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Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Dec., 1929), pp. 498-527

Published by: [The Academy of Political Science](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2143015>

Accessed: 14/12/2012 05:40

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## BLANQUI AND COMMUNISM

IT is a commonplace, admitted by all except the "scientific" historians, that each generation writes anew its history, re-selecting the facts and altering the emphasis, in accordance with changing interests and ends. This is as true in the history of socialism as elsewhere. Since the Russian Revolution we have seen the increase in magnitude of certain supposedly obscure nineteenth-century revolutionaries and the decrease of others. The historical importance of no one of them, probably, has changed more than that of L. A. Blanqui. In France and in Russia a long list of books has been written during the last ten years, discovering in Blanqui a thinker of considerable importance, and the connecting link between Babeuf and Bolshevism.<sup>1</sup> His few published works have been fished out of forgotten hiding-places and his relation to the Revolution of 1848 and to the Paris Commune newly studied.

The historians of nineteenth-century socialism had assigned to Blanqui a minor position. To them his greatest achievement, possibly, was the giving of his name to a Parisian boulevard, or perhaps his election to the Chamber of Deputies in 1879. The Blanquist party in France had never consisted of more than 2,500 members. He was chiefly known as one of the prominent radical republicans of 1848 and as the leader of two or three rather ridiculous attempts to seize power with a handful of followers, notably in 1839 and 1870. His most

<sup>1</sup> In French: Suzanne Wasserman, *Les Clubs de Barbès et Blanqui en 1848* (Paris, 1913), a careful historical account; Charles Da Costa, *Les Blanquistes* (Paris, 1912), a good description of the Blanquist party in the sixties; Alexandre Zevaès, *Auguste Blanqui* (Paris, 1920), a long but very superficial book; Maurice Dommanget, *Blanqui* (Paris, 1923), the best treatment of Blanqui's ideas. In Russian, among others: Goryev, *Auguste Blanqui* (Moskva, 1921); Velichnika, *Blanqui* (Moskva, 1921); Gustave Geffroy, *Blanqui, evo jizn i revoliutsionnaia deatel nost*. Recent translation from the French: Zevaès, *Blanqui* (1922). In addition the numerous books on the Paris Commune which have come out in recent years all give considerable space to Blanqui.

important work, *La Critique Sociale*, a posthumous, two-volume collection of short essays and aphorisms, assembled by the pious hand of a disciple, was rarely if ever read. Marx and Engels, his most prominent socialist contemporaries, had for him only a moderate respect. The estimate of Blanqui by the latter is typical of socialist opinion before the Russian Revolution :

Blanqui is really a political revolutionary, socialist only in his emotions, sympathizing with the suffering of the people, but without a socialist theory or definite, practical proposals for social reform ; in his political activities he was essentially a man of deeds, and of the opinion that a small, well organized minority, which strikes at the right moment, can carry with it the mass of the population and thus consummate a successful revolution. . . . One sees that Blanqui is a revolutionary of a past generation.<sup>1</sup>

What is *the just* evaluation of the historical importance of Blanqui? Such a question is a little absurd. I shall content myself in this paper with an attempt to answer a more modest question : what is the position of Blanqui as a forerunner and representative of what is now called communism?

Before the Russian Revolution it would have been impossible to give a definition of communism or to distinguish it from socialism. Or rather, there existed a bewildering number of varying and contradictory meanings. As is well known, communism and socialism exchanged positions a number of times between 1848 and the end of the century. At the time of the *Communist Manifesto*, the term "socialism" was used to describe a large collection of utopian proposals and was opposed by Marx and Engels to their own scientific, revolutionary brand of "communism". Later on when international socialism had, in a general way, defined its principles and organized its adherents, "communism" was usually used to describe the beliefs of certain small sects of voluntarists, generally religious, or the position of certain anarchist-communists such as Kropotkin or Reclus. And now, the term "socialism" having been disgraced, according to Russian communists, by the ac-

<sup>1</sup> *Program der blanquistischen Kommune-Flüchtlinge*, Volkstaat, 1874, no. 73.

tion, or inaction, of the Second International during the war, "communism" must be rescued from the hands of unimportant sectaries and be given the significance of 1848.

Laski, in his little book on communism, describes it as "at once an ideal and a method". The distinctive characteristic of communism, however, is to be found in its method, its revolutionary strategy. The ideal of communism is apparently no different from the ideal of socialism. The Second International and the Third International, at one another's throats on questions of political tactics, harmoniously agree on the nature of the inevitable society to come. In the popular mind communism is identified with a body of revolutionary strategy, and the communists themselves have countenanced this interpretation. At one time the vaguest of social ideals, whose votaries ranged from the mildest of evolutionists to the hardest of revolutionaries, communism has come to signify a narrow set of tactical methods developed and applied by the Bolsheviks. At one time the most ideally "constructive" of utopian dreams, it has become the most "destructive" of practical policies. It has drunk deeply of the waters of Russian nihilism. Needless to say I am not talking of the policies, political or economic, of Soviet Russia. No one either inside or out of Russia pretends that this is communism. The communism of the Third International and of the communist parties of Europe has come to stand for something identical with Bolshevism or Leninism. This is perhaps a misuse of terms, but it is a misuse which has received the sanction of general consent.

The body of revolutionary theory known as Bolshevism, expounded in *Iskra*, enunciated by the majority of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in 1903, developed and tested in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, was molded by the hand of Lenin.<sup>1</sup> To him the theory represents an interpretation of Marx,<sup>2</sup> but Kamenev and Stalin, among others, more rightly regard it as an addition to Marx. As the former has said:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The best account of the history of the party and the ideas of the party is to be found in Zinoviev, *Istoria Kommunisticheskoi Partii* (Bolshevikov).

<sup>2</sup> See his *State and Revolution*.

<sup>3</sup> See L. Lawton, *The Russian Revolution—1917-1926*, p. 27.

Two chapters are missing from Marx, one showing how the Socialist Revolution is made, the other describing the position of the working masses on the day following their assumption of power, and the problems they would be called upon to solve. These problems [chapters] were written by Lenin, not only in books but in life itself.

The interpretation of Leninism offered by these gentlemen is today called into question, but the essential characteristics of Leninism or Bolshevism as a revolutionary method are beyond dispute. It will be the purpose of this paper to inquire into the relation between the revolutionary thought and method of Blanqui and that of Bolshevism.

There is an extraordinary unity in the life of Blanqui: a blending of thought and action, a singleness of purpose and a monotony of experience which makes of him a figure clear-cut in its significance.<sup>1</sup> He alternated between a life of enforced meditation, in prison, on the evils of society and, when at liberty, a feverish, usually secret political activity designed to end these evils. A sombre, morose, *farouche* and solitary man, he gained and kept his followers by the strength of his purpose and the intensity of his determination rather than by any such personal charm as that which drew disciples to Bakunin. He wasted little time and energy on questions other than those immediately connected with his ends,<sup>2</sup> and these ends were conceived in terms of political activity here and now. Yet in his writings he established a certain justification for his actions, a body of thought which merits consideration from those interested in the history of radical political and economic theory. Benoit Malon is in a certain sense right in describing Blanqui

<sup>1</sup> The best biography of Blanqui is that of Gustave Geffroy, *L'Enfermé* (Paris, 1897). For two short contemporary biographies see Charles Hippolyte Castille, *L. A. Blanqui* (Paris, 1857), and E. de Mirecourt, *Blanqui (Les Contemporains, No. 91)* (Paris, 1857).

<sup>2</sup> During the ten-year period of his last imprisonment he threw together his meditations on astronomy into a small book called *L'Éternité par les Astres*, part of which was published in a scientific review. Apart from this, practically all his writings, manuscript as well as published, deal entirely with the question of social reform as he envisaged it.

as a synthesis of revolutionary Babouvism and scientific socialism.<sup>1</sup>

Blanqui's revolutionary theory in its barest outlines may be put very simply. The attainment of a communist society, the ideal order, must be the work of enlightenment.<sup>2</sup> The evils of our present organization are only the product of ignorance, an ignorance maintained and fostered by certain groups, notably the church, the state and the capitalists, or property owners, interested in perpetuating their privileged position. It must be the task of the revolution in seizing power to crush these anti-social groups during the time necessary for the illumination of the people. For this is necessary a relatively small group of intelligent and forceful men working in the interest of the proletariat. It will be impossible during this period to utilize the machinery of democracy, since the mass of the people, trained to respect its oppressors, is not in a position to know where its interest lies. Once this process of education has been accomplished, the dictatorship of the minority can cease, and society be left to develop its own institutions.

One finds in Blanqui's thought a thoroughgoing rationalism joined to a thoroughgoing environmentalism. It is perfectly possible by the use of the reason not only to understand the universe and society and the laws which describe the action of phenomena therein, but to discover the best possible social order and to devise the means of attaining it. There is no Marxian acceptance of whatever is as necessary, no tendency to wait for the movement of history to usher in the desired and inevitable order. The desired order is anything but inevitable; the mind and the will are necessary to seize it.

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Socialiste*, vol. II, p. 597 (1885).

<sup>2</sup> There is no good study of Blanqui's ideas. The best is that of Maurice Dommanget (Paris, 1923). But neither this nor other studies appears to have used the manuscripts of Blanqui, deposited by his friend Ernest Granger in the Bibliothèque Nationale. They are catalogued there under "Manuscripts français, Nouvelles Acquisitions, 9578-9598," and consist of twenty-one packages of very finely written manuscript; letters, essays and notes thrown together in considerable confusion. These documents have been used by Geffroy in his biography and by Suzanne Wasserman in her study on the clubs of Barbès and Blanqui, but, so far as I am aware, no one writing on the ideas of Blanqui has made use of them.

There is no evidence that Blanqui had read or was at all familiar with the work of Marx, though they were almost exactly contemporary. He spent some months in 1857 in London, where Marx was busy working on *Capital*, but there is no mention in his letters or manuscripts of having visited Marx. On the whole this is not very surprising, for Marx, in spite of his writings on the Revolution of 1848 and on French politics in the fifties, was relatively unknown in France until after the Commune. The association in the minds of the French conservatives of the First International with the Commune, and Marx's striking pamphlet, *Civil War in France*, made him a well-known figure after 1871; but at that time Blanqui was out of politics, safely ensconced in a prison cell, speculating on the movement of astronomical bodies.

Marx, however, was thoroughly familiar with the activities of Blanqui, and after 1871, when the Blanquists, driven from Paris, took refuge in London, he had occasion to become more closely acquainted with Blanqui's ideas. Blanqui was to Marx a true leader of the proletariat, and appeared as such in the Revolution of 1848.<sup>1</sup> In Marx's studies on the revolutionary movements in France illustrative of his philosophy of history, Blanqui is the most striking and typical leader of the emerging French proletariat, defeated in its first weak attempts at class revolution in 1848 and 1871, but destined inevitably to triumph.

Engels suggests<sup>2</sup> that the main reason the Blanquists in the Commune did not accomplish more in the way of socialist reform was that they were unacquainted with "German Scientific Socialism", that is, with Marx and Engels. Whether or not this is so, it is true that Blanqui was entirely French in his socialist tradition and quite unacquainted with his foreign contemporaries.

As a rationalist and environmentalist, the necessary means of progress, of revolution, appeared to him to be education, the application of the reason to those questions which had thus far escaped the domain of science. His published writings and his manuscripts form one long plea for enlightenment, one long

<sup>1</sup> Marx, *18th Brumaire*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Engels, *Civil War in France*, introduction.

diatribe against those groups which in their own interest made a mockery of education. "There is no durable revolution, without light! There is no emancipation without intelligence for a foundation! Liberty means instruction! Equality means instruction! Fraternity means instruction! Teachers, books, the printing-press, these are the true revolutionary agencies."<sup>1</sup> When Lafargue brought to Blanqui his tract on *Mutualisme, Collectivisme et Communisme* the latter heatedly, and somewhat unkindly, cried, "All this discussion of the probable forms of a future society smacks of revolutionary scholasticism. It is more necessary to write a criticism of primary instruction."

Blanqui's view of history envisages the idea as being the sole engine of progress. It is needless to say, in the light of Blanqui's intellectual heritage, that he was a progressist and perfectionist of the deepest dye. Every advance which mankind has made has been the product of human reason, every relapse the result of the imprisonment of reason. "No," he asserts, "it is not manual dexterity, it is the idea alone which makes the man. The instrument of deliverance is not the arm, but the brain, and the brain lives only by instruction."

At the dawn of history, before mankind had proceeded far in its discovery of the laws of nature, there was no golden age, but the reverse. Blanqui denies the existence of a primitive communism. Communism is the supreme product of the human intelligence and must constitute the last stage of human development. The first human beings lived in a state of war; there was no possibility of coöperation.<sup>2</sup>

Communism is not . . . an unformed chaos, the confused syncretism of the first ages of humanity; it is the last word of the social science, the ideal of the future.

It is false that communism has ever been the infancy of any society whatsoever, and that the lower human groups are placed in the scale of civilization, the closer they approach communism. These assertions are the direct opposite of the truth. The whole of history stands in permanent contradiction to them.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> MSS. Liasse I, Cahier B 3°, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Blanqui, *La Critique Sociale*, vol. II, p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> Blanqui, MSS., March 13, 1869, notes on an article of Liasse VII.



And again, "In every time and in every country, individualism formed the first cradle of society. Its reign was that of ignorance, of savagery and bestiality. . . . All social progress is the consequence of its defeat, the encroachment of communism upon its domain."<sup>1</sup>

The progress of the cultivation of the intellect in the direction of communism has been interrupted only by movements whose significance lay in the obscuring, the mystification of the intellect. Such a movement was Christianity, and a large part of Blanqui's writing was directed against religion and in defense of atheism.

Thrown between two civilizations, the one at its death bed, the other in its cradle, Christianity, hating the first, killed it in an act of parricide, and in turn perished at the hands of the second, heir and revenger of its predecessor.

Between the two, its true reign; the middle ages, barbarism.<sup>2</sup>

It is essential to know something of Blanqui's views on the importance of education and the rôle of the idea in history in order to understand his justification of his revolutionary method. The admitted ignorance of the proletariat excludes the possibility of its playing an important revolutionary rôle as a class. For a certain section of the proletariat, however, the enlightened industrial workers of Paris, this rôle is important. But the real leaders of revolution spring from the bourgeoisie; they are educated *déclassés* working in the interest of the proletariat. Liberal and democratic institutions, based as they are on the assumption that the average man is intelligent enough and informed enough to know his own interest and that of his class, are an impossibility in a society in which the vast mass of the population, the proletariat, is in ignorance. Those institutions which pass as liberal and democratic in modern society are simply creations, in its own interest, of a minority. It follows that a dictatorship of *déclassés* and the enlightened proletariat, working in the interests of the mass of the population, is the revolutionary method called for. But it is neces-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> MSS. Liasse I, Cahier B 2°, p. 140, September 2, 1858.

sary to enlarge upon and explain the separate parts of this theory which have been stated above in a form more succinct and clear-cut than that employed by Blanqui.

French socialism has always been more a product of the large cities than the socialism of any other country, with the possible exception of Russia. Sombart<sup>1</sup> explains this by the presence of an "*überfeinerte*" populace in all stages of decadence, possessed of an arrogant belief in its capacity and right to rule. Whatever the truth of this generalization as applicable to the whole of French socialism, it is largely valid as regards the socialism or communism of Blanqui and his followers. He is never tired of contrasting the intelligence and enlightenment of the Parisian proletariat with the ignorance, not to say bestiality, of the peasantry. It is evident in questions of religion, in economics and in politics. "*La férocité du spiritualisme, la tolérance du matérialisme, chez l'un, l'ignorance, la bestialité, l'abrutissement, l'égoïsme farouche, la prédominance des appétits matériels; chez l'autre, l'intelligence, la lumière, l'élévation de l'esprit et du cœur.*"

"*Le paysan bas-breton et l'ouvrier de Paris, types.*"<sup>2</sup>

The spread of education and a capacity for self-government he terms the "Parisification" of France.<sup>3</sup> He is thoroughly against the proposals of decentralization in France, for he thinks them an attempt of the reactionaries to escape from the growing influence of Paris.<sup>4</sup> Paris is the city of revolutions, which is, for Blanqui, the same thing as saying that it has demonstrated its capacity to rule. Once the "Parisification" of France has taken place we shall see "the voluntary abdication of Paris in favor of its children come to their majority"; we shall see "its maternal joy in the virility of its intellectual sons".<sup>5</sup> Until this time has come, the cause of progress will be furthered by the dictatorship of this enlightened element of the French proletariat.

<sup>1</sup> Sombart, *Proletarische Sozialismus*, vol. II, p. 378.

<sup>2</sup> *Ni Dieu, Ni Maître*, no. 14, December 3, 1880.

<sup>3</sup> MSS. Liasse I, Cahier B 3°, p. 231.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

Blanqui's revolutionary activity never extended beyond the confines of Paris, nor was he ever, except under compulsion, outside this city of revolutions. The Blanquist party at its height, in 1867 or 1868, was a group entirely Parisian in its constitution, whose heroes were the leaders of that first Commune in Paris which had for a time imposed its will upon France. In 1848 he protested against an appeal to universal suffrage which could result only in the destruction of the power of the Parisian republican proletariat and its transfer to the provincial conservatives. The Commune of Paris of 1871 was ostensibly a movement toward federalism and decentralization in France, but to the Blanquists in the Commune it represented an opportunity of seizing power not to the end of governing Paris but to the end of dominating France.

Not only was Blanqui convinced of the impossibility of revolution by the proletariat as a class; he held also that the driving force, the leadership, of revolution must rest in the hands of the bourgeoisie. And the reason is simple: here are to be found the men of ideas and of education. Blanqui is one of the few nineteenth-century socialists willing to recognize the importance of bourgeois leadership in European socialism, and it is distinctly to his credit.

The bourgeoisie includes an *élite* minority, an indissoluble group, nervous, ardent and full of zeal; it is the essence, the soul, the life of the Revolution. It is the incandescent source from which spring incessantly ideas of reconstruction, stirring and exciting the masses.—Who has planted the flag of the proletariat? Who has rallied it after its defeats? Who are the promulgators, the apostles of doctrines of equality? Who leads the people to battle against the bourgeoisie?—The bourgeoisie itself. They will cease only after having led the Revolution to the victory of Equality. But what is the device on its banner? Democracy? No—the proletariat. For its soldiers are workers though the leaders are not.<sup>1</sup>

And the element of the bourgeoisie which will provide this leadership is composed largely of the *déclassés*, those, as Som-

<sup>1</sup> MSS. Liasse II, p. 150.

bart says,<sup>1</sup> whose position is the result of their socialism and not the cause. Flocking to the cities in large numbers, these members of the bourgeoisie, unwilling to continue or incapable of following the traditions of their class, furnish a powerful support to the socialist movement. And in Paris, quite naturally, their importance has been and is considerable. As Blanqui puts it:

Thousands of the *élite* live in conditions of extreme misery. They shock and horrify the capital. And the capital does not deceive itself in its hate of them. These *déclassés*, invisible agents of progress, are today the secret ferment which sustains the masses and prevents them from sinking to a condition of impotence. Tomorrow, they will be the reserve force of the Revolution.<sup>2</sup>

The Blanquist party itself was composed principally of members of the bourgeoisie, radical students of the schools of Paris, young advocates, and journalists. Blanqui's favorite disciple, Tridon, was an unimportant journalist, the author of two or three pamphlets on the figures of the first Commune of Paris. Another, Ernest Granger, possessed a small patrimony which he expended in purchasing weapons for the unsuccessful attempt at revolution on August 14, 1870. Rigault and Ferré, the two most notorious Blanquists in the Commune, were both students. To this bourgeois majority were joined perhaps a few hundred radical Parisian workers. The Blanquist party was to consist of leaders, bourgeois for the most part, who would find their support from the rank and file after the revolution had been initiated.<sup>3</sup>

The revolutionary activity of the Parisian proletariat, assisted and led by the radical bourgeoisie, had as its end the establishment of a dictatorship in the interest of the proletariat. To rely upon popular elections and to attempt to work within the machinery of bourgeois governmental forms is to abandon the

<sup>1</sup> Sombart, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> *La Critique Sociale*, vol. I, p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> See on the Blanquist party Charles Da Costa, *Les Blanquistes*. Da Costa was a disciple of Blanqui.

revolution. We have already seen how in 1848 Blanqui condemned the appeal to popular suffrage on the ground that sixty years of oppression and of training in the catchwords of conservatism had rendered the people incapable of self-government.

In the cities, the working class, accustomed to the yoke by long years of oppression and misery, will either take no part in the election or will be led to it by their masters like blind beasts. In the country, all influence is in the hands of the clergy and the aristocrats. The people does not know. It is necessary that it should know. This is not the work of a day or of a month.—The elections if they take place will be reactionary.—It is a sacrilege to make lie for their own safety, millions of men; to tear from their inexperience the sanction of their slavery.<sup>1</sup>

In the existing state of society the issue of democratic procedure could only be a government of incompetents at best, composed of those who best knew how to play upon the prejudices of the ignorant masses. This suspicion of and antagonism to popular assemblies was shared by Blanqui's followers. In 1871, as soon as the Commune of Paris was established, the Blanquist members planned to introduce a resolution which would suspend all democratic forms, appoint a committee of public safety and militarize the Commune until the government of France had been overthrown.<sup>2</sup> They desisted only because of the realization that there was no hope of carrying this measure through the Commune assembly itself.

These are the elements of Blanqui's revolutionary tactics. As one sees, they are in the best communist and anti-democratic tradition. So far as revolutionary tactics go there is little difference between Babeuf and Blanqui or between Blanqui and modern communism. What difference exists is to be found in the slight adaptation of the general theory to particular conditions. Blanqui modified the theory of Babeuf to fit the revolutionary milieu in Paris, in which he worked. His indebtedness to Babeuf is pretty clear. In 1828 appeared

<sup>1</sup> Dommanget, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Gaston Da Costa, *La Commune Vécue*, vol. I, p. 327.

Buonarotti's *Conjuration des Égaux*, and through Buonarotti the ideas of Babeuf were transmitted to a whole group of radical republicans, Blanqui included. In the thirties he came into close contact with Buonarotti in the various secret societies with which they were mutually connected, and received from the lips of the sole living survivor of the *Égaux* the revolutionary tradition of Babeuf.

But to this teaching Blanqui added the conception of a class struggle. To him revolution was in the interest of the proletariat and not of the social ideals which motivated Babeuf. With nothing of the sociological interests or analytical capacity of Marx, he never defined what he meant by a class in general or by the proletariat in particular. But he clearly opposed the interests of the working class to the interests of the property-owning class and conceived the ends of revolution to be entirely connected with the emancipation of the former from the domination, in various forms, of the latter. In 1832, under the interrogation of the president of the *Cour d'Assises de la Seine*, he proudly, and not too intelligently, described his profession as being that of proletarian,<sup>1</sup> and arrayed his thirty million fellow proletarians against their masters, "living fatly off the sweat of the people". In fact Blanqui went so far in proclaiming the class struggle on this occasion that the court ordered a year's imprisonment and 200 francs fine for "troubling the public peace and exciting the contempt and hate of the populace against certain classes of people whom he alternately designates by the names of the 'privileged rich' and the 'bourgeoisie', in various passages of his speech".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Audiences des 10, 11 et 12 Janvier, 1832. Affaire de la Société des Amis du Peuple. Interrogatoire et défense du citoyen Blanqui :

"Le Président : Quelle est votre profession ?

Blanqui : Prolétaire.

Le Président : Ce n'est pas là une profession.

Blanqui : Comment, ce n'est pas une profession ! c'est la profession de trente millions de français qui vivent de leur travail et qui sont privés de droits politiques.

Le Président : Eh bien ! soit. Greffier, écrivez que l'accusé est prolétaire."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* In a more explicit statement of his aims (quoted above) he insists that the device on his banner is not democracy but the proletariat.

The conception of the revolutionary dictatorship of Babeuf was accepted by Blanqui to be applied to the advantage of the proletariat conceived as a class with interests opposed to those of other classes. His idea of the proletariat and its interests is the product of an analysis of the nature of society of sufficient importance to support Malon's judgment that Blanqui represents a synthesis of revolutionary Babouvism and "scientific" socialism.<sup>1</sup> The analysis of the nature of society sufficient to support such a claim need not, I take it, be extraordinarily profound; nor indeed is that furnished by Blanqui.

At the outset he vehemently denies the existence of the rule of law in society. Laws of human nature in the sense of uniformities of conduct are a *contradictio in adjecto*. The precise difference between man and nature is the presence of free will in the behavior of the former and the presence of a thorough determinism, which Blanqui calls fatalism, in the behavior of the latter. It is not that the uniformities of human conduct are more difficult of formulation than the laws of physics or chemistry, because perhaps of a greater complexity of the material, or a more persistent difficulty in isolation or observation, but that the mere supposition of such a uniformity is absurd.

The word law has sense only in nature. What one calls law, an invariable rule, immanent and inevitable, is incompatible with intelligence and will. Everywhere man intervenes and there is no longer a question of law but of caprice and arbitrary action. The term law in such a situation is an impertinence, an hypocrisy, a swindle and, frequently, all these things together.<sup>2</sup>

As usual Economics, whose votaries have made more of a pretense to the enunciation of "laws" than the professors of other social studies, is put to scorn. "The pretended fatalism of economic laws which rule in society! A pure impertinence. Nothing is more arbitrary and more irregular than human processes and actions which vary at the instance of a million caprices. Nothing is less similar to the immutable and fatal order of nature."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Revue Socialiste*, vol. II, p. 597 (1885).

<sup>2</sup> MSS. Liasse VII, Cahier E, p. 78 (1868).

<sup>3</sup> MSS. Liasse VII (1868).

Blanqui's position on this matter is in direct opposition to that of the illustrious utopian socialists who preceded him. Both Saint-Simon and Fourier were not only convinced of the existence of uniformities of human conduct but also of the possibility, not to say the simplicity, of describing these uniformities in the form of laws. On the basis of their respective analyses of the laws of society both lay claim to the title of the Newton of the social sciences.

Since Blanqui was a frequent reader of contemporary philosophy the attitude of the positivists on this question of the possibility of formulating laws of human conduct came often to his attention. His criticisms of the positivist position frequently exhibit a certain shrewdness and penetration. He sees a fatal antithesis between determinism and free will in positivism. It claims, he says, that human conduct exhibits the uniformities of natural phenomena, that every action is the product of its antecedents and that there is no place for novelty either as the result of chance or of free will. At the same time it maintains the possibility of the infinite perfectibility of human institutions, the unlimited possibility of change in society by deliberate human action through the cultivation of science.

Thus, on one side, the fatalism of social evolution which proceeds according to its own laws as the phenomena of nature, and on the other, the progress of society by means of the human will and conscious reflection, and through the fruit of experience. A strange contradiction which admits fatalism during the period of ignorance and suppresses it during the age of illumination.<sup>1</sup>

To Blanqui the possibility of continuous improvement of human institutions existed because and only because of the indeterminateness of human conduct.

If the pretended social sciences are not the product of systematic observation of the uniformities of human conduct, what are they? To Blanqui they are nothing but value judgments, and false value judgments at that. His views on this question may be illustrated most simply and clearly by his ob-

<sup>1</sup> MSS. Liasse VII.



servations on economics, since this was the object of his most careful and continuous attention. The society of the economists has no more relation to reality, if as much, than the society of the socialist or the communist. They are both ideal constructions, the one representing the individualist, selfish and anti-social paradise of an exploiting class and the other an egalitarian régime in which coöperation and "*solidarité*" have supplanted egoism. "A single glance suffices to measure the abyss which separates socialism from political economy. They are two conceptions of society diametrically opposed. What is a virtue in the eyes of one is a crime to the other. Denial corresponds to affirmation, malediction to applause, panegyric to anathema."<sup>1</sup>

Although the society of the economist and that of the socialist both represent value judgments there is this difference between them. The ideal of the economist is determined by consulting the material interests of a small class, while that of the socialist is arrived at through a consideration of the welfare of the mass of mankind. And naturally one ideal is not as good as another. The social studies are really branches of ethics; the end of such studies should be the determination of the just order of society. "Justice is the sole criterion to be applied in human affairs."<sup>2</sup> A reasonable interrogation of the nature of justice in society leads to but one conclusion, socialism. The indifference of existing political economy to questions of true morality deprives it of all value as a social study."<sup>3</sup>

Blanqui has described for us the first impressions which the study of economics made upon him as a youth.<sup>4</sup> Acquainted with the son of J. B. Say, he was introduced to the father and encouraged to read the latter's treatise *On Political Economy*.

On a young and ardent heart, political economy is like an icy douche. It is hard, dry, spiritless, bitter and sad; a visit to a

<sup>1</sup> *La Critique Sociale*, vol. I, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> As a brother of the economist, Jérôme Blanqui, L. A. Blanqui was early brought into contact with economic literature. During the course of his lifetime he read and criticized most of the work of the leading French economists of the middle of the century—a rather sterile group.

prison, to a hospital, to the dissecting tables; the grave of illusions and of generous dreams.

In these arid pages, not a trace of the idea of justice, not an echo of conscience. Nothing but egoism, in its fierce aridity, the war of man against man, the code of mutual extermination.<sup>1</sup>

The effect of reading Bastiat's defense of interest was even more lugubrious.

At these cutting words a shudder of terror made the book fall from my hands. So much assurance in so cruel an affirmation. What if this man were speaking the truth! What if human societies, as the animal world, were constructed on the plan of mutual extermination! What if men, in order to live, were condemned to devour one another! And, full of anguish, I dared not take up the book again, for fear of being overwhelmed with a crushing conviction.<sup>2</sup>

This is hardly the proper frame of mind in which to approach an examination of the problem of interest, but it was to this examination that Blanqui devoted most of his writings on economics. It is perhaps needless to say that his contributions on this subject were not great. They serve, however, to establish the fact that Blanqui was in the full current of nineteenth-century socialism and that his revolutionary attitude was accompanied by a theory, however ill supported, of the right of labor to its full product and of the unjustifiability of property incomes.

It must be said that his demonstration of the unjustifiability of such incomes is not entirely rigorous. He makes no distinction between various kinds of property income, e. g. between rent and interest. The definitions of capital current in contemporary political economy—embodied labor, or produced instruments of production—strike him as palpably absurd. All incomes other than wages, or wages of management, are only various forms of interest and as such represent theft from the laborer. "Capital is neither accumulated labor, nor an instru-

<sup>1</sup> *La Critique Sociale*, vol. II, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 116.

ment of production—capital is stolen labor.” Its physical form does not embrace factories, machinery, farms, raw material and the like; capital is money. In the absence of any reason of Blanqui’s for supposing the contrary we are led to believe that in a barter economy interest would be impossible. “What concerns us is the conviction, acquired by long experience, that the services of money are paid for very dearly. It has created usury, capitalist exploitation, and their sinister daughters, inequality and misery.”<sup>1</sup>

Having got rid of the conception of capital as instruments of production, Blanqui (to himself), conclusively demonstrates that capital, or money, is essentially sterile and unproductive. In the course of an imaginary conversation between the worker and the capitalist the worker concludes:

You give value to something which is really worth nothing. That, precisely, is the crime. The foundation of exchange is the equivalence of the objects exchanged. Money is only an intermediary between the two values. It has no other function. You buy it with your product. You must sell it again, against a product, for the same price.<sup>2</sup>

The appearance of interest upsets this equivalence in exchange. “Will the economists deign to explain”, demands Blanqui, “why, after establishing in principle the equivalence of exchange, they destroy it by the loan at interest and construct this lovely equation,  $100 = 105$  or  $110$ ,  $112$ , etc.”<sup>3</sup>

As one would expect, Blanqui denies categorically the assertion of the economists that the wages of labor will be increased with an increase in the employment of capital. “To find more capital is precisely to open wider the door to misery. . . . The increase of capital is the increase of the tithe which it lays on the laborer, and this tithe is, precisely, the origin of all their ills.”<sup>4</sup>

It might be supposed, after this analysis, that the remedy

<sup>1</sup> *La Critique Sociale*, vol. II, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> MSS. Liasse II, p. 73.

obviously called for is the suppression of the use of money, the institution of a barter economy. If capital is money and the interest on capital the source of all our ills, why not simultaneously eliminate both capital and interest by prohibiting the use of money? This does not satisfy Blanqui. The welfare of the proletariat demands the abolition of private property. The dividing up of existing property is no solution. "Let us say at once that equality does not mean the sharing of the land. An infinite parcellation of the soil will not change at bottom the rights to property. . . . Association, substituted for private property, will alone establish the reign of justice through equality."<sup>1</sup>

The essentially unintelligent *mélange* of bold assertions and indignant condemnations which makes up Blanqui's writings on the subject of economics serves to demonstrate to his own satisfaction the following important conclusions. First, that the existing system of property ownership has led to the division of society into two classes, the exploited class of workers, and the exploiting class of proprietors. Second, that the interests of the proletariat and the cause of social justice will be furthered by the abolition of private property and the institution of a communist régime.

But this conclusion and the reasons which support it are made inaccessible for the mass of mankind by propaganda of one sort or another spread by institutions working in the interests of the possessing class. The most notable and the most dangerous of these institutions is the church. French socialism in particular and Continental socialism in general, as opposed to English socialism, has always tended to occupy itself with the religious question. In the case of Blanqui and his followers it stands on a parity in importance with the question of private property. "Atheism, Communism and Revolution" was the professed program of the party.

The Blanquists had their hands in a good many of the atheist and materialist journals published on the Left Bank in the 1860's, which usually lived a few numbers and then died. Blanqui's friend and disciple, Tridon, was the editor of *Candide*,

<sup>1</sup> MSS. Liasse II, p. 280.

a paper devoted principally to combating "the cult of the supernatural". Blanqui wrote continuously for this journal, which appeared in 1865, under the name of Suzamel. Another young disciple, Rigault, projected a paper to be called *Le Barbare, Journal Matérialiste et Littéraire*. "The philosophical question," says the prospectus of this paper, "in spite of its evident importance, in spite of its intimate connection with the political question and the social question, is completely neglected by the political journals." In consequence *Le Barbare* will occupy itself with the "study of history to demonstrate the effects of faith. We shall show, for example, the French Revolution developing with atheism; we shall show it arriving at its apogee with the Commune of Paris, with the anti-religious agitation of Chaumette, with the profound and spiritual paper of Hébert."<sup>1</sup> Blanqui's own paper, *Ni Dieu, Ni Maître*, which he founded a few months before his death, devoted itself primarily to the religious question.

In part this opposition was the result of a philosophical repugnance to the doctrines of the church, in part of a belief in the identity of interest between the church and the possessing class, in part a mere following of the revolutionary tradition in France. The belief that the church was serving the interests of the possessing class was undoubtedly strong.

There is no longer any other opposition [says Blanqui] than that of Jesuits and socialists. Reduced to these terms the question will not be long in debate. The opposition was really of this nature from the beginning and it has required much blood and suffering to join the issue squarely. We have now the alliance of Thiers and Montalembert, the close union of the bank and the clergy. The industrialists of Elbeuf collect themselves under the banner of Loyola; they will go to mass every Sunday for the salvation of the social order and of their *écus*.<sup>2</sup>

The church saps the desire of its votaries for progress, for social amelioration. It lulls to sleep the fierce sense of injustice of the proletariat and the peasantry. "Christianity de-

<sup>1</sup> See Jules Forni, *Raoul Rigault*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> MSS. Liasse I, Cahier B 3, p. 145.

stroys the citizen and leaves only the sectary; it enervates, paralyzes, exhausts his social energy, suppresses his sense of duty toward the state, leaving merely a collection of travelers, burdens on their backs, ready for the next world and indifferent to anything else."<sup>1</sup>

This antagonism to the church and things religious translated itself into action during the Commune of Paris. Rigault and Ferré, two of Blanqui's staunchest followers, more than any one else were responsible for the execution of the Archbishop of Paris, the Curé of the Madeleine and other members of the clergy, hostages, during that May week in 1871.

Private property and the church, naturally, were not the only institutions of the existing order attacked by Blanqui. But he expended more of his ammunition on these targets than on any others. His destructive program may be summed up as nihilism, his constructive program, so far as he had one, as a communism the details of which he never tried to explain.

Blanqui exhibited all Marx's scorn of the utopian socialists who spent their time speculating on whether 1,800 or 3,000 would be the correct population for the ideal community of the future. To him any socialism which was not revolutionary was impotent and vain. In an often-quoted statement he declares, "Communism and Proudhonism dispute bitterly on the river bank as to whether the other bank is a field of corn or a field of wheat. They insist upon resolving this question before crossing the obstacle.—Let us get over first. We shall be able to see there."<sup>2</sup>

The effect of continuous debate on the details of the future society is to split into small groups and to weaken the socialist movement.

The various doctrines which today compete for the favor of the masses will one day realize their promise of progress and of well-being, but on the condition that they do not abandon the bone for the shadow.

They will end only in lamentable failure if people, following an

<sup>1</sup> MSS. Liasse I, Cahier B 2°, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> *La Critique Sociale*, vol. II, p. 314.

exclusive taste for theories, neglect the sole practical element of success, which is force.

Armament and organization, these are the decisive agencies of progress, the serious means of putting an end to oppression and misery.<sup>1</sup>

This continuous debate on social programs, in his opinion, had struck with impotence the French socialism of the first part of the nineteenth century. It is the opinion of certain authorities<sup>2</sup> that the ideas of Blanqui exhibit the influence of Saint-Simon, which had permeated the "Société des Amis du Peuple" in the early thirties. There is little evidence to support this opinion in the writings of Blanqui, which on the contrary are filled with rather frequent expressions of disdain for the Saint-Simonian system. Commenting on the statement that positivism had rendered two good services to mankind in killing Saint-Simonianism and Fourierism, Blanqui remarks:

Not at all! Positivism has saved nothing nor killed anything! Saint-Simonianism and Fourierism have died their own beautiful deaths without the help of anything other than common sense. They were condemned in advance by their foolishness; such extravagances could take no root. They have taken lodging in a few disordered brains and have found there their grave. Revolution, which alone can save humanity, is incompatible with the revelations of budding prophets.<sup>3</sup>

The socialism of the First International also left Blanqui cold. The French members of the International were mostly thoroughgoing followers of Proudhon whose lack of revolutionary theory or intention was not likely to recommend itself to Blanqui. He had intended to take some part in the first International Congress at Geneva in 1866 but changed his mind and ordered his followers in Paris not to attend. He was severely critical of the ideas expressed in the Bâle Congress in

<sup>1</sup> MSS. Liasse I, Cahier B 3°, p. 366.

<sup>2</sup> See in particular Tchernoff, *Le Parti Républicain*, p. 349, and *L'Extrême Gauche*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> MSS. Liasse VII, Apr. 3, 1869.

1867, and in 1868, although the Congress was held in Brussels, where he was living at the time, he had not sufficient interest to attend the meetings. The motion of a leader of the French branch, Tolain, to admit only workers into the International was not calculated to please one with Blanqui's ideas on the revolutionary rôle of the bourgeoisie. "It means the intellectual and moral degradation" (of the workers), he asserted, "the proclamation of their inferiority as a class. It is a true abdication." Nor did he approve the support of coöperative ventures and schemes of mutual credit, so dear to the heart of the Proudhonists.

Such schemes can only have the effect of dividing the working class against itself. A coöperative venture is within the capacity of the upper level of the proletariat only. As a scheme of social amelioration it can have no utility for the vast mass of the working class. Not only that, but it helps to deprive this mass of its natural leaders, the abler and more energetic of the proletariat who become possessed by the interests, habits and customs of thought of the *petite bourgeoisie*. It is the negation of revolutionary socialism.

Does one wish [he asked in 1867<sup>1</sup>] to skim the cream of the people, to deprive it of its natural protectors, to make a new caste, a kind of demi-bourgeoisie, but more egoistic, because short of money, and, in consequence, more suspicious and brutally conservative? That is the final significance of that bastard expedient that is baptized in its cradle with the great name, resurrection of socialism, and which is only its negation, its tomb.

With the strike, however, Blanqui was in thorough sympathy. The organization of the working class into fighting units imbued with a determination to resist the aggression of its natural enemy, the capitalists, is a plan which reaches the masses, and will strengthen the class-consciousness of the proletariat.

The strike is intelligible to every one; it is a simple idea, resistance to oppression. Everyone will rally to it.

Coöperation in all its various forms, credit societies, produc-

<sup>1</sup> See Dommanget, *op. cit.*, p. 58.



tive associations, is a complicated idea which can only seduce intelligences already developed, and which inspires fear and defiance in the ignorant. It will find ten adherents to ten thousand for the strike.<sup>1</sup>

Blanqui grasped this Marxian dilemma in thoroughgoing communist fashion. To the question of the correct socialist attitude toward non-socialist schemes of improving the condition of the working class Marx gave only a hesitant answer. Should the socialist favor such schemes if their result is, by raising the standard of living of the working class, to soften the antagonism between capital and labor? Blanqui spoke out clearly against any such amelioration.

This irreconcilable revolutionary communist was a person of some significance in French politics; of more significance than any other socialist in the nineteenth century with the possible exception of Louis Blanc. At two times in his eventful life, in 1848 and 1871, there was some possibility of his leading a temporarily successful revolution. On both occasions his power was destroyed on the eve of its fruition. In 1848 Blanqui was the leader and organizer of the most influential radical club in Paris, "La Société Républicaine Centrale." The personnel of this club was very heterogeneous—

composed particularly of former members of secret societies, assembled not from the chiefs of the party but from the rank and file of the conspirators; a mixed personnel, where, by the side of sincere socialists, were to be found intriguers who thought it useful to follow Blanqui, suspicious characters, *agents provocateurs*, swindlers, *déclassés* who seemed to have allied themselves with the socialist cause only as a consequence of successive misfortunes, and desirous of revenge; a personnel very mixed also from the point of view of professions represented; journalists and men of letters, bourgeois of all professions, officials, doctors, lawyers, and finally militant laborers.<sup>2</sup>

It was the single radical group of sufficient importance to inspire fear in the provisional government, and the power of

<sup>1</sup> MSS. Liasse VII, Oct. 17, 1867.

<sup>2</sup> Suzanne Wasserman, *Les Clubs de Barbès et Blanqui en 1848*, p. 10.

Blanqui during February and March grew steadily. He showed himself to be an organizer of talent and a rabble rouser of the first order. An historian of the Revolution of 1848 who often heard Blanqui gives us this description of his oratorical ability.

His force as an orator was immense ; his strident voice, shrill, penetrating, metallic, yet deadened like the noise of a tom-tom, communicated his fever to those who heard him. His eloquence, nourished, not from the purest sources, but from the most ardent and inspirited, had a savage character. . . . It was cold as the blade of a sword, as incisive and as dangerous, yet this eloquence warmed the sleeping enthusiasm of those who avidly listened to him.<sup>1</sup>

The strength and influence of Blanqui had attained proportions dangerous to the government when there appeared, on March 31, a document which deflated this power like a toy balloon. I refer to the so-called "Document Taschereau" which purported to be a demonstration that Blanqui had in 1839 betrayed his cause and his friends by giving information to the police on the personnel and organization of the secret societies to which he belonged.<sup>2</sup> Blanqui denied the allegation vehemently and published some weeks afterwards a reasoned reply; but the damage was done and he became for the time being a figure no longer to be reckoned with.

A second occasion on which it might have been within the

<sup>1</sup> Delvau, *Histoire de la Révolution de Février*, p. 318, quoted in Wasserman, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> I do not intend to go into the history of this incident, which is complicated, obscure, and possesses a considerable literature of its own. Blanqui's biographer Geffroy devotes a considerable number of convincing pages to the demonstration of his innocence, and certainly Blanqui's thirty years in prison may be taken as evidence of the fact that he was not an ordinary police agent. On the other hand, Maurice Dommanget in his recent small and interesting book on Blanqui, published in 1924, is even more convincing on the other side. M. Dommanget cannot be accused of conservative prejudice, since he is a communist and a tremendous admirer of Blanqui. The incident, which takes up a disproportionate amount of space in the writing on Blanqui, seems to me to be relatively unimportant. I should be prepared, as is M. Dommanget, to accept the explanation of Malleville, a minister of 1839, who ascribes this revelation to the illness of Blanqui at the time; it was made in a moment of weakness and is entirely out of harmony with anything else in his career.

power of Blanqui to dominate a successful revolution was in 1871. It is one of the ironies of history that he should have been arrested by government agents on the seventeenth of March, the day before the insurrection occurred. Although in prison he was elected to the communal assembly in the vote of March 26, by two *arrondissements*, along with a considerable number of his followers. In the Commune the Blanquists formed the strongest united group, though without a leader. They considered at the time and afterwards the absence of this leader a misfortune of the gravest importance. Everyone, one of their members has said,<sup>1</sup> felt himself opposed by a revolutionary problem beyond his courage and experience. "Regnard, Ferré, and particularly Rigault regretted constantly the absence of the great leader whom they had followed so long." They hoped for some time to release Blanqui through an exchange of hostages and offered the government of Versailles Monseigneur Darboy, the archbishop of Paris, and several score of hostages for Blanqui, but M. Thiers did not look with favor on the negotiation.

It is an open question whether the presence of Blanqui would have added anything to the strength of the Commune or whether he would have been able to dominate his colleagues. Maxime du Camp, the leading reactionary writer on the Commune, thinks not. "The release of Blanqui would have brought no new peril in addition to that with which it [the government] was already faced; it would have meant simply one more fool at the Hôtel de Ville, which was an insane asylum."<sup>2</sup> While refusing to associate oneself with this harsh judgment of the capacity of Blanqui or the "inmates" of the Hôtel de Ville, one may be permitted to doubt whether the presence of Blanqui would have added a single day to the life of the revolution of Paris. The opposition in the Commune to the revolutionary tactics for which Blanqui stood was probably too strong to permit him to dominate the assembly. And even if he had been able to assume a position of the first importance, the insurrec-

<sup>1</sup> Da Costa, *Commune Vécue*, vol. I, p. 411.

<sup>2</sup> Maxime du Camp, *Les Convulsions de Paris*, vol. I, p. 321.

tion did not possess the material requisite for a successful revolution. But that he would have been an important figure in this temporary government cannot be doubted.

Thus in these two important revolutionary movements Blanqui was forced by circumstances to occupy an unimportant position. In the two attempts at revolution which he led with his own men, his failure bordered on the ridiculous. On May 12, 1839, with eight or nine hundred men, he attempted the overthrow of the government. The day being Sunday, a demonstration at the Champ de Mars had attracted a considerable number of people away from the center of town. He massed his men against the Hôtel de Ville and the governmental centers of the seventh and eighth *arrondissements*. A couple of barricades were erected, but the insurgents succeeded in attracting few adherents among the crowd and the arrival of the troops quickly put an end to this uprising.

The affair of the fourteenth of August, 1870, was of even shorter duration. The flood of reverses in the war with Germany had raised the revolutionary attitude of the Parisian populace to a dangerous pitch. Blanqui and his followers thought to take advantage of this and to lead a movement which would overthrow the government. He had perhaps a hundred followers whom the patrimony of one of his disciples had equipped with arms and ammunition. The attempt was made in Belleville, a proletarian and revolutionary quarter of Paris, Place de la Villette. Blanqui published later in his paper, *La Patrie en Danger*, a sad account of the affair.<sup>1</sup>

The leaders of the enterprise had supposed that the gravity of the situation and the disorders of the preceding days would have been motives sufficient to rally the masses. . . . The fact is that in a quarter as revolutionary as Belleville the uprising was not able to gather a single recruit.

The net effect of the day's work was the death of one policeman.

These events in the active life of Blanqui exhibit him in the

<sup>1</sup> *La Patrie en Danger* (in book form), p. 49.

course of applying his revolutionary theory without too great success. He was a capable revolutionary communist born, perhaps, a little before his time. Engels described him as a revolutionary in the old style,<sup>1</sup> and we might have imagined Blanqui shaking his head sadly, as did that inhabitant of Haiti,<sup>2</sup> and remarking bitterly, "The machine gun has killed politics in the same way that machine methods have killed art", if the Russian Revolution had not demonstrated that the political methods and revolutionary theory of Blanqui are not as *passé* as Engels had supposed.

Blanqui stands midway between Babeuf and Lenin and all three belong in that strong revolutionary line which during the past century and a half has been of such importance in France and Russia. Between Babeuf and Lenin stands the development of the industrial proletariat and the great body of socialist theory regarding the position, function and historic mission of this proletariat. Babeuf was the ultimate expression of Jacobinism,<sup>3</sup> which can hardly be called socialism; Lenin is the greatest modern leader of the socialist proletariat. Blanqui was part eighteenth-century Jacobin and part nineteenth-century socialist. The Jacobins were egalitarian and none of them more so than Babeuf. But only if socialism means egalitarianism were they socialist. A number of the Jacobins, and no one of them more than Babeuf, conceived the only road to equality to lie through communism, the abolition of private property.<sup>4</sup> But modern socialism takes its stand on the existence of the class struggle, the product of modern capitalism. It ostensibly transcends political and national boundaries. Jacobinism was in every way patriotic and saw no obstacle to this patriotism in an inevitable opposition within the nation of classes divided by economic necessity.

In this respect Blanqui is half Jacobin and half socialist. He is patriotic with the Jacobins and with the socialists is con-

<sup>1</sup> Engels, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> See Paul Morand, *Magie Noire*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> See Espinas, *La Philosophie Sociale du XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, p. 196.

<sup>4</sup> See Buonarroti, *Conjuration des Égaux*, p. 50.

vinced of the inevitability of class struggle. His patriotism was unquestioned. To him France is the sole guardian of the sacred fire of civilization and the others are barbarians. In 1870 he called his paper *La Patrie en Danger* and devoted it almost exclusively to questions involved in the defense of Paris. He stigmatized the German invaders as "Vandals", "Goths", "barbarians" in a manner which would have done credit to 1914. In the first number of *La Patrie en Danger* he urged all opponents of the government to forget their differences and rally to the common cause. "Do not forget that to-morrow we are going to fight, not for a government, not for interests of caste or party, not even for honor, principles or ideas, but for what is the life and breath of all, for that which constitutes humanity in its most noble manifestation, for country."<sup>1</sup> His hatred of things foreign was not limited to the Germany of 1870-71. On many occasions England, the traditional enemy of France, came in for its share of condemnation.<sup>2</sup>

Yet Blanqui went far beyond Jacobinism in the direction of socialism. As has been pointed out, he has a definite theory of class struggle based upon some analysis, however weak, of the economic organization of society, and he identifies the welfare of society with the welfare of the proletariat in true socialist fashion. To Marx in 1848 he was truly socialist because the real leader of the Parisian proletariat,<sup>3</sup> and Lenin himself says of Blanqui that he was an "undoubted revolutionary and a strong supporter of socialism."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *La Patrie en Danger*, Sept. 8, 1870. See on Blanqui's patriotism, J. Tchernoff, *L'Extrême-Gauche Socialiste-Révolutionnaire en 1870-71* (Paris, 1918), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Blanqui is bitter though amusing on the subject of the gallicization of English words. E. g. MSS. Liasse I, Cahier B 3°, p. 206. "Club—cloub!—cleub!—Ah! oui, cleu-eu-eu-eub! Est-ce que sous prétexte d'Étymologie, nous allons être condamnés aux glapissements britanniques? Qu'est-ce que cette invasion d'Outre-Manche, cette descente des nez dans les bouches? Faudra-t-il, aussi, par fidélité aux origines, appeler désormais Raiding-Côôôôôôt notre vêtement aux longues basques, dont la coupe et le nom viennent d'Angleterre? Allons-nous substituer à l'accent net, simple et bref de notre langue si claire, toutes les intonations du miaulement anglais? Laissons à ces miaulements leur spécialité qui est de distraire, dans les entr'actes, le poulailler de l'Ambigu-Comique."

<sup>3</sup> See *18th Brumaire*.

<sup>4</sup> *Uroki Kommuni*, 1908. *Collected Works*, vol. XI, p. 509.

Babeuf, Blanqui and Lenin all pinned their faith on a compact group of convinced and determined men as the proper organization of a revolutionary party. All were convinced revolutionists certain of the necessity of destroying by force the agencies of existing government. All were convinced of the necessity of a dictatorship, either individual or collective, during the period of transition between the old order and the new. This transitional period and the problems it must bring were actively and continuously discussed by Babeuf and his followers.<sup>1</sup> He as well as Blanqui and Lenin was persuaded of the necessity of terrorism, of making "a just example, capable of frightening the traitors and of securing to those whom the people honored their confidence in the future."<sup>2</sup>

None of these revolutionaries had much respect for democratic forms of government. To Babeuf and Blanqui the proper organization of society was a simple deduction from a few natural law postulates. To all three the vast mass of the population was unfitted by improper education to legislate on questions of economic and political organization. To Babeuf the truly enlightened were found in the group of Paris revolutionaries; this group was the only one capable of acting for the interest of the state. To Blanqui the enlightened were the Paris proletariat and a group of bourgeois *déclassés* who must be given the dictatorship in the interest of the French proletariat. To Lenin the advanced and class-conscious element was the city proletariat. There is a difference in scope and in detail, but the revolutionary theory of all three runs on the same general lines.

Viewed in the light of the present significance of this revolutionary theory, Blanqui is entitled to a more considerable position in the history of communism than historians have customarily assigned him.

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<sup>1</sup> See Espinas, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> Buonarotti, *op. cit.*, p. 93.