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A few notes on media and repression

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In the course of awaiting the processes of several anarchists that are accused of having robbed banks in Aachen in 2013 and 2014, the prosecution office of Aachen, Germany, and their obedient voice, the media, use every chance available to advance their investigation. Whether it is on a juridical or a more subtle mediatic level, all these expressions are different tentacles of the same mechanism of repression. As usual the mainstream media are eager to get a “good” story by all means necessary, pervertedly scrutinizing people’s lives regardless of any ethics. They therefore do not hesitate in aiding the prosecution in spreading their fantastical tales. We have read these without much surprise – this is what journalists do after all –, have watched the hysterical spectacle that is being created around the implicated. Not being surprised however does not mean that we do not feel the need to clarify a few things that may have become blurred in the midst of this incessant stream of written and televised vomit.

After having ejaculated several articles in which the accused were portrayed according to the image the prosecution is trying to

spread, the media has now decided it is time to create their own story. A rumour came to us through the grapevine that a certain Dutch journalist has posted a request on Indymedia asking for information concerning one of the accused. Apparently not satisfied with the image dictated by the prosecution, he searches for “people in the squatting movement of Amsterdam who could tell me something about X”, after which he states that whoever decides to snitch need not worry, as he “will not tell anyone these conversations have taken place.” Needless to say, we are disgusted by this. What should be said is that until this day no statement has been made by the accused towards neither the media nor the cops, and therefore – excuse us for pointing out the obvious – no statement should be made by anyone else either.

Let it be clear that the media and the police are two sides of the same coin, and work closely together in a most refined manner: the media hunts for a story, the prosecution throws out a few assumptions and character sketches, the media publishes these and thus transforms it into “truth”, et voilà, the prosecution is able to reproduce this “truth” and use the mediatic hunt against the implicated. For if the media say so, it must be true. For if the media states these are dangerous criminals on the run, they must be – etcetera ad nauseam. All these intimidation efforts only aim to reinforce the State’s accusations and bring the accused in the dock already convicted by a machine of lies, slander and State propaganda. These tactics are not limited to this case; they have endlessly reproduced themselves throughout history. The media are not only in service of repression, they too are at the very core of repression.

The collaboration between State and media has always been a recipe for misleading information, witch hunts and repression. The media play an important role in manipulating the public opinion, it assures the hegemony of support for the State, even when it is forced to drop the mask of “justice” and openly show its repressive mechanisms. The media excuses repression against everything or anyone that deviates from the norm, against those who do not func-

tion in a manner that is productive for or supportive of State and capital. Even, or perhaps especially in a democratic regime such as the one we live under, the media are intertwined with State propaganda; both offer us the illusion we have the choice to form an opinion, decide by whom we want to be oppressed. Yet these “choices” are always confined within the same rigid parameters of a totalitarian regime that does not allow any challenge to itself, to its logics, to its Power.

Democracy has refined the art of brainwashing, to the point of making media propaganda pass as coexistence of multiple opinions, as the transmission of unbiased information and “free” thinking. Its only aim however consists of maintaining the authority of the States and of capital. Of course democracy allows some slightly contradicting – but in fact complimentary – divergences of positions to exist, to create a self-reinforcing debate, but never a challenge to the existence of institutional authority itself. It creates a wilful participation based on the only claim that democracy is less worse than other totalitarian regimes, that we should count ourselves lucky to be living under a democratic regime.

However, every regime needs enemies in order to offer a solution for the problems they have created, to legitimize its repressive apparatus and ultimately legitimize itself. The search for and classification of enemies too is reinforced and exercised by the media. We have noted the silence and excuses of the media in the economic “crisis” and the troubles of the banks; we have also heard their sickening stories about “external enemies” rattling at the gates of Fortress Europe, accused of wanting to enjoy the fruits of western welfare – fruits that were won by centuries of pillaging by the same western countries. The media reinforce the depiction of people as mere numbers, reinforce the climate of fear in which western countries saturate themselves, and simultaneously show an ever increasing eagerness to praise new “security measures” supposed to keep out or lock up the unwanted, those who might cause the system to stagger.

Whether these unwanted denominate the thousands of people seeking a better life somewhere in the world or those who refuse to or cannot bow down to Power (or a combination of the two) is irrelevant. Murdering borders are being pulled up around its Fortress to keep out “refugees”, while inside the walls repression aims to silence and punish anyone who cannot be kept out or removed from the grounds. The media speak of external enemies, the State also seeks out its internal enemies. Obviously repression is not limited to anarchists, it does however often focus on those who decide to fight repression. For example, in The Hague several people were given an area ban because they dared to show solidarity and agitate in a neighbourhood in a time of control, of cameras, preventive arrests and searches. The ban concerns the Schilderswijk neighbourhood, where in the summer of 2015 riots took place several days in a row after cops had murdered someone. Anarchists were later accused of having incited the revolt. These days even questioning the system and calling out for struggle on a poster referring to the revolt is enough to be prosecuted for incitation.

Repressive blows however cannot be seen as single isolated events, do not exist in a vacuum. They form part of an aggressive multi-front campaign, which aims to achieve a further, distinct step in the devouring of freedom, in violently expressing the domination of the State. Whether it concerns justifying the militarization of streets, emergency measures, legitimizing building walls at borders, massacring people or pursuing its campaigns against rebels and revolutionaries, it certainly needs a voice that creates a reality and an atmosphere in which repression is possible, acceptable and hopefully unquestioned. These are the mechanisms of State propaganda, this is the purpose of the media. Media is an integral and essential part in authority guarding its control and dictating the dependence and approval it needs to rule. The millions of words and images that fill the screens and (toilet)papers are not an echo or reflection of reality, they form an integral part of the creation of

that reality, of the imposition of the morals, rules and logics that permit the existence of the State.

When someone challenges this reality – the frame of authority itself –, when someone fights against it or simply refuses it, there is no mercy shown to the isolation or neutralization that by all means it unleashes against these individuals or groups. Not only through the sentences of the justice system, but also through the stigmatization of these individuals towards the rest of society, making sure they will carry their scarlet letter for the rest of their lives. The media aids the State in relying on public opinion to continue its work: judging, speculating and rendering as uncontagious as possible the ideas and practices that those incompatible with the system defend or are accused of. When the media portrays itself as a court room, it seeks out judges and prosecutors in the public. And this is where we need to be careful, where we need to consider our (perhaps subconscious) role in the continuation of these mechanisms, and ask ourselves how much we contribute to the speculation and creation of roles and a reality that only suits the narrative of domination.

Let’s not forget that repression can be fought in many areas. A court room and newspaper articles however are not among those, this is not the terrain of our struggles, methods and ideas. Let’s leave the speculation and distortion of reality to the experts – the State, cops, media, and their defenders –, let’s understand and intervene in reality on our own terms.

A few enemies of the society of the spectacle