

Filtering the muddy waters

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Anarchist Black Cross. *The past reaches into the present, especially when the mistakes of the past have not resulted in criticism inside the movement, capable of any kind of resolve. Too long serious issues have been unspoken in the [anti-authoritarian, ed.] movement in Copenhagen. Now, they are being revealed, hopefully in a fashion that cannot be ignored. We hope that this will lead to a debate, which can finally dig into the question of prison solidarity. In our opinion, this is not a question to be taken lightly, because it is associated with rebellion, and to everyone who wishes to connect thought and action.*

Better late than never, you hear people say, and hopefully, it will apply here as well. In the following, we will describe some events that took place a few years ago, as well as its consequences then and now. Even more urgent: the consequences it may have in the future. Ultimately, the reason mentioned last is the most important one. Were all of this part of the past, we would be able to let it be, but that is not the case, and it could have serious consequences for the future. We are publishing this account, together with our conclusions, in order to give everyone in the anarchist and anti-authoritarian movement an opportunity to make up their own minds regarding all of this. However, the time for hiding in the bushes with the explanation of not knowing anything about this is no more. Swimming around in muddy waters has been going on for too long; enough. Some people may hold the opinion that we are formulating some very harsh accusations, but in reality we are merely stating what several people have known for a long time. In the following will be a concise description of the issue, followed by the whole story from the beginning.

In the anarchist and left-radical movement in Copenhagen, there are two persons (from here on called X and Y) who have acted severely problematically in relation to a snitch in the years 2011-2013. In short, they knew who the snitch was, and decided not to make it public. They acted this way as a part of an overall strategy to avoid hard sentences in a big case against anarchists. To top it off, they did it without the consent from all the accused in the case, a gross mistake, which they in spite of everything have admitted since. All of this is serious, but would belong in the past, had these two persons in the Spring of 2017 not chosen to get involved in the prison solidarity group ABC København [Copenhagen, ed.] (Anarchist Black Cross). Given their history, this is highly problematic. In relation to this, a meeting was held with

these two persons [in the Summer of 2017], where a group of people asked them about what happened back then, and how they position themselves today when confronted with the issue. Had they been able to realize the problem and distanced themselves from prior actions relating to the snitch, the whole thing would have ended then and there. However, that is not what transpired; on the contrary, they defended their actions, saying that they would do the same again today, and tried to formulate their reasons behind their actions as being commonly anarchist, and, viable to be incorporated into the work of ABC KBH [Copenhagen, ed.]. We are of the opinion that it is a serious problem that two persons who defend covering up a snitch, at the same time – without having changed their opinion on the matter – are involved in a group, which is central for the support of the movement directed at comrades who are being accused or serving sentences. Their guidance in connection to a trial can worst case scenario harm individuals directly and the movement as a whole.

We think that these two persons have had more than enough time to openly explain their attitudes, and their consequences following their involvement in ABC KBH [Copenhagen, ed.], and since they have not done so, we are now publishing this account, which in our opinion urgently demands some answers. As mentioned above, a meeting has already been held (which was not public), where the two persons have answered questions, but we think that ABC KBH as a group need to consider and formulate their attitude clearly related to a series of important questions concerning anarchist prison solidarity.

In order to get a full picture, we start at the beginning: In 2011, a large criminal proceeding was initiated against five anarchists. The purpose of this text is not to describe the trial in detail, but in short the case involved a number of arsons against the police, international businesses, the fur industry and other institutions. The prosecutor tried to convict the five accused under the terrorism act, and the ground work for hard sentences was laid. The five anarchists was detained in pretrial custody. X was one of them, and Y supported him and some of the other accused from the outside.

At some point, one of the accused started talking to the police, and informed them about some of the other accused. This came to the attention of some of the accused and their supporters, among them X and Y. They chose – without communicating with all of the accused – to hide the identity of the snitch, and by keeping him close they could make sure that he would not inform any further. This was their explanation in 2017 when asked about the series of events. In our point of view, this is an absurd calculation to make without any sense of reality.

Some time after, before the beginning of the trial, three of the accused were released from pretrial custody. Among them was the snitch. In the period of time to come, still before the trial, both X and the snitch frequented spaces of the anti-authoritarian movement. In spite of this, X and Y continued to shield the snitch from having his identity revealed. However, it came out through other channels. Asked about this in 2017, they replied that ‘people’ knew who the snitch was anyway, and that they kept a watchful eye on him, and did not let him participate in the movement or talk to anybody therein. Do we need to point out how aggravatingly arrogant this explanation is?

To further illuminate the atmosphere in which the trial was set, and to give an improved picture of what kind of ideas X and Y have about the legal system, we will provide additional examples from that time. They are not directly related to covering up the snitch *per se*, but we think that there is a clear connection, because it is a specific attitude, and a specific view on the legal system that are revealed. Not to say the least, it is relevant because they are active in ABC KBH present day. Some of the accused and their supporters cooked up a strategy with the goal to downplay the political aspects of the actions that the five anarchists were accused of executing, and to look like nice guys, who had been smoking a little too much weed, and had a pretty foggy memory. This strategy is well documented in news articles from back then, because it involved giving elaborate interviews to DR [state-owned mainstream media (TV, WEB and radio)] and Politiken [middle class, mainstream newspaper and WEB], who – as we know – are important revolutionary media. The strategy also involved showing up in court in a suit and shaking hands with the prosecutors, like X did. The strange thing is that X apparently continued this strategy after the final verdict. In any case, he gave – together with at least one other accused – a substantial interview to a big fashion- and lifestyle magazine for men. In this article, comrades still in prison at the time were exposed in great detail by the reporter. Was X not to have considered thoroughly if it was okay to do this interview? At the other end, as the trial ran its course, very little information came out to international anarchist media. The case was kept under wraps in order not to distort the picture of a few apolitical young people who had made some mistakes, and who should not be punished too hard.

It is important to stress that it was not all of the accused who participated in this strategy, which nevertheless probably had consequences for all of them. Where the innocent are, so are the scapegoats.

In 2013, the final verdicts came. The terrorism indictment went away, but the accused were found guilty of arson. To persons received sentences of seven years. Those,

among them X, who stuck to the strategy in order to tone down the political aspects received milder sentences; including the snitch. Does that mean that it worked? Is that which works also right? And for what cost?

In the Spring of 2017, X and Y became involved in ABC KBH and the group started using the anti-authoritarian and anarchist spaces in Copenhagen, and for some people that was seen as crossing the line with the prior actions of these two persons in retrospect. The past is one thing, but when persons, who at an earlier time have chosen to protect a snitch, along with his identity, choose to enter into an anarchist solidarity group, bells go off. For that reason, the aforementioned meeting was held, where X and Y were asked a long list of questions about their actions, and how they view them today. Overall, they confirmed what many individuals already knew, presented their rationalizations and defenses for what they did. Moreover, they said that they would do it all over again, facing the same situation.

To sum up: X and Y, who are both active in ABC KBH, covered up a snitch. They have not changed their opinion about it. They did it without consent from all of the accused in the case, though they ended up admitting fault on that particular point¹. Furthermore, they were a part of a strategy aiming to make some of the accused look like friendly and apolitical guys. They did all this to protect X and some of the other accused from receiving hard sentences. They have defended these actions as being anarchist, and said that they would do it again.

What is wrong with all of this, then? First of all, it is blatantly irresponsible to cover up the identity of a snitch. It endangers for the rest of the accused, and it endangers the movement as a whole. It is not a question that can be molded, depending on the circumstances, because if it is okay to cover up a snitch in some cases, when does it stop being okay? Who can draw that line? X and Y are confident that they know how to, and that shows a very non-anarchist mentality. Do they see themselves as being better than others, since they withheld this information; information that concerns the whole movement? Overtness is the only solution if we are truly against authorities.

Second of all, the decision made without all of the accused to roll out a strategy that was to put some of the accused in a more positive light is deeply problematic. Is it not obvious that a strategy like this holds a great risk of being harmful toward those of the accused who are not a part of it? If it was not obvious back then, it should be obvious now. It is not a question to be taken lightly.

Worst of all, during the meeting in 2017, while involved in ABC KBH, the two persons chose to defend their actions and stating that they would do the same again in

¹ This admission was given after a failed and embarrassing attempt to explain, how they could not get in touch with all of the accused (or the people close to them) and talk to them about it. Additionally, they formulated some rather ominous attitudes concerning prisoner support such as “we are against prisons, which means support all prisoners, even snitches!”...

a similar situation. These two persons are at this very moment [as of November 2018] active in an anarchist prison solidarity group.

We now ask ABC KBH directly: What are these two persons doing in an anarchist prison solidarity group? Are you discussing what they have done, and the fact that they have not changed their opinion in this regard? When you establish contact with prosecuted comrades, do you tell them off the bat what kind of people you have in your group? Are you of the opinion that the statements of these two persons are compatible with anarchist ideas? If yes: Is ABC KBH in favor of covering up snitches? Is ABC KBH in favor of orchestrating media- and legal strategies without the consent from, and potentially harmful towards, all of the involved comrades? If that is the case, do you dare say it out loud?

We do not think that it is too much to ask that ABC KBH steps up and answers these questions. They are of the utmost importance, when the position of the group is taken into account. The group is often the first one prosecuted comrades get in contact with. Comrades who are already in an vulnerable position, and who, e.g. if they are placed in pretrial custody, have very little possibility of finding out who are in ABC KBH.

Let us finish this off with a couple of questions aimed at the movement as a whole: All of you who have called this 'a private matter' through the years, will you continue to defend this point of view? All of you who have known about all of this without lifting a finger, will you continue to let these persons be active in and around prison solidarity without putting forward critical questions and demand answers? Is this really too much to ask from an anarchist and anti-authoritarian movement?

the curious ones.

Update, autumn 2019:

ABC KBH is still going strong. They still haven't formulated any regrets concerning their previous actions, the people responsible for these actions are still a part of the group, and they still proliferate themselves as an anarchist prisoner-support group.