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Letter from the prison of Ghent

Paolo

November 2009

Dear friends,

The 25th of October 2009 at 7.50am, whilst taking my dog for a walk, I was surrounded by three members of the LRD, investigation service, I had to go to their office for an interrogation. A special intervention-unit in an armoured car was waiting at the corner, in case I would resist. The fuckers didn't even let me quietly say good-bye to my daughter who was just leaving for school at that moment.

¹That night a debate between amongst others Filip Dewinter (most popular Flemish extreme right politician) and J.M. Dedecker (extreme right wing liberal who has a political party carrying his own name) took place. The topic of discussion was (what else could it be) the debate around the headscarf. In times of so called economic crisis (because the rich will not have a single piece of bread less to eat) the capital (and its helpers, fascists and right wing political parties) is always looking for some scapegoats to start a witch hunt on, deviating the attention from the real problems, like the unequal and criminal distribution of wealth. The "leftist" social-democrat parties like to join this witch hunt with the aim of keeping and gaining votes. Their only strategy against (extreme) right taking over their points and spitting propaganda of hatred against illegalised people and foreigners (under the pretext of the war against terrorism and, softly spoken, the Islam). During this same night the palace of justice and a few right wing students were attacked. Here and there, fire was put.

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Retrieved on November 26, 2009 from www.non-fides.fr

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The same service made a house search the day before, confiscated my lap-top and took pictures of political posters and others.

At the office they asked me for my alibi for the night of the 6th on the 7th of October, and a lot of questions about mobile phone numbers and a friend of mine. A witness would have recognized me on pictures as being one of the two persons who put fire to a container that night¹.

After the interrogation, I got a juridical arrest. At 14:00 I had to appear before the prosecutor, who decided to detain me on the basis of suspicion of intentional arson on property during night time. I was transferred to prison, where I was kept in secret until Thursday evening. This was probably done in order to avoid me having contact with Jürgen, who was already for two weeks sitting in pre-arrest with the same charges, plus arson by night on property. What's funny is that we're sharing a cell together.

5 days later, I appeared in front of the hearing in chambers and the prosecutor told me I was suspected to have committed some other acts as well. Although my lawyer had told me this is not possible on the day of the appearance, the prosecutor did come up with some new data in connection to a mobile phone. So I got angry. (Not a good idea in the hearing in chambers, haha). This and the fact that I refused to cooperate with the investigation disturbed them a lot: detention prolonged one month.

In the meantime I've been inside for two weeks now and I got "used" to the prison system, in so far as that's possible of course. In this situation the state has complete control over your physical existence, and physically isolates you from the rest of society. While "outside" it is still possible to extract yourself in one way or another from the overpowering authority of state and capital, here you are confronted to a crystallization of the societal relations. When you're living in the rich West and are part of the correct population group, you can give yourself the illusion that you are more or less free. You can consume as much as you want, you can take part in all sorts of virtual fake realities, and if you have money you

can even travel around a bit, and treasure the illusion that you are free (to move).

“Inside”, the illusion gets crushed by the omnipresence of the repression machine which controls all of your movements and cleanly writes them down in reports, and if you don’t behave you get a negative report and/or go to the black hole or you are put on strict and certain “liberties” are taken from you, like making phone calls, having visits, and so on.

Inside, just like outside, certain privileges we have (which are artificial liberties) are being regarded as real liberties, you get used to certain privileges (like having a walk, making phone call and so on) and you don’t regard the fact of being locked up as a problem anymore, but the maintaining of certain privileges as the solution to your problems. In the end, here as well, you can consume how much you want, and feel better because of that, and start to feel like you’re staying in a cheap hotel, with the only difference of course that you cannot go to walk on the beach to see and inspect some monkeys, but that you have to stay the whole fucking time in your cell, without complaining.

I’m doing fine, and Jürgen as well, except from the fact that you are treated like a child in here (we are not even allowed to have fire in our cell). For the rest it’s often up to your own attitude how you are treated by other prisoners and the guards, off course there are assholes and bitches just like everywhere else. The most difficult thing is to stay out from the hierarchy that rules in here (the same hierarchy that rules over the destiny of millions outside). And I don’t only talk about the hierarchy between the state (guards, cops) and the prisoners, but as well amongst the prisoners themselves. Because this is clearly outlined as well, and if you would think about attacking this structure as a little anarchist, you would (figuratively speaking) end up with a knife in your stomach. As long as the power relations in the whole of society are not overthrown, these structures will continue to exist in here as well. The destruction of the prison system, all of its structures and in all of

its forms, as a part of a totalitarian repression machine, can only take place in a overall struggle which aims at the destruction of capitalism and its working tool, the state. Amen.

Normally I should only appear again in the hearing in chambers at the end of November, but this has been advanced to the 9th of November, the same day Jürgen has to appear. Of course both of us want to get out as soon as possible, but the fact that we don't cooperate with the investigation gives them the opportunity to fuck us and to keep us as long as possible in pre-arrest. Until then we'll live at the costs of the state, most of the time with a smile, now and then with a tear, but always free in our mind!

For a classless society without prisons

Paolo.