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BY SPANISH PRISONER
XOSÉ TARRIO GONZALEZ

Xosé Tarrío Gonzalez spent 16 years imprisoned in Spain, most of these years in isolation under the FIES regime. He responded to the brutal circumstances of prison with dignity and courage. He became involved in riots, hunger strikes and hostage taking in order to draw attention to and change the callous treatment the prison administration deemed fit to rehabilitate those defined as criminals. He was an active member of the group APRE ('Association of Prisoners under Special Regime'), which sought to make the country aware of the vicious realities of the prison system.

Xosé Tarrío suffered from AIDS, and struggled to change laws so that prisoners with incurable diseases could be released during the middle stages of illness. He consistently demonstrated his solidarity with those around him, helping to build a resistance movement in violent and depressing circumstances.

On January 2, 2005, Xosé Tarrío Gonzalez died in prison, not from AIDS, but from all that he fought against: isolation, torture, lack of medical attention and separation from loved ones.

The following texts are excerpts from the book "Huye, Hombre, Huye" written by Xosé Tarrío Gonzalez while imprisoned in Spain. He writes of escape plans, struggle inside prison, suffering and strength. His words expose painful details of a life behind bars. His book was first published in 1997 and is currently being translated into English.

For Further Reading:

Prison was Created for the Poor
Mothers & Sons: From FIES to Aachen

Available from Guelph ABC

radio interview, but because we held some public legitimacy that could cost her votes. The insincerity of this political pachyderm was insulting, so we decided to continue on with the kidnapping and the demands. We gathered up blankets and covered the windows so as to make it impossible for them to observe us or for a sniper to get a shot at us. It was a question of nerves. We knew that in the end we would have to surrender, but not before getting the necessary publicity to make our demands known to the outside and over the airwaves, to the other prisons where other companions could take their own measures.



In the isolation unit of Tenerife everything continued the same. We didn't know it but we were to be the first to be subjected to the FIES regime and they prepared to transfer us to jails in Badajoz and Valladolid. Several nights, bored, Juan entertained himself with the guards inside the sentry box guarding the unit.

"Surrender!," he shouted at them underneath the cell door, "put down your clubs and handcuffs, we have you surrounded!"

I then joined in and helped him out.

"Open the door and come out with your hands up you crooks!"

We would break out laughing. These moments of humour helped us in a notable way to overcome the isolation that we were being subjected to, with the exclusion of the exercise hour. We spent twenty days without leaving these dungeons whose iron slabs only opened to give us food and always in the presence of a large group of guards armed with clubs and iron bars. In these circumstances, the act of constant rebellion and the company we were both dedicated to, full of humour and words of encouragement, constituted our only possession in life, together with a pair of saws and the hope of leaving this hateful insensitive underworld.



I went into the cell and took all my books and other materials I had on the table and put them on the bed with all my clothes. Then I sat on the table. Some guards, wearing their plastic gloves started to search through my possessions while others searched the windows from outside. One of them talked to me from the other side of the window.

"Are these clothes dry?" he asked, pointing at the boxers.

I took my things in hand and answered him. "No, they're still damp. Why do you ask?"

"Because you can't hang things on the windows."

"I didn't know."

"Ok, but from now on dry them in your cell alright?"

"Yes sir."

I had soaked them that morning before leaving the cell. For now I was in the clear. The following night I acted. I hung a towel between the bars to block the view of the Guardia Civil sentries in front. Once it was covered I started working on the side of the bar that wasn't cut. I pulled it in above the bed and slid myself outside through the hole in the window. Then I went forward, crouching down until I reached a small wire fence which I got over quickly and skilfully. From there I went down the stairs of the entrance unit and, after jumping over a wall, towards the infirmary in the centre, across several gardens. There in the infirmary I climbed onto the roof of the entrance and from there onto the low roofs towards the centre and onto the high roof. I slid like a reptile towards the bridge area until I was underneath it. I had to jump on top of it and drag myself about 60 metres to the one place it was possible to jump without breaking my feet. I waited about half an hour and taking advantage of an error of the Guardia Civil provoked by the patrol car which did the rounds on the outside of the walls I jumped to the ground without being seen, hitting the right hand side of the gangway. Once there I opened my mouth slowly. I was in full view of the guard on the left, hoping for the luck of another oversight. Some minutes later it came. The guard turned his back on the bridge to look around at the grounds and the barracks. I continued on without hesitating with the taste of escape in my mouth and with my heart pounding a possessed rhythm. I had cleared the grounds and below me was the countryside. There was only a few metres to go to regain my freedom.

"If you move I'll kill you like a dog you bastard," shouted a guard, aiming his gun at my head. He had come up the bridge from the first checkpoint before I had time to react.

"I have it under control," he shouted to his mocking companions who now pointed their guns at my back. I wanted to die. Several floodlights lit up my position illuminating me kneeling on the concrete with my hands on my head,

beaten and desolate. Hours later I was transferred again to the unit and put in one of the cells. I felt despair for the moment that had escaped me. I had calculated it all well but hadn't known that there was a hidden camera on the first checkpoint which looked over all the bridge and it had detected my last movements. They had fucked me. It would be a long time before I had an opportunity like this again. The director of the prison ordered me into isolation. Again I had to walk on the yard alone. I got bitter with them, shouting insults constantly for no real reason. I took out on them all the frustration and impotence I felt trapped in this absurdity.



I left the kitchen and went to see the hostages. Among them there was a psychologist, two teachers, three guards, some assistants and two eighteen-year old guys, one a waiter and one a sports assistant. It would be very difficult for them to assault us with so many hostages. Tenerife was a small island and soon their families were at the door of the jail.

The administration thought a lot about the timing of the assault. It was curious, but now that my beast had arisen they all clamoured for reason and humanity. Now that the violence came from us, everyone wanted to talk. They left us to die in prison without any care except for isolation and batons, murdering us democratically without consideration and then they ask us for humanity when they had remained arrogant and unapproachable at the time of sentencing. What humanity did these people deserve, who lacked fundamental feelings in their hearts where there was only room for a bunch of keys which still echoed with the screams of men being beaten in punishment cells. They deserved to be stripped, and after being handcuffed, given a good beating so that they suffer in their flesh the fruit of their honourable work as society's executioners.

We would ponder this at the height of the standoff. Between us and them there existed important differences, it was easy enough to abuse a naked handcuffed man when you had the power. It was difficult to not do it. It was more noble. No, we would not harm them, except if the police tried an assault and this they knew. It is in these moments that those who have power over others become as they are. Whoever is a brute, acts like a brute, whoever is stupid acts as is necessary, whoever is noble, acts nobly, whoever is sadistic, inevitably with sadism; the nature of people is no more than what manifests itself. For us, simply, reaching this moment, we act with a purpose against a counterpurpose, without revenge.

An hour later we freed the blonde girl who I had given my word for and thanked the doctors for the good treatment they had given me. Also we took off the ropes of the rest, allowing them to go to the washroom if they needed to. I took charge of watching the hostages while Juan took charge of negotiations, which were going nowhere. They didn't want to make the demands public because of their importance. We then asked to negotiate with the deputy of United Left, Cristina Almeida, who was responding to the situation on the radio. She asked us to release the hostages and put an end to our protest, alluding to democracy and reason. It was a deception. She was not helping us and not because we didn't possess as much reason as she had brandished in her