

# **Illegalism: Why Pay for a Revolution on the Installment Plan...When You Can Steal One?**

Paul Z. Simons

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In truth, it isn't indispensable to feel oneself an anarchist to be seduced by the coming demolitions. All those whom society flagellates in the very intimacy of their being instinctively want vengeance. A thousand institutions of the old world are marked with a fatal sign. Those affiliated with the plot have no need to hope for a distant better future; they know a sure means to seize joy immediately: Destroy passionately!

-Zo d'Axa

*Destroy Passionately!*

Well as through this world I've traveled,  
I've seen lots of funny men,  
Some will rob you with a six gun  
and some with a fountain pen  
But as through this world you ramble,  
as through this world you roam,  
you will never see an outlaw  
drive a family from their home.

-Woody Guthrie

*Pretty Boy Floyd*

## **Illegalism: The open embrace of criminality as an expression of anarchism, particularly individualist anarchism.**

The advent of the illegalist tendency in the last three decades of the nineteenth century and first two decades of the twentieth century, primarily in France, Switzerland, Belgium and Italy, proved to be yet another contentious, seemingly indefensible dark stain on the soul of Anarchy for many of its working class adherents. Like the terrorists, the assassins, and the bandits - the illegalists presented to the world the tableau of the vessel of social morality tipped, emptied and smashed. For the illegalists crime was an accepted economic activity, and simultaneously the very heart and soul of social insurrection, the negation *and* the negation of the negation.

Passage into the illegalist milieu portended a commitment that encompassed the condemnation of all law, all morality, a rejection of both virtue and vice. It established a terrain of activity that by definition was beyond the purview of all social institutions and accepted relationships - the landscape of the illegalist was a place where the insurrection had already been fought and won.

The illegalists were probably the most individual of anarchists while simultaneously maintaining the strongest bonds of association and communication — bonds required by the social activity of crime as insurrection. The illegalist milieu also illuminates a singular aspect of utopia, specifically that when the anarchist society is realized it will not be as a result of some esoteric will-to-liberty, or a Freudian erotic demiurge, nor as the result and sum of a labored economic equation, rather utopia will arise as a function of necessity, as banal as breakfast and as certain as summer heat.

In the same manner that the illegalists turned to crime to survive and to speak, so society will turn to utopia to survive ... and to speak. Of course, illegalist actions and theory are the

stuff from which controversy is manufactured, not even ordinary criminals will condone crime publicly, and the Left, which has always asserted a monopoly on morality, was as outraged as the politicians and the press of the dominant society when anarchists started cracking safes and shooting bank tellers.

Anarchist history provides shining examples of theoretical hypocrisy; certainly the syndicalists, with their dreams of economic organization built atop massive industrial union structures were no grant fans of the illegalists.

The anarcho-communists who had watched as their tendency bled adherents into the various communist parties on one side and the syndicalists on the other were in no position to respond at any level, though Jean Grave, among others would develop a ranting liberal critique of the whole scene.

A very similar controversy reared its head two decades ago when Murray Bookchin and his "social anarchist" minions started throwing much at "lifestyle anarchists" for being uninterested in organizing for the masses for either the social revolution, or even a late July Social Ecology picnic. Though Bookchin obviously felt this was a new controversy within anarchism, his ravings (and ours) had all the trappings of the syndicalist versus illegalist tribal warfare conducted circa 1910.

Finally, the occupations of 2011 and the arguments brought for and against violence in the General Assemblies, as reported in the non-MSM press, also seemed yet another rehash of the illegalist controversy that played out a full century ago in France.

Yet, illegalism strikes deeper into anarchy than an economic or political construct - including class struggle, surplus value, or post-modern analysis done in crayon.

Certainly, the illegalist tap roots penetrate further than most anarchists would like to admit, and they are not only buried in the conceptual tangle that supports the anarchist challenge, they are also present and resonate throughout every historical manifestation of anarchy or anarchism.

Thus one day in a post-insurrectionary era a toddler holding fast to a chair for balance may query a parent - "are you an anarchist, too, Mama?"

For the simple reason that the child already knows that mom is an illegalist - it goes without saying.

## **Clément Duval from War to Crime to Devil's Island to New York**

The very first illegalist, and the man who would provide the initial intellectual argument for anarchists as criminals, was Clément Duval. He had served as a line soldier during the Franco-Prussian War and while unclear whether he participated in the Commune, he was wounded horribly by a Prussian mortar shell and subsequently contracted smallpox while recovering. He spent the next 10 years of his life recovering, including four years in hospital.

Upon release he was basically unemployable, being skillless save soldiering and with multiple physical challenges, and so set about becoming a thief. He also later joined the legendary anarchist group the *Panther of the Batignolles*, one of the many contemporary Parisian affinity groups in that era who were notorious for their extreme ideas and also their street actions which seemed designed more to imperil police officers and violate laws than to protest any perceived slight to the anarchist community.

The *Panther* also doubled as a criminal conspiracy and their occasional forays into illegality would push Duval even further into the milieu. Duval, however, was a pretty mediocre criminal, shortly after joining the Panther he was arrested for the theft of 80 francs and spent a year in prison. Then on October 25th of 1886 Duval broke into a socialites house, stole 15,000 francs and set the house on fire - either accidentally or on purpose, his "confession" is unclear on this point.

He was apprehended two weeks later trying to fence some of the goods from the burglary.

The myth of the illegalists begins with his arrest, for as the cop Rossignol was trying to apprehend Duval, Duval pulled a dagger from his coat and stabbed him repeatedly.

Though Rossignol would survive his wounds, the image of an apprehended criminal striking back at an officer of the law mid-arrest was an addition to the history of crime that only an illegalist could have made. His trial drew loud support from all segments of the anarchist milieu and ended in chaos as he was dragged from court screening, "Long Live Anarchy!"

He had also sent to the anarchist paper *La Révolte* an article which included the lines,

Theft exists only exists through the exploitation of man by man...when Society refuses you the right to exist, you must take it...the police-man arrested me in the name of the Law, I struck him in the name of Liberty.

Duval was sentenced to the "dry guillotine" of Devil's Island from which, after 20 unsuccessful attempts, he finally got it right and escaped in April of 1901 and lived out the rest of his life in New York City.

His memoirs were published in 1929, and have just recently been republished (*Outrage: An Anarchist Memoir of the Penal Colony*, translated by Michael Shreve, PM Press, 2012).

Duval never renounced nor backtracked from his life as an anarchist and criminal.

## **The Workers of the Night**

The second foray of anarchists into the criminal milieu is due to one man, Marius Jacob, who just didn't seem to be able to fit in.

Initially, a sailor's apprentice on a voyage to Sydney Australia, he jumped ship at some point in time and among other employments tried piracy but found it too cruel to his tastes.

Upon returning to France he took up typography and militant anarchist activity that ended with him being caught with a parcel of explosives after a string of minor larcenies. Jacob knew when he was beat, and thereafter never sought legitimate employment, rather he gathered around him a group of anarchists similarly alienated from the world of work and formed what they termed the "Workers of the night."

He used the term "pacifistic illegalism" to describe this new twist on anarchist activities. Jacob and his band evolved a simple though powerful set of guidelines, one does not kill except to protect one's life and freedom from the police, one steals only from social parasites like bankers, bosses, judges, soldiers, the clergy, and not from useful members of society like doctors, artists or architects.

Finally, a percentage of the proceeds were to be donated to anarchist causes, depending on the choice and tastes of the illegalist doing the stealing and the giving. Jacob and his gang proved to be cunning and successful burglars.

One of the many tricks they introduced was forcing their way into an apartment from the apartment above.

To facilitate this a small hole was drilled through the floor of the top apartment and into the ceiling of the lower dwelling. A closed umbrella was inserted through the hole and opened so that falling debris and noise would be lessened in the target apartment.

From 1900 to 1903 Jacob and his small crew of two to four burglars perpetuated at least 150 burglaries throughout France, including a smash and grab at the Tours Cathedral and pilfering an Admiral's mansion in Cherbourg.

Then in April of 1903 the whole venture went sour with the slaying of a police officer in Abbeville during an escape. Jacob and his confederates were eventually captured and tried two years later in Amiens. Anarchists flocked to the city to support him, and while his legal defense left much to be desired he avoided the guillotine and was sentenced to life at hard labor in Cayenne.

After 17 escape attempts he was finally pardoned and returned to France, though he was unhappy in Paris and moved to the Loire Valley where he continued on with his life.

He eventually remarried (his wife had died while he was in the *bagne*, the Gallic Gulag) and took up a life of commercial travel. In spite of this his anarchist activities never abated. He traveled to Barcelona in 1936 to volunteer for the CNT/FAI militias, but was convinced that the battle would be lost by the communists and republicans and so returned to France.

During the Nazi occupation he participated in *Maquis* sabotage squads (mostly expat Spainards, like Sabate, with a score to settle with any fascist - Spanish or German), primarily as a safe house operator and providing food and succor for the guerrillas.

Marius committed suicide by intentional morphine overdose on August 28th 1954.

His suicide was far from surrender, rather he wrote that it was a result of his calm acceptance of being unwilling to fight the rigors of old age. (My father committed suicide with a pistol in March of 2008 for very much the same reason, and I honor his will and courage in his action.)

Marius in the final years of his life developed a mixed attitude towards illegalism, based in part on the old magnetic attraction of proletarian workerist anarchism:

I don't think that illegalism can free the individual in present-day society. If he manages to free himself of a few constraints using this means, the unequal nature of the struggle will create others that are even worse and, in the end, will lead to the loss of his freedom, the little freedom he had, and sometimes his life.

Basically, illegalism, considered as an act of revolt, is more a matter of temperament than of doctrine. This is why it cannot have an educational effect on the working masses as a whole. By this I mean a *worthwhile educational effect*.

Strangely, this statement would have been accepted by Bonnot, Garnier and the other illegalists as being accurate - they were not every interested in propaganda by the deed, rather they were convinced that the deed itself, the robbery, the assassination, *was* the insurrection.

The point was not to educate the masses towards the social revolution, but to realize their insurrection here, now and for no one else but the individual, and possibly the union of egoists that she surrounds herself with - the herd, the collaborators - be damned.

Both Marius and Duval must be considered ultimately as proto-illegalists, each saw their respective criminal enterprises in a propaganda-of-the-deed conceptual framework, and as *la reprise individuelle* (basically individual expropriation).

The act was justified in a moral universe that turned as nearly as possible the dominant moral codes upside down, but nonetheless acknowledged and accepted society and its flaws as the strawman - the thing that conceptually must be destroyed and altered, manipulated in a negative fashion.

The illegalists, however, were less interested in social revolution than they were in living in a state of rebellion.

Given the chance they would have saved damn little of the dominant society, and certainly wouldn't have used it as a negative paradigm from which to design an anarchist community - which is the single greatest conceptual flaw of the workerist anarchism.

In this sense these proto-illegalists seem more aligned to the mass-base anarchist tendencies than to the individualist milieu from which Bonnot and others would arise.

This is best exhibited by Marius's ploughing his ill gotten gains into any one of a number of anarchist papers and projects, and the fact that such donation was an expected part of the gang's ethics. Both men viewed their crimes as a means to an end, as a way to pay the rent and also as bringing the social revolution that much closer to fruition by supporting anarchist causes.

One is also reminded of Durruti, Ascaso and Oliver who, during their "pistolero" period, were clearly closer to either Marius, Duval or even Nobiling, than to say, a Kropotkin.

Yet in their case the assassination and robberies were, among other things, a way to support the CNT, and later the FAI, and hence were only mildly tinged with individualist anarchist ideas.

The success of *La Revista Blanca*, and the popularity of its editors, Federic Montseny and her father Joan (Federico Urales), would leave a deeply individualist mark on all of Spanish anarchism, including the syndicalist CNT.

Given the repression that was present in Spain during the period when such actions took place, criminal or not, their "outrages" were politically consistent and while not illegalist are worth recalling with fondness.

Finally it should be noted that Marxists and the syndicalists who drew dark, bold lines between crime and the working class did so in spite of the very real proclivity of both groups to pass back and forth freely from one social role to the other.

Victor Kibalchich, of whom more later noted of Paris in the early 1900s,

One of the particular characteristics of working class Paris at that time was that it was in contact with the riff-raff, i.e. with the vast world of irregulars, decadents, wretched ones, with the equivocal world.

There were few essential differences between the young worker or artisan of the old quarters of the center and the pimps in the alleys of the neighborhoods of the Halles.

The rather quick-witted driver and mechanic, as a rule, stole whatever they could from the bosses, through class spirt and because they were 'free' of prejudices.

Similarly, the majority of "loss" to theft in businesses today is due less to customers than to employees conscious enough to fill their backpacks with store inventory and office supplies after a hard day's wage slavery.

## Toccata and Fugue in Dynamite, Dagger and Pistol

Concurrent with the fusion of anarchism and crime were the waves of assassinations and bombings throughout Europe perpetrated by anarchists. The opening salvo of the assassination campaigns began in the anarchist watershed year of 1878. Emil Max Hödel attempted to end the life of the Kaiser, Wilhelm I, on May 11, 1878 with a pistol. When the first shot strayed he walked across the street to try again, but was apprehended in the process.

Less than a month later the anarchist Dr. Karl Nobling had another go at Wilhelm I, again with a pistol and being a better shot he wounded the aging monarch but did not kill him. Nobling then shot himself in the head, succumbing to his wounds a few weeks later.

Hödel was tried and subsequently beheaded on August 16, 1878.

On November 17, 1878, the anarchist Giovanni Passannante attacked the king of Italy, Umberto I, while on the tour of the kingdom, accompanied by Queen Margherita and the Prime Minister, Benedetto Cairoli.

Wielding a dagger he tried to stab the monarch who warded off the lunge with a sabre blow. The king lived, but Cairoli, a former Garibaldian officer and total sellout, was severely wounded and retired, briefly, from public life.

Passannante was tried and condemned to death, even though that punishment was explicitly reserved for successful regicides. Umberto commuted his sentence to life imprisonment in a cell only 1.4 meters high, without sanitation and wearing thirty pounds of chains. Passannante would later die in an insane asylum from his treatment during his years in hell.

The Russian anarchist populist People's Will (*Norodnya Volya*) finally got it right (after several wild attempts) on 13 March, 1881 by tossing a bomb into Czar Aleksandr II's coach. The bomb fired but didn't harm the autocrat, however, as he stood in the street observing the carnage - and waiting for the transport back to the Winter Palace, another member of the People's Will, also armed with a bomb, threw it at Aleksandr's feet, which exploded - killing himself instantly.

The repression by the Russian state was savage and in response the People's Will set about plotting to kill the replacement czar, Nicholas. Their plans were uncovered leading to the arrest and hanging of Aleksandr Ulianov, Lenin's older brother, which launched his younger sibling on the road to the Marxists/statist counterrevolution.

So in terms of the long term political scorecard an anarchist should probably chalk that assassination up to a draw - sure they got Aleksandr, but ultimately the world got the Bolsheviks. Mixed bag.

The political violence revives, after a ten year lull, in 1891 in France when during a May Day celebration at Fourmies the police fired into a crowd of workers with a new device, the Lebel machine gun - by official count 14 dead, 40 wounded.

On the same day a small anarchist demonstration of laborers in Clichy degenerated into a running gun battle after the police attempted to break up the meeting. Three of the anarchist fighters from Clichy were rewarded by the French justice system with unusually harsh prison sentences for the time (three and five years).

Enter Ravachol, an impoverished, but highly motivated, anarchist who unleashed a singular and determined bombing campaign.

First he bombed the home of the presiding judge of the Clichy anarchists (March 1, 1892), then the Lobau police barracks, where Communard prisoners had been taken to be executed (March 15, 1892).



Ravachol was turned in after speaking a bit too openly about his exploits to a waiter while having dinner. He was arrested and executed in July of 1892.

Of note is the fact that on the day before the start of his trial a bomb exploded in the restaurant where Ravachol had spilled the beans to the waiter; evidently an attempt at vengeance.

Next stop Spain - November 7, 1893, with the tossing of two Orsini bombs by the anarchist Santiago Salvador into the orchestra pit of the Liceu Theater in Barcelona meant to avenge the garroting of anarchists in Jerez. The explosions killed twenty and injured an unknown number of others.

Not to be outdone by a Spanish comrade, and with Ravachol's guillotine to avenge - on December 9, 1893 August Vaillant walking into the Chamber of Deputies in Paris and tossed a bomb packed with nails at the assorted legislators (no fatalities, one injury). He gave himself up and was guillotined on February 3, 1894.

Then on February 12, 1894 Emile Henry upped the ante and tossed a bomb into the Cafe Terminus at the Gare St. Lazare train station to avenge the death of Vaillant. He was apprehended, tried and guillotined on the 21st of May in the same year. Henry distinguishes himself by giving a brilliant account of his political movement towards anarchism and his justification for his bombing in court.

The peroration is still reprinted to this day ([link to transcribed NY article on Vaillant](#)) and is worth the time spent to read it.

Finally to top it all off Sante Geronimo Caserio, an Italian anarchist, to avenge the death of Henry Vaillant, Ravachol and anybody else he could think of, stabbed and killed the French President Sadi Carnot on 24 June 1894. He was tried and guillotined in Lyons on 15 August of the same year.

The life of bombings and assassinations goes on almost without interruption until September 1932, when several *galleanisti*, using a large dynamite device, effectively leveled the home of Judge Webster Thayer, who presided over the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti - then resumes again in the sixties and continues on into the present...

## Disharmonic Convergence

In terms of political activity and propaganda things were also afoot in the form of Albert Joseph, or Albert Libertad, or just Libertad.

Born in 1875 in Bordeaux and abandoned at birth he became a ward of the state, and faced the usual miserabilist existence then doled out by the Third Republic to its unfortunates. Having lost the use of a leg as a result of childhood illness, probably polio, Libertad walked the rest of his life with the assistance of canes or crutches - which also doubled as clubs in a fight.

At the age of 21 Libertad moved to Paris and dove into writing, publishing, organizing, partying, lovemaking, just about every available opportunity for life and joy was not lost on the man. He worked and contributed to numerous journals including *Le Libertaire*, *L'En-Dehors*, and finally on 13 April 1905 there appeared the influential individualist journal that he founded, *l'Anarchie*, a four page broadsheet.

The journal was widely read, and - being sufficiently easy to publish - occasionally had incredible large print runs; as an example one issue specific to the July 14th holiday was issued in a

print run of 100,000. (By comparison, most contemporary North American anarchist publications run far less than 5,000 copies - *Modern Slavery* has an average print run of 3k.)

This issue included a manifesto appropriately entitled "The Bastille of Authority." During Libertad's life he met and worked with an astonishing array of writers, artists and oddly, politicians.

As an example, he worked as a correct on Astride Briand's journal *La Lanterne*, which is weird because Briand was not only a Socialist Politician but served a total of eleven terms as Prime Minister of France, and later offered one of the first proposals for an economic union of European nation-states some 90 years before the EU was realized.

Libertad also worked with various anarchist agitators from Zo d'Axa (quoted above), the founder of the pre-eminent individualist anarchist journal, *L'En-Dehors* (*The Outside*), reborn in 2002 and currently a franco-phone website (<http://endehors.net>); Sébastien Faure, Victor Kibalchich, George Mathias, Paraf-Javal, and Émile Armand.

The last two anarchists listed, along with Libertad, founded and organized the *Causeries Populaire*, well-attended individualist anarchist public discussion groups which eventually proliferated throughout Paris.

Libertad wrote in short clipped staccato pronouncements strung together by a common theme, very like prose poetry.

Finally, Libertad's version of free love and his natural combativeness backfired when in February of 1908 during an internecine individualist brawl he was kicked in the stomach by one of the two Mahe sisters, both of whom had been at one time or another his lovers. He died a week later in the hospital.

Victor Kibalchich picked up the editorship of *l'Anarchie*, and if anything cranked the articles into a virtual storm of individualist and illegalist rhetoric.

*L'Anarchie* moved rapidly into deep individualist waters propelled not only by the experimentation of the editorial staff with free love, vegetarianism and water-only diets, but by the discovery of the anarchist community in France of Max Stirner, the prophet of the sovereign self.

His work, *L'Unique et sa propriété*, was read, quoted, argued, lauded and reviled throughout the first decade of the 20th century in France, and indeed in most of Europe and the United States by anarchists of all stripes.

Stirner's most basic argument is grounded in an effective reduction of all conceptual political categories to ash, he derides all external logic of power, coercion and control and places the individual his or her needs and desires, including the desire for real community, at the center of his universe.

When first published in German, Marx, among others, immediately recognized the ramifications of the work and in response he wrote a typically lengthy and dull polemic in *The German Ideology* in a failed attempt to squash the individualist challenge.

Later editions of Marx's book edited out most of the anti-Stirner material (almost 300 pages), primarily as a result of the shunting of *The Unique and Its Property* into a side-yard of theory for several decades.

With the re-discovery of Stirner in the 1890's, and the printing of the first French translation of his work in 1900, the individualists had found a sound theoretical underpinning for a number of different projects.

As an example of Stirner's thought that directly addresses the issue of crime, guilt and liberation,

Only when I expect neither from individuals nor from a collectivity what I can give myself, only then do I scrape the bonds of love; the rabble stops being rabble only when it *seizes*...Only that seizing is *sin*, crime, only this rule creates a rabble...If people reach the point where they lose respect for property, then everyone will have property, as all slaves become free people as soon as they no longer respect the master as master.

The praise of crime was not just sounded in the individualist milieu and journals, rather it was found in almost all of the anarchist press of the time with varying degrees or rapidity.

One of the better examples was Émile Pouget's journal *Père Peinard*, the most widely read working class anarchist periodical, described vividly by a contemporary as,

[having] no display of philosophy [which is not to say that it had none], it played upon the appetites, prejudices, and rancorous of the proletariat. Without reserve or disguise, it incited theft, counterfeiting, the repudiation of taxes and rents, killing and arson. It counseled the immediate assassination of deputies, senators, judges, priests and army officers.

It urged ... farm laborers and vineyard workers to take possession of the farm and vineyards, and to turn the landlords and vineyard owners into fertilizing phosphates ... it recounted the exploited of olden-time brigands and outlaws and exhorted contemporaries to follow their example.

So the anarchist press hasn't really changed that much, the above content being stock in trade for the best libertarian periodicals now.

By 1910 all this theorizing, bombing, thieving individualist philosophy and intransigence would produce a group of young men and women determined to settle the score with bourgeois society in the form of the Bonnot Gang.

## **Beginnings: The Gang Forms**

Of significance is the fact that Belgium plays a role in the formation of the gang; the small, primarily francophone monarchy served as a destination for young men seeking to avoid service in the French army, political exiles, and on the lam criminals. Several gang members would first encounter each other in Brussels and there they found sufficient agreement in ideals and goals to begin the process of forming themselves into a working illegalist combine.

Our first suspect is Raymond Callemin (*La Science*) who was born in Brussels and the earliest childhood friend of Victor Kibalchich, scion of an impoverished Russian refugee family. The two young men worked their way through a course of reading and drifting slowly towards anarchism which among other results caused Raymond's father, an alcoholic and disillusioned socialist, to disown him for keeping bad company.

Kibalchich would eventually land a job on the French side of the border and while there made contact with *Causeries Populaires* speakers and promoters, and it was here that he met and became enamored of Henriette Maîtrejean (Rirette). Rirette had been married to an anarchist worker

living in Paris at 17, but by the age of twenty-two with two small children and finding her husband rather boring had drifted through various anarchist milieux, until finally she settled into individualist circles.

One of the main anarchist papers in Brussels, *Le Révolte*, served as a center for anarchist and later individualist activities and propaganda. It was here that Édouard Carouy, the paper's editor encountered a young Parisian draft dodger, thief, and anarchist named Octave Garnier, one of the two primary founders, with Bonnot of course, of the Bonnot Gang.

Garnier had been born in Fontainebleau, near Paris, on Christmas in 1889. Garnier's life of crime begins early and he was initially imprisoned at the age of 17 for conducting a series of smash and grabs. Exiting prison he found that without the requisite formal certificate indicating responsibility, sobriety and distaste for rebellion, most employers would have nothing to do with him. So taking a practical stance he had the appropriate forms forged and entered in to the world of work, which he found to be far nastier than unemployment, theft, or prison.

He drifted from job to job, tried his hand at being a mechanic, but was repeatedly rejected by employers.

During this period of drifting employment he participated in a number of strikes - which disillusioned him to the viability of a working class revolution. He found his workmates more interested in drink than in changing their situation, and this proclivity only made them more brutish, dull and easily led. He observed that union leaders, and especially the syndicalists, were about the same as the capitalists, as they both sought to manipulate workers to serve their own ends.

Finally he concluded in his biography, penned shortly before his death and found on his body,

So I became an anarchist. I was about eighteen and no longer wanted to go back to work, so once again I began *la reprise individuelle*.

By May 1910 he was nearing the age of being called up into the armed forces and so began to drift towards the refuge of Belgium. Of note here is that the law of 1905 instituting compulsory military service had created an entire underclass of the militarily-challenged, by one 1910 estimate a full 90,000 Frenchmen were being sought for draft evasion or outright desertion.

While in Belgium, Garnier finally found himself in the company of at least some semi-professional criminals, including Carouy the editor of *Le Révolte*, who augmented his income as a part-time pipe fitter with an occasional burglary; counterfeiting was also on the menu, and here he was instructed by Louis Maîtrejean, Rirette's erstwhile husband.

Meanwhile Victor, having arrived in Paris, began writing for *l'Anarchie*, and finally got the chance to spend more with time Rirette, who, at their first encounter, found him uninteresting and "a poser." It was in the Luxembourg Gardens that Victor introduced Rirette to a shy young anarchist named René Valet.

Valet was born into a middle class home, became interested in anarchism at a young age and had fled Belgium to avoid military service. It was there that he met Victor and Garnier.

His stay in Belgium was short though and upon return to Paris he collaborated on the journal *Le Libertaire*, attended anarchist meetings, and spent a lot of free time with Victor. It was during this period that Rirette introduced Victor to André Soudy, a pale thin young man and the most easily identifiable symbol of the Bonnot Gang as the photographic image of "the man with the rifle" had passed into the anarchist collective consciousness, including some rather impressive tattoos based on the photo.

Victor described Soudy as the perfect example of the crushed childhood of the back-alleys. He grew up on the street: "TB at thirteen, VD at eighteen..."

In the close anarchist circles in which Soudy moved he was known by the nickname "*Pas de chance*" (not a chance - a very prescient moniker indeed). It also reflected the fact that he felt his life was to be short given "the price of medicine".

Then in the midst of all the fermentation in Paris an event in Tottenham, a northern suburb of London, broke like a storm on the international anarchist community.

In December of 1910, several members of a Latvian revolutionary cell, while engaged in breaking into a jewelers store, were interrupted by the police. The comrades shot their way out, killing three policemen and wounding two, in the process also killing the leader of the kommando.

Eventually two comrades were traced back to Tottenham and there fought one of the anarchist equivalents of Thermopylae - there would be others.

The two men, armed only with pistols, held off seven hundred soldiers and dozens of cops.

The Home Office was eventually forced to bring in artillery, and a young Winston Churchill, to the battle. The fires started by the cannonade ended the confrontation with the anarchists expiring in the flaming building - they never surrendered.

The news traveled quickly around Europe and the Americas, drawing praise from most anarchist groups and derision from the powers that be.

A young and impressionable Alfred Hitchcock read all he could about the "Siege of Sidney Street" and eventually would put his artistic spin on it in the final scene of the 1934 version of "The Man Who Knew Too Much."

Kibalchich wrote an article in *l'Anarchie* entitled simply "Two Men" and in it he lays down one of the many conceptual visions that would subsequently animate the Bonnot Gang,

In the ordinary sense of the word we cannot and *will not* be honest. By definition, the anarchist lives by expediency; work for him, is a deplorable expedient, like stealing...He takes no account of any conventions which safeguard property; for him, force alone counts. Thus we have neither to approve nor disapprove of illegal actions.

We say: they are logical.

The anarchist is always illegal - theoretically. The sole word 'anarchist' means rebellion in every sense.

Several other minor actors join the group over the course of the next several months, mostly very young men well heeled in individualist anarchism and burning for some way, any way, to strike back at bourgeois society. This amorphous group moves back and forth across Paris, flats were rented, small communes came into being and were abandoned, arguments materialized and were forgotten.

The single greatest surprise of these months is that somehow the illegalists found themselves in complete control of *l'Anarchie*, with Kibalchich and Rirette taking over editorial duties.

## **The Final Puzzle Piece - Bonnot**

Much has been made of the character of Jules Bonnot, a charlatan, a dandy, a sociopath, a criminal masquerading as an anarchist, or vice versa.

It is known that unlike the other members of the gang he did serve in the military and made the most of the experience.

He learned to drive and fix motor cars and became a crack shot with both pistol and rifle - two skills that would serve him well when he decided on a career in crime.

Finally he was older than most of the other gang members by a decade, which provided him with determination and, strangely, a measured recklessness that rapidly infected (and affected) his younger comrades.

Mostly centered in Lyon after military service, he did occasional mechanic work and waited for the right burglary to come along - and when it did he hit it big. Bonnot had been traveling around to the homes of various lawyers posing as a businessman asking for legal services and inquiring about the climate for commerce in various regions of France.

In July 1910 he found his target, the home of a wealthy lawyer from Vienne; Bonnot and an accomplice drove to the house during a downpour to cover any sounds of the burglary. They cut through some shutters, broke a pane of glass, and Bonnot, using oxyacetylene torch burned a hole 30 cm wide into the safe from which 36,000 unfried francs were removed.

By the winter of 1911 Bonnot was finding Lyons far too warm for comfort, the heat included a visit to a garage he had been working at by the police where, among other swag, two recently stolen Terrot automobiles from the nearby Weber factory were identified. Bonnot had luckily been out and after learning of the visit headed to Paris directly, only to return a few weeks later to see the love of his life, Judith, one last time.

Judith's husband worked as a grounds keeper in a cemetery and the two lovers said their final goodbyes among the quiet snow-blanketed tombs.

They would never see each other again.

So Bonnot and a companion, the hapless Platano, set off for Paris in a stolen La Buire automobile on 26 November 1911.

The journey was to be marred by misfortune, first of all, in spite of the freezing weather, the La Buire began to overheat causing the two companions to spend the night in a small hotel at Joigny.

The next day they set off again, only this time one of the cars tires punctured and as Bonnot set about fixing the flat, Platano began to inspect his newly acquired Browning 9mm pistol. According to Bonnot as he took the weapon from Platano to show him its mechanism, it discharged and shot Platano behind the ear, wounding him fatally.

Bonnot, not wanting to leave his comrade mortally wounded, shot him again in the head and then tossed the body in the bushes after emptying the dead mans pockets.

Bonnot then sped off towards Paris.

The La Buire, like Platano, finally died and Bonnot was forced to take a train during the final leg of the journey into the Gare de Lyon. News of the death traveled rapidly to Lyons, and Bonnot was immediately identifies as the most likely suspect.

Police scoured his former residences where they culled anarchist literature, burglar's tools, and the 25,000 francs that Bonnot had meant to be a nest egg for his life with Judith.

Finally, Judith and her spouse were taken into custody and a warrant was issued for Bonnot's arrest.

Fortune was on Bonnot's side however, as the Paris papers ignored the story, so while being hunted in Lyon - he was relatively free to restart his criminal enterprises in the capital.

Upon arrival in Paris Bonnot looked up David Belonie, an anarchist whose name he had been given by contacts in Lyon; he explained the death of Platano to Belonie and it was suggested that a meeting of the illegalists be held to review the situation leading to the accident and to provide Bonnot the opportunity to clear himself of the homicide fully with the comrades.

A meeting was arranged in a top garret in Montmartre, Garnier, La Science, Carouy, Valet and a few others settled in to hear Bonnot's side of the story. Bonnot acquitted himself well - angrily explaining the accident and denying that he'd kill Platano, rather the shooting was a freak accident.

The final *coup de grace* was delivered to save the wounded man from any further pain, not in an attempt to silence a homicide victim.

Sometime during the "trial", Garnier, and possibly others, realizes that this Bonnot was the man they had been waiting for - a mechanic, a sharpshooter, a tried and tested criminal with a certain degree of *sang-froid*, including ten years of experience in the demi-monde to boot.

## **The Gang Bangs: A Fistful of Bullets**

Within weeks Garnier, Bonnot and La Science began working together on their "big job".

A quick tangential note about the favored anarchist weapon of the time, the Browning 9mm semi-automatic pistol. Thought not as accurate as other 9mm weapons like the Mauser, it was light, easily concealed, and ammunition was readily available. Further, with a seven round clip and capable of firing off five clips per minute, it was vastly superior to most pistols wielded by the forces of law and order, especially the clunky cavalry surplus revolvers carried by the Paris police.

Finally, the Browning 9mm was the weapon wielded by Gavrilo Princip to assassinate Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo precipitating the First World War, and to bring the discussion full circle the Browning was manufactured in Belgium, very much like the Bonnot Gang.

The illegalists had visited various areas outside Paris to find an auto with which to perpetuate their crime and finally settled on a 1910 Delaunay-Belleville limousine belonging to a bourgeois in the suburb of Boulogne-sur-Seine.

The Delaunay-Belleville was considered one of the best cars then available, with a six-cylinder thirty horsepower engine and a distinctive circular radiator - Bonnot clearly had a hand in the decision, he rarely settled for second best.

The name also had anarchist connotations, Delaunay being the anarchist assassin of the second-in-command of the Sûreté in 1909 and Belleville being the Paris suburb where the Commune had begun, and where during the final bloody week of street fighting most of the Communards had been slaughtered by the troops of the triumphant Third Republic.

Bonnot, Garnier, and La Science stole the automobile on the night of 13 December without a hitch.

The next decision, however, was the key, who or what would they rob?

And when?

They had weapons, a series of safe houses sprinkled throughout the outer boroughs of Paris, and an impressively fast car.

On the evening of December 20th the four illegalists, Bonnot, Garnier, La Science, and one other usually thought to be either René Valet or Jon De Boe, picked up an acetylene torch and like

Bonnot's previous burglary planned to enter the home of a bourgeois and relieve the capitalist of the contents of his safe.

The weather, however, remained dry and clear, and Bonnot insisted that they have rain to cover at least some of the noise made during the breaking and entering.

At about half past three they gave up on the burglary plan and decided instead to go for a more bold, innovative job that had been planned by Garnier and Bonnot a few days before - a daylight robbery on the bank messenger for the Société Générale, the largest Parisian bank and rivaled nationally only by the Credit Lyonnais.

The robbery would take place just as a bank messenger was to deposit funds into a branch of the Société Générale in the Rue Ordener, just west of the Butte de Montmartre, which would allow the gang to either flee outside of Paris rapidly or to use the neighborhoods of Belleville or Montmartre as a screen.

The men must have felt an air of destiny in the whole endeavor, Bonnot was wanted for murder and if caught would surely face the guillotine, Garnier and Carouy were wanted for an attempted murder in Charleroi, forgery, and had been under surveillance for several months, and Raymond La Science, the only non-fugitive, with his disgust for bourgeois society clearly had little to lose either.

They ran through the plan a few times and around eight o'clock found themselves parked on the Rue Ordener.

"We were fearfully armed," recalled Garnier, "I had no less than six revolvers on me, my companions each had three, and we had about four hundred rounds in our pockets; we were quite determine to defend ourselves to the death."

A little after eight Octave spotted the guard walking out of the bank and towards the corner where the messenger would arrive. The guard stood on the corner and waited in the drizzle.

At last one of the local street cars ground to a halt and a handful of bowler-hatted men stepped off, though only one was greeted with a handshake from the guard. The bank messenger carried a satchel and briefcase.

As both men began to walk towards the bank, branch Garnier pulled his hat down low and said, "Let's go," as he stepped out of the car. He fixed his gaze on the messenger and marched straight towards him, with La Science a few paces behind.

Twenty yards from the bank, and six from the cash laden messenger, Octave and Raymond pulled out their pistols and thrust them in to the bodyguard's and messenger's faces. The guard made a sprint for the bank doors as Garnier pushed the messenger down to the ground and grabbed his satchel.

Raymond grabbed the briefcase but the messenger reused to let go of it and was dragged a few yards up the street towards the waiting Delaunay.

Octave shot the messenger twice in the chest and ran to the car that Bonnot had just brought alongside the action. Octave jumped in the front seat, and Raymond, after dropping the briefcase in the gutter and retrieving it, hopped into the back seat.

Garnier held his pistol out the window and fired a few shots above the heads of any would be pursuers, and any traffic that impeded the escape. Five minutes later they flew past the Port de Clichy customs barrier and headed northwest towards St. Denis. Sometimes around 11 o'clock they halted the car and divided up the loot.



The small satchel revealed just 5,500 fr and the briefcase some 130,000 fr in bonds and checks. What was unknown to the men was that the messenger carried a small wallet inside his coat where the remaining 20,000 fr in cash was stashed.

Bonnot was irritated, he was much more comfortable with burglary and now that he had tried a daylight robbery it hadn't even paid very well.

They stopped for bread and chocolate and then proceeded to Rouen. They had decided to dump the auto over a cliff near Le Havre but ran out of gas too soon, so they pushed the car onto the beach where it stuck deep in the mud.

They stripped the license plates - one of which was thrown into the sea and the other into a large garden behind a seaside casino. The men then took a late boat train back into Paris, arriving about 1 am.

Upon alighting in the Gare St-Lazare train station Raymond bought a copy of the right-wing *La Patrie* whose headlines included, "The Audacity of Parisian Brigands - A Bank Messenger Attacked in Rue Ordener", and "Bold Attack in Daylight." *La Presse* reported the robbery as being "without precedent in the history of crime," and called them, "*les bandits auto*" - the auto bandits.

The Press also blasted the police for allowing such a thing to happen, especially when it was discovered that of the 84 cops assigned to the area where the robbery occurred only 18 were on duty at any given time.

The *Times* of London editorialized that, "at the moment when thieves and other pests of society are daily resorting to more daring methods, the police are being more diverted from their primary duties in order to mount guard over strike-breakers and others who ... in normal circumstances ought not require special protection."

In this sense the class struggle, far from being the means to the social revolution, was proving to be an effective diversion for the ends of the illegalist insurrection.

The issue of the bonds and checks immediately played on the minds of the illegalists, so Bonnot, with an interpreter, went to Amsterdam to see if they could recoup some of the money lost in the robbery by selling, trading or finding some way to turn the effectively worthless paper instruments into francs.

Of course the bonds' and checks' individual numbers were known across Europe within hours of the robbery and he was advised to wait until the heat had dissipated, or try cashing them in South America or Asia, where the likelihood of their origins may not, as yet, have been made known.

On the afternoon of December 24th La Science and Octave decided to visit Kibalchich and Rirette at home.

They knocked lightly at the door and a wide-eyed, incredulous Rirette let them in, hardly believing them still alive. They sat quietly and discussed the robbery with Victor, while Rirette occasionally shushed them for fear of waking the children.

As hours drew long the church bells rang in the new day, Christmas Day 1912, Garnier suddenly realized it was his birthday, he was 22.

The two illegalists took their leave of Victor and Rirette and went their own ways to spend the Christmas holiday.

Victor, however, seeing Raymond and Garnier at close quarter had realized that the time had come for *l'Anarchie* to rise to the occasion and to pour some gasoline on the illegalists' fire, and to stand, at least in journalistic solidarity with the actions of the illegalists.

Kibalchich faced the dual issue of his friendship with La Science, and his acquaintance with Garnier, (Bonnot being unknown to him), and for the fact that much of his writings were clearly an incitement to just exactly the type of action that had occurred on the Rue Ordener.

Something had to be written, and write it he did - in the first edition of *l'Anarchie* for the New Year appearing on Thursday 4 January 1912, bylined *Le Retif* and titled "The Bandit,"

To shoot, in full daylight, a miserable bank clerk proved that some men at least have understood the virtues of audacity.

I am not afraid to own up to it; I am with the bandits. I find their role a fine one; I see Men in them. Besides them I see only fools and nonentities.

Whatever may result, I like those who struggle.

Perhaps it will make you die younger, or force you to experience the manhunt and the penal colony; perhaps you will end up beneath the foul kiss of the guillotine.

That may be! I like those who accept the risk of a great struggle...

Besides one's destiny whether as victor or vanquished isn't it preferable to sullen resignation and the slow interminable agony of the proletarian who will die in retirement, a fool who has gained nothing out of life?

The bandit, he gambles. He has therefore chances of winning. And that is enough.

The bandits show strength.

The bandits show audacity.

The bandits show their firm desire to live.

Kibalchich was not done.

He knew that his friends were still at large and that now was the time to attempt to build some level of understanding and even support for the auto bandits among the various anarchist communities.

In notes for two *causeries* held during the weekend of January 27 and 28 he further developed his ideas.

He argued that society was the enemy of all individuality through its laws of social conservation and conformity, which deformed individuals into stunted, though "socialized" beings who could do little more than conform to a pre-defined role.

He was under no illusions about social progress, and fatalistically suggested that things had been, were and would continue to be pretty much the same.

As he indicated in a reply to a letter criticizing his article on the bandits, he considered their actions being "logical, inevitable, even necessary."

Kibalchich would write one more article for *l'Anarchie* defending the bandits entitled, "Anarchists and Criminals," in which he emphasized, "Outlaws, marginals, bandits - they alone dare, like us, to proclaim their will to live at any price. Certainly they live far from us, far from our dreams and our desires," but he had as much sympathy for them as he had for "honest folks who've either made it or missed the boat."

Whatever that last line meant in modifying the general intransigence of the rest of the article, he was, at least, clear about the importance of the bandits, and their crimes as they apply to theory.

The police, however, were under no illusions as to how close, both physically and ideologically, *l'Anarchie* and the auto bandits were to each other.

On January 31st the offices of *l'Anarchie* were raided and searched, though nothing of note was found in that incursion. Of interest is the attitude of Jouin, the Inspector in charge of the anarchist section for the Sûreté, who spoke to Kiblichich wistfully of the ideas of Jean Grave, and how the illegalists were harming the "good name" of Anarchy.

Which is an old trick and has been used as recently as the arrest of Stuart Christie for his alleged involvement in the Angry Brigade Bombings of the early seventies, when during his questioning the interrogating officer came on as an anarchist sympathizer more concerned with saving the good name of anarchy, than being a bloodhound sniffing about for sufficient evidence to send the arrestees to prison for several decades.

Yet another lesson for us all - beware the empathetic, politically engaged cops who "respects" your ideals - his real motive is to suck your blood, steal your time, and sink your soul - not save the good name of Anarchy.

The police returned later the next week and searched *l'Anarchie's* offices once again, this time they unearthed two of the ubiquitous 9mm Brownings, which led to both Victor and Rirette's arrest for the possession of stolen goods (the pistols) which they identified as swag from the burglary of a gunsmith's shop that had occurred on Christmas Eve 1911.

Rirette was eventually turned loose, but Victor waited in jail for something to occur that would either lead to freedom or to his being charged as a fence for stolen property; either way his oaths of silence and non-cooperation with police interrogators ran deep and he remained silent - willing to sit out his detention.

The illegalists for their part were pretty certain the Sûreté was only a few steps behind them, so they went to ground, changing their hair color and shaving off their distinctive moustaches; further Bonnot suggested that they begin to dress like the bourgeois enemy to allay suspicion - so he handed out collars, cuffs and new shirts to further their disguises.

Despite the notoriety attached to the Rue Ordener robbery, not one of the gang members thought for a minute of leaving France, let alone Paris.

La Science and Octave also maintained contact with Rirette, meeting her in restaurants and cafes to get the latest news and to hear how Victor was holding up in the belly of the beast.

The gang also kept scouting out new locations for the robberies and burglaries, particularly in the south, eventually happening upon Élie Monier (aka Simentoff) yet another draft dodger who had flung himself as far as Switzerland to escape French military service.

In 1910 he had written a brief piece for *l'Anarchie* detailing an anti-syndicalist action for comrades in Arles. He readily joined the insurgent army of crime when the time came for his assistance.

On 15 February 1912 a superb Peugeot limousine was stolen in Beziers by persons unknown and driven northwards towards Paris.

By 9 am the following morning, however, the limo had flattened and the five well-dressed occupants of the auto managed to get a lift from a local garage owner as far as Beaune. After lunch the men caught a train to Paris, arriving in at 6:15 pm. No one would ever be charged with the theft but the Sûreté detectives suspected it was yet another exploit of Bonnot and the gang.

Four days later the Parisian press announced that the hunt for Garnier had reached as far afield as Chemnitz and Berlin, though the gang's next "outrage" showed just how close the illegalists had stayed to their old stomping grounds.

In a spasm of spontaneity the gang had decided to travel south to rob the Lavernede mine near Alais and then the Comptoir National d'Escompte (a bank) near Nimes.

Once again they chose a Delaunay-Belleville for a getaway car, this one well fitted out by a bourgeois who was planning to follow the *Tour-de-France* as it wound its way through the French countryside.

The car though, almost from the very beginning, developed mechanical problems and after four hours wasted getting it repaired the disgruntled illegalists headed back to Paris. A real lemon.

Their drive though Paris was epic by the standards of the day, Bonnot behind the wheel kept the limo above 80 miles an hour through much of the city knocking over a few stalls near the Palais Royale and barely missing an autobus backing out of a berth at the Gare St-Lazare by hopping the car up onto the sidewalk nearly crushing two pedestrians as the engine coughed and sputtered into silence.

A traffic policeman who had been watched as the limo careened wildly to avoid disaster hurried over to demand the driver's papers. Bonnot ignored the cop and finally got the engine roaring again.

Garnier who had stepped out of the Delaunay for a moment, probably to slow the onset of an oncoming panic-induced heart attack, hopped into the back seat as the cop jumped on the running board and attempted to grab the wheel.

Garnier thinking quickly, fired three bullets point blank into the cops chest killing him as his body crumpled off the side of the car and collapsed into the road. Bonnot pushed the Delaunay back up to speed.

Two "honest" citizens attempted to give chase in their own automobiles but were mistaken by the gathering crowd as the auto bandits and were surrounded, and nearly seized and lynched.

Despite the best efforts of the mob to exact vigilante justice, the car of the would-be heroes pulled away from the growing pocket of bystanders and sped off only to run over a hapless young woman crossing the street. Their pursuit finally abandoned, the luckless posse of two were questioned severely by police, and subsequently released.

Bonnot and the others continued their search for a target and after 24 hours finally found a house worth burglarizing. They made quick work of the safe but raised enough noise to wake the inhabitants of the house.

The owner of the mansion, yet another lawyer, thinking quickly fired six shots at the burglars, which sent the illegalists running for cover and ended the attempt of the gang for an honest, non-violent burglary.

Octave, in a fit of pique, found sufficient flammables to set the Delaunay alight and the gang returned to Paris without a penny to show for 48 hours of wild illegality, including very nearly vehicular manslaughter.

As a result the gang decided to lay low for a few months and during this time the Sûreté went into overdrive arresting anyone even remotely associated with *l'Anarchie*, eventually catching two fish worth having - Belonie and Rodriguez, the two fences who had been given the responsibility of selling the bonds and checks taken during the Ordener robbery. After selling the financial instruments and realizing a small sum for the gang, both men were taken into custody and Rodriguez started doing all in his power to avoid the guillotine, both wet and dry.

The illegalists had grown somewhat depressed in the meantime; the sale of the bonds had yielded almost nothing, their last attempt at crime had been fun but a fiasco, the anarchist community had almost unanimously condemned them, and just as a final painful reminder of just

how isolated they truly were, *l'Anarchie* had published a piece bylined "LA" that had thrown some real mulch at the gang.

The author had called them, "feeble, narrow minded simpletons," whose theories were a load of crap; LA further noted that while their lives would be short, it was necessary for all anarchists to denounce their deeds and move as rapidly as possible in the opposite direction.

Of course the article drew scorn from a few in the individualist camp, an article written in response by Victor Metric scorned LA roundly and concluded with a request for funds to assist those in custody.

Garnier, of course, was nothing if not incensed and in order to get out in front of the criticism decided to do something truly seismic - he would write a challenge and send it in to one of the scions of the bourgeois press, *Le Atin*, which published it on 20 March 1912.

In the letter addressed to specific detectives in the Sûreté including Jouin, he taunted them and ridiculed the 10,000 fr offered to his companion Marie to betray him, adding, "...multiply the sum by ten, *messieurs*, and I will surrender myself to your mercy, bound hand and foot..."

He goes on to exonerate one of his friends caught in the dragnet, Dieudonné, and emphasized that he alone was guilty.

Lastly he declared that,

I know that there will be an end to this struggle which has begun between me and the formidable arsenal at society's disposal. I know that I will be beaten; I am the weakest.

But I sincerely hope to make you pay dearly for your victory.

Concluding jauntily, "Awaiting the pleasure of meeting you...Garnier."

Another enclosed sheet of paper bore inked impressions of Garnier's index finger and right hand to prove the identity of the author.

Bonnot, not to be outdone by his partner walked into the offices of the *Petit Parisien* (a Parisian equivalent of the tabloid press today like the *Sun* in the UK or the *New York Post*), and placing his Browning menacingly on the desk of the journalist Charles Saurwein and stated that,

We'll fire our last round at the cops, and if they don't care to come, we'll eventually know where to find them.

Then after picking up his pistol he walked nonchalantly out of the paper's office.

Of course the paper should have contracted the police immediately, it was the bourgeois thing to do, but the but the gang was slowly beginning to garner some mild popular sympathy, and the police, for whom the average Parisian felt at least a tinge of hostility, were sinking low in the perceptions of the press.

As an example many journals had begun to call the gang "the tragic bandits" though the *Petit Parisien* had settled on the "Bonnot Gang," which would stick long after the gang and the journal ceased to exist.

The effect of these interactions with the press was to bring even more pressure to bear on the police to do something spectacular and apprehend the outlaws, and completely outrageous.

Garnier had been thinking about firepower a great deal, feeling that though the police in Paris carried only old cavalry revolvers, the gang needed something truly intimidating to make the next robbery successful.

He finally found what he was looking for when he purchased four Winchester rifles from a local anarchist fence - basically the modern equivalent of would-be criminals among themselves with surface to air missiles, or rocket propelled grenades to rob a 7-11.

Car owners throughout Paris had become far more security conscious as a result of the spate of recent auto thefts, so in response the illegalists developed their final innovation to modern criminal activity - the car-jacking.

The gang, this time was made up of Soudy, Garnier, Bonnot, Valet and the new guy, Monier. They armed themselves, including Soudy who carried the Winchester under his great coat, and took suburban trains into the countryside.

They disembarked at Villeneuve and walked as the final rays of sun peaked from behind trees into the forest to bed down for the night. they had selected a piece of road on the N5, a main north-south artery, and by mid-morning had found an ideal spot for their ambush.

Meanwhile at 7am in Paris, a brand spanking new De Dion-Bouton 18 horsepower limousine, that had been ordered and purchased by the Comte de Rouge, was being revved and readied for delivery. Two men were in the car, a chauffeur in the pay of De Dion and a secretary sent by the Comte to make the 18,000 fr purchase; the Comte, who couldn't be bothered with the mundane was sunning himself on the Cote d'Azur, waiting for his new car to be delivered.

Bonnot, Garnier and La Science recognized that they had only once chance to obtain a car in this fashion, should a driver get past them, their whereabouts would immediately be flashed to the capital, including all the cops just waiting for the opportunity to pounce.

Luckily as they waited by the side of the road two horsecarts came spanking down the N5, the illegalists ran out flashing their weapons and seizing the two conveyances which they propped in the middle of the road.

At the same moment the yellow Dion-Bouton came into view. The car came to a halt and the anarchist walked with guns in hand towards the auto, La Science calling out, "It's the car we want."

The chauffeur pulled out his pistol, but he was too slow, Bonnot fired and shot him in the heart. Garnier, perhaps in response to Bonnot's shot, fired at the other passenger, hitting him four times in the hands, which had apparently been raised in protection.

The two bodies were dragged into the woods, the gang scrambled in and the Dion Bouton was turned around and roared north towards Chantilly.

They skirted Paris through the eastern suburbs and taking the N16 arrived after two hours of driving at the offices of the Société Générale in Chantilly, located on the main square.

Bonnot sat at the wheel while Garnier, La Science, Valet and Monier walked into the bank. Soudy remained on the pavement outside the bank, the Winchester raised and ready. La Science called out, "Messieurs, not a word!" as the gang came charging into the office, one of the clerks instinctively dove for the floor, which caused Garnier to shout, "Fire!"

Garnier shot one of the clerks six times and La Science poured four shots into another teller, while Valet winged the youngest clerk, a sixteen year old, with a shot to the shoulder. The remaining bank employees escaped by diving out the back door as bullets zipped past them.

Monier stayed at the door while Garnier, finding a set of keys after a "Jesse James" leap over the counter said, "Get the money first,"; perhaps wishing to avoid the embarrassment of staring lamely at a pile of worthless bonds and checks.

The shooting obviously did not go unnoticed by the locals, including the bank manager who began to walk back across the square. Soudy leveled the rifle at him and shouted, "Hold it! Hold it or I'll pick you off," finishing the statement with four rounds fired over the man's head.

The manager wisely retreated in the opposite direction.

Soudy now began to fire rounds at anyone who ventured into the square as well as those who appeared in windows. The illegalists raced over out of the bank, guns roaring as cover for the retreat, and crammed themselves into the waiting car.

Soudy fired a final shot and ran after the already accelerating car, he slipped as he was jumping in but was caught and hauled in by his comrades who realized that he had fainted in the excitement of trying to catch the auto.

In minutes the limo was racing south to Paris, and the relative safety of her teeming millions. Though sighted at numerous places on the return trip no effective chase was given and having abandoned the car, they hopped a fence and found themselves in Levallois-Perron, a neighborhood swarming with police due to the presence of the headquarters of the then striking taxi drivers union.

The strike had lasted for several months and results in numerous violent collisions between the taxi drivers, strike-breakers, and of course, the police.

So the gang strolled right through the largest cluster of police in all of France with 50,000 fr in their pockets and no one paid them any attention at all.

Again the class struggle had reared up and provided the perfect screen for the illegalist insurrection to occur.

The robbery at Chantilly sent the representatives of law and order and especially the bourgeois press into apoplectic fits.

Meetings were held up and down the various chains of command, and like the September 11 occurrences, the final outcome was a forgone conclusion - unbounded police surveillance powers, augmented by increased funding for the violation of rights, torture of suspects, whatever would bring the sad, and seemingly endless chapter to at least perceived conclusion.

Within 24 hours of the robbery raids took place across Paris, especially in the communities to the north and east, the "red belt" as it had been known since the days of the Commune.

*L'anarchie* was raided for the third time (in all the offices would be searched six times in as many months). The public mood at this time had turned from one of mild, silent approval for the Bonnot Gang to a raging hysteria - the image of a pale young man shooting at the honest, law-abiding denizens of a quiet Parisian suburb was unnerving to the point of psychosis for much of the bourgeois.

Gun sales spiked upwards as the middle and upper classes began to arm themselves in response to the possibility of confrontation with these neo-barbarians, and when the public realized that Bonnot had been trained to shoot and drive by no less a criminal conspiracy than the French army, many wondered if the entire structure of sovereignty might not collapse with an armed force made up of such malcontent recruits.

Further, like the resurrected Elvis, sightings of the gang began to be reported in such far flung places in Marseilles, Calais, and of course...Brussels.

In one incident, a Belgian stationmaster opened fire on a group of innocent, and probably stunned passengers convinced that the Bonnot Gang had decided to include train robbery in its repertoire.

In the working class neighborhoods, however, the mood was visibly different; kids exuberantly played "Bonnot Gang" with an unlucky few of the youngsters forced to play cops.

## **The Gang's Finale: For a Few Bullets More**

After Chantilly, the gang split the proceeds and parted company.

Soudy, seeking some relief from his tuberculosis, traveled to Berck, a seaside health resort. With his paleness and long interludes of coarse, rattled coughing no one expected to him to rejoin the gang.

Everyone else found safe houses and laid as low as possible, fully recognizing that anything appearing to be out of the ordinary could bring the attention of the neighbors and probably the police shortly thereafter.

The gang recognized that huge rewards were being offered for any information and that in working class areas the temptation must have been intense to turn informant.

Further the Sûreté was doing their best to plant as much suspicion as possible within anarchist circles, driving home the point made by Jouin that the bandits were "discrediting a great ideal," thereby casting the police in the unlikely role of guardians of the purity of anarchism.

The first to fall was Soudy who had been staying with friends at Berck. Jouin had been fed information detailing his whereabouts and as Soudy emerged from his friends [...] and walked towards the train station five policeman jumped him.

An unidentified informant was paid 20,000 fr for the betrayal.

Raymond La Science was next.

He had taken refuge with an anarchist couple Pierre Jourdan and his lover Louise-Marcelline in Paris's 9th *arrondissement*. Louise-Marcelline was evidently the unidentified informer in this case, and as La Science appeared outside the apartment early one morning wearing cycling gear and with a new racing bike he was apprehended.

A search of his cycling shorts revealed sixteen one hundred franc bills and two loaded Browning 9mm pistols.

Monier was next, he had taken to hopping from hotel room to hotel room and had been impressively assiduous in his efforts to remain invisible until he met some anarchist friends for a meal in the boulevard Delessert; the meal party included Lorulot who was well known to the police and they had been tracking him for several weeks.

The gambit paid off, Monier was immediately identified and followed back to his hotel. Unwilling to wait for him to come out the police forced their way into his room and due to surprise took him without incident.

They noted that he had two loaded 9mm Brownings on the bedstand and had they been less quiet the arrest could have gone very differently.

Bonnot and Garnier would be less easy to take unawares, and they were both poised to take as many cops as possible with them into the abyss.

Bonnot had been staying with a friend Gauzy above his second-hand clothing store. As time went on, Gauzy had become more and more uncomfortable with the situation, and Bonnot, unwilling to remain in a darkened room for hours on end had been out walking several times.



Meanwhile the Sûreté had patched together some loose leads and decided that many of the "Second hand" shops in working class areas as well be operated by fences, they had also linked a number of these shops to gang members.

Gauzy had finally prevailed upon Bonnot to find other accommodations, though Bonnot dithered away a day or two deciding what to do.

Gauzy was then surprised to see four bowler hatted men enter his shop on the day Bonnot was to have left, timing it seems was neither on his side nor Bonnot's.

Jouin introduced himself and stated that he had a warrant to search the premises, and probably hoping that Bonnot had jumped out the window, Gauzy led the detectives upstairs to his apartment.

Gauzy fumbled with the key as he unlocked the door and stood back for Jouin and Colmar to enter, as they did Bonnot who had been reading a paper by the window jumped up and grabbed for a small caliber pistol in his jacket pocket.

Jouin was on him in an instant, they wrestled and Bonnot, finally getting the pistol in hand, fired three shots into the detective, the final bullet through the neck killing him instantly; a perfectly appropriate Stirnerian moment; the triumphant individual destroying the lead coil of the venomous state.

A fourth shot, probably fired from the floor, killed Colmar.

The third detective Robert dashed into the room and finding Colmar breathing shallowly hefted him on his shoulder and carried him down the stairs.

Bonnot, shoving Jouin's corpse off him ran down the hallway, through a window and into the street.

His forearm, grazed by a bullet, trailed blood as he ran.

Bonnot spent three uncomfortable nights in the open, finally making it to the garage of an anarchist at the fringes of the gang, Jean Debois, in Choisy-Le-Roi where he spent the night.

Dubois was up early working on a motorcycle when sixteen armed men pulled up in several autos and rushed the garage. Dubois pulled a pistol and shot the detective closest to him in the wrist, but the other cops were ready and he was met with a hail of bullets, one striking him in the back of the neck killing him outright.

Bonnot, wakened by the din from downstairs, grabbed a gun and walked onto a small balcony overlooking the yards and stairs only to find the detectives just ascending to the room.

He fired catching the lead cop in the stomach, and then ducked back into the room to avoid the bullets flying at him.

The detectives summoned help from anywhere they could, including two companies of Republican Guards, a group of locals with pitchforks and shotguns (no, really - pitchforks), and further reinforcements from the Sûreté.

The battle lasted all morning with thousands of bullets tearing holes throughout the room where Bonnot was firing from, and Bonnot himself occasionally walking out on the porch to take a few well-aimed shots at his attackers.

By noon, with the battle effectively a draw; the Sûreté men decided to try and blow the garage up, with Bonnot inside.

A cart piled with mattresses was rolled towards the building, the dynamite fuse lit and placed next to the wall. The fuse sputtered and died causing the cart once again to roll forwards so that the fuse could be relit - this time successfully, though the charge was insufficient to destroy the garage.

Third time's a charm, with the dynamite charge this time large enough to level the building. Bonnot, still alive though barely breathing was rushed to the hospital, but died en route.

Two days later Bonnot and DuBois were buried surreptitiously in the paupers of the cemetery as Bagneux. The graves were left unmarked so as to preempt any remembrance ceremonies.

This left Garnier and Valet at large and the Sûreté detectives were justifiably concerned.

Garnier had sworn in his letter to *Le Martin* to deal swiftly with informers and he was serious about the threat.

One of the men whom Garnier was sure had sold information to the police was Victor Granghau, who had prearranged Carouy to stay with him; he was subsequently arrested the very same night.

Garnier had caught a train to Lozere and there waited for Victor to return from work. Victor and his father were walking back home from the station when Garnier stepped out of the bushes and in spite of the father's pleading and attempts to protect his son with an umbrella shot him once in each leg stating, "That will teach you to inform on Carouy."

The final battle took place in Nogent, where Garnier, his companion Marie, and Valet had rented a suburban Bungalow.

The two men had been recognized on a bus to Nogent and it didn't take long for the police to identify the house that had been recently rented to three suspicious newcomers.

The illegalists were just finishing preparations for a simple vegetarian dinner when Valet, standing in the back yard taking in the air was accosted by a man wearing a red, white and blue sash who called in, "Surrender in the Name of the Law."

Valet realized immediately that the gaudily clad man wasn't a neighbor, and put a few rounds into the air as he dodged back into the house.

The gun battle that then erupted was fierce even by the standards of Bonnot's last stand.

A cease-fire was called for and the detectives yelled in for the men to surrender.

Marie ran out of the house into the hands of the detectives.

The two anarchists downed water and forgetting their restrictive diet, also drank some coffee to stay alert, though neither had any time to eat.

They then made themselves ready for the end.

They piled the francs they had stolen in the middle of the floor and burned them. They both stripped to the waist and loaded clip after clip of ammo for the seven 9mm Brownings in their possession, though they had no cartridges for the Winchesters which would have been infinitely more useful, and accurate, in the static gun battle that they were engaged in.

After Garnier had made sure that Marie was safe, the battle rejoined with gusto.

As time went on the odds became increasingly ridiculous, eventually it was estimated that the anarchists were outmanned by a ratio of 500 to 1.

The two managed to hold out to midnight, a full six hours, when with the aid of sappers the house was finally destroyed by a blast of melinite.

The combatants on the side of the law made their way into the rubble and the brave detectives of the Sûreté shot both men, still alive, twice in the head, in direct violations of "standard" police procedures.

The bodies of Garnier and Valet were laid to rest very near the graves of their comrades in arms, Bonnot and DuBois.

Finally, there were those who had been arrested and now face trial, a total of 18 men and three women (Rirette, Marie, and Barbe) - a girlfriend of one of the outlying gang members).

The prosecution knew it had very little to go on, not one of the defendants was talking, the evidence was weak, very circumstantial and ultimately compromised in most cases by shoddy police work.

In fact there was no way that the prosecutors could state with any certainty exactly who had participated in what robbery. The accused languished in prison until 3 February 1913 when the court began to hear evidence.

In the interim Victor and Rirette began a rapid backpedal from what had been written in *l'anarchie*, complaining it had been misinterpreted, and that much of what they had said at meetings like the *causeries populaires* went unrecorded and directly contradicted material that had appeared in printed - basically casting themselves in the role of the "honest intellectual" versus the "criminal illegalist" that the other defendants obviously were.

The final decision of the court and the sentences of some of the defendants follow:

The three women and Rodriguez the fence - **Not guilty**

La Science, Soudy, Monier - **Guilty**; Guillotined 22 April 1913

Kibalchich - **Guilty**; five years in prison, five in exile.

Of the three defendants sent to the guillotine, they all died well (that is, bravely and without regret).

Of the two "honest intellectuals" Kibalchich eventually changed his name (to Victor Serge) and his politics, joined the Bolsheviks, worked closely with the left-communists and later Trotsky only to be deported by Stalin in 1937.

Like his friend Trotsky he eventually made it to Mexico where he died of natural causes in 1947 - though how he avoided the Stalinist ice-pick is hard to fathom.

Rirette spent the rest of her life damning the anarchists as publicly as she could - coming to the conclusion in her memoirs serialized in the bourgeois *Le Matin*,

...behind illegalism there are not even any ideas.

Here's what one finds there: spurious science, lust, the absurd and the grotesque.

Maybe she did "get it" after all...

## Parting shots

The history of illegalism doesn't end here, a few others have stepped forward and picked up the theory and the weapons that death had pried from the mouldering hands of the Bonnot gang.

These include the Italian/German Horst Fantazzini, an individualist anarchist, who robbed his way across Europe during the 60s and 70s with a flair as yet unmatched among the criminal classes.

In one holdup he fled successfully on bicycle, he escaped from prison several times, and when a teller fainted during one of his bank robberies he sent her roses the next day. The press dubbed him the "kind bandit" thereafter.

He wrote an account of his escape from Fossano prison, which was eventually made into a movie *Ormai e fatta!*

Fantazzini died in 2001 in a prison infirmary.

One of his daughters built a website to commemorate the life and exploits of her father (<http://horstfantazzini.net/>) which is fun to look through.

As of today, the life and written works of Alfredo Bonnano continues the theory and praxis of illegalism and any one of his articles is worth a read.

In terms of contemporary social movements the Yomango is an ongoing social phenomenon in South America, Spain, and Italy devoted to open socially informed shoplifting conducted *en masse*.

The movement is going strong and since the world economy hit the skids in 2008 has if anything grown and become more accepted, to the point of being endorsed by several non-anarchist Spanish trade unions, who periodically sponsor mass shoplifting outings for their members.

There are obviously many other forms of illegalism that have been tried and used in the anarchist milieu and the above review is in no way an exhaustive account.

As an example, all forms of squatting are by definition illegal, regardless, the practice is engaged in, and approved of, by virtually every permutation of current anarchist theory or movement, and is usually justified in a conceptual framework that looks and tastes very illegalist.

In a practical sense; not all illegalists are squatters, but all squatters are illegalists.

Continuing on in a pragmatic manner, illegalism also provides some interesting insights into the ongoing conundrum of organization as it applies to anarchism.

Of note is the fact that while Bonnot and company had no formal structure, no rules for decision making, and little to say on the issue of organization, they do seem to provide some answers on the subject.

One of these solutions is the turning on its very head of the question of organization, which usually begins with the question, "what type of structure shall we create?"

The illegalists, however, in the example provided by their activity began with the question what shall we do, what activity is required for the successful realization of this project. Then based upon what it is that a group is seeking to accomplish, the structure required to realize the activity comes into being.

Each of these solutions then is also tempered by the principle on its ability to realize the needs and desires of the individual, to safeguard her autonomy against the ever present likelihood that organizations will tend to blunt and ultimately deny the sovereignty of individual in favor of the growing power of the collective, especially with the passage of time.

*In extremis* some organizations exist whose sole purpose is to maintain their own existence, the nation-state is a good model of such circuitous existential theory, and certainly the police and the military are prime examples of the mailed fist that does nothing save preserve the sovereign status-quo, and eliminate any contestation that could lead to either radical internal change (a relative impossibility) or insurrection.

The absurdity of the argument is often laid bare when fundamental principles are used to justify their own destruction.

The Occupy movement, for all its weakness, provided a perfect example of freedom of speech being justified to destroy freedom of speech - you can say whatever you want, just not at night, not in a public park, and not in New York.

Alternatively there is the example of military versus militia organization in the Spanish Civil War; a puzzle that probably accounted for numerous sleepless nights for Durruti and other FAI militants during the late summer and fall of 1936.

In this case the strategic objective of winning the war did little to inform the structure of the militias; rather the decade/century milita configuration was far better suited to either the

type of affinity group actions that the FAI excelled at, or at one step remove, the strike or insurrectionary committees, either regional or national in scope, that the CNT had utilized for its industrial conestation or the outright seizure of villages and towns and the inevitable declaration of "comunismo libertario".

Durruti, in one of his moments of clarity, voiced the concern that the "discipline of indiscipline" was proving to be an ineffective tactic with which to fight a civil war.

I have no answer as to how the Spainards should have structured their militias, rather I am convinced that their chosen organization was sufficiently flawed as to allow them to lose twice, first to the Stalinists, and then to the fascists.

The simple, elegant illegalist "solution" to the problem of organization was neither new nor particularly innovative. The raiding parties of the Great Plains tribes were comprised in a very similar manner.

The "solution" then consists of a structure that is temporary - that ceases to exist past the accomplishment of the strategic goal for which the organization was brought into existence. The organization allowed for each of the individuals involved sufficient input so as to satisfy the need for participation in decisions that affect ones own life, especially those decisions that may lead to the maiming, capture or death of the organizations members.

Each of the individuals involved understood their various responsibilities and that knowledge allowed for tasks to be completed quickly and completely without the need for oversight (administration) nor the attendant operationalizing factor of oversight - discipline, and its sustaining hierarchy motivating principles - punishment and/or reward.

The illegalists also represent one of the last glowing embers of the association of anarchist with utopia; which would be brought back into a raging conflagration some seventy-five years later with an unlikely mixture of anti-civilization, anti-technology theory, the resurgence of combative, mobile affinity groups best exemplified by the "Vermont Family," urban squatters, and the re-discovery and re-popularization of 120 years of anarchist theory and history (including the Situationists and the Frankfurt School) by a well-connected group of writers, journalists and theorists linked together through zines, mail, and who found each other via the ultimate underground print media clearinghouse, *Factsheet Five*.

This strange mix of theory, personality and history would be brought to a near explosive mass via the catalyzing addition of various meetings and events including the 1986-1989 Continental Anarchist Gatherings (Chicago-SF-Toronto) and the Tompkins Square Park Riot of August 1988.

Grinding back to the 19th Century - Marx and Engels would use the term utopian as a way to criticize and infantilize not only those thinkers who had swum in the waters of socialism, communism, and revolution prior to their arrival, additionally the anarchists, especially Bakunin, would use the term utopian as an insult for all comers as they vied for political pre-eminence among the various population strata most likely to participate in revolutionary upheavals.

In the case of Bakunin the epithet was hurled without acknowledging the obvious and gnawing truth that most of anarchist theory and praxis was, in fact, pretty utopian.

The Paris Commune provided the political upheaval that materialized as the fork in the road that would effectively split the various revolutionary currents into utopian (anarchist) and anti-utopian (Marxist) camps.

Using then select activities of the Commune to illustrate this marked dichotomous political vision and simultaneously as real events that stirred the acrimonious stew then brewing between Marx and Bakunin, lets see what the Communards did that produced such antipathy - for the

Marxists the high water mark of the uprising may be the Commune's outlawing of night work for bakers, a solid practical step towards socialism without a blemish of the idealistic or heroic, without any revolutionary mumbo-jumbo that they accused their adversaries of engaging in.

For the anarchists the destruction of the Vendome Column was the insurrectionary act *par excellence* - with all the possibilities the action entailed, the death (regicide? arcicide?) of imperialism, militarism and nationalism, the proof of the malleability of the urban landscape to meet the needs of people, and finally the outrageous, side-splitting comedy of watching the bronzed, granite, phallus tumble grandly and flaccidly to the ground.

Not surprisingly the author of the night work legislation was Leo Frankel, a devoted follower of Marx, and the destruction of the Column was the brainchild of the artist Gustave Courbet, an admirer of both Proudhon and Bakunin.

Pushing on from the Commune into later European history one sees this dichotomy grow ever more striking, ever more profound.

The anarchists became the midwives of week long Social Republics, of risings doomed before the first shot was fired, of being the guardians of insurrection that is "nowhere" because it is realized and dreamed of everywhere.

In the mind one sees the image of a Spanish peasant unable to read but staring at and moving rough, calloused fingers over the pictures of black flags and various images that adorn the latest issue of *La Revista Blanca*.

Anarchism is utopian because the anarchist vision is sublime, transcendent; even the poorest, most uneducated worker could viscerally relate to a future where bosses and work had been destroyed in favor of play as the dominant economic activity and a grand illuminating equality of resources, wealth and opportunities to learn and attain knowledge, and finally to participate directly without mediation in decisions that affected one's life.

Unlike the Marxist who envisioned a society very like the one she lived in, only in the communist world the workers were the masters, not the slaves. Marxism is anti-utopian because the communist vision is of a society where nothing, other than the class makeup of the new bosses, has changed.

The advent and activities of the illegalists, and the concurrent rise of the most possibilist of anarchist tendencies, anarcho-syndicalism, replayed in miniature the split that occurred after the Commune.

In this instance the reinsertion of utopian currents into anarchism, accomplished as the result of the individual writings of Zo d'Axa, among others, was offset by the growth of the syndicalist tendency, including the uptick in the census of various union bodies, especially those associated with the Confederation General du Travail in France, the IWW in the US and Australia, and of course the proliferation of soviets in Russia.

The strength of the syndicalist argument ultimately being contained in the non-utopian, practical method of building unions as the seeds of the new society, and also providing structure as the post-general strike world and how industry would be changed from a generator of profit to a liberator of human aspirations.

Of interest too is the seeming confusion that reigned at the "top" of these organizations especially the IWW, where Bill Haywood would respond as to whether he had read Marx's *Capital* with the snappy rejoinder, "No, but I have the marks of Capital all over my body."

This sentiment is echoed by Joe Hill, who while rotting in prison during the months that the State of Utah was figuring out the easiest way to justify his murder was asked by a local journalist

whether he was a Marxist, to which he responded with the simple, and avowedly untrue, "Yes, I am and always have been."

Therefore as syndicalism sought to reject as much as possible the smear of utopianism, the closer the leaders and rank and file edged towards proclaiming the organization and its members Marxist.

The illegalists on the other hand never stood back from the glaring utopianism that characterized much of their theory.

Certainly Kibalchich was sufficiently clear in his theoretics that he acknowledged the basic utopianism that animated much of individualist anarchism, he was equally solid in translating illegalist activities into the living, breathing insurrection that was then being fought out. Not to be put off to some great event scheduled to occur in the next few centuries, but a battle that was joined daily by the adherents of illegalism, and their supporters.

In this sense the insult to the anti-utopians was two-fold, yes we are utopians, and yes we are utopians operating on the terrain of utopia - now - not in some far-flung future where our children's children will form of the general staff of an as yet unborn insurrectionary militia. Finally, it's also important to note the fundamental violence that such theories do to the Marxists, and some anarchists, who believe that only when the time has become ripe, through the collapse of the wage and profit system, the downhill slide from peak oil, or the moment when everyone, in a vast global pre-frontal cortex explosion of wisdom realizes that the total amount of debt, individual, sovereign, and corporate exceeds the total number of all possible forms of profits and incomes with which to make the payments will a revolution become a viable alternative to the species.

As opposed to the very general utopian notion that basic human individual desire and need will be the sole motivating factors that will push the species from where it is now into the great necessity; utopia.

Finally, the real arguments made against illegalism were that of an early, seemingly meaningless death.

So I'll let Marcuse who stood with one foot in Marxism and other in utopia bring this essay to a conclusion:

Under conditions of a truly human existence, the difference between succumbing to disease at the age of ten, thirty, fifty, or seventy, and dying a "natural" death after a fulfilled life, may well be a difference worth fighting for with all instinctual energy.

Not those who die, but those who die before they must and want to die, those who die in agony and pain, are the great indictment against civilization. They also testify to the unredeemable guilt of mankind. Their death arouses the painful awareness that it was unnecessary, that it could be otherwise. It takes all the institutions and values of a repressive order to pacify the bad conscience of this guilt.

Once again, the deep connection between the death instinct and the sense of guilt becomes apparent. The silent "professional agreement" with the fact of death and disease is perhaps one of the most widespread expressions of the death instinct - or, rather, of its social usefulness.

In a repressive civilization, death itself becomes an instrument of repression. Whether death is feared as constant threat, or glorified as supreme sacrifice, or

accepted as fate, the education for consent to death introduces an element of surrender into life from the beginning – surrender and submission. It stifles "utopian" efforts.

The powers that be have a deep affinity to death; death is a token of unfreedom, of defeat. Theology and philosophy today compete with each other in celebrating death as an existential category: perverting a biological fact into an ontological essence, they bestow transcendental blessing on the guilt of mankind which they help to perpetuate – they betray the promise of utopia.



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Paul Z. Simons

Illegalism: Why Pay for a Revolution on the Installment Plan...When You Can Steal One?  
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