

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNISM IN FRANCE FROM THE
FRENCH REVOLUTION TO 1848

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to trace the development of French communist movements from the late eighteenth century to 1848, when the Communist Manifesto appeared. Major emphasis is placed upon the revolutionaries themselves and the ideas that motivated them. They were linked to each other by a common goal: the radical transformation of society through revolutionary means. Their efforts were directed towards the establishment of a new kind of social order--one which would be based on economic and social equality.

Although the ideal of economic equality is as old as history itself, only with the French Revolution did it emerge as an attainable goal. The successful uprisings of that period provided a model of how power could be seized from below and paved the way for Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equals. Although a failure at the time, it served as an inspiration for later revolutionaries. The work of Babeuf's successors, Buonarroti, Blanqui, Cabet and a number of lesser figures is discussed in such a way as to distinguish their beliefs from those of the utopian socialists.

Finally, an attempt is made to show that pre-1848 communism had already developed a set of ideas and tactics very similar to those adopted by Lenin when he reintroduced the word in the twentieth century.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to trace the development of French communist movements from the late eighteenth century to 1848, when the Communist Manifesto first appeared. That document is often treated as the beginning of communism, rather than the culmination of an evolution which had already given the word "communism" sufficient meaning and emotional force that Marx and Engels were able to call it "a spectre haunting Europe."¹ By that year, communism was already a mature and familiar concept.

Communism possesses several meanings. It is a general term describing any society in which property is held in common and economic equality is a reality. In this sense the word communist has been applied to primitive social structures, imaginary utopias, religious sects and various experimental communities. In this sense it goes back to Plato's Republic, and to other writers of antiquity such as Seneca and to the early Christians.

The word can also be used as the name of an organization or party which is striving to bring about economic equality in a state which permits and even encourages substantial differences in material wealth among its inhabitants. Such states are usually referred to as capitalist, although those in the Third World have many pre-capitalist features. The Communist parties existing today in non-communist states would fall into this category, as would a number of proletarian

organizations of the first half of the nineteenth century. It is the latter which will be the subject of this thesis.

Although the terms socialism and communism have at times been used interchangeably, there are specific characteristics which have been attached to both over the years which make a clear distinction between them useful. Both were employed during the 1830s to describe movements which had basically similar goals: the attainment of economic equality and the elimination of private poverty. The first use of the word socialist was in the Owenite Cooperative Magazine, of November, 1827, where it designated those adhering to Robert Owen's doctrines.² Owen believed that industrial wealth should not be owned individually, but in common. In France, the term socialisme, made its first known appearance in print on February 13, 1832, in the Saint-Simonian periodical Le Globe, then edited by Pierre Leroux. The word was freely employed by Leroux and Réynaud in their Nouvelle Encyclopédie, and meant a number of groups aiming at some new sort of social order.

The first use of the term communism is difficult to track down. What is known is that the word appeared in France during the social ferment that followed the French Revolution of 1830.³ Except for its use by the radical journalist Restif de la Bretonne in the 1790s, communism is first heard in connection with the secret revolutionary societies in Paris in the 1830s, and did not become widely known until the 1840s, mainly in connection with the theories of Etienne Cabet. The only indication of any possible occurrence of

the term between Restif in the 1790s and 1840 is an undocumented attribution to Lamennais in Dauzat, Nouveau Dictionnaire.⁴ From the beginning, communism as used by the French seemed to carry with it a double meaning. It could be linked with the idea of the commune as the basic unit of social organization and self-government but there was also the notion of communauté, of having things in common, of common ownership.⁵ The communism which emerged during the 1830s derived its special character from the French revolutionary tradition as applied to the particular problems which developed as the effects of the Industrial Revolution began to be felt in France.

Despite the similarities between socialism and communism at this time, there were sufficient differences to warrant the use of two separate terms. Communism was usually applied to a system which followed the precept: "From each according to his ability; to each according to his need." Socialism, on the other hand, tended to be less extreme, in that it allowed for differences in recompense depending on the individual's contribution: "From each according to his ability; to each according to his labour." From the beginning, the socialist thus seems to have been a more moderate and practical type of person, whereas the communist was less prone to compromise. This was partly responsible for the second difference: early communists became associated with a greater willingness to use violence to achieve their goals, whereas socialists tended to settle for a more peaceful route. Communists were more impatient and less sanguine about the likelihood of getting what they wanted without a

struggle. They realized that for genuine equality to work, a new, less selfish human being was required, one who would have to be created by re-education during the period of temporary dictatorship, which would follow the revolution. As Oscar Hammen puts it:

"Communism was more closely associated with violent uprisings; socialism with various systems designed to cure social ills. Thus, communism was revolutionary, and socialism, evolutionary."⁶

The important differences in the connotations of the two words were recognized by Marx and Engels when they and their compatriots in the League of the Just changed its name to the Communist League and adopted the term for their Manifesto. Engels, in his preface to the 1888 English language edition, explains the reason for their decision to use the term communist as opposed to socialist in the title of this work:

Yet, when it was written we could not have called it a Socialist Manifesto. By Socialists, in 1847, were understood on the one hand, the adherents of the various utopian systems: Owenites in England, Fourierists in France, both of them already reduced to the position of mere sects, and gradually dying out; on the other hand, the most multifarious social quacks, who, by all manners of tinkering, professed to readers without any danger to capital and profit, all sorts of grievances, in both cases men outside the working class movement, and looking rather to the "educated" classes for support. Whatever portion of the working class had become convinced of the insufficiency of mere political revolutions, and had proclaimed the necessity of total social change, that portion then called itself communist. It was a crude, rough-hewn, purely instinctive sort of communism. Still, it touched the cardinal point and was powerful enough amongst the working class to produce the Utopian communism in France of Cabet, and in Germany, of Weitling. Thus socialism was, in 1847, a middle class movement, communism a working class movement. Socialism was, on the Continent at least, "respectable";

communism was the very opposite. And as our notion, from the very beginning; was that "the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself," there could be no doubt as to which of the two names we must take. Moreover, we have, ever since, been far from repudiating it.⁷

The socialists, usually referred to as utopians, devoted their energies to working out in great detail what the new society would be like, without worrying too much about how their dreams were actually to be realized. The Saint-Simonians and Fourierists in France, and the Owenites in England were the three major groups dubbed socialist during this period. All were critical of individualism, of the competitive system and laissez-faire, which had been given moral justification by Adam Smith and the Physiocrats, and of the "natural" economic law which would work out for the general good if only the politicians would keep their hands out of the regulation of economic affairs. However, their energy was channeled into creating communities such as Fourier's phalanstères, which were to be set up on a voluntary basis and on a small scale. Fourier furnished the main theme of socialist literature during the July Monarchy period, that of "the sentimental indictment of bourgeois heartlessness when confronted with the sufferings of the poor and the oppressed."⁸ In this respect, Fourier was the founder of a tradition which increasingly made socialism synonymous with humanitarian sentiment. Because the topic of this thesis is the communist movements of the first half of the nineteenth century, socialism or those thinkers usually referred to as Utopian Socialists will not be dealt with.

After the failure of the Revolutions of 1848, the word

socialism which, as Engels noted, had a more respectable tone, was used for working class movements emphasizing a democratic evolutionary approach. The social democratic parties in the late nineteenth century had to work within the capitalist system because there was no alternative in the non-revolutionary atmosphere of the time. Only the Paris Commune offered a brief ray of hope for those who wanted something more dramatic, but it served mainly to provide a heroic legend which later communists could utilize. The word communism only returned to active service with the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Lenin's disgust at the voting of war credits in 1914 by the nominally Marxist Social Democrats led him to choose a new name for his party to dissociate it from its socialist predecessors. In the April Theses, or The Task of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution, he suggested that the name of his party be changed from Social Democratic to Communist: "to distinguish it from those who have betrayed socialism and deserted to the bourgeoisie."⁹ It is interesting to note; however, that the state he created is known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Officially, the U.S.S.R. remains in the stage of socialism and is still on the road to communism.¹⁰ Only when sufficient abundance is created will it be possible to fulfill the communist promise of "to each according to his needs."

One final problem in dealing with the subject of communism is that the idea existed long before the modern word was coined. As we have noted, the more general meaning goes back at least to Plato. The second, more specialized connotation arose during the course of the

French Revolution and although the term was not employed by those involved, it is generally applied by later writers to the ideas of those whom we shall be discussing in this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE IDEA OF EQUALITY

The name of Jean Jacques Rousseau is often associated with the broad principles of the French Revolution of 1789, particularly with the ideas of liberty, equality and the sovereignty of the people. For example, Louis Blanc in his history of the French Revolution, regarded Rousseau as having inspired the idea of equality. He distinguished between two separate phases of the revolution. The first phase was the revolt of the bourgeoisie against the aristocracy, for which he believed Voltaire to be largely responsible. The second was the revolt of the people against the bourgeoisie which he regarded as having originated with the work of Rousseau. According to Blanc, the Second Discourse was the most important of all Rousseau's works, as it contained an attack on private property.¹¹

Rousseau believed that men were good by nature, and that there had once been a primitive age when a moral code based on uncorrupted human nature operated. This was the pre-civil society, which itself consisted of two stages: an uncorrupt and a corrupt stage. During the uncorrupt period, there was no private ownership of land; man was in effect free, a noble savage who roamed the earth at will and shared in its fruits. For Rousseau, this uncorrupt stage ended when private property was introduced. This led to the institution of the state which marked the beginning of civil society. Rousseau, however, did

not preach a community of goods. He believed that each man should be maintained in the peaceful possession of what belonged to him. However, he did attack the man who had more land than he could cultivate, and who sought privilege through the accumulation of wealth. He asks:

Are not the advantages of society for the rich and the powerful? Do they not hold all the lucrative positions? Are not the favours and exemptions reserved for them alone? Is not the public authority always on their side?¹²

In the reference to the rights of the rich, it is not difficult to discover the kind of rhetoric which could be viewed as encouraging open class hatred. Rousseau saw the rich and the poor as separate groups. The rich man was not merely showing an excessive zeal for his own security, but he was deliberately and consciously forcing the poor man under and taking delight in watching him suffer. Evidence for this point may be found in The Origins of Inequality:

If one sees a handful of the rich and powerful at the height of grandeur and fortune while the crowd grovels in misery and obscurity, this is because the former value things they possess only to the extent that others are deprived of them, and that without changing their condition they would cease to be happy if the common people ceased to be miserable.¹³

Rousseau's association with the French Revolution began with the victory of liberty and equality symbolized by the fall of the Bastille on July 14, 1789. In 1790, a bust of Rousseau was sculpted in stone with the words liberté, égalité and fraternité inscribed at its base, and on subsequent celebrations of the fourteenth of July,

his bust was carried in procession around the ruins of the fortress.

This influence was due more to the cult which arose after his death than to his political writings. It owed its existence not only to the appeal of the Nouvelle Héloïse and Emile, but even more to a legend which developed around him.¹⁴ In this legend, he is seen as a captivating genius, a man of charm and gentleness, whose sufferings had not prevented him from stating sublime truths learned in solitary communion with nature. Rousseau became for his admirers the prototype of the natural and virtuous man who suffered at the hands of tyranny, pride and privilege, but who courageously fought back with the weapon of truth. The revolutionaries, who regarded Rousseau as their forerunner, appropriated this vision of him. Rousseau had insisted that while men were virtuous, society was immoral and corrupt. The revolutionaries accepted his view that the regeneration of the individual would have to be brought about by the regeneration of society.

These ideas were embodied in Maximilien Robespierre who dominated the Committee of Public Safety during the Great Terror. He was born at Arras on May 6, 1758. His father practised the family profession of law, and his mother was the daughter of a brewer. He received his early education in the College of Arras, and made a good enough impression to be sent to the Collège-Louis-Le Grand at Paris in 1766. There he excelled in the study of the classics, which left a lasting imprint on his thought. Brutus was to him a republican hero and the ancient Greeks furnished the best example of how courage and

genius could unite to produce a free people. In 1781 he returned to his native city to practice law and the following year was appointed to a criminal judgeship, which he resigned when faced with having to pronounce a death sentence--an irony that never fails to strike those familiar with his later career.

He then turned to literature and earned a reputation as one of the best writers of Arras. In December 1783, he was elected a member of the Academy of Arras, the meetings of which he attended regularly; and, like all other young Frenchmen with literary proclivities, he began to compete for the prizes offered by various provincial academies. Robespierre entered Discourse sur les peines infamantes based on his inaugural address to the Arras Academy for a prize offered by the Royal Society of the Arts and Sciences of Metz. This work, which won second prize, is important as it contains the ideas which became the basis of his republican creed ten years later. He wrote:

The mainspring of energy in a republic, as has been proved by the author of L'Esprit des Lois is vertu, that is to say, political virtue, which is simply the love of one's laws and of one's country; and it follows from the very nature of these that all private interests and all personal relationships must give way to the general good. Every citizen has a share in the sovereign power and therefore cannot acquit his dearest friend, if the safety of the state requires his punishment. A man of high principle will be ready to sacrifice to the state of his wealth, his life, his very self (nature)--everything, indeed, except his honour.¹⁵

Robespierre was elected fifth in a list of eight representatives of the Third Estate of Artois and went to Versailles in May of 1789. He soon gained the reputation of a competent deputy,

distinguished by his humanity. In the words of J. M. Thompson, "no one in the Assembly was so consistently the spokesman of liberty and equality, no one so continuously the champion of popular rights, no one so definitely in opposition to the bourgeois monopoly of power."¹⁶

At first the dynamic purpose of the Revolution was, for Robespierre, the unimpeded advance toward complete realization of the democratic ideal. Like Rousseau, when speaking of man's dignity and freedom, Robespierre meant equality. Rousseau had said that human dignity and rights are degraded when one man has to acknowledge another man as his superior. According to Robespierre, throughout the ages the government has been employed for the exploitation and subjugation of the many by the few. As he put it:

The aim of the Revolution is the peaceful enjoyment of liberty and equality; the reign of that eternal justice of which the laws are engraved not on marble or on stone, but in the heart of all men, even in that of a slave who forgets them or a tyrant who denies them. We want an order of things where all base and cruel passions would be chained, all the benevolent and generous passions awakened by the laws, where one's ambition would be to merit glory and to serve his country; where all souls grow greater through the continuous interchange of republican sentiments, and by the need to merit the esteem of a great people; where the arts would be the ornament of that liberty which enobles them.¹⁷

It was Robespierre who for the first time tried to establish real equality by his actions and by the use of state power.¹⁸ His proposal was designed to limit individual acquisition of wealth rather than to collectivize it. This would be achieved by a system of progressive taxation. In the tradition of Rousseau, he placed property among those rights generated by society, rather than among the

inviolable natural rights. A declaration consecrating all established property as natural would be a declaration in favour of speculators and the rich and not the people. The right to own property was a privilege and must be restricted by the claim and needs of others. Any possession which violated the security and liberty of others was immoral. The Robespierrist point of departure was not class consciousness, but the idea of social harmony based on an egalitarian conception of man. His goal was not the triumph of one class and the subjection of another, but a situation in which class distinctions would no longer matter.

These ideas of Robespierre's were characteristic of the Jacobins in general. The latter originally consisted of a group of middle class reformers who joined together in 1789 to support and advance the revolution. Their clubs, known as the "Societies of the Friends of the Constitution," were organized to support the transition to a constitutional monarchy. Hoping to avoid violent upheavals, but also unnecessary concessions to the old regime, the Jacobins of 1789 believed discussion and education at the local level would easily make the new constitution acceptable.

After the overthrow of the monarchy in August of 1792, the clubs became an essential part of the revolutionary effort. They were no longer the Friends of the Constitution, as there now was none, but were now called the Friends of Liberty and Equality. The clubs became more congenial places for commoners, who had been attending meetings since the beginning, but had never held any important roles before

August 1792.

The atmosphere at the clubs came increasingly to reflect the presence of men who worked with their hands, who were of low social status, and who lacked formal education. These were the sansculottes--plebians or commoners, who were master craftsmen, journeymen, artisans, small shopkeepers, minor clerks and functionaries and common soldiers.¹⁹ This type of person joined in growing numbers those citizens of the middle class--lawyers, bureaucrats, teachers, merchants and landed proprietors, who were already installed in the clubs. In the months that followed, these petit bourgeois members began to take positions of leadership.

Thus they moved in the direction of greater egalitarianism. In this respect, the clubs completely outgrew their origins in the constitutional monarchy period. The Jacobins of 1789 had been elitists whose outlook was indelibly middle class in character. This changed throughout the period of the Terror and the Directory as the clubs brought diverse social groups together. In the words of Isser Woloch, "when middle class elitist preoccupations with liberty gave way after the monarchy's fall, it was possible for equality to become the main sustaining notion."²⁰

Jacobin egalitarianism was a moral outlook in which one's status ideally depended on civic virtue and social utility. The sacredness of work, of manual labour, was affirmed, thus elevating the sansculottes in general esteem, though not necessarily in material position. It offered them a chance to participate in civic life and a

measure of social worthiness. Jacobin egalitarians believed that extreme wealth produced evil consequences, that everyone was entitled to subsistence and that wholesome simplicity was a virtue to be cultivated. The major elements of Jacobin virtue were modesty, temperance and industry.

The basic requisites of Jacobin egalitarianism were a responsible popular government and social institutions that minimized the consequences of existing inequality. Their vision of equality lay not in the future, but within the Revolution itself; the Jacobins constructed arguments not against the historic condition of humanity, but against the corruption of the present. Their concern was not to eliminate inequalities of wealth or talent, but to prevent these advantages from creating excessive privilege. They constantly appealed to the public welfare as opposed to individual self-interest.

By 1793, the propagandistic and educational organizations that had begun in 1789, had evolved into socially heterogeneous political action groups. Finally in the year II (1793-94), the Jacobin clubs became the arms of a triumphant Montagnard government. The revolutionary government, whose centre was the Committee of Public Safety, attempted to coordinate everything and suppress that which it could not control. Its leaders, especially Robespierre and Saint Just, were authorized to establish a single centre for shaping public opinion and a single source of administrative control. In order to maintain this power, all the classic elements of liberty, (elections, freedom of expression, checks and balances, local autonomy) were laid

aside and the policy of the Terror was introduced.

During the Terror, there emerged in Paris, a group of left wing extremists, called the enragés. They were the leaders of the sansculottes, "a specific Parisian group with particular aspirations they wished to advance by bringing pressure to bear upon the Convention."²¹ Although critical of the economic measures of the Montagnard government, the enragés and their successors, the Hébertistes, did not advocate what we would call modern communism. Their personnel, like the sansculottes were middle class men of varying degrees of wealth consisting in the main of artisans, master craftsmen, petty traders, small shopkeepers and manufacturers.²² They did not recommend the abolition of private property, but a levelling of wealth in society. What these groups disliked were extremes in wealth. They were especially critical of speculators and food hoarders. The main difference between the enragés and their followers, and the Jacobin government was one of degree. Robespierre and his colleagues were not in favour of any restrictions on economic freedom; however, the enragés argued for such measures. Although more radical, even the enragés did not call for a social revolution which would alter the structure of capitalist society. They might advocate the massacre of the well-to-do and the seizure of their property for the benefit of the poor, "but such ideas were nothing new among radical democrats during the period, and if put into practice, would only have meant a mere generalization of poverty."²³

What these groups did was pressure the government into

granting a number of economic concessions. Beginning in April 1793, money speculation became a serious crime which was punishable by six years in irons; in July, food hoarding was declared a capital offence. The law of the maximum was the next favour granted by the Convention. It was designed to deal with inflation and food shortages. On May 3, 1793, when threatened with a riot, the government was forced to set a maximum price for grain. Then, on September 29, the law was expanded. Price and wage controls were introduced, and scarce items were rationed. When these measures did not completely satisfy the extremists, the "Laws of the Ventôse," were passed early in 1794. These laws authorized the seizure of properties of the émigrés and other enemies of the revolution, and recommended that they be distributed among landless Frenchmen.

All of these measures were those of a government meeting a life and death crisis, and not of a government seeking to transform society. They were of a temporary nature, designed to satisfy the demands of the sansculottes and to feeding the starving people in the streets of Paris. The proposed redistribution of property of the laws of the Ventôse was never enforced. Robespierre and his colleagues never intended to abolish private property, which remained sacred in their eyes. Like Rousseau, they were not prepared to take the final step towards economic equality. Their words tended to be more radical than their intentions. They talked as though they were in favour of genuine equality, but they were not prepared to go all the way. Their true colours are illustrated by the fact that the Committee in the end

guillotined the enragé leaders as well as Hébert.

Thus the promise of equality held out by Rousseau and pursued with much rhetoric by the leaders of the French Revolution, was destined to fall short of the great expectations it had aroused in the hearts and minds of the ordinary French people. Only when the sufferings of the Parisian sansculottes had become acute enough to pose a threat to political stability were they granted some relief in the form of price controls. The Committee of Public Safety yielded under pressure, not out of principle. Even then it went too far for many, and when Robespierre and St. Just were swept away by Thermidorian Reaction, men took over who had even less concern for the welfare of the masses. With the consolidation of their power by the Constitution of 1795 which established the Directory, the bright hopes of the past faded rapidly. As the lower classes, suffering from hunger and cold, watched the antics of the "gilded youth" and the vulgar ostentation of the successful speculators, they must have wondered for what purpose they had just participated in history's greatest revolution. Equality was a fine slogan but what meaning did it have for those who continued to live in misery.

CHAPTER TWO

BABEUF AND THE CONSPIRACY OF EQUALS

The policies of the new government, the Directory, ran directly counter to those of the previous government. Legislation on maximum prices and the distribution of produce by the government were abandoned and inflation resumed its course. Added to this was the economic crisis of 1796, due to the poor harvest, which caused widespread suffering amongst the lower classes. At the same time, the nouveaux-riches thrived on hoarding and speculating in paper money.

By this time, the Jacobins had gone underground. The Constitution of 1795 forbade affiliations and correspondence between societies, prohibited the election of permanent officers and fixed conditions of admission and eligibility. It also banned collective petitions and closed meetings. This was the environment out of which Gracchus Babeuf and his Conspiracy of Equals emerged. They took the Jacobin ideas on political equality to their logical conclusion by advocating a community based on economic equality and the abolition of private property. Their attempt to achieve this goal was the first active manifestation of what we might call modern communism.

Although Babeuf took his philosophy in the main from Rousseau and the utopianists of the Enlightenment, he drew also from the works of three relatively unknown but significant figures of the early years of the Revolution, Nicholas de Bonneville, Louis Sebastien Mercier and

Restif de la Bretonne. Nicholas de Bonneville was a radical whose journal, Le Tribun du Peuple, published from May to July of 1789, directed attention beyond the revolution currently taking place to the future revolution, one which would usher in equality.

Bonneville combined his writing with his work in a revolutionary group he formed called the Social Circle. This organization combined the Masonic idea of a purified inner circle with the Rousseauian ideal of a social contract. His group was a self-proclaimed intellectual elite. Bonneville also organized a "Universal Confederation of Friends of the Truth," which attracted an estimated six thousand members to the opening session in October 1790.²⁴ The Confederation, which was international in character, was designed to be a servant of the Social Circle. It represented one of the first efforts of a small circle of intellectuals systematically organized to propagate radical social ideas to a mass audience. The Confederation advocated a grande communion sociale, that would provide social benefits, universal progressive taxation and the extension of civic equality to women and blacks. Bonneville's short-lived group can be considered a precursor of the modern revolutionary organization.

The Social Circle continued for some time, but life became increasingly difficult for organizations of this type. The murder of Jean Paul Marat intensified the government's fear of foreign subversion and the concern that the cafés of the Palais-Royal, the great royal enclosure in central Paris where Bonneville's circle was centered, was a breeding ground for this type of activity. Moreover, by 1792, France

was engaged in a foreign war and the cosmopolitan nature of Bonneville's group could no longer be tolerated.

The link between Bonneville and Babeuf ran through Jean François Varlet, the leading opponent on the left of Robespierre's dictatorship. In his pamphlets, Varlet advocated permanent insurrection as the logical means of supporting direct democracy. He later joined Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equals and with Sylvain Maréchal, author of the group's Manifeste des Egaux, he continued to publish with Bonneville's press. Babeuf, in fact, appropriated the title of Bonneville's journal Tribun du Peuple for his own, six years later.

Another neglected writer worth mentioning is Louis Sébastien Mercier, a friend of Bonneville's. He wrote a remarkable utopian work, The Year 2440 (1768-81), which predicted the destruction of the Bastille and a republican form of government for France. The republic which he wrote about would be based on equality. Babeuf was influenced by this book which he read between 1790-1791.²⁵

The word "communism" had been introduced by Mercier's friend and fellow journalistic chronicler, Restif de la Bretonne, in his novel of 1769, Le Pied de Fanchette, ou L'Orphéline Française. In February of 1793, Restif used the term communism for the first time to describe the fundamental change in ownership that would remove the need for any further redistribution of goods and property.²⁶ His detailed expositions of communism and his regular use of the word began in 1794 with a "Regulation . . . for the Establishment of a

general community of the Human Race," in his Monsieur Nicholas: The Human Heart Unveiled (1794-1797). In this work, Restif insisted that the absolute elimination of private property would end human need, but not individual initiative. In a communist society, all citizens would accept the obligation to work, and declare publicly their annual production goals at the beginning of each year. Neither possessions nor professions could be passed on from one generation to another. Communism would be the best form of government and would give birth to a new political system. Only a communist order could end seduction by money, corruption and vice. Restif proposed regulations for communal ownership, communal eating and even a new type of exchange, monnaie communismale, which was intended to replace money.²⁷

Restif's three volume Philosophie de Monsieur Nicholas of 1796, called for a communauté universelle, and spoke about communists as though they were active in the real world. The possibility of links between Restif's verbal communism and Babeuf's active conspiracy have never been seriously considered; however, there is evidence of some connection between the two. Babeuf, for example, repeatedly used the word communauté and inventions like communautistes in the revolutionary manner of Restif, and Restif concluded Monsieur Nicholas with a reference to Babeuf followed by three dots.²⁸

François Noel Babeuf was born in Saint Quentin, Picardy, of poor parents on November 23, 1760. He learned the basics of Latin, German and mathematics from his father, who had at one time been an officer in the Austrian army, but later was forced to make his living

as a village labourer. During his formative years, Babeuf heard the complaints of the poor and land-hungry peasants of his native Picardy against the feudal exploitation and the encroachment of the big landowners on the common lands. The hardships endured by Babeuf in his youth help to explain his attitude towards the more privileged in society.

Family poverty forced Babeuf to seek employment at the age of fourteen with a feudiste, whose business was to search into the archives of landowners to supply evidence for the increase of dues to be paid by the already heavily burdened peasants. As a servant of the declining feudal system, Babeuf witnessed at first hand the reality of the social inequality of an irrational economic system. As he later put it: "such was the situation, in which I laid bare amid the dusty archives, the repulsive secrets of the nobility, and the story of its usurpation of the land of France."²⁹

While working as a feudiste, he began to read what was popular in the reform literature of his day. Most of the philosophes of the eighteenth century found the worst inequalities of their time unacceptable. Much of the literature contained a genuine concern for the impoverished and a considerable disgust with the rich. However, despite their egalitarian rhetoric, most of these writers, such as Voltaire, for example, never seriously questioned the institution of private property.

There were only two who went so far as to reject private property, the Abbé Bonnet de Mably (1709-85), and Morelly, an obscure

tutor from the town of Vitry-le François whose first name, and exact dates are unknown. Mably believed in the equality of all men, and he considered private property to be the root of all evil. In his Entretiens de Phocian sur les rapports de la morale avec la politique (1763) he wrote:

Nature says to us in a hundred different ways: you are all my children. I love you all equally; the whole earth is the patrimony of each of you; you were equal when you left my hands.³⁰

He thus rejected private property and affirmed that the whole purpose of society could only be realized by a public organization and direction of the economy. He, like Babeuf, considered the merchant to be both the directing and the corrupting force in the economy. Mably's conclusion, however, was extremely pessimistic since he thought that no human force could establish equality.

Morelly's ideas were similar to those of Mably, except that Morelly went a step further by laying down the instructions for a communist society. He thus became a stronger influence on Babeuf. Most authorities on the eighteenth century agree that Morelly was the only consistent communist thinker of the period. He believed that there was no remedy short of the complete abolition of private property. Morelly's Code de la Nature (1755), which was attributed to Diderot in Babeuf's day outlined the future economy of a communist society. The system of production and distribution would be based on public storehouse to which would be brought all produce, and from here it would be distributed according to need. There would be no leisure

class; everyone would work until they reached the age of forty and the state would look after them in their old age. Morelly's influence on Babeuf's economic plans for the new society is unmistakable.

These writers in their turn were influenced by other thinkers going back to antiquity. Mably's work was based on his reading of Plato's Republic. Other sources of inspiration included the communism of the early Church, the Peasant's uprising of 1381, communistic elements in the monastic orders of the Middle Ages and Thomas More's Utopia.³¹

While working as a feudiste, Babeuf corresponded with Dubois de Fosseaux, secretary of the Arras Academy. Babeuf's letters reveal his communist ideas well before the revolution.³² As early as 1786, he had wondered whether it would be possible to sweep away the existing order and to establish a society in which complete economic, social and political equality would exist. At least two years before the revolution had begun, he concluded that such an objective was attainable.

With the outbreak of the revolution, Babeuf became unemployed, as feudistes were no longer needed. He thus began his career as a defender of the oppressed. In 1789, he drew up the first article of the cahier of the electors of Roye, demanding the abolition of feudal rights. From July to September of that year, he was in Paris overseeing the publication of his first work, the Cadastre perpétuel. The Cadastre perpétuel, or land registry, was published as a practical guide to local authorities charged with the administration of taxes on

land and personal revenues. It was written in response to a new land tax being proposed in 1787 by the royal comptroller-general, Calonne. It was in essence a political tract rather than a bureaucratic manual on taxes. Babeuf suggested ways in which the replacement of existing duties by a single and equal impost might be justified, and how money could be redistributed for the benefit of everyone. He recommended that the state finance certain essential services from general taxation such as baptisms, burials, medical aid, poor relief and free education.

During the early years of the revolution a more radical solution, the agrarian law, preoccupied him. He regarded the legal structure as an instrument used to perpetuate the domination of the landowning class and to protect a cruel and inequitable system of private ownership. An agrarian law provided for the redistribution of lands. He first proposed that the nationalized church lands should be leased to propertyless peasants. Then he suggested that the feudal domains be taken by the state and disposed of in the same manner. Since 1790, the concept of agrarian law had been the subject of general and heated discussion among the revolutionaries. Formally the notion derived from the familiarity of most educated Frenchmen with the history of the Roman Republic, and in particular, with the attempts of Tiberius and Caius Gracchus to carry out some measure of land redistribution by the lex agraria. It had been a matter of popular controversy since the Abbé Claude Fauchet, a member of Bonneville's circle, was accused of advocating a version of it in a series of

lectures delivered at the Social Circle of the Palais Royal in Paris between October and December of 1790.³³ These lectures had been given under the auspices of the "Universal Confederation of the Friends of the Truth."

The measures advocated by Fauchet were quite moderate: a progressive tax, wastelands to be put under cultivation, marriage and inheritance laws to prevent the formation of future estates worth more than 50,000 livres annually, and the equal division of inheritances.³⁴ Despite this, he was vigorously denounced in the Jacobin club and in the press for preaching the agrarian law, and it is significant that the controversy was at its peak when Babeuf visited Paris in December of 1790. It is even more significant that Babeuf should have chosen to sign a copy of a petition drafted immediately on his return to Roye as "Babeuf, de la Société de la Confédération des Amis de la Vérité."³⁵ As R. B. Rose states, "it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Babeuf's interest in the agrarian law was aroused by his familiarity with Fauchet's ideas."³⁶

In 1790 Babeuf's agitation among the cabarétiers, the wine shopkeepers, urging them to resist their taxation, led to an order for his arrest but apparently no action was taken. In March 1791, he was appointed commissioner to the report on the national property in the town of Roye and in September 1792, he was elected a member of the Council-general of the Somme. Here, as everywhere, the violence of his attitude made his position difficult and he was soon transferred to the post of administrator of the district of Montdidier, there he

was accused of fraud for having substituted one name for another in the deed of transfer of national lands. It is quite possible that he did this out of negligence, but distrusting the impartiality of the judges of the Somme, he fled to Paris. This was not a final solution since the prosecution was not dropped and resulted in his being imprisoned several times. However, Babeuf managed to find a post on the Commune's Food Administration from May to August 1793. His position was that of secretary to the two administrators, and his duties were mainly of a clerical nature. The administration sent all kinds of instructions to local authorities in the provinces who might impede the shipment of grain to Paris. Their goal was to keep staples such as wheat and rye arriving to the capital so that the people would have food to eat. Babeuf left this job for a better one in October with the new National Commission of Subsistences. This Commission had been set up by the Jacobin government in the fall of 1793 to deal with the heavy demands of both the army and the home front during a period of inflation, civil war and economic crisis. The Commissions' officers had many duties: the task of putting the laws of the maximum into practice, the requisition of supplies for the army, and the distribution of available supplies between departments. On November 7, Babeuf obtained an appointment as secretary of this Commission, at a salary of four thousand livres.³⁷ However, the job only lasted one week as he was sent to the prison of the Mairie. The experience of working with the Commune's Food Administration afforded Babeuf the opportunity of witnessing at first hand various schemes which attempted

to redistribute wealth. It no doubt influenced his later thinking when he was planning his economy for the new social order.

Babeuf was soon released from prison and he was next found in Paris, September 3, 1794, publishing the first number of his Journal de la liberté de la presse, the title of which was altered on October 5 to Le Tribun du peuple. It was also at this time that he adopted the name Gracchus as a symbol of his quest for real economic equality.³⁸ Babeuf's Tribun du peuple was an organ of strategy, not just an outlet for rhetoric. Its criticisms of other revolutionary journals and its attempts to define a coherent line make it a distinct ancestor of Lenin's Iskra and Pravda; and its schemes defined a social as well as a moral mission. At the end of each issue stood the italicized slogan: "The aim of society is the happiness of the community."³⁹

The execution of Robespierre on July 28, 1794, ended the Terror and Babeuf attacked the fallen terrorists in his usual violent manner. But he also attacked, from the point of view of his own communist theories, the economic outcome of the Revolution. In Babeuf's eyes, Robespierre's policy of progressive taxation as an attempt to lessen the differences between classes did not go far enough. What Babeuf wanted was a society in which there would be no economic differences. This was an attitude which had few supporters even in the Jacobin clubs, and in October of 1794, he was arrested and sent to prison at Arras. Here he came under the influence of certain terrorist prisoners, notably of Lebois, editor of the Journal de l'égalité, and afterwards of the Ami du peuple, papers which carried

on the tradition of Marat. Babeuf emerged from prison convinced that revolution was the only means by which he could establish his community of equals.

Babeuism was a product of the despair caused by the Thermidorian reaction. As long as the revolution seemed to be moving forward, it had been possible for Babeuf to believe in gradual progress towards the egalitarian society. But following the fall of Robespierre, this trend was reversed. Immediately after the execution of Robespierre, Babeuf had believed that the disintegration of the Committee of Public Safety would at last permit the people to come into its own. He had hoped that the Thermidorians would put an end to emergency rule and let the democratic constitution of 1793 come into force. But Babeuf soon realized that the Thermidorians had no use for democracy. They constructed, as he put it, "a framework completely different from that of Robespierre, but equally injurious to the sansculottes."⁴⁰ He thus turned his polemic against the Thermidorians, and ceased to attack Robespierre. The latter could easily be seen as a tactical move on the part of Babeuf. Realizing that the only way he could find support among ex-Jacobins, Babeuf decided to praise Robespierre and to condemn the Hébertistes. He stated:

Robespierre was right to liquidate these ridiculous if well intentioned rivals. The welfare of twenty-five million men ought not to be balanced against the accommodation of a few equivocal individuals.⁴¹

Babeuf had, up to this time, been opposed to emergency dictatorship, demanding the immediate recognition of the rights of the

people. But a number of factors made him change his mind, the most important of which was the defeat of the Germinal and Prairial uprisings in 1795. Both of these spontaneous revolts were caused by hunger. Street riots, meetings in workshops and unofficial section assemblies all fused together in a mass movement. Both in the Germinal and in Prairial the insurgent masses were able to break into the Convention.

In the Germinal uprising, so called because it took place on 12 Germinal (April 1), the session of the Convention was interrupted by a crowd which entered the Chamber with cries of "Bread, Bread!" The demonstrators finally allowed themselves to be persuaded to leave the Chamber. The movement had no leaders worthy of mention and the participants were unarmed.

In the Prairial (May 20), the force of armed rebels from the faubourgs and from the centre of Paris was briefly strong enough to overcome the Convention and to compel the deputies to vote consent to their demands: the release of Jacobin and militant prisoners, steps to implement the Constitution of 1793, and an improvement in the food supplies. However, the rebellion proved to be unsuccessful. It lacked an organized central leadership and a common agreed program. Thus, once the Thermidorians recovered their courage, they were able to restore order and to hunt down the militants without difficulty, turning a momentary triumph into permanent catastrophe for the sansculotte movement.

Other reasons which helped alter Babeuf's view of an emergency

dictatorship were the repression which followed these uprisings and the adoption of the new bourgeois constitution. At this point, he came to the conclusion that dictatorship was an indispensable necessity. To be successful, insurrections of the future would have to be carefully planned and responsibly led by an organizing cadre of professionals.

While in prison, Babeuf acquired a solid reputation among Jacobins. In the Thermidorian jails, a group of admirers promoted his ideas among revolutionaries in and outside of prison. When Babeuf prepared to resume publication of his paper, Tribun du peuple after his release, he could appeal to the good will that existed towards him amongst the Jacobins.

René Vatar's Journal des hommes libres provided valuable publicity for Babeuf. This was the official organ of the Jacobins. Vatar was a bookseller and publisher from a family of that profession who had moved to Paris from Rennes in 1791, and in 1793 he was appointed by Robespierre as a printer for the Committee of Public Safety. Although barely surviving the Thermidorian purge, he managed to keep his newspaper alive; it became a beacon for persecuted Jacobins in Paris and the provinces.

Babeuf, like the other prisoners, was released after the attempted Royalist coup of 13 Vendémiaire (October 1795). By this amnesty, the government wished to repay the Left for its help in suppressing the Royalist insurrection. On November 5, 1795, Vatar published an announcement, submitted by one of Babeuf's group,

informing his readers that Babeuf was ready to resume his activities. The Hommes libres urged patriots to support Babeuf, and to facilitate this assistance, it reprinted complete information on how to secure a subscription to the Tribun. Direct evidence proves that subscribers reached Babeuf specifically through this channel. For example, the Cherbourg Jacobin Fossard, standing trial with the Babeuvists at Vendôme testified as follows on his original contact with Babeuf:

Sometime after the 13th of Vendemiaire, I saw the announcement of the Tribun du Peuple in the Journal des Hommes Libres. Our curiosity was piqued; we each sacrificed one hundred sous. Four or five among us resolved to write to this Tribun du peuple and order his newspaper.⁴²

Vatar's print shop provided a meeting place for both Jacobins and Babeuvists, such as Felix Lepelletier and P. J. Antonelle. Antonelle, an ex-noble turned democrat, warned that the spirit of inequality threatened to undermine the republic: "A Distressing and excessive inequality keeps the real people--the entire mass, except for a small number--under the dependence of that small number, and under a veritable oppression."⁴³ His premise was that a people with France's revolutionary past could reverse this trend if it was aroused and organized, especially by joining together in clubs. The right of association was fundamental: for it was by this that citizens would enlighten themselves and exercise surveillance over officials. Antonelle considered the Jacobin clubs not only a political organization, but a unique institution for promoting social integration and combatting the spirit of oligarchy that was corrupting social

institutions.⁴⁴

Thus, while the Jacobins were advocating the revival of political clubs and universal public education, Babeuf was calling for an insurrection; while Babeuf firmly believed that collectivism was an attainable goal, the Jacobins still considered it to be a utopian ideal. For Babeuf, only in the community of equals could equality thrive; for the Jacobins equality could reign in a democratic republic. It must be kept in mind that equality did not mean economic equality to the Jacobins; rather, it was a moral and civic concept which denoted a spirit rather than a condition.⁴⁵ Even Vatar, who had urged his fellow Jacobins to support Babeuf hesitated after reading the first issue of the Tribun. Yet, the Jacobins did not completely turn against Babeuf. Few believed that he would actually carry out his insurrection; instead they considered him to be a publicist with provocative and uncompromising opinions and a selfless man with the purest of intentions. As a revolutionary leader, Babeuf was only taken seriously by his innermost group of supporters.

During the liberal period soon after the Vendémiaire events, not only did the Directory release political prisoners, but it also allowed the Society of the Pantheon, called the Réunion des amis de la République, to be formed and to become a rallying center for the Left.⁴⁶ The government hoped to control the society through its agents. The Society of the Pantheon met in the crypt of the Convent Sainte-Genève, where in the words of Buonarroti, "the dim paleness of the torch light, the hollow echoes of their voices and the

constrained positions of the persons, whether standing or seated on the ground, impressed on them the greatness and the perils of their enterprise, as well as the courage and prudence it required."⁴⁷ It ran its meetings without permanent officers, rules of procedure or minutes. The club had a membership of almost three thousand.⁴⁸ Babeuf, a leading member of this club tried to use it and others as fronts, while traditional democrats viewed the clubs as their major rallying place and hope for the future.

Eventually, however, the government decided that the club's discussions were getting out of hand and at the end of February 1796 sent General Bonaparte to close it down. Throughout Paris, other revolutionary clubs and public meetings were suspended as well.

Around the middle of March 1796, Charles Germain wrote to Babeuf urging him to assume leadership and unite the diverse elements in the movement. Germain was Babeuf's correspondent in La Providence and the most important of Babeuf's inner circle of confidants. They had met at Les Orties prison in 1795, where Germain had been sent after his arrest for quarrelling with an anti-Jacobin in the public galleries of the Convention. As a result of Germain's advice, Babeuf founded the comité insurrecteur, the secret inner committee which was to plan the future insurrection and attempted to weaken all rival committees. The comité insurrecteur consisted of six men, Babeuf, Darthé, Buonrotti, Maréchal, Delon and Lepelletier.

Auguste Alexandre Darthé was a law student in Paris when the revolution broke out. In 1789, he took part in the storming of the

Bastille. Then, he became a member of the Directory of his Department and was promoted to the office of public accuser before the Revolutionary Tribunal of Arras and Cambrai. After Thermidor, when he found himself out of work and in dire poverty, he joined Babeuf's group. Darthé remained Babeuf's strongest supporter and died with him.

Philippe Buonarroti who met Babeuf in the Plessis prison in 1795, had been active in the French Revolution, spreading its ideals to various parts of Italy. He was later responsible for the transmission of Babeuvist ideas to the next generation of revolutionaries. Buonarroti's book, Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality (1828), became the textbook of the revolutionaries of the 1830s.

Sylvain Maréchal was the major orator and professional demagogue of the party. He wrote popular songs supporting the movement and drafted the famous Manifeste des égaux. Maréchal is also significant in his own right as an early communist. Already in 1785, he had used the phrase "community of goods" to describe the egalitarian ideal.⁴⁹ Maréchal had been linked to Babeuf in the early part of the revolution. He had suggested to Babeuf that he take the job of typographer at Bonneville's press in 1793. This is where Maréchal was publishing a number of his own works, the most important of which was his neglected Corréctif à la revolution (1793). In this work, he warned, "that the revolution was not completed," and that there will be a new and more equal distribution of goods."⁵⁰ To this he added: "The French Revolution is but the precursor of another revolution, far

greater, far more solemn, which will be the last."⁵¹

All that is known about Debon was that he was a veteran of the Plessis prison who had established a relationship with Babeuf before Vendémiaire. Lepelletier, a member of a wealthy family of the nobility of the Robe, did much to finance the movement. The acknowledged head of the Secret Directory, as the Committee called themselves, was Babeuf. Clearly, it was a forerunner of those revolutionary groups of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to whom the elaboration of revolutionary doctrine was as important as the coup itself. Buonarroti described the Committee's goals as

1. To re-establish the Constitution of 1793, agreed by the people, as a fundamental law which frankly consecrates the exercise of its power--a prompt means of arriving at equality--a rallying point necessary to overthrow the existing authority, convicted of tyranny.
2. To prepare, in the distance, for the adoption of a veritable equality, by demonstrating it to the people as the only effectual means of drying up for ever all the sources of public calamity.⁵²

The Babeuvists were practical politicians who concerned themselves with the serious problem of replacing one order with another. They agreed that the new society could not be ushered in at once and that a transitional authority had to intervene between the insurrection and the ideal social system. Like Blanqui, their inheritor and successor, the Babeuvists contended that to hold elections immediately after the revolution would be dangerous. Elections would permit the rich and educated few to remain in power by continuing their influence over the exploited multitude. The people

needed an extraordinary instrument to restore it to a state where it could effectively exercise its sovereignty. They therefore decided that the existing government would be replaced "by a revolutionary and provisional power, constituted in such a way as to free the people from the natural enemies of equality and to endow it with the unity of will necessary for the adoption of republican institutions."⁵³

The phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat," was not coined until the middle of the nineteenth century,⁵⁴ but long before Blanqui and Marx gave it a modern stamp, the concept had already been developed to a remarkable degree by the members of the Secret Directory. Babeuf and the majority of its members preferred the dictatorship of a small group to that of one man. The Secret Directory would have itself declared the provisional government by the acclamation of the insurgent masses. To this central committee, the conspirators would add a national assembly, composed of one member from each department. Each of them would be nominated by the Secret Directory, and would be approved by a popular vote. The Secret Directory would continue to exercise the dictatorial functions as it guided the people towards perfect equality.

To Babeuf and his fellow conspirators, there was no contradiction between the idea of a party of the vanguard and the idea of the general will; they believed that the general will was not the spontaneously expressed will of individuals, but rather something that ought to be willed and that must be imposed if necessary. Babeuf claimed to have learned this from Robespierre, whom he quotes with

approval:

True lawgivers ought not to subordinate laws to the corrupt morality of the people for whom they are destined, but they ought to be able to restore the morality of the people by their laws; first to base these on virtue and then to know how to surmount every difficulty in order to impose them upon men.⁵⁵

While preparing the insurrection, the Committee was also discussing plans for the organization of the communist society. In the words of Buonarroti, "the Committee never ceased to occupy itself with the definite legislation of equality, and with the intermediary laws by which it was gradually attained."⁵⁶ Although most of the documents of this long-term programme have been lost, Buonarroti's book Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equality (1828) and Babeuf's letter written in prison to Charles Germain dated July 28, 1795, reveal many details of the new society.

The correspondence between Babeuf and Germain began when Babeuf sent Germain a copy of his agrarian law. In his reply, Germain looked to predecessors such as the Anabaptist experiments in communism during the sixteenth century (continued today by the Hutterites), the Essene traditions in Jewish history, and the "Sublime Nazarene legislator," Jesus Christ. Germain advocated a two stage revolution: first a forcible seizure and redistribution of land among individuals, and then the inclusion of these individual holdings in the common domain, with cultivation directed for the good of all. The ultimate aim was complete equality through the equal distribution of the goods of the soil.⁵⁷

Babeuf's response to this was an essay of five thousand words which systematically took up the points raised by Germain as a basis for deeper analysis. In his condemnation of commerce, Babeuf really summarized the theory of surplus value. He argued that commerce represented no more than a façade for the exploitation of the productive majority by the idle minority, thanks to the workings of a "very old plot . . . by the aid of which one is able to set a multitude of arms in motion, without those who move them receiving the intended fruits."⁵⁸ He continued by saying that all workers, from those who spun or made cloth, tanned leather or made boots, to those who made furniture, trade tools, etc., were all deprived of their most basic needs. Commerce discriminated against the original producer whose work was not rewarded as well as the less important task of the distributor.⁵⁹ Babeuf explained this injustice as the result of a conspiracy between the speculators and the merchants to keep the producer at their mercy. While the speculators used their monopoly of capital and their control of the allocation of work to force down wages and keep up the working hours, the merchants used all kinds of devices to force up prices. These included concealing stocks, spreading rumours of scarcity and sometimes even destroying goods, until only they and their speculator friends could afford them.

Babeuf also criticized the harmful effects of competition. In the existing unorganized world of industry, competition meant either the suppression of new inventions or a flood of new production driving down standards and forcing producers into bankruptcy. The competition

of manufactured items against each other also meant the swindling of the public by the marketing of shoddy goods dressed up for the customer and the waste of raw materials and labour which might be better used elsewhere. Competition was, finally, "a system in which only the richest would win out and the small man must go to the wall."⁶⁰

Babeuf was very specific in his discussion of the type of economic organization which would replace the prevailing commercial system. In the new society, there would be neither money nor individual trade. All would work for the common storehouse, to which they would bring the products of their labour. Then assigned agents would distribute to each citizen an equal portion of the total production in return for their contribution. Babeuf thought in terms of a central administration of the "great storehouse" and the "great workshop," and he specifically allowed for governmental industry as an acceptable contribution to the common good.

What he advocated was, in essence, a planned economy. The tasks of the government thus included the regulation of production in industry according to a rational calculation of present and future need. A fixed output would be assigned to each producer and the number of men allowed to work in each trade would be regulated. Through such planning, the evil effects of competition could be avoided.

While Germain objected to foreign trade, claiming that France was self-sufficient, Babeuf rejected Germain's idea of erecting an

"impassable barrier of steel between foreigners and the French people."⁶¹ Babeuf would allow the people of Europe free access across French borders, and a certain amount of trade would be permissible provided it represented only the free gift of France's surplus in return for whatever other nations might wish to give. Eventually, however, there would be no need for trade as France would become self-sufficient.

At the close of his letter, Babeuf considered the problem of idleness in a society of absolute equality. His solution to this was to declare that "he who does not work, neither shall he eat."⁶² Whoever failed to contribute to the national wealth would not share in the distribution. Willful idleness would be the only crime for which a penal code would be needed. Babeuf was depending on a general moral reformation of humanity following the introduction of the new order. He wrote:

In the regenerated society, there will be neither high nor low, neither first nor last; the efforts, like the intentions of all the associated--will constantly converge on the great fraternal goal, the common prosperity, the inexhaustible and perpetual mine of individual well being. Equity, loyalty, probity, sincerity--at all times and in all places. Everyone shall have his function, which he exercises conscientiously, and which shall cause him to live happily.⁶³

The égalité parfaite preached by Babeuf was an equality of status within a genuinely classless society.

Babeuf's letter of July 28, 1795, reveals that it is not just a question of criticizing the past, and proposing an ideal or abstract system. From this time onward, the practical and the ideal are

united, and the achievement of a communist society is regarded as an immediate and practical goal. Although as noted, both Mably and Morelly played a role in Babeuf's conversion to communism, probably even more important was the practice and promise of the Jacobin experiment in collectivist economy during the years 1793-94. The legacy of Babeuf's experience as secretary of the Paris Commune's Food Administration was a conviction of the practicability of a state system of grain collection and distribution. He referred to the success of the Commission des subsistances in organizing supplies for the 1,200,000 men in the republican army as evidence of the perfect practicability of a collectivist economy.⁶⁴

Babeuf also described the nature of his communism in his journal Tribun du peuple no. 35. In a section called the "Manifesto of the Plebians," he gave further details of the communist state. There would be a "common administration," private property would be abolished and every man would perform the work best suited to his talents. All produce would be kept in a common storehouse, and would be distributed equally. Babeuf paid tribute to Jesus Christ; and he cited precedents of this type of arrangement in Greek and Roman history. In the Manifesto, Babeuf indicated that he no longer advocated the agrarian law. As Rose puts it:

The 'agrarian law', now and henceforth, formed no part of his doctrine, and indeed there was little in the new program which was specifically relevant to the peasants or to the countryside. The revolution was to proceed by a single and uniform step to the universal abolition of private property and to the establishment of 'le bonheur commun' by the pooling of all resources.⁶⁵

In the same document Babeuf also dealt with the interesting problem posed by the especially energetic or talented man, who might produce far more than his fellows. "Such a man," said Babeuf, "must be repressed as a threat to social harmony and compelled to produce no more than the ordinary workers."⁶⁶

The means to this absolute or perfect equality was through the Babeuvist plot. It began in April of 1796 with the preparation of the Manifesto of the Equals drawn up by Maréchal. It was a call to action, an attempt to rescue the most appealing social ideals of the Revolution while there was still time. The key ideas contained in the Manifesto of the Equals are that equality is essential for the achievement of liberty and that it can be achieved by determined action immediately.

The Committee, however, decided it needed a more incisive statement of the doctrine of Babeuvism. This was the much less rhetorical Analyse de la doctrine de Babeuf. The main points in the doctrine are the following:

1. Nature has given every man an equal right to the enjoyment of all wealth.
2. The aim of society is to defend this equality, often attacked by the strong and the wicked in the state of nature, and to increase by the cooperation of all, the common enjoyment of all.
3. Nature has imposed on each man, the duty to work; no one can, without committing a crime, abstain.
4. Labour and enjoyment ought to be in common.
5. Oppression exists when one man exhausts himself working and

wants for everything, while another wallows in abundance without doing anything.

6. No one can, without committing a crime, appropriate to himself alone the wealth of the earth or of industry.
7. In a true society, there should be neither rich nor poor.
8. The aim of the revolution is to destroy inequality and to establish common happiness.⁶⁷

The two essential principles of action were the concentration of power and planning in the hands of a small central committee and the use of hand picked revolutionary agents to penetrate, propagandize and win over the army, the police and other branches of the machinery of the state. Twelve revolutionary agents supervised propaganda in each arrondissement. These were men of the lesser bourgeoisie and artisan class, former policemen, soldiers and small tradesmen. Propaganda was sent to many towns outside of Paris. The Secret Directory urged sympathizers in the provinces to come to Paris to assist in the revolution and for this purpose it created a special office with Bétrand, a former mayor of Lyons, at its head. But despite their best intentions, the Babeuvists were restricted in their provincial activities by poor resources and by the secrecy of their organization.

Babeuf considered terror to be a necessary tool of revolution. He proclaimed that, "in order to govern judiciously it is necessary to terrorize the evil disposed, the royalists, the papists and the starvers of the public."⁶⁸ On the Day of the Revolution, according to General Rossignol, "heads were to fall like hail and tripes and bowels

would be scattered about the pavement."⁶⁹ Darthé was especially bloodthirsty, and urged the people to be as cold-blooded as possible. He selected various people for execution: "the five Directors and the seven ministers; the general commanding the Army of the Interior and his headquarter staff; all foreigners in the streets, all bakers who refused to bake. They were to be strung up from the nearest lanterne), and all citizens who refused to surrender food supplies."⁷⁰

On May 8, 1796, a general meeting of the political Secret Committee was held to agree upon the final plans for the uprising. At the conclusion of this gathering, they planned to meet again in two days to set the exact time. In the meantime, final preparations were being made. Storehouses of ammunition were laid up and arrangements were being made for the seizure of government weapons.

In 1828, Buonarroti reproduced a tabulation on which the conspirators based their strategy. This listed seventeen thousand direct and immediate supporters, not including the numerous workers. The count consisted of 4,000 revolutionaries from Paris and 1,000 from the provinces; 1,000 canonniers of the sections; 1,500 Jacobin purged from administrative posts and 500 Jacobin ex-officers; 6,000 members of the police legion; and 3,000 men from other military units.⁷¹ This was no doubt greatly exaggerated. Regardless of the size of their support, the movement never got off the ground. From May 3, the Director Carnot had been receiving a series of letters signed by a certain "Armand," warning him of the existence of the conspiracy and offering to provide further details in person. Since "Armand" was

Georges Grisel, the conspiracy was doomed from this point on. Grisel, a career soldier of plebian origins, had been recruited by Darthé as a military agent on April 15. In his statements at the trial of the Babeuvists, Grisel claimed that he had never been a loyal member of the conspiracy, but from the beginning had only been involved to discover as much as possible about the plotters before revealing all to the police.

Thus, on May 10, 1796, the police seized the headquarters of the Conspiracy, while the leaders were at work on the post victory manifestos. Babeuf and his followers were arrested and were charged with plotting to overthrow the government and the Constitution of 1795, to cause civil war and to pillage private property. Many of those arrested were Jacobins who had little or no relation to the actual plot, but whose names had been found on lists. At the same time, the government also arrested a man named Drouet who had the reputation of being the most outspoken critic of the Directory. But he had nothing to do with the Babeuvist plot. The real reason for his arrest was that because he was a Deputy the trial would have to be held before a Special High Court, whose procedures and verdict were not subject to appeal.

The actual trial before the High Court of Vendôme lasted three months. At the time of his arrest, Babeuf had delivered a defiant statement admitting probably more than he was guilty of, and flaunting before the government his plan of insurrection to establish real equality. Eventually he gave up this stand to protect the lives of

the approximately sixty defendants. Instead of using the trial as a platform from which to proclaim his communist beliefs, Babeuf concealed his conspiratorial program and presented himself as a misguided idealist. Since the case for the defense was that the plot was a figment of the government's imagination it was thus possible for the others to avoid opposing Babeuf. While each man defended himself individually, they were able to present an impression of solidarity to the French nation. Darthé was the only man to keep silent and for this he lost his life.

In the end, Babeuf was convicted and executed for his opinions and his writings, rather than for anything he did. In a decree dated 27 Germinal (April 16, 1796), the Director had enacted that anyone publicly advocating the Constitutions of 1791 or 1793, would be subject to the death penalty. It was under this count alone that he was ultimately convicted.⁷² Babeuf and Darthé both attempted suicide right in the court room, which further dramatized the brutality of the sentence.

After the trial, Babeuf became a hero in the eyes of the Jacobins. The actuality of the plot almost completely disappeared for them. In its place arose an image of Babeuf as a democratic martyr rather than the founder of insurrectionary communism. Only with Buonarroti, a generation later would Babeuf be restored to his proper place.

An important question which must be considered by anyone who undertakes the study of Babeuf is "how communist was the communism of

Babeuf?"⁷³ Because of conflicting opinions on the matter, it is worthy of examination. Interpretations of this issue vary, depending on the political beliefs of the historian. Interestingly, both J. L. Talmon on the right, and M. Dommanget on the left agree in viewing Babeuf as a communist and Babeuvism as a precursor to the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. To them, Babeuvism is a "prefiguration of the Grand Soir of 1917."⁷⁴ Albert Mathiez, a committed Robespierriest, on the other hand, believes the only reason that Babeuf had a following was the unpopularity of the Directory. People supported Babeuf because they detested the Directory, not because they were interested in establishing a communist society.

R. B. Rose, author of a political biography of Babeuf, entitled, Gracchus Babeuf: The First Revolutionary Communist, despite the title of his book, sees Babeuf as a "democratic agitator, who strove to rally the scattered and demoralized democratic forces against the remnants of the revolutionary government and the steady political counteroffensive of the bourgeois conservatives."⁷⁵ Although Rose concedes that Babeuf outlined a communist society in 1795,⁷⁶ he adheres to his conviction that Babeuf was more a democrat than a precursor of Lenin.

Victor Daline, the Russian author of Gracchus Babeuf à la veille et pendant la grande Révolution Française 1785-94 (French edition, 1976), sees Babeuf as a communist concerned with the problem of class conflict in early capitalist society. Daline considers Babeuf to be a pragmatist rather than a utopian. For Daline, Babeuf's

communism started in 1787 when Babeuf described collective farms in which twenty to fifty people would live together. These were the precursors of Soviet agricultural practices. Daline, who views Babeuf as a proto-Leninist, had the advantage of reading unpublished Babeuvist manuscripts in the Marxist-Leninist Institute which are unavailable to westerners.

The author of this thesis tends to agree with the statement of Patrice R. L. Higonnet in the review article, "Babeuf: communist or proto-communist," that "He was indeed the first revolutionary communist."⁷⁷ Babeuf's program consisted of all the elements of modern communism. He intended to seize power by revolutionary means and then establish a dictatorship which was required in order to carry out his plans. As the French historian Georges Lefebvre states: "He arrived at a clear concept of that popular dictatorship of which Marat and the Hébertistes had spoken without defining it; through Buonarroti, he bequeathed it to Blanqui and then to Lenin, who turned it into reality."⁷⁸ The abolition of private property, which was central to Babeuf's communism, called for a temporary dictatorship which would have the purpose of eliminating the rich, the former holders of power. This dictatorship would be exercised in the name of the people and would end when the wealthy were no longer a threat, and when the people had been sufficiently educated in the ways of equality. Babeuf's goal was to create through revolution, a society in which all class differences would cease and one in which each would receive according to his need. This understanding of the concept of communism

was transmitted to the next generation of revolutionaries through Buonarroti.

CHAPTER THREE

BUONARROTI AND THE SECRET SOCIETIES

Babeuvism did not die with Babeuf. The tradition was carried on into the nineteenth century by Buonarroti, who was to be the first full time revolutionary, in the modern sense of having total dedication to the creation by force of a new secular order.

Filippo Michele Buonarroti, a descendant of Michelangelo, was born in Pisa on November 11, 1761. His mother was a Sienese noblewoman, while his father, Leonardo, was descended from a distinguished patrician Florentine family. Buonarroti received a typical upbringing for a boy of his background, attending a Jesuit school and serving as a page at the court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. At the age of seventeen, he became a law student at the University of Pisa. This university, along with the court of the Austrian Archduke had become a centre of that reforming spirit that made Tuscany, one of the few exceptions to the apathetic climate of eighteenth-century Italy. At the University of Pisa, Buonarroti enthusiastically absorbed much of the atmosphere of the Enlightenment. His studies were guided by two professors: Christoforo Sarti, a disciple of Locke and Condillac, who taught philosophy, and Giovanni Maria Lampredi, a professor of public law, who directed the study of French political thought.⁷⁹ It was under the tutelage of Sarti, Buonarroti encountered his favorite author, Jean Jacques Rousseau.

After receiving his doctorate in law in four years, Buonarroti went to Florence where he married a young noblewoman, Elizabeth de 'Conti. In recognition of his literary talents, he was made a Chevalier of Saint Stephen by the Grand Duke, whose patronage would have assured him a brilliant career at the Tuscan court. However, by 1786, Buonarroti had chosen a very different career: that of a revolutionary journalist.

In 1787, he founded a short-lived journal in which he praised the American constitution for its guarantees of religious and journalistic liberty, as well as the Jansenists and the Dutch republicans for their struggles against the forces of tradition. In October 1789, he left Florence to become a journalist in Corsica. His Patriotic Journal of Corsica (1790), which was the first newspaper in Italian to support the French Revolution, defended it along Rousseauian lines, arguing that "general happiness can be found only in the state of nature."⁸⁰

While in Corsica, Buonarroti was constantly engaged in revolutionary activities. In January, 1792, he joined the ill-fated campaign of revolutionary France against Sardinia. He was, however, successful in San Pietro, an island on the southwest coast of Sardinia. Here he drafted a model republican constitution which he called The Code of Nature, the full text of which is unknown.

Following this expedition, Buonarroti went to Paris late in 1792, to plead for the incorporation of his island utopia of San Pietro into the French republic. He was successful in this endeavour

as well as in his ambition to become a naturalized French citizen. The latter was realized by a decree issued by the Convention on May 27, 1793. While in Paris, he also became acquainted with Robespierre, whom he held in the highest esteem all of his life.

As the reign of Terror descended on Paris, Buonarroti returned to the front lines of the revolutionary advance into Italy. He joined Robespierre's brother, Augustine, and the young Napoleon Bonaparte with the French armies on the Italian Riviera in 1794. On April 9, Buonarroti took charge of revolutionary rule in the city of Oneglia, a small principality between Nice and Menton, occupied by French troops. Here he applied the laws of the revolutionary government. Buonarroti established a centralized system of revolutionary agents designed to mobilize the population against the tyrannical forces still serving the Italian aristocracy and priesthood. His proclamation of May 9, 1794, to the people of Oneglia could be considered his first statement of egalitarianism. He insisted that all men are created "equal, free and to be happy, and that any distinction whatsoever is an open violation of the law of nature."⁸¹ His experience as an administrator at Oneglia had a profound effect on him as it provided the basis of the policy and doctrine which he later formulated with Babeuf.

Buonarroti continued to work in obscurity until finally his confiscation of lands belonging to a Genoese aristocrat brought about trouble with the French authorities, who ordered him to Paris and eventually placed him in the prison of Plessis on March 5, 1795. His time spent at Plessis completed the education he had begun at the

University of Pisa. It provided him with an indispensable period of quiet meditation on his experiences of the preceding years, and moreover, it facilitated an exchange of ideas on revolutionary theory and tactics with a fellow prisoner and future colleague, Gracchus Babeuf.⁸² After he was released from prison, Buonarroti became a member of the Society of the Pantheon and joined Babeuf's Conspiracy of Equals.

Buonarroti helped to convince Babeuf that a period of dictatorship was necessary to establish equality. The Jacobin dictatorship provided him with a model to which he added from his own ideas. Buonarroti believed that even the best laws could not function immediately, because the people, who had been removed from equality for so long, were unable to distinguish between tyrants and those who would act in their own interest. Thus, a period of dictatorship was necessary to re-educate the people towards equality. Once a degree of equality had been achieved through the measures of the dictatorial government, the sovereignty of the people would be re-established and universal direct suffrage restored, according to the Constitution of 1793.

At the heart of Buonarroti's philosophy was the notion that the people could only be sovereign in a society where private property had been abolished. He first called for the abolition of private property in his Response to a letter signed M.V. (April-May 1796). In this letter, Buonarroti wrote: "The system of equality excludes all divisions."⁸³ It is these divisions that have caused all evil in the

world and the only cure is for all wealth to be controlled by the government, with all agricultural and industrial products to be placed in public storehouses. Real equality would be based on the premise of work in common and the enjoyment of goods in common.

Buonarroti was arrested along with the other members of the Conspiracy of Equals in 1796. However, instead of being condemned to death, he was imprisoned at Cherbourg from 1797-1800. While at Cherbourg, Buonarroti seemed to have kept in touch with his friends on the outside; he later claimed that he began organizing secret societies while there. In March 1800, he was transferred to Oléron; then in December 1802, he was moved to Sospello in the Alpes-Maritimes. He was finally released from prison in July of 1806 and Napoleon allowed him to move to Geneva, where he lived for the next seventeen years, except for the fourteen months which he spent in Grenoble from 1813-1814.

There is evidence that in 1809, he founded an organization which may be regarded as the first international political secret society. The date of 1808-1809 was given by Buonarroti himself, but the first document dates from 1811.⁸⁴ This was the Sublime Perfect Masters, an organization which drew heavily on Freemasonry and the Illuminati of Bavaria. The precise history of Buonarroti's activities during this period are not known because they were carried out with great secrecy. What is known is that he was influenced by his five year involvement with the Masons in Geneva. In order to understand the nature of Buonarroti's secret societies we must first look briefly

at Freemasonry and the Illuminati of Bavaria.

Freemasonry was "an institution which had as its object to recall men to their primitive equality, to reassert among masons the bonds of society and humanity by undercutting the distinctions of birth, rank and occupation."⁸⁵ Masons thought that they were recreating in their fraternal societies the cooperation that existed among those earlier masons who shaped stones for the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages. The movement of each brother from the stage of apprentice through journeyman to master, required philosophical and philanthropic accomplishment as opposed to social status. Freemasonry was thus a meritocracy--implicitly subversive within any static society that was based on a traditional hierarchy.⁸⁶ Men of intelligence and ambition in the eighteenth century often experienced a kind of brotherhood among equals which could not be found in the aristocratic world outside.

The period of 1789-1848 witnessed a development of ritual organizations which is of considerable importance to the history of the communist movement. "Throughout the period of the three French Revolutions, the secret revolutionary brotherhood was by far the most important organization for changing society in Western Europe."⁸⁷ These secret societies owed much of their organization, tradition and procedure to freemasonry. The sympathies of the masons for the ideas which found expression in the American and French Revolutions made many of them revolutionaries, and masonic organization made it very easy for lodges to turn into political centres or pressure groups, to

protect revolutionary brotherhoods and to be infiltrated by them.

Most of the persistent revolutionaries and conspirators during the nineteenth century had a masonic background and thought organizationally in masonic terms. This is notably true of Buonarroti, who was not only involved in masonry and Carbonarism, but also dominated one of the best known secret conspiratorial societies, the Sublime Perfect Masters. Secret revolutionary societies adapted the rituals of the masons for the purpose of security: thus the reason for the hierarchical groupings in which members from one group do not know those from another.

When revolutionary activity expanded, masonry often spawned more specialized orders like Weishaupt's Illuminati. It was primarily under the influence of the Illuminati of Bavaria that Buonarroti developed his own secret society. The Illuminati was founded in 1776 by a professor at the Bavarian university of Ingolstadt named Adam Weishaupt who was one of the few egalitarians of his day.

Weishaupt's goal was to provide an organization which would promote his egalitarian aims. He drew heavily on masonic technique; the initiate was led gradually towards the secret doctrines, first by reading the classical moralists, then the works of Holbach and finally, those of Helvetius. Throughout this period of initiation, he would be supervised by a senior initiate to whom he was completely obedient. The gravest obligations of secrecy, and pledges to terminate ties with family and friends were placed upon the novice. Once these obligations were undertaken, the novice would proceed through the other grades of

initiation. His instruction and character were scrutinized in a series of regular examinations in the form of written replies to questionnaires. Initiates would then work their way through two further grades. Even at the two higher levels, the member would not know that most of what was told to him was nonsense, nor that Weishaupt provided for another, supreme level above these grades.

This highest level was called the Areopagus, a secret inner circle of directors of the whole Order. Here Weishaupt's social idealism, nurtured on Rousseau, Mably and Morelly, culminated in a subversive purpose, the revolutionary education of the members of the Order, who were to carry out the transformation of society. The Areopagite stage represented man freed from all authority and thus able to live in egalitarian harmony. This promise of complete liberation terrified the German-speaking world and the order was formally dissolved between 1785 and 1787. However, the dispersion of the members produced a posthumous impact that was far greater than anything the movement had been able to accomplish during its short life as a society of German intellectuals.

The decisive channel of Illuminist influence in France was Nicholas Bonneville.⁸⁸ He was converted to Illuminism in June of 1787, during a visit to Paris by Weishaupt's leading associate, Christian Bode. Bonneville's version of the Illuminist ideal interested such well-known figures as Saint Just and Desmoulins. Occult, possibly Illuminist influence can be detected in Babeuf's first clear statement of his communist objectives early in 1795--when

he invited a friend "to enter into the secret mysteries of agrarianism" and accepted fidelity from a ch evalier de l'ordre des  gaux.⁸⁹

Babeuf's initial blueprint for his conspiracy mentioned a "circle of adherents advancing by degree . . . to transform the world."⁹⁰ His secret hierarchical organization resembled that of the Illuminists and Bonneville's Social Circle.

Evidence that Buonarroti was probably affected by Illuminism is provided in a forgotten journal of 1789 by a group of Italians who had been influenced by Illuminism while staying in Bavaria. These students, who had been excited by the political news coming from Paris, drew up plans at Innsbruck to establish a journal capable of promoting the total transformation of humanity based on the Illuminist model. Late in 1789, they published in Sondrio, on the Italian side of the Alps, a journal that may have been the first ideological revolutionary organ of modern times: Political Appendix to all gazettes and other new sheets.⁹¹ The journal claimed to go beyond politics, providing an instructional guide for the revolutionary reading of all other publications. The editors insisted: "Appendix is not a gazette, but rather a reasoned course of legislation, of Government, of Political Economy, applied to the present revolutions of Europe."⁹² The ideal was happy equality embodied in a social constitution. In the first issue, the editor saluted his friend, "Abraham Levi Solomon, the recorder of the Patriotic Journal of Corsica."⁹³ A footnote identified this person as "the cavalier Buonarroti, a man of spirit."⁹⁴ Since Buonarroti is the only

contemporary Italian referred to by name in the journal, he would seem to have had some connections with the Appendix.⁹⁵

Buonarroti's first secret society, the Sublime Perfect Masters, like all of his other ones had a masonic structure.⁹⁶ His secret societies were divided into different levels, of which the highest, composed of a small number controlled and directed the others. This was the typical masonic structure. The people in the lower grades did not know those in the higher ones, and thus the whole structure would not collapse if the lower levels were discovered. Buonarroti actually had little use for the masons, and he looked upon their organization with the contempt that professional reserves for amateurs: "The public character of its meetings, the almost infinite number of initiates and the ease with which they are admitted have removed from masonry every trace of political inclination."⁹⁷ But he considered their mystery and use of obscure language useful in masking the real intentions of his secret society. Thus, he strove to infiltrate their ranks. He also exploited the French and Italian branches of the Carbonari, which had been organized in Italy around the same time as the Sublime Perfect Masters, and somewhat later in France. Like the masons, the Carbonari did not meet Buonarroti's strict standards of secrecy, limited admission policy and determined goal.

The actual structure of the Sublime Perfect Masters consisted of three hierarchical grades. There were three credos, or professions of faith, one for each level. The teachings of the different grades, the Church, the Synod and the Areopagus, were

adopted to the individuals who comprised them. The Church's doctrine reflected the liberal and republican members who strove for universal suffrage and popular institutions. In order to accept the second level's ideas one would have to be a convinced democrat. It is only with the Areopagus that the real goals of the group were disclosed. The credo of the third level is also evidence that Buonarroti's communist convictions of 1796 never ceased to be the most significant aspect of his activities during the period of the Restoration. The most important portion of the credo reads:

Let us break down the marks of private property. Let us create with the ruins of the private land a social patrimony. Let the Republic be the sole proprietor; like a mother it will afford to each of its members equal education, food and labour. This is the only regeneration aimed at by philosophers. This is the only rebuilding of Jerusalem. This is the evident and necessary law of social progress, such as has been determined by Providence.⁹⁸

The fact that the third level was called Areopagus is revealing. This was also the name of Weishaupt's highest grade: the areopagites were the only ones to know the real purpose of the order, the date of its establishment and the name of its founder.

According to Joachim Paul de Prati (b. 1790), one of Buonarroti's close associates, Buonarroti was the only leader of all the secret societies at this time who aimed not just at political change, but at social regeneration.⁹⁹ His secret society was not republican, but communist.

In 1823, the Sublime Perfect Masters were discovered by the police and the organization came to an end. Buonarroti managed to

escape from Geneva to the canton of Vaud where he remained for a year, before taking up residence in Brussels. He chose Brussels because it was one of the few places in Europe still tolerant of extremists.

During his six year stay in Belgium, Buonarroti formed a secret organization which he called the Monde. It could be considered a reorganization of the Sublime Perfect Masters. He saw the Monde as a group which would liberate and unify the world. Buonarroti took the name of Polycarp after the early Christian evangelist who had closed the gap between the disciples of Christ and the institutional Church. He thought of himself as playing a similar role, linking the apostles of the revolutionary era to the institutionalized movements of the Restoration.

It was during his sojourn in Brussels that he wrote his tribute to the Babeuvist Conspiracy, called Conspiration pour l'égalité dite de Babeuf, or as usually translated, Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality. The first edition appeared in 1828. Bronterre O'Brien's English translation was published in London in 1836. More than a year before the Revolution of 1830, Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality was reviewed at length, and its arguments were analyzed in the Globe. The book was "one of the foremost texts of the history of the French Revolution under the July Monarchy."¹⁰⁰ Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality provided both an ancestry and a model for egalitarian revolution by publicizing the Babeuvist plot. "It caused not only a revival of the Jacobin tradition under the July monarchy, but also introduced for the first time the ideology of state

communism and dictatorship in European society."¹⁰¹

In the book, Buonarroti described the details of the Babeuvist plot, its conspiratorial methods, the revolutionary dictatorship and its egalitarian aims. He insisted that all revolutions since 1789 had failed because they lacked strong leaders who were prepared to take charge of a revolutionary government. Buonarroti urged that the popular elections not take place while the first changes were occurring; rather the government should fulfill three functions first. These were the following:

1. Direct all the force of the nation against internal and external enemies.
2. Create and establish the institutions through which the people will be imperceptibly led to exercise sovereignty.
3. Prepare the popular constitution which should complete and close the revolution.¹⁰²

The ultimate aim of the revolution, as stressed by Buonarroti in his book was the Rousseauian one of returning man to his natural state of liberty in which the general will prevails. Thus, revolutionary power must be entrusted to a "strong, constant, enlightened immovable will," and "the same will must direct the enfranchisement and prepare liberty."¹⁰³ Experience had proven that the privileged were poor directors of popular insurrections and that the people were incapable of either regeneration by themselves, or of appointing those who could direct the reformation.

Buonarroti's emphasis was always on the leadership of a minority of enlightened legislators who were able to change the

majority of selfish individuals. Hence his glorification of the Committee of Public Safety:

One cannot too much admire the prudence with which these illustrious legislators, turning reverses and victories, to account, with equal skill, were able to inspire the great majority of the nation, with a self-denial the most sublime, with contempt of riches, pleasures and even death.¹⁰⁴

Added to this praise was a somewhat ambiguous defense of the Terror. The liquidation of the enemy was only the first step towards the good society. The main task in transforming a corrupted nation into a virtuous one remained:

The skillful legislator attaches the people . . . by their own free choice, . . . here the masterpiece of policy consists in modifying the human heart by education, by example, by reasoning, and by the attractions of pleasure as to cause it never to form any desires than those which tend to render society more free, more happy and more durable.¹⁰⁵

The readers of Buonarroti's book were told that in the new social order, "the country takes possession of every individual at birth and never quits him until death."¹⁰⁶ Young men are initiated into French society by a solemn oath and a ceremony complete with the presentation of a suit of armour. They were subject to military service and were always to be ready to take up arms for the state. Women were not treated with such pomp and ceremony. Their duty was to produce these healthy males who would feed and protect the society.¹⁰⁷

The major economic problems of the nineteenth century would be solved by turning the clock back, by legislating the industrial revolution out of existence. The physiocrat's vision of a

self-sufficient agrarian economy, protected by tariffs would result:

The first and most important occupation of the citizens ought to be those which assure them subsistence, clothing, habitations and have for their object agriculture and the arts subservient to cultivation of the soil.¹⁰⁸

The economic legislation of the Terror would be continued and expanded so that all wealth would be nationalized. The poor would willingly relinquish the rights to their small holdings for membership in a "grand national economy which maintains all members in an equal and honourable mediocrity."¹⁰⁹ The possessions of the rich would be taxed so heavily that they would either emigrate, or willingly give up their wealth.

After the completion of his book, Buonarroti directed his attention to organizing local societies in Italy, where revolution still seemed a possibility. In 1832, he formed a Society of True Italians, with a central committee and local groups designed to implant the social virtue of a free people. The following year, this group allied with the Reformed Carbonari, who were radical republicans of the original French Carbonari, to form the Universal Democratic Carbonari. The Carbonari was the most famous of all secret societies during the Napoleonic period. Although a revolutionary organization, it was republican rather than communistic in its goals. The new Carbonari was Buonarroti's last attempt at creating an international revolutionary organization. Its goal, unlike that of the previous Carbonari, was the realization of equality. All statutes of the French Carbonari were abolished and new ones were drawn up. The

highest grade were called the "Masters" and their political, and social doctrine closely resembled that of the Areopagus of the Sublime

Perfect Masters:

What is liberty? Liberty in society is the right to only obey the will of the people. Of what does social equality consist? Equality consists of the equal participation of all in the goods of nature and society, and the rights which emanate from them.¹¹⁰

The revolutionary conspiracy chose names such as Saint Just and Jean Jacques, and codes and security procedures which became more complex as police pressure intensified. After 1835, these societies amalgamated with Blanqui's Society of the Seasons. By this time, Buonarroti was an old man living in the Parisian home of Voyer d'Argenson, a colleague and member of the French Carbonari. He died two years later on September 16, 1837.

Buonarroti is significant in the development of the communist movement for many reasons. First, he played an important role in Babeuf's Conspiracy of the Equals by stressing the importance of revolutionary dictatorship. After the failure of the Babeuvist plot, he kept communism alive in an era of republicanism through his secret conspiratorial societies. "Here then is Buonarroti's essential contribution to the European socialist tradition based on his experience in 1796: the establishment through conspiratorial methods of a political dictatorship, a Babeuvist committee of public safety to prepare an equalitarian regime."¹¹¹ Perhaps his greatest achievement was his transmission of Babeuvism to the next generation of French

revolutionaries by the writing of Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality.

This book became the textbook of French and other radicals during the 1830s and 1840s.

CHAPTER FOUR

BLANQUI AND INSURRECTIONARY COMMUNISM IN THE 1830S

The egalitarian tradition of Babeuf and Buonarroti was continued by Blanqui. There is evidence of personal association between the two men. Both were members of the revolutionary Society of the Friends of the People in 1832; they both appeared on the defense committee of the Lyonnais and Parisians accused of instigating insurrection in April 1834. Moreover, in 1835, Buonarroti wrote a letter in which he mentioned that Blanqui had witnessed some of his actions.¹¹² In any case, the revolutionary tactics and communist ideas which Blanqui was to develop were very similar to those of Buonarroti.

Louis Auguste Blanqui was born on February 1, 1805, in Puget-Théniers, a town located forty miles northwest of Nice. His father, Jean Dominique Blanqui, a professor of philosophy and anatomy at the Collège de Nice, became involved in politics at the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789. He was at the apex of a party which wanted Nice, at that time controlled by Sardinia, to become part of France. Because of this, he was chosen a delegate to the French Convention, where he sat with the Girondins. He pleaded his party's cause, and on January 31, 1793, Nice officially became the French department of Alpes-Maritimes. Later, he rallied to the cause of the Empire, for which he was awarded the post of subprefect at Puget-Théniers by

Napoleon. The fortunes of the Blanqui family fell with the Empire in 1814, and at that time Auguste was sent to Paris to live with his elder brother, Adolphe.

At the age of nine, Blanqui was admitted to the Lycée Charlemagne. There he excelled in his studies--history, Latin, classical literature, the dramas of Corneille and Racine and the works of the major eighteenth century writers. He also read the complete works of the French economist Jean Baptiste Say. This helped to arouse his interest in economic matters. Included amongst Say's writings was the communist utopia of Oblie, which envisaged the banishment of all tyrants, priests and parasites from the face of the earth.

After graduating from the Lycée Charlemagne in 1824, he abandoned academic studies to join the French Carbonari. Blanqui learned much from this organization concerning admission rites, the necessity of hierarchical structure and secrecy; later, he applied all of this to his own revolutionary organizations. He also met many influential revolutionaries at the meetings: Voyer d'Argenson, Philippe Buchez and Amand Bazard who both became Saint-Simonians, Etienne Cabet, the founder of a utopian communist school and Pierre Leroux, one of the most respected of the nineteenth-century socialists. However, a futile insurrection in 1822 reduced the number of branches of the Carbonari, and unsuccessful uprisings in 1823 broke them up.

Blanqui now turned to journalism. He wrote for the Courier français and the Journal du commerce, but his earnings were so small

that he gave this up to take a post as tutor to the son of a Napoleonic general living in the Garonne Department. This occupation did not last long, and by 1826, he was back in Paris enrolled in law and medicine at the Sorbonne. He remained a student for one year but in 1827 abandoned the academic world to become a full time journalist and a revolutionary. In that year, he participated in a minor uprising against the Bourbons. It was the reaction of a group of discontented students and workers to a number of reactionary bills which had been passed to strengthen the power of the Church and to restrict what little freedom there was in the press. Blanqui took part in the demonstrations and skirmishes along with other students and workers, Bonpartists and republicans. The events of 1827 were his initiation into a life devoted to revolutionary activity. For his participation in this minor uprising, he spent a year in prison.

On his release from prison in 1828 Blanqui became a reporter for the Globe, a leading opposition newspaper founded by the Saint-Simonian, Pierre Leroux, in 1824. Leroux regarded Blanqui as a potential recruit to the Saint-Simonian school.

Leroux's essential ideas are contained in his two major works, De l'égalité (1838) and De l'humanité (1840). He sketched an historical outline of the origins of inequality. In primitive times, men enjoyed equality; subsequently they lost it but now were coming into it again. In the meantime, they had gone through three phases of inequality: the regime of the family, which excluded from the enjoyment of rights all those not born within it; the regime of the

state, which did not grant recognition to those born outside of it; and the regime of property, which has enabled owners to exploit non-owners. Like Rousseau, he believed that the family, the state and property were inherently good, but that man had misused them. Slavery has existed in three forms: the enslavement of man to man; the enslavement of man to the state and the enslavement of man to property, as exemplified in the feudalism of the medieval period, which he claimed still existed in the modern form of industrialism. He considered the present to be the period of transition from the regime of inequality to the regime of equality.

Leroux's paper had an almost unrivalled reputation for its liberal doctrines and its distinguished list of contributors, which included men such as Victor Cousin, Augustin Thierry, Sainte Beuve, Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo. The paper had made itself popular with the Academy of Science for having set forth and defended Lamarck's evolutionary theory and it familiarized readers with such problems as state supported schools, the emancipation of the skilled worker and the idea of cooperation.

Blanqui was twenty-four when he joined the staff of the Globe. His colleagues were much older, with established reputations, and they were mainly economic liberals. Years later, he recorded his impressions of the Globe's writers and their ideas: "sacrosanct dogmas, taken out of maxims; the gospel according to St. Malthus, St. Ricardo, St. Jeremy Bentham and other learned professors of usury and selfishness."¹¹³ The only exception was Pierre Leroux, and

Blanqui's respect for him only increased with the years.

Since Blanqui worked for Leroux, he could not avoid coming into contact with the major tenets of the Saint-Simonians. The Saint-Simonian school was founded in 1825 upon the death of Saint-Simon. Saint-Simon had proposed an industrial society in which all must work, and be rewarded accordingly. He did not think in terms of antagonism between workers and proprietors. According to him, their interests were the same. Saint Simon's main concern was to eradicate the class of idlers, les oisifs, as he referred to them. They performed no useful function in the aristocracy, society, and thus, they should be abolished.

The Saint Simonians radicalized their master's teachings. Saint Simon did not call for the abolition of private property, yet his followers did. They also analyzed the class struggle in terms of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Saint Simon's followers devoted themselves to publicizing his doctrines in their journals Le Producteur, Le Organisateur and finally Le Globe. The most important members of the Saint-Simonian school were Rodrigues, Enfantin and Bazard. Olinde Rodrigues was the only disciple who had known Saint-Simon closely. He was a wealthy Jewish banker who provided the funds necessary to finance the movement. Barthelemy Prosper Enfantin, a young mathematics student of Rodrigues, had abandoned a military and commercial career to join the Saint-Simonians. These two polytechnicians joined together with former French Carbonari members, Saint Amand Bazard and Philippe Buchez, to edit Le Producteur in

1825-26, and then in 1828, they drew up a systematic exposition of Saint Simon's doctrine.

Bazard began the public exposition of Saint Simon's doctrine on December 12, 1828. His lectures lasted until 1830 and were published under the title Doctrine de Saint Simon. Premiere Année 1828-1829. Deuxieme Année 1830. In the first lecture, entitled "De la nécessité d'une doctrine sociale nouvelle," Bazard reviewed the conditions existing in society. Modern society was in a state of anarchy which had resulted from the liberty promised by the Revolution. Individualism and egoism abounded and antagonism ruled: antagonism between man and man, church and state and labour and capital. The task of the Saint-Simonians was to offer a solution to the inner struggles of society. The crisis of the modern age was mainly one of order and authority. The old order had been overthrown, but nothing had emerged to replace it. For a new order to be established, a new philosophy of life would be required.

In the following lectures, Bazard expounded the group's doctrine of progress. He divided historical societies into two types: organic and critical. In organic societies, institutions and beliefs rest on a general doctrine, while in critical societies, this doctrine is rejected and replaced by a new one. The first part of the critical period is distinguishable by a common unity which is needed to overthrow the old order. During the second stage, to which the modern world belongs, the destruction of the old order had been completed, but there is a lack of unity between the three general spheres of

human social activity--science, industry and the arts.

According to the Saint-Simonians, there have been two warring principles throughout history: that of individualism and that of unity or association. The final goal of humanity is universal association and history has shown an uninterrupted progress in this direction. However, this progress has continued side by side with antagonism as expressed in the exploitation of man by man. The history of exploitation was reviewed by Bazard beginning with slavery in ancient times, proceeding through serfdom in the Middle Ages and continuing up to the present day where workers are exploited intellectually, morally and materially.

The Saint-Simonian programme consisted of four main principles: the creation of a workers' association, the abolition of inherited wealth and property, the organization of industry for peaceful production, the production and distribution of wealth in accordance with the principle, "a chacun selon sa capacite, a chaque capacite selon ses oeuvres,"¹¹⁴ i.e., each doing the work for which he is best suited and the rewards being accorded to services. Goodwyn Barmby, the British communist, who visited France in 1840 wrote that "the Saint-Simonians were not communists, as communism levels and equalizes all: it gives to all capacities and has no regard to the merits or the industry of men."¹¹⁵

Although Blanqui rejected Saint-Simonianism, it is quite clear that he appropriated several of their teachings. Some of these were: their belief that liberalism had nothing to offer the class of

producers, their rejection of free enterprise, their insistence on man's association with man for the conquest of nature, their belief in the perfectibility of man, culminating in the replacement of the administration of men by the administration of things, and the unfolding of history as a record of class conflicts. His major disagreement with them concerned their attempt to replace Catholicism with another similar religion. Hence, he dismissed them as "trivial imitators of Catholicism."¹¹⁶

The political crisis of 1830 revealed a world of difference between Blanqui and his colleagues at the Globe. Blanqui called on them to establish an insurrectionary committee. This was too risky for them--they would not go beyond the law. He carried his arguments to the Sorbonne Law School, exhorting his fellow students to be more radical. For his participation in the Revolution, he was decorated by the Orléanist monarch, Louis Philippe, with the Order of July. It was the only official accolade he ever received.

Blanqui soon rejected the July Monarchy as a mockery of the ideals of the French Revolution which it claimed to have fulfilled, and he abandoned political participation for life in the revolutionary underground. Louis Philippe's government was not a government of the people as it had claimed to be, but a tool of bourgeois capitalists. What Blanqui wanted, it did not offer--economic as well as political change.

Widespread disgust with the government of Louis Philippe made it possible in the France of the 1830s and 1840s to get a hearing for

more revolutionary proposals. This manifested itself in a mushrooming of political clubs. The most important was the Society of the Friends of the People, a combination of ex-Carbonari and republicans of the July Days. Charles Teste, a friend and disciple of Buonarroti; Philippe Buchez, an ex-Saint-Simonian and former member of the Carbonari; and Blanqui were in the society's highest echelons. Its membership was somewhere between four and six hundred, but many more read its placards and went to its meetings. The Society called on workers to cooperate in the enterprise of erecting a republic, by which it meant a social order for human welfare.

Blanqui continued his battle with the July Monarchy in January of 1831 by writing an address for the Committee of Schools. The draft was an appeal to insurrection and accused the government of not living up to its promises. It had neither done away with despotic practices, nor had it voted the liberties that had supposedly been won by the fighting. The Academic Council singled him out as the instigator of student disorders and suspended him from the university. He was then imprisoned for three weeks and released in February. He was arrested again in July of 1831 along with fourteen others and indicted on two counts: treason and violation of the laws governing the press.

His trial came up in January of 1832. His speech at the trial represented a turning point in his revolutionary development. He used the term "proletariat" when referring to people like himself. According to his estimation, about two hundred thousand idle rich lived like robber barons on what they could steal from the French

proletariat.¹¹⁷ The idle were aided in their exploitation by the French government. Taxes, imposts, lotteries and monopolies were the means by which earnings were taken from the proletariat and given to the wealthy in France.

The word prolétaire can be traced back to ancient Rome. According to the Dictionary of the Academy, the prolétaire were "those who in Rome constituted the lowest class of the people, and who, being very poor were exempt from taxes and from the liability to serve in war."¹¹⁸ Proletariat came into modern use in the seventeenth century as a general contemptuous term for the lower classes.¹¹⁹ It was identified with class conflict in the economist Sismondi's book New Principles of Political Economy (1819). His "social economics" challenged the classical economists' indifference to the social consequence of the free market, which had led to the impoverishment of the proletariat. Sismondi argued that, while the Roman proletariat lived at the expense of the wealthy, the modern bourgeoisie was living at the expense of the proletariat. After the Revolution of 1830, the word was associated with Blanqui and his followers who identified the proletariat with social struggle outside of all existing political systems.¹²⁰

Due to his remarks on the proletariat, Blanqui was sent to prison in 1832 for a year. Between the years 1832-34, his ideas on communism were crystallizing. He questioned the effectiveness of the ballot in view of its restricted use. Furthermore, the regime seemed to lean more to severe measures than to concessions. This was a sign

that the bourgeoisie was determined to retain its monopoly on power. The alternative was either to accept the premises of the social order or to reject them. Blanqui chose the latter, as he was no longer able to tolerate a system based on the majority's wretchedness.

In 1834, a law was passed which forbade secret associations, and this was followed by further restrictions on the press. It was largely directed against the growing strength of the Society of the Rights of Man, the organization to which the most radical republicans belonged. It was a nationwide, open association, with sections of ten to twenty members elected by majority vote. The society gathered in groups mainly agitating for civil liberties. It was the first national association to extend its educational activities to the working class.¹²¹

Instead of the word communism, Blanqui, at this time, employed the term association, which the Saint-Simonians had put into circulation, and his understanding of it was the reign of equality. By equality, he meant the common ownership of the means of labour, including the land. A system in which mine and thine did not exist was his goal.

The two best organized conspiracies during the July Monarchy were led by Blanqui and Barbès. The first was the Society of the Families, founded in July 1834. The Society of the Seasons, Blanqui's second secret society, was formed after the dissolution of the Families in 1836.

Armand Barbès was Blanqui's most important fellow conspirator,

a republican, a romantic and an egalitarian. He was a Creole, born in the French West Indies in 1809, but he grew up near Carcassonne. His father, a physician, had raised him in luxury and left him a sizeable fortune. Had he been a political neutral, he could have spent a life of ease. However, this was not meant to be. Barbès considered his duty to live and fight for the lower classes. He went to Paris, where he studied law, attended various club meetings and joined the national committee for the defence of the insurgents of 1834. In July of 1834, he entered into association with Blanqui.

More than half of the members of the Society of the Families were artisans or small shopkeepers. The rest were property owners or intellectuals who provided the leaders. Underneath them were the sections, known as the families--each having six members, including the head, who had been appointed by the leaders. To become a member, one had to be of age, discreet, honourable and of good character. The decision for acceptance or rejection of a prospective member depended on a report of his qualifications submitted by the highest authority of the society. If the inquiry confirmed his qualities, he was initiated with the required rites.

The ceremony of initiation followed prescribed rules. The ritual was similar to the liturgy of the Carbonari, or the procedure of Buonarroti's secret organizations. Admitted blindfolded into the presence of the family head, the candidate was tested on his knowledge of the society's credo. Fifteen questions and answers in catechismal form, ran the gamut of its principles, from the standards of the order,

to the criteria of the good life and the means of attaining it. For example, the following is an excerpt from the catechism of the Families.

What is the people?

The people is the mass of citizens who work.

What is the fate of the proletariat under the government of the rich?

It is the same as that of the serf and the Negro; its life is only in big talk of hardships, fatigue and suffering.

Must one make a political or social revolution?

One must make a social revolution.¹²²

The society's governing principle was equality; its objectives were security, free education and participation in government. Here ended the comparison of present and future social systems. To sum up: one social system stood for greed, force and the suffering of man, the other, popular power and equality. The only method of achieving the latter was through revolution.

The task of the new member was to propagate the republican gospel and to obey the command to take up arms to overthrow the government. He was required to swear an oath of secrecy and pledge obedience to the rules of the society. The recruit vowed to be pitiless to traitors, to love and help comrades and to be prepared to sacrifice himself to the noble cause.

After this solemn ceremony, the blindfold was removed. Facing his leader, he was given final instructions. He was obliged to contribute gunpowder to the common supply, choose a nom de guerre, refuse to answer questions in court, and report for service whenever ordered. Finally, he had to be constantly on the look out for new

members.

The catechism and structure of the Society of the Families were the unmistakable handiwork of Blanqui. The layout was consistent with his elitism. His professional revolutionary vanguard were drawn from déclassé bourgeois intellectuals, who would be determined, skilled and fearless. Blanqui himself is the prime example of a person who though well-educated and bright, refused to fit the middle class mold. Rank and file workers were accepted as members, but they never rose to leadership positions. Though membership was not limited, the society was a small body, that seemed to have been confined to the capital.

The fact that the Society of the Families was a Parisian organization had an historical reason. A successful revolution at the centre usually meant its triumph in the rest of the nation. Only a close-knit, centralized body that could quickly mobilize its strength, and hurl it at the weakest part of the political armoury could be expected to overthrow it.

Unfortunately for the Families, the society never reached that point as its leaders were arrested in 1836. Since each member of the society was supposed to have in his possession some gunpowder and a firearm of some sort, a small house in the suburb of Port Royal was used as a gunpowder factory. Early in March, the police, who had received spy information raided this house, discovered the powder factory and arrested the two members of the society found on the premises. Two days later, Blanqui and Barbes were arrested. They

were tried in August and Blanqui received a sentence of two years imprisonment at the prison of Fontevrault, and a fine of two thousand francs, while Barbes received one year's imprisonment and a fine of five hundred francs.¹²³ With the marriage of a German princess to the heir of the French throne in May of 1837, an amnesty freed political prisoner and Blanqui was released. He eventually made his way back to Paris, illegally, as he had been forbidden to live there, and he formed the successor to the Society of the Families, the Society of the Seasons.

The Society of the Seasons resembled the previous organization in structure, except that the new body had more gradations. The lowest, known as the Week, had seven members, including Sunday, who was the head. A Month had four weeks, or twenty-eight members, twenty-nine with the leader, July. Four Months made up a Season, which, with the top man, Spring, added up to eight-eight members. The highest division, a Year, had four Seasons, totalling three hundred and fifty members, including a responsible revolutionary agent. The blueprint called for three Years, or over one thousand members. At the apex was a triumvirate consisting of Blanqui, Barbès and Armand Bernard. Blanqui was commander in chief.

Thus, the divisions of the Society of the Seasons were calendarized and arranged in the form of a pyramid. From the base up, they were completely separated from each other, so as to provide for maximum security. The arrest of a Week, or even of a Month, would not disable the entire organization. Only those at the very top knew what

went on below them.

A set of circumstances, early in 1839, had the semblance, in the eyes of the Society of the Seasons' leaders, of a chance for an assault on the Orleanist government. The economic crisis of 1837 in the United States had made European investors and industrialists panic. In France, money was tight and production was sluggish. Unemployment was on the rise. Instead of a recovery in March of that year, as experts had predicted, the economy continued to slump.

The political situation was not any brighter. A contest between personal rule and constitutionalism was occurring in the French Parliament. The two principles of government were represented by two separate factions of the ruling class. On one side were Louis Philippe and his parliamentary mercenaries; on the other, the bourgeoisie and its deputies, whose model was the British Parliament. In other words, it was a question of whether the King or the Chamber should be superior. To the Seasons, the battle within the government represented a sign of weakness. The combination of the poor economy with political divisions led Blanqui to decide that the time was ripe for a popular uprising, which was set for May 12, 1839. Members were instructed to be at designated places in the city for the usual mobilization exercises. Only the three chiefs knew that it was going to be more than an ordinary drill. Not only were members kept in the dark as to what was going to happen, but they were led to believe that their numbers were far greater than they really were. With Barbès, Blanqui led a contingent of five hundred rebels in an assault on

Hôtel de Ville in the hope of toppling the regime in a revolutionary day of insurrection. His insurgents were successful in occupying the building, but were beaten in two days of fighting. While Barbès was badly wounded in the thick of the battle, Blanqui had left the field before the fighting was over. He remained in hiding for several months until he was arrested while attempting to cross into Switzerland. He was tried the following year and condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment--just as in the case of Barbès, who had been convicted a year earlier.

German secret societies paralleled those of the French. The Federation of the Just was an ally of Blanqui's Society of the Seasons. It had grown out of the League or Society of the Exiles, which German political refugees had formed in 1834, along similar lines to the Carbonari. The League had the usual hierarchical structure and a Carbonari influenced nomenclature. Its headquarters were in Paris, where approximately two hundred German workers published a small paper, Der Geächtete (The Outlaw).¹²⁴ However, most of its branches were in Germany. Two programs contended for supremacy in the League of the Exiles. One, urged by Jakob Venedy of Heidelberg, a Freemason who had escaped to France from a German prison, looked to egalitarianism stemming from small ownership, i.e., private property. The other, represented by Theodore Schuster, an instructor of law at the University of Gottingen and a friend of Buonarroti's was communistic. Schuster had come under the influence of Blanqui, and his energetic support for Blanquism led to a split in the party. In 1836, Schuster

and those who stood for communism formed a new organization called the League or Federation of the Just.

Virtually every French communist belief had its expounders in the League of the Just. Many took their texts from Lamennais' Paroles d'un Croyant (1834),¹²⁵ translated into German by the famous political journalist, Ludwig Borne. Lamennais was a Breton priest who began his career as an orthodox Churchman, and a convinced royalist. However by the 1830s he had moved far to the left advocating a form of Christian communism. His book was a manifesto against all those who had usurped power and were using it to oppress the poor. He called upon the downtrodden to unite for the destruction of their tyrants, preached the solidarity of mankind and demanded social, economic and political justice for the masses. By the 1840s, however, the League's main source of ideas was Etienne Cabet's Journey to Icaria, translated by Dr. Hermann Ewerbeck.

The communist perspectives of the League of the Just were best set out by the tailor, Wilhelm Weitling, who joined the League in 1837 on his arrival in Paris. He quickly became one of its most influential members, and was asked to formulate its program. It was the intention of the sponsors to have a treatise produced which would state its principles, for circulation as propaganda material in France, Switzerland and the German states.

The publication was entitled Mankind as It is and As It Should Be (1838). Weitling had written the manuscript while working full time at his tailor's shop. Copies were carried in 1839 to Frankfurt

by Heinrich Jakobi, a shoemaker's helper, and by other journeymen travelling between the towns of France, Switzerland and Germany.

Mankind as It is and As It Should Be was Weitling's first attempt to integrate the workers' movement in its broader aspects with the new revolutionary program of communism. The book belongs to the Christian communist tradition. Its form was similar to Lamennais' Paroles d'un Croyant, and its content was a potpourri of socialist and communist principles. Weitling's communism was firmly grounded in moral precepts, since he possessed deep religious convictions. It called for absolute equality among human beings and for a return to that happiness of which men had been deprived by the exercise of political and economic power for selfish ends. His book was a vigorous protest against the existing state of society and it concluded that the only remedy lay in revolution.

In May of 1839, the League of the Just became involved in Blanqui's revolutionary uprising in the streets of Paris. Though the disturbance was primarily a demonstration by French members of the Society of the Seasons, Weitling, Schapper and other Germans fought on the barricades around the Hôtel de Ville, side by side with their French comrades. Schapper and Bauer were thrown in jail but later escaped with Moll to England. Weitling was neither apprehended nor prosecuted, but his League of the Just was broken up, along with the French society and he was forced to shift the centre of his activity to London.

Meanwhile, Blanqui remained a prisoner at Mont Saint-Michel,

and then at Tours until 1848, when he was released during the February revolution. He went directly to Paris, where he assumed a leading role. He organized a club, the Central Republican Society, which sponsored nightly lectures, and he soon gained the reputation of one of Paris' best known orators. The club was a springboard for the organization of popular rallies. On March 17, he led a crowd of a hundred thousand demonstrators to City Hall, in an effort to postpone elections for a constituent assembly, which he feared, if held too soon, would choose a conservative majority. With the April election, his fears were confirmed, as the republic passed back into the hands of a more moderate leadership. In May of 1848, Blanqui was once again rounded up by the authorities and tried for sedition before the high court at Bourges where he was sentenced to ten years in prison.

Blanqui's growing influence was somewhat undermined by the publication of a document in 1848 alleged to have been copied from a confession made by Blanqui which gave Louis Philippe's police information concerning the conspiracy of 1839. It is commonly known as the Taschereau Document, as it was published by a man named Taschereau in the Revue retrospective (Paris, 1848).¹²⁶ The accusation has never been decisively proven or disproven, but the supporting testimony of Barbès, who became Blanqui's most bitter enemy over this incident, undermined his prestige among Paris militants. From 1859 until his death, Blanqui was in and out of prison for waging further battles against the state. After his death in 1881, his disciples attempted to keep Blanquism alive, but they were eventually

absorbed into the French socialist party. Blanquism as the basis of a specific political party was dead, but its influence has been manifest in French politics until today.

For Blanqui, all of history had been leading up to the ultimate end of communism: "All social progress is of communist innovation. Communism is nothing but the final end of association."¹²⁷ The only means to achieve communism was through revolution, and this is mainly the reason why Blanqui held the Utopian Socialists in low esteem. He did not believe, as they did, that the new society could be achieved voluntarily.

Blanqui first mentioned the class struggle in 1831 in a letter to a friend, Mlle. Montgolfier. In it, he spoke of the "bourgeoisie with great bitterness."¹²⁸ He also criticized the government as a tool used by this group of exploiters. At his trial in 1832, he outlined the change in the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the feudal aristocracy to that of one between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. He stated: "It appears to me that here, under new forms and between other adversaries is the war of the feudal barons against the merchants whom they plundered on the high road."¹²⁹

Blanqui's most sophisticated discussion of the nature of economic relationships appeared in Le Libérateur in 1834. In an unpublished article, he distinguished between slavery and privilege in modern society on the basis of the instruments of labour. Roger Garaudy considers Blanqui to be "the first to envisage class relationships from the point of view of production and not of distribution."¹³⁰

As with Buonarroti, Blanqui called for a period of transition between the old and the new society, during which there would be a revolutionary dictatorship. Fragments which illustrate the character of this period may be found in the documents of the Society of the Seasons. They refer to a period of revolutionary dictatorship as an intervening stage in which the new generation would learn to live in fraternity. The type of dictatorship which Blanqui had in mind was a triumvirate. It would be dangerous to vest power in one man, and to divide it among many would be to delay decision making. However, a team of three committed men had the ability to act quickly and decisively. It would suspend the old laws, fill new administrative posts, see to the public services and appoint judges. The dictatorship would also defend the country against counter-revolution and educate the people to a new way of life. Education was extremely crucial because: "Communism had to wait upon the triumph of universal public education, because it could not work as long as there remained the ignorant to be bilked by the greedy."¹³¹

The fullest statement of the tactics which would be adopted after the successful revolution is contained in a lengthy resolution approved by the French Democratic Society, the French communist exiles in London in 1840. They were a group of Blanquists who went to London after the failure of the uprising of 1839. Little is known about their activities and their following. Structurally, they resembled the Society of the Seasons. Later, in 1847, the French Democratic Society entered into an alliance with the German Workers' Educational

League which had grown out of the League of the Just.

The document was published by the police chief, Girod de l'Ain, in a supplement to his report on the Darmes attempt on Louis Philippe's life in 1840; it may also be found as a supplement in Victor Bouton's Profils révolutionnaires (Paris, 1849). The major concern is to establish a provisional revolutionary government. The group's ideas were basically similar in content to those of Buonarroti. The major tenets were as follows: under a single directing authority, government run shops were to be established to store and sell products; workers would be organized in state workshops, working an eight hour day. In these workshops, they would be clothed, fed and housed together with their families; private inheritance would be abolished. Education would be provided for by the state. At the age of five, a child would be taken away from his parents and educated with other children, so that parents could not inspire egoist feelings in their children. All religious teachings would be prohibited. Finally, the underlying principle of equality and unity would be instilled in everyone.

Blanqui belongs to the egalitarian tradition of Babeuf. He transmitted this heritage to the generation of the 1840s and its successors, thus providing an important link between nineteenth-century radicals. In the words of the French scholar, M. Dommanget, who has probably studied Blanqui more intensively than anyone else, "the liaison between Babouvism and Bolshevism, by way of revolutionary Marxism is realized, so to speak through Blanquism."¹³²

Blanqui is also significant for refining the conspiratorial

method based on a small group of trained professional revolutionaries. This is very much the accepted picture of Lenin's approach but it is interesting to note that he did not see himself as a follower of Blanqui. He regarded Blanquism as an "error" because it relied on a dedicated minority to seize power, whereas he recognized the necessity of involving the masses. However, it is obvious that for a revolution to be successful, whether led by Blanqui, Lenin or anyone else, it must have at least the tacit support of the masses. What Lenin really wanted to do was use them, which was a matter of tactics. He had no sympathy for the Mensheviks who wished to give them time to become politically conscious. His position was always that if and when a revolutionary situation emerged he would act, whether the masses were ready or not. Thus the difference between Lenin and Blanqui is more apparent than real.¹³³

CHAPTER FIVE

COMMUNIST MOVEMENTS IN THE 1840S

Communist movements blossomed during the 1840s. The decade began with the visit of the Owenite, John Goodwyn Barmby, to Paris to report on the social movements for his friends in Great Britain. He claimed to have been the first person to have used the word communist: "I first pronounced the name of communism, which had arisen in so many countries and dominated so many different societies, until, through the French Revolution, it has acquired that world wide reputation."¹³⁴

Barmby's observations of the events occurring in France serve as valuable insight of an interested outsider. In the New Moral World or Gazette of the Universal Communist Society of Rational Religionists (August 1, 1840), he provides a detailed description of the first communist banquet:

The dinner took place on Wednesday the first of July, at Belle Ville, one of the environs of Paris; and notwithstanding the slanders of the press, and the preparations of the government--ever fearful as wicked--for the preservation of the peace, great éclat attended the meeting at which 1,200 were present to attest their love of Community, Liberty and Equality and to show to the world the immense progress of the social ideas in Paris. It must also be understood that the community and not the Phalanstère was the object of their meeting; the grand toast at the banquet being, "a la communauté sociale."¹³⁵

He goes on to give some of the toasts at the banquet: "To Equality, To Community. To the abolition of competition (concurrency); To Equal Education. To brotherhood. To the absolute punishment of

death. To courage in the propagation of opinions. To the definite triumph of community, the only source of happiness."¹³⁶

In his last report in the New Moral World, Barmby distinguishes between the phalansteres of Fournier and the communists:

The Phalansteres are our very precursors; they lead men to think of association, but their disciples cannot long love the three-classed inequality of the Phalanstere; for there is but little happiness without equality and real equality can but alone be found in Community life.¹³⁷

Thus the communists or communitarians, as he often called them, are genuine egalitarians while the Phalansteres do not provide for complete equality.

Early in the decade, an important book on French communist movements, History of Socialism and Communism in Contemporary France (1842) was published. It was written by the Prussian aristocrat, Lorenz von Stein, who was commissioned by the Prussian government in 1840 to study the disturbing socialist and communist ideas in Paris. Stein had spent the greater part of his life teaching political science at the University of Vienna and publishing comprehensive works on political science and the theory of public administration. His work on France met with such success that it was followed by a larger edition in 1848, and finally by a third edition in 1850, which consisted of three volumes and was called History of the Socialist Movement in France from 1789-1850. Stein provided a concise statement on the nature of communism at that time:

Even at present, communism, growing in strength and scope has no specific doctrine; all the individual communist trends and systems have little or no power at all over communism as a whole; communism has sometimes accepted, sometimes refuted them, has temporarily embraced them, but again forgotten them without changing its character or its direction. This is precisely why communism is so much more important and more powerful than socialism . . .

Communism is a phenomenon and a trend in the contemporary world, which has first drawn attention to the contradictions within industrial society which has made both major classes aware of this contradiction. It has not developed logically but grown up historically; it is not a teaching, rather it is a condition.¹³⁸

Stein treated French communism as a movement beginning with Babeuf in the late eighteenth century, and as an ideology which expressed the interests of the proletariat, an entirely new class that had come upon the stage of history during the French Revolution of 1789. He went on to outline the basic characteristic of communism: absolute equality which requires the abolition of private property and the equal distribution of all goods. Stein then continued by considering the various communist and socialist movements such as those of Fourier, Saint Simon, Blanqui and Louis Blanc.

Stein is frequently referred to as the forerunner of economic materialism and thus his relationship to Marx is of special interest. The first edition of Stein's book was in circulation when Marx arrived in Paris and it is believed that Marx read it in 1842.¹³⁹ Marx's essays on The Class Struggles in France (1850) and The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852) use the same concepts and interpretations of the course of French history; the role of the proletariat which Stein had formulated in his first edition, based of

course on his study of the French, is the main theme of the Communist Manifesto of 1848. The extent to which Marx was actually stimulated by Stein's theory remains controversial. However, most scholars who have studied the Stein-Marx connection would agree that Stein's great contribution is "his sociological characterization of the proletariat."¹⁴⁰ He discussed ideas such as the class struggle, the role of the proletariat and the inevitability of communism which were soon to be taken up by Marx.

Etienne Cabet was the most important communist during this period. He was born on January 1, 1788, in Dijon, the son of Claude Cabet, a master cooper. Cabet's major intellectual influences were his lycée teacher, Joseph Jacotot, and Victor Proudhon, dean of the Dijon law school. From Jacotot he acquired his comprehensive education and under his influence, Cabet's views of life took on that revolutionary character which later made him such an enemy of the bourgeoisie.¹⁴¹ Politically, both Jacotot and Proudhon were located on the left and they both lost their jobs for supporting Napoleon's liberal promises of the Hundred Days.

Cabet received his law degree in May of 1812, and afterwards became a successful lawyer in Dijon until he was faced with a malpractice suit which resulted in his suspension from the bar for a year. This prompted him to move to Paris where he had already established contacts during a visit to that city in 1816. In Paris, he became secretary to a wealthy lawyer, Felix Nicod. This association enabled Cabet to meet many active liberals who were

opposed to the Bourbons. Inevitably, he became acquainted with the Charbonnerie, the only major conspiracy against the Bourbon regime. Here he met Charles Teste and Voyer d'Argenson, transmitters of the Babeuvist tradition. During this period, Cabet read Buonarroti's book on the Babeuvist conspiracy with much interest. In Toute la verité du peuple (1842), he writes:

I had known Buonarroti for a long time, his opinions, his feelings, his admiration for Robespierre, his attachment to Babeuf, whose efforts and misfortunes he had shared, and finally his enthusiasm. I had for him, for his devotion, for his virtues, for his work, a sincere devotion. I was one of the first patriots, who, on return from exile, received from him his book, Histoire de la conspiration de Babeuf as an expression of his esteem.¹⁴²

Cabet considered the French Revolution of 1789 as a whole to be morally good. He supported all the articles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen and the Constitution of 1791, except for the latter's property qualification on voting. He condemned the Thermidorian persecution of the Jacobins, whom he referred to as the patriots of the period. They had saved France from disaster. He justified the dictatorship of the Committee of Public Safety and the Terror: "'93 was not the republic but war; and throughout the duration of this stormy epoch, it was a question not of liberty or of institutions but of combat, of defense, of life or death for the nation."¹⁴³

This was as far as he was prepared to go in defense of the Jacobins; however, many of his ideas fitted nicely into the Jacobin tradition. For instance, in 1833 he advocated a devotion to the

principle of popular sovereignty--the citizen becomes virtuous. Moreover, Cabet declared the necessity of revolution by legislation, or, if necessary, by force. Though he favoured the former, he did not completely rule out the use of violence, as is often believed: "If the people were united, if it existed as a people for a single day, a single hour, its powerful hand or its voice alone would at once resuscitate its rights, and force would then be acting only to assure the triumph of justice."¹⁴⁴

Cabet became a communist during his five year exile in England from 1834-39. He decided to leave France instead of serving a prison term for press offences. A number of influences played a part in his conversion to communism. One was the reality of the dire poverty in which he found himself. Another was his depressed emotional state, perhaps a reflection of his poverty. The latter "appears to have been crucial in his transition to communism."¹⁴⁵ There were also intellectual forces at work which drew him to communism. While he was in London, he met and discussed social ideas with Robert Owen. Owen's cooperative communities appealed to Cabet. He read Thomas More's Utopia during the winter of 1835-36.¹⁴⁶ There are many similarities between More's utopia, and Icaria, the community which Cabet later designed. Finally, Cabet spent many hours in the British Museum reading and reassessing the French Revolution of 1789. His four volume Histoire populaire de la révolution française (1840) was a product of this study. In this work, he praised the wisdom of the Committee of Public Safety and especially that of Robespierre.

Cabet's other work of his period of exile, Voyage en Icarie, enlightens the reader on the nature of his communism. La communauté is the basis of Icaria. Icaria is a centrally-planned, but democratically run egalitarian state, with neither private property, police courts nor money. Given the natural equality of people, the only way they can become truly human is by living in a society constructed for it. Social or economic equality is the dominant factor in his society. Everyone is to receive equal amounts of food and clothing, houses and furnishings. Some individual taste is allowed. The fundamental social unit is the family--averaging twenty people. Cabet deplored the condition of the family under capitalism and felt that it had been reduced to an economic unit.

The units of production and distribution are owned by the State, which is the community of Icarians. Members of committees are chosen from a popularly elected national assembly of about two hundred members to be in charge of such things as agriculture, industry and commerce. Agriculture is highly scientific and new knowledge is circulated through a journal devoted to it. Industrial production is pursued entirely on the basis of the factory system in which a highly coordinated process produces a single product per factory. There are no artisans in Icaria. Management in factories is completely democratic: "In each factory, the rules are deliberated and the functionaries elected by the workers themselves, while the laws common to all factories are made by those elected by the entire People."¹⁴⁷

Cabet did not go into the intricate details of the plan of

distribution in Icaria. He did say that goods other than food are stored in huge warehouses and that the Icarian simply goes to it and takes out what he needs. Apparently, Icarian education is so successful that greed is eliminated and no one would take more than he requires. Food is actually delivered to each household.

Cabet considered work to be a necessary evil which should be made as short and as pleasant as possible. Thus, factories would be clean, and painted in bright colours. The working day would be seven hours long in the summer and six in the winter. Each person works because he realizes that it is for the good of the community; it is a public function.

Education is of prime importance in Icaria--it permeates life. It is "the foundation of our entire social and political system."¹⁴⁸ What does this education consist of? First, physical education and detailed instructions on pre-natal care and child rearing practices. All children should be taught how to be sociable and to read and write before they are sent to school, which begins at the age of six. The first twelve years are devoted to the development of the intellect, a sense of duty and discipline, and the creation of a disposition which would be necessary for life in Icaria. Both sexes are given basically the same education. At age eighteen for boys, seventeen for girls, specialized education begins when they choose their professions. They are to select the type of work best suited to their natural abilities.

The educational system puts heavy stress on one's civic duty which is absolutely necessary for the maintenance of law and order in

a society lacking in police and law courts. Offences are rare as the reason for committing them--inequality of wealth--has been eliminated. As he puts it: "there is no crime nor instance of human misery which is not provoked and sustained by inequality of wealth, by property and money."¹⁴⁹ The rare minor offences are handled by ad hoc people's courts. An example of a minor offence would be making unkind remarks about another person. More serious offences, which are not specified, are dealt with by the popular assembly of each locale consisting of approximately two thousand members. Order in Icaria is based on public censorship. To Cabet this type of pressure is democratic, although to others it might smack of totalitarianism.

Cabet thought it would take fifty years to establish la communauté. During the period of transition, a dictator would be in charge. Inheritance would be abolished; as each property owner died, his goods would go to the state. Simultaneously, all property would be heavily taxed and a progressive income tax would be introduced.

Cabet is usually depicted as a utopian and an anti-revolutionary, without a sophisticated understanding of the real nature of class relations in mid-nineteenth century France. While such attitudes are well documented in his writings, it may also be proven that he did not rule out revolution entirely and that his later understanding of social relations was much less utopian than has generally been believed.

Cabet's original conception of class relations was relatively simple and based on his understanding of the French revolution of 1789.

Antagonism existed in society, but it was between the rich and the poor: the aristocratie and the peuple. This antagonism could be overcome by the rational persuasion of all sides that a better life could be constructed. Power was still in the hands of an aristocracy, an aristocracy of wealth rather than one of birth. He felt that the aristocratie d'argent or bourgeoisie, a class situated between the aristocracy and the people, were a potential ally of the people. What is significant is that he changed his viewpoint on the latter in the 1840s--the bourgeoisie was really the enemy of the people who became more and more identified in his mind with the working classes.

By 1843, Cabet had made his reputation as a communist who had rejected the tactics universally associated with communism at this time, i.e., the promotion of violent revolution by means of conspiratorial secret societies. He wanted to bring communism into the open through the use of propaganda: people were to be convinced rationally of the efficacy of his ideal society. The transformation from the old to the new society would be facilitated by a dictatorship which would also have the role of coordinating the first steps of the new society. Thus Cabet's tactical program consisted of three steps: the development of a great cross-class movement through propaganda and organization; the legal conquest of political power by the communist majority; the election of a dictator who would initiate the transition to communism. Ideally, the communauté was to be ordained by the general will of the useful (non-aristocratic) citizens of the nation. Therefore, he would not only have the task of persuading the workers,

but also the bourgeoisie of the benefits of a communist society. The bourgeoisie did not respond favourably to Cabet's communist propaganda. They were not convinced that they would be better off in Cabet's new world because every bourgeois function would be either eliminated or altered in Icaria. The supervision of commerce, manufacturing and the distribution and consumption of goods would be the responsibility of elected officials.

However, Cabet had no difficulty in winning the support of the working class. Although many of his followers were drawn from those active in secret societies, Cabet attracted many who had little or no political conviction previously. This points to the important role he played in the politicization of the French worker. He continually stressed the "point d'indifference politique," new in 1846.¹⁵⁰ Flora Tristan had popularized it in her Union ouvrière (1843). The strongest statement Cabet made on this issue appeared in the Almanach in 1847:

Misery will not end for us until the spirit of brotherhood and solidarity is universal, when all workers of one department, all the workers of France even those of Europe really understand that they are a community; that they should rescue themselves and all sign a petition to reclaim justice and their rights.¹⁵¹

Cabet's changing attitude towards class relations revealed his grasp of social realities. His conception of the nature of capitalism was much more sophisticated than before. He spoke of the transition to the communauté as being facilitated by the monopolization of the means of production into the hands of a few "gros capitalistes." In Le Populaire, he says:

Financial, industrial and commercial concentration is one of the principal features of the epoch and a significant movement over the last several years. And this movement can only continue to grow in rapid progression.

And it is this that will lead to Community; for on one side, in ruining all the little manufactures, it makes a great social reform necessary; and on the other, in concentrating the workshops, the stores, the mines, the railways, etc., etc., it shows the economies and the power of concentration of association, of unity and prepares the way for Community which is nothing but the most vast association and the most complete concentration, but in the interest of all.

Realized in the interest of a few while ruining the mass of men, concentration is a calamity; but realized in the common interest on the basis of fraternity, concentration which would be then called communism, is the greatest of benefits for Humanity.¹⁵²

Cabet seemed to be saying that a type of determinism was acting in the evolution of capitalism. His willingness to relinquish his quest for bourgeois support, his emphasis on working class solidarity and the idea of the concentration of capital all present to the historian a somewhat different picture of Cabet.

Finally, something must be mentioned about his tactics.

Certainly Cabet is remembered for his maxim that communism must be brought about by persuasion; however, the problem is somewhat more complicated than it is usually presented.

Firstly, Icaria itself was the result of a revolution, after which one man was given the role of dictator. Secondly, Cabet had been an ardent revolutionary before and during the revolution of 1830. As noted earlier, he was a member of the Charbonnerie and probably wrote the most famous description of the trial and execution of the four sergents of La Rochelle, the "Mort héroïque de Boires, Goublin, Raoulx et Pommier," printed in the Almanach populaire de la France

(Paris, 1848). In a manuscript dating from 1827, Cabet presented an "Exposé d'une révolution nécessaire dans le gouvernement de la France," in which he called upon the middle class youth to rise against the Restoration. During the Revolution of 1830, he did not fight due to eye problems, but he was a member of the municipal revolutionary commission of the eleventh arrondissement. After the revolution, he did take the post of Procurer-general of Corsica, but he quickly gave it up when he realized what the July Monarchy was really like. In the Chamber of Deputies, where he was a member for two years between 1832 and 1834, he was the most revolutionary voice of democracy.

Arnold Ruge doubted the sincerity of Cabet's pacifism.¹⁵³ Engels was of the same opinion, writing in the New Moral World, "even the Icarians, though they declare in their publications that they abhor physical revolution and secret societies, seize upon every opportunity to establish a republic by force."¹⁵⁴

The most correct judgement of Cabet's attitude towards violent revolution seems to be as follows: although for purposes of safety, he presented the appearance of being opposed to revolution in any form, he could conceive of a revolution as a means of social change if it would be one of the entire nation against a corrupt group controlling the government. What he was really opposed to was the formation of secret societies like the Society of the Seasons. Although he viewed the type of revolution just described as favourable, he could not stomach the spectre of class warfare even though he understood the depth of class antagonism. Thus, the image of Cabet as a timid

anti-revolutionary is somewhat exaggerated.

Cabet played a major role during the early stages of the Revolution of 1848, but he was destroyed by the violent anti-communist propaganda of April and May which centered on Blanqui and the publication of the Taschereau document. By the June days, Cabet's movement had lost its unity. Despite Cabet's moderate position with regard to revolution, it was charged that he, Blanqui and the other communists had been planning to turn the revolution into a blood bath from which a communist dictatorship would emerge.

Cabet then left for America to attempt the construction of a communist regime in Illinois. To remain in France would have demanded that he promote a proletarian revolution, at least as a long term goal. This he could not do. Cabet's reason for leaving France was that the government threatened to destroy communism in France and therefore it could only be saved by removing it elsewhere. The bourgeoisie was the enemy and since we cannot go to war with it, let us avoid the conflict by leaving--such were the terms in which he solved his dilemma.

Of great historical significance is the fact that the majority of the German communists, after passing through a phase of real sympathy for Cabet, left Paris for London and came under the influence of Karl Marx. Although Schapper, Moll, Bauer and their friends were never Icarians, Cabet was their favorite communist and they were especially impressed with his idea of the need for a mass movement and his denunciation of conspiratorial organization. Their evolution is

an indication of how short a step it was from Cabet to Marx in 1847.

Engels referred to Cabet as a "utopian communist"¹⁵⁵ in his introduction to the 1888 English version of the Communist Manifesto. This is primarily because Cabet designed a utopian community, called Icaria and because he established experimental communities in the United States. Cabet's communities differed from those of socialists like Robert Owen in that Cabet advocated a radical form of communism and wanted to establish it on a nationwide basis. He believed that equality was a practical proposition and he was deadly serious about equality.

Cabet played the important role of intermediary between the Jacobin-Babeuvist tradition and the communists of the 1840s.¹⁵⁶ In his pamphlets Comment je suis communiste and Mon credo communiste, both written in 1841, he refers to the ideas of 1789 and 1793 as the basis of his communism. Although he became a communist in London, his communist goals were based on the revolutionary force which drove Babeuf and his conspiracy beyond Robespierism.

Although Blanqui has been discussed within the context of the 1830s, his influence on the emerging communist movement of the 1840s was significant. Blanqui had developed the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat before 1848, even though no one has been able to document his use of that term.¹⁵⁷ His first reference to the idea was at his trial in 1832, then in February 1848 he argued for placing military and political power immediately in the hands of the working class, and for postponing elections so that the interim organizations

of the revolutionary proletariat would have time to re-educate the people in terms of their true interests. Even Marx equates "the revolutionary proletariat" with Blanqui. In The Class Struggles in France, Marx states: "The proletariat is more and more uniting around revolutionary socialism; around communism, which the bourgeoisie itself baptised with the name of Blanqui."¹⁵⁸ Blanqui and his comrades were designated by Marx as "the real leaders of the proletarian party and the revolutionary communists," in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.¹⁵⁹

Permanent revolution, another key term to revolutionary communism was also borrowed from Blanqui. Marx rejected the concept when it was proposed by working class leaders in Cologne during the year 1848-49, but he embraced "revolution in permanence" as the slogan of the reorganized Communist League in March 1850.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the letters sent from London Central Committee to the German leaders of the Communist League in March indicated that the classical Illuminist-Buonarrotian-Blanquist type of conspiracy had taken root among the Germans. Agents sent from London were instructed to recruit people to the League who were already active in some type of revolutionary organization. There would be three levels of members. The outer, consisting of local and provincial groups would be told nothing about the inner circle which would be the nucleus. The secret hierarchical movement would be controlled by the London Central Committee, "which would sanction selective terror against hated individuals or public buildings associated with hated memories."¹⁶¹ The League consisted of:

a union of the Communist League with the Blanquists and the Chartists and was called the "World League of Revolutionary Communists," a type of super secret society which aimed at overthrowing all privileged classes, the dictatorship of the proletariat and permanent revolution until the realization of communism.¹⁶² The League, was, however, temporary in nature. By October 1850, it was clear the circumstances which had made revolution possible in 1848 no longer existed. The League dissolved.

One thinker often associated with the socialism and communism of the 1840s, but who is neither socialist nor communist is Pierre Joseph Proudhon. Although Proudhon said that "property is theft," in his famous What is Property? (1840), he did not call for an abolition of private property, but for a purification of property. Evidence supporting this argument may be found in his Premier Mémoire of 1840 which is more against what he called the droit d'aubaine, or the right which property gives its owners to levy tolls on others. Property allows the owner to take revenue from the non-owner and this leads to the droit de vol (right of theft). Proudhon believed that if private property is infused with the principle of justice it is no longer condemnable, but praiseworthy.¹⁶³ Ownership is a liberating influence:

Property in its modern forms . . . may in fact be considered a triumph of liberty. For it is born of liberty; not, as it may first appear against right, but through the operation of a much better understanding of right.¹⁶⁴

In his Système des contradictions économique (1846), he criticizes communism:

The community [of goods] is nothing but the exaltation of the state, the glorification of the police . . . communism reproduces . . . all the contradictions of liberal political economy. Mankind, like a drunk, hesitates and flounders between two abysses, property on the one hand, community [of goods] and statism on the other: the question is how [humanity] can traverse this mountain pass where the head thus is seized by vertigo and the feet refuse their service.¹⁶⁵

Proudhon as Marx soon recognized, was hostile to communism and is remembered rather as the father of anarcho-syndicalism.¹⁶⁶

Cabet and Blanqui were not the only voices of communism in Paris at this time. Dézamy, Pillot and Laponneraye were also major communists especially concerned with resolving problems of class struggle and the economic and social transformation of society.

Théodore Dézamy (1808-1850) was an impoverished young student from Dijon who came to Paris in the early 1840s. He was a member of Blanqui's Society of the Seasons and later collaborated with Cabet on Le Populaire. Dézamy had initially joined with Cabet and Lamennais in a united front of social revolutionary opposition to the rise of officially sponsored nationalism that followed the Blanquist uprising in 1839, the subsequent scare with Germany and the conquest of Algeria. Dézamy worked with Cabet on an anti-nationalist compendium French Patriots Read and Blush with Shame (1840). Lamennais, who was one of the first radicals of the 1830s and 1840s referred to by the government as "communist," was soon denounced by Dézamy for not being communist enough. In 1841, Dézamy produced a pamphlet entitled M. Lamennais Refuted by Himself, in which he criticized Lemennais for his religious principles. He also came out against Cabet in Slanders and Politics

of M. Cabet (1842). In this Dézamy rejected Cabet's method of propaganda as a means to communism. He also argued that ideological as well as political discipline was necessary for communism.

This idea is brought out in the May and June issues of Dézamy's newspaper, L'Egalitaire (1840). According to Dézamy, the key to the worker's emancipation was the comprehension of his situation from a philosophical point of view. Dézamy, in the tradition of the French materialists of the eighteenth century, provides a materialist doctrine to serve as the basis for communism. As Roger Caraudy, the main authority on Dézamy writes: "Except for Blanqui, no French writer before 1848 had urged with such rigour the development of communist materialism."¹⁶⁷

L'Egalitaire also criticized liberal economics in every form. He presented a wide tableau of misery. Under the aegis of free competition, wheat prices rise yet wages are cut, industrialists destroy each other while throwing men out of work, the grain dealers, in the name of competition monopolize the harvests driving prices even higher, and all this is sanctioned by the political regime. Thus the people suffer. Consequently, the journal promoted a call to action:

The moment has come for you to wake up and to realize that you are men. Only through the fraternal union of workingmen, a thoughtful confederation of their condition and the concentration of their energies on political matters may the road to equality be opened.¹⁶⁸

Dézamy's major work, Code de la Communauté (1842) presented an alternative to Cabet's Voyage en Icarie. He began with a vicious

critique of capitalism. The three major defects of the capitalist system were: the conflict of individual interests caused by free competition on the one hand and monopoly on the other, the antagonism between classes and the exploitation and crushing of the proletariat. Class antagonism and class warfare are Dézamy's major areas of interest. In discussing the conflict between classes, Dézamy cited in his Almanach de la communauté (1843) Jean Reynaud, an almost forgotten socialist thinker. Reynaud clearly differentiated between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie: "I call proletarians the people . . . who own nothing but the daily wage of their labor and whose future rests solely on a hope no less precarious than the unpredictable and chaotic performance of industry."¹⁶⁹ The bourgeoisie are "people who possess capital and live on the annual income it yields, who hold industry in their pay . . . The bourgeois are the owners starting from the wealthiest . . . right down to the most modest . . ."¹⁷⁰

Following this critique, Dézamy shows that the only remedy is the radical change of the social and economic regime. Communism is the only solution: communism achieved through a revolution which would immediately confiscate all property and money. Swift and total change would be less bloody than a slow process, since communism releases the natural goodness of men. The commune as Dézamy understands it, i.e., the basis of communist society is characterized by three fundamental traits; common property, common education and common work. All work is public and praiseworthy function. The basis of all social organization is happiness, la bonheur, which is also the final goal:

It is a goal, a final end to which all the desires and actions of men lead to. This goal, this final end, is the free and regular development of our being, the full and complete satisfaction of all our needs--physical, intellectual and moral.¹⁷¹

La bonheur de la communauté consists of equality, fraternity and unity which he defines as follows:

Equality is a harmony, a perfect equilibrium that rules all things, from the largest society to the smallest insect. It is also a law necessary for our social existence. This primordial law is the foundation of all social principles. Outside of equality, no society is possible; one only sees confusion, constraint, dissention and wars.

Fraternity is the sublime sentiment which brings men to live as members of one family. Fraternity is the natural conclusion, the only real palladium of liberty and equality.

Unity is the indissoluble identification of all interests and of all wills, the communauté, full and complete of all the good and all the bad.¹⁷²

Finally, the communauté is nothing more than the realization of unity and fraternity as has just been defined. It is complete unity; unity is all--in education, work, in the home, in life.

An alarmed police report depicted D ezamy's Code de la communaut  as a blueprint for "la communaut  rigoureux, math matique et imm diate."¹⁷³ His arrest and trial in 1844 inspired the most radical of foreign intellectuals living in Paris at the time, Arnold Ruge, Moses Hess and Karl Marx. In The Holy Family, Marx saw in D ezamy one of the most important communist disciples of materialist philosophy: "The more scientific French communists, D ezamy, Gay and others, developed the teachings of materialism as the teaching of real humanism and the logical basis of communism."¹⁷⁴

Jean Jacques Pillot (1809-1877) occupies an important position among the French communists of the 1840s. Originally a priest, he left this vocation in 1838 and commenced his revolutionary activities. During the years 1838-39, Pillot published the journal La Tribune du peuple, and participated in Blanqui's uprising. On July 1, 1840, Pillot along with Dézamy, organized the first communist banquet at Belleville, the one which was described for his English readers by Goodwyn Barmby. Cabet had been invited to this important occasion, but he refused to attend. The reasons for this are obscure; however, the most plausible explanation is that he sought a wider unity on the left and this banquet appeared to Cabet to be motivated by "the spirit of contradiction, of rivalry, of hostility, between certain communists, and the reformists and not by the reflective and prudent concern for the community."¹⁷⁵ Moreover, at this time, Cabet and Dézamy were attacking each other: Cabet claiming that Dézamy had taken his ideas, while Dézamy rejected Cabet's method of employing propaganda.

The leading role at the banquet was played by Pillot who announced that those present were participating in a great event the consequences of which were going to be immeasurable. At six p.m., some twelve hundred workers and communist sympathizers were called to order by Pillot. To illustrate their fervour for equality, they refused to elect a chairman. Pillot began the first of many speeches by stressing "the first two qualities that ought not to cease to shine among us . . . the dignity that characterizes the man capable of enjoying his rights, and the gentle candidness inspired by the

sentiments of a sincere fraternity."¹⁷⁶

Then followed numerous speeches and toasts by various participants. A series of speakers invoked the work communism for the first time before such an audience. The major terms used in their speeches were unity and equality. They advocated community and common happiness. Some were more sophisticated in their statements of communism than others. For instance, Duval the barber, who advocated the abolition of free competition said:

It is this dreadful evil that excites such cruel discord among the workers, and that . . . sullies, wastes and emphasizes all the products of industry and science. Let this monster, enemy to the peace of all, which even tyrannizes its beneficiaries themselves, expire under the sword of equality.¹⁷⁷

The major significance of the banquet was that communism had come into public view. Its method of propaganda and agitation proved to be successful enough that further banquets were held in Rouen and Lyons later in the month.

As well as his important role at the banquet, Pillot also contributed to the communist movement in his capacity as a writer. In his toast at the banquet, he exhorted those present to support a decisive coup with a fanaticism which would crush tyranny and usher in eternal principles of absolute equality. He went on to explain his communist system, which he defended in his brochures written between 1840-41. The first element in his social teaching is that of science-- the knowledge of the essential characteristics of the laws of matter. Only science, which destroys all the myths, which does not know

anything except the essential properties of matter, can reveal the common principle determining the true conditions of human life.¹⁷⁸

Pillot's social philosophy was greatly influenced by the thinkers of the Enlightenment--especially with respect to the application of the general laws of nature to human society. He affirmed that "The law of nature is the immutable base of all laws. The voice of nature always speaks in the heart of man."¹⁷⁹ Man is not an isolated being. He was born for society and the goal of human life is to guarantee the well being of men. The fundamental cause of man's misfortunes is ignorance and this ignorance is kept alive by religion; religious myths serve to terrify the people and aid their exploiters. Christianity has not abolished slavery, but kept the people in chains and Catholicism has sanctioned the idea of the power of man over man.

Throughout the course of history, people have not only been exploited by the Church, but also by the nobility and the power of the State. The institution of the monarchy was a means of suffocating equality and it was invented to intimidate people. These ideas are brought out in his book Ni châteaux ni chaumières (1841). In this work, he distinguished two periods in the history of the monarchy. During the first, the royal power was founded upon its divine right involving a pact with Catholicism. The monarch ruled by the grace of God and the nation was his property. This dogma, which was accepted by the people, was based on a material and ideological view of the world. The people believed the king to be a person having a special power which was absolute; no one questioned his rights. He was the

one who distributed privileges and these privileges were equally recognized as having the sanction of divine right.

The second period of the history of the monarchy began the moment the monarchy lost its glory of divine right. The belief in divine right was indispensable to the maintenance of order in society. The passage to this stage was marked by revolution. This revolution was the natural consequence of all the bad of the old regime. At the beginning of the revolution, satellites of the monarchy were installed. They desired to preserve all they had during the reign of the monarchy. This group, the bourgeoisie, did not bring a definitive victory to the people. With all the changes in government, power remained in the hands of the privileged. Nonetheless, the French Revolution was of utmost importance--the experience permitted Pillot to see in France, "the fundamental hearth in which the regenerating fire would spread life to all parts of the earth."¹⁸⁰ Pillot considered the year 1793 as the culmination in the development of the revolution. The immortal Revolution of '93 did not resemble anything which preceded it. The merit of the militants of '93 was that they unveiled to the people a new vision--the vision of happiness. Their mission was to destroy the old sound edifice and "its ideas, institutions, prejudices and monstrosities."¹⁸¹ The Revolution of 1793 destroyed all religious mystification clearing the way for a future revolution which would abolish all exploitation and domination.

Without a doubt, Pillot saw the Babeuvists as his predecessors and masters. According to Babeuf, the revolution was made in the name

of human dignity and the eternal rights of man which the old regime criminally violated. The Babeuvists, who wanted to establish a social order which guaranteed the well being of everyone, not only proposed a system which was the logical consequence of the principles of '93, but represented the only way of realizing an effective association and giving total satisfaction to man's needs.

Pillot was thus a neo-Babeuvist who advocated the rule of equality. He believed that the communist order could not possibly come into being without a struggle. A future revolution was inevitable and would be successful. In La Tribune du peuple he wrote: "The revolution is not dead; it will continue to struggle and will inevitably be victorious."¹⁸² He stressed the difference between the revolution of the past and that of the future in Ni château, ni chaumières: The goal of the future revolution is the death of classes and the resolution of all social problems. Communists occupied a special place in the revolution: as a highly organized elite of professional revolutionaries, they would be in charge of the active overthrow of the rich. Pillot himself ended up by realizing this role by directing one of the revolutionary clubs during the Revolution of 1848. He later participated in the Paris Commune and as a result was condemned to prison for the rest of his life.

Albert Laponneraye (1808-1849) was another participant in the communist banquet of 1840. He edited a newspaper called L'Intelligence which first appeared in 1837. This journal was called by Cabet, "the standard bearer of the egalitarian party, the communist party."¹⁸³

L'Intelligence was important because it was the first journal to translate successfully the revolutionary visions of middle class intellectuals into an appealing message for the working class. Laponneraye developed the idea of class conflict in the French Revolution and promoted popular education. Education for him was not just the circulation of knowledge, but the creation of a new person--an anti-egotistical being. He thus provided for the worker a new perspective on the French Revolution, one which held meaning for him. Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety were glorified, and the mission of the communists in the 1840s was to combine Robespierre with Babeuf, i.e., combine authoritarian means with egalitarian ends. Babeuf's agrarian law was to be replaced by a more thorough "repartition pro-rated according to need, designed to create a totalistic community of rights, labour and duties."¹⁸⁴

Laponneraye's ideas on class struggle were more thoroughly expounded in his History of the French Revolution (1838). As an historian of the French Revolution, he considered the class struggle to be the motor of history. The French nation was divided into two classes, one of which was the exploited and the other the exploiter. The exploited class was composed of the Third Estate, the multitude kept in servitude by the First Estate the nobility and the priesthood who held all privilege, honour, dignity and wealth. After the bourgeois victory in 1789, a change took place: sovereignty passed from the hands of the clergy and the nobility into the hands of the bourgeoisie. This occurred without benefitting the people. Although

the bourgeoisie decreed equality before the law, this equality was a chimera when it was not a part of institutions. He classified the bourgeoisie as false democrats because they stopped short of an egalitarian community of goods. They were not prepared to fight for the liberation of the proletariat and were, in their own way, just as bad as the previous class of exploiters. Finally, Laponneraye stressed the need for a radical revolution in which the proletariat would assume the role that the Third Estate took in 1789.¹⁸⁵

This survey of some of the leading French communists of the 1840s has hopefully demonstrated that the movement came of age during the decade. It was also finally baptized; the goal and the militancy were together expressed in the work which quickly replaced its fuzzier predecessors. Although there was still a certain amount of flexibility in its usage, the word communism had acquired most of the connotations which have remained with it to this day. It was ready and waiting to be adopted by Marx and Engels in their historic Manifesto.

What is probably most striking about the whole affair is that the Communist Manifesto marks less a beginning than a beginning of the end, as far as the nineteenth century is concerned, for the word communist. The conditions that gave rise to its hopes for an imminent transformation of society disappeared with the failure of the 1848 revolutions. A new age in which realpolitik replaced romanticism was dawning and the ideas which formed the content of communism no longer seemed relevant. They did not vanish but became part of the elaborate theoretical structure of dialectical materialism. But as

far as action was concerned, the future in western Europe lay with workingmen's associations which felt more comfortable with the less inflammatory term socialist. The dissolution of the reorganized Communist League in late 1850 was a reluctant recognition that times had changed.

CONCLUSION

Babeuf and his successors discussed in this thesis are often treated as precursors of Marx and Lenin. To look upon those who participated in the early development of communism only as "precursors" is not only to do them an injustice but to distort their place in history. They were not trying to anticipate someone else's ideas; they were attempting to express and implement their own. Babeuf is too often seen as a somewhat primitive proto-Marxist whose vision was limited by the circumstances of his day. What should be apparent instead is how complete was his grasp of the inner logic of communism, and how early in the history of the movement its essentials emerged.

As we have noted, the ideal of equality put forward by Rousseau and his followers meant nothing to the lower classes, who not only had to suffer poverty, but were penalized for it by being denied the vote. Babeuf and his followers believed that genuine equality could only be realized through the abolition of private property. This was an old dream, but new circumstances made it seem possible in the near future. However, the achievement of economic equality was a formidable task. Unless one is to be satisfied with small utopian communities existing precariously within a bourgeois state, economic equality can only be attained on a large scale by imposing it from above. In order to do that one must have control of the state apparatus itself. Although in theory it is possible to obtain this control by democratic means after a long process of organization and

education, in practice this does not represent a viable option. Communists do not want equality in the distant and problematic future--they want it now. Moreover, they have rarely operated in an environment favourable to the gradualist approach adopted by, say, the Fabians in Great Britain. Certainly it was not likely in Babeuf's day with a government, the Directory, firmly dedicated to economic inequality. Thus, the only path that lay open was one that had become very familiar since 1789: revolution.

Attempts to seize power by violence are as old as history, but they usually did not involve the people themselves to any extent. The great lesson of the French Revolution appeared to be that the people had demonstrated they could take their destiny in their own hands. In reality, of course, it was not that simple. But the revolutionary journées, in which the crowd was able to influence events at the centre of power, provided a model of how it could be done. The actual unfolding of the French Revolution depended more on chance than planning; ideology was involved but it emerged as changing conditions dictated. What was different about Babeuf's idea of revolution was that it was organized from the beginning for a specific purpose: the achievement of l'égalité parfaite. It was to be a new type of revolution.

However, such an operation was fraught with difficulties. Would the common people, who might be persuaded to unite against oppression and deprivation, be willing to fight for an abstract ideal of equality, which seemed to offer them no immediate benefits? The

fact that only a few of Babeuf's supporters were drawn to him because they agreed with or even understood his programme indicates that the answer was at least doubtful. However, Babeuf was aware of this and was happy to utilize anyone who was willing to join with him for whatever reason. One of the purposes of Buonarroti's multi-level societies was to make use of any source of discontentment, as long as it could be controlled by the more radical members of the inner circle. The value of "front" organizations was recognized early.

It was intended that the leadership of a small group would have to be maintained after the successful revolution in the form of a dictatorship. There was nothing inherently sinister in this since dictatorship in Roman times was by definition temporary. A short period of unlimited power seemed a small enough concession to make when balanced against the good to be accomplished, namely, the preparation of the people for more direct participation by means of re-education.

Babeuf, therefore, had a clear understanding of what was necessary for the attainment of perfect equality. First, there must be a revolution led by a dedicated few. This revolution would be followed by a period of temporary dictatorship so that the people could be readied for their new life of equality by those who had already been converted to it. George Lichtheim sums up the importance of Babeuf as follows:

In this respect, Babeuf and his associates appear as the precursors of 19th century radicals like Blanqui, and at

a remove, the Russian Revolutionary Populists of the 1860's and 1870's whose heritage was subsequently assumed by the Bolsheviks. The extreme wing of the French Revolution may thus be said to have given birth to a set of notions, which, while never successful in France, were destined to become politically effective in Russia.¹⁸⁶

The failure of the Conspiracy of Equals combined with the charged circumstances of the first quarter of the nineteenth century led Buonarroti to emphasize the mechanism of organization and the preparations necessary for a successful coup. By reviving and publicizing Babeuvism in his book of 1828 he paved the way for a resurgence of revolutionary communism just when the old order was breaking down again. According to one authority on this subject, Arthur Lehning: "It caused not only a revival of the Jacobin tradition under the July Monarchy, but also introduced for the first time the ideology of state communism."¹⁸⁷

Blanqui continued and expanded Buonarroti's work in secret societies throughout the 1830s and 1840s. He transmitted the heritage of Babeuvism to the generation of the 1840s, thus providing an important link between nineteenth century radicals. In the words of M. Dommanget, "the liaison between Babouvism and Bolshevism, by way of revolutionary Marxism is realized so to speak through Blanquism."¹⁸⁸ Blanqui is also of significance for his discussion of the proletariat as a group of oppressed and exploited people. It is here that he introduces his ideas on class struggle, especially the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. But it was his vision of a group of professional revolutionaries seizing power on behalf of the

silent and suffering majority that, in the words of Lichtheim, "made him an ancestor of the Russian 'Jacobins' such as Peter Tkachev, who handed the conspiratorial and elitist faith on to Lenin."¹⁸⁹

Communism during the 1840s was based on the legacy of Babeuvism reactivated by the blatant inequalities of the July Monarchy. The communists of that decade were particularly concerned with resolving problems of class struggle and the economic transformation of society. All concluded that communism, achieved through violent revolution was the only remedy for society's ills. Thus, by 1847-48 the concept of communism had enough meaning and emotional force to be taken up by Marx and Engels and, although it lay dormant for the next half century, it was ready for Lenin when he felt the need for it.

Footnotes

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¹⁵⁴ Frederick Engels, "Progress of Social Reform on the Continent," New Moral World, no. 19 (November 4, 1843 cited in Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Collected Works, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), p. 397.

¹⁵⁵ Frederick Engels, "Preface to the 1888 English edition of the Communist Manifesto, pp. 27-28.

¹⁵⁶ Lichtheim, p. 30.

¹⁵⁷Spitzer, p. 176.

¹⁵⁸Karl Marx, The Class Struggles in France (New York: International Publishers, 1964), p. 126.

¹⁵⁹Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p. 23.

¹⁶⁰Billington, p. 284.

¹⁶¹From the copy of the secret directive of the committee edited in London, March 1850, as captured by the Saxon police, sent to the friendly German governments and cited from the Wurtemberg Archives by Stadelmann, 164-65, cited in Billington, p. 284.

¹⁶²The statutes of the Society were published by D. Rizahov in Unter dern Banner des Marxismus (March 1928), nos. 4-5, pp. 144-45, cited in Billington, p. 292.

¹⁶³Lichtheim, p. 90.

¹⁶⁴Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Système des contradictions économiques (1846), I, 284, cited in Lichtheim, p. 92.

¹⁶⁵P. J. Proudhon, Theory of Property (1863-64), cited in Selected Writings of P. J. Proudhon, trans. and eds. Stewart Edwards, Elizabeth Fraser (New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 140.

¹⁶⁶Lichtheim, p. 83.

¹⁶⁷Roger Garaudy, Les sources scientifiques du socialisme (Paris: Hier et Aujourd'hui), p. 202.

¹⁶⁸Théodore Dézamy, L'Egalitaire, no. 1 (May 1840), 9, 13; no. 2 (June 1840), 36, 37, 49, cited in Johnson, Utopian Communism, p. 70.

¹⁶⁹Jean Reynaud, Revue encyclopédique, LIV, 12, cited in David A. Griffiths, "Jean Reynaud: An Unfamiliar Page from the History of Socialist Thought," Science and Society 46 (Spring 1982-Winter 1983), 364.

¹⁷⁰Reynaud, p. 18 in Griffiths, 364.

¹⁷¹Dézamy, Code de communauté (Paris: Editions d'histoire sociale, 1842), p. 10.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁷³Samuel Bernstein, "Le Neo Babouvism d'Après la Presse 1837-1848," Babeuf et les problèmes du Babouvism: colloque international de Stockholm (Paris:

¹⁷⁴Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, The Holy Family in Collected Works, p. 131.

¹⁷⁵Cabet, Toute la vérité au peuple (Paris, 1844), p. 38, cited in Johnson, Utopian, p. 73.

¹⁷⁶Dézamy et al., Premier banquet communiste, le 1er juillet 1840 (Paris, 1840), pp. 1-3, cited in Johnson, p. 73.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Jean Jacques Pillot, Histoire des égaux (Paris, 1840), pp. 20, 29, cited in V. P. Volguine, "Jean Jacques Pillot, Communiste Utopiste," La Pensée (March-April 1959), 40.

¹⁷⁹Pillot, Ni château, ni chaumières, p. 33, cited in Volguine, "Jean Jacques Pillot," 41.

¹⁸⁰Pillot, Ni châteaux, p. 35, cited in Volguine, 44.

¹⁸¹Ibid., p. 42.

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¹⁸³Cabet, Histoire du Journal "Intelligence," 7 (undated fragment in Bibliothèque Nationale) identified only as an extract from Le Populaire, no. 6, cited Billington, p. 247.

¹⁸⁴Laponneraye, "Babeuf et son système," L'Intelligence (February 1-2, 1840), cited in Billington, p. 249.

¹⁸⁵Laponneraye, "Place au Proletariat," L'Intelligence (September 4, 1837), cited in Billington, p. 249.

¹⁸⁶Lichtheim, pp. 21-22.

¹⁸⁷Lehning, p. 83.

¹⁸⁸M. Dommanget, Auguste Blanqui à Belle-Ile, Paris: Librairie du travail, 1935, pp. 7-11.

¹⁸⁹Lichtheim, p. 68.

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