God gave Noah the rainbow sign—No more water, the fire next time.
Anarchists need to actively expose this process of deliberate manipulation. Our solidarity with prisoners cannot depend upon concepts of amnesty, nonviolence, or negotiation.
The Strike!
On the Georgia Prison Rebellion of 2010

The following is reprinted from a longer article in issue 11 of Fire to the Prisons, a North American anarchist magazine. Though generally directed at a broader audience, we hope that it can generate discussion with regard to the role of prison solidarity on the outside.

The reality for decades. But the thing that pushed many over the edge was a statewide smuggling ban in all prisons that was to be set in place on January 1st of this year. A truly 'bread and roses' moment.

Organizers spent months building a web of divergent factions and gangs — groups not known to cooperate — into a mostly unified coalition using text messaging and word of mouth. The strike was scheduled for December 9th, and was only to last the one day. It ended up lasting 6 days with thousands of participants. Prisoners refused to work, participate in activities, or leave their cells, forcing the prison administration to 'lock down' many facilities. A man at Hays State Prison in Trion, GA was quoted as saying "We're hearing in the news they're putting it down as we're starting a riot, so they locked all the prisons down." But, he said, "We locked ourselves down."
The wants and desires of those involved with this strike must be treated as serious. That is not to say that there has not been a widening of a fissure, to exploring the capacity of organizing on the inside. To make such demands, even in the reality that they will never be actualized, is a step forward in the possibility of prison revolt generalizing past the walls it wishes to destroy.

The tools available to those incarcerated in this country are few. Their bodies and the capacity of disrupting imposed order are some of the only options afforded to them. Whether against guards, prosecutors, officers, or management, prisoners are able to see from the administration, violence is a well-worn tool in these battles. Often when prisoners decide to stand in defiance of their captors they are faced with physical and emotional repression. The 45 dead at Attica in 1971; the 5 dead at Alcatraz in 1946, those dead at Lucasville in 1993 and thousands of others are testament to the danger of prison life. The fact that prisons are not a skill that the US anarchist movement has managed to master.

It often falls short of the simplest goal of merely 'supporting' those incarcerated or faced with incarceration. The Anarchist Black Cross communities that once dotted the US have fallen to the internal power battles that has plagued the discourse for years. Of the few prisoner support organizations that still remain, most have dedicated themselves to a charity-oriented role. Mailing pamphlets and books to prisoners has too often taken the place of creating friendships and building affinity with those on the inside. Many anarchists in the US would rather "educate" prisoners rather than organize or facilitate more radical and theoretical frameworks necessary to grow multiple entry points for a diversity of "movements," all capable of attacking prisons from multiple angles.

Prison revolt does not fit well into a utilitarian or "campaign-based" approach. If one understands the purpose a prison riot is to be the winning of demands, it is clear that prisoners almost always lose. The point of the strike was not to win, but to build the movement. Revolution on the short term generally ends with more punishment and violence, not less. Perhaps this explains why the gradual, movement-building approach of...
A Little at a Time

One of the brothers here at H-Con (Super-Max) let me see the first issue of your magazine. I wish to first thank you and commend you for providing a voice for NC prisoners. Thank you!

Secondly, I think a word of caution is warranted in that you may want to consider the wording of the letters published. I do not advocate censorship, but if the DOC reads material they feel promotes violence, insurrection, riots, etc. they will ban this publication. Having an outlet for our voices does us no good if we can’t receive it. Please print my letter in the next issue if you can.

I have been in this system for 17-plus years now and want to share a few observations I’ve made concerning the state we currently find ourselves in...

There are probably many more things that can be added and all of my dates may not be correct, but they’re close enough to see what they did; one “small” thing at a time was taken every year or so. If anyone or a few raised hell...straight to lock-up. Let everyone calm down a year or so, transfer any instigators around and all of my dates may not be correct, but they’re close enough to see what they did; one “small” thing at a time was taken every year or so. If anyone or a few raised hell...straight to lock-up. Let everyone calm down a year or so, transfer any instigators around and then take another “small” thing.

No, they are not stupid. If they had taken all of that at one time they knew they’d have hell to pay. So they played our asses like a fiddle at a time.

There’s more on the way in the near future. What are we doing to do about it? We piss and moan about other states having hot plates in their cells, TVs in their cells, personal computers, ice chests in their cells, being able to spend $50 or $100 at a time in the canteen, having numerous religious rights/ceremonies, care packages from home, etc...Hell, we couldn’t keep what we had, so not many raised hell over losing their radios and those few that did went to lock-up. That was the start, but then:

1996 - No smoking on lock-up
1997 – No more food from home at Christmas
1998 – No more shoes from the street
1999 – No more TV and canteen food on lock-up
2000 – No more breakfast meals on lock-up
2000 – No more watches and jewelry from the street
2001 – No more nude photos/magazines
2000-2001 – All prisons go cash-free
2009 – No more microwaves in Close Custody Canteens or cell blocks
2010 – No more free weights in Close Custody
2010 – No more tobacco in prisons

What I didn’t know then is that PERT is a paramilitary group. They train in preparation for quelling riots and insurrections, handling work stoppages, hostage situations, and so forth. Anyone who is a member of PERT is always on call. When the alert goes out, it goes out to all PERT members throughout the state. They receive their instructions and convene in units to pre-established locations to be fully briefed on the emergency situation. When they arrive at the prison they arrive with the force of numbers and equipment.

If there was anything I learned from that riot at Polk, it was that these people are well-organized and can easily crush a rebellion if it isn’t very well-planned and coordinated. When they came through the gate on A-block, their presence alone instilled terror and restored order. I remember seeing 50 guards in full body armor lined up at the gate of A-block. The lead man had a tear gas gun. I didn’t know what it was at the time, I thought it was a bazooka! They had gas masks on and the whole nine. I thought they were going to kill us.

But they barked orders that nobody disobeyed, and made us all line up against the wall face first, and sit on our knees. They told us not to talk, not to move, not to turn our head to the side. And as a handful of them kept us like this, the rest of the guards from that unit went through the block and threw away everything. If you had personal property laying out, shoes, whatever, they threw it away. They stripped all the remaining mattresses bare and when everything was cleaned up, they called our names one at a time into the block. Uneven bunk we were assigned and even went to our bunk. It was freezing cold because we had bust out all the windows and tore up the heating system, and there were no sheets on the beds. Some people were in their boxers.

At about 9am order was fully restored, but PERT was still there. They prepared pack-outs for breakfast and pulled up buses to begin shipping people out. There were over 700 prisoners at Polk and the cap was supposed to be 335.

The media was out there, and they didn’t want us talking to the media. So some people gagged us with tape over our mouths as we were escorted from the prison. It’s crazy how my memory would be jarring almost ten years later by seeing similar images from Guantanamo Bay.

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For a minute everybody just sat there on our bunks waiting to see what would happen next. But in the next moment we heard and saw commotion over in B-Block. It was pitch black over there, because they had basted out all the lights, and the next thing you know the picnic table came crashing against the bars on B-Block, and then the TV. We knew they were rioting, and when we saw there was no immediate response by the guards other than to lock the gate, somebody yelled “Bust out the lights!” Boots began flying again until all the lights were knocked out, and then the rioting began.

We didn’t even have a cause, other than the fact that we were in prison and we just all had pent-up anger and aggression. We began to tear A-block to pieces! We busted out all the windows, tore down the heating system, broke some of the toilets, windows, tore down the heating system, broke some of the toilets, we took over the bunks, set fires to mattresses and sheets and looted peoples’ lockers. Of course there was violence. Some people got hurt really bad, but it was all prisoner-on-prisoner. And the guards wouldn’t come in to help. I saw a guy bleeding profusely with his face cut up and another beaten till he was unconscious. They grabbed onto the bars and begged the guards on the other side for help, for medical attention, but they wouldn’t open the gate for anything. They had orders.

We rioted until about 4am, and it spread throughout A-block. We saw there was no immediate response by the guards other than to lock the gate, somebody yelled “Bust out the lights!” Boots began flying again until all the lights were knocked out, and then the rioting began.

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We rioted until about 4am, and it spread throughout the whole prison. We took over the PA system and we were making announcements over the intercom to all the blocks telling them to burn the place down, tear it up, and “fuck the police.” I heard that maybe a guard got beat down on another block and prisoners had captured the keys and were running around in police raincoats. I even heard that they tore a hole in a wall that separated two blocks, and busted up the plumbing in other buildings. In A-block we fought each other, looted each other’s lockers, and tore the block to pieces.

Around 5am, the PERT [Prison Emergency Response Team] team arrived. We saw them lining up in formations outside our windows. They were like a paramilitary group, dressed in all black or navy blue and heavily armed and equipped. They looked like the same type of outfit that is assembled to break up demon-
California's overcrowded prisons are so bad that they violate the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment, the Supreme Court ruled on Monday, ordering the state to reduce its prison population by more than 30,000 inmates.

Monday's ruling in the case, Brown v. Plata, No. 09-1233, affirmed an order by a special three-judge federal court requiring state officials to reduce the prison population to 110,000, which is 137.5 percent of the system's capacity. There have been more than 160,000 inmates in the system in recent years, and there are now more than 140,000.

Prison release orders are rare and hard to obtain, and even advocates for prisoners' rights said Monday's decision was unlikely to have a significant impact around the nation.

"California is an extreme case by any measure," said David C. Fathi, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's National Prison Project, which submitted a brief urging the justices to uphold the lower court's order. "This case involves ongoing, undisputed and lethal constitutional violations. We're not going to see a lot of copycat litigation."

State officials in California will have two years to comply with the order, and they may ask for more time. Justice Kennedy emphasized that the reduction in population need not be achieved solely by releasing prisoners early. Among the other possibilities, he said, are new construction, transfers out of state and using country facilities.

At the same time, Justice Kennedy, citing the lower court decision, said there was "no realistic possibility that California would be able to build itself out of this crisis," in light of the state's financial problems.

California prisons have a recent history of tension and struggle, including a large riot in August 2009 at a facility in Chino, CA as well as a hunger strike currently under way at the segregated housing unit at Pelican Bay.

If this is true, it would suggest not just that the mailroom guard is stealing money from inmates' accounts, but that there is a financial incentive for guards to censor material and violate prisoners' first amendment rights.

"A Letter to the Law"

Dem boy wanna talk like dem wanna gon come
But what you gon' do if you got one gun?
I sing a song for the hero unsung
With faces on the mural of the revolution
No looking back, cousin, Back is what's done
Tell the preacher that God got more than one son
Tell the law my Uzi weighs a ton
I walk like a warrior from them I won't run
On the streets they try to beat us like a drum
In Cincinnati, another brother hung
Again he won't see the sun, with his family stung
They want us to hold justice, but you've handed me none

Supreme Court Tells California to Cut Prison Population

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An Update on the Ashevile 11

By some and Beltane by others, May 1st is an internationally celebrated holiday. The history of resistance on this day goes back primarily to the labor movement of the late 1800's and early 1900's. In the United States this day has seen many different incarnations and uses, from protests and celebrations to strikes and sabotage. On May 1, 2010 nearly $20,000 worth of damage was done to store front and car windows in a gentrified tourist section of downtown Asheville. The connection between this vandalism and "May Day" is unclear. Nevertheless, the Asheville Police Department wasted no time in arresting eleven people and charging them with the damage. Picketed at random, the eleven were swept off sidewalks and into waiting police vehicles. They have become the targets of egregious attempts by the Asheville Police Department to show it maintains control.

What began as ten misdemeanor charges and $10,000 bail was quickly ratcheted up to $65,000 bail with an additional $10,000 bail for each of the eleven individuals. The police have said that $20,000 worth of damage was done to store front and car windows in a gentrified tourist section of downtown Asheville. The connection between this vandalism and "May Day" is unclear. Nevertheless, the Asheville Police Department wasted no time in arresting eleven people and charging them with the damage. Picketed at random, the eleven were swept off sidewalks and into waiting police vehicles. They have become the targets of egregious attempts by the Asheville Police Department to show it maintains control.

There have been some major developments in the case: Chief publicly declaring the arrested individuals to be part of a "vast anti-capitalist conspiracy." Each are facing over five years in jail; a higher penalty than is often found in domestic violence cases. The arrestees were charged nearly a year ago and still have not gone to trial.

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On Saturday, March 12th, about two dozen comrades and supporters of the prisoners amassed outside Bertie CI in Windsor, NC, a prison facing a tense upsurge in radical thought and action. They submitted to prison authorities:

• That we ‘had weapons’ and that his goons entered my cell, tackled me and held me down while I didn’t know that refusing to come out of your cell was causing a disturbance. Once they saw we weren’t coming out, they left. When they returned, it was the Captain along with his goons who had an electric shield and a mace canister the size of a fire extinguisher. They came to my cell first and told me to ‘submit to the cuffs’ and come out of my cell. They received no reply. One of the guards opened my food trap and sprayed mace in my cell and closed my trap hoping that would force me to come out willingly. It didn’t work. Next, they did the same thing again and it was unsuccessful too. Then, the Captain called the guard in the control booth to open my door and flooding others joined in and escalated the response by setting fires.

• That we not be treated like animals and that we ‘had weapons’ and that his goons entered my cell, tackled me and held me down while I didn’t know that refusing to come out of your cell was causing a disturbance. Once they saw we weren’t coming out, they left. When they returned, it was the Captain along with his goons who had an electric shield and a mace canister the size of a fire extinguisher. They came to my cell first and told me to ‘submit to the cuffs’ and come out of my cell. They received no reply. One of the guards opened my food trap and sprayed mace in my cell and closed my trap hoping that would force me to come out willingly. It didn’t work. Next, they did the same thing again and it was unsuccessful too. Then, the Captain called the guard in the control booth to open my door and flooding others joined in and escalated the response by setting fires.

• That address our basic human rights. Once they received the list of demands, they sent the Unit Manager, Asst. Unit Manager, Captain, and the Intelligence Lieutenant (he deals with prisoners who are labeled as being part of a Security Threat Group) to our doors to speak to us and ask us if we had any food trays, but neither of us answered and they left. The captain summoned his lil’ ‘goon squad,’ and he came to our cells again, this time accompanied by a guard holding a camera, giving us a direct order to come out of our cells. He received no reply. He stated on the camera that we ‘had weapons’ and that his goons would come and extract us from our cells ‘to restore order.’

• I was then thrown in a shower – with the water on – for about five or six minutes, taken to see the nurse for a check-up and placed in a cage. They also ran my comrade’s cell, but I don’t have the exact details.

• We had the chance to speak to the Superintendent, Asst. Superintendent, Captain, Intelligence Lieutenant, Unit Manager, and Asst. Unit Manager. In meeting with them, we went down our list of demands and addressed every demand. This is what I was told in response to these demands:

  • A new chaplain will be starting on 3/28/11 who will come around and visit the prisoners. Also, they will be making sure there are materials for all religions and no specific religion will be shown favoritism.

  • Lack of nurses has been the reason for inadequate medical care and in timely responses to medical emergencies. More nurses are in the process of being hired.

  • More dental staff are in the process of being hired as well. The dental board issue wasn’t discussed.

  • I was told to contact a woman in the Education Department about starting up some educational programs for prisoners in solitary.

  • We were told to contact Raleigh about the publications ban list.

  • I was told we would be given toilet brushes during cell clean-up—and we have been.

• Maintenance would be contacted to make sure the temperatures are correct, and to clean the vents out.

• The food will be served according to the dietary charts in Raleigh. Basically, no change.

• More nurses are in the process of being hired. The only thing to fear is fear itself and the only thing to lose is these chains.”