

“NO COURT HAS SENTENCED THEM TO DEATH IN JAIL”-

Protests by Italian HIV+ Prisoners

In November, prisoners with HIV staged the latest in a series of protests about their treatment in Italian prisons. The spark for this protest was the death from an overdose of Umberto Ceccato, a 29 year old with AIDS. Umberto's death came just two days after he had been released from the Due Palazzi prison in Padua (Padova), where he had been remanded for eight months before being cleared of robbing a jewellers.

While in prison, accused of a crime he didn't commit, Umberto's health deteriorated. In a letter he wrote in October he complained: *"I'm in here in need of specialist treatment, they are refusing me bandages and they are refusing to give me medication for my ulcerations"*.

Despite his poor health, Umberto was refused a transfer to a non-prison hospital. Like others at the Due Palazzi prison, the only hospital treatment he was offered was at the notorious 'Bunker', a special prison wing of the local Civil Hospital. The inhuman Bunker regime of total isolation with 24 hour surveillance and no

TV, radio, newspapers or cigarettes, is certainly not the caring environment needed by people with AIDS!

Umberto's demands for decent treatment were actively supported by the other prisoners awaiting trial in the Due Palazzi. On the 22 October 1991 there was a general strike in Italy; as their contribution to the strike prisoners refused food and exercise for the day. 156 of the 180 remand prisoners signed a statement complaining about medical treatment in the jail and demanding freedom for Umberto and another particularly ill prisoner. They stated: *"No court has sentenced them to death in jail"*.

After Umberto's death, prisoners at the jail staged another hunger strike. On 7th November a demonstration in support of the prisoners- and over other issues- was organised by Radio Sherwood (a local radical radio station), the city's squatted social centres, and various student and workers groups.

Umberto's case was not unique. It has been estimated that between 60% and 90% of the 180 prisoners in the Due Palazzi are (or have been) injecting drug users. The number of drug users in prison has increased since a new law (the Vassalli-Jervolino law) criminalised possession in 1990. Before this, it was legal for people to be in possession of any drug (including heroin), so long as it was for their own use. During their protests, prisoners have been demanding the abolition of this law.

According to the Due Palazzi prisoners themselves, at least 90 of them are HIV positive. The government has authorised prison governors to arrange for prisoners with AIDS to leave prison and continue their detention in hospital. However in many cases this is not happening, partly because of the obstructiveness of prison governors, and partly because of the difficulty of finding suitable hospital places.

As well as at the Due Palazzi in Padua, there have been protests elsewhere, such as a hunger strike at Le Vallette prison in Turin.

Letter from a prisoner with AIDS in the Due Palazzi Prison, Padua

Padua, 12.10.91

Someone must be responsible for my imminent death in prison?

My name is Claudiani Maurizio. Since 1984 I have been HIV positive. With this letter to Radio Sherwood I am sending a desperate appeal to everyone willing to save me from death in prison.

I will explain my case: I was under house-arrest for a drug-related offence. While I was serving this sentence, on the 2.10.91, my girlfriend died of skin cancer. She had been HIV positive for quite a long time.

On the afternoon of the same day, the Carabinieri from Mestre, while searching my house found 20 grams of heroin. For this reason I was brought here to the Due Palazzi prison. I point out that I have been addicted to heroin since 1972 and that 20 grams would last me only four days.

I am sharing a four-person cell with eight other prisoners, including Umberto Ceccato, who is in the same condition as me.

I am distraught with grief over my girlfriend's death: I could not even attend her funeral.

My health condition is desperate: I am in the final stage of AIDS. I have deep ulcerations with phlebitis in both of my legs, I need hygienic living conditions and daily medical treatment, and in the prison infirmary there are no qualified staff and, anyway, nobody, not even the doctor would treat me because of the understandable fear of infection!

Anyway I have to die, but at least not surrounded by these walls.

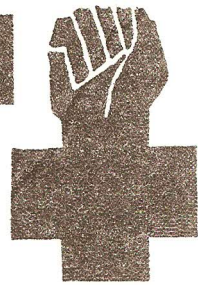
Help me!

Messages of support to the prisoners can be sent c/o
Radio Sherwood,
Vicolo Pontecorvo, 1A,
35100 Padova, Italy
(tel: 010-39-49-8752129,
fax: 010-39-49-664589).

CONTACT:
LONDON ANARCHIST
BLACK CROSS, or
BOX LN, both c/o
121 RAILTON RD:
LONDON SE24.

Cheers to "Mainliners"

ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS (London)



c/o 121, RAILTON ROAD, LONDON. S.E.24 ★

26th Jan 1992.

Dear comrades,

this is just a short note to let you know that London Anarchist Black Cross has changed address. We are no longer at :-

BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX.

Our new address is:-

c/o 121 Railton Rd., Brixton, London SE24

Anyone in the London area interested in solidarity work for anarchist and other revolutionary prisoners, framed prisoners or prisoners resisting the prison system - get in touch!

In Solidarity

London ABC.



SUPPORTING CLASS STRUGGLE PRISONERS

London

ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS

c/o 121 BOOKSHOP, 121 RAILTON RD, LONDON SE24

Dear comrades,

30/4/92

heres a copy of the latest London ABC Bulletin
which I hope you like. Any news/info/donations
or more copies wanted, let us know. Next issue
should be out around the middle of June - so
if you want to make it, send stuff for end
of may. In solidarity Alex H.



SUPPORTING CLASS STRUGGLE PRISONERS