, against the kidnapping that is portrayed and preventive detention — which officially condemns people to an indefinite confinement that is later confirmed if not increased at the trial. Moreover, we are reminded of the movement that sent collective demands for provisional liberty in Lyons at the beginning of summer in 1984.<sup>4</sup>

As long as there have been prisons, everything prisoners have gotten they conquered by risking their lives in revolt. In some instances, they were able to impose a breach in the prison regime.

What prisoners manage to grab by force and at the cost of blood, the prison administration later gnaws away again, using improvements of prison conditions as a means of blackmail.

The guards have the task of persecuting the least bit of freedom in every gesture of daily life. The deprivation of freedom is refined every day in the constant, sadistic abuse of these pigs. In prison, freedom is even the choice to remain seated, asleep or standing when one wants to.

Since the time of Peyrefitte and Badinter<sup>5</sup>, if the state proposes a program of reform, it is solely to prevent the risk of an explosion and certainly not for humanitarian reasons.

Prisoners no longer demand reform; they have suffered its reality. The application of each reform depends on the good will of the prison administration and the guards. What was presented as a benefit becomes a further degradation.

“Free conversations” are even refused by some, because what one has to submit to in order to get these visits is so humiliating.

Though in appearance the death penalty has been abolished and no longer is part of the legal code, it has in fact become more common and democratized. It is now carried out by a mob of reactionary vigilantes and cops, while in prisons the guards do it.

In the same way, the suppression of the QHS (maximum security wings) was a humanitarian bluff (supported by the left). The best example of this opportunistic attitude was when they used a humanitarian campaign to release Knobelpiess, who had denounced the horrors of the QHS, and then, when they were done using him, did not hesitate to lock him back up.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Since in France, the judges who receive demands for provisional liberty from prisoners awaiting trial must respond in five days in order to prevent the prisoner from being released, a collective action of this sort can clog up the system, leading to the release of some of the prisoners. However in this instance the judges got together to guarantee that didn't happen.

<sup>5</sup>Two former French Ministers of justice.

<sup>6</sup>Special attention should be given to the unbearable situation of condemned prisoners who have been locked up in solitary confinement, or those like Knobelpiess who are still there, those who the prison administration particularly harasses in order to make them pay a high price for never having submitted to the prison regime. We cite the case of Charlie Bauer, sentenced to twenty years inside in 1962 for burglary. He was released on parole in 1976 after long experience in the QHS. He was imprisoned again with a five-year sentence for receipt of stolen goods, with an additional six years for breaking parole. He probably won't be able to leave until 1990. Bauer fought against the QHS, where he met Jacques Mesrine [a well-known French bank robber, who the authorities couldn't manage to keep locked up. In his later

As a special regime of isolation, the QHS was never suppressed. They simply changed the name. It is now called QI (isolation quarters). In 1983, a new prison called “Les Godets” opened near Nevers. It is intended for imprisoning convicts who are considered particularly dangerous. It can hold eighty prisoners in an extremely harsh surveillance regime.

Furthermore, the administration and the guards want to extend QHS conditions to the entirety of the prison. The number of isolation cells has increased. The DPS (specially watched prisoner) statute is applied more and more. Punishment cells are increasingly filled. With greater frequency, the prison administration reserves the right to inflict more special punishments and sanctions on the basis of the tension that reigns in prison. Abuse and beatings are the order of the day. It drives prisoners to suicide or allows murder to pass for suicide. There are no natural deaths in prison; those who succumb, die of prison. Murder is called “accidental death” — like Mohammed Rhabi in Rouen and Bruno Sulak in Fleury, who guards killed during an escape attempt; like Alain Pinol in Fresnes, killed by the cops. Prisoners’ suicides are all murders committed by the prison administration that gladly provides you with the rope for hanging yourself. And if there are more and more suicides (at least twenty since the beginning of the year), it means that living conditions inside are increasingly intolerable.

An additional pressure is exercised against condemned immigrants. Along with prison, they can suffer a second penalty: deportation. And it even goes so far that, after having served their sentence, they continue to rot in prison for months before the deportation procedures are completed.

To finish with Badinter’s famous reforms, his latest gift, the TIF [a work program mentioned above] has been a fine load of shit. One can already predict that new accused prisoners awaiting trial will quickly fill the cells emptied by the TIG. This modern version of forced labor is not at all preferable to prison — so little so that some of those convicted have refused it.

All those who demand rights in prison (prisoner’s unions) are far behind the prisoners’ movement of revolt, because prisoners can only impose their demands through violence, risking their own lives. “Union battles will be carried out within the law and through the law, by prosecuting all abuses before the qualified authorities”: this is the program of prisoner’s unions. . .

We have already seen what unions are on the outside. They only serve to channel and domesticate people’s rebellion, in reforms aimed at prettifying misery. Furthermore, they are used to stifle the real demands that the poor spontaneously think up in their struggle.

Prisoners no longer fight for reforms that they now know were mere illusions. Rather than placing themselves on the abstract terrain of rights, they can demand something that will at least have a concrete result — a general reduction of punishments.

It’s a question of demanding:

### A Reduction Of Punishments

#### For All Those Convicted.

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days he explicitly fought against the state and the prison system. Since they couldn’t keep him caged, the French authorities shot him down — WL]. This was something the prison administration couldn’t forgive.

The Release Of All Prisoners Awaiting Trial.

The Definitive Stopping Of All

Deportation Measures.

And, of course,

The Cancellation Of All Sanctions

Against The Rebels

The demand for the release of those awaiting trial is more than a specific demand relating to prison. It is not so much addressed to the state or the prison administration, as to all the poor for whom preventive detention is a sword of Damocles hanging over their heads every day. It is a challenge launched against this society that resounds in the minds of all those who have decided not to submit.

Judicial and prison questions almost always remain private matters in which each one is powerless in his isolation. Both the one on the inside, awaiting her trial, and the one outside, who has a friend in prison and can often do nothing more than to help out financially or pay her a visit. The rebels have put forth some practical demands that aim, at the minimum, at getting the greatest number of people out. These demands form a prisoners' offensive against their isolation and an appeal to those on the outside to act concretely to break it. It's a question of bringing pressure to bear against this society, of shitting on this world with its prisons that would prefer not to hear about them.

OS CANGACEIROS

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