

Speeches from the Founding Conference of the International Emergency Committee to Defend the Life of Abimael Guzmán

Introduction

On the weekend of 27-28 February 1993, nearly 1000 people came together, many having traveled from across the globe, to attend the Founding Conference of the International Emergency Committee to Defend the Life of Abimael Guzmán in Duisburg, Germany. People from over 33 countries were at the Conference: Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bolivia, Columbia, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Iran, Italy, Kurdistan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Martinique, Malaysia, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, U.S., Yugoslavia.

This is no ordinary campaign and this was no ordinary Conference. For many, simply attending the Conference was a struggle. The delegates from Nepal represented thousands in their Country who are active in the campaign - their air tickets alone cost the equivalent of one year's wage for a member of parliament in Nepal. At least two delegates were detained at German airports on their way to the Conference by police who knew of their destination. Many exiled Peruvians came to the Conference, some at great risk since they are being sought for extradition by the Peruvian government.

One delegate, Mr. Metin Can, a Kurdish human rights lawyer from Turkey, was abducted by government death squads in Turkey a few days before he was to leave for the Conference. His captors called his wife to tell her that if he gave up going to Europe to attend the Conference, they might release him. He and another human rights activist were found a few days later, tortured to death. The enemies of the people take this campaign seriously. And they took this Conference seriously.

As hundreds filed into Efendi Hall in Duisburg on Saturday morning, they were greeted with a massive larger-than-life mural of Dr. Abimael Guzmán saluting them from the prison "cage" in Peru. The walls were covered with banners from around the world: a huge blue one from Mexico showing five horsemen taking the Peruvian Andes, a red graffiti banner signed by campaign supporters from Latin America living in Los Angeles and banners in Turkish from Turkey and Germany. The Conference was translated simultaneously into five languages: Spanish, English, Turkish, German and Farsi. This accomplishment was the result of hundreds of hours of technical preparation of headphone equipment, and involved the efforts of over twenty translators who worked into the night. In the hall that day, one understood in a deep way that the efforts of the people can truly break down the barriers of borders and languages - in the service of a great cause.

At the Conference, a new IEC Steering Committee (SC) was established which met on Sunday. Each country selected one or two members of the SC, and four at-large members were elected by the SC (42 members total were present for the SC meeting). Members were elected from the following countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bolivia, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Iran, Italy, Mexico, Nepal, Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and U.S.

...The IEC Call was reaffirmed as the basis of unity for the IEC. The three people who had been working since September 1992 in the London office...were elected to continue to serve in those positions. By-Laws for the IEC were passed unanimously, and four Resolutions were passed. A plan was made to hold International Days of Action in mid-May 1993.

With this Conference, the campaign to defend the life of Abimael Guzmán made real advances, as people from around the world actually came together, met each other face to face, and made plans to propel the campaign to a higher level internationally.

The following are speeches which were prepared for the Conference. Not all of them were able to be delivered, and some were cut short due to time constraints, but they are printed in full here. From this material, one can get a picture of some of the people who, coming from vastly different cultures and walks of life, have united with great energy, optimism and determination in defense of the most important political prisoner in the world today.