

# Brenda Christie FREE

Fifth Estate Collective

1981

On 19 May this year Brenda Earl Christie, a co-founder of the anarchist publishing house Cienfuegos Press, and her two-year-old daughter Branwen, were arrested at Hanover Airport in West Germany as they were boarding a Gatwick (England) bound flight following a three week holiday with her sister-in-law. Both Brenda and her daughter were held by GS-9 antiterrorist police when the Central Police Computer in Wiesbaden indicated that Brenda was wanted on a warrant issued against her eleven years ago in Frankfurt.

Upon her arrest, the West German authorities charged her in connection with the May 10, 1970 bombing of an Iberia Airline flight to Barcelona by the anti-Francoist group Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth (FIJL). The police alleged that Brenda had bought a ticket on that flight for one "Dos Santos," the ticket that was used to place an incendiary device in the luggage compartment of the Iberia flight.

Brenda was imprisoned for eight days in a Frankfurt jail (her daughter was allowed to return home), until the West German police arranged a police line-up in an attempt to have the woman who sold the ticket in 1970 to make a positive identification. As Brenda put it in an interview shortly after her release, "It wasn't funny at the time but it was a complete farce. The other people in the line-up were women police officers, some of them 50 years old... Even then it was just a case of 'spot the Limey,' the witness didn't identify me. When she was pressed she said there was a 20% or 30% chance that it could have been me but she refused to go to court and say so. After that I was released."

All of us here at the *Fifth Estate* were greatly pleased and relieved to hear that May 27, 1981 Brenda had been released and that she was on her way back home, and we were also pleased by the tremendous show of solidarity that was quickly brought into action when the news of her arrest was made public. Groups and individuals from all around the world sent telegrams of outrage to the West German government and of support to Brenda Earl Christie, support that we feel had great impact on how the German authorities dealt with her imprisonment, a situation that could have lasted up to seven months before the court would have had to take any action on the matter.

We've always wondered what effect something as simple as sending a telegram to an embassy has in situations like this, but this time its impact was made quite clear to us. The day after we sent a telegram to the West German Embassy in Washington D.C., a contact at the Detroit daily newspaper the Free Press told us that a representative from the embassy had called the editors of that newspaper asking about our circulation rate and what type of newspaper the FE is. Obviously, the Free Press gave them all the information they wanted—what are friends for. But the important point here is that telegrams concerning matters like the arrest of Brenda do have an impact on the authorities, and a strong show of international solidarity might make the difference between night and day for the person who is on the inside.

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