

Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre
(GRAPO)

Interview With Eva Alonso
GRAPO Political Prisoner

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Eva Alonso Arce was arrested May 26, 1979 at a Spanish Civil Guard police checkpoint near Valencia, During the ten days that she remained under arrest in Madrid she was brutally tortured. Today, she has been in prison over twenty years in the prisons of Yeserias, Carabanchel, and Sevilla 11, from which she will be released in June 1999.

Over the past 20 years, what have been the worst and best moments you have had to go through?

It is difficult to choose, but perhaps the hardest experiences that I have lived through have been the two hunger strikes to the death that the prisoners of the PCE (r) (Spanish Communist Party – reconstituted) and GRAPO have had to carry out. The first was in 1981, against the extermination regime in the prison of Herrera de la Mancha and the second was in 1990 around the regroupment of the prisoners. The deaths of Kepa and Sevi were the worst moments inside a very hard situation, and still today, just the memory of it makes me tremble. . As for good moments, I would emphasize small, but very important, things, such as family visits, meeting comrades again after years of dispersion, or activities that I can do in the community.

Is the suffering greater for women in prison, or, as militants, are the attacks and responses the same?

The repression is maybe one of the few areas in which we reach true equality. The key is that we are not women or men, we are imprisoned militants. The repressive strategies are the

same for everybody as are the targets that they are after with them. Of course, we confront this in a militant manner, and this depends on your commitment, not your gender.

Have there been, over the course of the past 20 years, many changes in the methods of repression in the prisons?

They have been perfecting them, overall, after building the maxi-prisons and the policy of dispersion. They have been exploiting all the possibilities of isolation and have been doing their utmost against our movement. All this, together with the standard searches, beatings and provocations, is doing in that the repression in the prisons is growing in vileness compared to what we had 20 years ago. The wardens, on the whole, also take part, but, individually, there are some that make your life hell, some that merely do their “job”, and, less often, those that try to make your life a bit sweeter.

How important is it to be grouped together in one prison?

Absolutely everything. It is important politically to be able to organize inside prison, to be able to increase your activities with your comrades, to defend yourself against repression and to undertake the struggle effectively. It is important on a personal level as well; because you have people that see the world as you do, with many things in common with which you can always support yourself. Prison is a hostile environment, the only things not hostile are your comrades. It has been proved that it is possible to survive years and years without them, as a person and as a militant, and that is a great victory, but it is infinitely harder.

What is the role of family and friends in giving support to the prisoners, and especially around their dispersion?

In prison, any amount of support, solidarity or consideration has an incredible value, and it is worth much more than on the streets. It is not what makes your want to resist, but it makes it easier to live in prison. To get some mail, to get a visit from somebody, these are things that can make you smile at a time when you are feeling sad or lonely.

How were the peace talks between the Spanish government and GRAPO viewed from prison?

With certain expectations, but little worry, because there were very important matters on the table. But beyond the expectations, I viewed it with distrust towards the State, it is obvious that its intentions to solve the problems peacefully are void. They trust in the repression and in force to exterminate any struggle or groups that faces them, and that fact makes this kind of process always unsuccessful. In our case this was clearly proved. There was never negotiation, only talks towards negotiation, and when the government had to put forward its intentions, it only tried to bring us to surrender.

What is the situation of the GRAPO prisoners, especially those who are ill and have already served 3/4 of their sentence?

We have four comrades who are trying to obtain their freedom due to the severity of their illnesses. Two have been imprisoned for 17 years and the other two for 14 years, so they are not going to be able to help the movement much when they get out. With regards to freedom for those who have served 3/4 of their sentence, there are quite a few of us who have exceeded that years ago. I accomplished that in June 1994. None of us in this situation have ever been released on parole.

What do you think of the support that the Basque people give to the prisoners?

The struggle to support the prisoners in the Basque country has always seemed admirable to me. I do not think that we can ask for more courage and initiative than what our people have with their prisoners. Nevertheless, I do not think that the time for struggle and sacrifice is over, and I fear that we will have to restart strongly all sorts of initiatives to approach the prisoners of the Basque country, or better yet, get them free. The Spanish state does not seem to have any intention of solving this politically, it leaves us with the struggle as the only way.

After these long years, you must have felt low at times when a personal way out of prison and suffering might have been a priority.

No, never. Of course, over these past 20 years I have had very tough moments, when I felt too weak to stick to my own commitment, but I always knew that there was a line I would not cross, a line that situates me alongside the people, and to cross that line would be to put myself in front of them. Loyalty to my ideas and to the people gave me the strength to resist, and now I will leave prison having a clear conscience.

How do you imagine your life outside of prison?

I entered prison when I was 17 years old, and I am leaving prison 20 years later. Mostly, I want to meet my people again, I have a lot to learn. After that, I will see.

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