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MEDIA CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL RESOCIALIZATION: CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING FLASHBULB MEMORIES CONSTITUTED FROM CRIMINAL NEWS - THE CASE SUZANE VON RICHTOFEN (BR)

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, there is much talk in a media criminology to reference the set of information on the issue of crime and the criminal in the media. Addressing the theme in the light of social flashbulb memories, we will briefly demonstrate their interventions in the process of social recovery of the criminal.

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INTRODUCTION

The criminal events occupy most of the time and space of media media, whether through information or entertainment. The fact is that, from these narratives, especially journalistic ones, society starts to have a kind of contact with the world of crime which leads to the constitution of a social memory about the crime, the criminal and the punishment. In this context, stimulating the feeling of revenge, fear, victimization and proximity to violence, the news may affect the social perspectives on rehabilitation of the condemned. In an article published in 2007, Dr. Francesc Barata (2007) had already approached the perspective that criminology up to now understood that the reports provided by the media were one of the sources of collective fears. According to him, the media have the ability to both broaden and reduce the social anguish related to the offense, because the criminal environment can be reproduced in such a way that people have the feeling of

experiencing it directly, so that this may reinforce social panic to the offense as an exaggerated emotional reaction against crime (MARSH; GAYNOR, 2011). In such way, the mass media become intermediaries between the public reader/spectator and of a criminal reality portrayed there, usually impregnated with an oversizing of the violence, stigmatization of the criminal as a threatening figure (COHEN, 2001), diffusion of the feeling of collective victimization and, especially, the immediate and necessary intervention of the punishment institutions that strengthen the speech of social isolation of the prisoner. This form to give to know the reality promotes, in the scope of the society, the constitution of long-term social memories, due to socially shared emotions. The high degree of appeal to the dramatization of violence and fear (PENNEBAKER; PÁEZ; RIMÉ, 1997), therefore, constitute social memories capable of activating collective demands that support a punitivist policy. As follows, besides to socio-institutional issues, such as: indignity conditions human being in the prison establishments, denial of procedural rights, disproportionality of custodial penalties, racial and economic selectivity of the prison population (ZAFFARONI, 2001, 2007), we will try to demonstrate, based on flashbulb

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memories theories ((BELLELLI; LEONE; CURCI, 1999; CONWAY, 1995; JEDLOWSKI, 2005; PENNEBAKER; PÁEZ; RIMÉ, 1997) and on research conducted in criminalistics texts and news, how media discourses can compromise the social commitment to reintegrate the convicted. In fact, as Ricoeur points out (2000), if something like rehabilitation should be counted as the successful future of the penalty, it is crucial that the condemned understands it as, at least, reasonable, since the condemnation tends to be received as excess distance, marked by physical and geographic isolation of the prisoner, by the prisons distant from the cities, the deprivation of civic rights and professional limitations, loss of self-esteem, after all the condemnation labels the individual, to this are added the sufferings of the ruptures of family bonds. So, if this excess distance is assumed to be rational by the convict, then, the path of the punishment passes to be a possible way to the social reintegration. The path of social restoration, that is, the insertion of the one who fulfilled the penalty to the place of ordinary citizen, with all his fundamental rights and civil capacities, means “[...] a question of giving the condemned person the opportunity to become a full citizen once more at the end of the sentence and therefore to end the physical and symbolic exclusion that finds its fullest expression in imprisonment” (RICOEUR, 2000). In this sense, criminal recidivism, as opposed to rehabilitation, marks the failure of the sanction.

The criminal news that we see on TV, on social networks, in newspapers, in terms of criminal resocialization, however, are filled with contemptuous contents about the condemned, often relating it to the fabrication of new criminals in the prison establishment, in the same proportion in which they overvalue the fear and the feeling of victimization of a close, but not occurred, violence. These speeches, therefore, end up undermine society's credibility in resocialization, as a virtuous result of the sanction. This because, from the massive spreading of events that cause great commotion, surprise, trauma, that is, that cause strong affective impacts on the collectivity, a kind of memory, called flashbulb memory, is constituted in the social sphere, whose intense level of social sharing of emotions results in a memory of lasting effects (CONWAY, 1995). In this sense, we speak in a flashbulb memory about crime that, intensely shared, is steeped in the feeling of fear, revenge and collective panic against the criminal subject and the world of crime. As noted by Zaffaroni (2013):

[...] creates (it) a reality that generates such panic in society to the point of this claim a huge repression and this will have to be done, because it is necessary to normalize the situation and rebalance the system. (ZAFFARONI, 2013, p. 89, our translation).

In the disclosure of the murder of the couple Manfred and Marisia Von Richtofen, by their daughter Suzane and her boyfriend Daniel Cravinhos, in São Paulo (BR) (Oct, 2002), for example, the Brazilian society had the opportunity to follow, in detail, the behavior of the killers, the cruelty of the crime, even their condemnation. But for us, as for the intention of this work, we highlight how the media focused on the person of Suzanne von Richtofen during the fulfillment of her sentence:

Suzane Von Richtofen is engaged to a prisonmate's brother

[...]

A relative very close to Olberg told to O GLOBO that the family has suffered from curiosity about the relationship. The girl said that she until needed to leave the house.

– They focused on him and forgot that an investigation is underway (referring to the exit to a place not informed by Suzane, from the prison last Sunday) in which we are being cited – explains her, who confirmed the engagement, but declined to give further details of the relationship.

[...]

One of Olberg's sisters, Luciana, was sentenced to 18 years in prison in 2013, accused of being her husband's accomplice in a crime of sexual abuse against two three-year-old twin sisters.

In the last week, Suzane was benefited, for the second time, with temporary departure for Mother's Day, but on Sunday, according to a report aired by TV Globo's program *Fantástico*, she was not found at the address provided to the court. She was in a nearby place that belongs to another sister of Olberg.

On account of what happened on the Mother's Day, Suzane was sent to a solitary cell until the case was completed – in the space of 10 days. The Justice also suspended the semi-open regime, which the detainee had been serving since last year. The defense is appealing. (SOUTO, 2016, our translation).

Suzane Von Richtofen, 14 years later

From a marked wedding, the young woman who helped kill her parents in 2002 wants to have children, open a confection and lead an anonymous life

Suzane Von Richtofen remains almost as beautiful as she was at the age of 19, when she planned and participated in the murder of her parents, Manfred and Marisia Von Richtofen. For the crime, she was sentenced to 39 years in prison. Taken on November 8, 2002 to the cell of the 89th São Paulo Police District, since then practically has not left the jail. [...] It was in the beginning of this month, when she was allowed to leave the Santa Maria Eufrasia Pelletier Women's Penitentiary, in Tremembé, to spend the Father's Day in freedom. Every prisoner who is in a semi-open regime, has already served a sixth sentence and presented “good prison conduct”, has a right to the benefit of the temporary exits. In terms of good behavior, Suzane seems unbeatable, as shown by the testimonials collected by VEJA. Paulo Jose da Palma, the prosecutor responsible for monitoring her sentence, for example, says the young woman “was praised in all the prisons she went through”. The director of the Tremembé Penitentiary, to whom Suzane calls her “mother”, often walks through the courtyard arm in arm with her. The way the young woman seems to have adapted to prison life also caught the attention of the criminologist Alvinio Augusto de Sá, a member of a group that recently conducted an interview with her in jail. “Suzane greeted us with a quite open smile. She was so comfortable in the environment that she asked us to sit down”.

The young woman who helped kill her own parents hitting them with iron bars, according to these descriptions, is docile, gentle and kind. It is not a unanimous opinion.

Two years ago, when Suzane won the right to the semi-open regime, she underwent a psychological test that concluded that she has a “high egocentrism” and “camouflaged aggression” beyond being “manipulative, insidious and narcissistic”. The conclusion is similar to what they say, in other words, some of the people with whom Suzane has lived in jail. A prison officer who has worked for ten years in Tremembé, for example, says that the young woman usually modulates the tone of voice according to the talker. “Talk to the detainees one way and make a little girl's voice when she's in front of a jailer or someone she wants something for.” A prisoner who lives daily with her says it was for pragmatism and no other reason that Suzane was involved in 2014 with Sandra Ruiz, a Tremembé veteran known as Sandrão, famous for her physical strength and willingness to violate the rules of prison (she even regressed from semi-open to closed in 2011, for challenging prison officers). “Suzane never liked women. She played charm for Sandrão to become the first lady in jail and to be protected and respected”. Sandra Ruiz herself, or Sandrão, told to VEJA to have doubts about the motivations that led her ex-girlfriend to approach her - and also leaving her: “Su is a riddle. You never know what you're really feeling”. Recently promoted to the open regime, Sandra Ruiz is laconic when talking about the ex. “I just say that she disgraced my life.”

Suzane did other victims. In 2009, the young woman reported to a judge that prosecutor Eliseu José Gonçalves, of the Court of Jury and the Court of Justice of Ribeirão Preto, had ordered her to be picked up twice in the cell under the pretext of dealing with an abuse report by agents in prisons. On one occasion, she said, he ordered a snack and greeted her with two pecks on the cheek. Suzane said she felt harassed, and the complaint ended up in the Judicial Administrative Department. The colleagues, Gonçalves, who ended up punished with suspension of 22 days, assured that it was the young woman who insinuated for him. See, just said, “I'd rather hear about the devil, but I don't want to hear that girl's name”. Prosecutor Luiz Marcelo Negrini, who took care of the execution of Suzane's sentence when she was in the closed regime, says that the “ability to manipulate” is a striking feature of the detainee. “This is evident in the personal relationships she creates. One time she is homosexual, another time takes on the role of straight. And so she gets involved with people and discard them, according to what suits her”.

Sandrão is past now. Suzane is engaged to the cabinetmaker Rogério Olberg and has already set the wedding date: April 2017, when he should get new authorization for temporary departure, on the Easter holiday. It was to meet her fiancé that she got all dressed up on Father's Day [...]. Olberg, brother of Suzane's cellmate, is her only reference in the outside world. Since when, in 2014, for unclear reasons, she broke up with her lawyer and tutor, Denivaldo Barni, has not received any more visits to the jail. With his younger brother Andreas, he hasn't spoken for ten years. On the way out of Father's Day, Suzane spent most of her five days of freedom at the fiancé's house in Angatuba (SP), a small town of 20.000 inhabitants. When she ventured out into the street (she took an ice cream and bought new clothes), she was always wearing sunglasses. Her sentence ends in April 2040. But well before that, she can

progress to the open regime. Next year, this possibility will be discussed again. If released, she says to friends, she wants to have children, set up a clothing store, taking advantage of the experience of the chain (she works in the sewing shop), and live an anonymous life. To do so, she will have to hope that the world will forget what one day was able to make a beautiful girl with angelic look and voice - sometimes - very sweet (CAMPBELL, 2016).

These two reports only, among so many others of the same kind, are able to demonstrate a stigmatizing description of the person of the condemned. In the first, Suzane's affective relationships are emphasized, her fiancé's sister is a former convict, the granting of temporary exit on Mother's Day for one who killed her own fathers, noncompliance with the terms of liberty and, still, the conduction to the solitary cell and the suspension of the semi-prison regime. Despite the authorities' testimony of good behavior by Suzane von Richtofen, on a mere 15 lines, in the second report, in a text of about 77, everything else was devoted to reinforcing the thought that she was an unrecoverable prisoner, her psychotic behavior, manipulative and malicious with detainees, her affective involvement with one of the most undisciplined and feared detainees in prison, the accusation of harassment that prompted disciplinary punishment of a prosecutor who, according to other detainees, was encouraged by Suzane, until the definitive breakup of family ties with her only brother, whom she had not spoken to for over 10 years. And ends the text: “[...] she will have to hope that the world will forget what one day was able to make a beautiful girl with angelic look and voice - sometimes - very sweet” (CAMPBELL, 2016).

The perception that the society starts to have of Suzane Von Richtofen, as well as many other convicts, prisoners, criminals, consolidated by social flashbulb memories, have a strong impact on the collective conscience regarding the possibility and commitment of the entire society of social rehabilitation.

In this sense, even if the convicted person has served all the penalty of deprivation of liberty, the expectation of returning to society, with the possibility of developing all his moral and physical potentialities, is greatly frustrated by the social memory about criminal facts that feeds the feeling of revenge, fear and isolation of the human being.

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