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The Black International Conspiracy as Security Dispositive in the Netherlands, 1880-1900

Beatrice de Graaf*

Abstract: »Die Verschwörung der 'Schwarzen Internationale' als Sicherheitsdispositiv in den Niederlanden, 1880-1900«. In this paper we introduce the fight against anarchism at the end of the 19th century as a security dispositive. An analysis of the emergence of the dispositive of the Black International conspiracy and the rise of new modes of governance in the wake of the fight against violent anarchism in the Netherlands is presented as a bottom-up process of securitization, enabled by two remarkable episodes of anarchist activities in the Netherlands in 1894 and 1895-1898. Regional prosecutors and police commissioners capitalized on this (foreign) anarchist threat to instigate large-scale police reforms in terms of bureaucratization, standardization and centralization. New technologies of imagination, imported from abroad, helped to advance these processes of securitization and modernization.

Keywords: anarchism, Black International, police modernization, anthropometric data retention, Bertillonage.

1. Introduction

In this paper we introduce the fight against anarchism at the end of the 19th century as a security dispositive.¹ The manifestation and imagination of a 'Black International' conspiracy marked an acceleration in time and space, a rise of new techniques, scientific methods, perspectives and a political constellation, that led to a heterogeneous assemblage of discursive and material elements resulting from this new threat perception (cf. De Graaf 2012). We will present here an analysis of the emergence of the dispositive of the Black International and the rise of new modes of governance in the wake of the fight against violent anarchism.

Anarchist attacks were not merely figments of the imagination, as will be elaborated below. But we will argue that after 1880 the police and security forces were much better equipped and organized to perceive and identify such a

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transnational and evasive phenomenon as an international conspiracy. Telegraph, telephone, new communication and transportation connections and developments in the field of biometrical data retention enabled Amsterdam police officers to exchange information with Russian Ochrana agents about Russian anarchists visiting the Netherlands.

The Netherlands were, admittedly, much less targeted by anarchist activists than France, the Russian Empire, Italy, the United States or Germany. No heads of state or ministers were smitten. Archival records, however, do reveal a number of reports and incidents regarding anarchist violence and visiting anarchists from abroad. The Dutch socialist leader Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis pointed in his autobiography of 1910 to the spurious contacts he had with (violent) anarchist comrades from Russia or Germany (Domela Nieuwenhuis 1910, 365-77). Not much has been written on Dutch experiences with anarchist violence. Literature on the socialist movement does mention its clashes with anarchist ideology and activists, but remains silent on the violent aspects and international contacts between fugitive *dynamitards* in the Netherlands and well-known socialists such as Domela Nieuwenhuis (Charité 1972; Bos 2001; Perry 1994; Perry 1983; Vliegen 1905/1921; Vliegen 1924-38). Even a recent biography on Domela Nieuwenhuis only touches upon his contacts in the anarchist scene in passing, and avoids discussing his ambivalent attitude towards political violence (Stutje 2012, 327-9). In this paper, some first findings are presented on the struggle against anarchist violence in the Netherlands around the end of the 19th century.

The hypothesis is that this struggle should not merely be described as a reaction to concrete incidents and attacks, but should also be considered an expression of administrative and political agenda-setting, closely connected to the ambition to create a modern, centralized and standardized police force, with corresponding mission statements and security ideas. Here, we will use the dispositive frame discussed in the introduction to analyze the Black International conspiracy, by using the five conceptual elements mentioned in the introduction (securitizing actors, referent subject, referent object, ICT techniques and modes of governance), with an additional final note on the visualization of security. We will do so by presenting new material taken from the Dutch National Archives on some remarkable instances of anti-anarchist activities in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

2. A 'World-Wide Conspiracy': Actors & Threat Definition

The anarchist violence that became manifest between 1880 and 1914 is often considered the 'first wave' of modern terrorism. In numerous anthologies and monographs on the history of terrorism, the Russian narodniki, French nihilists and Italian anarchists are identified as representing a 'Black International'

wave of terrorist violence (Rapoport 2004, 46-73). This global threat of a 'Black International' conspiracy was triggered by individual anarchists, unwittingly assisted by social activists and groups through leaflets and magazines, who blew up public sites, targeted heads of state with dynamite or stabbed them to death, and threatened to unleash all kinds of destructive actions as 'propaganda of the deed'. During the years between 1880 and 1914 over 500 people were wounded and around 160 persons, mostly high officials and state representatives, fell victim to anarchist attacks (leaving Russia aside): amongst them Czar Alexander II, King Umberto of Italy, the US President William McKinley, three prime ministers, numerous other ministers, police officials and politicians. Popular Empress Elisabeth of Austria ('Sissi') was stabbed to death by the Italian anarchist Luigi Lucheni in 1898. Some also consider the attack on the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914 an anarchist attack.

The 'world-wide conspiracy' was the specter invoked by the anarchists in their writings to describe their millenarian and apocalyptic utopia (or dystopia) on the one hand and to boost their small number on the other. Anarchists operated new, very visible and fearsome technologies of destruction, such as dynamite and the automobile, as means of transport and as vehicle-borne improvised explosive device *avant la lettre* (Davis 2007). Anarchist associations gratefully exploited new possibilities of communicating and traveling around the world much more quickly than before. Western anarchists assisted Russian colleagues in their attempts to target the Czar. A Polish anarchist took his cue to attack the Czar from a newspaper report on the impending state visit of the Russian head of state to France. Russian nihilist Sergey Nechaev seized the opportunity of cheaper printing techniques to smuggle, translate and disseminate his *Revolutionary Catechism* abroad (Butterworth 2010). His anarchist colleague Bakunin issued his handful of disciples with four-digit membership cards, to suggest a constituency of thousands of adherents to his *World Revolutionary Alliance*. And the French League of Nihilists disseminated a leaflet in 1881, bragging about poisoning hundreds of bourgeois families by dispersing toxins into the Paris water supply (idem 181-2).

Anarchists did in fact conspire and commit attacks. The extent to which they inflated these conspiracies by means of the modern media and by playing into popular fears was, however, larger than life. The projection of their fantasies of destruction and psychological terror was met with similarly outrageous reactions of public and political abhorrence. These reactions were symbolic of a new, late 19th-century discourse on (in)security and chaos. A new dispositive of security and governance emerged, brought into existence by, among other things, new technological inventions and adaptations that were appropriated by the anarchists and their opponents alike.

The specter of the anarchist threat was thus immediately taken over by the police and security agencies to frame these disparate incidents and attacks as a

real international and homogeneous threat. The ‘conspiracy’ dispositive increasingly became a favorite strategy to frame social problems, to discredit socialist opposition and mobilize support for the expansion and professionalization of police and security forces. Conspiracy was a fruit of modernism: it combined reactionary fears of chaos and socialism with an over-reliance on and faith in technological and managerial progress and engineering. The idea of the Black International moreover provided operational clues to the nascent police and security centers. Even seemingly harmless meetings, such as completely legal gatherings of social democratic parties and associations, could be framed as a decoy, concealing deceitful activities and illegal conspiracies to overthrow the government.

A conspiracy is by its nature progressive and exponential: it suggests a dark number of participants, a transnational outreach, international targets and a widely projected end goal (e.g. world power). Such reasoning naturally legitimizes metastasizing security measures and efforts. Anarchists might have dealt the first blow, but police and security forces soon took over, especially those operating without any democratic or legal constraints, such as the Czarist security agency, the Ochrana. Their activities mirrored their threat perceptions. Russian officers and noblemen even established an anti-anarchist conspiracy of their own, the so-called ‘Holy Brotherhood’, designed to wage war on the anarchists by all means, including terrorist attacks (Butterworth 2011, 177).

The idea of a Black International as an organized, international and homogeneous threat was invigorated by sub-state actors in the police and security domain. The rationale of national security led to an unwillingness to establish checks and balances in the adoption of the rules governing executive secrecy in this regard. The fight against anarchism enhanced the reliance on the Weberian rationale for secrecy, namely that bureaucracies seek refuge in secrecy for reasons of convenience and of efficiency. Concealment in fact insulated bureaucracies from criticism and interference by the nascent European democracies of the late 19th century; it permitted them to cut corners, apply new, far-reaching measures and to usurp budgets with no questions being asked (Weber 1946; Simmel 1906).

This became especially clear in the case of the fugitive anarchist suspect, Baron von Ungern-Sternberg, whose story reads like a 19th-century crime novel, but has been constructed based on archival research.

3. The Case of Baron von Ungern-Sternberg – The First Terrorist Experience in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the dispositive of the Black International was not predominant in the Dutch media, but even here, the anarchist threat gave rise to substantial changes in administrative and political security practices. New technol-

ogies of imagination entered the Dutch bureaucratic domain, triggering and enabling new modes of governance and security measures.

Due to the rise of financial markets and the diamond industry, cities like Amsterdam experienced an economical high after 1871, followed by a corresponding upsurge of urban security and criminality problems. Public disturbances and riots increased, thus putting issues of public order and security high on the local and political agenda, advanced by political parties that were founded around that same period (De Rooy et al. 2011, 298-321).² Regarding these security concerns, it was not the anarchists but the organized socialists that represented the largest threat to the established order (Charité 1972; Bos 2001). Riots and revolts, such as the Amsterdam 'Eel Revolt' of 1886, where 26 people died after the police tried to suppress a public spectacle, demonstrated that local authorities had to deal with new kinds of challenges and tensions (De Rooy 1971; Van der Wal 2000, 172-3; Bos 2001, 207-21). Police reports spoke of 'red flags' and subversive socialists roaming the streets.³ In 1887, a new article was added to the constitution, allowing the king to impose martial law and to declare a state of emergency 'in order to maintain external and international security'. Civil government would be suspended and military rule would be deployed instead, allowing the army to intervene at the king's command (Van Zuijlen 2008, 66).⁴ This constitutional amendment legalized already existing practices of local army interventions at any mayor's request, thereby normalizing and standardizing this instrument of force. In March 1888, it was deployed against worker strikes in the northern parts of the country, in the Frisian and Groninger turf areas, after the Social Democrat League (*Sociaal-Democratische Bond*, SDB) had incited the poorly-paid workers to riot. Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, the SDB's notorious leader, was elected into Parliament only a few months later. Fear of socialist revolt and violent class struggle subsequently increased (Domela Nieuwenhuis 1910, 99, 122, 132, 442).⁵

Violent outbursts were still the exception, but Parliament had nevertheless felt the need to prohibit the transport and stockpiling of explosives 'with malicious intent' by royal decree in 1885.⁶ On 5 December 1888, on the occasion of the Dutch national celebration of Santa Claus, the mayor, police commander

² Cf. 'Een terugblik', *De Nederlandsche Politiegids*, 3 (1888), No. 36.

³ Cf. Amsterdam City Archives, 5225, inv. no. 759, A30532000159, telegram no. 164, bureau sectie 5 aan hoofdbureau, 25 July 1886, 7.56 uur namiddag.; A30532000139, telegram no. 148, bureau sectie 5 aan hoofdbureau, 25 July 1886, 5.50 uur namiddag. With thanks to Bernard Bremmer.

⁴ <<http://www.denederlandsegrondwet.nl/9353000/1/j9vvhlf299q0sr/vi7df7it0ez5>>.

⁵ F. Domela Nieuwenhuis denies in his autobiography any violent behavior on behalf of the Dutch socialists and anarchists; they were no 'dynamite men'. He discards allegations of this nature by minister Heemskerk as 'mendacious'. However, he does admit his admiration for foreign anarchists such as Elysée Reclus and Peter Kropotkin, whose texts he translated in 1885.

⁶ Koninklijk Besluit (Royal Decree), 15 October 1885, *Staatsblad*, No. 187.

and public prosecutor of Amsterdam received ‘hellish machines’ – explosive devices, intended to blow up after they were unwrapped. The true content of the surprise packages was, however, detected before they exploded.⁷ From the archives, it becomes clear that itinerant anarchists remained a threat in the years that followed. Police commissioners declared their worries over socialist meetings usurped by anarchists, or misused to mobilize workers to riot. They reported on ‘strangers’ within their area, purportedly preparing all kinds of subversive activities. Generally, local police officers would take care of such threats on their own, together with the mayor and the local authorities. The Ministry of Justice would only be alerted in case of urgent prosecutorial relevance. However, according to local and regional police commissioners and public prosecutors, anarchism was now reaching a stage of national urgency.⁸

The year 1894 became a decisive point in the development of anti-anarchist activities, both in Western Europe and in the Netherlands. On February 22, the French anarchist Emile Henry carried out an attack on the café Terminus in Paris, killing five citizens. His trial commenced two months later, triggering a series of solidarity actions by fellow anarchists all over Europe. Even in the United States, demonstrations on Henry’s behalf were organized. In the mining town of Liège in Belgium, where recent mine accidents had fuelled unrest amongst the coal workers, anarchists seized their opportunity. On 1 May 1894 a heavy bomb blew up the Saint Jacob Church in the city centre, followed by another heavy explosion two days later. The second attack severely wounded the local G. P. Renson, although it had been intended for the local court president who went by the same name; the anarchists had deposited their explosives at the wrong address. The perpetrators were caught a few days later, only for the police to discover that they had been lured and paid by a stranger, who had moved into town a few months earlier and who travelled under the name of Baron Ernest von Ungern-Sternberg.

The investigating judge issued a warrant order and sent out pictures and personal description of the suspected baron.⁹ Von Ungern, however, managed to escape to the Netherlands, very conveniently leaving a note in his hotel room with the names of eight Germans, two Dutchmen and two Belgians who had allegedly assisted him in his activities (Butterworth 2010, 338-45).¹⁰ The Belgian prosecutor informed his Dutch colleagues about the investigations. On 31 May, the prosecutor of Den Bosch, ‘jonkheer’ (squire) Theodore Serraris, notified the minister of justice, W. van der Kaay, that the suspected perpetrator

⁷ ‘Uit de Hoofdstad’, in: *De Nederlandsche Politiegids*, Vol. 3 (1888), No. 37.

⁸ National Archive, The Hague/Netherlands (NA), pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6486, file No. 8, Letter from the Public Prosecutor of Amsterdam to the Minister of Justice, 14 June 1894.

⁹ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6486, Cabinet du Juge d’Instruction/Arrondissement de Liège, ‘Signalement et Portrait’, Luik, 20 May 1894.

¹⁰ Butterworth did not conduct research in the Netherlands and does not mention the Von Sternberg affair.

of an anarchist attack, one ‘Ungern von Sternberg’, had fled to Maastricht and had “repeatedly met with the notorious and very dangerous socialist Vliegen, publisher and printer of *De Volkstribuun* [people’s tribune],” a socialist magazine.¹¹ Willem Vliegen was a well-known propagandist and typographer in Maastricht and would become co-founder of the Dutch Social Democratic Party, the SDAP, later in August that year. Serraris received permission to put Vliegen under surveillance and to interrogate him and his socialist comrades (Perry 1994; De Jonge 1979).

Von Ungern-Sternberg had in the meantime found refuge at the Russian consulate, which was not as surprising as it might seem, since the fake baron was an agent of the Russian secret police, the Ochrana. And his real name was Cyprien Jagolkovsky. He worked under instructions from his superior Rachkovsky, who operated from the Russian embassy in Paris and had organized a series of anarchist attacks in western capitals, to reinforce suspicions of an international anarchist conspiracy. Commissioned by the Ochrana, Jagolkovsky had paid a number of European anarchists to commit attacks, with the Liège bombings being one of the most successful operations. At the Dutch consulate, Jagolkovsky however ran into probably the only Russian diplomat who was not involved in the Ochrana conspiracy and did not want to condone it either, once Jagolkovsky informed him of his true nature. He did not want to protect the *agent provocateur* and reported him to the Amsterdam police. There, police officials had already discovered that the anarchist suspect was not a member of the respectable Baltic aristocratic family Von Unger-Sternberg. Jagolkovsky had, however, escaped once again, and fled back to his mother country (Butterworth 2010, 342).

The exact details of the Ochrana plot were not clear at that time. Only in January 1895, during the trial against Von Ungern-Sternberg’s Belgian accomplices, did vague rumors regarding a possible sting operation surface. The renowned head of the Amsterdam criminal investigation, Christiaan Batelt, testified that the ‘fake baron’ had intermittently lived with the anarchist Guérin under the name Stein and had reported himself to the Russian consul as a ‘secret agent’.¹² The consul, however, refused to appear in court to testify and Russia refused to extradite Jagolkovsky or respond to the allegations.¹³

The affair had severe consequences for the Dutch socialists. By the efforts of Serraris and his fellow prosecutors, they were immediately implicated in the perceived threat of anarchist violence. One of the two Dutchmen mentioned in

¹¹ NA, Archive Ministry of Justice 1876-1914, pl. no. 2.09.05, inv. no. 6486, file no. 2, 4 June 1894, Letters from Serraris to the Minister of Justice, 31 May 1894 and 2 June 1894.

¹² Batelt (1846-1919) had established a photographic service within the Amsterdam police force in 1883 and was a renowned expert in forensic and investigative matters.

¹³ Zie: ‘België’, *De Baanbreker*, 5 January 1895, vol. 58; *De Baanbreker*, 26 January 1895, vol. 61.

Von Sternberg's note was Vliegen. Von Sternberg had indeed visited him three times between 29 April and 2 May (just before and after the attacks). According to the police, Vliegen and someone called 'Pieters' were "dangerous individuals", who were in "in close contact with their Belgian party colleagues" and were suspected of "importing dynamite from Belgium".¹⁴ The police assumed that Von Sternberg had printed his 'threatening manifests' at Vliegen's office, and repeatedly searched his private and company address. A letter by Von Sternberg was found, of which Vliegen vehemently denied any knowledge, asserting that "Sternberg, who visited him three times, had planted the letter on him to make him unhappy" (a quite realistic assumption). Apart from Vliegen and Pieters, the judicial authorities also held other socialists under surveillance who were allegedly part of the anarchist conspiracy. In this manner, the purported plot was extended progressively. Prosecutors travelled between Maastricht, Liège, Brussels and Amsterdam, harassing their socialist suspects.¹⁵

Here, the Ochrana had at least achieved some success: For Serraris, the Von Ungern case was a very welcome opportunity to lobby for more security measures and to convince the minister of justice of the purported anarchist threat. Other prosecutors came to his assistance as well. The prosecutor of The Hague reported the retrieval of a recipe for the making of a nitroglycerine bomb in May 1894, via a 'secret informer' within anarchist circles.¹⁶ Another prosecutor informed the minister about a box with dynamite, located in a train wagon coming in from Germany.¹⁷ Both findings proved harmless (the recipe did not work and the purported dynamite turned out to be a hoax), but nevertheless inspired the pyrotechnical department of the War cabinet to draft a manual "to deal with hellish machines."¹⁸

4. The Queen on Tour – New Impulses for the Antiterrorist Dispositive in 1895

This episode spilled over into the next year 1895, when Queen Regent Emma von Waldeck and Pyrmont took her daughter, crown princess Wilhelmina, on a

¹⁴ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6486, file no. 7, Serraris to the minister, 11 June 1894, Den Bosch.

¹⁵ NA, pl. no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6486, file no. 2, Serraris to the minister, 2 June 1894, Den Bosch; file no. 9, letter Serraris, 14 June 1894.

¹⁶ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6486, file no. 10, exchange between the regional police and the Minister of Justice, May 22 – June 13, 1894.

¹⁷ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6486, file no. 25, letter from the Amsterdam Prosecutor General to the Minister of Justice, 20 July 1894; Letter from the Public Prosecutor of Haarlem to the minister, 27 July 1894.

¹⁸ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6442, no. D36, letter from the Minister of Justice to the Minister of War, 3 August 1894. With thanks to Jos Smeets.

number of high-profile city visits to warm the restless and rioting population of the southern, predominantly Catholic parts of the country towards the (Protestant) house of Orange. With the murder of the French prime minister in 1894 in his mind, the zealous prosecutor from the south, Theodore Serraris, was wary of anarchist attacks; a fear worsened by the steady influx of anarchist fugitives from France who were on the run from the increasingly repressive measures in their home country.¹⁹ The Von Ungern-Sternberg affair exacerbated suspicions about the involvement of well-known Dutch social democrats in international anarchist conspiracies.

In May 1895, the regent Emma and 14-year old princess Wilhelmina embarked on their first railroad trip. The tour induced a number of new security arrangements, most notably a special security escort, intended to deter and to fend off socialists and anarchists. The regent, however, admonished them not to “resort into a brute show of force towards a public expressing its warm sentiments for the Royal Family, or, regarding a foreign head of state, its interest in this head of state’s personality.”²⁰ On May 15 and 16, the royal pair visited the city of Den Bosch. Mayor Van der Does de Willebois, wary of anarchists and socialists, summoned plain-clothed detectives to patrol as journalists amongst the onlookers (Biemans 2007). On May 25, the royal party went further to Tilburg, the largest city of the province of Brabant, and from there to Maastricht. Regarding the high-profile security risks involved, prosecutor Serraris tried to sack socialist railway employees in advance and raided socialist headquarters once again. Soon afterwards, Vliegen’s printing company went down in flames, under suspect circumstances.²¹ In preparation of her majesty’s visit to the South, the minister of justice moreover put anarchists in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany under surveillance, in cooperation with the Prussian and Belgian authorities. Two Prussian and four Belgian secret agents were added to the team of Dutch investigating officers during this royal summer.²²

These concrete measures aside, the Dutch minister of justice remained reluctant to adopt new laws similar to the French, Russian or Prussian ones. He kept to his liberal position and fended off both his prosecutor Serraris and the Prussian envoy, who demanded stricter laws. In December 1895, the Prussian envoy sent a request, asking the minister to adopt laws against dissemination and glorification of socialist and anarchist standpoints by meetings, writings or

¹⁹ Letter from Prosecutor General Serraris to the minister, 11 May 1895. Ministry of Justice, inv.no. 2.09.05, no. 6487. NA.

²⁰ Decree, signed by the Minister of War and Her Majesty Wilhelmina, 28 February 1895, file no. 27; letter from the Minister of Justice to the Prosecutor General of Den Bosch, 5 April 1895, file no. 3. Pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6487, NA.

²¹ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6487, file no. 9, exchange between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prosecutor General of Den Bosch, 18 May 1895; file no. 3, exchange between the Minister of Justice and the Prosecutor General of Den Bosch, 4 June 1895.

²² NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6487, file no. 12, Serraris to the minister, 17 June 1895.

other means. According to the Prussian police, Dutch socialists and anarchists, who enjoyed free rein in publishing and disseminating their riotous ideas in the Netherlands, also ventured into neighboring Germany, thereby causing “the security of [...] friendly states to be endangered, and public order and quiet to be disrupted”. Minister Van der Kaay, however, was not susceptible to this demand for solidarity. Socialist “dissemination has taken place freely for years now, by virtue of the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech for anyone to ventilate his ideas.” The minister did not see any merit in “cultivating martyrs” or “sowing the seed of resentment” amongst the social democrats, thereby “nourishing that party”.

Experience taught us the efficacy of this line of conduct, because it stands without doubt that social democrat turmoils in the Netherlands have not merely waned both in numbers and relevance for some years now, but the influence of their leaders on the population has decreased considerably as well, and interest in the movement itself is gradually declining.²³

According to the minister, incidental measures were one thing, but ordering large-scale repressive laws something else altogether. Compared with Germany, socialism was on the retreat in the Netherlands, thus, ignoring them and not providing them with more frameworks of injustice seemed the most effective approach.

To be sure, the minister was no free spirit but a staunch liberal conservative. He acquiesced in stepping up surveillance measures, deploying plain-clothed detectives at border towns and stations, keeping socialists and anarchists under control and ordering all aliens to report within 24 hours of their arrival in the Netherlands. A number of foreigners were immediately expelled as a result. Compared to other countries, the fight against the Black International in the Netherlands was a second-tier dispositive, but it still did trigger public attention and morphed into new techniques of dealing with foreigners and socialists after 1894.

5. Public Morality under Attack: The Referent Object Expands

In most European countries, the projected anarchist threat was legitimized by pointing to the values at stake. Not only official representatives but urban life as such, public norms and values were perceived as being threatened. These ideas went hand in glove with the shift in security objectives in late 19th-century Europe. The liberal vision of a rather marginal notion of state security

²³ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6488, file no. 6, 8 January 1896, exchange between the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the German envoy, 18 December 1895.

gave way to maximalist and very modernist concepts of public order and public security for the state, its authorities and the population. Security, in the broadest sense of the word, became an ordering principle in society; general safety and security measures served to promote nationalist and moral values (Te Velde 1992, 205). The dispositive of the Black International served these purposes. Anarchists not only threatened the lives of monarchs and presidents, but disrupted daily life, economic business and undermined the public spirit and moral order. The expansion of the 'referent object' of the anarchist threat thus mirrored the expanding projecting of the conspiring circles.

Parallel to the rise of socialism, mechanisms of control and the hold over society by security measures grew stronger. Article 3 of the new constitution of 1887 commanded the government to offer protection to goods, traffic and persons within the Dutch territory. For the liberals in parliament, this new emphasis on "the concern for the peace and security of the state" marked the beginning of a new regime of preventative and regulating security considerations. Security policy was made subject to the ordering principles of nationalism, liberalism and public decency. For Dutch standards, an unprecedented amount of new laws, measures and administrative practices were developed, especially in the security domain (Te Velde 1992, 205).

Compared to other European countries this expansion was kept in rein, partly by the lack of successful attacks (no lethal anarchist attacks took place), and partly by other considerations of a more liberal, economical or even historical kind. Dutch representatives and commentators reminded their audiences, for example, of the consequences of a repressive *haute police*, when the Dutch suffered "under Napoleon's iron rod and multiple spies".²⁴ Until late in the 19th century, the overriding ideas on police activities pertained to a rather passive and reactive maintenance of public order and peace. The socialist movement and the industrial proletariat were less developed and counted fewer members than elsewhere in Europe. Central security agencies similar to those in the Austrian empire, Prussia or France did not exist in the Netherlands.

However, even considering this relatively low profile on security matters, the anarchists' objectives and society's vulnerability were extended considerably after 1894. An influential police journal wrote about "attacks against public morality", inspired by the "revolt against authority", enabled and disseminated through "the media".²⁵ This expansion of the referent object inevitably dictated the corresponding countering logics and measures. Serraris received permission to appoint "secret police officers", "familiar with the French and German languages and trained to monitor the activities and intentions of the many social democrats and anarchists that lived or temporarily stayed in that area, amongst

²⁴ 'Geheime Uitgaven', I, II, in: *De Nederlandsche Politiegids*, vol. 5 (1890), no. 51, 52.

²⁵ 'Schadelijke openbaarmaking van misdrijven', in: *De Nederlandsche Politiegids*, vol. 9 (December 1894), no. 108.

them numerous Belgians and Germans”.²⁶ This measure granted Serraris vast opportunities to investigate, monitor and register any foreigner he deemed suspect.

Since the attacks in Belgium and France, especially after the murder of Prime Minister Sadi Carnot by Italian anarchist Sante Caserio on 25 June 1894, public awareness, both in the media and in society, of ‘dangerous individuals’ and ‘strange chaps’ had increased.²⁷ “Spring and summer have seen plenty of shocking incidents inside and outside our borders,” *De Nederlandsche Politiegids* warned its readers. “Dynamiters don’t need to correspond with each other; they leave that to the press, in the full knowledge that this queen of the earth has irresistible means at her disposal to make them heard and seen.”²⁸ According to the *Politiegids*, the *dynamitards* were not only after public and political dignitaries, but were subverting the overall public and moral order: “And our country? [...] Then a number of shocking attacks against public morality occurred. However different they might be, it seemed as if they were connected by a single thread.” This ‘thread’ consisted of a revolt against authority as such, and the abuse of the media to glorify such immoral deeds.²⁹

To state a situation of moral panic would be an exaggeration of public knowledge and the dissemination of newspapers within the population at that time. However, alarmed by newspaper stories, a number of perceptive citizens felt the urge to report the sight of suspicious-looking strangers to the police. A medical doctor in Amsterdam remembered having treated the suspected Baron Von Ungern-Sternberg in his office on 15 March 1894.³⁰ In July 1894, the minister of justice received a number of reports on two ‘suspicious Spaniards’ who had been spotted in a ‘coffee house’, discussing plans to attack the heads of state in Spain. The police was keen to follow up on these reports; warrants were issued, and wanted descriptions were spread. Through the Foreign Office, the implicated countries were informed as well, leading to personal expressions of gratitude by the Spanish crown in this instance.³¹ The Ministry of Justice moreover received numerous requests for extradition or description from Russia, Belgium and Germany and generally tried to meet these demands dutifully. The post and telegraph offices enabled a quick exchange of letters.

²⁶ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6486, file no. 22. Exchange between the Minister of Justice and the Prosecutor General of Amsterdam, 25 September 1894.

²⁷ Cf. *Anarchist* 7, 21 July 1894, no. 62; ‘Aanranding van ‘t Gezag’, *De Nederlandsche Politiegids* 9, July 1894, no. 103.

²⁸ ‘Schadelijke openbaarmaking van misdrijven’, *De Nederlandsche Politiegids* 9, December 1894, no. 108.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6486, file no. 4, letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs (FA) to the Minister of Justice, 29 June 1894, including the medical doctor’s report; *Idem*, 16 July 1894.

³¹ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6486, file no. 19, letter from the Minister of Justice to the FA, 6 July 1894; Envoy Madrid to FA, 21 July 1894.

In general, oversight on foreigners was intensified. Regional prosecutors reported the number of ‘strangers’ in their area to the minister on a regular basis.³² If such a foreigner was caught without a license, explaining and legitimizing his residence in the country, he was immediately deported abroad. The fear of the anarchist stranger thus prompted all kinds of measures, justified by the prosecutors with reference to the threat of an anarchist attack in the Netherlands.

Society’s vulnerability to subversion was accentuated, not only by subversive acts of violence, but also by subversive thoughts. On 24 January 1895, Serraris sent a number of proposals to the minister suggesting criminalizing insults and incitement and introducing censorship on the media.

I for one do not share the views of those who are in favor of allowing that party [the social democrat party, BdG] free rein, of letting that illness “drive itself out” – thus applying the old “laissez faire, laissez passer” rule to it as well’. The media in particular were to blame: ‘The press has been the most powerful weapon wielded by the socialists for propaganda purposes so far [...] There are those who would like to have the newspaper tax reintroduced.’³³

This attempt at criminalizing the whole of the social movement was a bridge too far to the liking of the minister. “Each case has to be judged on its own” Minister Van der Kaay (still a classical liberal) scribbled in the margin of Serraris’ notes. The policy of leniency and indulgence had “been applied successfully in the northern provinces. Precisely because we have let them get on with it, the meetings of these associations [the socialist and anarchist, BdG] are only being attended by a handful of young men.” Although the minister still felt that constitutional rights should not be infringed upon generically, he started to move in Serraris’ direction. He admitted that the Criminal Code could profit from one amendment or another. In particular, Serraris’ proposals for heavier punishment for insulting authorities spoke to the minister. In December 1894, he issued a ban on the Social Democrat League. The times were indeed changing.³⁴

6. The Emergence of New ICT Techniques

Without the rise of new information, communication and transport methods (ICT), it would have been very hard for the anarchist threat to be securitized as

³² Cf. NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6486, Fourth quarterly report by the Prosecutor General in Leeuwarden to the Minister of Justice, 19 January 1893, p. 12-13.

³³ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6487, file no. 18, Serraris to Minister of Justice (with notes from the minister), 24 January 1895.

³⁴ The Social Democrat League (SDB) was dissolved but reestablished and continued under the name Socialist League.

a world-wide conspiracy (the Black International) at all. Anarchists published their threats in newspapers, traveled by steamships and contacted each other by telegraph. Newspapers connected strikes, workers' riots and communist meetings to attacks by Russian nihilists and French anarchists. Incidents in Europe, Australia and the United States were related to attacks in Egypt, China and Japan. Fear soared high; in 1898 the German emperor Wilhelm II cancelled a state visit to Egypt because of rumors about Italian anarchists conspiring to attack him there. The global threat of the Black International played into the vignette of the "new political era, experimental, positive, scientific" (Butterworth 2010, 46). The downside to the era of enormous progress and positivist faith in science and technology was the idea that villains would be able to deploy these scientific findings as well – to their own malicious intents.

At the same time, new modes of transport, telecommunication and technological means also played into the hands of the police forces, who were now able to 'connect the dots' and frame the incidents into one looming specter of the anarchist Black International – a specter that was never substantiated by evidence, only evoked in the minds and fantasies of the contemporaries. One brilliant example of such imagination can be found in G.K. Chesterton's novel *The Man Who Was Thursday* from 1908, in which the high council of anarchists in the end turns out to be set up by Scotland Yard. Good and evil overlapped, "so that each man fighting for order may be as brave and good a man as the dynamiter. [...] We have descended into hell" (Chesterton 2008[1908], 172-3).

Police forces in Europe joined forces and implemented the system of Bertillonage, developed around 1882 by the French police prefect Alphonse Bertillon. So-called *portraits parlés* registered a series of bio-anthropological facial and bodily traits and measures, based on a system of numbers and codes. This 'scientific' method was informed by the notion that a deviational, criminal nature manifested itself in facial features and other anthropometric characteristics. The system of Bertillonage went hand in glove with the social Darwinist and eugenic ideas on criminal degeneration as a genetic phenomenon. It had the advantage that it systematized crime-scene photography and developed a standardized identification system based on physical measurements. This anthropometrical data could be transmitted at short notice to fellow police forces abroad, in order to identify and arrest fugitive criminals or suspects – which was something of a revolution, at least on paper, since most of the suspects had still managed to keep their identity hidden until that time, or were able to escape with forged identity cards. New shipping lines and railroad connections furthermore enabled the photographs taken to be dispatched in a much quicker pace as well (Fijnaut 2007, 283; Jäger 2006, 196-221).

The operational techniques of Bertillonage, the metric photography and the international warrant posters not only served to identify suspects or to improve prosecution, but they also symbolized the state of modernity to which national

security forces aspired. Within the context of increasing bilateral and transnational cooperation, these modern applications were a ticket to the circle of the – supposedly – most advanced and professionalized forces. Hence, police forces in the Netherlands also pressed their minister to tune into the new scientific insights and international developments. The Bertillonage system had already been adopted in France, and subsequently conquered Germany and the United Kingdom (Lignian 1894, 987-96). Due to the ambitious police commissioner of Rotterdam, Willem Voormolen, the system also gained a foothold in the Netherlands. In February 1896, the Parisian police officer was invited to the Netherlands and received a royal decoration, together with Voormolen himself, from the Dutch queen regent Emma.³⁵ By royal decree, the Bertillon system was now also applied within the Dutch police and judicial forces.³⁶

In this fashion, the Department of Justice embraced ‘modern’ scientific insights from the young discipline of criminology and thus signaled its attempt to professionalize and centralize the Dutch police system. A central system of registration was adopted, and in the following years a central investigative force was created and new detectives were trained. Although no new anarchist incident was reported after 1898, the new measures were still legitimized by pointing to the necessity of infiltrating the anarchist movement and the prevention of attacks. These reforms and novelties lifted the Dutch police to the status of international players. Dutch police forces and the newly constituted criminal investigators went along in collecting material on suspect anarchists, exchanging details and photographs with colleagues over the world, including colleagues from authoritarian police forces such as the Ochrana.

International collaboration between European police forces, including the Dutch, profited from these trends in bureaucratization and professionalization – in compliance with Mathieu Deflem’s hypothesis on the close connection between more autonomy in terms of bureaucratization and professionalization and more international contacts (Deflem 2002). This internationalization was cemented in 1898, when the first international anti-anarchist conference was organized, three weeks after the murder of Empress Elisabeth. Here, participating states agreed on a definition of anarchist crimes, accepted the system of Bertillonage internationally, promised to assist each other with rendition and information requests, and declared that they would implement the death penalty. Not all countries ratified the treaty, but the meeting heralded the beginning

³⁵ ‘Het Bertillonage-stelsel’, *De Nederlandsche Politiegids* 10, May 1895, no. 113; NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6488, exchange between the Minister of Justice, the FA and the Cabinet of the Queen Regent, 22 January 1896, no. 12; 12 February, no. 5; 15 February, no. 7; 19 February no. 11.

³⁶ KB, Staatsblad, 22 February 1896. Cf. ‘Antropometrisch stelsel’, *Nieuws van de Dag*, 3 January 1896.

of organized international police cooperation and can be seen as the forerunner of Interpol (Fijnaut 2007, 283; Jäger 2006, 196-221).

The system of Bertillonage soon gave way to the British invention of dactyloscopy, but the idea was the same. Without these international communication possibilities, police agencies from Amsterdam to Moscow would not have been able to invoke and identify an internationally defined, purported global anarchist network. Although in reality not many anarchists were caught by these systems, they served to centralize, professionalize and standardize police approaches and heralded new, modernized security regimes throughout Europe (De Graaf 2012).

In 1903, Voormolen made another study trip to London, Paris and Berlin, to sustain bilateral cooperation on fighting anarchism and to learn more about new theories on ‘errant villains’, radicals and anarchists operating ‘hellish machines’. From London Voormolen brought back the technique of dactyloscopy, again single-handedly modernizing the Dutch police force. He also reported proudly on his exchange with Prussian colleagues, to whom he had been able to present new anarchist photographs: 300 to the Dresden Police and 91 to his Berlin colleagues.³⁷ The conspiracy dispositive thus both thrived on and legitimized the rise and implementation of new ICT techniques.

7. The Rise of New Governance Techniques

The technology that enabled police and justice forces on a global scale to identify, exchange and disseminate their threat perception also fed into the creation of new modes of international cooperation and the establishment of formal measures of international exchange of anarchist identities between police and judicial services.

As we already noted, not only the anarchists were duped by these techniques. The new technological devices were especially geared to register, identify and disseminate suspect aliens as such. Notification orders, surveillance measures and border checks followed from that. Even in the Netherlands, where no new laws infringing on freedom of speech were adopted, executive power expanded into new police and investigative centers. Both the Von Sternberg affair in 1894 and – even more so – the royal tour to the southern part of the country in 1895 opened a window of opportunity for new modes of governance.

Inspired by police reforms in the United Kingdom, public prosecutors and police commissioners initiated a transformation in law enforcement and securi-

³⁷ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 6514, file 2 October 1905, no. 7, Report by Voormolen to the Minister of Justice, 30 September 1903.

ty thinking: attention shifted from repression to prevention, and from reactive ‘crime fighting’ to proactive control of public life and order – to the extent that some scholars even speak of the emergence of a “social intervention state” (De Rooy 1979). Especially the chief police commissioners in the main capitals of the Netherlands were active in pushing forward these developments (Meershoek 2006, 106). Rotterdam’s commissioner Voormolen went on tour to various cities abroad, to study how other police forces coped with new trends in crime and security management. In 1898, he established the Fellowship of Chief Commissioners and Commissioners of the Netherlands Police Forces, in order to better calibrate and coordinate organization and methods of the judicial police throughout the country and to build a lobby for modernization. For the first meeting, he invited experts from abroad to report on their findings and share their experiences (Smeets 2011, 96-7). Such meetings indeed contributed to a broader proliferation of the new attitudes and ideas on the mission and aim of the police forces.

The modes of governance correspondingly changed: Concern about vagrancy and begging and attention towards misfits, outsiders and marginal figures disrupting public order and quiet gave way to a preventative regulation of that order on the base of risk calculation measures (Meershoek 2006, 114-20; Smeets 2011, 44-8), such as the deployment of plain-clothed detectives at border stations or at ‘hot spots’, surveillance of anarchists and the registration of foreigners. The Marechaussee (Royal Dutch Constabulary) was tasked with maintaining public order, law enforcement, and safeguarding the main roads in small municipalities and in the southern provinces of Limburg and North Brabant. Although militarily organized, the Marechaussee was part of the national police (*rijkspolitie*) and was tasked to patrol in border towns and during festivities, if necessary also in disguise, to identify suspect strangers. For criminal investigators and detectives, a higher level of education became obligatory. In 1896, parliament decided to establish a ‘Secret Police Force’ (*korps geheime politie*), and in March 1897, the first federal police investigators were appointed: trained and tasked to carry out professional prosecution and investigation duties, equipped with special investigative means, and embedded within the Office of the Public Prosecution (Smeets 2011, 30-5; Van de Bunt and Niemeijer 1997). Prosecution of socialists and anarchists tripled (cf. Heering 1994, 37).

The coronation of Royal Princess Wilhelmina, on 31 August 1898, gave rise to additional concerns and corresponding measures. When prosecutors and commissioners suggested the adoption of a new law, regulating the supervision of foreigners, anarchists and other potentially dangerous individuals, enough public and political support had accrued. A parliamentary committee (the ‘Commission-Kist’), established in 1898, publicly and officially proclaimed anarchism a danger to the public order. The committee, set up by the liberal minister of justice Cort van der Linden, was tasked to investigate law enforce-

ment improvements and police reforms. The threat of anarchism was explicitly used as an argument in favor of restructuring the national police organization: “out of concern for society, regarding anarchist movements and attacks, that not only threaten the state but also target society as a whole”, a nationalized and centralized police force was necessary, according to the committee.³⁸ Only such a professional and national police force would be able to fend off the most important threats to national security: anarchism (from within and outside the Netherlands), foreigners, revolutionaries of other dangerous groups, threats to the Royal Family (Smeets 2006, 106).³⁹

The committee thus not only expanded the referent subject of the threat, it also inflated the referent object: the assumed targets being threatened ranged from the Royal Family to the social fabric as such. Although the organizational and administrative conclusions on large-scale police reforms were not adopted, the framing of the threat was accepted and reiterated in parliamentary debate and in the media. Hence, the imagination of the anarchist threat and alarmist language were now infused in the parliamentary-political discourse – and no longer confined to behind-the-scenes deliberations within the police and judiciary bureaucracies.

Even the Pierson Administration, known for its commitment to advancing social justice, embraced the new security considerations. Liberal Minister of Justice Pieter Cort van der Linden suggested expanding article 131 (criminal incitement) with the sentence “incitement to disobey legally issued administrative orders, to disobey legal prescriptions, to violently subvert public order”, because “in the face of the most dangerous incitement, intended to overthrow the existing social order, the authorities more often than not are helpless”. He also advocated the introduction of a new article 266, intended to further restrict freedom of speech, turning the Netherlands – in the words of socialist leader Domela Nieuwenhuis – into “another Mecklenburg-Russia”. Until that time, leveling criticisms at the authorities had been admissible; only insults towards concrete individuals were penalized. That freedom would now be restricted, according to the minister (cf. Domela Nieuwenhuis 1910, 491).⁴⁰

With these new declarations and legal securitizations, the struggle against anarchism gained much more public and political salience. In 1900, the national *Police Magazine* (Politiegids) first referred to the existence of a Black International, quoting some phrases from the French *Journal des Débats*:

³⁸ Commissie-Kist, *Verslag der commissie door den minister van Justitie benoemd om advies uit te brengen nopens de maatregelen welke tot verbetering van de politie kunnen strekken* (The Hague 1901), chapter 1. Cited at Fijnaut 2007: 325.

³⁹ NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 3004, letter from the Minister of Justice to Kist, Franken and Voormolen, 6 October 1898, no. 113; ‘De Politie en ‘t Anarchisme’, *De Nederlandsche Politiegids*, 15, September 1900, no. 177.

⁴⁰ Cf. ‘Binnenland’, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 2 October 1900.

An international secret association exists in the world, with a criminal intent; it is time for the police forces of all countries to try to identify this organization's practices without delay and to mutually encourage one another to exchange information and investigation results. They do so already in numerous instances, they should do so always.⁴¹

Given the empirical lack of real violent anarchists in the Netherlands, mostly socialists suffered from these new modes of control and surveillance. Enraged, socialist leader and representative P. J. Troelstra briefed the Dutch parliament on the activities of the Amsterdam Criminal Investigation Department, which had assembled an archive of 1500 photographic records on anarchists and socialists and did not feel any inhibition in sharing these with the Russian secret police, the Ochrana. On the occasion of an international socialist congress in the Dutch capital, Amsterdam detectives had not hesitated in dispatching pictures and information regarding the conference's participants to their Czarist colleagues (Fijnaut 2007, 354).⁴² In sum, although the modes of governance enabled and legitimized by the Dutch conspiracy dispositive did differ from the ones enacted by authoritarian regimes (in Prussia or Czarist Russia), and constitutional infringements and public censorship were kept in close rein on an administrative and executive level, the levels of control, repression, surveillance and monitoring activities were raised considerably.

8. A Final Note: The Importance of Imagining Security

Concluding, with constitutional limitations in place, the security dispositive of the fight against the Black International also gained ground in the Netherlands from 1893 onwards. Although the Netherlands lacked a thoroughly centralized and authoritarian regime wielding power, metropolitan police commissioners and regional prosecution offices, most notably from the offices in the border regions, managed to prioritize anarchism as a security threat. Until 1894, this process of bottom-up securitization unfolded behind the scenes, within the police and judicial departments. At this stage, expansion of security measures and infringements on constitutional liberties were clearly inhibited by judicial and administrative constraints. Judges were not prepared to support political prosecution practices. Mayors claimed their local authority and rejected interventions by the Royal Marechaussee.⁴³ The Ministry of Warfare resisted widespread deployment of the military police, out of financial constraints. The

⁴¹ 'De Politie en 't Anarchisme', *De Nederlandsche Politiegids*, 15, September 1900, no. 177.

⁴² Acts of Parliament (Handelingen der Tweede Kamer), 1904-1906, 36th meeting, 20 December 1904, 885-891.

⁴³ Cf. NA, pl.no. 2.09.05, inv.no. 2919, letter from the Association of Mayors and Town Clerks in Friesland to the Minister of Justice, 23 August 1893, no. 44.

minister of justice moreover refused to spend money on an autonomous bomb squad or explosives research laboratory, and was also rather stingy in appointing more police informers and detectives. Within the Dutch system, there was still no place for deploying *agents provocateurs* as the Ochrana did. Nor was there enough political support for the implementation of a ‘thought police’, total censorship or ideologically motivated prosecution.

However, news about attacks abroad, in France, Germany or Russia, reached the Dutch coffee tables through all kinds of new information and communication channels from 1894 onwards. And through the bottom-up processes of securitization within the regional police and judiciary offices, the fight against the Black International climbed high on the Dutch political agenda as well. ‘Technologies of imagination’ transformed the faraway, imagined threat of anarchist violence into a vivid and material danger. Police commissioners assembled and disseminated wanted posters and pictures of fugitive anarchists, *portraits parlés* (identity cards containing anthropometric data) within the country and abroad, and assisted their foreign police colleagues when possible. Newspapers, telegraph, telephone and coffee house rumors contributed to this process of public dissemination and securitization of the global anarchist threat.

Incidents in the Netherlands remained limited to the Von Ungern-Sternberg affair, some hoaxes and heightened anarchist activity in writing and organization surrounding the royal visit in the summer of 1895. Notwithstanding this lack of ‘real’ anarchist attacks, the potential threat of the Black International captured both the public and political space and legitimized an acceleration of the already ongoing processes of modernization and professionalization of the police forces. From 1894/1895 (after the Von Sternberg affair and the crowning of Wilhelmina), classical liberal administrations launched the first attempts to restrict constitutional liberties. They supported the inflation of both the referent subject and the referent object of the threat: progressively, socialists, outsiders and foreigners were targeted by the new modes of security governance, and society’s vulnerability was accentuated. Deportation of foreigners, permanent surveillance and the deployment of plain-clothed detectives as a preventative and proactive measure became standard procedure in cases of perceived urgency and threat. In the media as in official parliamentary reports (for example by the Commission-Kist), the anarchist threat was equated with a subversion of public order and morality as such.

In sum, even within a relatively peaceful and quiet country such as the Netherlands, the dispositive of the Black International provided local and national authorities with leverage to impose new modes of control and governance on society – through the use of imagination and the techniques to operationalize imagined threats.

Some last words on the nexus between conspiracy dispositives and the new technologies of imagination.⁴⁴ Conspiracies need imagination; the above-mentioned expansion of the referent subject, referent object and the rise of new modes of governance thrived on the visualization of danger and threat by new ICT means of the late 19th century. Security rests on the basis of certain images of danger, threat and destruction. In complexly networked societies, security needs to be communicated in order to exist. Images of security are therefore crucial elements of modern security dispositives. By means of new ‘technologies of imagination’, the conspiracy dispositive invoked an invisible enemy. For the police forces, the conspiracy concept nourished a diffuse conglomerate of all kinds of heterogeneous threats: ranging from socialists, reformists, communists to the handful of real anarchists. For them, the conspiracy dispositive also offered an operational anchor. Underneath perfectly legal gatherings or activities, a subversive plot might be metastasizing; its members, supporters, geographical extension and explosive or apocalyptic means were beyond measurement. But not beyond imagination, and here the technologies of imagination came in useful as means of rendering the imagined threat as positively measurable and visible as possible: by presenting pictures, anthropometric coordinates, at least the suggestion of scientific policing and accurate prosecuting was upheld.

These imaginaries of threat and insecurity are intricately connected to more general modern social imaginaries (Taylor 2004). Much work has been done on the ways in which the nation is an imagined community (Anderson 1991) and in which societies involve an ‘imaginary constitution’ (Castoriadis 1987). Both Ricoeur (1986) and Taylor (2004) underscore the importance of general imaginaries in forming everyday life, providing meaning and order to social practice. (Gaonkar 2002, 4). More specifically, social imagination consists of representations (in the form of definitions, attributions, pictures, statistics, charts, graphs, etc.) that claim to describe (parts of) society. Thematizations of security, especially when the threat is framed as a conspiracy, take shape in the face of threats and dangers that cannot be fully known, measured or calculated, but that nonetheless involve various images of security that are closely connected to larger risk and security imaginaries.

These thematizations are produced by the so-called “*ocular centers* of social life, geared specifically to the production of images of risk and security”. Ocular centers can be defined in a general sense as institutions specialized in visualizing, representing or imagining social life (Schinkel 2011). Ocular centers have proliferated in modern times in a number of fields, ranging from monitoring agencies in the fields of capital flows and quality management to evaluating institutions in health care and education, from audit agencies to often suprana-

⁴⁴ I owe these thoughts on ‘technologies of imagination’ to Willem Schinkel.

tional regulatory bodies and regimes of supervision or surveillance. Examples of ocular centers in the security realm are risk databases, border monitoring agencies and policy bodies. This is exactly what happened in the case of the Black International, where the securitization of the anarchist threat led to the construction of conspiracy theories. The techniques of visualization in the case of the Black International were manifold: the specter of the anarchist throwing bombs was multiplied by leaflets, in newspapers, distributed over the world. Most wanted posters were disseminated. Photographs depicting anarchists in various disguises and *portraits parlés* became popular collector's items in police circles. New ocular centers (the international police conference of Rome 1898, new investigative agencies, registration centers) were erected. The performative dimensions of the risk and security images that these centers disseminated in terms of legitimation and practices, in politics and policy, were enormous: they legitimized the mobilization of police forces, raids, searches of potential anarchist hideouts. The anarchist suspect became an overwhelming public scare in many countries, leading to the increase of preventative measures against strangers, socialists or communists as such (notification orders, expulsion orders, surveillance measures, rendition agreements, country bans, restrictions on the freedom of speech, association).

Although not all European countries went as far as the repressive laws and measures adopted by the Czarist regime – the Dutch government operated very carefully not to provide additional ammunition to the socialists, or turn them into martyrs –, the Black International nevertheless tied into larger, more encompassing discourses and risk and security imaginaries of the 19th-century civilized world. The social imagination of the anarchist scare was played out against the image of good citizenship in the context of late 19th-century norms and values. Thus, it accelerated the politics of disciplining chaos and radical opposition, legitimized new surveillance and intelligence techniques, prompted a metastasizing intelligence bureaucracy and launched the first international standardization and organization of police and intelligence cooperation. The dispositive of the Black International was legitimized by the construction of a conspiratorial view of disparate anarchist incidents, visualized by all kinds of new ICT methods, and fed into new modes of governance that laid the groundwork for modern-day centralized, technology-driven, national security regimes.

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