

Walkin' Steel

A NEWSLETTER DEVOTED TO THE ABOLITION OF CONTROL UNIT PRISONS
PUBLISHED BY THE COMMITTEE TO END THE MARION LOCKDOWN

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THE PROPOSED PRISON IN FLORENCE, COLORADO: A "NEW AND IMPROVED" MARION

FIRST ALCATRAZ, THEN MARION

The United States Penitentiary at Marion, located in Southern Illinois, opened in 1963 to replace Alcatraz, which closed that same year. Marion is the highest security prison in the country, the only one with a "level 6" security rating. Marion is also the only U.S. prison that has ever been condemned by Amnesty International for violating the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Despite this international condemnation, Marion has become an experimental laboratory and trendsetter for the entire federal prison system.

Since 1983, Marion Prison has been in a state of permanent "lockdown." Prisoners are locked in their cells for 22.5 hours a day, and all standard vocational, educational and recreational activities are virtually nonexistent. The cells are 8' x 10' and contain a tv, bed, toilet and sink. Prisoners are forced to sleep, eat and defecate in their cells. They are also forbidden to socialize with each other or to participate in group religious services. Those who misbehave in their cells (an arbitrary determination made by the guard on duty) may be tied spread eagle and naked, on their concrete slab beds. At most other prisons, a typical lockdown may last several days to a week. However, at Marion the lockdown is permanent, and the entire prison has been transformed into a "Control Unit." The objective is absolute physical and psychological control over the prisoners.

NOW FLORENCE, COLORADO

In early 1990 the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) announced its decision to open a new maximum security prison in Florence, Colorado. Marion is no longer brutal enough for them. The prison in Florence will be designed so

that one guard can control the movements of numerous prisoners in several cellblocks by way of electronic doors, cameras and

audio equipment. "We'll be able to electronically open a cell door, shut it behind the inmate, and move him through a series of sliding doors" says Russ Martin, project manager for the Florence prison. Presently, at Marion, the prisoners can scream to one another from their cells; prisoners have minimal contact with guards when their food is shoved between the bars. In Florence, this "contact" may be eliminated. "These guys will never be out of their cells, much less in the yard or anywhere around here," the Florence City Manager states. State-of-the-art security technology and new construction materials will ensure near *complete* isolation; in fact, the building will be designed with no windows at all. Martin claims, "Marion learned from Alcatraz, and now we've had 30 years to learn from Marion."

Ground was broken for the \$150 million complex in July, 1990. The giant prison complex (600 acres) in Florence, a town about 50 miles west of Colorado Springs, will consist of four different level security units: a 250-bed minimum security facility, a 750-bed medium security prison, a 550-bed high security penitentiary similar to Leavenworth, and a 550-bed "administrative maximum" security prison far worse than Marion prison. The minimum and medium security units are scheduled to open in 1992 and the other two in 1993. Construction on the two former units began in January 1991.

WHY MARION AND FLORENCE EXIST

Despite BOP claims that the purpose of Marion and Florence is to contain violent prisoners, they, in fact, function to control dissidents. Many are sent to Marion because they have written "too many" law suits, participated in work stoppages, or pursued their religious and political beliefs. Former U.S. Representative Kastenmeier, the past head of the Congressional committee that oversees prisons, recently acknowledged the existence of political prisoners at Marion, and said "[they] do not need the degree of maximum security, that in my view, they're subjected to." Despite his statements, the BOP plans to transfer most of the prisoners at Marion to Florence and increase the "security" conditions there by way of more advanced and high-tech equipment. The terror that Marion and Florence represent hangs over the entire prison system like a giant club, poised to deliver yet another crushing blow to political resistance and the spirit of the prisoners themselves.

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Leaking tailing ponds at Cotter Uranium Plant

THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT

In a move reminiscent of the use of toxic water to poison prisoners at Marion, the BOP picked an area in Florence that may be equally detrimental for the prisoners' health. Just five miles from the proposed prison site, in Lincoln Park, there is the notorious Cotter Corporation, a uranium milling company owned and run by Commonwealth Edison of Chicago, Illinois. A class action lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court, in Denver, by over 340 people against Cotter, Santa Fe Railroad, and others claiming diminution of land value due to radioactive contamination. The contamination is not just limited to the Cotter site. Radioactive materials were found at the Santa Fe depot near downtown Canon City and a railroad site north of Cotter. The railroad sites were used to load and unload uranium ore containing some of the highest levels of radioactive material known to humankind. Cotter was sued by the state of Colorado in 1983 for the extensive contamination, and they settled for \$15 million and a promise by Cotter to clean up the mill site, but the agreement did not include the railroad sites.

The presence and risks of uranium in the water, soil and air is of immediate concern. Cotter stored its tailings (the remnants of the milling process) in tailing ponds. Studies of these ponds show that the tailings seeped into the underground water source. The second source of concern is air contamination. Experts on radiation diseases state that the radioactive dust is the most threatening and dangerous source of contamination. Due to the water contamination alone, the Lincoln Park area has been on the Environmental Protection Agency's National Priorities List since 1984 and has been designated a Superfund site for contamination clean up.

FLORENCE AREA'S POLITICAL CLIMATE

Residents in the

Canon City and Florence area seem to be overwhelmingly in favor of this new torture chamber. They managed to raise \$160,000 to purchase the 600 acres for the site; 400 locals gathered for the ground breaking; t-shirts bearing a map of the site that included wind patterns were "sold out" at \$7.99. Although the enthusiastic attitude by many locals is reprehensible, it is hardly a surprise. Ten years ago in the U.S., when they proposed a new prison, the general climate was to run prison authorities out of town. Now, due to increasing economic hardship, prisons are welcomed with open arms.

It is estimated that the prison will generate about 1000 temporary jobs for the poverty stricken area and about 750 to 900 permanent jobs. Management positions generally will be filled through transfers and entry-level jobs will be filled with locally hired people. Requirements for guards include 3 1/2 years experience, and they must be between 21 and 35 years old, exceptions being made for medical personnel. The average pay for most positions ranges from \$14,500 to \$24,700. The prison will generate an annual payroll totalling \$44 million. Pueblo Community College has capitalized on this opportunity by "customizing" its "criminal justice" courses to suit the needs of the federal prison. The College is trying to work out a deal where students of these customized classes would be guaranteed an interview with the prison. Canon City is currently the home of at least six state prisons. One of these, Centennial, is also in the control unit construction stage - a state model based on Marion.

THE PROLIFERATION OF CONTROL UNIT PRISONS

Control unit prisons are proliferating. In addition to the state run prisons at Pelican Bay, California, Shawangunk, N.Y., and Ionia, Michigan, the BOP is planning a new prison in Massachusetts which promises to cost about \$800,000 per prisoner for construction alone. Sam Calbone, deputy regional director for the BOP, said prisoncrats nationwide will look to Florence because "this will be a model for other correctional complexes."

We've learned that the BOP has examined 60 more

sites and plans to draft Environmental Impact Statements (a serious step) for 20 new project sites. In fact, a map in the Florence EIS shows that a new facility is currently being developed in Puerto Rico. Newspaper accounts relate that Florence will be the first of seven federal prisons to be built across the U.S. in the next six years!

At this beginning of yet another stretch of the official swinishness that characterizes the Marion lockdown, the BOP is engaged in an offensive to change it from lockdown of an institution to institutionalized lockdown. The physical plant of Marion having proven inadequate to expanding the research into suppressing the spirit of its victims the apparatus of repression is building a new dungeon at Florence, Colorado, to which it plans to transfer Marion's "mission". There, evidence indicates it intends to escalate its efforts to sterilize the seeds of resistance.

BILL DUNNE, prisoner at Marion



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119th Year No. 176

Pueblo, Colorado, Saturday, October 20, 1990

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Marion, Ill., prison protesters to visit Florence

second article appeared under the headline: "Group vows to stop FB (Federal Bureau of Prisons) penitentiary." We then set out to look over the

In late October, 1990 three members of the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML) drove from Chicago to Colorado (20 hours each way) to meet with friends, to talk to the media about their distorted coverage of the planned control unit prison at Florence, and to look over the site for the prison.

Before leaving we sent letters and information packages to all reporters in the state who had written articles about the planned prison, told them about our trip, and asked to meet with them. The response was substantial. Some of the reporters even called us in Chicago and interviewed us before we left. After driving through the night, we arrived in Colorado Springs mid-Thursday. We then met with a small group of friends and a correspondent for the *National Catholic Reporter*. Right before our next presentation to the local chapter of the National Lawyers' Guild, we were interviewed by CBS which aired in Denver as the lead story that evening. At the Guild meeting we watched the "20/20" segment about Marion and discussed its relationship to Florence.

The following morning we drove off to Florence and Canon City, adjacent to one another. Canon City is a startling place, the home of at least six state prisons, including a state control unit prison. We met there with friends, who were very helpful and kind to us, and with a reporter from the *Canon City Daily Record*, who had written an article on our trip before we arrived and then wrote another article based upon his interview with us. This

prison site. We were staggered by what we saw. One follows directions and signs towards the prison and then makes a turn onto an unmarked road. After that, there is nothing; the area is literally barren. The three of us imagined that this must be what the surface of the moon is like. After driving a couple of miles more we located the site and watched, in pain, as the bulldozers cleared the land for what might become the prison that will house those the Bureau of Prisons wishes to destroy.

We then drove off to Pueblo for another press conference in late afternoon and a meeting with a group of friends in a community church after dinner. At the end of the meeting we drove to Denver to prepare for Saturday's activities.

We spent much of Saturday afternoon meeting with friends in small groups. (We also found time, with some of these friends, to drive up into the mountains, which were very beautiful, especially to people used to the flatlands of Illinois.) Saturday night we addressed another community meeting, showed our video and had a long, exciting discussion with the participants. After the meeting we packed up and drove through the night, returning to Chicago early Sunday evening.

The trip was certainly productive, but also indicated just how difficult stopping the planned prison in Florence will be. Even sympathetic people in the area feel that the prison is necessary for economic development. This was a theme that was constantly presented to us by the media. We countered by saying that the morality of working at this prison was comparable to that of working on a slave ship and asked them what they thought of that. Their responses to this formulation were mixed. Prisons are the main industry there, and people in the area don't seem able to envision a world in which they do not make their living by incarcerating huge numbers of people of color. Such is the nature of the United States, where people are forced to survive by keeping other people in cages or by fighting in wars. As one drives down main street in Canon City one runs smack into the old women's prison, which is now a "prison museum," filled with all the grotesque images that one would expect. Yes indeed, Main Street, USA!

We are headed back to Colorado in the spring, to recontact the people we met with during our first trip and to meet with new friends. If you live in the area and would like to meet with us, please get in touch as soon as possible so that we can plan our trip appropriately. Since we are not likely to soon appear on national television, meeting with small groups of people is the best way to build opposition to the planned control unit prison. We hope to hear from you!

Since January of 1984 I have been on control unit status. Due to time lost for "misbehavior" [it] won't end until August of '91. Before now I thought "Well, soon I will go to Marion's main-line and hopefully to an open prison in 2 or 3 years." Now I see that the carrot the Fed has held out in front of me all these years I can never reach. There is no carrot. Never was, I guess. The hardest thing to live with in a lockdown state is your mind. It doesn't seem to understand there's no way to achieve its desires. So it always keeps hoping and wanting and making excuses that someday things will get better. Slowly even the mind rots. I guess this is the government's way to destroy us mentally instead of physically. I wish the brain death would come quickly because seeing it happening and knowing how you were before is a terrible thing. Even though you recognize it you can't stop it.

SCOTT ROUTLEDGE, prisoner at Marion

A POLICY OF CONTAINMENT CONTROL UNIT PRISONS FLOURISH

More than 1,000,000 people are incarcerated by the United States; over 3,000,000 are under the control of the "Criminal" "Justice" "System," and about 10,000,000 are arrested yearly. Black people in the U.S. are imprisoned at a rate of about 900 per 100,000, which is about 7.5 times as often as white people in the U.S. and almost twice as often as Black people in South Africa. About one out of every four Black men will go to prison in his lifetime (this does not include jail, parole, probation, or arrest); about one out of every two Black men will be arrested, and there are more Black men aged 20-29 under control of the criminal justice system than there are Black men of all ages in college. Although there are many fewer women in prison, the imprisonment racial differential between Black and white women is even greater than between Black and white men.

While huge numbers of people are going to prison, the crime rate is not decreasing; society is not becoming a "kinder and gentler" place; no one is being rehabilitated, and an entire nation of Black people is being criminalized. The "war on crime" of Lyndon Johnson has become the "war on drugs" of George Bush, but even the *Los Angeles Times* states that they are both quite simply a war on Black people. For example, a front-page article in this paper noted that while 80% of all drug users are white, 80% of all people who go to prison for using drugs are Black.

The desperate conditions of life for Black people are widely understood by now by people likely to be reading this statement and thus need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that many of these conditions are similar to those in the Third World.

The nature of imprisonment along with these conditions of life constitute genocide, as defined by the United Nations General Assembly, being inflicted upon Black people by the United States.

Prisons do not deter crime. Prisons do not rehabilitate people. And it costs far more to send a person to prison than to Harvard. The only function that an institution that fits this description can serve is as some kind of containment mechanism for people of color.

It is important for us to note that prisons should not be seen as an accident or as a "failure." Prisons only fail if their purpose is to prevent crime or to rehabilitate. If, on the other hand, the purpose of prisons is to contain people of color, they are succeeding—at least temporarily.

We believe that people of color will be the leading force for progressive change in the United States, and the world. Historically, they have demonstrated the greatest tendency to pursue the creation of a just society within the borders of the United States, and we see nothing that has changed this situation. Thus we oppose the use of prisons to blunt and destroy the potential insurgency of people of color.

It is in this context that control unit prisons can best be understood. Rebellion in society cannot be conained

except by imprisonment. Rebellion within prisons cannot be contained except by control units. They are the prisons within the prison system. Although we were told that the

The government's propaganda that we are "the worst of the worst" serves as a rationalization for the proliferation of control unit prisons and justification of the abuses which take place within them. And it's pure rubbish.

I saw this sort of propaganda used during my tour in Viet Nam. From training sergeants to general William Westmoreland, we were steadily fed a diet of racist, anticommunist, anti-Vietnamese propaganda which served to foster the worst images of the people of that ravaged country. And it made it easier for us to kill, abuse and denigrate. I still remember when Westmoreland said the Vietnamese don't care about dying because they don't place the same value on human life that Americans do. Unadulterated, racist garbage.

RAY LEVASSEUR, prisoner at Marion

United States Penitentiary at Marion would put all the violent prisoners in one prison and allow the rest of the system to loosen up, this has been a big lie. First, it is not the most violent prisoners who get sent to Marion; it is the most rebellious, the dissidents. Second, Marion has not loosened up the prison system. Rather, it has worked as an anchor to pull the rest of the prison system towards it in more and more restrictive prisons.

When Marion was opened, no one could have known what it would become. It evolved gradually to become the most destructive prison in the history of the United States. Now they are planning a "new and improved" Marion in Florence. None of us now can say that we do not know what they are constructing there in the empty lands of Colorado. They are building what will be the most intensive life extinguishing prison that western "civilization" has ever produced.

We are at an essential juncture. Although prisons in the United States have existed for 200 years, now the government is making a conscious, systematic and deliberate attempt to qualitatively shift the meaning and nature of imprisonment

I've seen guys descend to the level of mental disorder because of the games these people, the "prisoncrats," play with one's life, both the mental and physical being are tremendously taxed. It is the sort of psychological torture I'll never forget and Florence will only be worse.

RICK HUNTER-BEY, prisoner at Marion

by generating more and more of these control unit prisons. They are attempting to create a new order, a new order with an iron fist. It is their experiment and thus our battle. Both the buildings and the associated ideology must be combatted.

We oppose control unit prisons for three main reasons. First, they are brutal and no human being should be forced to live under such brutal conditions, conditions that kill the body and deaden the soul; conditions so horrendous that to experience them minimizes the chances that one will ever emerge human again. These conditions degrade and brutalize not only those they incarcerate but those in whose name they are built. Second, these prisons are generating a

My experiences teach me that punishment for crimes proven against me are non-essential, that the government of my country wishes, in a most cruel and deliberate manner, to practice racism against one and all concerned in order to perpetuate its existence.

JAMES JOSEPH OWENS, prisoner at Marion

new model and ideology that will proliferate unless we stop them and stop them fast. Finally, as the capstone of the prison system, these control unit prisons are one of the ultimate attempts of the system of white supremacy to sustain itself. For these three reasons, and many others, we oppose control unit prisons.

The question is, will North Americans ever say enough is enough? Now we are fighting level 6 prisons. Perhaps our grandchildren will be fighting level 9 prisons. And to what effect? Will crime be deterred? Will inequality be minimized? Will enfranchisement increase as these monster prisons come to dominate our lives?

Those of us who are progressive cannot hope to be building a new society, a society based on human values rather than greed and exploitation, unless we face squarely this new level of terror being constructed by the government to operate in our name. To fight against control unit prisons is not a negative act. It is a life-affirming act, an act that can facilitate the pursuit of a new society. All of us must, in one way or another, be involved in such a pursuit.



THE FIGHT AGAINST CONTROL UNIT PRISONS PEOPLE TO CONTACT

This is a list of organizations and individuals who are doing work to stop the proliferation of control unit prisons. Some are working on state prisons and some are working on Florence or Marion. If you are interested in learning more about this work, we urge you to contact one or more of the following:

Pelican Bay Information Project (Corey Weinstein, M.D.)
Prisoners Rights Union
1960 Sixth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 441-4214

Bulldozer
Box 5052 Stn A
Toronto, Ontario M5W 1W4
Canada

Dan Kromer
P.O. Box 32761
Detroit, MI 48232

Edna Silvestri
6428 Cates #1 West
St. Louis, MO 63130

Committee to End the Marion Lockdown
P.O. Box 578172
Chicago, IL 60657-8172
(312) 235-0070

Women's Jail Project
P.O. Box 1592
Madison, WI 53701
(608) 251-6314

Leonard Peltier Defense Committee
National Office
P.O. Box 583
Lawrence, KS 66044
(913) 842-5774

Saxifrage
P.O. Box 18717
Denver, CO 80218

Cindy Bowden
P.O. Box 7489
Boulder, CO 80306

Rita Martinez
716 West 16th Street
Pueblo, CO 81003

Crossroads Support Network
Masai Ehehosi
P.O. Box 529
Bergen Ave. #A81
Jersey City, New Jersey 07304

NY3 Freedom Campaign
2170 Broadway, Suite 2234
New York, N.Y. 10024

NOVEMBER 17, 1990 CALL FOR ACTION

The November 17, 1990 conference was a call for action to stop the new proposed United States Penitentiary (USP) in Florence, Colorado, which is scheduled to be the second level six prison, in addition to USP Marion. The conference, sponsored by the CEML and The National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War, took place at DePaul University in Chicago and attracted approximately 100 people to the afternoon workshops from as far away as New York, Colorado, Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Kansas, Missouri, and Canada. Over 150 people attended the evening rally.

The workshops were conceived as an organizer's event, in order to develop a national campaign to spearhead an effort to prevent the new and worse "Marion" from opening in Florence. Preparations for the conference included mailings, CEML presentations at Chicago area events, and publication of the pamphlet "Resistance Won't Stop," a collection of comments by Marion prisoners about the proposed prison at Florence. A pre-conference fact-finding and coalition building trip to Colorado by three members of CEML garnered much media attention in the local press (see article page 3).

Erica Thompson moderated the first workshop entitled "Organizing in Opposition to Control Unit Prisons." The first speaker, Michael Deutsch, a lawyer with the People's Law Office in Chicago who was one of the first non-prisoners to join the fight against Marion 20 years ago, spoke of the history of control units and of organizing against Marion. Michael urged everyone to draw upon the lessons of the successful campaign to stop the BOP from opening a behavior modification center at the federal prison at Butner, N.C. He specifically mentioned the need to work in a broad number of sectors, to develop a cadre of dedicated workers, and to rely on prisoners and their families for leadership, ideas and guidance. Jan Susler, also an attorney at the People's Law Office who represents prisoners at Marion, read from a federal court decision that upheld the constitutionality of the lockdown at Marion even though it said that the conditions are "sordid" and "horrible." She stated that, "we don't have to take it because some court of white men says it is legal. We don't really care what they say is legal."

The third speaker, Jaime Delgado, a recently released political prisoner, spoke on his imprisonment as a Puerto

Rican independentista. Jaime told the workshop that many prisons not considered to be "control-unit" prisons, do indeed contain their own isolation cells and control units, and that the psychological torture of sensory deprivation occurs in these prisons also. During the question and answer period he cheered everyone by relating his experience in being energized and empowered when, as a prisoner in isolation, he heard people outside demonstrating on his behalf. The fourth speaker, Safiya Bukhari-Alston, also a former political prisoner, spoke about her experience as a political prisoner and her struggle against control unit prisons in New York. She

urged us to remember that our comrades in prison are our family, our brothers and sisters, and that we must continue to communicate and support them in order to continue the struggle.

The second workshop, addressed what we know about Florence, and was conducted by CEML members Mariel Nanasi and Tim Lohraff. Mariel detailed the history of the Florence area.

Canon City, eight miles from the proposed site, is the home of seven of Colorado's 14 prisons. An economically depressed area, people are vying for the 60% of the prison jobs allotted to the local population, all the lowest paying positions. Mariel next discussed what is known about the planned maximum security prison. She related that cells will probably have solid front doors on small ranges, and each cell may have its own recreation area to further isolate prisoners. She concluded that the BOP has made as their mission at Florence the "social experimentation, physical manipulation and destruction of those who challenge the system."

Tim discussed the legal strategies that may be used to temporarily or permanently stop Florence. He first told the workshop about what the environmental impact statement revealed about Florence and the BOP's plans. He also discussed in detail the nearby contamination from the Cotter Mill Company, which is on the Superfund priority cleanup list, like Crab Orchard Lake in Marion. Cotter Mill has polluted the small town of Lincoln Park, about five miles from the proposed prison site, with radioactive wastes. Finally, he discussed specific federal environmental statutes upon which a lawsuit could possibly be based, stressing that coalition building and networking with progressive environmental and legal groups was the key to any success in the legal arena.



Pickets protest Marion lockdown

Marchers supporting the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown are shown during Saturday's march from the Southern Illinois University-Carbondale campus to the U.S. Penitentiary at Marion. Demonstrations were held at the campus, the Federal Building and the post office in Carbondale.

Southern Illinois photo by JAN ABBOTT

Steve Whitman moderated the third workshop, an open forum for discussing the possibility of organizing a national campaign to stop Florence. Topics included what form a coalition could take, possible coalition strategies and goals, and coordination. Everyone agreed that more thought needed to be given to logistical problems before starting a national coalition, but phone numbers and addresses were exchanged so that informal cooperation could begin. Participants also decided that a national newsletter should be published, the first issue of which is in your hands.

CEML member Nancy Kurshan opened the evening rally by summing up the day's events and exhorting us all to get involved in combating the U.S. prison plans of a "New Order with an Iron Hand." The first speaker, Bob Robideau of the American Indian Movement, co-defendant of Leonard Peltier and National Coordinator of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, began by noting that the use of the courtroom to eliminate political activists is not a new tactic. He called for unity among members of different liberation struggles and reminded us of the sacrifices our imprisoned brothers and sisters have made. He declared that "our comrades in prison are strong enough to challenge the enemy all the way to the steel cages. In the spirit of such sacrifice, it is essential that we build solidarity amongst our movements to support our combatants."

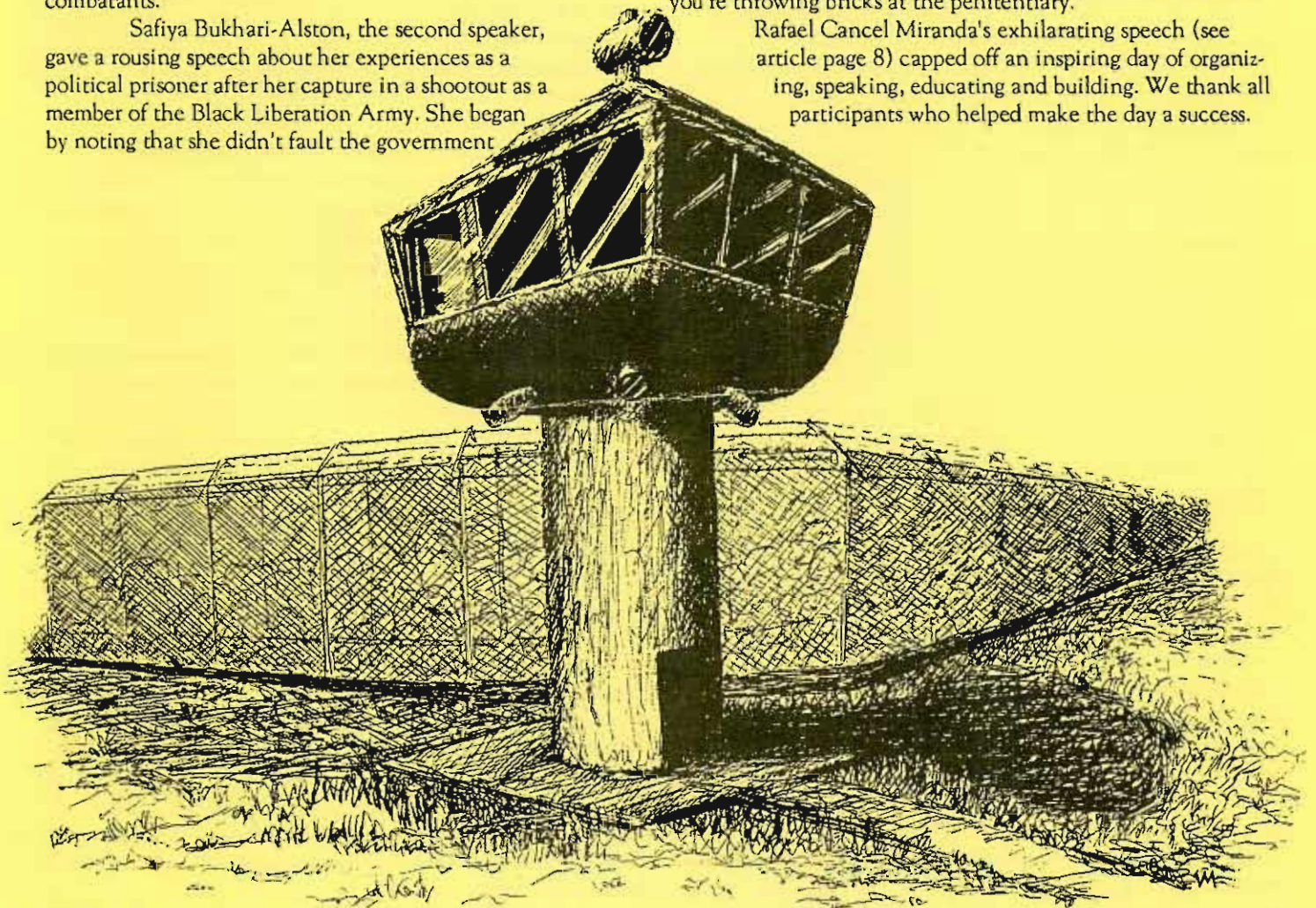
Safiya Bukhari-Alston, the second speaker, gave a rousing speech about her experiences as a political prisoner after her capture in a shootout as a member of the Black Liberation Army. She began by noting that she didn't fault the government

Prisons are becoming big business and this gulag is the hottest model for duplication. The ratio of jailers to prisoners in this gulag is almost one to one. This is translated into more jobs for jailers. And there's plenty of demands for such jobs. For any economically depressed community, getting a prison is almost a miracle. For politicians who get elected using crime as an issue and calling for less government, building prisons is the perfect budget item. And for industry, prisons are a sweetheart deal. Consequently, structurally prisons are becoming a solution for economic woes and the final solution to the problem of the wretched and the alienated of this society.

OSCAR LOPEZ RIVERA, prisoner at Marion

for COINTELPRO (the FBI's covert intelligence program targeting the black liberation movement), but faulted us for allowing them to get away with it. She told the workshop that while we're organizing to stop Florence, we cannot allow ourselves to only organize those who are about the same things we are about. Telling us of her years as a prisoner, and now as an organizer, she declared that "any time you organize, you're throwing bricks at the penitentiary."

Rafael Cancel Miranda's exhilarating speech (see article page 8) capped off an inspiring day of organizing, speaking, educating and building. We thank all participants who helped make the day a success.



"40 ft. to Freedom"

VON MOOS

U.S.P. Marion - Jan. 16th, 1991

CEML -7-

"THE ONLY WAY WE CAN STOP NOTHING IS IF WE DO NOTHING. THAT IS THE WORST DEFEAT WE CAN HAVE, DOING NOTHING."

Rafael Cancel Miranda is a Puerto Rican national hero. He spent 25 years in prison fighting for the independence of Puerto Rico. He was finally released in 1979 after an intensive international campaign forced Jimmy Carter to free Rafael and the other four nationalists. Rafael's 25 years were spent in all the worst prisons in the US, including six in Alcatraz and eight in Marion.

On November 17, 1991 Rafael gave the concluding address to the day-long conference devoted to stopping the Florence Control Unit. The following are excerpts from that speech. Those present alternately laughed and cried as Rafael wove a tale of courage, strength and determination. No transcription could ever adequately convey what Rafael says. (If you would like a copy of the video tape of the evening's rally, including Rafael's full speech, see details on the last page.)

When I went into prison, they gave me a very big honor. They didn't like me. They sent me straight to Alcatraz, straight from court. I went to Alcatraz 24 years old. I came out when I was 30 years old. Then I went to Leavenworth. They put me in isolation in Leavenworth for 5 months because they said I led a strike. By that time I was already locked up for 16 years. If after 16 years I was good enough, strong enough, to still organize a strike, then Alcatraz did nothing to me.

Because of that strike they sent me as a punishment to Marion. They charged me with being the leader of the strike. When I went to Marion they sent me straight to the hole (solitary confinement). They told me they sent me to Marion because I had too many friends. Can you imagine them punishing someone for having too many friends?

At Marion we held another strike and for some reason they charged me again for being a leader of the strike and put me in solitary. That was the time, right there and then, when they first created the Control Unit. That happened in 1972. It was just solitary confinement at first, but they transformed it into a Control Unit, the Control Unit that we know today but really not as bad as it is today. I spent 18 months in the Control Unit. Within that space of time many people killed themselves there. Many also went crazy. They used to give prolixin, thorazine and valium. Once you get hooked into that, forget it; you're not your own man or woman any more.

I was in the Control Unit where Oscar is today. When the prolixin and the thorazine and the valium don't work, they beat you. They use the big stick. It was common for them to beat a prisoner in the Control Unit and then say he killed himself. Quite a few prisoners killed themselves like that.

It was at that time when I was in the Control Unit that I met the people in Chicago. Then the battle to free us really started. People from Chicago like Carmen Valentin, Carlos Alberto Torres, Lucy and Alicia Rodriguez, all the brothers and sisters who are in prison now, we owe it all to them. We are enjoying ourselves talking here today thanks to them. They kept moving. They put heart in it. In this type of struggle, you don't go half way. If you don't go all the way, then get the heck out of the way because you are going to be an obstacle. They started moving here in Chicago and from Chicago to New York. And in a few years, that small group of people had the case of the 5 Puerto Rican Nationalists all around the world. It was all across the world, and it all started right here with a group like you. That's why I know the power of a group of people like you. When you really work, you can shake the power of the whole United States system. 500

people. 200 people even. They underestimate us, but that's good. That means we can make big surprises.

When I was in prison, they were talking about opening a behavior modification prison in Burner, North Carolina already. Just like they're talking now about Florence. And then a group of people started fighting against Butner, and we won.

They never opened Butner.

We can stop Control Units. We can stop Florence because we have the strength. We have to have the confidence. The only way we can stop nothing is if we do nothing. That is the worst defeat we can have. Doing nothing. Sometimes we get scared. We think they are too overpowering. They are not that strong. Superman and Rambo are fiction. Fiction. *You can do it. I know it.*

If somebody can stop control units, if somebody can stop Florence, if somebody could even change the system in the long run, these are the kinds of people who could do it. This is the type of people. You are the ones who could do it. I know that some day it will depend not on them, but us. How soon it happens will depend on us. We will hear Leonard Peltier from here, from this podium. We will hear Oscar Lopez from here. We will hear Carmen Valentin. We can do it.

All we have to do is have confidence in ourselves. When we are together, we are powerful. They are the weak ones. They are the minority, but they let us believe that they are the powerful ones. If we get organized, we can change the whole system. We have the power. When we get together as one people, George Bush will wind up running away from us. They ask themselves, what the heck makes a man be like Luis Rosa. What makes a woman be like Carmen Valentin. Carmen Valentin is such a little person but with such power, such strength. They can not understand us. They can not understand humanity.

When I'm with you, you all are my people. I feel one with you. Thank you very much and keep on.



Rafael Cancel Miranda, Bob Robideau, Safiya Bukhari-Alston

A CHRONOLOGY OF CONTAMINATION BY THE COTTER URANIUM CORPORATION

This chronology gives a brief history of the the main polluter in the Florence area, Cotter Uranium Corporation, a uranium milling plant. All is not known about the extent of radiation contamination, but we do know that the risks are high and the Bureau of Prisons is aware of them.

* From 1958 until 1987, the mill processed uranium ore into material called "yellow cake." It then shipped this yellow cake to Commonwealth Edison, in Chicago, Illinois, for use in the company's nuclear utility industries.

* In 1968, Cotter purchased 100,000 tons of previously processed uranium ore which was originally used by the U.S. government in the production of the first atomic weapons. Studies of the ore have since shown that it possesses some of the highest levels of radioactive contaminants, Thorium 230 and Protactinium 231 known to humans. After Cotter purchased the ore, they shipped it to their mill in rail cars. Studies of the soil at the depot show that large amounts of radioactive dust are present at the depot. The presence of this dust is most likely attributable to the transport of this "Manhattan Project" ore. Cotter did not document this "Manhattan Project" material in their inventory; but later admitted, in 1989, that they had milled this extremely potent ore.

* Cotter originally stored its tailings, the remnants of the milling process which still contain 10% of the original uranium ore and 90% of the original radiation potential, in a series of unlined tailing ponds. In 1981, Cotter acknowledged that these unlined ponds were leaking and attempted to alleviate these problems by installing lined tailing ponds, but due to improper installation these leaked, as well.

* As early as 1983, the Environmental Protection Agency placed Lincoln Park, just 5 miles from Florence, on the National Priority List of the United States most contaminated sites.

* In 1985, the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) documented that the tailing ponds seeped into the underground water source. The water source in these areas show major contamination by both radioactive elements and heavy metals and has been labeled "poison aquifer." It has posed many health problems in the area including reportedly

high rate of birth defects and lymphomic cancer. The RI/FS further elucidates the problems already detected among domestic animals, wildlife, agriculture and fish, citing for instance, the fact that as early as 1962, farmers and ranchers began noticing that their cattle were getting skinnier and losing hair.

* In 1988, Cotter agreed to a \$15 million settlement to clean up the Cotter site. This does not include the railroad depot.

* According to the 1989 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), an in-depth study on the Florence prison site, the water source for the prison is to be provided by the City of Florence, which currently gets its water from the Arkansas River. The EIS states that the Arkansas River "is subject to pollution which could render its water supply unusable." Currently, the city is in the process of seeking an alternative water supply.

* The 1989 EIS raises the additional concern of air contamination. When the tailings separate from the tailing ponds, the high winds which blow down through the canyon scatter the dust from the tailings over the towns and cities below. Also, after the old tailing ponds were emptied, the soil which had been underneath was left to dry out and migrate in the prevailing wind patterns. Experts on radiation diseases state that the contaminated dust is the most threatening and dangerous source of contamination. There is an estimate, by Cotter itself, that over 19.9 tons of extremely hazardous dust were released annually from the mill. This is particularly important because of the arid nature of the region, and the fact that the EIS itself notes that Florence is in violation of legal health standards for "particulates" - or air-borne pollution. "Due to the semi-arid conditions of the region, particulate concentrations resulting from dust carried by high winds is exceptionally difficult to control," the EIS warns.

Ladies and Gentlemen, (we) are entering a new era of repression. A dismal future of totalitarianism nefarious to the very core. Brutal at its kindest and gentler of states - the land of milk and honey is sour with corruption. Most organized countermeasures will still have a positive effect with notable percentages of success. Again, the government is on the run . . . hoping to ease out the backdoor (as usual) to another out of the way place before everyone is made "aware" of this unjust lockdown! But, of course, the tools of their trade will follow. [P]ersevere and faint not, you will succeed. And because "poison makes me sick" you must not give up! And for the record, which is the more toxic - PCB or BOP?

VON MOOS, prisoner at Marion

WHO WE ARE

This newsletter is published by the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML). The United States Penitentiary at Marion was opened in 1963 to replace the infamous Alcatraz prison which closed that same year. Since then, Marion has become an increasingly inhumane institution. In 1973, two years after the rebellion at Attica prison, one wing of Marion was turned into a control unit. In 1979 Marion became the first prison to be assigned the level 6 security rating, the highest in the system. In 1983, the entire prison was locked down and turned into one huge control unit. CEML was founded in 1985, with three main purposes: to fight against the brutality of the prison; to work against the spread of control unit prisons throughout the U.S.; and to expose the white supremacist nature of the prison system. Over the years, those opposed to Marion have fought many battles, winning some of them. But the lockdown continues, and thus so does the battle against it.

In early 1990, the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) announced that the "mission of Marion" would be moved to a new prison being constructed in Florence, Colorado. CEML decided that, as small as we were, we need to fight against the opening of this prison that would likely become the most barbaric in the U.S. We initiated a call for a conference in November 1990 to map a strategy to halt the opening of this new prison. As the conference summary (contained elsewhere in this newsletter) indicates, the conference went well. One of the main proposals approved at the conference was the creation of a national newsletter in opposition to control unit prisons in general and Florence in particular. It was also suggested that CEML be responsible for the first issue. This is what you are now reading.

The production of this newsletter has been a major endeavor for CEML. We hope to expand and improve it in future issues. To do so, we need your help. Specifically, please help us by doing one or more of the following:

- 1) Critique this issue. What can we do to improve future issues?
- 2) Contribute ideas and articles. Is there an issue we should be covering or someone we should be soliciting an article from? Could you or someone you know write an article for the newsletter?
- 3) Help distribute this issue. Please write for additional copies.
- 4) Contribute financially.

Fighting against Marion was certainly enough work for us; adding Florence is very difficult, yet we feel we cannot walk away from it. This work cannot suffer as we expand our efforts to publish this newsletter. Please help us 1. Reproduce and circulate the enclosed petition; 2. reproduce, circulate and write the BOP for answers to the enclosed questions; 3. send for and help to distribute our other resources (we will be happy to provide you with a Resource List).

----- CUT THIS COUPON AND MAIL IT TO CEML AT THE ADDRESS BELOW -----

Yes! I want to help CEML produce more issues of this newsletter and continue its work to stop control unit prisons.

- ☐ My comments on this issue are attached.
- ☐ I would like a video copy of the November 17, 1990 conference rally. Enclosed is \$10 for my video copy.
- ☐ I would like to write an article or know someone who might write one. Please contact me.
- ☐ I would like to help distribute this issue. Enclose please find \$_____ for _____ copies (\$.50 per copy).
- ☐ Enclosed is my financial contribution to the newsletter:
_____ \$100 _____ \$75 _____ \$50 _____ \$25 _____ Other _____
- ☐ Please send me a _____ Resource List or _____ publications as listed on attached page.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

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