

## CHAPTER II

### THE FIRST FRENCH REVOLUTION

Illuminism in France—Cagliostro—Mirabeau—Intrigues of Prussia—The Orléanistes—The Reign of Terror—Cloutz and Internationalism—Robespierre and Socialism—The plan of depopulation—After-effects of revolution.

Two years before the suppression of Illuminism in Bavaria its adepts had begun their work in France. The "magician" Cagliostro, generally reputed to be a Jew<sup>1</sup> from Sicily, had been enrolled as an Illuminatus in Germany. According to his own account given in the course of his interrogatory before the Holy See in Rome in 1790, "his initiation took place at a little distance from Frankfurt in an underground room. An iron box filled with papers was opened. The introducers took from it a manuscript book on the first page of which one read: 'We, Grand Masters of the Templars—' Then followed a form of oath, traced in blood. The book

<sup>1</sup> It has been denied that Cagliostro was a Jew, but no definite proof to the contrary has been produced. M. Louis Dasté in his book *Marie-Antoinette et le complot maçonnique*, p. 70, gives passages from various contemporaries affirming his Jewish origin. Friedrich Bülow (*Geheime Geschichten und Räthselhafte Menschen* (1850), vol. i. p. 311) says that his father was Peter Balsamo, the son of a bookseller in Palermo—Antonio Balsamo—who appears to have been of the Jewish race, but Joseph (*i.e.* Cagliostro) was brought up in a seminary as a Christian. Bülow adds that it was Cagliostro who brought about the admission of Jews to the masonic lodges. Cagliostro himself pretended to know nothing of his origin, declaring that he was brought up in Arabia, in the palace of the Muphti at Medina. Replying to Mme. de la Motte's assertion that he was a Jew, he stated: "I was brought up as the son of Christian parents—I have never been a Jew or a Mahomedan," but he did not say that he was not of Jewish race. Bülow further relates that Cagliostro on a visit to England formed a friendship with Lord George Gordon, who in the following year made a plan to burn down London and incidentally became a Jew. (See *Chambers's Biographical Dictionary*, article on Lord George Gordon; *Mémoire pour le Comte de Cagliostro*, p. 83 (1786 edition).)

stated that Illuminism was a conspiracy directed against thrones and altars, and that the first blows were to attain France, that after the fall of the French Monarchy, Rome must be attacked. Cagliostro learnt from the mouths of the Initiators that the secret society of which henceforth he formed a part possessed a mass of money dispersed in the banks of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, London, Genoa, and Venice. He himself drew a substantial sum destined for the expenses of propaganda, received the instructions of the Sect and went to Strasbourg."<sup>1</sup> It was in Strasbourg that Cagliostro then made the acquaintance of the Cardinal de Rohan,<sup>2</sup> who quickly fell under the spell of the hypnotic power which formed Cagliostro's stock-in-trade and is still practised by propagandists of Illuminism. Soon after this the Cardinal introduced the magician to Mme. de la Motte,<sup>3</sup> and the "Affair of the Necklace" was the result. It was thus that the first blow at the French Monarchy was planned in the councils of the German Illuminati.

Two years later a further success was achieved for Illuminism by the acquisition of Mirabeau. That great adventurer had been sent by the French Government on a mission to Berlin, and whilst in Germany became acquainted with some of the Illuminati, amongst others Nicolai and Leuchtsenring. Finally at Brunswick he formed a friendship with Mauvillon, who initiated him into the highest mysteries of the Order.<sup>4</sup> With superb effrontery Mirabeau then published a pamphlet entitled *Essai sur la secte des Illuminés*, purporting to expose the follies of Illuminism but in reality describing the sect of the Martinistes, so as to throw a veil over the manœuvres of the real Illuminati of Bavaria.<sup>5</sup> On his return to France, Mirabeau (who had assumed the illuminated name "Leonidas"), in co-operation with Talleyrand, introduced Illuminism into his lodge, which he had called the "Philalèthes,"<sup>6</sup> again throwing dust in

<sup>1</sup> Louis Blanc, *Histoire de la Révolution Française*, ii. 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoire pour le Comte de Cagliostro*, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Barruel, *Mémoires sur le Jacobinisme*, iv. 258; Robison, *op. cit.* 276.

<sup>5</sup> Clifford, *Application of Barruel's Memoirs of Jacobinism*, p. xvii.

<sup>6</sup> Barruel, *op. cit.* iv. 258, 373.

the eyes of the public, for, as we have seen, the "Philalèthes" was a lodge of the Martinistes—and it was then decided that all the masonic lodges of France should be illuminized. Finding this task, however, beyond his powers, Mirabeau sent to Germany for two more adepts—Bode, known as Amelius, and the Baron de Busche, known as Bayard. At the lodge of the "Amis Réunis," where the members of the masonic lodges from all over France congregated, the mysteries of Illuminism were unveiled by the two German emissaries and the code of Weishaupt was formally placed on the table.<sup>1</sup> The result of this was that by March 1789 the 266 lodges controlled by the Grand Orient were all "illuminized" without knowing it, for the Freemasons in general were not told the name of the sect that brought them these mysteries, and only a very small number were really initiated into the secret.<sup>2</sup>

In the following month the Revolution broke out.

No one will deny that France at this period was ripe for drastic reforms. It is true that Babeuf, the Socialist, afterwards declared that the people of France were no worse off than the people of other countries,<sup>3</sup> and that Arthur Young, whose earlier views on the Revolution, written under Orléanistic influence, are always quoted as the strongest indictment of the Old Régime, was later on led by fuller knowledge to assert that "the old government of France, with all its faults, was certainly the best enjoyed by any considerable country in Europe, England alone excepted."<sup>4</sup> Still an examination of facts shows that there was very real cause for discontent, more on the part of the peasants than of the industrial workers. The Game Laws, or *capitaineries*—by which the crops of the peasants could be trampled down by the hunt or destroyed by the game—the salt tax or *gabelle*, the enforced labour known as the *corvée*, the dues paid to the landlords, and a host of other agricultural grievances, but, above all, the iniquitous inequality of taxation, were burdens that the people very naturally resented. But it must not be forgotten that the

<sup>1</sup> Barruel, *op. cit.* iv. 280.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 281.

<sup>3</sup> *Pièces saisies chez Babeuf*, 142.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Young, *The Example of France, a Warning to Britain*, p. 36.

King himself had continued to urge the abolition of these injustices, and that the attitude of the aristocracy as a whole was at this moment far from intractable. The philosophy of Rousseau had opened the eyes of many of the nobles to the need for reforms, and there was probably never a moment in the history of the world when a great regeneration might have been carried out with less violence.

The work of the revolutionaries was not, however, to accelerate reforms, but to arrest them in order to increase popular discontent and bring themselves into power. The manner in which they accomplished their designs has been described in detail in my study of the French Revolution, and for the purpose of the present work the history of this period must be condensed as far as possible so as to indicate only the course of the social revolution.

For, during the first three years of the great upheaval, the plan of Illuminism was obscured by the intrigues of political factions—the conspiracy of the Orléanistes to change the dynasty, and later the struggle of the Girondins to achieve political power. Meanwhile Prussia was playing an insidious part in the troubles of France.

For many years before the Revolution the cherished scheme of Frederick the Great had been to break the Franco-Austrian alliance of 1756, which barred his way to power, and to establish a unified Germany under Prussian domination. In 1778 the Empress Maria Theresa in a letter to her daughter Marie Antoinette wrote these prophetic words :

Every one in Europe knows to what point one can count on the King of Prussia and how far one can depend on his word. France has been able to perceive this under diverse circumstances. And yet that is the sovereign who aspires to erect himself as protector and dictator of Germany. What is still more extraordinary, the Powers do not think of uniting to prevent such a misfortune, from which, sooner or later, all will have to endure the disastrous consequences. What I put forward concerns all the Powers of Europe ; the future does not appear to me under a smiling aspect. Yet to-day we endure the influence of *that military and despotic monarchy which recognizes no principle*, but which, in all that it does and all that it undertakes, always pursues the same goal, its own interest and its exclusive advantage. If this Prussian principle is allowed to continue to



gain ground, what hope is there for those who will succeed us one day? <sup>1</sup>

As a result of warnings such as these Marie Antoinette adopted that anti-Prussian attitude for which she paid so dearly, and Frederick, centring all his hatred of Austria on the luckless Dauphine of France, circulated libels against her through his agent von der Goltz, who combined the rôle of ambassador and spy at the Court of Versailles. Such indeed was the thoroughness of Hohenzollern methods that he had even taken the trouble to enter into relations with an obscure thief in France named Carra, afterwards to become a leading revolutionary, who apparently proved so efficient that Frederick saw fit to reward him with a gold snuff-box in recognition of his services. The policy of Frederick the Great was faithfully carried out by his successor, Frederick William II., and Prussian agents, chief amongst them a Jew named Ephraim, were sent over to Paris to mingle with the revolutionary mobs and inflame their passions.

The intrigue that directed the opening stages of the Revolution was, however, the Orléaniste conspiracy, and it was by this faction that the artificial scarcity of grain was created during the spring and summer of 1789, and that the siege of the Bastille on July 14 and the march on Versailles on October 5 were organized. Now it has been objected by several critics that in my descriptions of these days I overrated the importance of the Orléaniste conspiracy, and that the feeble character of the Duc d'Orléans makes it impossible to see in him a determined conspirator. The latter fact is true, but it will be noticed that I did not attribute to the Duke himself the organization of the conspiracy, but to his supporters, notably Choderlos de Laclos. Since, however, in research of this kind no progress can be made unless one is willing to reconstruct one's view in the light of further knowledge, I frankly admit that in my *French Revolution* I underrated the importance of Illuminism, and it is therefore quite possible that part of the organization I attributed to the genius of Choderlos de Laclos was in reality the work of illumined Freemasonry. This would in no way affect the descriptions of the mechanism by which the so-called

<sup>1</sup> Deschamps, *op. cit.* pp. 22-28, quoting from the German press.

popular risings were brought about, but would supply a further explanation of its efficiency.

But since the Duc d'Orléans, whilst lending himself to the plan of usurping the throne of France, was at the same time Grand Master of the Grand Orient, and all the revolutionary leaders, Orléaniste or otherwise, were members of the lodges, it is obviously impossible to disentangle the threads of the two intrigues. How can we know which of the Duke's supporters were genuinely working for a change of dynasty and which for the overthrow of monarchy and all ordered government? The plan of Weishaupt was always to make use of princes to further their own ends, and it would be interesting to discover whether the loans raised by the Duc d'Orléans in Amsterdam and England, wherewith, as the Revolution proceeded he replenished his coffers, came from the funds of the Illuminati in those places.

To whatever agency we attribute it, however, the mechanism of the French Revolution distinguishes it from all previous revolutions. Hitherto the isolated revolutions that had taken place throughout the history of the world can be clearly recognized as spontaneous movements brought about by oppression or by a political faction enjoying some measure of popular support, and therefore endeavouring to satisfy the demands of the people. But in the French Revolution we see for the first time that plan in operation which has been carried on right up to the present moment—*the systematic attempt to create grievances in order to exploit them.*

The most remarkable instance of engineered agitation during the early stages of the Revolution was the extraordinary incident known to history as "The Great Fear," when on the same day, July 22, 1789, and almost at the same hour, in towns and villages all over France, a panic was created by the announcement that brigands were approaching and therefore that all good citizens must take up arms. The messengers who brought the news post-haste on horseback in many cases exhibited placards headed "Edict of the King," bearing the words "The King orders all châteaux to be burnt down; he only wishes to keep his own!" And the people, obedient to these commands, seized upon every weapon they could find and set themselves to the task of

destruction. The object of the conspirators was thus achieved—the arming of the populace against law and order, a device which ever since 1789 has always formed the first item in the programme of the social revolution.

It is said that the idea originated with Adrien Duport and has therefore been attributed to the Orléaniste conspiracy, but Duport was not only an *intime* of the Duc d'Orléans, but an adept of illuminized Freemasonry, and the organization of the "Great Fear" may well have been masonic. This explanation seems the more probable when we remember that the plan of the lodges even before they became illuminized had been "to make a revolution for the benefit of the *bourgeoisie* with the people as instruments." With this end in view the conspirators held up the food supplies, blocked all reforms in the National Assembly, and organized demonstrations directly opposed to the interests of the people. From the attack on the factory of Reveillon in April 1789 to the murder of the baker François in October, nearly every outrage was directed against men who had fed and befriended the poor.

Under the domination of the Tiers État—almost entirely composed of *bourgeoisie* far more occupied with their own grievances against the nobles than with the sufferings of the people—the legislation carried out by the National Assembly cannot be described by so mild a word as "reactionary"; it was frankly and ruthlessly repressive of all Socialistic or even democratic ideas. Not only was property safeguarded by new laws, but suffrage was extended only to citizens possessing certain incomes, whilst the trade unions that had existed peacefully under the name of "working-men's corporations" were rigorously suppressed by the famous "Loi Chapelier" on June 14, 1791.

By this glaringly anti-democratic act working-men were forbidden to "name presidents, keep registers, make resolutions, deliberate or draw up regulations on their pretended common interests," or to agree on any fixed scale of wages. The working of the first Article runs as follows :

The annihilation of all kinds of corporations of citizens belonging to the same state or profession being one of the funda-

mental bases of the French Constitution, it is forbidden to re-establish them on any pretext or under any form whatsoever.

This law was passed without a word of protest from Robespierre or any of the so-called democrats of the Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

As to the "Constitution" held up before the eyes of the people as the supreme benefit the Revolution was to confer on them, it will be noticed that every step on the road to its final promulgation was marked by a fresh outbreak of revolutionary agitation. No sooner had its first principles been placed before the Assembly by Mounier, Clermont Tonnerre, and other honest democrats than a price was placed on the heads of these men by the revolutionaries of the Palais Royal, and an attempt was made to march on Versailles. When two years later the King finally accepted the Constitution, this immense concession to the demands of the people, which if the Revolution had been made by the people would undoubtedly have ended it, became the signal for a fresh outbreak of revolutionary fury, expressed by the hideous massacre known as the "Glacière d'Avignon." Can we not believe then that there may be some truth in the Père Deschamps' statement that "the cry of 'Constitution' has been in all countries the word of command of the Secret Societies," that is to say, the rallying cry of revolution?<sup>2</sup> We shall find further confirmation of this theory later in the history of the revolutionary movement in Russia.

Thus during the first two years of the Revolution Illuminism concealed itself under the guise of popular tumults, but with the formation of the Jacobin Clubs all over France its scheme of domination becomes more apparent.

These societies, Robison in his *Proofs of a Conspiracy* declares, were organized by the revolutionary committees under the direct inspiration of the Bavarian Illuminati, who taught them their "method of doing business, of managing their correspondence, and of procuring and training pupils." It was thus that at a given signal insurrections could be engineered simultaneously in all parts

<sup>1</sup> Buchez et Roux, *Histoire parlementaire*, x. 196.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Sociétés secrètes et la société*, by P. Deschamps and Claudio Jannet, p. 242.

of the country or that the Faubourgs could be summoned forth at the word of command.

The plan of Weishaupt for enlisting women in the movement had been adopted from the beginning by the revolutionaries, and we see in the declamations of Théroigne de Méricourt,<sup>1</sup> and of the militant suffragette Olympe de Gouges, how cleverly the idea of "giving them hints of emancipation" was carried out. Madame Roland, likewise glorying in the political power the Revolution had brought her, little dreamt whither the movement was tending—to the disappearance from the stage of all women except the furies of the guillotine. Olympe and Madame Roland paid for their illusions with their heads; Théroigne, publicly flogged in the Tuileries gardens by the *tricoteuses* of Robespierre, lost her reason and died raving mad in the Salpêtrière some years later. For in times of revolution it is not the women of brains and energy who can ever take a leading part, but only those whose disordered imaginations and perverted passions inspire them with a ferocity more horrible than that of man.

The Jacobins, in playing on these passions amongst the women who assembled at the meetings held three times weekly at their "Sociétés Fraternelles," fanned their fury into flame and prepared those terrible bands of harpies who committed the atrocities of August 10th.

So complete had the organization of the Jacobin Clubs now become that during 1791 and 1792 all the masonic lodges of France were closed down and Philippe Égalité sent in his resignation as Grand Master. This was held advisable for several reasons: the Jacobins, once the masters of France, could not with safety tolerate the existence of any secret association that might be used as a cover for counter-revolutionary schemes; moreover, as the great plan of Illuminism was by this time in process of fulfilment, what further need was there for secrecy? Projects formerly discussed with bated breath in the lodges could now

<sup>1</sup> Théroigne thus expressed her views on the Revolution to an English contemporary: "Society is undergoing a change, a grand reorganization, and women are about to resume their rights. We shall no more be flattered in order to be enslaved; these arms have dethroned the tyrant and conquered freedom" (*France in 1802*, Letters of Redhead Yorke, p. 62).

be openly avowed in the tribune of the Jacobin Clubs, and nothing remained but to put them into execution.

It was not, however, until after the overthrow of the monarchy on the 10th of August that the work of demolition began on the vast scale planned by Weishaupt. From this moment the rôle of Illuminism can be clearly traced through the succeeding phases of the Revolution. Thus it is from the 10th of August onwards that we find the tricolour, banner of the usurper, replaced by the red flag of the social revolution, whilst the cry of "Vive notre roi d'Orléans!" gives way to the masonic watchword "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity!" During the massacres in the prisons that followed in September the assassins were observed to make masonic signs to the victims and to spare those who knew how to reply. Amongst those not spared was the Abbé Lefranc, who had published a pamphlet unveiling the designs of Freemasonry at the beginning of the Revolution.

The proclamation issued by the Convention in December summoning the proletariats of Europe to rise in revolt against all ordered government was the first trumpet-call to World Revolution, and it was the failure to respond to this appeal that forced the Jacobins into a "national" attitude they had never intended to assume.

In November 1793 the campaign against religion, inaugurated by the massacre of the priests in September of the preceding year, was carried out all over France. In the cemeteries the cherished motto of the Illuminati, "Death is an eternal sleep," was posted up by order of the Illuminatus "Anaxagoras" Chaumette. The Feasts of Reason celebrated in the churches of Paris were the mere corollary to Weishaupt's teaching that "Reason should be the only code of Man"; and Robison states that the actual ceremonies which took place, when women of easy morals were enthroned as goddesses, were modelled on Weishaupt's plan of an "Eroterion" or festival in honour of the god of Love.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The idea seems to have been long current in Germany. "In 1751 an impious work, dedicated to Frederick II. (the Great), published as a frontispiece the scene of the adoration of a prostitute which was destined to be realised on the 20th of Brumaire 1793 on the altar of Notre Dame of Paris" (Deschamps, *Les Sociétés secrètes*, ii. 98, quoting *Der Goetze der Humanität oder das Positive der Freimaurerei*, Freiburg Herder, 1875, pp. 75-80).

It was likewise to Weishaupt's declamations against "the mercantile tribe" that the devastation of the manufacturing towns of France and the ruin of her merchants can be traced, whilst the campaign against education formed a further part of the scheme for destroying civilization. The Terrorists in burning down the libraries and guillotining Lavoisier, on the plea that "the Republic has no need of chemists," were simply putting into practice Weishaupt's theory that the sciences were "children of necessity, the complicated needs of a state contrary to Nature, the inventions of vain and empty brains." "The system of persecution against men of talents was organized," a contemporary declared—organized, as was the whole system of the Terror, by the Illuminati and carried out by men who had accepted the guiding principle of the sect. For it was Weishaupt's favourite maxim, "The end justifies the means," that we find again in the mouths of the Jacobins under the form of "Tout est permis à quiconque agit dans le sens de la Révolution." The Reign of Terror was the logical outcome of this premise.

But this does not imply that all the Terrorists were Illuminati, that is to say, conscious adepts of Weishaupt. It is true that, as we have seen, all were Freemasons at the beginning of the Revolution, but it is probable that few were initiated into the inner mysteries of the Order. The art of Illuminism lay in enlisting dupes as well as adepts, and by encouraging the dreams of honest visionaries or the schemes of fanatics, by flattering the vanity of ambitious egoists, by working on unbalanced brains, or by playing on such passions as greed of gold or power, to make men of totally divergent aims serve the secret purpose of the sect. Indeed, amongst all the revolutionary leaders one man alone stands out as a pure Illuminatus—the Prussian Baron, Anacharsis Clootz.

In the utterances of Clootz we find the doctrines of Weishaupt expressed with absolute fidelity. Thus in his *République Universelle* the scheme of Weishaupt for welding the whole human race into "one good and happy family" is set forth at length: "One common interest! one mind! one Nation!" cries Anacharsis. "Do you wish," he asks again, "to exterminate all tyrants at a blow? Declare



then authentically that sovereignty consists in the common patriotism and solidarity of the totality of men, of the one and only nation. . . . The Universe will form one State, the State of united individuals, the immutable empire of the great *Germany*—the Universal Republic." Or again: "When the Tower of London falls like the tower of Paris it will be all over with tyrants. All the people forming only one nation, all the trades forming only one trade, all interests forming only one interest," etc. It was Cloutz, moreover, who played the most active part in the campaign against religion. Was it not he who had invented the word to "septemberize," regretting that they had not "septemberized" more priests in the prisons, and who openly declared himself "the personal enemy of Jesus Christ"? The fact that he never revealed himself to be an Illuminatus and never referred to Weishaupt was in strict accordance with the rule of the Order, which we shall find adhered to by every adept in turn. "The Illuminati," Professor Renner had declared before the Bavarian Court of Inquiry, "fear nothing so much as being recognized under this name," and frightful punishment was attached to the betrayal of the secret. It is thus that historians, unaware of the sources whence Cloutz drew his theories, or anxious to conceal the rôle of Illuminism in the revolutionary movement, describe him as an amiable eccentric of no importance. In reality Cloutz was one of the most important figures of the whole Revolution if viewed from the modern standpoint, for it was he alone of all his day who embodied the spirit of anti-patriotism and Internationalism which, defeated in France of 1793, finally secured its triumph on the ruins of the Russian Empire of 1917.

It was Cloutz's Internationalism that ended by antagonizing Robespierre. When at the Jacobin Club the Prussian Baron declared that "his heart was French and *sans-culotte*," but at the same time proposed that as soon as "the French army came in sight of the Austrian and Prussian soldiers they should, instead of attacking the enemy, throw down their own arms and advance towards them dancing in a friendly manner,"<sup>1</sup> Robespierre, "who was

<sup>1</sup> *France in 1802*, Letters of Henry Redhead Yorke, p. 72.



not without a certain penetration in his hatreds . . . acidly apostrophized him, saying that he distrusted all these foreigners who pretended to be more patriotic than the French themselves, that he suspected the good faith of a so-called *sans-culotte* who had an income of 100,000 livres,"<sup>1</sup> and he ended by sending Cloutz and his fellow-atheists Hébert, Chaumette, Ronsin, and Vincent to the scaffold.

Was Robespierre then not an Illuminatus? He was certainly a Freemason, and Prince Kropotkin definitely states that he belonged to one of the lodges of the Illuminati founded by Weishaupt. But contemporaries declare that he had not been fully initiated and acted as the tool rather than as the agent of the conspiracy. Moreover, Robespierre was the disciple not only of Weishaupt but of Rousseau, and under the inspiration of the *Contrat Social* had elaborated a scheme of his own which held none of the aimless destructiveness of the Illuminati. Thus Robespierre clearly recognized the necessity for the vast social revolution indicated by Weishaupt; but whilst Weishaupt fixed his eyes on the explosion and "smiled at the thought of universal conflagration," Robespierre regarded anarchy simply as a means to an end—the reconstruction of society according to the plan he had evolved with the co-operation of Saint-Just, which was simply an embryonic form of the system known later as *State Socialism*.

This statement will of course be challenged by Socialists, who have always—for reasons I shall show later—denied the Robespierrean origin of their doctrines. It is true of course that the word Socialism was not invented until some forty years later, but it would be absurd by means of such a quibble to disassociate Socialism from its earliest exponents. M. Aulard is no doubt perfectly right in saying that Robespierre's Declaration of the Rights of Man contains "all the essentials of French Socialism founded on the principles of 1789 and such as Louis Blanc popularized in 1848. It is for having proposed these Socialistic articles, it is for having proposed this charter for Socialism, and not for having vaguely declaimed against the rich and sounded the praises of mediocrity, that Robespierre after his death, as much

<sup>1</sup> *Biographie Michaud*, article "Cloutz."

in our own century as in the time of Babeuf, became the prophet of many of those amongst us who dreamt of a social renovation, and he remained so until the period when German influence made French Socialists temporarily forget the French origins of their doctrines." <sup>1</sup> Robespierre may indeed, in the language of Socialism, be described as more "advanced" than his French successors of the early nineteenth century, for he anticipated the Marxian theory of the class war, which was not again to find acceptance in France until adopted by the Guesdists and Syndicalists at the very end of the century. Robespierre's cherished maxim, "The rich man is the enemy of the *sans-culotte*," <sup>2</sup> contains the whole spirit of the class war. We have in fact only to transpose the phrases current in 1793 into their modern equivalents to recognize their identity with modern Socialistic formulas. Thus the magic phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat"—of which it is doubtful whether any one understands the precise meaning—was expressed at that date by the words "Sovereignty of the People," and formed the text of Robespierre's gospel. "The people," he wrote, "must be the object of all political institutions." <sup>3</sup> All other classes of the community were to be entirely unrepresented or, preferably, not to be allowed to exist.

Even the theory of "wage slavery," later on proclaimed by Marx, was already current during the Reign of Terror, and on this point we have the evidence of a contemporary.

"The plan of the Jacobins," wrote the democrat Fantin Désodoards, "was to stir up the rich against the poor and the poor against the rich. To the latter they said: 'You have made a few sacrifices in favour of the Revolution, but fear, not patriotism, was the motive.' To the former they said: 'The rich man has no bowels of compassion; under the pretext of feeding the poor by providing them with work he exercises over them a superiority contrary to the views of Nature and to Republican principles. Liberty will always be precarious as long as one part of the nation lives on wages from the other. In order to preserve its independ-

<sup>1</sup> Aulard, *Histoire politique de la Révolution Française*, iv. 47; see also Aulard, *Études et leçons sur la Révolution Française*, ii. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Papiers trouvés chez Robespierre*, i. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Discours et rapports de Robespierre*, edited by Charles Vellay, p. 8; see also p. 327.

ence, it is necessary that every one should be rich or that every one should be poor.'"<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen then that the whole theory of the class war, and even the very phrases by which it was to be promoted, as also the necessity for abolishing the relationship of capital and labour, which is usually associated with Marx, were ideas that existed twenty-five years before his birth. We cannot doubt that it is to Robespierre and Saint-Just that they must be mainly attributed. Robespierre, as we know, definitely advocated the abolition of inheritance. "The property of a man," he said, "must return after his death to the public domain of society"; and although he was known to declare that "equality of wealth is a chimera," it was no doubt because he well knew that wealth can never be evenly distributed, and therefore that the only way to achieve equality is by the process known to-day as the nationalization of all wealth and property. "This," says the editor of his discourses, M. Charles Vellay, "is what the Revolution means to him—it is to lead to a sort of Communism, and it is here that he separates himself from his colleagues, that he isolates himself, and that resistance gathers around him." In 1840 the Socialist Cabet, who had received the Robespierriste tradition direct from the contemporary Buonarotti, expressed the same opinion :

All the proposals of the Comité de Salut Public during the last five months, the opinions of Bodson and of Buonarotti—both initiated into the profound views of Robespierre, both his admirers, and both Communists,—give us the conviction that Robespierre and Saint-Just only blamed the untimely invocation of Community by declared atheists (*i.e.* Cloutz, Hébert, etc.), and that they themselves marched towards Communism by paths they judged more suited to success.<sup>2</sup>

Still more clinching evidence of Robespierre's real aim is, however, provided by the Communist Babeuf, who wrote these words in 1795 :

He (Robespierre) thought that equality would only be a vain word as long as the owners of property were allowed to tyrannize

<sup>1</sup> Fantin Désodoards, *Histoire philosophique de la Révolution Française*, iv. 344.

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire populaire de la Révolution Française*, by Cabet (1840).

over the great mass, and that in order to destroy their power and to take the mass of citizens out of their dependence *there was no way but to place all property in the hands of the government.*<sup>1</sup>

In the face of this statement how can any one deny that Robespierre was a State Socialist in precisely the sense in which we understand the term to-day? That the State was of course to be represented by Robespierre himself and his chosen associates it is needless to add, but what Communist or group of Communists have ever excluded the hypothesis of their own supremacy from their plan of a Socialist State? "L'État c'est nous" is the maxim of all such theorists.

On one point, however, Robespierre differed from most of the members of the same school of thought who came after him in that he showed himself a *consistent* Socialist, for he had the singleness of aim, aided by an entire want of moral scruples, to push his theories to their logical conclusion. A Labour extremist in this country recently described the modern Bolsheviks as "Socialists with the courage of their opinions," and the same description might be applied to Robespierre and Saint-Just. Thus Robespierre did not talk hypocritically of "peaceful revolution"; he knew that revolution is never peaceful, that in its very essence it implies onslaught met with resistance, a resistance that can only be overcome by an absolute disregard for human life. "I will walk willingly with my feet in blood and tears," said his coadjutor Saint-Just; and this, whether he admits it or not, must be the maxim of every revolutionary Socialist who believes that any methods are justifiable for the attainment of his end.

The Reign of Terror was therefore not only the outcome of Illuminism but also the logical result of Socialistic doctrines. Thus, for example, the attacks on civilization carried out in the summer of 1793, the burning of the libraries and the destruction of treasures of art and literature, were all part of the scheme of Weishaupt, but they were also perfectly consistent with the Socialistic theory of the "sovereignty of the people." For if one considers that in the least educated portion of the community

<sup>1</sup> *Sur le système de la dépopulation*, p. 28.

all wisdom and all virtue reside, the only logical thing to do is to burn the libraries and close down the schools. Of what avail is it to train the intellectual faculties of a child if manual labour alone is to be held honourable? Of what use to civilize him if in civilization is to be found the bane of mankind? It is idle in one breath to talk of the beauties of education and in the next to advocate the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and condemn all educated people as *bourgeois*.

Of this strange contradiction the Jacobins of France, like the Bolsheviks of Russia, at first were guilty. Magnificent schemes were propounded to the Convention for "écoles normales," "écoles centrales," etc.; regiments of professors were to be commandeered for the instruction of youth; but all these schemes came to nought, for by the end of 1794 public education was said to be non-existent,<sup>1</sup> owing obviously to the fact that meanwhile the emissaries of the Comité de Salut Public had busied themselves destroying books and pictures and persecuting all men of education.

This campaign against the *bourgeoisie* found its principal support in Robespierre. It was he who first sounded the call to arms which has since become the war-cry of the social revolution. "Internal dangers come from the *bourgeois*; in order to conquer the *bourgeois* we must rouse the people, we must procure arms for them and make them angry."<sup>2</sup> The natural consequence of this policy carried out against the mercantile *bourgeoisie* by the attacks on the manufacturing towns of France was of course to create vast unemployment. Already the destruction of the aristocracy had thrown numberless workers on the streets, so that by 1791 nearly all the hands that had ministered to the needs or caprices of the rich were idle, and thousands of hairdressers, gilders, bookbinders, tailors, embroiderers, and domestic servants wandered about Paris and collected in crowds "to debate on the misery of their situation."

The situation must always arise, if the leisured classes are suddenly destroyed either by killing them off or by a

<sup>1</sup> Joseph de Maistre, *Mélanges inédits*, pp. 122, 124, 125, quoting contemporary documents.

<sup>2</sup> *Papiers trouvés chez Robespierre*, ii. 15.

ruthless conscription of capital. Socialists are fond of describing luxury workers as parasites; obviously then if one destroys the animal on which the parasite lives one must destroy the parasite too. It is possible that by a very slow and gradual redistribution of wealth luxury workers might be more or less absorbed into the essential trades, but even this is very doubtful. At any rate the attempt to abolish the luxury trades at a blow must inevitably lead to unemployment on a vast scale, for not only will the luxury workers themselves be idle, but, since all classes are interdependent, many of the workers in the essential trades who depend on them for a livelihood will be idle likewise. Any sudden dislocation of the industrial system must therefore mean national bankruptcy.

This is precisely what happened in France—as even Socialist writers admit. Malon in his *Histoire du socialisme* illustrates, by a picture of a scene in a Paris street, the situation described by Michelet in the words :

The Revolution was to open a career to the peasant but closed it to the workman. The first pricked up his ear at the decrees which placed the goods of the clergy on sale; the second, silent and sombre, dismissed from his workshop, wandered about all day with folded arms.<sup>1</sup>

The condition of the industrial workers was still further aggravated by the legislation of the Terror. Not only was the Loi Chapelier against trade unions confirmed and severely enforced by the Comité de Salut Public under the domination of Robespierre, but the workers were obliged to toil very much harder than ever before. This point, systematically ignored by historians, constitutes one of the chief ironies of the period and illustrates the ingenious method by which the so-called advocates of the People's Sovereignty contrived to dupe the People to their own undoing. Thus, under the pretext of abolishing the obsolete customs and superstitions of the Old Régime, the workers were deprived of all the holidays they had enjoyed in honour of the Saints or the festivals of the Church. Under the monarchy not only every one of these days but also the day following it

<sup>1</sup> Malon, *Histoire du socialisme*, i. 267, 297.

had been a holiday, and neither on Sunday nor on Monday was any work done.

By substituting "decadi," that is to say one day in every ten, for Sunday and making it only a half-holiday, the new masters of France added  $3\frac{1}{2}$  working days to every fortnight. The result per year is shown in an amusing article of the *Moniteur* for September 9, 1794, entitled "National Idleness," of which the following is an extract :

Easter, Christmas, All Saints, days of the Virgin, of Kings, Saint Martin, fifty thousand patrons of parishes and priories . . . all these fêtes and their morrows have been suppressed ; by expelling the saints from their shrines and all the priests from their confessionals thirty-six half Sundays are left us (*i.e.* the thirty-six *decadis* which occurred in the course of the year, which were half-holidays). The Revolution has consecrated to work at least a hundred and twenty days which the Pope and his Elder Son (the title given to the King of France) left to idleness in France. This national idleness was a tax on misery, a tax that diminished the revenues of the State and increased expenses for alms, assistance, and hospitals. Permission to work is a charity which costs nothing to the public treasure and which will bring to it considerable funds. All is new in France—weather, mankind, the earth, and the sea. . . . *The Republican year gives to work four months more than the papal and monarchic year.*<sup>1</sup>

It is not necessary to be a believer in the principle of Ca' Canny as a remedy for unemployment to recognize that the result of this legislation was to reduce the number of hands required and leave the vast reserve of labour which enables the employer to make his own terms with the workers. It will be seen that this expedient which State Socialists are fond of denouncing as one of the evils of Capitalism was practised under the régime of that first experimenter in State Socialism—Maximilien Robespierre.

But towards the end of 1793 it became evident that there was no possibility of absorbing the residuum created, for the attacks on the manufacturing towns of France had dealt the final blow to trade and the Republic found itself faced by hundreds of thousands of working-men for whom it could not find employment. It was then that the Comité

<sup>1</sup> *Moniteur*, xxi. 699.



de Salut Public, anticipating the Malthusian theory, embarked on its fearful project—the *system of depopulation*.

That this plan really existed it is impossible to doubt in the face of overwhelming contemporary evidence. In *The French Revolution* I quoted in this connection the testimony of no less than twenty-two witnesses—all revolutionaries;<sup>1</sup> and since then I have found further corroboration of the fact in the letters of an Englishman, named Redhead Yorke, who travelled in France in 1802 and made particular inquiries on this question from the ally of Robespierre, the painter David :

I asked him whether it was true that a project had been in contemplation to reduce the population of France to one-third of its present number. He answered that it had been seriously discussed and that Dubois Crancé was the author.

In another passage Yorke states :

Monsieur de la Métherie assured me that during the time of the Revolutionary Tribunals, it was in serious contemplation to reduce the population of France to 14,000,000. Dubois Crancé was a very distinguished and enthusiastic partisan of this humane and philosophical policy.<sup>2</sup>

It will be noticed that there is here a discrepancy in the exact figures; the population of France at that period being 25 millions, the proposal to reduce it to one-third was to bring it down to approximately eight millions. The difference then lies between the projects of reducing it *by* one-third or *to* one-third—issues which Yorke evidently confused; but it was precisely on this point that the opinions of the Terrorists differed. Thus we are told that d'Antonelle of the Revolutionary Tribunal advocated the former and more moderate policy, but that a reduction to eight millions, that is to say to one-third, was the figure generally agreed on by the leaders.

The necessity for this lay not only in the fact that there was not even enough bread, money, or property to go round, but also, after the destruction of the aristocracy and *bourgeoisie*, not enough work.

<sup>1</sup> *The French Revolution*, pp. 426-428.

<sup>2</sup> *France in 1802*, Letters of Redhead Yorke, edited by J. A. C. Sykes (Heinemann), 1906, pp. 102, 127.



"In the eyes of Maximilien Robespierre and his council," says Babeuf, "depopulation was indispensable because the calculation had been made that the French population was in excess of the resources of the soil and of the requirements of *useful industry*, that is to say, that with us men jostled each other too much for each to be able to live at ease; that hands were too numerous for the execution of all works of *essential utility*—and this is the horrible conclusion; that since the superabundant population could only amount to so much . . . a portion of *sans-culottes* must be sacrificed; that this rubbish could be cleared up to a certain quantity, and that means must be found for doing it."

The system of the Terror was thus the answer to the problem of unemployment—unemployment brought about on a vast scale by the destruction of the luxury trades.

If the hecatombs carried out all over France never reached the huge proportions planned by the leaders, it was not for want of what they described as "energy in the art of revolution." Night and day the members of the Comité de Salut Public sat round the green-covered table in the Tuileries with the map of France spread out before them, pointing out towns and villages and calculating how many heads they must have in each department. Night and day the Revolutionary Tribunal passed on, without judgement, its never-ending stream of victims, whilst near by the indefatigable Fouquier bent over his lists for the morrow, and in the provinces the proconsuls Carrier, Fréron, Collot d'Herbois, Lebon toiled unremittingly at the same Herculean task.

Compared to the results they had hoped to achieve the mortality was insignificant; compared to the accounts given us by "the conspiracy of history" it was terrific. The popular conception of the Reign of Terror as a procession of powdered heads going to the guillotine seems strangely naïve when we read the actual records of the period. Thus during the great Terror in Paris about 2800 victims perished, and out of these approximately 500 were of the aristocracy, 1000 of the *bourgeoisie*, and 1000 working-class. These estimates are not a surmise, since they can be proved by the actual register of the Revolutionary Tribunal published both by Campardon and Wallon, also

by the contemporary Prudhomme,<sup>1</sup> and they are accepted as accurate by the Robespierriste historian Louis Blanc.<sup>2</sup>

According to Prudhomme the total number of victims drowned, guillotined, or shot all over France amounted to 300,000, and of this number the nobles sacrificed were an almost negligible quantity, only about 3000 in all.<sup>3</sup>

At Nantes 500 children of the people were killed in one butchery, and according to an English contemporary 144 poor women who sewed shirts for the army were thrown into the river.<sup>4</sup>

Such was the period during which Carlyle dared to assure us that "The Twenty-Five Millions of France" had "never suffered less."

.But this frightful mortality was not the only dreadful feature of the Terror—ruin, misery, starvation were the lot of all but the band of tyrants who had seized the reins of power, and this state of affairs continued long after the reign of Robespierre ended. The conception of France rising like a phoenix from that great welter of blood and horror is as mythical as the allegory from which it is taken and has existed only in the minds of posterity. Not a single contemporary who lived through the Revolution has ever pretended that it was anything but a ghastly failure. The conspiracy of history alone has created the myth.

Yet in France the truth is at last beginning to be known. Thus M. Madelin, the most impartial and enlightened of modern historians, has described the condition of France at the end of the Terror in these forcible words :

France is demoralized. She is exhausted—this is the last trait of this country in ruins. There is no longer any public opinion, or rather this opinion is made up only of hatred. They hate the Directors (members of the Directory) and they hate the deputies; they hate the Terrorists and they hate the *chouans* (the Royalists of La Vendée); they hate the rich and they hate the anarchists; they hate the Revolution and the counter-revolution. . . . But where hatred reaches paroxysm is in the case of the newly rich. What is the good of having destroyed

<sup>1</sup> Prudhomme, *Crimes de la Révolution*, vol. vi. Table VI.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Blanc, *Histoire de la Révolution*, xi. 155.

<sup>3</sup> Prudhomme, *Crimes de la Révolution*, vol. vi. Table VI.

<sup>4</sup> Playfair's *History of Jacobinism*, p. 789.

Kings, nobles, and aristocrats, since deputies, farmers, and tradesmen take their place? What cries of hatred! . . . Of all the ruins found and increased by the Directory—ruins of parties, ruins of power, ruins of national representation, ruins of churches, ruins of finances, ruins of homes, ruins of consciences, ruins of intellects—there is nothing more pitiable than this: *the ruin of the national character*.<sup>1</sup>

Eight years after the ending of the Terror, France had not yet recovered from its ravages. According to Redhead Yorke, even the usually accepted theory of agricultural prosperity is erroneous.

Nothing can exceed the wretchedness of the implements of husbandry employed but the wretched appearance of the persons using them. Women at the plough and young girls driving a team give but an indifferent idea of the progress of agriculture under the Republic. There are no farmhouses dispersed over the fields. The farmers reside together in remote villages, a circumstance calculated to retard the business of cultivation. The interiors of the houses are filthy, the farmyards in the utmost disorder, and the miserable condition of the cattle sufficiently bespeaks the poverty of their owner.<sup>2</sup>

Everywhere beggars assailed the traveller for alms; in spite of the reduced population unemployment was rife, education was at a standstill, and owing to the destruction of the old nobility and clergy, and the fact that the new rich who occupied their estates were absentee landlords, there was no system of organized charity. Yorke is finally driven to declare:

The Revolution, which was brought about ostensibly for the benefit of the lower classes of society, has sunk them to a degree of degradation and misfortune to which they never were reduced under the ancient monarchy. They have been disinherited, stripped, and deprived of every resource for existence, except defeats of arms and the fleeting spoil of vanquished nations.

In another passage Yorke asks the inevitable question that arises in the minds of all thinking contemporaries:

France still bleeds at every pore—she is a vast mourning family, clad in sackcloth. It is impossible at this time for a

<sup>1</sup> Madelin, *La Révolution*, pp. 443, 444.

<sup>2</sup> *France in 1802*, p. 28.

contemplative mind to be gay in France. At every footstep the merciless and sanguinary route of fanatical barbarians disgust the sight and sicken humanity—on all sides ruins obtrude themselves on the eye and compel the question, "For what and for whom are all this havoc and desolation?"<sup>1</sup>

It will of course be said that Redhead Yorke was a "reactionary." As a matter of fact he was a constitutional revolutionary and had served a term of imprisonment in Dorchester Castle from 1795 to 1799 for having declared himself to be "a man who had been concerned in three revolutions already, who essentially contributed to serve the Republic in America, who contributed to that of Holland, who materially assisted that of France, and who will continue to cause revolutions all over the world." His visit to France in 1802, however, dispelled his illusions, and he had the courage to admit his change of views. His letters were not published till after his death.

Advocates of social revolution, to whom the revelations on the real facts of the Terror which have recently been published are extremely disconcerting, have adopted the convenient line of describing the first French Revolution as a "*bourgeois* movement." It is true that it was made by *bourgeois*, and at the beginning also by aristocrats—and that the people throughout were the chief sufferers; but this has been the case in every outbreak of the World Revolution. All revolutionary leaders or writers have been *bourgeois*, from Weishaupt to Lenin. Marx was a *bourgeois*, Sorel was a *bourgeois* likewise. No man of the people has ever taken a prominent part in the movement. But in the French "Terror," as in Russia to-day, the *bourgeoisie* were also the victims.

"In that sort of epilepsy into which France had fallen," wrote Prudhomme, "not only the revolutionary nobles set themselves by preference against nobles, priests against priests, merchants against merchants, rich against rich, but even the *sans-culottes* once they themselves became judges did not any the more spare the *sans-culottes* who had remained amongst the crowd of citizens. How could the people have suspected the system of universal depopulation? Until then it had not been

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<sup>1</sup> *France in 1802*, p. 33.

heard of in history. This great doctrine, however, was not chimerical, it existed, it was visible, the leaders of opinion only wished to reign over deserts."<sup>1</sup>

What power can have inspired this fearful system? The pages of accepted history provide no clue to the problem. Only by a recognition of the secret forces at work beneath the surface is it possible to understand how the French nation fell a victim to the hideous régime of the Terror. In the opinion of numberless enlightened contemporaries Illuminism alone explains the mystery. As early as 1793 the *Journal de Vienne* pointed out the true source of inspiration beneath the system of the Jacobins:

It is not the French who conceived the great project of changing the face of the world; this honour belongs to the Germans. The French can claim the honour of having begun its execution, and of having followed it out to its ultimate consequences, which, as history is there to prove, were in accordance with the genius of this people—the guillotine, intrigue, assassination, incendiarism, and cannibalism. . . . Whence comes the eternal Jacobin refrain of universal liberty and equality, of the suppression of kings and princes who are merely tyrants, of oppression by the clergy, of necessary measures for annihilating the Christian religion and establishing a philosophic religion—a refrain that reminds every one of the declarations of Mauvillon, a notable Illuminatus, touching Christianity, of those of Knigge and Campe touching State religion? Whence comes it that all this harmonizes with the "Original Writings" of the Illuminati if there is no alliance between the two sects? Whence comes it that Jacobinism has partisans everywhere, even in the most distant countries, and how can we explain that these, as far as researches can extend, have been in touch with Illuminism?

Aloys Hoffman, editor of this Journal, wrote: "I shall never cease to repeat that the Revolution has come from masonry and that it was made by writers and the Illuminati."

That the objects of the conspiracy were precisely the same as they are to-day is shown by this remarkable extract from a letter of Quintin Crawford to Lord Auckland on May 23, 1793:

The present crisis is certainly the most extraordinary in its nature, and may be the most important in its consequences of

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<sup>1</sup> Prudhomme, *Crimes de la Révolution*, I. p. xxiii.

any that is to be found on the page of history. It may decide the fate of the Religion and Government of most of the nations of Europe, or rather it may decide whether religion and government are to exist, or Europe be plunged again into a state of barbarism. Hitherto the basis of human polity was religion, the Supreme Being was everywhere adored, and the great maxims of morality respected; but when the order of civil society had attained a degree of perfection unknown in former ages, we see endeavours almost everywhere put in practice to destroy it, Atheism rising against Religion, Anarchy against government, vagabonds against the industrious, men who have nothing to lose against those who enjoy what they received from their ancestors or acquired by their labour, and this conflict brought at last into the field to be decided by the sword. On one hand we see the chief powers of Europe taking arms in defence of Religion and lawful authority, and on the other a multitude of disorganized barbarians endeavouring to undo them. Such, my Lord, with some political shades that might be added is a pretty faithful picture of what the French Revolution has produced hitherto.

What words could better describe the situation of Europe in this year of 1921?

But in spite of the vast demolition effected by the Terror, neither the disciples of Weishaupt nor their tools the revolutionary Socialists had achieved their purpose. One more effort must be made to bring about the "Universal revolution that should deal the deathblow to society." This attempt was made two years after the Terror ended by the Communist, Gracchus Babeuf.

V. V. V.