

CAUGHT IN THE WEB OF DECEPTION

*and other
writings on
anarchists
and the media*



SIGNAL FIRE DISTRO

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INTRODUCTION

The terrain of social control is shifting. Every day the agents of social control become more dispersed. The surveillance state is not limited to the police, the FBI, the CCTV cameras on every corner. For anarchists and other criminally-minded people in general, media representatives are obstacles that stand in the way of our illicit desires.

The media represents more than the big corporations by which they are owned. The media is an integral pillar of capitalist democracy, and whether intentionally or not, acts as an agent of the state surveillance apparatus.

When some media pig documents illegal activity and then that documentation is used as evidence in a prosecution we must recognize this for what it is: snitching, or worse yet, plain and simple police work. This pamphlet contains a series of texts and communiqués from different places and times which shed light on the nature of the threat posed to us by the media, as well as a few ideas for how anarchists might respond to this threat.

CAUGHT IN THE WEB OF DECEPTION

The technological system for the dissemination of ideology, the media, is an inherent part of the power structure, and therefore an enemy of all rebellion and of every attempt to create free life. I use the word media to refer specifically to this system in its totality, not to refer to specific tools it uses to carry out its function, since some of these tools can be used in different manner, even against this function.

The media plays a specific role in the power structure, a role that, in a democratic state, becomes not only essential, but also central to the functioning of power. But before continuing, it is necessary to confront the illusions many have about democracy. While it is true that democracy can merely mean a decision-making process which offers all involved a say or a vote in each decision (why this is incompatible with anarchy is a subject best dealt with at another time for the sake of brevity), in the present era, democracy is also and more essentially a system of state and social power which maintains social peace by allowing the expression of the broadest possible spectrum of opinions. The democratic state is able to allow such a broad spectrum of opinion precisely because opinions are basically substanceless. Opinions are ideas that have been drained of all vitality. Separated from life and from any projectual basis, they have become harmless blathering that ultimately strengthens the democratic state by making it appear tolerant and open as compared to feudal or dictatorial states.

From this, the political function of the media should be obvious. It is the mediator and processor of democratic opinions. It devours the complexities of life and social interaction, of international relations and insurgency, of cultural breakdown and economic necessity... the totality of reality in the present, and mashes them to mush between its teeth, then digests them and shits out turds. All of the complexities, all of the vitality, all connection to real life has been leached out, and we are left to decide whether these nearly identical brown lumps stink or not. The reality from which these turds were produced is so distant that we "know" that we can't affect it directly, so instead we buy the binary logic of the democratic state, argue at the pub over the stinkiness of turds and vote for those politicians whose bullshit exudes the sweetest aroma. To be for or against this war, that law, whatever candidate, policy or program is no threat whatso-

ever to power. The purpose of the media is precisely to promote the predigested thinking that keeps us passive in the face of a distant reality, always ready to choose between the options offered by the democratic state, options that all end up subjecting the chooser to the power of the state and capital.

The media has another essential function. It is the creator of images for consumption. It creates celebrities and personalities for people to look up to and live through vicariously. It creates role images for people to imitate in order to invent their "identity." It creates images of events separated from and placed above life. It is through these images, ingested uncritically, that people are to view and interpret the world, formulating their opinions out of this virtual unreality. To the extent that the media succeeds, the result is a passive, predictable population consuming the trash dished out by the social order.

In choosing to seek to get ones' ideas across through the media, one is choosing to feed these ideas to this masticating monster, to offer one's self to this life-draining ghoul. For anarchists this makes no sense. It is impossible for the media to portray anarchism as a living praxis or anarchists as complex multi-dimensional individuals. It is therefore not possible to express anarchist ideas in a worthwhile way through this forum. The ideas will be chewed up and shat out as one opinion among many, one more turd about whose odor the public can argue. The living individuals get chewed up and shat out as images of freaks, of intellectual brooders, of street rioters - but essentially as images, not as living, acting beings. The media is part of the power structure, and, as such, is our enemy. We can't play their game and win.

In dealing with the media on its terrain, one chooses to give up determining one's own actions on one's own terms. As the 60 Minutes episode made so clear, dealing with the media on its terrain is accepting delegation. One turns one's ideas over to the masters of "communication" to be masticated into more opinions in the ideological marketplace. One gives the reality of one's life over to these experts in separation to be turned into 60-second images of isolated events. One turns the activity of communication over to those whose specialty is the one way "communication" of devitalized, pre-digested non-ideas and non-events that create social consensus. And then one claims about how badly one was represented in the media. Why did one

choose to be represented at all? The choice to accept media representation is no less an acceptance of delegation than voting or unionism. The rejection of delegation, so central to an anarchist and insurrectional perspective, includes the refusal to deal with the media on its terms.

If we take self-determination and self-activity as fundamental bases for anarchist practice, the way to communicate our ideas is clearly to create our own means of communication. Graffiti, posters, communiques, papers, magazines and pirate radio can all be used to express anarchist ideas without putting them through the masticating mechanisms of the media. These self-determined means of communication can be distinguished from the media in that they are not attempts to mediate opinions and images while claiming objectivity and dishing out pre-digested pablum to a passive audience; they are actual attempts on the part of anarchists to express their ideas not only in the words but also in the method through which they go about expressing them. Of course these methods, which we can take into our own hands, will not get out to nearly as many people as a mainstream newspaper, magazine, or television show. But such considerations could only be of significance to those who want to evangelize, to those who view anarchy as a belief system to which we must convert people if there is ever to be a revolution. To paraphrase some Italian comrades: if one has no commodities to sell, of what use are neon signs? And in the era of the reign of capital, evangelism - even anarchist evangelism - is ideological marketeering. To those whose interest is creating their lives as their own and destroying the society that prevents this, such marketeering is worthless.

TO INFORM, TO OBEY

The journalist is always the best friend of those in power and of the cops. The journalist is the one who smoothes the path for them, who conceals their violence, always ready to justify it, who publicizes their misdeeds and applauds them or who criticizes them so that next time they can strike better.

It is thanks to journalists that we have become so weak, frightened, and divided as to not be able to react to the daily repression and the suffocating control of our existence. The television news is defining everyone who rebels - against the way, against exploitation, against increasingly precarious and vile living conditions - a terrorist, an individual dangerous for all. It is from the pages of newspapers that the rage of the exploited is thrust into the treacherous arms of the parties and unions, that have managed our exploitation up until yesterday, and today would like to manage our protest.

Journalists are the enemies of anyone who is exploited and no longer wants to be so, of anyone who is a slave and wants to free himself, of anyone who is without strength and wants to take a breath.

Of the rhetoric about "freedom of information," of the myth of the free and independent reporter that exposes the powerful with his pen and denounces their misdeeds, nothing is left but empty words. The journalist is simple functionary, the central gear around which the information machine turns. Its close collaboration with the police headquarters, their inevitable dependence on all the groups in power, in fact, sets them against all those who are not in power. Even were one to open some space for truth in a newspaper, one would drown in the sea of banality and lies that it contains. Absurdity of absurdities, it would be like trying to express some rebellious thought on call-in radio.

An information grinding machine, built to create consensus and to maintain the social peace, that manipulates our greatest weaknesses and our worst fears.

The press incarnates for its readers the realization of a hope: that there are those who foresee and everything follows the straight path. It is at the same time *information* and *judgment*. It is also a tool against boredom, capable of consoling even if it doesn't manage to gather anything intelligible from the surround world. The desire

that many readers have of a clean, ordered world in which one feels at ease - is sought and found on the pages of the newspapers - also contains within itself the anxiety about this world, considered incomprehensible without the help of others. Thanks to its authority, the newspaper relieves the reader of the necessity of arranging, sifting, and valuing events. Furnishing the reader with accounts of what has happened that have already been ordered and commented on in a synthetic and safe way, the press gives the consoling certainty that one is still in a position to confront and understand reality, in order to feel like part of this world. Even the reports dedicated to "true stories," to little daily incidents, take on a meaning; they give the readers the feeling that they are speaking of the people, of human fate, of the problems of men and women exactly like each one of them. And one can calmly rely on a newspaper that shows so much interest in the human side. The press appears to be a good companion, that is always there when it is needed, managing to hide the considerable power of persuasion available to it. What stands out is always the question/demand from the readers for the tools useful for understanding the society in which they live, that necessarily becomes increasingly abstract, leading events back to the individual and his fate, joined with the desire to conserve objects of identification and projection on which to be able to finally unload personal worries and problems.

This is the intimate and deep mechanism that creates public opinions, that influences, that furnishes the commonplaces of discussions for millions of people. The newspapers build their power on this, closely intertwined with the interests of power.

THE REASONS FOR A HOSTILITY

about the mass media

Our hostility toward journalists - their words, their images - needs some more clarification. As we explain in the following notes, the point is not the greater or lesser honesty of the individual journalist or photographer, but rather the role of the media apparatus itself. That mass media has the pretension of being the total representation of reality is made obvious by this simple fact: for it, anyone who refuses to speak with journalists, “doesn’t want to communicate with anyone.” As if it was impossible to communicate in a direct manner, without the filter of the press and television. It is the same attitude that the political authorities have: anyone who refuses any relationship with them, so they tell us, refuses dialogue with everyone. And yet, despite the great steps forward in social domestication, the world is not just populated by authorities, cops, and journalists. In fact, it is actually beyond and against their power that real dialogue begins.

The mass media is an integral part of the ruling order. As such, it forces participation, excludes, recuperates, and represses at the same time.

It forces participation. Everyone must believe that the only reality that exists is that which the newspapers and television shape daily, the reality of the state and the economy. The media is the indispensable tool in the determination of consensus. It is the modern version of the myth, i.e., of the representation that unites the exploited with the exploiters. The media socializes the populace.

It excludes. Thoughts and actions hostile to this society must not appear. They must be silenced, falsified, or rendered incomprehensible. Silencing when their very existence is an attack against the constituted order. Falsifying when that which cannot be silenced has to be opportunely reconstructed. Rendering incomprehensible when the media is forced to concede some partial truth to revolt, so that its total meaning goes unnoticed. The media takes every means of autonomous expression away from the powerless. The one-sided nature of information is the opposite of communication between individuals.

It recuperates. It invites us to dialogue with the institutions, it creates spokespeople and leaders, it integrates all subversive ideas and practices once it renders them harmless, separating them from their context, making us consume them without living, suffocating them with the boredom of the already well-known.

It represses. It collaborates with the police in denouncing and slandering, it prepares the terrain for repression with opportune alarmism, it publicly justifies their operations. Sometimes it represses by admitting an action is right - someone called this "laudatory repression" - i.e., by presenting that which is not subversive as being so, that which is just around the corner as distant, that which has just now started as finished. More often all one gets from the mass media is the work of falsification and repression, i.e., the more openly slanderous and criminalizing aspect. But rage against journalistic lies is short-lived since it can be undermined in less conflictual periods by series of sufficiently honest articles. The problem is not the honesty of the individual journalist or the accuracy of the articles, but rather the social activity of the mass media. In the media machine, intellectual qualities and ethical norms are swept away by the mass of information, by the "totalitarianism of the fragment" that is the true face of the news. Critical intelligence is formed through association, analogy, memory. News, on the contrary, is the product of separation, of details, of the eternal present. Media passivity is only the reflection of the passivity of work and of the market. As is well-known, the life that gets away from us comes back to us in the form of the image. The more one is informed, the less one knows, i.e., the less one lives.

Today no one can do politics without selling her image. Anyone who does not want to break with politics in all its forms does not want to break with media representation. He might insult journalists for several weeks, in the impossibility of doing anything else; then she will return to dialog.

The media is necessary for mediating with power. It is itself, and recent events confirm this, what urges dialog in order to, thus, foster the repression of those who don't dialog with their enemies.

In the chatter of consensus, the police file starts against anyone who remains silent. Because to break off with the press and television, with the images and labels

that they place on our backs, means breaking off with politics.

But the conclusion cannot be that of a refusal to communicate beyond the anarchist milieu at all, but rather that of a rebellion that gives itself its own tools of autonomous communication.

MODESTO: BEE BOXES SABOTAGED

April 9, 2010

It seems the local Sheriff's Department (known for getting slapped with fat lawsuits for sexual harassment and getting their own guns stolen from under their pig noses at the local Honor Farm) came upon a slow night in Modesto several days ago. Instead of going what most of us do while at work during a slow day (nothing), they decided to "make the most of it" and went down to 9th street and arrested several sex workers after waiting for various johns to take them to motels. More sickening, the Modesto Bee printed the names of these people in their disgusting corporate publication, further humiliating them and vindicating the police in their story.

Sex workers, like all workers, sell their labor for wages. As women in a patriarchal society, they face attacks from customers and often from police. The same system which seeks to criminalize them is the same force that shut down production at the Modesto Bee building itself, and threatens people across the Central Valley. The police, the protectors of the rich. The media, their mouth piece. Fuck you all.

With super glue, we gave you a likkle sumthing, knowing that hopefully not being able to collect money from people that buy your horrible publication will be a thorn in your side. In total, 10 newspaper boxes were sabotaged last week. These actions are easy. They are simple to reproduce. Fuck the Modesto Bee, from its ongoing layoffs and horrible wages, to its boss and cop loving content. We up in yo honey pot, what?!

Against patriarchy and its police!
Destroy capitalism!

Bee Killaz

OLYMPIA: PROPERTY DESTRUCTION TARGETTED SNITCH PHOTOGRAPHER

June 9, 2011

An Olympian photographer's Tumwater home and The Olympian's building on Bethel Street were both targeted by vandals overnight Wednesday – with anarchist graffiti left spray-painted on walls, corrosive acid thrown on windows and three tires of the photographer's pickup slashed.

Olympian photographer Tony Overman was singled out by the graffiti left on an exterior wall at The Olympian – where the words “Overman snitch” were written in dark paint. Overman said he was editing video in the living room of his Tumwater home after 1 a.m. Thursday morning when he looked out the window and noticed his pickup was sitting at a crooked angle in his driveway.

He said that when he went outside to investigate, he found the tires of his truck slashed, an anarchist symbol spray painted on his garage door and the word “snitch” spray-painted on his pickup. Additionally, a gooey substance had been left on all the windows of his truck.

At The Olympian, facilities and maintenance manager Darrell McDevitt said he arrived at work about 5:45 a.m. Thursday to find an acidic or corrosive paint-like substance had been splashed over about 13 windows at the front of the building. The words “Overman snitch” also were spray painted on an Olympian delivery truck and on the front wall of the building.

McDevitt said it is too early to say exactly how much it will cost to fix the damage, but he estimated it could cost upwards of \$11,000 or \$12,000.

Overman, 48, a two time regional photographer of the year for the National Press Photographers Association who has traveled to Iraq to shoot photos in war zones, said he is extremely disturbed that a group would take the trouble to learn where he lives and vandalize his property.

“These are the anarchists, and they are targeting me to try and scare me,” he said.

He said he thinks a group of anarchists want to intimidate him so they can prevent him from taking their photos during their participation in public marches. He said that in the past, published photos that he has taken of

photos that he has taken of anarchists committing crimes like throwing rocks during marches and spray-painting property have been used by police to try to identify them.

Overman emphasized that only his photos published in *The Olympian* and on its website have ever been made available to police. Overman said that over the last several years, *The Olympian* has refused many police requests from law enforcement agencies for Overman's unpublished photos.

Overman was the victim of an assault back in April 2010, when a woman, clad in black and her face covered by a bandana, spray painted his face and camera lens as he attempted to take a photo of a professed anarchist "anti-police brutality" march in downtown Olympia.

Overman said being targeted by anarchists at his house is infinitely more traumatizing than his experience working as a photojournalist in war zones in Iraq.

"The reason why it's so disturbing to me is that you'd think that in a free country, the people who use the First Amendment to express their right to free speech would also respect the First Amendment right of the free press," he said.

Olympia Police Detective Rich Allen, who has been assigned to investigate the vandalism at *The Olympian*, said he will coordinate with Tumwater detectives investigating the vandalism at Overman's home.

Allen said Overman's prior history as an assault victim, and now being targeted for crimes at his home, is "over the line" from what police normally deal with in vandalism cases.

SNITCH PHOTOGRAPHER AT THE OLYMPIAN LIED

July 11, 2011

The Olympian newspaper has issued an apology after a longtime photographer gave unpublished photos of protesters to police, and then repeatedly lied about it.

Tony Overman told the public, the press, and his own newspaper that he “never” provided law enforcement with unpublished photos of protesters breaking the law.

“That’s not true,” Jerry Wakefield, The Olympian’s managing editor, wrote in an apologetic article. “We regret we misled our readers.”

In a Page One story by The Olympian’s Sean Robinson, Overman admitted that he allowed officers to view photos of protesters on his camera’s screen.

“The problem that I’m wrestling with is that I did the right thing as a citizen and I did the wrong thing as a journalist,” Overman told Robinson in an interview.

Those photos were then used by police to identify and arrest protesters who had broken the law, wrote Wakefield.

“In sharing those photos, Tony violated our long-standing policy of refusing to release to law enforcement agencies photographs and other material that have not been published in print or online,” he wrote. “We have that policy to ensure that we can be independent, unbiased observers of what goes on in our community.”

In an interview with 97.3 KIRO FM in June, Overman denied ever having shared such photos with police, despite repeated requests that he do so.

“In my 30 years, I can think of probably 10 times that we’ve been subpoenaed by attorneys or police who say ‘Turn over all of your unpublished material from this particular event,’ and we have always refused,” Overman said.

Overman’s lies about providing photographs to the police were in fact backed up by the Olympia Police themselves.

When asked back in June, a police spokesman said Tony had never shown their department unpublished photos, which we now know is untrue.

“I know that a few of his photos have been used in

cases, but they had been put in the paper so they were public record,” said Olympia Police Spokesman Dick Macklin.

“He’s never given us any photos we couldn’t have seen in the paper.”

That statement is partially true.

According to Wakefield, the photos Overman shared with police during the protests were later published in the paper or online. However, they weren’t published at the time, which Wakefield said is a violation of their policy.

As part of his job at The Olympian, Overman routinely covers protests as a member of the media. He garnered major media attention when he became the target of those protesters, who labeled him a “snitch” following accusations that he worked for the police.

Overman had been personally attacked by protesters. His home, vehicle, camera and place of work had been vandalized.

“In the heat of violent confrontations, Tony held evidence of people breaking the law in his own hands, on the memory card in his digital camera,” Wakefield wrote. “In a split-second decision as he watched people committing violent acts and in one case was assaulted himself, he chose to let police officers look at the photos on his camera’s view screen.”

COMMUNIQUE FROM PORTLAND

PORT SHUTDOWN

December 12, 2012

Given the good deal of media-led misinformation// opposition to the west coast #d12 port shutdown, the presence of habitually unsympathetic local news crews at the blockaded port terminals in Portland seemed to assure that our actions would be misrepresented beyond recognition. So when the opportunity arose to relieve KATU of a 25,000\$ news camera, we did just that.

Given KATU's inclination to distort current events through the filthy lense of power, we figured they were no worse off filming their story from the muddy bottom of the Willamette. #splash.

-some folks.

WHY THE MEDIA MUST BE ASSAULTED

This essay was written shortly after May Day 2012 in Seattle. During the anti-capitalist march that day, various representatives of the media were attacked.

Although the author of this piece believes that members of the mainstream media should be assaulted strategically at any place and time, this piece was heavily influenced by what I saw occur on May 1st 2012 in Seattle Washington. As an anarchist in Seattle, this is written mainly for a Seattle audience although hopefully there are some things people from other places will be able to take away from it.

The mainstream media will never be on our side. We don't even need to get into which company owns what media outlet, let's leave all that aside, they are scum and we know this. Beyond this, almost all forms of media that are not "our" media will almost never be on our side. Luckily, in the radical scene in Seattle, this is something nearly everybody already knows. There is frequent talk of how the media lies to the public and a common understanding that they will intentionally distort our "message". While this is an accurate analysis, it does not run deep enough. This analysis places the media in a role that is much more passive than the actual role they fulfill. Many of us have seen the images and videos from the G20 in Toronto, or the Vancouver hockey riots, or most recently the London riots. Those of us who have seen these images are also probably aware of the way that the state attempted to identify people who they perceived to have committed crimes. While much of this footage came from security cameras (which should also be smashed as frequently as possible, obviously), in each case there was also a good deal that came right from the media reporters who were present at all of these actions. In several cases the media either gladly handed over the footage the cops were interested in, or simply broadcasted the crimes in real-time, giving open access to anyone who had a desire to review the footage.

The media is not a passive enemy, but a quite active one. The presence of the media at our demos not only distorts our views and delegitimizes our struggles and confrontations, it puts people in jail or prison. All of the major media outlets in Seattle were just handed a subpoena endorsed by Detective Ric Hall, stating that they had to hand over any material or footage they have from May Day, they

are specifically interested in the footage in which people appear to be committing crimes (go figure). Although as of now it is unclear whether or not the outlets will comply with this request, they probably will. However, even if not all the outlets complied, there is already information floating around that KIRO has already given all of their material to the police, and it is currently being reviewed. While we can certainly hope for the best, realistically it will not be a shock if they end up identifying people from these videos and charges end up being filed.

We have already seen the way the media has portrayed May Day, day where the anarchist terrorists brought mayhem to our peaceful little green city. After all, what's to say one of those windows couldn't have been your living room, or the doctor's office where your elderly mother was attending her appointment. So we can only assume that this trend will continue, and that they want to see us "held accountable" for our terroristic actions. They will most likely offer any information they have to the police, aiding in the apprehension of the criminals. Once again, even if in some miraculous turn of events they don't hand over all of their raw footage, the stuff shot live still exists, and the police will probably not have too hard of a time accessing it.

The police claim that they were well prepared for May Day. However, it is rather hard to imagine why they would let the federal courthouse (among other things) be attacked on a day where they were (allegedly) so well-prepared. They are eager to identify people and charge them with these crimes. They must be feeling beyond embarrassed about all of the property damage that occurred, and they also have the downtown business association breathing down their necks to apprehend those who destroyed their property. We must assume that they are going to go to pretty great lengths to try to get some convictions. The task force has already been set up, and if they don't already exist, I don't think special snitchlines and websites are very off. They feel embarrassed and need to prove to "the public" that this type of behavior will not be tolerated and that the consequences will be very real.

This is why the media must be assaulted, there is a very real chance that people will end up in jail because of the footage taken. However, many in Seattle did do a great job at scaring away some of the more timid reporters (props to all those who used their flag-bats for the right

purpose). Several of the reporters were assaulted by those in the bloc, and a few of them even had to run away because they felt too unsafe. Reporters were paint bombed, struck with flag-bats, punched, kicked, and slapped. Over all I would say the this particular march was not very a peaceful atmosphere for reporters, despite what that guy over at The Stranger [Seattle lefty “alternative” news weekly] said. We cannot shame them away. Yelling can be good and invigorating, but it will not do enough, we must treat them like the lap-dogs they are and physically remove from the area. Although this could be done without violence, it would probably take a lot longer, and let’s be honest they definitely deserve it.

If we are successfully able to remove the media from core areas of our demos, or at the very least severely limit their access, there is much better chance of incriminating footage not winding up in the hands of the pigs. At this point, it is kind of a given that there will be at least some cameras around while the crimes are being committed, those who are choosing to document this stuff need to be very particular about the way they do it. I would say that it helps if people actually know who you are and have a relatively clear conception of why are there holding a camera. However, don’t be surprised if anyone shows any hostility to you for trying to capture images or film, because in most cases it’s obviously for the better if our crimes don’t get caught on film.

If the media is going to be actively complicit in putting us in cages, then they must be actively attacked.

TV NEWS CREW ROBBED OF CAMERA GEAR IN OAKLAND

August 3, 2013

Oakland police say a television news crew was robbed of camera equipment at gunpoint in broad daylight even while accompanied by a security guard.

Officials say three men accosted the KGO-TV crew around 2:30 p.m. Friday in West Oakland. At least one had a gun.

Police say the suspects ordered the journalists onto ground before fleeing with camera gear. The crew wasn't hurt.

The incident is the latest robbery targeting media in Oakland.

In November, a KPIX news cameraman was punched and robbed during a live broadcast outside a high school. The incident prompted the station to hire security guards to accompany its crews when they cover news in Oakland.

In July, Bay Area News Group reporters and photographers were robbed of camera equipment while working in Oakland.

*“So go and grab
the reporters
so I can smash
their recorders”*

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