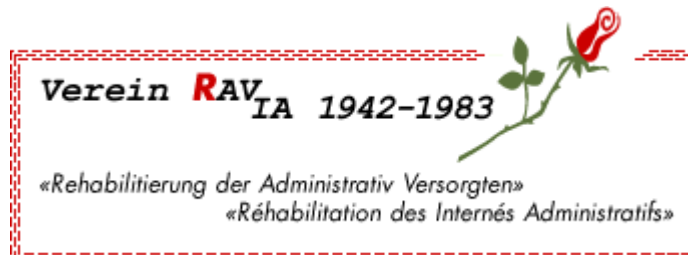


REMEMBRANCE EVENT



RAVIA Association
"Rehabilitation of administrative detainees"

Dear Federal Councillor,

Dear ladies and gentlemen, dear persons affected by the former compulsory care measures,

I was taken into care. When I ended up in the women's prison at Hindelbank I was just 17 years old. In the cell next to me lived murderers, and during the daily walk in the courtyard and also at the workplace we encountered convicted criminals. I was in prison, although I had never been sentenced by a court. My offense was that I was young, passionate, I rebelled, and to cap it all I was expecting a baby from the great love of my life without being married. So the State wanted to "educate" me.

Many of us who were subject to administrative detention had already in our childhood been through unimaginable physical and mental violence, corporal punishment, isolation, and sexual abuse in children's homes, on farms as "contract children," in foster families, as au pairs, and even in our own families. Finally we ended up, supposedly for our "protection," in educational institutions, which were often in fact prisons, where we were kept locked away indefinitely. Also forced adoptions, abortions, sterilisations and castrations took place throughout the 20th century!

We young people who were brought in for education were not "educated" in the way that the law of that time would have approved. Nor were we "punished". No, the worst thing they could do to us was that they wanted to break our will. Many of us really did get broken. And in addition to this we were sullied forever by association with the dregs of our society! This is one of the reasons why we continue to be mocked after our release as "convicts" and "ex-cons". For many of us this in turn meant that the mental torture was kept up incessantly. These coercive measures had no educational value; on the contrary, they were destructive. Those of us who were involved are even today still suffering from post-traumatic stress symptoms, and some of us our afflicted by severe mental and physical suffering, not to mention the social exclusion and discrimination. Many of the victims have taken their own lives during the detention or shortly afterwards, or at a later date. Many have died early due to illness. For most of the people who were subject to administrative detention, even those who managed to make it and survive, the consequences of the morality detention measures of those times are devastating. These emotional wounds do not heal.

The usual justification given for placing young people in penal institutions and penal colonies was that the authorities didn't have sufficient funds to build suitable institutions! What a travesty: to allow damage to the bodies and minds of the people recommended for protective detention, purely for financial reasons. This meant it was not we young people who were being protected but rather the purse of the authorities. In fact things were even taken a step further: it has now long been known that the parents or relatives were in fact compelled to pay for our stay in the prisons and institutions. "Maintenance costs" they called it. And on top of all this we had to do unpaid forced labour. In Fact, for the Swiss government, these incarcerations were quite lucrative!

The State not only put us into prisons and institutions, it often abandoned us after our release. The stigma of having been in prison stays with us throughout our lives. There were many who did not make it, and those who have managed to survive are forced to tremble again and again, whenever they leave out this period in the CV, or when someone asks what that blank space in the life history means. The State has inflicted wounds on us by its despotism. Such wounds never heal. You cannot imagine the amount of energy it

requires just to lead a normal, carefree life.

But it is not only the State that has degraded us to outcasts in society; often the so-called “good citizens” also join in without thinking, or sometimes even deliberately. To this day we find our old wounds being dug into again and again.

The administrative detentions affect our humanity, and suffering. They are a matter of irreversible damage to the development of the health and the mind. Many were completely thrown off the rails.

And that is why we have a request: a hardship fund must be set up as a corrective, supporting measure. This is not meant as a way for the State to “buy itself free”. That is not possible. It is rather a question of making the society and future generations aware of the debt and guilt that the State and its agents have incurred. This would be a sign that the State really does acknowledge its past failures.

Finally I would like to exhort the present leaders of our State to respect and love the children. Because the young people are a beacon of hope for our land. Let us prevent such monumental mistakes from happening a second time.

Dear Federal Councillor Sommaruga, on behalf of all those affected I ask you to act in support of this cause.

Thank you!
Ursula Biondi