

## **How to Make an Anarchist-Terrorist in *Fin-de-Siècle* France**

Project Notes & Outline

Rev. 8/2/09

### **TOPIC/HISTORICAL QUESTION/ARGUMENT**

This essay takes a close view of debates over anarchist-terrorism in France in the 1890s.

How did contemporaries understand the terrorist threat?

Commentators on anarchist-terrorism – in fiction, journalism, political commentary *and* the social sciences — used the anarchist threat to pursue their political-cultural interests. Their views on anarchist-terrorism say more about their own values and interests than about terrorism.

Another way of putting this: the debate over the sources of anarchist-terrorism was a proxy war in the political-cultural battles of France in the age of Dreyfus.

### **KEY SECONDARY SOURCES**

Scene setting. Works on late nineteenth century France. Weber, Brown

Works on print culture. Mollier, Angenot, et al.

On anarchist terrorism. See Maitron, Laqueur, Lay, Eisenzweig, Sonn, Nye, Harris. For the most part, they've only taken up the debate on the sources of anarchist-terrorism tangentially. Eisenzweig is most important and relevant of these, though there are some important criticisms to make.

### **KEY PRIMARY SOURCES**

Debates over anarchist-terrorists of 1890s. In press, social science literature, juridical work. With some attention to work in fiction. Esp. *Le Figaro*, *La Croix*, Alex. Bérard, Louis Proal, R. Garraud.

Legislation on anarchists, esp. the laws of 1893-4. See *Journal officiel*.

The trial of anarchist intellectuals in 1894. See Albert Bataille.

### **CONTEXT**

France in the 1890s. Time of wrenching social and economic change, political crisis.

Years before the Dreyfus Affair

A remarkably tumultuous print culture.

## **OUTLINE**

### 1. Introduction

- Hook: American Taliban, 2003. The point: democracies have a hard time confronting home-grown terrorism
- Our topic: discussion of anarchist terrorism in France in the 1890s
- Lay out secondary literature on anarchist terrorism. Excellent work. But there is a curious blindspot. What does the debate over the “making of an anarchist terrorist” tell us about the social imaginary
- Thesis: Commentators on anarchist-terrorism – in fiction, journalism, political commentary *and* the social sciences — used the anarchist threat to pursue their political-cultural interests. Their views on anarchist-terrorism say more about their own values and interests than about terrorism.

### 2. Overview of anarchist terror of 1892-4

- Section of historical context. Recount events

### 3. Explanations of the making of an anarchist-terrorist

- Organized by the different views. Anarchist-Terrorist the fault of:
  - Education
  - Religion
  - Democracy
  - Lazy Youth
- The point: anarchism could be the fault of anything.
- These discussions say more about the critics than the anarchists

### 4. Conclusion

- Epilogue. How did the anarchist threat fade? No simple answer. By 1895, commentators agreed that the wave had past.
- Summarize. What does this tell us about French politics in the late 19<sup>th</sup> c.?
- Significance. Underlines the response to terrorism in democratic societies.