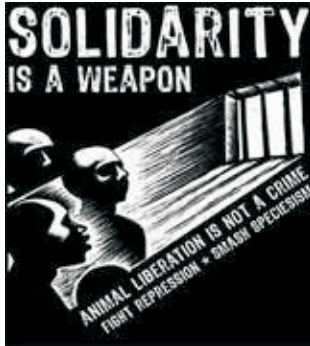


Solidarity Party for Austrian Animal Rights Activists

A solidarity party for ddr. Martin Balluch and 9 other Austrian Animal Rights Activists will take place on Thursday, February 18th, 2010 at 19.30 in Gustaf hall (Pekarna Cultural Centre) in Maribor.

At the end of May 2008 Balluch and his colleagues were imprisoned. At six o' clock in the morning on May 21st 23 flats and houses were stormed by special units of the Austrian police opening doors violently, waking sleeping people and threatening them with firearms. A house search requires concrete suspicion of illegal behaviour. The search must also be restricted to objects which are important for immediate clarification of that accusation. The search warrant also needs to name the wanted object, so that occupants of the house have the chance to give them up wanted objects voluntarily. In this case (on May 21st) there was no connection between the criminal offence and the accused persons. The accused were not told what objects were wanted, and none of the affected persons were given the opportunity to give the wanted objects up to the police. Most people did not even get the opportunity to phone a legal adviser. First, mobile phones were confiscated so that nobody could make calls. These illegal search methods were also used at the office of the Verein Gegen Tierfabriken (VGT) and the storehouse in which information about animal abuse was kept. The same search methods were used at three other animal protection locations, organisations which have been hugely successful in their line of work over the years. The organisations worked democratically and without any violence, but were awkward for politicians. The activists were held in prison without official accusations and proofs.



Because there were no concrete accusations, § 278a StGB has been used in order to hold people on remand, wherein detainees are assumed to be members of a criminal organisation. To quote from Green MP Brigid Weinzinger's May 26th, 2008 media broadcast; "This passage of criminal law is geared to Mafia and similar organisations." The Office of Public Prosecutor however, does not have any documents which prove the existence of a criminal organisation.

Because of the world wide public support and a later accusation based on false statements and proofs, the prisoners were released three months later on September 2nd 2009. All the time there were protest taking place around the world to support the Austrian 10. Also many human rights organizations publicly declared their support. Amnesty International released a two page statement in which it describes a string of abuses of the Austrian criminal law. Amnesty International emphasizes, once again, that political and social activism as a freedom of expression is a protected human right. The statement criticises the use of sec 278a of the criminal code being used against political activists noting "It seems inadequate to postulate a group involved in organised crime from a situation where a number of demonstrators arrange to resist state authority".

On March 2nd 2010 a trial against activists starts. It is suppose to last 6 months with three hearings per week. The activists are now threatened with up to 5 years imprisonment. The cost of the trial will amount to 35.000 eur per activist.

The Austrian law gives the activists no right to be reimbursed for these legal costs even if they were eventually found not guilty.

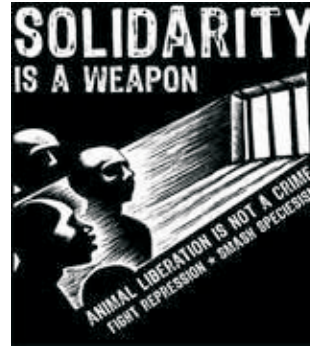
With the solidarity party we want to express the social and political dimension of these events, especially the danger of establishing police states and lobbies, who see a threat to conscienceless capitalism in ethical practices. With collecting donation on Febuary Vegan dinner, we want to offer Austrian activist a little help in covering the costs of the trial.

www.for-animals.org

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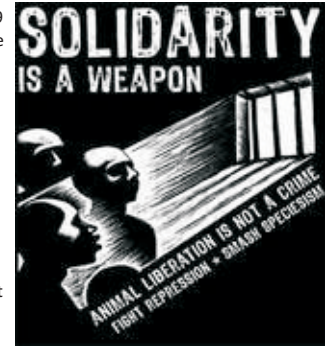
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