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Interview with Laudelino Iglesias

**Organised prisoners' struggle against the FIES in
Spain**

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Laudelino spent 25 years in prison between October 1980 and August 2004. Of those 25 years, he spent 13 in isolation. He inaugurated the archive for internal prisoners under special observation in the FIES, in 1991.

Sal Haketa — *Today we would like to ask you about the organised movement of resistance that several prisoners have taken part in in recent years, denouncing the conditions of imprisonment and evaluating the evolution of this movement and its present state.*

Laudelino — Hello, in order to understand the movement of resistance within the prisons we need to go back to when Franco died in 1975. The social conditions implied that people were going from a fascist Franquist regime to a monarchic Franquist regime and then there was the political struggle of the people outside. When Franco died, there were negotiations with the prisoners who declared themselves political, there were also lots of riots on the outside, they managed to get the majority of them released, but not all of them.

S — *That was with the amnesties of 1976 and 1977?*

L — But they did not release any of the social prisoners. But it is from then on, because prison conditions were really bad, lots of torture, lots of beatings, overcrowding, the food was really bad, etc. Then people started getting organised, mainly because it was expected that if there was a change in the political regime it was supposed to be for everyone. There was supposed to be no difference between political and social prisoners. At the time the struggle wasn't only for the prison conditions to improve, but also for the amnesty of all prisoners. It was in this atmosphere that the COPEL (Coordination of prisoners in struggle) was born. There were lots of riots inside, the government did not want to grant amnesties, therefore there were riots, basi-

cally prisoners destroyed most of the prisons. Of course they were old prisons, not like the modern ones, and basically they destroyed everything inside them, but after that of course there was harsh repression. The police came in and beat a lot of people up, there were fatalities. Then they got all of those whom they thought were leaders and took them to Herrera de la Mancha. They punished the COPEL movement very severely; this precipitated a period between 1978 and 1985 where only a few people were active because everybody knew the consequences of being involved with the COPEL movement. To punish and repress not only the activist prisoners, but also all other prisoners, so they do not move a finger. COPEL continued in clandestinity but with just a few people. Then with the Penitentiary Organic Law of 1978 the special regime was applied within the entire 1st grade.

S — *What was this regime about?*

L — The special regime consisted in that they could isolate you for as long as they wanted. In the meantime they would hold you without any communication, beating you up now and again, because since you were not able to have any communication with the outside world, not even by letter, that is, in writing, or in any other way, they could do whatever they wanted with you.

S — *These people who were living under the special regime, were living within special structures within the prisons. Is that correct?*

L — Well yes, inside the prisons at the time the special departments were the 1st grade modules where the special regime was applied, and you could stay for one, two, three, five years or never get out. It depended on your attitude inside. The people were very upset, and that is when APRE started. (Association of Prisoners in special regime). They started to struggle because the boys inside started reading the new penal code. Inside the

problem is that I go along with it very well. I think it is very important to denounce what there is inside, for people to get conscious and when I say people, I do not mean one, two, three or four, it is everybody's problem.

September 2005

human rights inside prison, which crime is that. For them it is a crime.

S — *That is what you were telling me before, that they were going against their own laws.*

L — Yes, they are breaking the law all the time, when I became aware of my rights I read article 15 of the Spanish constitution: no-one will be tortured or suffer ill treatment. I was shocked. Is this the Spanish Constitution! Is this possible? Here they are torturing us everyday, they are beating us, how could that be? How could it be possible that these people could have such a nerve? They are systematically breaking their own laws and in fact, well, when I talk to people, I think that a very important step is to oblige them to respect their own laws. That would be a very important step. Because a lot of prisoners would benefit from it. That would be an important step, then if we want to go further, well, that step will then be very important, because a lot of prisoners would benefit, lots of prisoners would get released, conditions inside would be a bit better, and that they treat you at least as a person is also good. Because if you feel like you are nobody they can do whatever they want with you. It is a feeling that leaves you feeling very bad. And on top of that, nothing happens to them. It is a very important step, that they respect their own laws. Mainly human rights within the prisons. This will be a very important point. And then, all the other rights that are legislated, that are contemplated by law, for them to respect them the same. A lot of prisoners would get released, but a lot of them, and their lives would change inside by 100%.

S — *Do you want to tell us anything else?*

L — Well, I don't know, what I would like to say is that I am really wounded, because they have hurt me a lot, but well, I am outside, I am getting over it bit by bit. But they have damaged me very much, very hard. I am really wounded, it is true, the

special regime there were norms that were not being respected. And therefore the only thing those people were doing was to claim for those rights to be respected. That was all they were doing. That was the least they could do within the situation. Their own laws were not being respected, that is why they started to denounce.

S — *What kind of revendications were they making? And what kind of collective actions?*

L — APRE mainly approached legal subjects, that is legal problems in the sense that the penitentiary legislation be respected. Like for example, all that concerns mainly human rights and living conditions.

S — *And the collective actions, what kind of actions were they, hunger strike, patio strikes etc?*

L — Hunger strikes were mainly about petitions, the problem was that at the same time, there were some prisoners who thought that those actions were not going to have any effect. Then we thought that since our denouncements and complaints were getting nowhere, and the guards and judges were not paying any attention to us, then our only way to call attention was to rebel. That is why GAPEL was formed (Armed Group of prisoners in struggle) that was going on at the same time as the APRE. Then the people from GAPEL, of course we did not want to stay in prison because we were really bad, we were mainly trying to escape, freedom was our main priority. Our only aim was freedom. Why could we not get it? Then we barricaded ourselves in with hostages, and negotiated. One of the main demands was first that they did not put their hands on us again, that there be no physical repression and, secondly, that all subjects about the penitentiary legislation that were not respected be looked at. They had to respect their own laws. Then well, GAPEL started, I was in GAPEL, I was with other comrades kidnapping, starting

riots and things like that. Until ... there were so many kidnappings and riots that apparently that got the system very worried and then they applied the FIES regime. This happened in 1991, this was a very hard regime, and in fact they not only did it to punish us physically and psychologically but also and mainly to destroy the GAPEL movement. Because those in the APRE mainly focussed on written demands, they did not annoy them very much. Those they annoyed a lot were those who were causing trouble. Mainly because we wanted to escape, and to denounce through violence because we did not have any other alternative due to the prison conditions. That is when they applied the FIES regime and took all prisoners by surprise, we did not have any idea of what that regime was and it was very traumatic because of course they suddenly started doing it to a selection of people.

S — *To those of you who were causing more trouble?*

L — Yes, they made special listings. First they got us all together in Badajoz, then in Seville, and later in El Dueso in Cantabria. And then, well, they kept us three months without going out of our cells at all.

S — *How many of you? Around 150?*

L — Yes, more or less, split between the three prisons we were around 150 prisoners. Well, a daily change of cells, and they would not take us to the exercise yard for anything. We were inside the cells all naked, because they forced us to wear overalls, then, because we did not want to wear them, we were all naked. Then the only thing that they allowed us to have in the cell was a mattress but without the foam or anything. On the floor because there was no bed or anything, and a toothbrush that they cut the handle off.

S — *Cut in half so you could not use it as a weapon.*

L — Then, well yes, I think it is outrageous what they are doing with him. And well, I don't know if it's possible to get him out, now he's on trial, they still have not reached a conclusion.

S — *There is still no sentence, but for example, what do you think would happen if Gabriel was to go back to Spain, because the country has asked for the extradition.*

L — When he gets back to Spain? When he gets back to Spain they are going to keep on torturing him, they are going to keep him isolated to see if he somehow, well dies, whether from a sickness or from a beating. I think they want to assassinate him and they will not stop until they manage it. If they take him back to Spain he does not have a chance, he had it very bad and he is going to keep on having it very bad. And if he managed to get out because of the support around him that he was having at the moment, because I found it incredible that they gave him a permit. You see, when there is a real support, you see... And well, the guy took advantage, he did not go back and well, fucking great, but now, they got him again. He was inside his story, his fight, he had that accident and well.

S — *In the end, what the State really hates is people like Gabriel, that is again in a very difficult situation, and even still, he keeps on writing, he keeps on denouncing, and he keeps on having his own ideas.*

L — That is why they punish you more when you are in prison, for your attitude inside, it is not for what you have done, in the end what have you done, nothing. You start asking yourself, what have I done for all this. I've done nothing for fuck's sake. At the end of the day there are four inside that have done much more and they are not paying anything. They punish your attitude inside prison, if they think it is, if they see you go against the system and that you are against them, well look for defending

kidnapped by the system, the system had me kidnapped, not for what I was, but for what I had become at that moment, and for what I was doing inside the prison. That is why instead of 9 years, they made me pay nearly 25. And well, now I know what the State is, I know what repression is, I know why they apply repression, I know a lot of things. Now I am aware, and I have read several writers, political texts, mainly anarchists, the ones that I most liked, now I have my own ideas.

S — *Maybe with the experience of being a prisoner, mainly in that atmosphere like yourself, one of the few things that is positive is getting to know a few people. Other comrades that have common struggle with you, and mainly we could talk about Gabriel Pombo da Silva, who is on trial at the moment in Aachen.*

L — Yes I did get to know him, they have also been very unfair with him and well, apparently he managed in Nanclares de la Oca, with the support that he had from the outside, he managed to get a permit to go out, the man never came back. Well, it's normal, how are you going to go back to get tortured, would you? Now from what I have heard they got him in Germany, and that the conditions there are really horrible. Apparently it was an accident, well, I do not know exactly what happened with the guy. But what is clear to me is that he did not go back to prison. Why? Because how is anyone going to go back to get tortured, that is why he escaped, in fact he had tried while he was inside several times, he also was always trying to escape. And well, I believe he got to Germany and there was a problem, I do not know what happened, but well, it was an accident within his struggle, and well, he's been unlucky because now they've got him again and he has it really bad, I heard the same or worse than in the Spanish FIES 1, 2 or regime.

S — *It is another kind of torture, white torture, more psychological than physical?*

L — Well, a weapon..., but well. They cut the toothbrush, one of those toothbrushes that are common in prison because it was given by the institution and a plastic spoon, a plastic tray. That was all we could have in the cell.

S — *Pen and paper?*

L — Pen and paper? I don't think so, because if I remember rightly, I believe we needed to buy it ourselves with our own money from the *economato*. Otherwise not. In those conditions we remained in isolation because they did not allow us to communicate either.

S — *Not even with the lawyers?*

L — No, not even with the lawyers, nor with family, with no-one. For about three months, the thing was that even in those conditions we were doing whatever actions we could. Then some of the riots were made public and then of course they had to take what was going on into the light. What the FIES regime was, nobody knew and it took us all by surprise and well, bit by bit, we started to have visits with the family only. We would go out to visits handcuffed, that is, with lots of guards, always with lots of armed guards and you were handcuffed behind and they would force you to wear the boiler suit so you'd have to wear it if you wanted to communicate. Otherwise they would not allow you, you had to wear the suit.

S — *Always when you were outside the cell you had to be handcuffed inside the prison? For the yard and for the showers?*

L — Yes, any movement or transfer outside the cell, those cells have special locks, one of those security doors with bars, you would have to turn around, put your hands behind you, they would handcuff you and then they would open the special lock and got you out. And they would search you.

S — *With shoes or flip-flops?*

L — At that time we were without anything, bare feet. Then when we started to protest, we got them to return our clothes, we got them to give us our radios and bit by bit we managed to make them give us our belongings because they had confiscated them all. They would not even give us pen and paper, so that we could not denounce them. We wanted pen and paper to be able to denounce but they would not give it to us. That is nothing. They had us completely isolated and as they wanted. They did not want anyone from outside to know what was going on, that is why they would not give you any of that. And well, then it was that they got us all together. When they first applied the regime they did not have a physical structure for those who were going to go to the FIES regime, not like it is now, simply what they wanted at that moment was to kidnap us, get us all together in mainly three prisons and hold us there for some time while they were preparing the FIES modules. Those are small modules, completely automated, automatic doors, control cameras everywhere, microphones everywhere, you could not, you cannot have any physical contact with the guards. Everything is through bars, everything is through latrines and security windows.

S — *Completely inhuman.*

L — Yes, then until those modules were done, they were doing them very quickly, they kept us all together and in very bad conditions, that is really bad, because we could not hear any news, we could not hear the radio or anything, we began to think that maybe there was a coup d'état, maybe there had been a coup d'état and now they wanted to execute us. They kidnapped us, we could not be in contact with anyone. Maybe that's that, one by one they are going to shoot us, what do I know.

S — *Thinking that the Death Penalty was back.*

very aware, I did not even know how to write a letter, well, I did know how to write, but I did not know how to write a letter, where to put the address or the return address, or any of those things, I had never written a letter. And I did not know what my rights were. And also I went in in the 80s, with all the mutinies/riots from the COPEL, all prisons were basically destroyed. Then I was there, I was sent to Malaga prison and I was tripping, completely shocked, because since prisons were destroyed inside, they would have us sleeping in groups of 60 or 70 blokes in a space for 15 or 20, so we were really overcrowded. And well, there, with time I was getting more and more interested in my rights, I started getting hold of the penal code, first thing I learned was how to make claims to the institution, because when you are inside, every time that you want to ask for something, you need to do a written claim. Therefore I started by doing the written claims and then I was getting to learn which article I needed to mention to make such or such a claim, because when you do not base your claims on the articles, they will get thrown out straight away, they will not reply to you. So bit by bit I started by reading the Penal Code, penal legislation, the penal code, the constitution, and everything. And I was shocked. Fuck we had all those rights? That could not be, how can it be possible that we had all those rights, because they do not respect any of them. That was the first shock. You start writing, and then I started going around with people that had been inside for longer than myself. They tell you about escapes, it is normal, the people who were inside were there for a long time, and in prison the conditions are really bad. And then the people who are trying to escape have a different mentality and then you read, you get publications, and in the end, you start becoming aware of being a prisoner. You become aware that you are a prisoner of the system. I was felt I was being

well all my life's been like that, all my life. Well, I was also involved in illegal activity, the problem is that they had been exploiting me, I was conscious that I was being exploited, and with what I was getting I could not manage, and then one way or another I needed to get some money to live on, to have my life, not that I was spending it on drugs. But well, I liked to live well, with as much dignity as possible, even though I was a kid, to have my own money, why could I not have my own money? If I had the guts to go and get it. I think it's like that, who doesn't do it because they do not have the guts or courage to do it, well, nothing, worse for him, but if you know that you can get it, I got it and that's that.

S — *The first step necessary for a movement of rebellion to happen, for a movement of resistance within the prisons, is that for the persons that are inside to become aware of their condition as prisoners, aware of the system that is oppressing them and also aware of the reasons why they are in such a condition. When did you experience this change within you and how?*

L — Well, me being aware of all that, when I was a kid, of course I was not aware of any of those things. When I was a kid I was in the Basque country, I had thrown lots of stones at the police; I had participated in lots of demos. But for me it was because it was the police, that was my reason, they were bad, they were the ones who used to arrest me, beat me up, torture me, and I did not like them, do you understand me? Also because I was stealing, and then they used to arrest me, they used to torture me, they used to do all kinds of savage things. And then of course, if I was to see that there were demos against the cops, I would go to throw stones at them, to throw them whatever, because they were cops, but I was a kid at the time, but I was not aware then about how the system works. Then when they made me a prisoner again in the 80s, well, it is not that I was

L — That there was a fascist coup d'état, Tejero's friends and company and now who knows what they want to do with us. Fuck, they were treating us very badly, the minimum was to be savagely beaten. We were all there completely naked, every day they were searching the cells, changing cells, they would not take us to the yard, that is the few rights that they give you to have a normal life, and they had taken them all away. Then with the structure of the FIES regime, what happened is that, of course, we were all always trying to escape and the FIES modules were only for no more than 4 people. They had me alone for over two months, completely alone and everywhere full of guards.

S — *I imagine the nights you spent when there were noises.*

L — Yes, as it happened when they give you a heavy beating and they kill you, then they hang you up and say that you have hanged yourself. They beat you more than they intended and if you are dead, then well, they make up the story for the public that another prisoner has hanged him/herself. Then the main objective of the FIES modules and regime was to break the movement of those who were at that moment struggling for freedom, for the revindication of human rights and freedom. And they did manage to break the whole movement because with time not only did they manage to divide us, they managed to confront us. Well, the people, if you were one of those, who tried to escape, you see that under those conditions you have no possibility of escape because you have tried but it could not be. You reach the conclusion that you are never going to be able to get out of there. Not even if they come looking for us.

S — *Very distressing.*

L — Then there is a point when people say, it is understandable, you have no other option but to swallow it, cooperate, submit, not argue with the guards, lets see if one year goes by, two years,

and they get me out of the FIES. At least if they get me out of the FIES I have a possibility to escape, but here there is none.

S — *Is that why there were lots of prisoners who tried to go to court, to go to hospitals so they could try on the way to escape?*

L — Of course, but the guards knew about that, then when you went to one of those courts, first you would not know at what time they were, not even the lawyers, they would take you in such conditions... there were guards everywhere, they would pick you up from any part of your body, barefoot, they would pick you up by the hair, they would force your head down, you could not move at all. Of course, at that time there was hardly anyone on the streets, until they got you inside the court, from the van that was doing the transfer to the court cell, well, imagine, for you not to see anything, they would take you in a very violent way, well, with tremendous humiliation. Not only physical violence, but also a tremendous psychological violence, very intense humiliation. Then people would assume responsibility for acts that maybe they had not done, people would write to the judge of a certain place to say that they had done something, and then pum, but the judge when he realised, only took half of the declarations. But well, I think no-one managed to escape on those stories. And in the end people realised that there was no way to escape on those transfers.

S — *Therefore the only thing that they were doing was accumulating more years of imprisonment.*

L — More years of imprisonment, yes, then that way was not good for escaping, because they prevented you. That is why a lot of people decided to submit. Not to make any protest, if you had to sweep the floor, if you had to do any kind of cleaning because the guard was asking you, then you would have to do it and not contradict the guards at all. You had to treat them with good manners. If you had that attitude, depending on the

outside, there are lots of things from the people in the streets that because you are used to doing things other ways, other attitudes. For example in the streets people insult each other just like that. Inside if you get insulted, you need to fight for your life and things like that. You are in a pub and someone comes and pushes you and, what's going on? Lack of respect that here is no problem, but inside it's very strong, well that you need to kill yourself with someone for such a stupid thing. Here outside they are stupid things, but inside lack of respect is a very serious thing. But well, I am seeing how people function outside because I am not going to be killing myself with everyone that insults me or pushes me. What I am going to do? I will have to be one more of those outside. I mean, I am not going to slap childish people that are going around pushing people in the pub, they could get me in prison again, that could be a problem.

S — *That is a fear that you have always in mind, isn't it?*

L — That I get imprisoned for such a stupid thing, and mainly because if I go into prison again, they have all my files there, I will go directly into the FIES, and then the guards are going to really give me a very hard time. They will try to increase my sentence, maybe I go in there just to do six months, but I might never manage to get out. I won't be able to be out because they will increase my sentence for fighting with someone, if I can defend myself I will defend myself. If you defend yourself, they will consider it an aggression, then they will increase the sentence to 4 years, 6 years, what do I know.

S — *Now you are 44 years old and you went in when you were 17.*

L — No, well, I went in when I was 19 and now I am 44, the thing is that before I had been inside more times. I had 4 more sentences. Then I was also in a young offenders institution, from here, in the young offenders institution of El Cisco, I managed to escape, the thing is that it was easier to escape before, and

good and coordinated movement outside. A movement that not only tells them what their rights are and then how to fight for them avoid the repression of possible reprisals and if prisoners got punished for fighting for their rights, to follow up from the outside and then also with regards to the media, that is, it is not only about making denunciations, demonstrations outside, but also going to the media, even to the big ones, a way of pressuring them so they can denounce what is going on, can't they? The problem is that if prisoners do not see, and more so as things are going at the moment, if they do not see that there is real and strong support, there is nothing to do. Here in Spain it is all finished. There only remains ashes and the four that have always been there, they continue there, fucking good, it is a pity.

S – *You Laude, have been free for one year and one month, and I would like to ask you two things, what do you think about the prisoner's support movement that there is outside, now that you can see them, and how are you?*

L – Well, to be honest I think that a lot more could be done, that not much is being done, and that there should be much more, lots more could be done. And how am I? Fucking great. I am fucking great outside, I rather be outside than inside.

S – *But what consequences did the isolation time in prison have upon you?*

L – Ah! I am very fucked up in the head, I am really bad, I have enormous psychological trauma, and I do not know how, bit by bit, I am going to get over it. The system has not provided psychiatrists or anything, I did not get any kind of attention at the beginning either, I had to do it all myself. No, but it is true that it leaves your mind really bad, a lot of distrust and lots of paranoia, I still dream about prison. Look what paranoia, I have been outside for a year and I still dream about prison. It is just too much. It is also difficult to relate with the people

person in question, depending on what they consider, because for one person acting that way, six months was enough, but for another person this means he will need to stay two years and this other man three.

S – *Could you talk for a bit about the function drugs has taken within the FIES regime?*

L – The function of drugs is very clear.

S – *There are a lot of people that do not know.*

L – They do not know? No, well, the function of drugs within prisons is very clear, mainly legal drugs. Legal drugs that are given by the system itself like methadone, psychopharmacos, tranquilizers and the like. That is those people in 1, 2, 3, because the prison is very hard, find it very difficult to confront the situation. Then people would tend to go to whatever way is easier, because if I get drugged and I am stoned I do not realise; according to them, they are stealing days from the judge. They do not realise that they are taking away their own lives bit by bit. Aren't they? But it is that, the drug affects people, and mainly if it is given by the institution, the institution has them tied up; they become instruments of the institution. They will turn them against you. In all senses and ways. In fact today, there are many prisons where many things, like opening the doors and closing the doors, that was done by the guards before, now it is prisoners who are doing it.

S – *Taking food.*

L – Taking food, things, but open and locking up the door of a prisoner, there are many prisons where other prisoners are doing things of this kind. But why? Because they are hooked to methadone, because they let them apart from the drugs that is given by the system, then the trustees, they are given trust, and they let them do business inside, they let them get drugs inside, they deal so they sort out their life. The guards also always get

their cut. The guards also get lots of drugs inside. In fact there have been cases when they got them, for example, in bottles of cola-caó(chocolate milk drink) full of heroin, in Alcala-Meco and in many other places. Because guards do not get searched, they get heroin inside and the trusted prisoners go giving the heroin around and the prisoners sell it. And the guard can therefore make gold inside. They get lots of money. The prisoners are also getting a way of living because there is a lot of poverty, the guards are also getting a lot of money, they are amongst the ones who profit most. Then, their main concern is that there are no riots or disruption inside in prison, that there is no-one reclaiming or demanding, therefore, the guards, by introducing a lot of drugs and by giving lots of drugs to the prisoners, know that the stability of the institution is not going to go, the worst that can happen is that they argue between themselves, people who do not pay, because they got the drugs on credit.

S — *So in the end that is the strategy, to confront the penitentiary population. Is it? So that collectives are not created, to stop collective actions or confrontations.*

L — Mainly to cancel those people as people. So they do not have conscience of their rights. So they do not demand them. That it is mainly, secondly so they do not give any problems. If there are to be problems, let it be among the prisoners, the main thing for them, is that they do not give problems to the institution. And secondly if there are to be problems, that those problems are between prisoners so then later the guards go in like the salvation army, like the good ones. They go to separate fights and things like that, then every time that there is a conflict between prisoners, if it has gone outside, then they always talk about mafia, about people fighting between mafias inside prisons and then, the guards can go and ask for extra money for security, more staff, a raise in their salary. The guards gain advantage

will tell you anything, and then of course you also get sanctions. They give you lots of sanctions as well, so for the next time that you try it again, maybe it has been a year or more, until you have paid all your sanctions, until you recover from the trauma, and they move you to a place where you can see again that there are possibilities and then you start fantasising a bit, then maybe it has been more than a year, or maybe more, look how things are, then well, it is ok, what are you going to do when you are inside, tell me.

S — *It is an instinct, isn't it?*

L — In fact I am telling you, if from the beginning, when I went in the 80s for this story, if I had been an ordinary prisoner and had accepted what was happening inside the prisons, and I didn't rebel about anything, then I would have been inside for just 9 years or maybe 10, but I stayed for over 25 years. That is because of my attitude inside the prisons and I have been quite quiet, I do not get into serious things, the problem is that... I do not know.

S — *What about the things that have been going on those last two years, that could make us think, if we were to know again that there are riots/mutinies inside the prisons like the two that occurred in Cuatre Camins, what do you think?*

L — The prison of Cuatre Camins is in Cataluña, in Cataluña it is another story. But with regards to the Spanish state? From the social prisoners' point of view? I think that there is not much and what remains is old people, they have always been fighting and will keep on fighting. But to encourage the people who are inside a bit so they start to, I don't know, to get conscious first, because lots of prisoners are not aware of what their rights are, that is the problem, they cannot write nor read. Therefore first, to make them aware of what their rights are, and to encourage them to fight for their rights, there needs to be a very

you all the time, you do not have time to plan anything. It is a tool to stop prisoners from escaping that is why they transfer you. Both transfers and changes of cell. Well, also, they use it with people that will not try to escape like Basque prisoners, well, some of them will, but most don't, they change them to fuck them up, so they cannot have any communication with their families, etc. But for us, for the ones who wanted to escape, they do it so you do not escape, they do not care about our families, they do not care about us, they only do it so you do not have an opportunity to escape.

S – *How many times did you manage to escape? How many times did you manage to escape and got to the streets?*

L – Me only once.

S – *Once? And from which prison?*

L – Well, look, it was from the *calabozos municipales*, (municipal jails), around here, from a village around here, now I do not remember what it is called.

S – *And tried to escape?*

L – I tried many times, and two of them kidnapping, but no, kidnapping is very difficult and even more difficult from the FIES modules, you have to go through a lot of barriers, lots of controls, and in the end you do not manage to go.

S – *And when you come back to prison?*

L – The problem of trying to escape is that while you are planning it is ok, you are passing your time, but the problem is that if it does not go well, they beat you up savagely. They punish you very much. They do not like it if you try to escape, they do not like it at all, I cannot understand why.

S – *Because it is normal to try it, isn't it?*

L – If you try to escape and then you do not manage they beat you up a lot, they isolate you, they torture you, they handcuff you from your feet and hands to the bed, they insult you, they

from all that, do you understand? That is the function that it has with prisoners, to me it is very clear. It makes people very negative and I am telling you, when I got to 1st grade, because within the 1st grade there is also lots of drugs, people are really hooked on methadone, on psychotropic drugs, but on 2nd grade, it is just too much. When I got out to 2nd grade, two years before I got released, I was really shocked with the people. Because if you were to say anything to the prisoner, they would go and tell the guard without any fear or anything. Well, really out of order, I used to think, fuck, to me guards were my enemy because I know they are my enemy but these people who were prisoners the same as me, they were also my enemies, that was too much. That is, to me that is clear, not only the function of drugs within the prisons; through drugs they first manage to ensure that prisoners do not make any trouble, second to ensure that any problems would happen between the prisoners themselves, so they also benefit from it and then make it another instrument of the system, because the system gives them drugs. They had them at their feet; they will do with them what they want. If a guard tells a prisoner, close that door, the prisoner would go and close it. If the guard says go around repeating this lie, that is any lie, normally about another prisoner, the prisoners will go and do it. So guards could tell them what they want. Get this knife and kill this man, then I am going to double your portion of methadone and I will get you on the 3rd grade. In fact to us, to people who were kidnapping people at the moment to escape, they proposed to us to form a prisoners' GAL. That is that guards do not stop themselves when it comes to those things.

S – *Could you explain a bit what is the prisoners' GAL? What is GAL and what is the prisoners' GAL?*

L – Yes, what I was telling you before, even me, if you start to look closely at the prison, the prison is very hard, well, today most

of the people who go in from the streets have already had some contact with drugs and if they are inside, because the prison is very hard, then they cannot face it and therefore they find it easier to get into drugs. On top of that, if the system is giving it to you, fucking better, and well, prisoners have assumed that if they do not give any problems to the system and collaborate with the system, then they will get released sooner, on probation and so on. That is clear for them, then, the prison is very hard and then these people on the outside, I do not know if they had an alternative to live or not. I don't think so, and therefore because they did not have options outside, inside they have even less so.

S — *And the GAL?*

L — About the GAL, inside or outside?

S — *First explain what it was outside.*

L — Outside it was...

S — *An Antiterrorist Group of Liberation.*

L — Yes, a mafia of policemen, inside the Guardia Civil, inside the National Police, and also inside the army, although the Guardia Civil isn't an army body, but a police army body. Well they would focus mainly on physically disposing of people like ... Basque people. Mainly those who belong to the GRAPO, mainly people who were involved in armed bands with political ends. Then well, they would go and kidnap them, they would kill them and put bombs against them, that is, hard and pure violence, total terrorism, that is terrorism of the State. Then well, they had all the means at their disposal, inside and outside, and then inside, because there were some Basque prisoners, and they will think that they have tirada with regards to others, then they were worried, because maybe due to the reasons they were in jail...

S — *Police and the army were worried about those cases.*

participated in a riot/mutiny, or maybe for having punched a guard while they were beating you up, because many times you cannot, but sometimes you can give a punch to a guard if you get an opportunity. For those reasons, because the people were against the institution they got you into the FIES 1, only social prisoners.

S — *Other kinds of torture that they apply is the transfers, you were saying before that to change cells is very common, and also to get transferred to other prisons, with the aim of setting you apart from your homes and families. Like you just said, inside the FIES 1, it is mainly social prisoners, recidivists, supposed leaders of prisoners movements and many coming from poor families.*

L — Yes of course, that is why we were in prison, we were all poor.

S — *And about the transfers? Under what conditions are those transfers made? How often? How many people?*

L — Change of cell?

S — *Yes and change of prison.*

L — Of prison? Well the changes are not only transfers between prisons, it is also changes of cell, they move you around the prison and change your cell, twice a week, or four times a week, or once every fortnight, whatever they want. Then transfers between prisons, the same, I don't know, it can be once every fortnight, once a month, every 20 days, whatever they want.

S — *Again you are isolated because your families cannot go to see you, it is not the same if you are here in Vizcaya or if you are in Cadiz.*

L — Yes of course, and also the prisons that have the FIES regime are just a few, it is not all prisons, they all have 1st grade but not all of them have the FIES modules. They transfer you, the transfers are also a way to stop you from escaping, because, according to them, if you are in one place for a long time, you can be checking one thing or another, but if they are moving

grade. But what I am saying, it was started by about 200 and finished I think with 50 without eating.

S — *You just mentioned that there are a lot of people held in the 1st grade, maybe it's important to say that, mainly in Europe, the people who are under the FIES regime are at the moment 44, because Xose Tarrío died in January. The FIES regime, that is the strict regime of isolation, still exists in Spain, and will still be there even when there are no FIES prisoners.*

L — Yes, they are going to stay there, that is the modules. They have spent a lot of money on them. Imagine, they are modules were everything is automated, only automatic doors and cameras, bars over the top, all that has cost a lot of money. They are not going to destroy that from one day to the other, they will always keep it there. In the 1990s it was us, in the 2000s there will be other ones and 2010s there will be new ones. These are micro-prisons of maximum security. To me, the walls of the FIES are microprisons of maximum security inside the macroprisons of maximum security. Mainly, the FIES modules are to stop people from escaping. And it is only social prisoners that they keep in them; I still have not seen political prisoners inside the FIES module of direct control. I have seen political prisoners in 1st grade with FIES 3, that is different, but FIES 1 is much harder.

S — *Absolute control.*

L — Of course, the problem is that in FIES 1, you are allowed to go out to the yard a maximum of one hour per day and with no more than one person, but with the 1st grade in FIES 3 you go to the yard something like 4 to 5 hours per day, and there are seven or eight people in the yard. Notice how it changes, it changes a lot. That is that, the FIES is FIES 1 direct control, and that is only applied to social prisoners, people that wanted to escape, or that had rebelled anyhow against the institution, for having

L — Well, they even end up telling us that they wanted to get rid of some Basque prisoners, and then they would say to us, well, not to me because I am Basque, but they were asking the guys, they took them to the cell and told them, “listen fellows, you are fighting for freedom? Well, if you are clever, look, you could get freedom in six months, and everything legal, you only have to do what we tell you”. And those prisoners that were by no means stupid, asked them, “well, what do we have to do? You are setting us free in six months, so well, what do we have to do?” “Well, it is simple, everybody knows that you are doing kidnappings all the time, well, this time we are going to let you kidnap some of us, you will need to take us to a certain place that we will tell you and then you will eliminate one person that we will tell you. You will tie us up very well, you kill that person and then you hand yourselves over, nobody is going to touch you, because everything is agreed, then in six months” That is what the law says, because otherwise they cannot do it, because that would look a bit dodgy because the law says that the minimum is six months of 1st grade, before you can go to second grade, and three months later you are in third grade, you are able to get permits to go out, you are in the streets. And that is what they were proposing, they wanted us to go killing our comrades, that is the Prison GAL that they wanted to build up inside prisons, we did not do it, but they proposed it to us.

S — *And how is the situation of the struggle inside the prisons nowadays? After if you want, we could talk as well about the hunger strike of prisoners in isolation in the year 2000, as another example of collective experience.*

L — I was doing that hunger strike, and I had a really bad time. It was very hard, I was very hungry, and like me, we were all very hungry. And well, at the same time, it is a way of telling the guards who were inside, but well, we got no result, because

there was no change to the regime, we got nothing more than reprisals from the ones that were inside. And I think that was the problem, because if outside there had been a greater and more real coordination, the people, well-coordinated, more real support, then the guards would have stopped repressing us. But of course because they knew that the support that we had outside was symbolic, apart from the four or five usual people, the rest was more like a small fashion of the time. And guards know all those things, and because they knew that it was not real support, that is what happened.

S – *It did not have an impact on the guards.*

L – Not at all, they were not at all concerned, in fact, every time we did a hunger strike, and also this time, the guards were laughing at us, they were laughing at us. But anyhow, we were not eating, we were still refusing el rancho. We were not eating.

S – *They did not care; in fact five guards savagely beat you up once when you were on your 18th day of the hunger strike. Is that correct?*

L – Yes, five guards. On day 18 of the hunger strike, they were transferring me to another cell and they started beating me up from behind, they threw me down on to the floor, they kicked my head, they handcuffed me, they made several cuts in my head and then they tied me hand and foot to a bed, they did the stitches on the cuts in my head without anaesthetic, really bad. I was complaining and after 18 days without eating you are very weak. But it was a way of beating me up, it was the first time that they did it in such a cowardly way, lying to me, other times I had general searches, do you know the tension? You know that if they do not remove your pants they are going to beat you up, you get ready, but then, because you are all by yourself, there is nothing you can do, but well, you are prepared, you know they are going to beat you up at that moment. But that time they

lied to me, they told me “Cell change!”, a normal cell change, because they change my cell sometimes every day. They were going after me, “get your things” and stuff like that, and I was taking what I was writing at the time, I took the notebook, the letters and the things that I do not want them to see when they are searching the room, and I was walking along the corridor and just like that they started beating me up in the back. And then I turned around and then it was when they started beating me up really bad, they got me down to the floor, they kicked me in the head, a very strong beating, imagine. And at the time I was having the support of Amaitu.

S – *Your village association.*

L – Yes, but they did not mind, they did not care at all.

S – *And in the hunger strike of the year 2000, they were also not bothered about the fact that you were all still on hunger strike, how many of you were doing the hunger strike?*

L – I think that in total it was about 200 people, maybe more, I am not very sure because one will say one thing and others will say another, and also because since we were isolated, we could not talk between us. We had to be calling on the phone to other people that were outside to know how about things in our prison and in other prisons, I think that in total more than 200 people started it, I think it was more or less 50 the ones that finished it.

S – *It was only done by the prisoners that were on the 1st grade, because on 2nd grade it was only follow by Gabriel and another comrade. It was not very supported amongst other prisoners, was it?*

L – No, in the 2nd grade there was only Gabriel and... and in 1st grade it was also only a few prisoners, because in the 1st grade there were lots of prisoners and the hunger strike was only followed by those who were in the FIES and by a few in the 1st