

Our contribution to the rally on March 18th, 2022 in Karlsruhe

ANIKA

20 March 2022

March 18 as Political Prisoners' Day goes back to the revolutionary events in Paris, in 1871, which went down in history as the „Paris Commune“. It was the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. The French Emperor had been captured and the Republic had just been proclaimed. Many imagined that this would usher in a new era, but in truth the old system was merely perpetuated by a new band of political impostors. Disillusioned with the new rulers, a revolutionary uprising occurred on that March 18 and Paris became autonomous overnight. The city got rid of the rulers and reinvented everything. There was food for the poor, free education, medical care, a separation of church and state, suffrage and self-determination for women, and much more. A city almost without any administration and a social revolution.

The course of events at that time is highly complex and is still controversial today. To all those interested in the background, I can recommend the recently reissued book „La Commune“ by contemporary witness and anarchist Louise Michel.

What is often forgotten in the context of the Paris Commune is that in those months of the uprising there were also comparable proletarian uprisings in other, larger cities such as Marseille or Toulouse, and barricades were built there as well.

But this new order, based on the needs of the people, was not to last long. After 73 days, the Paris Commune was crushed by the military with brutal force. Within just one week, the government shot between 20 and 30,000 Communards. The streams of blood from the mass executions stained the streets and gutters of Paris red.

Thousands of revolutionaries were exiled to penal colonies or disappeared as political prisoners in the dungeons of the now once again ruling class.

For those who believe that these events are a dark chapter of history that has long since been overcome, it is worth remembering that there are still a large number of political prisoners today, even if this fact is all too readily denied by the ruling class. As long as we have to eke out our existence as wage-earners and exploited in a capitalist society, those who rebel against these conditions will be criminalized and locked up by a class justice system whose sole task is to maintain the very conditions of ownership and power. The state in itself, even in the early forms of its emergence, is and was always based on violence, exploitation and exclusion. A world with-

out violence, exploitation and exclusion can therefore only be a world without rulers, without borders and without states.

But today we would like to focus on the Russian and Belarusian anarchists and antifascists. Belarus, under the leadership of the Stalinist Lukashenko, is considered the last dictatorship in Europe. His regime since 1994 has been characterized by electoral fraud and unrestrained violence.

The first major protests against the ruler took place in 2006, when more than 10,000 people took to the streets against Lukashenko shortly after that year's election – despite threats by the secret police to imprison the demonstrators for life.

In 2020, the situation in Belarus escalated again. Mass protests and strikes were the response to the presidential election, which was accompanied by manipulation and repression. Over 33,000 people were arrested. There are numerous reports from prisons of hunger, violence, torture and rape. Sharp shots at demonstrators, torture and murder ultimately led to the violent suppression of the uprisings. In the process, two people were shot, one died in prison for failure to render aid, and another was beaten to death. To this day, not a single criminal case has been opened against their murderers.

And all those who now believe that the German state would reject or even condemn such things, I must unfortunately disappoint them. Lukashenko's repressive gangs have been trained and supplied with weapons by the German police time and again.¹ The focus of this support was always the „handling“ of mass events. The blood of the Belarusian demonstrators is thus also on the hands of the German police.

Our solidarity goes to the anarchists and anti-fascists who are imprisoned in the dungeons of the Belarusian secret police. It is for all those who do not let the repression get them down and who oppose the cooperation of the Belarusian dictator with the Russian war of aggression. And it is for those who support the people who are currently still in Ukraine or have already had to leave.

The cooperation between Lukashenko and Putin is not without contradictions. On the one hand, there is a strong dependence of Belarus on Russia, which stems largely from the Soviet era. To this day, an agreement exists that is supposed to allow the two countries to join forces. At the same time, however, Lukashenko has repeatedly tried to break away from this dependence in recent years.

However, the military cooperation in the Russian invasion of Ukraine shows that these two autocrats are nevertheless perfectly capable of working together.

When it comes to repression against their own populations, the two states do not give each other anything in return. In Russia, as in Belarus, the political opposition has been completely crushed. There, too, it is a sad reality that political opponents are murdered without batting an eye or imprisoned in mock trials. Repression, torture and violence against any critical organization are unfortunately the order of the day there.

But the current protests against the invasion of Ukraine show that not all people allow themselves to be subdued without resistance. Our solidarity goes to all those who continue to oppose Putin's authoritarian regime and his henchmen. And our solidarity goes to Grigoriy Sinchenko, who has dedicated himself for years to the fight against the Russian separatists in Donetsk and ended up in Russian jail for it. It goes to Evgeny Karakashev, Pavel Krisevich, Kirill Kuzminkin

¹ Bundestag Printed Matter 17/10727, 17th Election Period 2012

and all the other imprisoned Russian anarchists and antifascists.

By the way, you can find their names and the background of their imprisonment on the pages of the Anarchist Black Cross Belarus and Moscow. There you can also write letters to them or donate.

But although today we have put our focus on our comrades in Belarus and Russia, we do not forget our other comrades, neither today nor on other days.

We think of Jan, Ella and Lina. We think of Jo and Dy. And we think of the countless Kurdish comrades who the German repressive apparatus wants to silence with the accusation of „forming a terrorist organization“. It has affected individuals, it means all of us!

As anarchists, our attention is not only directed to the political prisoners, but to all people who are behind bars. As locked away, they are deprived of their social essence to a high degree and are at the mercy of the repressive apparatus without protection. This disempowerment and everyday humiliation can embitter prisoners in relation to society as a whole. Torn social ties, loss of property, subsequent unemployment, and the branding of ex-prisoners make it additionally more difficult to reintegrate these people into our society after their release. Of all the functions that prison advocates repeatedly cite, rehabilitation is therefore the one in which they fail the most.

Our critique is therefore not only of prisons themselves, but also of the justice system that fills them. A system that places punishment and revenge above reparation, that answers violence with counter-violence. A system that claims to act in the name of the victims, but at the same time does almost nothing to repair the damage done to the victims, but merely exercises revenge in their name. It is to this system that today, on Political Prisoners Day, but also on all other days, our strongest criticism must be directed.

For this reason we say:

Freedom for ALL prisoners!

Fire and flame ALL prisons!

And up the anti-national solidarity!

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Some anarchists participated in the rally for the Day of Political Prisoners in Karlsruhe. Our focus was on the comrades from Belarus and Russia. We document the speech below.

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