

Struggle for existence in Spain's cemeteries for the living . . .

No consent from Alan!

11th JULY, 1978.

AFTER being arrested by the Spanish police at the African-Spanish frontier I was escorted to the local prison, "Les Rosales" in Ceuta.

When I first saw the inside of the prison I was very shocked. Everything and everywhere looked very dirty and a very strong smell of urine filled the air, especially from the Patio (exercise yard).

The majority of the people in this prison are Moroccan because Ceuta is situated in North Africa. The rest of the people are mostly Spanish, with a dozen or so Europeans.

Unfortunately, I arrived at the prison at a very bad time because two or three weeks before my arrival there had been a riot and many departments were badly damaged by fire. The Europeans were held responsible for starting the riot, the cause was for much better conditions.

I was supplied with one filthy bed sheet and a mattress with many urine stains. I was then put in a cell with three other people, two French lads and an English lad from Liverpool, J. McLaughlin, who is my constant companion throughout the time I have already spent in prison here and on the mainland in Spain.

There are 15 cells approximately three metres by 50 metres; each cell contains two double sleeping bunks; that takes up 90 per cent of the space. There is also a toilet and hand wash basin. The smell alone from the toilet is unbearable because the flushing mechanism does not work and, for most part of the day and night the water is turned off at the mains.

There is no shortage of water in Ceuta and I assume that the lack of water for the prisoners is just aggravation of the guards' part. Apart

from not being able to use the toilet regularly there is no guarantee that one can have a wash.

There is no laundry or a change of bed sheets, clothes and bedding have to be washed by hand in cold water in the wash basin.

At this time of year the weather is really hot and it is very difficult to sleep at night. Prisoners are constantly bitten by bed bugs that live in the mattresses and small cracks in the walls. Mosquitos are another popular menace.

The doctor who visits the prison has very little interest in the people; several complaints have been made because of the very unhygienic conditions but he laughs at the Europeans and states: "It is normal!"

The Moroccan and Spanish prisoners seldom complain about anything. This I can now understand because McLaughlin and I wrote a telegram to the World Health Organisation and to the Minister of Justice in Madrid complaining and asking for their help and support.

The telegrams were destroyed by the chief officer and we were threatened with a beating if any more complaints were made of this nature.

"OUR ARMS were aching and a few of us were very close to losing consciousness after about an hour. If the guards saw that our arms were slowly dropping they would strike us in the genitals with their batons"

For a short time I worked in the kitchen with my three cell mates. Again I was shocked and disturbed by what I saw. The kitchen was absolutely filthy and infested with rats,

lice and many other strange insects.

To my amazement, some of the cooking was done in a small Patio adjoining the kitchen, in the open air. Four large stone blocks are placed on the ground and a metal container placed on top; a fire made of wood is then lit and fish, paella and various other foods is cooked in this fashion.

By ALAN JONES

There is no one to supervise the kitchen; the food is never cleaned properly, if at all, fish is served with the insides and heads intact and the smell is disgusting.

Apart from the cells there are two dormitories, one for Morroccans and the other for Spanish and Europeans mixed. These dormitories are very overcrowded and because of the very bad conditions there are often quarrels and fighting among the prisoners.

If the weather permits, all the prisoners eat their food in the Patio, a very small area for over 100 people. Most have to stand or sit on the floor to eat because tables and chairs are not provided. Waste food is thrown all over the place so the Patio is infested with rats, flies and other disease carrying insects.

The guards in Ceuta prison do as little work as possible. The prison is virtually controlled by Cabboes (trustee prisoners). These prisoners often lock all cell doors and run the prison while the guards sit in the centre office, drinking beer and coffee.

Several complaints have been made to the various con-

sulates of the European prisoners. The British Vice-Consul here at Ceuta, had full knowledge of the conditions but stated he could do nothing to help us because we are under Spanish control.

During this time I had my first of many interviews with my solicitor. Before the end of 1977 a person charged with a large amount of hashish could, through a solicitor, get bail. A person would then leave Spain and forfeit the amount of money paid for bail.

In my case bail was refused, but the sum of money required was £17,000.

Even in Spain today, if a person can pay the amount of money required there is no doubt that the person will be given freedom.

A state solicitor is available if a person has no money; it is also a well known fact that state solicitors do very little in court to help.

It depends on the amount of hashish as to what a solicitor's fee may be if you can afford to pay for one. Usually it is between £500 and £1,000 for his services.

This money is usually paid for a lower sentence but there is no guarantee, especially if the court finds you guilty. Up to now I have never heard of any European getting a not guilty verdict in court and there are innocent people serving ridiculous sentences in Spanish prisons today.

With conditions getting worse instead of improving, it was inevitable that many of the Europeans would eventually try to escape.

A very good plan of escape was put into operation, but, unfortunately, it failed at the very final stage.

Daniel, a French lad, and a very good friend of mine was shot at by the sentry guards and unfortunately he fell in between the two surrounding walls of the prison.

He was not hit by the 20 or more bullets fired but was seriously injured and spent four months in hospital before returning to the prison.

Daniel now has a damaged spine and has a permanent limp. He has recently been to court and is serving eight years for hashish.

The night escape failed, all the prisoners were rounded up and made to face the wall, in the patio with our hands above our heads. We were surrounded by guards armed with rifles and sub-machine guns.

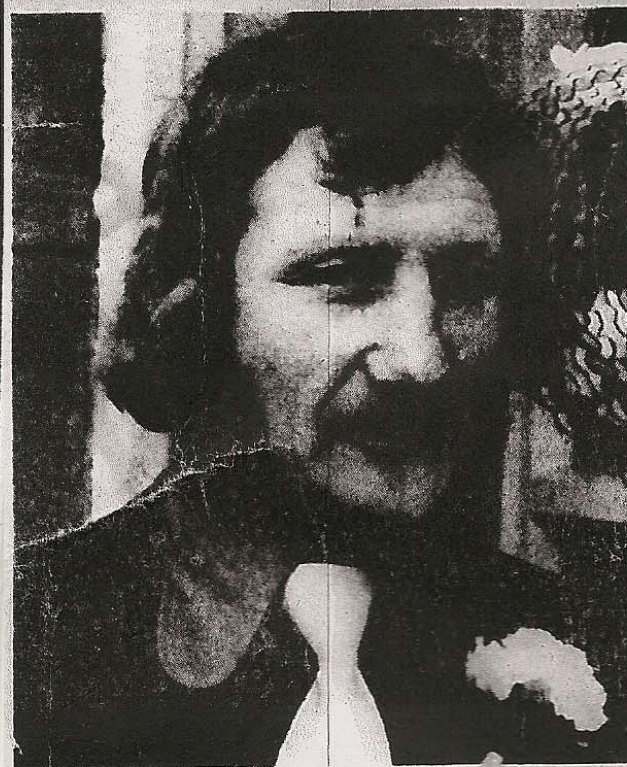
The Europeans were then separated from the other prisoners and beaten very badly by the guards. We were then taken into the prison and again forced to face the wall with our hands above our heads, this time for approximately two hours. During this time screams could be heard very clearly coming from the prisoners who were being beaten by the guards.

"SOME DAYS the food is definitely not for human consumption . . . My honest opinion amongst other European I have spoken to it is remarkable and unbelievable & no person has been caught and DIED from any disease in prison"

Our arms aching and a few of us were very close to losing consciousness after about an hour in this position. If the guards saw that our arms were dropping they would strike us in the genitals with their batons.

Many innocent people were badly beaten, including Spanish Morroccan because the guards had no evidence wanted the names of people who attempted escape.

For weeks after we were locked in the cells for 24 hours a day it was two months before I visited the hospital where



ALAN JONES from Ton Pentre was arrested on July 11 last year in Ceuta, Spanish Morrocco.

He was charged with smuggling over 60 lbs of hashish over the border.

He was sent to Ceuta jail and has been in prison ever since.

The 'Rhondda Leader' has been interested in his case and we asked him to write an article about his experiences. We received the article this week.

He sent it from Seville prison on the Spanish mainland. It was too dangerous to send from Ceuta.

Alan Jones has always said he is innocent and the drug was planted on him but he has not yet been tried.

In the 10 months he has been in the hands of the Spanish authorities he has been to three jails; Ceuta (twice), Cordoba and now Seville.

This is his story . . .

they found my body was still badly bruised and my cracked ribs were healing very nicely with the binding of torn sheets that I applied with the help of my friends. In Ceuta I was also refused to see the consulate and the mail was interfered with.

October 3, 1978.

Twelve Europeans were then transferred to various prisons on the Spanish mainland, mainly to Cordoba. The reception we received at Cordoba was very pleasant and the guards and prison were more relaxed in every

way. Our mail was regular which is a great comfort to many of the prisoners and their families. We also found the guards were very helpful to us strangers and treated us with every respect.

Although the food is not very good in most Spanish prisons, Cordoba has two small shops where various food, tinned fruit, tea, coffee and toiletries can be bought if you have the money. Prisoners in Cordoba are allowed to have 4,000 Pesetas per week - £28 - to spend. There is also work to be had and the wages are up to 2,000 pesetas per week. But the

work is mainly for Spanish people. There is also a film most Saturdays and Sundays and a fee of 20 pesetas is charged. Pornography and violence are favourites with Spanish, especially with the younger generation.

I have found and many people agree, including the Spanish people I have spoken to, that the people in Southern Spain are not so intelligent as those of Northern Spain. If today's statistics are correct, 40 per cent of the Spanish population cannot read or write.

Many prisoners in Spain are serving sentences from 30 to 100 years for robbery with or without arms. Many of these sentences were imposed when Franco was alive. Prisoners, including Europeans, have to serve at least ten years before being considered for release.

I spoke to a German lad of 25 serving 34 years for house breaking; he has now spent eight years in various prisons and I asked his opinion of the prisons in general. His reply was: "It's a cemetery for the living".

It is advisable not to get too acquainted with many Spanish prisoners and to avoid arguments or quarrels because usually the younger prisoners are armed with a knife or sharp instrument and would think nothing of using it in a quarrel or a fight.

The British Vice Consul for Cordoba, Mr. Formby, travels from Seville as often as possible to visit any British subject. Unlike the Consul at Ceuta, Mr. Formby was most helpful in any enquiries I wanted made, either with the prison authorities, my solicitor or family.

Although conditions in general are 100 per cent better in Cordoba, I found that in winter time the prison is extremely cold and very damp throughout. The mattress and bed clothes are very damp and the cells extremely cold. Many prisoners, including myself, slept fully dressed for most of the winter period.

Myself and fellow Europeans suffered in silence and put up with this discomfort because the general atmosphere and everything in general was a lot better than what we had experienced in Ceuta.

25th February, 1979.

After a period of five months in Cordoba, McLaughlin and I were transferred back to Ceuta for trial. (Although we were told by the Consul and our solicitor that our trial was to take place in Cadiz).

On entering the prison for the second time, I was again very disturbed to find that the

conditions had seriously deteriorated.

Some days the food is definitely not for human consumption, although I am told the kitchen has been modernised.

In my honest opinion, and most of the other Europeans I have spoken to, it is remarkable and unbelievable how no person has NOT caught and DIED from any disease in this prison.

My trial was adjourned on March 7. My solicitor informs me that my case will be heard some time in May because I am innocent of the charges and pleading not guilty.

I am also told that the extra delay is because the court requires information from Interpol. Why Interpol has not been notified during the eight months it took to get my case into court is, as much your guess as mine!

"There is no one to supervise in the kitchen; the food is never cleaned properly, if at all; fish is served with the insides and heads intact and the smell is disgusting"

"In my case bail was refused but the sum of money required was £17,000. Even in Spain today, if a person can pay the money required there is no doubt they will be given freedom"

Today in Spain the new constitution is established and the law will eventually be the same as other countries throughout Europe, especially now that Spain may eventually become a member of the Common Market.

It is obvious that the country and the people must have first consideration if Spain wants to become a prosperous and better country to live in. But it is also essential that conditions in Spanish prisons must be looked into very seriously.

Not just for the people of other countries serving sentences in Spain but for the Spanish people also.

There is a lot more to be said about Spain as a country, the people and prisons but I am taking this opportunity to send this article off now.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family at Wyndham Street, my brother Norman who has worked extremely hard on my behalf, and, finally, a very good friend who has kept in touch with me throughout my stay in Spain, Mr. Phillip Llewellyn and his family from Llwynypia.