

Illegalism

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“... a mighty, reckless, shameless, conscienceless, proud, CRIME, does it not rumble in distant thunder...” -Max Stirner, *The Ego and its Own*

Crime: an act in violation of the law. Whether the act is a conscious defiance of morals and authority, or the realization of frustrated desires, the criminal rejects the acceptable roles offered him or her in favor of creating a new self-defined one. Though this doesn't always lead to a rejection of the dominant forces of the society involved, rampant and blatant disregard of the law is a sign of a society in deterioration and usually leads to a complete breakdown of the social order. When a society is dependent upon the exploitation and subjugation of its citizens, the subversion of the social order by the defiant actions of those same people against the forces of law and order offers them their purely symbolic civil disobedience nor black market sub-economies threatened the status quo. Civil disobedience merely reinforces the roles of rulers and ruled, while black markets need the continued existence of the state to limit competition and provide the infrastructure which supports both above and underground economics — mainly currency. Rather than military conflict with the nation/states or rampant terroristic campaigns against the “enemy” population, people who wish to create a revolutionary situation according to the realization of an expansive libtratory existence would take into consideration the example of the illegalists.

French Illegalists

Pre-WWI France was the setting for the only documented anarchist revolutionary movement to embrace all illegal activity as revolutionary practice. Pick-pocketing, theft from the workplace, robbery, confidence scams, desertion from the armed forces, you name it, illegalist activity was praised as a justifiable and necessary aspect of class struggle. Some of the most widely circulated French anarchist newspapers and journals urged their readers to commit crime, including papers published and edited by Russian expatriate Victor Serge, and Elisee Recluse. Indeed, it seems that Mr. Recluse's unrelenting support of illegal activity has cost him widespread translation and influence in the non-French speaking nations. One of his biographers referred to his “flaws in judgment” without discussing his unapologetic stance on illegalism. Recluse was the only major anarchist theorist who never recanted his public support of illegalism, even after the vilification of the Bonnot “Gang” and police repression which followed (see Richard Parry's book *The Bonnot Gang* for a detailed account).

In France, and elsewhere since, the suppression of anarchist working class papers and organization was given a “tsk-tsk” by the liberal utopians, those who wish to transform society through gradual, peaceful methods (such as education and establishing co-operatives). This anarcho-aristocratic attitude still exists and is one reason why anarchy and anarchists continue to be marginalized and all but irrelevant as a revolutionary movement.

Someone might get in TROUBLE!

The risk of being caught, hurt and even killed is present in all illegal actions. To the poor and working classes, this is not a deterrent to criminal activity, merely part of the equation: “Is the goal worth the risk?” After pondering the pros and cons of the situation, the criminal gives up or carries on and if caught, well, that's how it goes, and better luck next time.

It is here that class distinctions enter the picture. To some poor people, life in jail is not so much worse than life on the streets. Instead, to many poor people in the “underdeveloped” world, life in a U.S. jail would be an almost incalculable improvement over the conditions of their current status. When insurgents take to illegal activity: using underground illegal squats, carrying out armed robberies to support themselves, etc., among their most vocal critics are the liberals and activists who, if they were to be too closely associated with the illegal actions of their comrades, could stand to lose their student financing, jobs, or, gasp, trust funds. With so much depending on their reputations, the liberals will sometimes even go so far as to co-operate with the state in apprehension, denunciation and incarceration of those who they feel have gone too far. And recently endangered other people’s careers.

The Uncontrollables

For better or worse, anarchist revolutionary movements have always attracted people who adamantly refuse to follow orders or obey rules, even those presented by anarchist organizations. Branded as uncontrollables, these loose cannons bring discredit to anarchist ideals-or so the high minded utopians and scholars would have us believe. However, these same utopians never fail to have a hand out to accept the plunder shared by these “bandits and adventurers” in order to finance their publications, free schools and union activities.

From the period after the repression of the Paris Commune through the Spanish Revolution and up to the round-up of anarchists in Italy this decade, bombers such as Ravachol, gun men like Ourruti and bank robbers like those alleged to have operated in Tialy have inspired loathing by respectable voices of anarchism while winning admiration and emulation of the working classes of their countries. The UK say its own uprising of uncontrollables, The Angry Brigade, a group which not only did not exist, but carried out hundred of bombings, expropriations, pranks and stunts. Once the media-generated hysteria surrounding their fabricated “terrorist” group began, people across the land joined in. the resulting turmoil infuriated the scholars and self-appointed leaders of the anarcho-liberal mainstream, some of whom had, in their eyes, the dubious honor of having to stand trial for ??? [word cut off]

That’s Revolting!

When social change groups and movements keep to their place, as ineffective, impotent, cathartic activism, their leaders and spokespersons are awarded accolades and treats. They become scholars, historians, voices of the alleged repression. But once they step beyond the social acceptable realm of whining and gnashing their teeth and truly challenge the authority of their overlords, they are branded as criminally terrorists and kooks. This is only appropriate, as the powerful are not in the least interested in losing their power and privileges. The leaders and spokespersons of the loyal opposition are often at the forefront of this effort, lest they lose their social goodies in the repression of the insurgent uncontrollables.

Throughout the history of anarchist revolutionary movements, those who did the front line fighting (and suffered the consequences), seldom took the time to write down their thoughts, acknowledge their inspiration or record their actions. To be sure, such records could have been used by the state to prosecute their comrades and loved ones. So, the overwhelming majority of

anarchist histories and other scholarship has been written by those who pooh-pooed the daring and bravery of the insurgents from the comfort and safety of their studies.

However, the final acts of uncontrollable revolutionary fury have not yet happened. Until the world, in part or entirely, has been freed from the yoke of capitalism and all other forms of privilege and authority, more people will revolt and with increasing urgency. Even now, in the midst of an ever-expanding economy, everyday people are coming to the realization that west civilization has reached a dead end and it's time to do something different. More and more people, especially those under social pressure to find their vocational niche and get to work, are turning to illegal means to create an imaginative existence of expansive potentialities. They've already weighed the possible consequences of their actions and have concluded that it is worth the risk. Because...

We have the World to Win and Nothing to Lose!

Under the current order, our lives are only nominally our own. Our governments, our employers, banks and insurance companies have more say about how we dress, look, think and what we imbibe than we do. If every facet of our lives is measured, timed, bought and sold, then can we be said to be alive, or have we become animated machinery?

To turn away from this horrifying existence is to become an outcast, to drift off into marginalization and cross the boundary into illegality.

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