

# Bulletin

Rebellious in the face of repression,  
insurgent for freedom,  
from the Belgian territory,  
and beyond borders



Starting in 2008, the Belgian State carried out a large investigation aiming at different struggles that were in conflict with detention centres, borders, prisons and the world of authority and exploitation – always without concessions. In its sights: the anarchist library *Acrata*, anarchist and anti-authoritarian publications (*Hors Service*, *La Cavale* and *Tout doit partir*), dozens of flyers and posters, more than a hundred actions, attacks and acts of sabotage...in other words, the fight against Power in all its different expressions.

Initially, 12 comrades were charged with “participation in a terrorist group”. After a procession of many years through juridical limbo, **in the year 2020 the Appeal Court finally sentenced 9 of the accused** to probationary prison sentences and suspended sentences. **Another court case is pending** for 7 comrades, the main charge is “incitement to commit crimes and misdemeanours”.

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## *Back in the Dayz*

In late 2008, amidst diffuse hostilities triggered by the revolt in Greece following the assassination of the young anarchist Alexis Grigoropoulos by police, the Federal Prosecutor launched an exploratory investigation aimed at anarchists in Belgium. In 2010, while the struggle against the construction of a new detention centre in Steenokkerzeel was underway, investigative magistrate Isabelle Panou was assigned to lead the investigation. From then on, the investigation was executed by the counterterrorist branch of the Federal Police. In May and in September 2013, a dozen house raids took place within this investigation, targeting different homes as well as the anarchist library *Acrata* in Brussels. It was on this occasion that the existence of a counterterrorist investigation first emerged. The investigation closed in 2014, culminating in the prosecution of twelve anarchists in the courts.

The common thread that runs through the investigation – which produced no less than 32 boxes filled with papers – is the hypothesis of an anarchist “terrorist group” that was supposedly active in Brussels and whose activities the accused either “promoted” or “participated in”. For example a long list is compiled of around 150 attacks (a good number of which were incendiary) against structures of domination – police stations, courts, banks, companies which profit from imprisonment, construction sites, cars of diplomats, NATO employees and Eurocrats, cell towers, etc. – in Brussels and the surrounding area between 2008 and 2013. From the files it is clear that not only the Federal Police were involved in the investigation but also the State Security and the military intelligence agency as well as various counterterrorist police departments of other European countries.

After the 6 year long investigation, the Federal Prosecutor had drawn up no less than 29 charges. Nine comrades were accused of belonging to a terrorist organization for more or less extended periods. Three of them were also accused of being the “leaders”. In addition, three other people arrested in the aftermath of an attack on the police station of Marolles (in Brussels) were accused of belonging to this terrorist group for a day. This overarching theme is supplemented by more specific charges such as participation in a non-authorized demonstration outside the detention centre 127bis in Steenokkerzeel (transformed into “attempted arson” by the prosecutor), preparation and participation in the attack on the police station in Marolles (qualified by the prosecution as a “terrorist act”), inflicting bodily harm on police officers, obstruction of the public road, causing damages in various forms, shoplifting, arson of prison guards’ cars at the Ittre prison, incitement to commit terrorist offences, etc. It should be noted that these specific allegations were each aimed at specific comrades – not everyone was charged with all the allegations.

## *The Courts in the Relay Race*

After a hearing convened to legitimize the special investigation methods used in the context of this investigation – tailing, phone

tapping, placing microphones in a house, covert house searches, attempts at infiltration, placing surveillance cameras outside of houses and in one case, inside – in October 2015, the file was forwarded to the Advisory Chamber. On the 1st of August 2017, this Chamber pronounced itself on the referral of the case to the courts and on the charges to be withheld. The Chamber cancelled the aggravating circumstance of terrorism wherever the prosecution had attributed it to a precise crime. At the same time, it reclassified the charge of participation in a “terrorist association” to participation in an “association with the aim of committing felonies and/or misdemeanours”. The Chamber also dropped a good number of charges for which it found insufficient grounds in the files.

The trial in front of the Correctional Court took place on the 29th and 30th of April 2019. Two of the accused were present in the courtroom but refused to answer questions. All 12 accused were represented by lawyers. The verdict arrived on the 28th of May, judge Keutgen ruled the inadmissibility of the prosecution against 9 of the accused since “the means of investigation implemented exceeded the framework of what was strictly necessary and authorized” and “have brought serious and irreparable harm” to “a fair trial”. Regarding the attack on the police station of Marolles; 2 people were acquitted and one was found guilty of having resisted arrest without being sentenced because the reasonable length of time had been exceeded. Some weeks later the prosecutor put forward an appeal against the decision (except against the 2 accused who were totally acquitted).

On the 8th, 9th and 16th of October 2020, the case took place before the Court of Appeal. Only one co-defendant was present and refused to speak. Prosecutor Malagnini recommended sentences ranging from 3 to 6 years effective prison, demanding double the length that he made in the first instance. On November 12th, judge Van Der Noot (who in the courtroom didn’t hide his animosity towards the accused) made his verdict public. Among others, the charges stemming from the demonstration at the detention centre of Steenokkerzeel were not confirmed, nor did the judge see a continuous organization during the whole period of the investigation (but convicted for being part of an association between the specific dates of felonies or misdemeanours), nor does he recognize leaders. The charges that he finds sufficiently proven are on the basis of “the totality of clues” (biography of the accused, seen in the surroundings or seen leaving the home at “unusual” hours, etc.) and often without any evidence that would allow the identification of the specific authors. Thus (the presumption of) being present on site becomes “being part of facilitating” the deeds. In this way, several charges concerning demonstrations and *balades* (unannounced collective walks during which there can be posters pasted, pamphlets distributed, slogans spray-painted, songs sung, etc.) lead to convictions for damages, blockades, armed resistance, insulting Eurocrats, etc. Also the fight with two drivers and the damages to their limousines at the entrance to the “International Subversive Bookfair” in 2011 result in convictions. These last convictions, as well as the convictions resulting from graffiti (“Eat the rich”, “Nique les proprios” and “Niq le fric”) receive the aggravating circumstance of “being motivated by hate for a person because of their fortune”.

Several charges reached the statute of limitations in the months leading up to the appeal trial, but the judge found a way to circumvent them by applying extensions of the terms allowed because of the lockdown during the spring (even though this trial had not been delayed by the covid context). “Association with the aim of committing” either “misdemeanours” or “felonies” is added



to the convictions, depending on the severity of the crime. The five comrades that are sentenced solely for the first “lighter” category each get a suspended sentence over a period of 3 years (if they commit a crime during this period the next judge can also pronounce a punishment for these previous convictions). The comrades who were also convicted for the second category are sentenced to probationary prison sentences; two get 10 months (probation lasting 5 years), one gets 8 months (probation lasting 5 years) and another one gets 6 months (probation lasting 3 years). These four comrades are also stripped of certain civic rights during the relevant period of probation; employment in public services, being electable, voting. The comrade who was solely accused of “association with the aim of committing felonies and/or misdemeanours” and not of specific crimes, is acquitted. In addition, fines are issued and more than half of the costs resulting from the trial and investigation have to be paid. The state will pay a little less than half plus the bill of the phone taps because according to the judge these “provided no evidence that led to convictions” (the expenses of the telecom companies amount to 92 000 euros).

## One More Replay

In the meantime, another case against 7 anarchists is moving forward in the courts. This case is the outcome of an investigation between 2012 and 2015 that was also conducted by the same counterterrorist branch of the Federal Police, but this time led by investigative magistrate De Coster. The initial charge of participation in a terrorist association has been dropped by the prosecutor. The remaining charges are “incitement to commit felonies (arson) and misdemeanours (property damage)”, both “without consequences”, for 6 of the accused and “possession of prohibited weapons” (pepperspray and a slingshot) for all 7. After the case appeared in front of the Chamber of Accusations (to approve the investigation methods) and the Advisory Chamber (which didn’t change anything about the charges), a first session was held at the Correctional Court on the 29th of May 2020. The Dutch language court decided to transfer the case to a French language court (in Brussels both exist in parallel). We are now waiting for a date for the first session in front of the French speaking Correctional Court.



## Contact

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**Acrata** – Anarchist library

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<https://acratabxl.wordpress.com>  
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## Info

For more reading material about that period:

**Tout doit partir.** *Pour la liquidation totale de ce qui nous détruit.* The issues of this magazine are retrievable in different anti-authoritarian libraries. They also exist on the web.

**Brique par brique.** *Se battre contre la prison et son monde (Belgique, 2006-2011).* Edited by Tumult ([tumult.noblogs.org](http://tumult.noblogs.org))

**Éclats de liberté.** *La lutte contre la construction d'un nouveau centre fermé pour clandestins à Steenokkerzeel (Belgique, 2009-2010).* Edited by Tumult ([tumult.noblogs.org](http://tumult.noblogs.org))

**Hors Service.** *Recueil de textes du journal anarchiste 2010-2014.* Edited by Tumult ([tumult.noblogs.org](http://tumult.noblogs.org))

# Where is the Hate?

Scribble “Eat the rich” on a wall and you’ll run the risk of being prosecuted for property damage. That is how the state protects the interests of those who own. Even if the interest is, at first glance, a rather banal one of preferring blank walls. The point being rather that the sacrosanct property was violated by some scoundrels behaving disrespectfully towards the holy institution of ownership. So no matter how superficial the physical alterations to the object, the iconoclasts must be punished. But that is not enough. Clearly. To take an example from the Belgian state, a certain judge also thought it necessary to convict for not only the material and moral damages inflicted but also for the mindset of the culprits. Or at least an assumed mindset, projected onto the accused.

And so the judge included in his verdict the “aggravating circumstance” of being “motivated by hate towards persons because of their economic status.” Not quite how people imagined it when these words were added to the criminal code, which were probably written in defence of those who cannot afford to pay the *entrance fee* to society – as a means of shielding them from more overt expressions of contempt. As it turns out, power flows and functions differently. Those who have access in this society continue to have it, while those who lack access continue to have it limited – a class system which protects its wealthy via means of access: access to money, education and protection from the state. A system which perpetuates and protects its own interests when it creates a perpetual state of harassment, pressure, instability, and lack. And so, laws which give the impression of protecting the excluded are, in the end, mostly used to persecute them.

Another recent example can be seen in the aftermath of the documentary “Femme de la rue”. The images recorded on the streets of Brussels show the daily harassment women have to endure from men. The mass media grabbed hold of the topic and put it in front of those dear politicians who rule us. The result – in theory at least – is that it has become easier to punish whoever makes sexist remarks. Two years after the first fines were written against perpetrators of sexism, it seems that in 90% of these cases however, the targets of the sexist remarks were female police officers. So another path has been made to punish whoever does not comply with cop orders.

But why hate the rich? Healthy, stable, well-adjusted people don’t besmirch those with more money or success than themselves. One can question inequality, but hate for the other must be linked to some kind of psychological defect or ideological myopia. Really? Isn’t this a rather convenient way to define the conflict between rich and poor from the good side – those who also have the power to impose their definition.

Let’s even ignore for a moment that most rich people are manipulative, micromanaging, two-faced, reactionary bullies and that they spend money on absolute bullshit. Ok, life is nuanced, people are complicated, not all rich people are evil. So let’s just focus on the inequality that produces the rich and poor in the first place. Despite all the myths of meritocracy it is still true that in no actually existing capitalist society do rich people become wealthy through their own hard work, but rather by appropriating for themselves the resources of the earth and the fruits of the labour of others (past, present and future). Sure, most of the time, most of the people consider this to be “normal” and do not question it. Who can still connect the dots between the ongoing catastrophes of capitalism and the members of high society leading their comfortable lives? These phenomena seem to exist on different planets for most people. They might even aspire to become rich themselves and set their hopes on some elusive shortcut, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity or hard work. The constant supply of images of luxurious consumption and the illusion of upward social mobility entice. And what exists in opposition to it? Less and less it seems, since class has been reduced to a statistical concept. Maybe it was different when class consciousness and working-class culture still had a substantial presence in social relations, for better or for worse. Now only the graphs matter, and on there everybody is middle class. Left of middle or right of middle, but first of all middle. Because what is there to love about being poor? Nothing, it’s miserable. So what is there to hate about being rich? Everything, absolutely everything in this society that oppresses and exploits. Because that misery is purposely organised for the profit of the rich while life and its meaning is being destroyed for everyone.

How we speak about this reality and the various concepts of class has changed dramatically, but what does not change and what remains undeniable is that being rich means having access, it means having power over others. Sustaining this power entails using it to defend and expand it at the expense of others. The rich are waging a war against every obstacle that stands in their way. It seems the only thing that’s holding them back is that they don’t agree on what the obstacles are.

Wanting something radically different means fighting back.

On a side note: the same judge saw the same aggravating circumstance at work in a fight between some of the convicted and two limousine drivers. That is proof of some advanced level of telepathy coupled with some secret time-travel technology. And it becomes really ridiculous when he similarly convicts for the phrase “Niq le friq”; has money already reached the status of a person?