THE "QUESTION OUVRIERE" IN THE WORKS OF JAURES, MATHIEZ, AND LEFEBVRE

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ABSTRACT

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Historians of the French Revolution in the nineteenth century tended to treat the lower classes as a homogeneous group and only rarely differentiated the independent role played by the wage-earning class. Jean Jaurès' Histoire socialiste (1901) made the first extensive effort to study the question ouvrière. Jaurès showed that the wage-earners had no independent consciousness but that they did occasionally act on their own, apart from the sans-culotte group of which they were one element. Albert Mathiez, although inspired by Jaurès, tended to obscure the distinctions Jaurès had made by submerging the wage-earners in a broader "class" of petty bourgeoisie and small consumers. Georges Lefebvre, in contrast, developed the ideas of Jaurès and showed how the antagonisms between wage-earner and petty bourgeoisie divided and destroyed the sans-culotte movement. The work of these three historians shows the value of studying the question ouvrière in the French Revolution, but their continuators have not taken up the topic to any great extent and much research remains to be done.

PREFACE

I had almost completed this historiographical study when I came across the following remarks, which, for obvious reasons, I initially found disturbing:

> There was a time when . . . old historians never died but simply became historiographers. Now novitiates, scarcely weaned, turn historiographers overnight . . . . Assembling a dozen essays, they thrust into the hands of the ignorant what a dozen assorted mentalities have said about a topic, a topic obscured rather than clarified by such historiographical shuffling. No sweat, no tears, no contribution to knowledge--just unearned increment on other men's labours.[1]

Irritation, my first reaction, gradually waned as I considered what I had read, and reached the conclusion that the writer was not so very wrong. As history becomes an increasingly large industry, employing thousands of men and women, it looks even to itself for subject matter. This may or may not be unhealthy, but it is certainly true that the proliferation of historiographical work does tend to obscure the fundamental aim of the historical discipline, which is to seek an understanding of the past. It sometimes seems that (to paraphrase George Bernard Shaw) those who can, research; those who cannot, write historiography.

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[1]Charles F. Mullet, in a book review in the American Historical Review, LXXVI (1971), 1514.

Having said this, I must now defend my own historiographical work, this thesis. I lay no claim to having produced an original, important, or brilliant contribution to history. The aims of this thesis were somewhat more limited: first, to acquaint myself thoroughly with the basic literature on the question ouvrière as a preliminary to embarking on my own research; and secondly, to provide a brief comparative study of the way Jaurès, Mathiez, and Lefebvre dealt with the revolutionary working class. Professor Albert Soboul of the Sorbonne suggested the subject to me, as appropriate in light of the non-availability of much basic research material in Montreal and, more positively, as constituting a valid tribute to Mathiez and Lefebvre, the centenary of whose births will occur in 1974.

All historians recognize Jaurès, Mathiez, and Lefebvre as the giants in French Revolutionary historiography of the twentieth century. Their most productive period spanned sixty years (1900 - 1959) and each of them left Revolutionary history far richer than he found it. Furthermore, the three are significant not only as individuals but also as a kind of trinity, for their work is closely related. All three were Marxists to a degree (Mathiez the least); both Mathiez and Lefebvre recognized Jaurès as their master and mentor. Since Lefebvre's

death, no single individual has managed to impose his own image on the writing of Revolutionary history to the extent that any of the three did. The student can still read their work for inspiration and profit.

My original plan was to deal only with Jaurès, Mathiez, and Lefebvre, but it soon became apparent that to understand their interpretations, I needed to study the social and economic conditions of France on the eve of and during the Revolution. This investigation, which concentrated on the _ouvriers_, became Chapter I. I also decided to add a second chapter to summarize the treatment which the _question ouvrière_ has received at the hands of nineteenth-century historians. The reading of these historians, now too frequently neglected by students, was one of the more rewarding aspects of my research. Although little of what I found in these authors made its way into my written text, I was often impressed by the insights of these early histories of the French Revolution. The three chapters following this one are each in turn devoted to one of the three historians whose work is the subject of this thesis. A final chapter sums up, and describes how recent historians have continued the work of these three men.

I would like to thank Professor Albert Soboul for recommending the topic of this thesis and Professor George Rudé for his guidance during the writing of it. Professor Rudé's criticism was always helpful and to the point; some of his unpublished work, which he kindly permitted me to use, was extremely useful. I owe a debt of gratitude to my good friends Francie Piva and Michael Piva, who were constant encouragements to continued effort whenever I became discouraged. I must also thank the staff of the Inter-Library Loans Service at the Sir George Williams University Library for the quick and friendly service with which they provided me.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, whatever the stage of technological development a society may have achieved, and whatever its pattern of organization, the majority of its members have devoted a large portion of its time to productive labour. A few individuals may constitute an elite social class that can live without working, but no society can survive without productive labour. The necessarily permanent existence of the labouring class has been described by Friedrich Engels in these terms:

> But, since classes arose, there never was a time when society could do without a working class. The name, the social status of that class has changed; the serf took the place of the slave, to be in his turn relieved by the free working man--free from servitude but also free from any earthly possessions save his own labour force. But it is plain: whatever changes took place in the upper, non-producing ranks of society, society could not live without a class of producers. This class, then, is necessary under all circumstances . . . .[1]

We can conclude that there has always been a "labour problem" in one form or another, whether the working class consisted of helots, serfs, or peasants,

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[1]Friedrich Engels, "Social Classes--necessary and superfluous," in Engels: Selected Writings, ed. by W.O. Henderson, Penguin Books (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1967), p. 113.

slaves, craftsmen, or industrial proletarians. The term question ouvrière refers to a specific kind of labour problem, posed by the existence of a class of propertyless individuals who, since they do not own the means of production, are compelled to sell their labour to others, in return for a wage which enables them to survive. The phrase question ouvrière is best translated as "proletarian problem," with the implicit understanding that the reference is to the industrial and not the agricultural proletariat. Not only does modern industrial capitalism require a proletariat to function, but capitalism itself is defined by the existence of such a class. Capitalism is a social system in which the labouring class does not sell what it produces but instead sells labour itself. The worker is "free" in the sense that he can sell his labour in the market whenever and to whomever he wishes.[1] The alternative is to withhold his labour--and starve. The ambiguous nature of this "freedom" is the paradox which lies at the heart of the question ouvrière. As long ago as 1767, when there were few wage-earners and almost no one recognized the actual or potential social schism which their presence implied, the philosophe Linguet described the existing contradictions in a passionate plea on behalf of the ouvrier:

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[1]See Maurice Dobb, Studies in the Development of Capitalism (London, 1967), pp. 10-32.

> Il est libre! C'est précisément de quoi je le plains. On l'en ménage beaucoup moins dans les travaux auxquels on l'applique. On en est plus hardi à prodiguer sa vie.[1]

The question ouvrière can be considered the central social problem of modern capitalist and industrial society. But in eighteenth-century France, the peasant problem was more acute, and far more obvious, for it impinged directly on the lives of an indisputably greater proportion of society. France was overwhelmingly rural, her production overwhelmingly agricultural. Because the question ouvrière is a function of industrialization, any discussion of the problem at the time of the Revolution must first consider the industrial side of the French economy. Only when we understand the condition of France at the end of the eighteenth century will it be possible to deal with the historiography of the question ouvrière and the French Revolution.

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[1]Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet, Théorie des lois civiles, ou principes fondamentaux de la société (2 vols.; London, 1767), II, 466-67.

CHAPTER I

THE QUESTION OUVRIERE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

Industrial Development

It is commonly recognized that France, on the eve of her Revolution, had not industrialized along the lines of England. Economic historians have put forth a variety of explanations: the predominance of aristocratic values and the want of entrepreneurial spirit or initiative; the fragmentation of a country which lacked good internal communications, but was criss-crossed by internal customs barriers; the absence of an intensive demand and unified market; or even the paradox that the very wealth of France, both in manpower and natural resources, acted to discourage technological innovation in the productive process.[1] But in the flurry of debate, it is easy to

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[1]The literature on French industry in the eighteenth century is too extensive for full citation in a footnote. The most recent, and best, work is contained in Ernest Labrousse et al., Histoire économique et sociale de la France, Vol. II: Des derniers temps de l'âge seigneurial aux préludes de l'âge industriel (1660 - 1789) (Paris, 1970). A good summary, which takes account of the major recent monographs, is provided by the essays in Tom Kemp, Economic Forces in French History (London, 1971). Industrial technology is well treated by Charles Ballot,

lose sight of the fact that France was industrially more advanced than any other continental power. Furthermore, until the 1780's, the rate of French economic and industrial growth kept pace with the English, and in certain sectors (such as coal and iron production) it even held the lead. The decisive factor which allowed England finally and decisively to surge ahead was the superior level of her technology, and the disruptive effects of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars on the French economy.[1]

Large industrial enterprises were not at all unknown in eighteenth-century France. Arthur Young, that inquisitive and itinerant Englishman, was greatly impressed by the size of the "famous manufacture of Vanrobais . . . described in all dictionaries of commerce," which employed 1500 people to produce woollens. In contrast to this, he also recorded his surprise at finding, at Chateaurault, cutlery manufactured in individual shops, where the cutler worked with only his wife and children as assistants. That this industry could be carried on cheaply and success-

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L'introduction du machinisme dans l'industrie française (Paris and Lille, 1923). Other general works are cited in the following pages, and in the bibliography.

[1]Labrousse et al., Histoire économique et sociale, II, 527-28; John U. Nef, "The Industrial Revolution Reconsidered," Journal of Economic History, III (1943), 14-25.

fully, almost without any division of labour, Young thought "rather singular."[1]

These examples represent the two extremes of French industry. On the one hand stood the small workshops of the artisan, from which in fact came the bulk of France's industrial production. In most urban crafts, these artisans grouped themselves in corporations, which included not only masters, but also their journeymen and apprentices. On the other hand were the large manufactories. A "royal" industry, like the Gobelin tapestry in Paris, was administered by a public corporation, but most large-scale industry was carried out privately, although subject to government regulation. The workers in the manufactories were genuine proletarians, but this was still an anomaly. Most large-scale industry was of a third, intermediate type, using scattered, individual producers, but organizing them (and exploiting them) along capitalist lines.[2]

Rural domestic industry, which was of this third type, was characteristic of the economy of the _ancien régime_. Although more frequently found in textiles, it

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[1]Arthur Young, _Travels in France during the years 1787, 1788 and 1789_, ed. by Jeffry Kaplow, Anchor Books (Garden City, New York, 1969), pp. 412-13, 416-17.

[2]Jacques Godechot, _Les institutions de la France sous la Révolution et l'Empire_ (Paris, 1951), pp. 176-77.

was also prevalent in other trades, like metal-working at Vimeau, or cutlery at Thiers. Wholesale merchants had realized that by developing rural industry they could escape the restrictions of corporate regulation, and even royal inspectors, and furthermore they could pay lower wages to those among the rural population who wanted only to supplement what they produced on an insufficient land holding.[1] The cotton industry at Elbeuf, for example, employed a total of 5000 heads of families, but only 800 to 900 of these actually lived or worked within the town.[2] This kind of worker cannot be labelled proletarian, since he was still associated with the land, and still worked as an independent producer, albeit on the orders of a manufacturer who conducted his business along capitalist lines.

A similar organization also existed within the urban setting. The manufacture of silk at Lyons was the best example of this, but not the only one. The Grande fabrique of Lyons, perhaps the largest French industry of the eighteenth century, was dominated by about 350 merchant-

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[1]Henri Sée, "Remarques sur le caractère de l'industrie rurale en France et les causes de son extension au XVIIIe siècle," Revue historique, XLII (January-April 1923), 47-53; Hermann Kellenbenz, "Industries rurales en Occident de la fin du moyen âge au XVIIIe siècle," Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations, XVIII (1963), 833-82, and especially 845-47.

[2]Jeffry Kaplow, Elbeuf during the Revolutionary Period: History and Social Structure (Baltimore, 1964), p. 72.

manufacturers who gave work to about 6000 artisanal workshops, owned by master craftsmen, the canuts. These, although masters who owned their own tools and shops, were completely subordinate to and dependent on the merchant-manufacturers. They in turn dominated a work-force of more than 30,000 journeymen, apprentices, and workers (male and female) but were themselves in constant danger of being pushed down into the lower ranks. As a result, they identified with their workers against the merchant-manufacturers, and this alignment characterized social conflict in Lyons.[1] But were these men and women proletarian? The canuts, certainly, were not. Their journeymen, apprentices, and other employees were in the same situation as thousands of others who worked for master craftsmen, and their case cannot be considered in isolation.

The Compagnons

Most hired industrial labour in eighteenth-century France worked for artisans. The most characteristic form of manufacture, in village and city, remained the artisanal type, in which a master craftsman worked at his trade, sometimes alone, more frequently with a handful of

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[1]Maurice Garden, "Ouvriers et artisans au XVIIIe siècle: l'exemple lyonnais et les problèmes de classification," Revue d'histoire économique et sociale, XLVIII (1970), 28-31; L. Trénard, "La crise sociale lyonnaise à la veille de la Révolution," Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, II (1955), 5-45.

compagnons (journeymen) and apprentices. In Bordeaux, there was an average of four compagnons to every master;[1] in Paris, excluding the large industries, the number was around six.[2] These ratios were probably typical of France as a whole, but we should not forget that in most small centres, and in certain trades, like the cutlers described by Arthur Young, no compagnons might be used. In many cases, workers lived with their master--"à son pain, pot, lit et maison," according to the contemporary phrase.[3] It was a relationship susceptible to romanticization, especially in comparison to the harsher manufactory system. Diderot's Encyclopédie compared the two in these words:

> A la grande manufacture tout se fait au coup de cloche, les ouvriers sont plus contraints & plus gourmandés. Les commis ... les traitent durement & avec mépris. ...
>
> Chez le petit fabriquant le compagnon est le camarade du maître, vit avec lui, comme avec son égal; a place au feu & à la chandelle, a plus de liberté, & préfère enfin de travailler chez lui.[4]

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[1]Henri Sée, La France économique et sociale au XVIIIe siècle (Paris, 1925), p. 100.

[2]Albert Soboul, Les sans-culottes parisiens en l'an II: mouvement populaire et gouvernement révolutionnaire, 2 juin - 9 thermidor an II (Paris, 1958), p. 437.

[3]Albert Soboul, La civilisation et la Révolution française, Vol. I: La crise de l'Ancien Régime (Paris, 1970), p. 437.

[4]"Manufacture," Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences et des metiers, ed. by Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert (17 vols.; 1751 - 1765), X, 60-61.

But the real world was less idyllic than it appeared to the eyes of a philosophe. The corporations, dating back to mediaeval times, had been intended to protect, and to regulate the relationships among, masters, compagnons, and apprentices. Of course, the institution came under the domination of the masters, who used its regulatory powers for their own benefit. By the eighteenth century, the compagnons were usually condemned perpetually to retain their subordinate status. The son of a master could rise to become a master, as could a compagnon who married a master's widow, or who even bought a position, but such channels of upward mobility were not open to the majority.[1]

The compagnons had developed their own organization, the compagnonnage, the origins of which are lost in mystery and legend, but which appears to have formed at about the same time as the corporation, that it to say, in the period from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century.[2] The corporation, in theory, united compagnons and patrons; the compagnonnage was more likely to divide them. This latter

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[1]Emile Coornaert, Les corporations en France avant 1789 (2nd ed.; Paris, 1968); Alfred Franklin, La vie privée d'autrefois: Comment on devenait patron (Paris, 1899), pp. 90-96. Albert Soboul, "L'apprentissage au XVIIIe siècle: réalités sociales et necessités économiques," in his Paysans, sans-culottes et Jacobins (Paris, n.d.), pp. 142-60.

[2]Luc Benoist, Le compagnonnage et les métiers (Paris, 1966); Emile Coornaert, Les compagnonnages en France du moyen âge à nos jours (Paris, 1966).

organization gave the worker a base for struggling against the abuses of employer and state, and was for that reason strictly illegal. But over time the compagnonnages became increasingly active, despite the prohibition. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, one in three workers was affiliated, but by the end, it was possible for the compagnonnages in many places to forbid the hiring of non-affiliates.[1] In disputes, the compagnons might demonstrate before the workshop, or black-list it, assault "scab" labour and the masters, or even desert an entire city (even Paris).[2]

Strikes of this type were seen as a general social danger because they could lead rapidly to disorder. Hardy, a Parisian bookseller, described in his journal a strike by Parisian compagnons charpentiers (journeymen carpenters) in March 1786. An active group ran from workshop to workshop, threatening anyone who refused to join them. According to Hardy, it was all the more important to suppress this strike because it appeared to act "comme une espèce de fermentation parmi les compagnons de différents métiers ...."[3] Similar agitation was not unknown among

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[1]Benoist, Le compagnonnage et les métiers, p. 35.

[2]Coornaert, Les compagnonnages en France, p. 164; Edmond Soreau, Ouvriers et paysans de 1789 à 1792 (Paris, 1930), pp. 45-51, gives a long list of such strikes.

[3]Quoted in Marcel Rouff, "Une grève de gagne-deniers en 1786 à Paris," Revue historique, CV (1910), 344-45.

the large industries. Even the Van Robais factory was occupied by workers in the course of a five-month long strike in 1716, and troops were required to disperse them. A like situation developed at Dieppe, where 1000 workers occupied a tobacco factory, and stoned the troops called to expel them (1729 and again in 1733).[1] However, the compagnonnages were far more numerous in the workshop than in large-scale manufactories.[2]

The government response was persecution and prosecution, and a number of ordinances were issued outlawing the compagnonnages and restricting the rights of the compagnon, including his right to leave employment without the employer's permission.[3] But it was impossible to destroy the secret organizations, just as it was impossible to eradicate the frondeur spirit of the compagnons. However, a note of caution needs introduction here: despite all this conflict, the compagnonnage was not a labour union. It functioned as a mutual-aid society and as a social organization, surrounded by mysteries and quasi-religious rites (which offended the Church). But fights between compagnonnages were frequent and bloody, often leading to death or mutilation, and did much to

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[1]Coornaert, Les corporations en France, p. 163, n. 1.

[2]Soreau, Ouvriers et paysans, p. 28.

[3]Ibid., pp. 34-ff.

earn the compagnon a reputation as a rowdy. The compagnonnage did not really encourage class solidarity, but rather fostered what one historian has called "une solidarité de côterie."[1]

The Question Ouvrière

This lack of class solidarity calls into question the distinction between the compagnon and the superior master artisan. There was little difference apparent in the conditions under which they worked and lived. The conditions of life and work were hard in eighteenth-century France. The demographic revolution, which resulted from a fall in the mortality rate, meant a glut of workers on the market, and consequently left the labourer in an inferior bargaining position. Wages therefore tended to lag significantly behind the cost of living.[2] Except for the compagnons in some of the skilled trades, like building, furniture manufacture, or iron-working, there was little job security, and a worker might drift from job to job. Sickness, old age, and unemployment threatened to reduce him to beggary.[3] The descriptive name of "labouring poor"

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[1]Edouard Dolléans, "La Révolution et le droit ouvrier," Le mouvement socialiste, X (May-August 1903), 176.

[2]Ernest Labrousse, La crise de l'économie française à la fin de l'Ancien Régime et au début de la Révolution, Vol. I (Paris, 1944), xxix-xxxi.

[3]Pierre Goubert, L'Ancien Régime, Vol. I: La société (Paris, 1969), p. 204.

conveys the vulnerability of the group far better than any designation of class.[1]

Many of the artisans, who were technically owners of the means of production, were no less at the mercy of economic crisis. Thus we can read in an official report of October 1788, concerning the effects of an economic crisis on the cotton industry at Troyes, that the fabricants have been compelled to cut back on production, or even to suspend it, and "sont réduits à la condition d'ouvriers."[2] For all, hours were long, ranging from twelve to eighteen a day, with fifteen apparently the norm--from five in the morning to eight at night, at least in the summer.[3] Similarly, there was another strong link between ouvrier and artisan provided by their common interests as consumers, especially of bread. "En tête l'alimentation du pauvre, le pain, toujours le pain, encore le pain."[4]

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[1]Jeffry Kaplow, "The Culture of Poverty in Paris on the Eve of the Revolution," International Review of Social History, XII (1967), 277.

[2]Quoted in Frances Ascomb, "Unemployment and Relief in Champagne, 1788," Journal of Modern History, XI (1939), 42.

[3]Edouard Dolléans, Histoire du travail (Paris, 1943), pp. 58-61.

[4]Robert Philippe, "Une opération pilote: l'étude du rivitaillement de Paris au temps de Lavoisier," Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations, XVI (1961), 566.

The issue of whether there was, or was not, at the time of the French Revolution, a question ouvrière hinges on whether the coincidence of interests between ouvrier and artisan predominated, or whether the latent antagonisms represented by the existence of the compagnonnage ruptured the possibility of accord. Related to this point is the problem of consciousness: was there an independent working-class consciousness? Various answers have been given to this question by modern historians of the working class.

Edmond Soreau answered in the affirmative, stating with certainty that:

> il se pose une question ouvrière et les ouvriers possèdent une certaine solidarité, un certain esprit de classe, crée par l'ambiance; une scission tend à les isoler déjà dans le tiers-état.[1]

Henri Sée's stand was opposed to this. Having analyzed French society and its economic basis in the eighteenth century, he concluded:

> Très visiblement, en 1789, les ouvriers ne se rendent guère compte encore de leurs intérêts de classe. ... Ainsi, la question ouvrière ne se pose nullement comme elle se posera plus tard.[2]

And adopting a position which seems to shift from Soreau's to Sée's in midstream, was Roger Picard, whose study of the attitudes of the working class as reflected in the cahiers

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[1]Soreau, Ouvriers et paysans, p. 44.

[2]Sée, La France économique et sociale, pp. 150-51.

doléances led him to suggest:

> Un véritable prolétariat, ayant des habitudes de vie, des intérêts et même un état juridique distincts de ceux des autres classes de la nation, est constitué en 1789. Les ouvriers n'avaient peut-être pas encore, à cette époque, une "conscience de classe" bien nette, mais dès longtemps, ils s'organisaient, se coalisaient, s'associaient et luttaient pour défendre leurs intérêts contre leurs employeurs.[1]

These three opinions, representative of a range of responses to the problem of the historical origins of the question ouvrière, are not the result of different evidence so much as differing interpretations of the same facts. French industry was fairly advanced, within limits, and there was a conflict of interests between patron and ouvrier, as indicated by a background of labour disputes. Or, French industry was limited in development, even if somewhat advanced, and the shared interests of patron and ouvrier overshadowed any differences. Both these views, presented here somewhat simplified, are basically a matter of shifted emphasis.

For the purposes of this discussion, two criteria can be used in determining the reality of working-class consciousness. The first is contemporary conceptions of class division. Was there any realization that there existed, contemporaneously or potentially, a distinct

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[1]Roger Picard, Les cahiers de 1789 et les classes ouvrières (Paris, 1910), p. 96.

proletariat? The second criterion is the behaviour of the working class in the course of the French Revolution. To what extent did it manifest an independent consciousness? Did it act independently, or merely as a force d'appui for others? Only when these questions are answered is it possible to determine whether or not there existed a question ouvrière during the Revolution.

Perceptions of Class

When the author of an eighteenth-century dictionary of aphorisms wrote under the entry for ouvrier that "le seul nom des ouvriers dont on se sert, décide le goût qu'on a pour l'élégance, & pour la parure,"[1] he was far from thinking of the ouvrier as a faceless proletarian who labours anonymously in a huge factory. Although the writer's specialized use of ouvrier may not have been typical of his time, it nevertheless remains true that throughout the eighteenth century the term lacked a precise meaning which might limit its application to a man who could live only by selling his labour. Diderot's Encyclopédie, for example, defined the word as a "terme générale, se dit en général de tout artisan qui travaille de quelque métier que ce soit."[2] We can find examples

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[1]"Ouvrier," Dictionnaire critique, pittoresque et sentencieux, propre à faire connoître les usages du Siècle, ainsi que les bisarreries (3 vols.; Lyon, 1768), II, 176.

[2]"Ouvrier," Encyclopédie, XI, 276.

of the use of the phrase classe ouvrière before and during the Revolution, but there is no indication that anything more than a general concept of men who work with their hands was meant.[1] Thus, when a writer in 1789 wanted to describe the specifically proletarian nature of the Réveillon rioters, he was forced to fall back on a clumsy and imprecise expression: "cette classe du Tiers-état de la ville de Paris, dont les individus paient au-dessous de six livres de capitation."[2] (Six livres was the minimum tax qualification for taking part in the primary electoral assemblies.)

There is, however, ample evidence to suggest a general recognition of an "inferior class" characterized not by its relationship to the mode of production, but rather by its poverty and economic vulnerability.[3] Necker, for example, wrote:

> La pauvreté est malheureusement une des conditions inséparables de l'état de société: il y aura toujours des hommes ... qui se trouvent réduits

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[1]Max Frey, Les transformations du vocabulaire français à l'époque de la Révolution (1789 - 1800) (Paris, 1925), p. 92; Ferdinand Brunot, Histoire de la langue française, Vol. IX: La Révolution et l'Empire, Part 2: Les événements, les institutions et la langue (Paris, 1937), p. 710.

[2]"Lettre du Chevalier de Moret addressé à Necker," in Patrick Kessel, Les gauchistes de 89 (Paris, n.d.), pp. 43-45.

[3]See François Furet, "Pour une définition des classes inférieures à l'époque moderne," Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations, XVIII (1963), 460.

> pour tout bien, à la simple force de leurs bras: et c'est en dévouant cette force au service d'autrui, qu'ils peuvent obtenir la subsistence journalière ....[1]

Necker drew no political conclusions from his observations, but Dufourny de Villiers, writing only five years later in April 1789 asked a pointed question:

> Pourquoi cette classe immense de journaliers, de salariés, de gens non gagés, sur lesquels portent toutes les révolutions politique, cette classe qui a tant de représentations à faire ... est elle rejetée du sein de la Nation?[2]

At first glance, it appears that both Necker and Dufourny de Villiers have been discussing a proletariat, paid wages in return for its labour. But when put back in the context from which they have been excerpted, both quotations are concerned with the manual labourer, artisan and ouvrier, in contrast to the bourgeoisie. The attack was not against ownership of the means of production by a few; instead, it was directed against the abuse of great fortunes at the expense of the poor. Thus, the major social evil for Dufourny de Villiers was "les vicissitudes & l'excès du prix du pain & des premières denrées ...."[3] There was, then, on the eve of the Revolution, already a concept of social conflict within the Third Estate, but

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[1]Jacques Necker, De l'administration des finances de la France (3 vols.; n.p., 1784), III, 159-60.

[2]Louis Pierre Dufourny de Villiers, Cahiers du Quatrième Ordre, celui des pauvres journaliers, des infirmes, des indigens, &c, No. I, 25 avril 1789 (Reprinted by Editions d'histoire sociale; Paris, 1967), p. 13.

[3]Ibid., p. 27.

the idea of social class was still too undeveloped and too vague to give it a clear form.[1]

Throughout the Revolution, social conflict continued to be perceived not in terms of capitalist versus proletarian, but in terms of rich against poor. Popular newspapers made no distinction between the artisan and the compagnon, or the small shopkeeper and his clerk. All were subsumed under a variety of rubrics: peuple, menu peuple, pauvres, and especially sans-culottes. Marat, for example, wrote that "There remain only the farmers, small merchants, artisans, and workers, labourers and proletariat . . . . to form a free people . . . ."[2] Hébert's Père Duchesne, for all its over-used vulgarity, probably came closest of all the newspapers to conveying the tone and mood of the Parisian streets. Like Marat's, Hébert's diatribes showed a consistent hostility to the rich and to lawyers, but there was no real conception of class. The following, an excerpt typical of his style

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[1]Léon Cahen, "L'idée de lutte de classes au XVIIIe siècle," Revue de synthèse historique, XIII (1906), 44-56. This article is useful in that it shows contemporary awareness of social inequalities and tensions, but the author goes beyond his own evidence when he concludes that the idea of class conflict was "non pas la conséquence du développement de la grande industrie et de la formation d'un prolétariat ouvrier, mais l'oeuvre logique et rationnelle de la philosophie française du XVIIIe siècle."

[2]Quoted in Louis R. Gottschalk, Jean Paul Marat: A Study in Radicalism (New York, 1966), pp. 105-06.

and his social beliefs, is illustrative of this fact:

> Braves Sans-Culottes, vous ètes les abeilles de la république. Trop long-tems vous avez travaillé pour les fainéans. ... Malheureusement, foutre, vous ne connoissiez pas votre force et vous vous laissiez opprimer par une poignée de scélérats qui sont tombés à vos pieds, quand vous vous êtes rebiffés.
> . . . . . .
> On va vous appeler désorganisateurs, anarchistes; foutez-vous en, et ne cessez de crier: plus de nobles, plus de prêtres, plus de financiers, plus de robins à la tête de nos affaires.[1]

The radical Jacobin journalist Prudhomme, although not as far to the left as Hébert, was particularly concerned with closing the social schism. In early 1791, he lamented in an article entitled "Des riches et des pauvres" (the title itself is significant) that:

> Ce sont les pauvres qui ont fait la révolution, mais ils ne l'ont pas faite à leur profit; car depuis le 14 juillet, ils sont à peu près ce qu'ils étoient avant le 14 juillet 1789.[2]

But his sympathy for the poor did not lead him to any radical proposals. He was chary of violating property rights, and ended his article with a timid appeal that the wealthy voluntarily give some of their land to the poor.

Like the journalists, the sans-culottes as a group were firmly committed to private property--although opposed to the existence of large industrial or commercial

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[1]Père Duchesne, No. 251, pp. 3, 7.

[2]Révolutions de Paris, No. 82 (29 January - 5 February, 1791).

enterprises.[1] For example, throughout the Revolution, they maintained unflagging hostility towards the government policy of giving out orders for military supplies to large contractors, and urged instead that independent artisans receive the commissions.

> Qui souffrent de tous ces fournisseurs? C'est la République, c'est les artistes indigens, ce sont les ouvriers sans fortune, qui pour manger du pain, sont forcés, par le besoin de la vie, d'aller chez ces égoistes demander de l'ouvrage pour le confectionner à vil prix ....[2]

This was the fear of the independent producer, that he would be reduced to the level of a proletarian, and had nothing to do with genuine working-class demands for the protection of labour. It is very clear that, in the eyes of the sans-culottes--of rank and file, as well as of the movement's ideologists--the dominant social problem was not the question ouvrière, but rather the widening gap between rich and poor, and the clash of interests between large merchant and the small consumer. The answer was not expanded industrial production, with a fairer share for all, or socialization of the means of production, but was rather a retreat to precapitalist forms of production: the

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[1]See the excellent article by Albert Soboul, "Classes et luttes de classes sous la Révolution française," La pensée, No. 53 (January-February 1954), 1-24.

[2]"Pétition de la société de l'Unité à la Convention 4 pluviôse II," in Walter Markov and Albert Soboul, eds., Die Sansculotten von Paris: Dokumente zur Geschichte der Volksbewegung 1793 - 1794 (Berlin, 1957), p. 274.

small workshop, the small retail store, the small land holding.

This attitude was the inevitable result of the social nature of the sans-culotte movement, made up as it was of an amalgam of artisans and small shopkeepers, along with their numerous compagnons or wage-earning ouvriers and clerks. We know that there were many well-to-do among the sans-culottes, but the following contemporary definition applied to the majority of them, and shows us how they viewed themselves. What is a sans-culotte?

> C'est un Etre qui va toujours à pied, qui n'a point de millions ..., point de chateaux, ... et qui loge tout simplement avec Sa femme et ses enfans, S'il en a, au quatrième ou cinquième étage.
> il est utile, car il sait labourer un champ, forger, scier, limer, couvrir un toit, faire des Souliers et verser jusqu'à la dernière goute de Son Sang pour le Salut de la République.[1]

The point made here is the same as that made by Marat or Hébert, or even Prudhomme, that there existed a group of men who ranged from those of moderate means down to the very poor, who provided the labour for society--whether as wage-earners or as artisans, as clerks or as shopkeepers--and whose independence and even survival was threatened by a selfish, rich bourgeoisie.

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[1]"Réponse à l'impertinente question: Mais qu'est-ce qu'un Sans-Culotte?" in ibid., p. 2.

The Working-class Movement

It is difficult to describe a working-class movement standing out from the activities of other classes during the course of the Revolution. Two facts militated against the possibility of such a movement's developing on any large scale: the relatively small number of workers, and their ideological dependence. French industry towards the end of the eighteenth century has been described, and from this it should be clear that there was no significant proletariat in the modern sense. The total number of ouvriers in France at that time is difficult to establish, since statistics are either lacking or, where available, notoriously inaccurate. Roger Picard estimated a total "industrial population" of nine million, but included anyone at all connected with industry, even rural industry.[1] Mathiez suggested a proletariat of eleven million, but here he counted the vast numbers of landless rural proletarians.[2] More recent research indicates that there were only between 400,000 and 500,000 ouvriers purs --that is, males, living solely from wages earned in industrial labour (including in the artisan's workshop).[3]

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[1]Picard, Les cahiers de 1789, p. 33.

[2]Albert Mathiez, "Notes sur l'importance du prolétariat en France à la veille de la Révolution," Annales historiques de la Révolution française, VII (1930), 508. The Annales historiques de la Révolution française will hereafter be cited as A.h.R.f.

[3]Labrousse et al., Histoire économique et sociale, II, 658-59.

This small number represents a mere fraction of a total population of twenty-five million. However, because they were grouped in a few cities and regions, the importance of these workers was enhanced beyond what numbers alone might indicate.

Of all cities, Paris, of course, was the most important in this respect, for it was here, at the heart of the Revolution, that the ouvrier could exert the most influence on events. Furthermore, a large proportion of the French working class lived in Paris, which was by far the largest city in the nation, and which could be rivalled as a centre of urban industry only by Lyons. Fortunately, there are figures available for the city. In 1790 - 1791, the authorities, in an attempt to establish the demand for assignats of small denominations, conducted a survey of the number of ouvriers employed by each artisan and entrepreneur. The results for forty-one of forty-eight sections survive, and using them, F. Braesch established a population ouvrière of 293,820 (counting one wife and two children per worker).[1] This is a precise calculation, but deceptively precise. The survey on which it is based probably took no account of workshops with only one compagnon--or none; there were no figures available for

[1]F. Braesch, "Essai de statistique de la population ouvrière de Paris vers 1791," La Révolution française, LXIII (1912), 289-321.

seven sections; and the coefficient of four per family is a pure guess. However, the figure offered by Léon Cahen, which was really nothing more than a sophisticated guess, is not much different. He suggested about 100,000 male ouvriers, including many who were clerks or worked in shops.[1] Taking into account the similarity of both these figures, we can conclude that there was probably a working-class population of 350,000 including the families of the ouvriers. This would be something more than half the population of Paris.[2]

If half the population of the city was wage-earning, it would not seem inconceivable that in Paris, at least, a working-class movement could arise. But within the bounds imposed by sans-culotte ideology, there was little room for the development of an independent proletarian ideology. The artisanal tradition weighed heavily on the consciousness of the compagnons, and even on the proletariat of the larger industrial manufactories, who mingled with them and perhaps had begun their working life as compagnons. Wages were linked in the popular mind to subsistence, not to the value of labour as a

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[1]Léon Cahen, "La population parisienne au milieu du XVIIIe siècle," Revue de Paris, XXVI (September-October 1919), 157.

[2]George Rudé, "La population ouvrière parisienne de 1789 à 1791," A.h.R.f., XXXI (1957), 15-33.

social function, and this conditioned the response to the situation as it developed during the Revolution.[1] Rising costs led to calls for fixed prices and an end to hoarding, or alternatively, to demands for higher wages so as to meet the increased cost of living--living in the strictest sense of survival. But the demand was clearly for the maintenance of traditional society and traditional living standards, not for any recasting of the social order, and it translated itself into sans-culotte militancy on the issue of a General Maximum on prices. Equally clear is the fact that this demand was made by all elements of the "inferior class" and not only by the ouvriers.

It is therefore inaccurate to describe a widespread working-class movement in the course of the French Revolution, although two historians, Eugene Tarlé and Grace Jaffé, have argued that this was the case. Both were explicit in describing the ouvrier as distinct from the master artisan,[2] but in interpreting evidence they took contemporary usage of the term ouvrier at face value. Moreover, both exaggerated in importance the few moments

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[1]Albert Soboul, "Le problème du travail en l'an II," in Paysans, sans-culottes et Jacobin, pp. 121-42.

[2]Evgheny Viktorovic Tarlé, La classe operaia nella rivoluzione francese (2 vols.; Rome, 1960), I, 12; Grace M. Jaffé, Le mouvement ouvrier à Paris pendant la Révolution française (1789 - 1791) (Paris, n.d.), p. 67.

of genuinely independent action on the part of the working class. More judicious research has tempered their conclusions, to show that the role of the ouvrier in the French Revolution can only occasionally be distinguished from that of the sans-culottes. Certainly, on none of the major journées did the workers manifest an independent pattern of behaviour, with one exception.[1]

This one exception was the Réveillon riot of April 27 - 28, 1789. The disturbance erupted over alleged remarks by Réveillon, a wall-paper manufacturer, on the desirability of lower wages, and reached a crescendo on the second day, when troops fired on the rioters--who had burned down Réveillon's house--and thereby killed an undetermined number of them. The crowd on this occasion appears to have been made up of factory workers and compagnons, including four hundred workers from a large glass manufactory, who joined in either willingly or under compulsion, when the crowd broke down the doors of their manufactory, which had been locked at police orders to keep them at work.[2] This was the one time that concerns

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[1]See George Rudé, The Parisian Wage-Earning Population and the Insurrectionary Movements of 1789 - 91 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1950) and "Les ouvriers parisiens dans la Révolution française," La pensée, No. 48-49 (June-September 1953), 108-28.

[2]George Rudé, The Crowd in the French Revolution (London, Oxford, New York, 1959), pp. 34-39; also, Jean Collot, "L'affaire Réveillon: 27 et 28 avril 1789,"

peculiar to the wage-earning population led to insurrection. Yet even here the imprecise nature of their class consciousness is suggested by the fact that anger was directed against Réveillon as a person, and not as an employer. For, according to Hardy, only Réveillon's home was burned down; his workshop and store, as well as his tools and patterns, were left untouched.[1]

The more common pattern of working-class protest during the Revolution was in the tradition of the compagnonnage. Workers in a particular trade banded together to demand an increase of wages to offset rising costs. In August 1789, the tailor journeymen struck for a guaranteed wage of forty sous per day, and there were demonstrations by the garçons boulangers and garçons perruquiers who were out of work. In September, the ouvriers cordonniers formed a coalition for an increased wage. These groups were motivated by a deteriorating economic situation, and rising bread prices, which culminated in the march to Versailles (October 10, 1789) to bring back "the baker, the baker's wife, and the baker's boy." All autumn and winter, groups of compagnons

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Revue des questions historiques, CXXI (1934), 34-55, and CXXII (1935), 239-54.

[1]Quoted by Sophie A. Lotte, in George Rudé et al., "I sanculotti: una discussione tra storici marxisti," Critica storica, I (1962), 391.

continued to demand increased wages and lower bread prices in coalitions and strikes throughout France.[1]

Such demonstrations made the bourgeoisie uneasy, not so much because they saw the agitation as something new and therefore threatening, but rather because it disturbed public order at a critical time, and furthermore challenged the ideological foundations of the new bourgeois state. This attitude is evident in the reaction to a coalition of workers in a number of trades, especially the building trades, which, in the early summer of 1791, prompted the passage of the loi Le Chapelier (June 14).[2] As the deputy Le Chapelier explained when he introduced his law:

> Il faut remonter au principe que c'est aux conventions libres, d'individu à individu, à fixer la journée pour chaque ouvrier. ... [Therefore] le comité de constitution avait cru indispensable de vous soumettre le projet de décret suivant, qui a pour objet de prévenir tant les coalitions que formeraient les ouvriers pour faire augmenter le prix de la journée de travail ....[3]

The Constituent Assembly undoubtedly believed that it was upholding the principle of individual freedom,

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[1]Godechot, Les institutions de France, p. 182; Marcel Rouff, "Le peuple ouvrier de Paris aux journées du 30 juin et du 30 août 1789," La Révolution française, LXIII (1912), 486-87.

[2]Edmond Soreau, "La loi Le Chapelier," A.h.R.f., VIII (1931), 287-314.

[3]Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel, No. 166 (15 June 1791).

but in so doing, it was of course leaving the wage-earner unprotected in the market. However, the law was difficult to enforce during the Revolution, and remained ineffective for many years. Marx called it a bourgeois coup d'état, but it was not immediately seen in that light. The bourgeois were by and large ignorant of any question ouvrière, but believed the law to be only one more attack on the corporate structure of the society of the ancien régime. They had abolished the corporations; now they would abolish the compagnonnages. The working class, to judge from sans-culotte demands, remained ignorant of the implications of the law. Because of the uses to which the loi Le Chapelier would be put, it gained far more importance in the nineteenth century than the revolutionaries who passed it could have anticipated.

The law may have hampered wage demands, but it had no effect on curbing the push for controlled prices which continued, sustained by the sans-culotte movement. Yet the great demonstration of September 4, 1793 was of predominantly working-class origins, with the artisans and shopkeepers notably absent, for reasons we cannot determine.[1] This agitation finally resulted in the imposition of the Maximum Général, on September 29. It aimed to control

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[1]George Rudé, in "I sanculotti," p. 374; Albert Soboul, Les sans-culottes parisiens en l'an II, pp. 165-70.

wages as well as prices, but because wage controls were left to municipal government, in some cities they were not enforced. This was especially true of Paris, where the radical Hébertists, who dominated the Hôtel de Ville, refrained from implementing the fixed wages. Only after the purge of March 1794, which sent Hébert and his followers to the scaffold, was the Jacobin dictatorship in a position to enforce this aspect of policy. The maximum on wages was published on 5 thermidor--and its most immediate political result was a general unwillingness among the working class in particular, but also among the sans-culottes as a whole, to support Robespierre on 9 thermidor.[1]

The Robespierrists, despite their publication of the wage maximum, were undoubtedly more sympathetic towards the sans-culotte demands than the men who took power in the Thermidorian Reaction. The sectional assemblies, centres of popular agitation, continued for a while, but it was soon clear that the heyday of popular radicalism was over. The rift between government and sans-culottes had been opened by Robespierre, and it was not to be closed by his successors. But this time, the government, unencumbered as it was by any sincere commitment to the

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[1]Albert Soboul and George Rudé, "Le maximum des salaires parisiens et le 9 thermidor," in Paysans, sans-culottes et Jacobins, pp. 161-82.

ideal of popular sovereignty, was more than willing to bridle agitation. An undercurrent of discontent remained, for economic conditions deteriorated, but it was only an undercurrent which did not threaten to erupt again into a dangerous challenge to authority.[1]

Conclusions

The picture of the working class which has emerged from this brief study is ambiguous. This ambiguity, however, is a reflection of the economic realities of French society in the eighteenth century. France was industrialized enough to present us with a small group of men and women, in a few large manufactories, who were proletarian in the modern sense. But the predominant industrial wage-earning class was organized within an artisanal framework. The compagnons and other hired workers still saw their interests as lying within this structure. They might form *compagnonnages*, and riot and cause disturbances, but they did not see themselves as a class apart from the small artisan, nor were they seen as such a class by others. This is clear from the vague meanings attached to the word *ouvrier*. In addition, had they not identified with the craftsmen, no sans-culotte movement could have been possible.

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[1]Kåre D. Tönneson, *La défaite des sans-culottes: mouvement populaire et réaction bourgeoise en l'an III* (Paris, 1959).

The social crisis opposed rich to poor, and only rarely capital to labour. There was a significant question ouvrière during the French Revolution only in retrospect. That is, it is only because of social developments in the nineteenth century that we have any interest in looking back at this transitional period to search for the first stirrings of an undeveloped, and largely undifferentiated, proletariat.

CHAPTER II

THE *QUESTION OUVRIERE* AND HISTORIANS BEFORE JAURES

We have seen that in the course of the French Revolution there were a number of individuals who spoke with passion and conviction in defence of the *menu peuple*, who faced a bourgeois economic tyranny as real as the political tyranny of aristocratic privilege. There were of course other individuals who spoke clearly for the other side in the quarrel. On such gentleman, an emigré, declared: "The arms of artisans, labourers, and soldiers are vigorous and docile only because their heads are empty and their minds inactive." He also noted that something dangerous and "electrical" occurred when such people gathered in crowds.[1]

It was only when events had receded into the past that it became possible to contemplate the social problems raised by the Revolution with at least some degree of

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[1]Antoine Sabatier de Castres, *Pensées et observations morales et politiques*... (Vienna, 1794), cited in Paul H. Beik, *The French Revolution Seen from the Right* (New York, 1970), p. 61.

detachment. Furthermore, it was not until the nineteenth century that there was some attempt to separate the question ouvrière from other social issues which had been posed with frequently greater urgency. But if time was able to provide a better perspective for viewing the Revolution, it did not cool the ardour of the viewers. The debate on the French Revolution remained throughout the nineteenth century as heated and polemical as it had been when Marat or the emigré gentleman quoted above first addressed themselves to the subject. Almost all battles in French politics--and this is a truism--were fought out in terms of the Revolution. The Revolution had to be rejected or accepted; and if it were accepted, was this as a whole, or was only one phase acceptable? And which phase? Napoleon I, the Third Republic, the Communards of 1871, all claimed to be heirs to the Revolution. And of course there was the political right, which defined and limited its position by its very rejection of and contempt for the Revolution. In 1891, Victor Sardou's play, Thermidor, became a subject of debate in the Chamber of Deputies because of its harsh treatment of Robespierre. It was on this occasion that Georges Clemenceau made his famous observation: "Messieurs, que nous le voulions ou non, la Révolution française est un bloc dont on ne peut rien distraire."[1] But Clemenceau himself would have been

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[1]Quoted in Alice Gérard, La Révolution française,

unwilling to accept Babouvian socialism and its derivatives as an integral part of the Revolutionary tradition.

The point is that the writing of the history of the French Revolution has always been a political act. This is not necessarily to be deplored, for history has often been at its best when it has mirrored contemporary concerns and conflict. This is particularly true of the historiography of the Revolution, and of its treatment of the question ouvrière. Attention has been given to the question not as the result of idle intellectual curiosity, but because of particular social and political concerns immediate to the historians' own lives.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a sketch of the various approaches to the question ouvrière taken by historians before Jaurès. A number of limitations have been imposed by the historiographical nature of the presentation. Thinkers who did not write histories of the Revolution have been omitted, despite the insights which they may have brought to the subject. Thus, the fascinating and influental ideas of such individuals as Comte, Fourier, Saint-Simon, and Proudhon, to name only some of those on the left, have been omitted.[1] Secondly,

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mythes et interprétations 1789 - 1970 (n.p., 1970), p. 72.

[1]For information on these men and their attitudes

only French historians are discussed. And thirdly, among the French historians a selection has been made so that all are not included, but only a sampling. This sample should show two things: that the question ouvrière was not overlooked or ignored in the nineteenth century, but that nonetheless it was Jaurès who gave it new importance for the historian.

Mignet and Thiers

F.A. Mignet and Adolphe Thiers were, it is generally conceded, the first real historians of the French Revolution, as distinct from propagandists or memoir-writers. This is far from saying that they wrote "objective" history; no one has ever done so, least of all in France when it comes to the events of the Revolution. Both were liberal journalists under the Restoration, at a time when the political task which the liberals confronted was "to sell the French Revolution."[1] The short history of Mignet (1824), and the much longer one by Thiers (1823 - 1828) were intended to serve exactly this purpose. In both works, the Revolution appeared as a necessary event, arising from the nature of society under the ancien régime, and

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towards the Revolution, see the excellent essays in La pensée socialiste devant la Révolution française (Paris, 1966).

[1]Stanley Mellon, The Political Uses of History: A Study of Historians in the French Restoration (Stanford, California, 1958), p. 3.

progressing with a force that transcended individuals and accident. It was an essentially bourgeois revolution which, except for the excesses of 1793 - 1794, was to the benefit of France. They focused on the class struggle between bourgeois and aristocrat, and the proletariat appeared only in an accessory role. As Daniel Halévy aptly wrote, in the works of Mignet and Thiers: "Le peuple y participe comme le manoeuvre dans l'usine, on l'appelle pour les ouvrages de force."[1]

Mignet described three classes which sought in turn to govern France between 1789 and 1795: the "privileged class," which hoped to establish its rule against the court and the bourgeoisie through the maintenance of the three orders and the Estates-General; the bourgeoisie, which wanted to establish itself against the privileged on the one hand and the "multitude" on the other; and the "multitude" which wanted to govern everybody. None of these classes could establish its own rule, because each was exclusive--but the result of this progressive movement as a whole was a new civilization.[2] The Revolution, said

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[1]Daniel Halévy, Histoire d'une histoire: esquissée pour le troisième cinquantenaire de la Révolution française (Paris, 1939), p. 10. This little book, generally overlooked or ignored, is a brilliant attack on the French Revolution as event and legend.

[2]F.A. Mignet, Histoire de la Révolution française depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1814 (4th ed.; 2 vols.; Paris, 1827), II, 184.

Mignet, "a delivré les hommes des distinctions des classes ... à un seul peuple."[1]

As this last comment of Mignet might suggest, he was not a particularly acute observer of class realities. Furthermore, his discussion of the "multitude" tended to obscure any independent interests or behaviour on the part of the wage-earners. Only once did he mention the ouvrier in a distinct context, and this was in contrast to the "citoyens bien intentionnés" who stormed the Bastille:

> Des troupes d'ouvriers, employés par le gouvernement à des travaux public, la plupart sans domicile, sans aveu, brûlèrent les barrières, infestèrent les rues, pillèrent quelques maisons; ce furent eux qu'on appela les brigands.[2]

Here was a clue which, had Mignet been interested in the question ouvrière, he might have picked up. For the attacks against the barriers of Paris are explicable to anyone who realizes that, by the tolls (octrois) imposed, these raised the cost of food within the city, a matter of no little interest to the man with a minimal wage.

Thiers gave more attention to the wage-earner in his larger and more detailed study of the Revolution, although--as appropriate in the man who would subdue Paris and butcher its working class in 1871--he gave them no

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[1]Ibid., I, 2.

[2]Ibid., I, 70.

more sympathy than Mignet. Like his friend, Thiers made the distinction between the bourgeois revolution and the subsequent more popular one, led by the Jacobins but resting on the force of the "multitude." It was this urban populace which Thiers described as "barbares indisciplinés, tour à tour gais ou féroces, qui pullulent au sein des villes, et croupissent au-dessous de la civilisation la plus brillante."[1] Whenever the multitude acted on behalf of the bourgeoisie, Thiers was willing to forgive the act as necessary, even as he excoriated the crowd. But when the lower classes acted independently, then they became for him the "vile populace." For example, the wage-earners who burned Réveillon's house were "brigands" attacking a respectable businessman responsible for the improvement of French industry and for giving work to three hundred men.[2]

Whether as politician or historian, if the choice lay between a Réveillon and his employees, there was never a doubt as to which side Thiers would take. Nevertheless, he was not unaware of the nature of the crisis faced by the wage-earners during the Revolution: the frequent lack of food supplies and the unemployment caused

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[1]Adolphe Thiers, Histoire de la Révolution française (13th ed.; 10 vols.; Paris, 1870), II, 130.

[2]Ibid., I, 38.

by the interruption of commerce led to great suffering by the classes ouvrières.[1] To alleviate the situation, the "esprits violents" urged the Maximum and the destruction of all opposition; the "esprits modérés" believed that commerce should take its own course. Thiers was a good liberal, and his preferences clearly lay with the latter.[2] Here, then, in simplest terms was his solution to the question ouvrière: the free play of economic forces. He could not understand why the worker had to resort to violence except as an instinctive and primitive response to the situation. Thiers argued that the agitation for the Maximum was totally unnecessary, and resulted from popular ignorance of the principles by which a free economy works. Writing as if there were no loi Le Chapelier (could he have been ignorant of its existence?), Thiers declared:

> Enfin le peuple ouvrier, toujours obligé d'offrir ses services, de les donner à qui veut les accepter, ne sachant pas se concerter pour faire augmenter les salaires du double, du triple, à mesure que les assignats diminuaient dans la même proportion, ne recevait qu'une partie de ce qui lui était nécessaire pour obtenir en échange les objets de ses besoins. [Emphasis mine.][3]

Popular hatred of the accapareurs was totally unwarrented,

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[1] Ibid., III, 178.

[2] Ibid., III, 180-81.

[3] Ibid., IV, 324.

for "il n'y avait que des marchands qui refusaient une monnaie sans valeur."[1] And was this not their right?

"The Siamese twins of revolutionary studies," one historian has called Thiers and Mignet.[2] It is a fitting phrase, for in their interpretation of the Revolution (and in the ideological and political purpose which lay behind that interpretation), in their treatment of the "multitude," and in their dismissal of the question ouvrière, the two friends were bound fast together. Neither was capable of moving beyond the limits of liberal ideology, which clouded over class realities with the myth of "un peuple" and which sought to remedy social problems with the panacea of the free play of economic forces. Neither sensed the urgency of the question ouvrière, in his own time or in history.

Buchez

In the years between 1834 and 1840, there appeared a forty-volume work on the French Revolution. It was not a history, in the strict sense, but rather a collection of excerpts from speeches, pamphlets, newspapers, and

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[1]Ibid., IV, 327.

[2]John McManners, "The Historiography of the French Revolution," in The New Cambridge Modern History, Vol. VIII: The American and French Revolutions 1763 - 93, ed. by A. Goodwin (Cambridge, England, 1965), p. 627.

documents of the Revolutionary period, arranged carefully in chronological order by P.-J.-B. Buchez and P.-C. Roux. While historians still find this Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française a useful source of primary material, rare is the individual who bothers to read the prefaces with which most of the volumes begin. These are the work of Philippe Buchez, and in their day caused great controversy--so much so that Buchez frequently paused in one preface to answer the critics of his preceding one. Taken as a whole, these prefaces offer a unique interpretation of the French Revolution.

For, at the same time that Mignet and Thiers were working to make liberalism respectable in Restoration France, a new ideology was coming to birth. Henri Saint-Simon and, after his death in 1825, a small group of disciples were fusing a critique of modern industrial society to the egalitarian tradition of the Revolution, and producing a pre-Marxian socialism. The socialists of the French Revolution, including Babeuf, had been agrarian socialists. The Saint-Simonians in contrast seized upon the vast productive capacities of industrial technology and envisaged a reorganization of industrial society. Buchez, as a young medical student, had been one of this group. He did not long remain a Saint-Simonian because he could not, as a devout Catholic, accommodate himself

to the religious direction which the movement took under Enfantin. But he did remain a revolutionary and a socialist all his life.[1]

Buchez' prefaces were the result of a peculiar fusion of his Saint-Simonianism and his Catholicism. The principal belief which lay behind them was that the Christian (Catholic) religion preaches fraternity and equality, and it was these religious goals which the Revolution sought to accomplish. The Revolution therefore was the work of the Evangile.[2] According to Buchez, who rejected the materialist interpretation of history as immoral and an encouragement to egoism, it was ideas which provided the motive force behind the Revolution.[3] The bourgeoisie were infected by materialism, but the French masses were "encore pleines de foi," which enabled them to endure the suffering exacted by the great work of building a new society which they had undertaken.[4]

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[1]André Cuvillier, P.-J.-B. Buchez et les origines du socialisme chrétien [Collection du centenaire de la Révolution de 1848, published by the Comité nationale du centenaire] (Paris, 1948), pp. 16-17; see also, the essay by J.-B. Duroselle, "Buchez et la Révolution française," in La pensée socialiste devant la Révolution française, pp. 77-107.

[2]P.-J.-B. Buchez and P.-C. Roux, Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française (40 vols.; Paris, 1834 - 1840), I, 1-5.

[3]Ibid., X, vi-vii.

[4]Ibid., XXX, vii-viii.

Buchez therefore took a more sympathetic approach to the question ouvrière. Among the evils brought about by the Revolutionary upheaval, he wrote,

> le plus dangereux est la perturbation industrielle qui ôte le travail et le pain à tous les hommes qui vivent de salaire, c'est-à-dire au plus grand nombre.[1]

The only answer to the problem during the Revolution was--to endure. We are not on this earth for happiness, but to work and to suffer for progress, sustained by our religious faith. The wage-earner during the Revolution had to resign himself to this fact. But, Buchez added, this does not mean that the condition of men is not to be improved. That the majority of men should work each day for wages to nourish them the next, while a minority enjoys education and security, is a monstrous inequality for a Christian society. Buchez thereupon put forward a plan for a new industrial organization of society, in which the most productive members would be the most rewarded.[2]

It is easy to ridicule Buchez' Catholic-Socialist interpretation, but there is some real merit to it which should not be overlooked. Buchez pointed out the injustices of what he called bourgeois despotism, which protected the newly-won bourgeois rights but rejected

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[1] Ibid., XXXII, x.

[2] Ibid., XXXII, x-xi.

the claims of the wage-earner who, as part of the masses, had helped to win them.[1] He saw the existence of a question ouvrière which was insoluble in the course of the Revolution, but could and should be remedied by further social change. The Revolution of which Buchez wrote was yet to be completed by the liberation of the wage-earner from his economic dependence.

Lamartine

In 1847, three different authors brought out books on the French Revolution. All three histories were republican interpretations, directed against the "bourgeois king" Louis-Philippe. But their ideological content, their approaches to the problems of Revolutionary historiography, and even their literary styles were very different.

> Ces livres composèrent une fugue à trois voix d'un prodigieux effet. Trois voix si différentes: celle de Louis Blanc, âpre et forte; celle de Lamartine, ravissante; celle de Michelet, nerveuse et magnifique.[2]

Lamartine was a poet (and an occasional politician), not a historian. Metaphor and symbol were therefore frequently more important to him than exact truth; this showed in his writing. He made it clear from the beginning of his history that he did not intend to concern

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[1] Ibid., II, ii.

[2] Halévy, Histoire d'une histoire, p. 15.

himself with social movements: "J'entreprends d'écrire l'histoire d'un petit nombre d'hommes ...."[1] Nevertheless, he could not paint portraits without backgrounds, and therefore did in fact discuss the wider context in which individuals played their roles and did touch upon the social questions. His heros may have been the callous economic liberals, the Girondin, (although one tends to forget his equally heroic portrayal of Robespierre), yet that did not keep Lamartine from showing an interest in the "prolétariat moderne, sorte d'esclavage tempéré par le salaire."[2] But he did not go so far as to discuss the question ouvrière in anything but the most general terms, as when he castigated "la liberté du travail" as prejudicial to the interests of the wage-earner:

> Mais la concurrence n'est que le code de l'égoisme, et la guerre à mort entre celui qui travaille et celui qui fait travailler ....[3]

This understanding did not lead to any radical conclusions. It seemed to Lamartine that, regrettable as private property, freedom of work, and competition might be, they were the imperfect creations of imperfect human beings--and could not be reformed in one stroke. The Revolution had been

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[1]Alphonse de Lamartine, Histoire des Girondins (6 vols.; Paris, 1913), I, 3.

[2]Ibid., IV, 136.

[3]Ibid., IV, 213. For another expression of criticism of the industrial system, see ibid., V, 133, where he deplores the large factories where the worker is treated "comme un rouage mécanique."

made not to destroy private property, but to distribute it more equitably.[1]

This work, then, provides no real discussion of the wage-earning class, except for poetic expressions of sympathy. Lamartine was one of those humane politicians who are genuinely moved by the plight of the oppressed, but because they have no critique of society are impotent to go beyond deploring the oppression. Lamartine was aware of the suffering of the wage-earner during the Revolution, but he did not see it in terms of a question ouvrière because he could see no possible solution. It was a fact, not a question.

Lamartine's historical work contrasts with that of Michelet and Louis Blanc. The last two men were much better historians, careful to carry out research not only in published sources but also in the archives. Both gave more emphasis to the social basis of the Revolution and more attention to the question ouvrière.

Michelet

Michelet's history of the Revolution, published beteen 1847 and 1853, remains a literary masterpiece. It is probably the most widely read history of the Revolution

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[1]Ibid., IV, 213, 218.

written to this day. In it, Michelet exalted and extolled le peuple--the good common people of France. He concluded the work by declaring:

> Toute histoire de la Révolution jusqu'ici était essentiellement monarchique. (Telle pour Louis XVI, telle pour Robespierre.) Celle-ci est la première républicaine, celle qui a brisé les idoles et les dieux. De la première page à la dernière, elle n'a eu qu'un héros: le peuple.[1]

The people, much like the multitude of earlier histories, was a monolithic entity which thought and acted as one. In this case, however, its motives were not sordid or selfish but of the utmost purity and idealism. Yet, contrary to what is generally believed, Michelet's simplistic conception did not represent complete ignorance of, or indifference to, more subtle class distinctions. At more than one point in his history, Michelet considered the question ouvrière, even if only to argue that it did not really exist during the Revolution.

Michelet criticized the excessive amount of attention which he believed Buchez and Roux had given to the working class, and declared: "Ils oublient une chose essentielle. Cette classe n'était pas née."[2] The proletariat only barely existed, concentrated in Paris

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[1]Jules Michelet, Histoire de la Révolution française, ed. by Gerard Walter (2 vols.; Paris, 1952), II, 991.

[2]Ibid., I, 293.

and a few other cities, and only with the industrial surge after 1815 did the class become significant. This meant that the obstacles between bourgeoisie and peuple were minimal and that the bourgeoisie could rely on the latter as an allied force.[1] The Réveillon riot was the work of "quelques centaines de gens ivres et de voleurs." Had the thousands of ouvriers, unemployed and hungry, who inhabited the faubourg Saint-Antoine followed their example, the bourgeoisie would have been driven to rely on the troops of the monarchy and there would have been no Revolution.[2] On the other hand, Michelet did remark favourably upon the participation of the ouvriers in the demonstrations of September 4 and 5, 1793, and the effects of the Maximum limiting wages on the events of 9 thermidor.[3]

Michelet was therefore the first of the Revolutionary historians to provide a critical approach to the question ouvrière. The existence of the problem had been noted by the liberals and by socialists like Buchez. But Michelet paused to consider the question from a historical point of view, that is in relation to his contemporary social situation. He concluded that the ouvriers at the time of the Revolution were numerically

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[1]Ibid., I, 431; also, 294.

[2]Ibid., I, 85; also, 292.

[3]Ibid., II, 568-69, 971.

too insignificant to pose a social question. He was right to stress the small number of wage-earners, but he was wrong to see them as inconsequential. He emphasized the unity of the popular classes to such an extent that he failed to perceive the differences which in fact existed.

Blanc

On the other hand, Louis Blanc went to the opposite extreme in what was the most substantial socialist history of the French Revolution written before that of Jaurès (1847 - 1862). If the people were for Michelet a mystic entity, Blanc attempted to give the term more social precision:

> Le peuple est l'ensemble des citoyens qui, ne possédant aucun capital, dépendent d'autrui complètement et en ce qui touche aux premières nécessités de la vie.
>
> Ceux-là ne sont libres que de nom.[1]

These words appear to define the peuple more as a modern proletariat than as sans-culottes or artisans who did possess a small capital. Of course, in describing the revolutionary masses as distincly proletarian, Louis Blanc was reading back into the past the social conditions of the mid-nineteenth century. His sympathies clearly lay with what he described as the "serfs du salaire" and

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[1]Louis Blanc, Histoire de la Révolution française (12 vols.; Paris, 1847 - 1862), I, 121.

"la pâle légion des ouvriers ..., proscrits de la civilisation moderne,"[1] and the question ouvrière (although he never used the term) was therefore far more important to him than to any other of the nineteenth-century historians. His analysis of the Réveillon riot, for example, contrasted with the curt disapproval with which others before him had dismissed the event's significance:

> Ainsi s'annonçait de loin la tragique question du prolétariat. ... on avait parlé du SALAIRE; et ce seul mot contenait une révolution bien autrement profonde que celle où la bourgeoisie se précipitait. Mais nul ne s'en doutait encore, et on appelait émeute le problème de l'avenir, tout à coup posé dans un soulèvement.[2]

Blanc, however, did not sustain his analysis in such strict terms as he had begun it. He quickly lapsed into a more traditional interpretation, and spoke more of le peuple than of the proletariat. He distinguished (like others before him) two revolutions within the French Revolution: one (1789) took place in the name of individualism, and served the interests of the dominant bourgeoisie; the second was attempted in the name of brotherhood (fraternité) and it failed on 9 thermidor.[3] The massacre of the Champs de Mars marked the apogee of the first phase; the events of June 20 and August 10, 1792,

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[1]Ibid., VIII, 393.

[2]Ibid., II, 257.

[3]Ibid., I, 11.

inaugurated the second.[1] The Third Estate had dissolved into its component parts, "les plébéiens du beau monde et les plébéiens de la rue."[2] Other historians had made these distinctions, but none had sided so decisively with the second revolution.

Yet the contrast between Blanc's vague and imprecise phrase "les plébéiens de la rue" and his earlier references to "la tragique question du prolétariat" shows the confusion in both his socialism and his socialist analysis. He knew and understood the problem of the wage-earner, but he seemed to think that all sans-culottes were proletarian. In addition, he was unable to conceive of any solution to the social crisis other than the Maximum. What was only an emergency measure in time of crisis somehow seemed to him a major piece of social legislation: "C'était le travail analysé, le secret du commerce livré au monde, l'industrie prise sur le fait ....[3]

But, despite its inadequacies, Louis Blanc's history was the best attempt to deal with the French Revolution from below to make its appearance before the Histoire socialiste of Jaurès. Michelet was, it is true,

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[1]Ibid., V, 503.

[2]Ibid., II, 317.

[3]Ibid., X, 254-55.

Blanc's superior as a writer and, to some extent, as a researcher. (It should be pointed out that Blanc wrote most of his work from exile in England, where he had the library at the British Museum, but no archival resources.) Blanc, however, did not make the error of treating the people as an infallible source of truth and justice; he described the lower classes with more of a sense of reality.

Tocqueville

Louis Blanc may have written the best history from below, but Alexis de Tocqueville's Ancien régime et la Révolution française (1856) was probably the greatest single work on the French Revolution written in the nineteenth century. Tocqueville unfortunately did not live long enough to continue the study beyond 1789, and there remain only preliminary fragments of the projected whole. The principal argument of the book is that the Revolution, in extending central control over the nation, was not an originator, but only continued policies that had been launched under the ancien régime. The second theme, and indeed the original motivation behind Tocqueville's historical research, was to study the connection between the rise of the masses and the subsequent establishment of Napoleon I's despotism. Tocqueville, himself living under the despotism of Napoleon III, which he saw

partly as the result of the revolutionary outbreaks of 1848, was particularly concerned with solving this historical problem.[1]

"Je parle des classes," wrote Tocqueville, "elles seules doivent occuper l'histoire."[2] But he did not, at least in his single published volume, directly broach the question ouvrière, except in a single reference to the working class. Paris, he said, became the centre of the industrial life of the nation, and in the sixty years before 1789, the number of ouvriers in the city doubled, while the population as a whole increased only one-third.

> Ainsi Paris était devenu le maître de la France, et déjà s'assemblait l'armée qui devait se rendre maîtresse de Paris.[3]

The notes and fragments of Tocqueville's planned continuation show that he intended to give more consideration to the ouvriers and their revolutionary role. He was aware of the effects of the industrial crisis which helped precipitate the Revolution, although he also commented on the fact that industry was as yet little

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[1]Richard Herr, Tocqueville and the Old Regime (Princeton, New Jersey, 1962).

[2]Alexis de Tocqueville, L'ancien régime et la Révolution [Oeuvres complètes, under the direction of J.-P. Mayer, Vol. II] (2 parts; Paris, 1952 - 1953), part 1, p. 179.

[3]Ibid., part 1, p. 142.

developed in France.[1] In a notation, he made clear the line of approach he was taking:

> 1° pour montrer ce qu'était déjà le mouvement de la population industrielle dans les grands villes, surtout dans Paris; ce qui a facilité les émeutes.[2]

There is really little else to be said about Tocqueville and the question ouvrière. He made no real contribution to the historiography of the problem and if it were not for the importance of his work as a whole, it would not need to be discussed here. Certainly Tocqueville, who as a politician in 1848 had been terrified by the June Days and the social threat he saw, was extremely interested in the roots of France's social problems. And it is probably no coincidence that the three nineteenth-century histories which concerned themselves most directly with the social history of the French Revolution--Louis Blanc's and Michelet's, and the unfinished work of Tocqueville--were all three written around the time of the Revolution of 1848. The events of mid-century made clear the role of the lower classes in revolution and revealed the question ouvrière which was beginning to force itself on the attention of the European governments of their day. Yet once a new conservative order began to consolidate itself in France, under Napoleon III and then under the

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[1]Ibid., part 2, pp. 89, 229.

[2]Ibid., part 2, p. 229.

Third Republic, historians tended to forget the lessons learned in 1848. The major histories produced in the following years either ignored the question ouvrière or dealt with it in unrealistic terms.

Quinet

Edgar Quinet wrote his history of the Revolution (1865) for much the same reason as Tocqueville, to find out "Pourquoi des hommes qui on su si admirablement mourir [for liberty], n'ont-ils pu ni su être libres?"[1] The conclusion he came to was that the Revolution had failed because it had transformed "l'ordre matériel, la propriété," but had not assured its survival by changing the interior of men, "l'ordre moral."[2] And he reproached the revolutionaries for not making France Protestant!

Quinet is an excellent example of how it was possible to write Revolutionary history without really understanding the social background. He was a friend and correspondent of Michelet, but while the latter had seen

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[1]Edgar Quinet, La Révolution (2nd ed.; 2 vols.; Paris, 1865), I, 1-2. Quinet, an exile from the France of Louis Napoleon, had good reason to ask this question. For information on Quinet himself, see Gabriel Monod, "Le centenaire d'Edgar Quinet," Revue historique, LXXXII (May-August 1903), 75-80; and Henri Michel, "Le centenaire d'Edgar Quinet," Revue bleue, XVIII, No. 25 (December 20, 1902), 769-74.

[2]Quinet, La Révolution, I, 120-21.

the peuple as a mystic entity, he had also been aware of their social and economic interests. Quinet, in contrast, rejected the idea that economic motives were responsible for popular action. What, he demanded to know, would become of a class which never saw beyond the "crise alimentaire"? He insisted that to reduce the peuple

> à la seule préoccupation de la famine et du salaire, c'est lui ôter à la fois le passé et l'avenir.[1]

The people acted out of "cet enthousiasme, qui transporte les peuples au-dessus d'eux-mêmes."[2] But it was a political and moral enthusiasm, having little to do with mere material needs. Even when the social question was precipitated--not by the masses but by the bourgeoisie, who limited the franchise--the people were too humble immediately to challenge their betters. Only in 1793 did they enter the historical stage, and even then, they remained anonymous.[3] As a result, Quinet saw no question ouvrière, indeed no genuine social question at all. A perfect example of his blindness was the remark that there was no longer a proletariat in France of the Second Empire:

> L'ouvrier moderne, tel qu'il est sorti de l'atelier de la Révolution française, a sa fortune, sa dignité, son credit dans ses mains.[4]

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[1]Ibid., I, 239.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., I, 236-37, 242.

[4]Ibid., II, 630-31.

Taine

Taine's reputation, at least among professional historians, never recovered from the blow it received at the hands of Alphonse Aulard, who methodically catalogued the errors and distortions in Taine's history of the Revolution (1878 - 1885).[1] A recent assessment has called Taine "perhaps the greatest of bad historians" and has argued the paradox that:

> With a quality of mind and brilliance of style that outrank all but the greatest, he wrote worse history than a host of mediocrities.[2]

In fact, Taine's history bears a striking similarity to that of Michelet, with the important exception that they looked at the Revolution and the revolutionary crowds with very different preconceptions. Lord Acton summed it up when he wrote that "No man feels the grandeur of the Revolution till he reads Michelet, or the horror of it without reading Taine."[3] Mathiez described the similarity in these terms:

> Mais quiconque a de fortes convictions politiques n'est-il pas fatalement un passioné? Michelet l'était-il moins que Taine? Mais voilà: Michelet

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[1]Alphonse Aulard, Taine, historien de la Révolution française (Paris, 1907). See also, Augustin Cochin, La crise de l'histoire révolutionnaire: Taine et M. Aulard (Paris, 1909).

[2]Alfred Cobban, "Hippolyte Taine, Historian of the French Revolution," History, LIII (1968), 331.

[3]Quoted in G.P. Gooch, History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century (London, New York, Bombay and Calcutta, 1913), p. 238.

comprenait le peuple, Taine ne l'a jamais compris parce qu'il ne l'a jamais aimé.[1]

Taine's horror of the Revolution was to a great extent a reaction to the Commune of 1871. He saw the evils under which France suffered in the nineteenth century not as the result of economic and social inequality, but as the fruit of the spirit of insubordination which the Revolution had embodied. A positivist and historical determinist, Taine nevertheless gave in to the most intense and petty hatred, and this distorted his whole historical perspective.[2]

Taine's treatment of the working class is exemplified by the epithets he applied to the revolutionary crowds: "vagabonds, traîneurs de rue, indigents," or "affamés, bandits et patriotes," among numerous others.[3] He had no sympathy for their misfortune during the Revolution, for the fault was theirs:

> Parce que les ouvriers de Paris ont été des usurpateurs et des tyrans, ils sont devenus des

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[1]Albert Mathiez, review of A. Aulard, Taine, historien de la Révolution française, A.h.R.f. I (1908), 354.

[2]See Edmond Scherer, "M. Taine et la Révolution," in his Etudes sur la littérature contemporaine, VII (Paris, 1894), 230-47.

[3]Hippolyte Taine, Les origines de la France contemporaine: La Révolution (3 vols.; Paris, 1878-1885), I, 36, 41.

> mendiants. Parce qu'ils ont ruiné les propriétaires et les capitalistes, les particuliers ne peuvent plus leur donner de travail.[1]

Yet, the surprising fact is that Taine was also aware of the problems faced by the ouvriers which were not their own doing, like the octrois, the rigours of winter, the scarcity of bread.[2] He might have forgiven them, if only he had not feared them so much.

Taine's indiscriminate condemnation of course masked the more subtle realities of class differences. Only occasionally did he treat the wage-earner as distinct from other members of the working classes, as when he spoke of artisans-maîtres and ouvriers-patrons as being demi-notables, unlike those "réduits à vivre au jour le jour."[3] On another page, he wrote that the more radical elements, "les enragés de la plèbe parisienne," were recruited for the most part from among the "journaliers, manoeuvres, compagnons et apprentis, bref des gens habitués à se servir de leurs bras ...."[4]

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[1] Ibid., III, 538-39. Cf. II, 138-39, where he shows a sympathetic attitude towards the bourgeoisie and the "gens aisés et considerés," for whom "il était dur."

[2] Ibid., I, 33.

[3] Ibid., III, 422-23.

[4] Ibid., II, 295.

Taine's brilliant mind was capable of making a genuine contribution to Revolutionary historiography; instead, he provided an eloquent and (at least within its own context of paranoia) logical refutation of the spirit and work of the French Revolution. He helped to make rejection of 1789 intellectually respectable once again, and indeed this had been his intention. As Taine wrote in his correspondence, he wanted to demolish "the willfull illusion in which we live since the book of M. Thiers."[1] The reply of the municipality of Paris was to endow a chair in the history of the Revolution at the Sorbonne and to appoint Alphonse Aulard as its first occupant in 1885.

Aulard

Aulard was the first professional historian of the French Revolution.[2] He not only lectured on the Revolution at the Sorbonne, but also edited a historical journal dedicated to the subject, appropriately enough entitled La Révolution française. From 1885 until his death forty-three years later, he fought with books, journals, and speeches against those like Taine who would denigrate the

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[1]Quoted in Pieter Geyl, Encounters in History (Cleveland and New York, 1961), p. 127.

[2]For information on his career, see James L. Godfrey, "Alphonse Aulard (1849 - 1928)," in S. William Halperin, ed., Essays in Modern European Historiography (Chicago and London, 1970), pp. 22-42; and Georges Belloni, Aulard, historien de la Révolution française (Paris, 1949).

Great Revolution; and until Mathiez rose to challenge him, he was the recognized authority on the subject. Aulard revived the enthusiasm for and faith in the principles of 1789. But he did so for very transparent partisan purposes. Aulard was defending the conservative Third Republic, and defending it as much against the left as against the right. Yet he remained a scholar at all times and, despite his own ideological convictions, welcomed with enthusiasm the socialist interpretation of Jaurès.

Aulard's approach to the French Revolution was political; he was not particularly interested in economics or society. The title of his major work, Histoire politique de la Révolution française (1901), is a clear indication of his interests. The book aimed to tell the political history of the Revolution from the viewpoint of the development of democracy and the Republic, which were for Aulard the two essential principles of the Revolution[1] (and, needless to say, of the Third Republic). The ouvriers made almost no appearance on the pages of this history, except for the few where Aulard paused to discuss the origins of socialism. He recognized that socialism was the logical, if extreme, consequence of the Declaration

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[1]A. Aulard, Histoire politique de la Révolution française: Origines et développement de la démocratie et de la République (1789 - 1804) (Paris, 1901), p. v.

of the Rights of Man, but he rejected it as an impossibility given the situation in the 1790's when the wage-earner was in such a small minority. For socialism, in his view, was in contradiction to the social system established in 1789.[1]

The historical scholarship of Aulard ranks far above that of any other historian of the Revolution who wrote in the nineteenth century. It is possible to see a progressive development in that respect, for as the techniques of historical research were improved and as increasing use was made of archival materials, the quality of the history written became increasingly better. But if Aulard's work marks the zenith of nineteenth-century historical scholarship, it is not the high point of nineteenth-century social history. Michelet, Louis Blanc, and Tocqueville, for all their failings, attempted to give a far fuller treatment of the social background to the Revolution than did Aulard. Among other social issues, they dealt with the _question ouvrière_, and he virtually ignored it. It is an irony of historiography, as well as symbolic of the closing of one century and the opening of another, that Aulard's _Histoire politique_ appeared in 1901 --the same year that Jaurès began to publish his _Histoire socialiste_.

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[1]_Ibid._, pp. 47-48.

CHAPTER III

JEAN JAURES (1859 - 1914)

I: Genesis of the Historian

Alive, Jean Jaurès was one of the dominant figures in French and European socialism; the nature of his death at the hands of an assassin augmented the image so that his influence on the French left long continued. For Léon Blum, for example, Jaurès remained a constant point of reference, his principles the touchstone of socialist policy.[1] Thus biography has not infrequently shaded to hagiography, and the life of Jaurès come to resemble that of a secular saint: brilliant son of a bourgeois family, convert to a new social faith, eloquent apostle of socialism, and, finally, martyr. This aspect does not enter directly into the make-up of Jaurès the historian, but it cannot be ignored. Had he been nothing but historian, his Histoire socialiste would certainly have had

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[1]"Léon Blum avait coutume de dire ... que nous ne devions pas nous demander, hommes ordinaires, ce qu'il aurait fait dans telle ou telle circonstances où nous nous trouvions, mais 'Qu'aurait-il voulu que nous fissions ...?'"--Louis Lévy, Anthologie de Jean Jaurès (London, 1947), p. v.

an impact and a continuing influence, but because he was in fact much else, the impact was reinforced.

Like other historians, including Mathiez and Lefebvre, Jaurès was affected by all the social, political and cultural forces of his environment. But Jaurès was also the exception, in that he was not primarily an historian. He played his most active role in molding the political environment, so that his historical studies are linked to his political career and Jaurès historien was unquestionably Jaurès homme politique.

At the time Jaurès began his political career, the influence of the French Revolution on the origins of socialism was a matter of much debate. Jules Guesde had rejected the Revolution, arguing that it had been essentially bourgeois, offering no lesson to the proletariat.[1] Jaurès, however, had been interested in history since a school-boy, and he had come to a different conclusion, which he repeated again and again, in speech and editorial. If the Revolution had not fought against capitalism, it nonetheless embodied a spirit of revolt against all tyrannies. "Le triomphe du socialisme sera donc ... la consommation de la Révolution française dans des con-

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[1]Harvey Goldberg, The Life of Jean Jaurès (Madison, 1962), p. 150.

ditions économiques nouvelles."[1] Furthermore, "le socialisme surgit de la Révolution française sous l'action combinée de deux forces: la force de l'idée de droit, la force de l'action prolétarienne naissante."[2]

It was, then, not surprising that when, in 1898, the publisher Jules Rouff asked Jaurès to plan, edit, and contribute to a multivolume history of France from 1789 through the nineteenth century, he accepted happily. Jaurès himself was to write only some of the volumes on the French Revolution, but when other contributors backed out of their obligations, Jaurès was compelled to write them all. He was not a member of the Chamber of Deputies at this time, but he was far from inactive--the Dreyfus Affair, the quarrel with the Guesdists, and the work for socialist unity kept him busy. Nevertheless, he found time--at home, in hotels, on trains, and even as he sat on the platform at socialist rallies--to read not only secondary sources, but also a vast quantity of documents, newspapers, and pamphlets. Then, at intervals, he sat down and wrote page after page, using not a single note,

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[1]Jaurès, "La jeunesse démocratique," (from La Dépêche de Toulouse, 2 May 1893) in his Etudes socialistes, Vol. I: 1888 - 1897 [Oeuvres de Jean Jaurès, ed. by Max Bonnafous] (Paris, 1931), p. 138.

[2]Jaurès, "Le socialisme et la vie," (7 September 1901) in Etudes socialistes, Vol. II: 1897 - 1901 (Paris, 1933), p. 356.

and such was his skill that he never had to recast a single line.[1]

The history began to appear in 1901, in fascicules priced at fifty centimes each. On the cover, which was a significant red, was printed a summons to the proletariat:

> When a new class arises and affirms its strength, it attempts not only to prepare the future but to understand and interpret the past according to the new light of its consciousness. . . . Peasants! Workers!--here is the history of the efforts and struggles of your fathers. Seek in it an increase of strength and clarity for the struggle of tomorrow.[2]

Jaurès called his work not a social history, but a socialist history: L'histoire socialiste de la Révolution française. Aulard insisted, in his laudatory review, that what Jaurès had produced was "l'histoire sans épithète."[3] But, as Jaurès explained, he wrote from a distinctly socialist viewpoint. According to Jaurès, the study of political and social evolution was meaningful to a socialist only in light of the end towards which history was moving--the triumph of the proletariat.[4]

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[1]Goldberg, Life of Jean Jaurès, p. 283; Lévy, Anthologie de Jean Jaurès, p. xv.

[2]Quoted in J. Hampden Jackson, Jean Jaurès: His Life and Work (London, 1943), pp. 87-88.

[3]Alphonse Aulard, "M. Jaurès, historien de la Révolution," La Révolution française, XLIII (1902), 290.

[4]Jaurès, L'histoire socialiste de la Révolution

Yet, if Jaurès was a socialist, writing from a socialist's viewpoint, he did not limit the source of his historical inspiration to Marx's writings. In his introduction, he wrote:

> Au risque de surprendre un moment nos lecteurs par le disparate de ces grands noms, c'est sous la triple inspiration de Marx, de Michelet et de Plutarque que nous voudrons écrire cette modeste histoire ....[1]

Plutarch, Michelet, and Marx were a mixed group to say the least, but by Jaurès' own admission they provide the key to an understanding of the thought which lay behind his own historical work.

When only nineteen, in 1878, Jaurès won first prize in a national contest with a speech on the value of Plutarch: he will "show the French that you can join courage to prudence, generosity to moderation, freedom to order, and that good actions do not lose their value by eliminating excess."[2] Twenty years later, Jaurès sill kept a belief in the didactic and moral value of history.

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française, ed. by Albert Mathiez (8vols.; Paris, 1922 - 1924), I, 10. There is a recent edition of the Histoire socialiste edited by Albert Soboul (Paris, 1968--), but the set is not as yet completely published. This edition includes footnotes citing Jaurès' sources (a feature unfortunately lacking in the earlier editions) and also amplifying or correcting his statements. All references will be to the Mathiez edition, except where otherwise indicated.

[1]Ibid., I, 27.

[2]Quoted in Goldberg, Life of Jean Jaurès, pp. 14-15.

We have already seen that he hoped to instruct and inspire the proletariat in particular. Furthermore, Jaurès retained from Plutarch the cult of the individual hero, and saw the Revolution as embodied successively in a number of personalities like Barnave, Mirabeau, Danton, and Robespierre among others.

Although there were fundamental differences of specific interpretation separating Jaurès from Michelet, Jaurès accorded to him honours equal to those he bestowed on Marx. He not only shared with Michelet a love for le peuple as the artisans of liberty, but he also had a tendency towards mysticism:

> Aussi notre interprétation de l'histoire sera-t-elle à la fois matérialiste avec Marx et mystique avec Michelet. C'est bien la vie économique qui a été le fond et le ressort de l'histoire humaine, mais, à travers la succession des formes sociales, l'homme, force pensante, aspire à la pleine vie de la pensée, à la communion ardente de l'esprit inquiet, avide d'unité, et du mystérieux univers.[1]

According to Jaurès, it was the duty of all socialists to salute Michelet who, if he was not directly "one of ours," had anticipated socialism in seeking the unity of all men with themselves and with nature.[2]

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[1]Jaurès, Histoire socialiste, I, 26.

[2]Jaurès, "Michelet et le socialisme," (from La pétite République, 16 July 1898) in Etudes socialistes, II, 66-70.

Jaurès claimed to be a Marxist, and indeed he cannot be understood by anyone who discounts the influence of Karl Marx on his intellectual and political development. But, as his invocation of Plutarch and Michelet indicates, neither can he be understood, either as an historian or as a politician, only in terms of that particular influence. What he learned from Marx was that society rests on an economic basis. The corollaries for him were, as a politician, the central importance of the modern industrial proletariat as the vehicle of social reform, and as a historian, the need to uncover the social conflicts at the roots of the French Revolution. But what he rejected or modified in Marxism was the truly original contribution of Marx's genius--the revelation that ideology is not a timeless truth, but on the contrary an evanescent reflection of class relationships.

Did Jaurès understand Marx? At one point, he denied the applicability of the methodology of historical materialism as presented by Marx in the Eighteenth Brumaire:

> Mais il n'y a pas seulement dans l'histoire des luttes de classes, il y a aussi des luttes de partis. J'entends qu'en dehors des affinités ou des antagonismes économiques, il se forment des groupements de passions, des intérêts d'orgueil, de domination qui se disputent la surface de l'histoire et qui déterminent de très vastes ébranlements.[1]

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[1]Jaurès, Histoire socialiste, VII, 526.

But there is of course nothing in that statement with which Marx could have disagreed and the very work which Jaurès cites to contradict makes this agreement obvious. The way in which Jaurès modified Marx's thought has been best explained by Léon Blum. Marx had shown that the triumph of the proletariat was historically inevitable, but

> ... ce qui est fatal n'est pas nécessairement juste. ... Jaurès alors avait montré que la Révolution sociale n'est pas seulement la conséquence inéluctable de l'évolution économique mais qu'elle serait en même temps le terme d'une exigence éternelle de la raison et de la conscience humaine.[1]

Neither the philosophical nor the empirical basis of the Histoire socialiste has escaped without criticism. Sorel found it "a fine collection of platitudinous political maxims" and, disgusted by Jaurès tendency to identify with success, he deplored this as "a policy fitting a purveyor to the guillotine."[2] Franz Mehring, the German socialist, attacked the work as being entirely derivative: "Elle exige un tas de livres, une paire de ciseaux, un panier à papier, un pot à colle, puis enfin une plume."[3] Both were right--but only to a degree.

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[1]Léon Blum, A l'échelle humaine, in L'oeuvre de Léon Blum ... 1940 - 1945 (Paris, 1955), p. 466.

[2]Georges Sorel, Reflections on Violence, trans. by T.E. Hulme (New York, 1941), p. 119.

[3]Franz Mehring, "Jaurès, historien: Pour le Roi

Jaurès teleological interpretation of history, and the mystical distortions he inflicted on Marxism often led him to justify the past, rather than to analyze it. And it is unfortunately true that Jaurès had a tendency to quote lengthy extracts, often running on for page after page, from speeches, documents, or other books, when a short analytical synopsis would have sufficed.

But these faults are obscured by the truth of Aulard's judgement:

> Ces incertitudes et ces lacunes proviennent des conditions où M. Jaurès a travaillé. Il a dû, en quatre ou cinq ans, faire un travail qu'un autre, moins bien doué, n'aurait pu faire qu'après vingt ans de préparation.[1]

If the flaws in the Histoire socialiste are many, nevertheless, Jaurès penetrating thought, careful scholarship, and intuitive grasp of the fundamentals are evident throughout. What binds the work together, and gives it its compelling power, is his deep and sincere love for the people of France, especially the humble peasants and labourers, and his respect for the traditions of the Revolution. Albert Soboul has rightly called it "un monument de science et une oeuvre de foi."[2]

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de Prusse!", Le mouvement socialiste, X (May-August 1903), 51.

[1]Aulard, "M. Jaurès, historien," p. 297.

[2]Albert Soboul, "Note de l'éditeur," in Jaurès, Histoire socialiste, ed. by A. Soboul, p. 55.

II: The Historical Work

Definition of the Proletariat

It was characteristic of Jaurès' brand of socialism that it avoided emphasizing the political and social importance of the industrial proletariat at the expense of other exploited classes, especially the peasantry. This was a deliberate political tactic, designed to enable parliamentary socialism to appeal to as wide an electorate as possible. Something of the same kind of tendency can be noted in Jaurès' treatment of the problems of class in the *Histoire socialiste*. It was not that he failed to discuss, and even to stress, the *question ouvrière*, but rather that he did not consistently treat it as distinct from other broader social issues and class struggles. In many places in his work, "proletarian" lost its restrictive meaning and came to be synonymous with the oppressed lower classes in general. Many earlier historians had shown a similar lack of precision in their analysis of class, but this had usually been the result of confusion as to the exact meaning of social terminology. This was not the case with Jaurès, who was aware of class differences even if he did not always observe them rigorously. Here, for example, was his distinction between the precise Marxist terminology and the vaguer terminology of an earlier period:

> Le mot de prolétariat, tel que nous l'employons aujourd'hui, a un sens précis: il signifie l'ensemble des hommes qui vivent de leur travail et qui ne peuvent travailler qu'en mettant en oeuvre le capitale possédé par d'autres. Dans la langue politique et dans l'état économique de la société française en 1789, le mot peuple ne pouvait avoir cette précision: il s'appliquait même, selon les moments, à des catégories très diverses de la population ....[1]

The peuple were, for Jaurès, the whole group of popular classes which formed the sans-culotte amalgam, as when he wrote that "le peuple, formé de prolétaires et d'artisans" were to be distinguished from the "aristocratie industrielle et bourgeoise."[2] The proletariat he identified more specifically with the wage-earners, as in this phrase: "Les prolétaires, les salariés exerçaient donc ... une double action de classe ...."[3] Because the proletariat could be either peasant or industrial, Jaurès frequently used a phrase like prolétariat ouvrier to limit the term to the industrial wage-earner. Had he used such a scheme consistently, Jaurès would have avoided confusion; unfortunately, he did not keep his social categories unentangled. He often wrote "proletarian" when he meant "sans-culotte," as if the two terms were interchangeable. They were not, and he certainly knew so. A similar error not infrequently

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[1]Histoire socialiste, I, 421.

[2]Ibid., VII, 74.

[3]Ibid., VI, 116.

appeared in his use of the term peuple, although he sometimes tried to salvage the situation with combinations like peuple-ouvrier.

These defects were partly the result of hasty writing and partly the product of his mystical approach to the revolutionary masses, in the manner of Michelet. Dedicated to the ideals and idealism of the Revolution, the peuple, the sans-culottes, the proletarians became a single force in Jaurès' eyes. If on his more sober pages Jaurès showed himself more aware of precise class differences, in the enthusiasm of other pages he veered into the inaccuracies of rhetoric. As a result, his treatment of the question ouvrière was at times highly sophisticated and at other times incredibly naive and simplistic.

The "Question Ouvrière"

Jaurès' discussion of the proletariat and the question ouvrière can be properly understood only in light of his political beliefs and commitments. He wrote the Histoire socialiste to demonstrate what he had long contended: that the French working-class movement of the nineteenth century derived from the French Revolution. As a politican, he sought to reconcile socialism with the bourgeois-democratic institutions of the Third Republic and it was in the same spirit that, as an historian, he

tried to synthesize the Marxist and the bourgeois interpretations of the Revolution. That is, while he agreed that the Revolution was to the immediate benefit of the bourgeoisie, he contended that the proletariat also made significant political advances which they could later transform into social and economic gains. That is what he meant when he wrote: "Il n'y a rien aujourd'hui sous le soleil qui appartienne pleinement à la bourgeoisie, pas même sa Révolution."[1] The Revolution had brought the democracy which made parliamentary socialism possible. The problem was that the Revolution had also led to increased oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, a fact which confronted Jaurès with the dilemma that in justifying the Revolution he was to some extent justifying this oppression.

As a result, Jaurès' synthesis had its points of weakness. All too often, it became an endeavour to paper over the social cracks (as we shall see in his treatment of the Réveillon riot). The image of the proletariat as Christ--and of mankind redeemed by the suffering of this class--grotesque as it might be, was a true product of the mind of Jaurès. He was therefore prepared not only to describe and explain the alliance of bourgeois and proletariat in the early phase of the Revolution, but also to

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[1]*Ibid.*, I, 309.

justify it as a necessary prelude to the socialist movement of the nineteenth century. This is most apparent in the sections in which Jaurès dealt with class consciousness.

According to Jaurès' reading of him, the German socialist Lassalle had argued in one of his pamphlets that it was the transformation of French industry by technological advances which led to the social upheaval of 1789--the spinning-jenny was the first event of the French Revolution.[1] Far more aware of the historic realities than this, Jaurès pointed out the absurdity of the contention. "Si le mot de Lassalle était vrai, 1789 eût ressemblé à 1848."[2] It was, to the contrary, precisely because French industry was still in the embryonic stage that the Revolution was possible. The bourgeoisie and the proletariat could act together to overthrow the feudal regime, instead of facing each other across the barricade. Industry in 1789 was

> assez développée pour donner à la bourgeoisie une force décisive. Elle n'était encore ni assez puissante, ni assez concentrée pour grouper en quelques foyers un

[1]Or so Jaurès quoted him as saying. What Lassalle actually said was quite different: "the first machine, Arkwright's spinning-jenny, embodied a complete revolution in . . . social conditions."--Ferdinand Lassalle, "The Workingmen's Programme," trans. by E.H. Babbit, in The German Classics: Masterpieces of German Literature Translated into English, Vol. X (New York, 1914), p. 410.

[2]Histoire socialiste, I, 90.

> vaste prolétariat aggloméré et pour lui donner une conscience de classe énergique et distincte. L'industrie française était assez active pour donner à la bourgeoisie dirigeante et entreprenante une force et une conscience révolutionnaires. Elle ne l'était pas assez pour communiquer au prolétariat une vertu révolutionnaire distincte du mouvement bourgeois.[1]

The power of the proletariat was effective at the beginning of the Revolution only so long as the proletariat took its cue from the bourgeoisie. Lacking both consciousness and organization, the proletarian class was a force

> seulement dans le sens de la Révolution bourgeoise, mêlés à elle, confondus en elle et lui donnant par leur impetuosité toute sa logique et tout son élan.[2]

But in this fact that proletariat and bourgeoisie, the two elements of the new social order coming into being, stood united against the old feudal order, there, in Jaurès' opinion. lay the strength of the Revolution. Citing an historian who spoke of a municipal officer of Marseille as "l'idole des riches et du peuple," he commented that:

> ... par ce seul rapprochement de mots [riches and peuple] ... l'historien marseillais éclaire jusqu'au fond la Révolution bourgeoise. C'est la bourgeoisie assistée de la force et de l'enthusiasme populaire, qui marche à la conquête du pouvoir.[3]

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[1] Ibid., I, 85.

[2] Ibid., I, 169.

[3] Ibid., I, 77.

Jaurès took the deputy Barnave, who wrote a short study of the origins of the Revolution, as representative of the bourgeois class as a whole.[1] This use of Barnave served a double purpose. First, it showed the extent to which the bourgeoisie were class conscious and aware of the economic foundations of their power. But secondly, Jaurès drew attention to the absence in Barnave's work of any mention of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie were blind to the growth of the wage-earning class, whose development was the corollary of their own. For them, "le problème du prolétariat ne se pose même pas."[2] Elsewhere, Jaurès repeated the theme that "à la veille de la Révolution ... ce que nous appelons la question ouvrière n'était pas née."[3]

The basic thought behind Jaurès' argument was that the question ouvrière could not become significant until after the success of the bourgeois revolution. For this reason, it was in the interest of the proletariat to co-operate with their oppressors:

> ... il fallait que la société bourgeoise se substituât à l'ordre monarchique et féodal pour que le prolétariat pût grandir à son tour. Pauvres ouvriers enthousiastes de 1789, bien des déceptions vous attendent, et bien

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[1]See Antoine Pierre Joseph Marie de Barnave, Introduction à la Révolution française, ed. by Fernand Rude (Paris, 1960).

[2]Histoire socialiste, I, 130.

[3]Ibid., I, 76.

> des souffrances: mais malgré tout, et en fin de compte, ce n'est pas vous qui êtes les dupes.[1]

In a similar vein, Jaurès defended the class egoism of the Convention, which unanimously ratified Danton's motion to place private property under the protection of the Nation:

> Quel est le socialiste, s'il est fidèle à la méthode historique, qui reprochera à la Convention de n'avoir pas proclamé l'idéal communiste et prolétarien, avant que les conditions économiques et intellectuelles en fussent réalisées? ... Le devoir des conventionneles était de défendre ... la Révolution; ce n'était pas d'anticiper sur une Révolution nouvelle dont nul à cette heure n'avait la formule et qu'aucune classe n'était prête à porter.[2]

In the context of 1789, for the proletariat to oppose the bourgeoisie would have been certainly "une hardiesse ultra-révolutionnaire," and possibly "une manoeuvre de contre-Révolution."[3] This latter danger Jaurès believed to have been exemplified by the case of Lyons, where the industrial crisis of 1792 led to a working-class insurrection that opened the way to counter-Revolution.[4]

But even when the earlier alliance had broken up and the popular movement freed itself from bourgeois direction, Jaurès was careful to differentiate between

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[1] *Ibid.*, I, 78.

[2] *Ibid.*, IV, 373.

[3] *Ibid.*, I, 161.

[4] *Ibid.*, VI, 67.

sans-culotte ideology and socialist, proletarian ideology. He argued that the former, not the latter, predominated and limited the possibilities of an acute question ouvrière during the course of the Revolution:

> Même en 1793 et 1794 les prolétaires étaient confondus dans le Tiers Etat: ils n'avaient ni une claire conscience de classe ni le désir ou la notion d'une autre forme de propriété. ... La merveilleuse sève de vie du socialisme, créateur de richesse, de beauté et de joie, n'était point en eux: aux jours terribles, ils brûlaient d'une flamme sèche, flamme de colère et d'envie. Ils ignoraient la séduction, la puissante douceur d'un idéal nouveau.[1]

The Wage Movement

According to Jaurès' interpretation, the bourgeoisie and the peuple began the Revolution in unity. But, as events unfolded, their interests increasingly diverged and the union disintegrated:

> Comme un crible animé d'un mouvement de plus en plus rapide, la Révolution, à mesure qu'elle s'accélère, s'épare des intérêts d'abord confondus ....[2]

There developed a popular movement, with two fundamental tactics. There was an effort by the popular classes as a whole to limit prices by popular force or by laws demanded from the state (the subsistence movement) and there was a campaign of agitation by the wage-earners in particular for increased wages to meet the rising cost

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[1] Ibid., I, 21.

[2] Ibid., III, 336.

of living. Jaurès was the first to study in any detail this wage movement.

The wage-earners had, in fact, not kept silent even at the beginning of the Revolution. There had been the Réveillon affair to give an early indication of latent class antagonisms. But Jaurès did not emphasize this aspect of the event. Indeed, he speculated that the rioters might have been agents of counter-Revolution and he found significance in the fact that at no time during the later stages of the Revolution was any call for popular vengeance for the bloody repression heard.[1] Jaurès' refusal to recognize the peculiar nature and significance of this action by the wage-earners was the result of his general interpretation. According to his synthesis, the bourgeoisie and the peuple were working together in 1789 because their interests coincided. He was therefore not anxious to emphasize an event which threatened his basic line of argument.

His attitude towards the wage movement which developed in 1791 was much more positive, for Jaurès rightly believed it to be a genuine social movement, foreshadowing nineteenth-century conflict between capital and labour. From his viewpoint, the loi Le Chapelier

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[1]Ibid., I, 141-43.

was an unmistakable measure of repression aimed against the proletariat:

> Et, audacieusement, insolemment, comme si elle était sûre de son droit, elle [the bourgeoisie] invoque les Droits de l'homme pour organiser l'oppression des salariés. C'était donc bien sur une première lutte entre salariés et capitalistes que la Constituante se prononçait par la loi Chapelier: et il est impossible de méconnaitre l'origine de classe de cette loi.[1]

Neverthless, Jaurès stressed that the law did not have quite the same meaning for its contemporaries as it did for posterity. Robespierre, who voted for the law, had urged the arming of all citizens--a far more radical right than the right to strike. Marat, in his denunciation, interpreted the law more in a political context than a social one, seeing it as directed against popular clubs and civic assemblies. Moreover, the law must be seen in the context of a general failure to foresee the coming of great industry and of a widespread belief that the abolition of all corporations and compagnonnages would mean freedom for all producers to become self-employed patrons.[2]

Furthermore, Jaurès doubted the general efficacy of the loi Le Chapelier. In the first place, he presumed

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[1]Ibid., II, 278.

[2]Ibid., II, 264-66, 270-72, 282-84.

that, whatever the law might say, rising prices must have led to "une des plus profondes et des plus générales agitations en vue d'un meilleur salaire, qu'enregistre l'histoire de la classe ouvrière."[1] The French people at this time were too full of revolutionary ardour and pride, too confident of their own power and strength, for it to be any other way. Then too, there was the evidence of the Maximum, which raised wages one-half as compared to a one-third increase in prices. Jaurès argued that the Convention could not have increased wages against the will of the propertied class unless popular agitation by the wage-earners had already imposed an increase. He quoted complaints by some workers who objected that the wage maximum in fact decreased their income.[2] Jaurès based these arguments as to the existence and success of the wage movement on slender evidence, but the accuracy of his conclusions is to his credit. He did not have the detailed statistical studies needed to reach any final conclusions; indeed, until after his Histoire socialiste little attempt was made to write any.

This explains why, although he drew historical attention to the existence of an intensive and widespread movement on the part of the wage-earning class, he

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[1]Ibid., VI, 111.

[2]Ibid., VI, 115.

nevertheless failed to understand its political significance. For example, he totally ignored the impact of the wage maximum on the events of 9 thermidor. The important fact for Jaurès was not so much the results of the movement as the fact that the proletarians, struggling together in an immense if informal coalition, demanded the means to live:

> L'histoire, obsédée par les visions tragique de cette periode, a négligé de recueillir trait à trait cette prodigieuse revendication de salaire qui, en chaque usine, en chaque ferme, mettait les salariés aux prises avec la bourgeoisie révolutionnaire et possédante. Mais ce n'est pas d'un mouvement aisé, tout naturel et automatique, que le prix des journées de travail s'est adjusté au prix extraordinaire du blé et des denrées.[1]

This was a sign of and an inspiration for the future. But at the same time the connection between subsistence and politics was much better documented, much easier to establish, and affected a much wider spectrum of classes. This issue therefore seemed much more important to Jaurès.

The Subsistence Movement

The second aspect of the popular movement was the subsistence movement. Jaurès gave more attention to this movement than he did to the wage issue, although he did not consider it to be as important from the socialists' point of view. For, he argued, the subsistence crisis and

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[1] *Ibid.*, VI, 116.

the agitation emerging out of it did not provide (nor could they provide) the basis for a social movement on the part of the proletariat. The problem was too vital to be a social question, he insisted. By this he meant that it could not become an issue which set the ouvriers as a class against the bourgeoisie. No government, no matter its ideological or class bias, could ignore the exigencies of a critical situation which threatened starvation. Whatever the remedial action the revolutionary government might take, including dictatorial regulation, it took from necessity which went beyond the dynamics of class struggle. Furthermore, the peuple attributed the crisis not to social causes but to the manipulations of counter-revolutionaries both foreign and domestic. For these reasons, Jaurès insisted:

> La question du pain a donc été comme un ferment dans la Révolution bourgeoise: elle n'a pu servir de support à un mouvement vraiment socialiste et ouvrier.[1]

Two further reasons for Jaurès attitude emerge from the text of the Histoire socialiste. He believed that the subsistence movement did not challenge the social structure and that it obscured certain important class divisions by stressing others.

The first limitation of the subsistence crisis as a basis for social action was amplified by Jaurès in

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[1]Ibid., I, 161.

his analysis of the crisis of 1792. The shortage of sugar, due to the revolts of the colonies and the forestalling by merchants, deprived households of café au lait in the morning and led to "un véritable soulèvement populaire" which opposed the bourgeoisie marchande to the peuple ouvrier.[1]

> Ainsi, c'est à l'intérieur de la Révolution même qui se dessine un antagonisme de classe, entre les consommateurs et les marchands, entre les prolétaires ou artisans d'un côté et la bourgeoisie riche de l'autre.[2]

Furthermore, the social conflict had serious political implications because it brought the artisans and the proletariat, who were beginning to think in terms of a controlled economy, into conflict with the Girondins.[3] These new ideas as to regulation were therefore significant (they eventually led to the Maximum), but at the same time, they were hardly socialist.

> Oh! le peuple n'a pas encore essayé d'analyser le mécanisme social. ... Il est prêt non à transformer la propriété, mais à en corriger, par une intervention vigoureuse et la force de la loi, les excès les plus criants.[4]

The second limitation was that the social conflict ranged the commercial bourgeoisie against the "ensemble du

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[1] Ibid., III, 283-84.

[2] Ibid., III, 286.

[3] Ibid., III, 300.

[4] Ibid., III, 291.

peuple," which included artisans and even some manufacturers as well as the wage-earners, and not the wage-earner against his employer. Even the interests of the manufacturers, small and large, coincided with those of their employees--against the monopoleurs and accapareurs who raised the cost of raw materials as well as food.[1]

It was the same in the case of the disturbances of February 1793, when both the petit patronat and the ouvriers compelled merchants to sell goods (chiefly soap, candles, and sugar) at prices fixed by the buyer.[2] It was Jacques Roux, the enragé, who inspired and organized this "sorte de révolution des subsistences, qui semblait annoncer et même amorcer un mouvement social, cette 'troisième révolution.'"[3] But Jaurès cautioned against mistaking the real meaning of the riots. Jacques Roux was defending the petty bourgeoisie and the artisans against the competition of the great merchants just as much as he defended the proletariat against the rising costs of food. The movement was petty bourgeois and not truly proletarian.[4]

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[1]Ibid., III, 304-06.

[2]Ibid., VII, 40.

[3]Ibid., VII, 44.

[4]Ibid., VII, 49, 53.

Nevertheless, the net result of the sugar crisis and of the more general price crisis which followed was to sharpen the class consciousness of the lower classes and to accentuate the "scission sourde" between the "fraction bourgeoise" and the "fraction populaire." Economic crisis aggravated the class antagonisms which had already been made obvious by the legislation which limited suffrage or by the massacre of the Champ-de-Mars.[1] The peuple became increasingly conscious of themselves as a class in opposition to the capitalists and bourgeois proprietors.[2] The result was the intensification of the popular agitation in 1793. During the rioting of October-November 1792, the will power of the proletariat ("la volonté prolétarienne") had not been strong enough to sweep aside the hesitation and resistance of the bourgeois Convention, but within a year the assembly was forced by popular pressure to impose fixed prices. The Maximum was the fruit of popular agitation, and "C'est sous cette forme que la revendication prolétarienne commence à presser et assaillir la Convention."[3]

At this point, the argument of Jaurès appears to have become somewhat inconsistent. On the one hand, he

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[1]Ibid., III, 332-33.

[2]Ibid., VI, 121.

[3]Ibid., VI, 151.

insisted that the subsistence crisis did not lead to a proletarian social movement; on the other hand, he described the Maximum as a proletarian demand imposed from below. But the inconsistency is not in the logic of the argument so much as in the evident confusion of class terminology, which varied from passage to passage. Jaurès was describing not a proletarian consciousness but a sans-culotte consciousness. There was a connection between the question ouvrière and the subsistence crisis--after all, the proletariat have to eat--but, because Jaurès' discussion was clumsy and confusing, it appeared contradictory as well. It is possible to make sense of his arguments only if one understands that he must have meant "sans-culotte" in some of the places where he wrote "proletariat." Jaurès was trying to say that the Maximum answered the demands of the peuple in general, and for that reason could not provide the basis of a proletarian movement in particular, even if it was a response to the needs of this class.

The Political Role of the Proletariat

The problem with Jaurès' treatment of the political role of the proletariat is much the same as the problem we find in his discussion of the subsistence crisis: his failure to maintain the distinction between the proletariat and the peuple or sans-culottes. In many passages, it is

virtually impossible to be certain as to exactly what Jaurès meant to say.

We have seen that one of Jaurès' principal arguments was that in 1789 the bourgeoisie and the peuple stood united against the ancien régime--but whether the latter would remain permanently subordinate depended on the course of events. Jaurès considered 1790 the most "organic" year of the Revolution, for it saw the creation of all the fundamental institutions of the new order, while the Fête de la Fédération celebrated on the Champ-de-Mars on July 14 of that year symbolically marked a moment of social and political equilibrium.[1] The bourgeoisie were at this stage still royalist:

> Il fallait à la bourgeoisie révolutionnaire un point d'appui: comme il lui était plus commode de le trouver dans le pouvoir royal, connu, circonscrit, subordonné et stable, qu'en cette immense force mouvante et nouvelle du peuple inquiet et illimité.[2]

Had the King remained faithful to the advice of Mirabeau and adhered to the revolutionary settlement, the equilibrium would have stayed in balance. In that case, only

> la lente croissance économique du prolétariat industriel, la lente diffusion des lumières dans le peuple auraient transformé peu à peu la Révolution en démocratie.[3]

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[1] Ibid., II, 196, 204.

[2] Ibid., II, 363-64.

[3] Ibid., II, 206.

But it was the failure of the King to accept the Revolution that "abridged" this slower path of democratic development, by compelling the more advanced among the bourgeois revolutionaries to call on the people for support. And the result of this was the awakening of political thought among the masses, the formation of popular clubs and sectional assemblies, the establishment of universal suffrage, and finally an end to bourgeois political supremacy.[1]

Thus, it was political events which, after July 1791 (the massacre of the Champ-de-Mars), enabled the peuple to exercise their strength, first on behalf of their radical bourgeois allies, then for their own benefit:

> les divisions de la bourgeoisie grandissaient le rôle des prolétaires; ceux-ci, bien faiblement encore, commencent à apparaître comme les arbitres possibles de la Révolution.[2]

Their participation in the revolutionary journées had its price--political equality and the Maximum:

> Comme les esclaves antiques qui conquéraient leur liberté sur les champs de bataille, les prolétaires vont conquérir le droit de suffrage et quelques heures brèves de souveraineté politique sur les champs de combat de la Révolution bourgeoise.[3]

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[1]Ibid., II, 205, 363-64.

[2]Ibid., I, 367.

[3]Ibid., I, 309.

Jaurès emphasized the importance of the political development which took place in the popular aasemblies and clubs, which he saw as the key to an understanding of much of the revolutionary action:

> Il faudrait pouvoir suivre, jour par jour ... la vie de chaque section, surprendre, pour ainsi dire, l'éclosion et surveiller la croissance des pensées révolutionnaires.[1]

For three years, from 1789 to 1792, there was little direct contact between the popular forces and the legislators, but meanwhile the political education of the masses increased day by day. The result was that the motives of popular revolutionary action shifted to a more political orientation:

> les journées des 5 et 6 octobre [1789] sortaient, si je puis dire, des entrailles du peuple souffrant: la journée de 20 juin [1792] sort du cerveau révolutionnaire du peuple ouvrier.[2]

On June 20, 1792, the people had invaded the Tuileries in a purely political protest against royal policy. It was in a similar spirit that the workers and proletarians overthrew the King on August 10, 1792. (Jaurès would have been more accurate had he attributed the events of August 10 to the sans-culottes.) The insurrection had been prepared in the sectional assemblies. "Le local de chaque section était, en chaque quartier, une sorte de

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[1] Ibid., IV, 48.

[2] Ibid., IV, 53-54.

fortresse du peuple et de la Révolution."[1] But the workers and proletarians put forward no economic claims. They limited their demands to a Republic and universal suffrage:

> C'est la pleine liberté politique, c'est la pleine démocratie qu'ils réclamaient avant tout. En elle, assurément, ils trouveraient des garanties pour leurs intérêts, pour leurs salaires, pour leur existence même.[2]

Jaurès therefore found nothing to criticize in the fact that the Convention elected in September 1792 was almost completely bourgeois in composition. The people sought a democratic regime which would guarantee the Revolution and they saw no reason not to leave the government in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Besides, Jaurès insisted, it was a professional bourgeoisie which dominated the Convention, and not "une bourgeoisie de classe," which would be clearly opposed to the proletariat.[3] (This was one of Jaurès more ridiculous statements, demonstrating the extent to which he stretched thin his arguments to justify the revolutionary bourgeoisie.) Furthermore, there was one <u>ouvrier</u> elected from Lyons. For the first time, Jaurès rejoiced, a manual labourer was summoned to a share in sovereignty and to sit in

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., IV, 117.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., IV, 140.

[3] <u>Ibid</u>., IV, 299-301.

judgment on the King: "c'est un grand spectacle et ... une Révolution dans la Révolution."[1]

The next phase of the political struggle was the conflict between the Girondins, who upheld bourgeois interests, and the Montagnards, who relied on the revolutionary force of the people. But Jaurès did not see this as a class conflict. The Girondins were doomed not because of any inflexible economic doctrine--they had none--but by the fact that they let the people exceed them in revolutionary political élan and were compelled to fall back increasingly on the bourgeoisie of trade and industry for support. Their party spirit, in Jaurès words, narrowed to a spirit of faction.[2] The force to overthrow the Girondins came from below, from the popular sectional assemblies and the fédérés (men who had come to Paris in July 1792 to save liberty by overthrowing the King).[3]

> Ce n'était plus seulement au nom de Paris, c'était au nom de tout le peuple révolutionnaire de France ... que les délégués des sections parlaient à la Convention. Unis aux fédérés, ils étaient toute la nation révolutionnaire.[4]

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[1] Ibid., IV, 304.

[2] Ibid., VII, 514, 525.

[3] Ibid., VII, 6.

[4] Ibid., VII, 8.

The Girondins were expelled from the Convention on June 2, 1793. There followed a period of intense popular agitation in the clubs and sectional assemblies. At this point, according to Jaurès, political demands gave way to social and economic ones (the process had begun during the food riots of February 1793):

> Ce qui frappe d'emblée, dans les déclarations et manifestes de ces groupements révolutionnaires, c'est le souci dominante des questions économiques, c'est l'accent de revendication sociale.[1]

Thus ended the distinction between the political role of the popular classes and their social demands. The question which now comes up is the connection between these social and economic demands and the emergence of socialism.

The Origins of Socialism

To what degree did socialism grow out of the French Revolution? This was a question which lay at the heart of Jaurès' historical analysis. The debt which socialism owed the Revolution was, after all, of central importance in the debate between Jaurès and his socialist critics over the issue of socialist participation in bourgeois democracy. One might therefore expect that Jaurès would have been prepared to argue that there were many traces of socialist thought to be found among the

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[1] *Ibid.*, VII, 11.

revolutionary masses. In fact, he argued exactly the opposite.

We have seen that Jaurès denied that the revolutionary proletariat knew anything of "la séduction, la puissante douceur" of the socialist idea. (See above, page 83.) Similarly, the artisans, who were part of the petty bourgeoisie, did not understand the idea of common property and production, but sought to defend their position as independent producers against the encroachments of technological innovation and capitalist organization. Jaurès did not condemn them for this:

> Aujourd'hui, les voies socialistes et communistes sont ouvertes, et clairement tracées: et c'est par la plus rétrograde aberration que la petite bourgeoisie refuse d'y entrer. Au commencement de 1793, il n'y avait pas de claire formule socialiste; et c'est en tâtonnant à travers la Révolution que le peuple des artisans cherchait sa voie.[1]

If there were no socialist ideas among the popular classes, what about in the minds of individual thinkers? At the time Jaurès was writing, André Lichtenberger had published a book to demonstrate that there were indeed forerunners of socialism among the philosophes and the revolutionary leaders.[2] Jaurès, however, challenged the

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[1]Ibid., VII, 50.

[2]André Lichtenberger, Le socialisme et la Révolution française: étude sur les idées socialistes en France de 1789 à 1796 (Paris, 1899).

fundamental sssumptions of Lichtenberger, who, he claimed, confused critiques of industrial technology with socialism, which is a critique of the capitalist system. Jaurès, as a politician, constantly and consistently urged socialists to come to terms with the aspirations of the peasantry. But that did not mean that he was willing to accept excoriations of industry as socialism. This was retrograde.

> D'instinct, les ouvriers des manufactures étaient beaucoup plus avec la bourgeoisie révolutionnaire qui suscitait et élargissait le travail industriel qu'avec les prétendus reformateurs qui, dans un intérêt de moralité et simplicité, voulaient ramener au pâturage commun, trempé de matinale rosée, le troupeau paisible des hommes.[1]

Jaurès looked to Babeuf for the first sign of socialism. Citing a letter of 1787, in which Babeuf suggested that all men share in the fruits of the land and the products of industry, he found:

> ... les premières lueurs du communisme moderne et industriel; ce n'est plus le communisme purement agraire, primitif et réactionnaire, et on pressent que celui-ci pourra avoir des prises sur le prolétariat des usines, sur le peuple des mines, des hautes journaux, des grandes cités éblouissantes et misérables.[2]

When, under the Directory, Babeuf founded his club, he located it in the Panthéon district, near Saint-Marcel, with its tanneries, and Saint-Antoine, with its numerous large workshops. According to Jaurès, this proved that

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[1]Histoire socialiste, I, 159.

[2]Ibid., I, 161.

Babouvism rested on the *ouvriers* of the manufactories.[1] Here he saw the philosophical roots of socialism merge with the proletariat, the social class which was its object and its carrier.

There is no doubt that Jaurès misunderstood Babouvian socialism, which was far more in the tradition of radical Jacobinism than he realized. This misunderstanding was symptomatic of Jaurès' treatment of the *question ouvrière*. His contribution to the study of the *question* was tremendous. He was the first to attempt to deal with the problem of the proletariat at length and to relate that class to the development of socialism out of the revolutionary tradition. He understood the difference between the proletariat and the sans-culotte, but he was not always clear on this point, and here was a great flaw in the *Histoire socialiste*. His tendency to merge the two groups could only be detrimental to his analysis of the *question ouvrière*.

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[1] *Ibid.*, VII, 48.

CHAPTER IV

ALBERT MATHIEZ (1874 - 1932)

I: Genesis of the Historian

Albert Mathiez, unlike Jaurès, was a professional historian.[1] During his course of studies at the Ecole normale supérieure, his interest in the French Revolution was so marked that, as one of his friends recalled, "sa voix résonnait comme un écho des assemblées révolutionnaires: et nous l'appelions 'le Citoyen.'"[2] It was therefore quite natural that, upon graduation in 1897, Mathiez went to the Sorbonne to study under Aulard. There he wrote a major and a minor thesis, both of which dealt with the religious history of the Revolution, and received his doctorat ès lettres in 1904.

At about this time, Mathiez published an article which praised his teacher in the most effusive and enthu-

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[1]For a brief biography of Mathiez, see Frances Acomb, "Albert Mathiez (1874 - 1932)," in Halperin, Essays in Modern European Historiography, pp. 225-42.

[2]Paul Mantoux, "Sur Albert Mathiez," A.h.R.f., X (1933), 375.

siastic way:

> ... M. Aulard est vraiment l'historien représentif d'une époque, celui dont les ouvrages s'imposent au professeur, à l'érudit comme à l'homme du monde. M. Aulard personnifie en France l'histoire politique de la Révolution française. ... La Révolution française est sa chose, son domaine.[1]

Yet within three years Mathiez had decisively broken with Aulard and had even created his own society, the Société des études robespierristes, to publish a journal in challenge to Aulard's. The Annales révolutionnaires came out until 1924, in which year it joined with another journal to become the Annales historiques de la Révolution française. Mathiez edited both journals until his death.

The antagonism between the two men became increasingly bitter and petty over the years, and until Aulard's death in 1928 neither missed an opportunity to criticize and attack the other. On a superficial level, the quarrel between Mathiez and Aulard revolved around their attitudes towards Danton and Robespierre. Aulard admired Danton and denigrated Robespierre, while to Mathiez Robespierre was the embodiment of the Revolution and Danton only a corrupt character. But Danton and Robespierre were only the symbols of far more profound differences. Aulard was, in

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[1]A. Mathiez, "M. Aulard, historien et professeur," La Révolution française, LV (1908), 47. This article originally appeared untitled in the Revue des Charentes of March 31, 1905. Aulard later reproduced it in his own journal in order to embarrass Mathiez after their split.

a very real sense, the official historian of the Third Republic. In his laudatory article on Aulard, Mathiez had acknowledged this when he praised his teacher as the historian most representative of his time. Mathiez' politics, however, were more radical than Aulard's, and as time went on, he became increasingly disillusioned with the radical republicans and their policies.[1] As he explained matters in 1930, in a letter written to Louis Gottschalk:

> ... l'histoire telle que la comprend Aulard est une histoire au profit d'un parti et ... je me suis élevé peu à peu, en m'anfranchissant de son influence, à une vue plus objective des choses .... Je gênais ainsi la politique de défense républicaine d'Aulard et de ses amis radicaux qui, systématiquement, ne voulaient pas attirer l'attention sur le rôle primordial de la bourgeoisie et sur la misère du peuple qui a joué le rôle de dupe.[2]

The legend of Danton he believed consciously created because the <u>République des camarades</u> needed a corrupt politician as its patron. Thus, he could inscribe in a copy of one of his books the observation that the rehabilitation of Danton was not only "un outrage à la verité, mais l'indice d'une politique équivoque et dangereux pour la démocratie."[3]

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[1]Franco Venturi, <u>Jean Jaurès e altri storici della Rivoluzione francese</u> (n.p., 1948), p. 141.

[2]"Une lettre d'Albert Mathiez," <u>A.h.R.f.</u>, IX (1932), 219.

[3]Hermann Wendel, "Albert Mathiez vu par un 'Dantoniste' Allemand," trans. by Jules Millot-Maderan, <u>A.h.R.f.</u> IX (1932), 238-39.

The Aulard-Mathiez controversy had the regrettable effect of dividing historians of the French Revolution into two quarrelling schools, but it also helped to clear the way for a new approach to the historical problems, along the lines suggested by Jaurès. Mathiez was now free to develop in his own way and the work which now followed, for the most part in the form of articles in his journal, was prodigious.[1] Mathiez explained the pattern of his development in terms of a natural progression from religious history and anticlericalism to the history of the labouring classes, and then to economic and social problems.[2] But, of course, this movement did not occur in a vacuum.

It does not appear that the work of Jaurès was the decisive factor in Mathiez' change of historical approach, at least not at first. Mathiez had, it is true, praised the Histoire socialiste when it first appeared, and in later years he acknowledged Jaurès as a major influence. Speaking of Jaurès' history, he said:

> je déclare humblement que j'y ai puisé non seulement l'excitation sans laquelle mes recherches eussent été impossibles, mais bien des suggestions qui m'ont

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[1]For a full bibliography (which misses only a few articles), see Ricardo R. Caillet-Bois, Bibliografia de Albert Mathiez (Buenos Aires, 1932). Mathiez had lectured in Argentina and this bibliography was a tribute to him, published hurriedly after his death.

[2]"Une lettre d'Albert Mathiez," p. 219.

> servi de ligne directrices. ... c'est parce qu'il a écrit avant moi que j'ai pu entreprendre telle investigation qui, sans lui, n'aurait pas eu lieu.[1]

Furthermore, in 1922, Mathiez paid a more concrete tribute when he edited a new edition of Jaurès' history. It was "an appropriate answer to a prejudice which had recently acquitted Jaurès' assassin; it was also an indication . . . of the lines on which the history of the Revolution ought to be written."[2] But Jaurès' work had come out in 1901, when Mathiez was still a pupil of Aulard, and Mathiez did not turn to social history until over a decade later. It was only in 1915 that he began to publish, in the Annales révolutionnaires, a series of articles which would become his most important book, La vie chère et le mouvement sociale sous la Terreur.

This is an indication that the decisive influence on Mathiez was not Jaurès but rather the impact of World War I. The Maximum, the Jacobin dictatorship, and the Terror were, in Mathiez' eyes, strikingly similar to the rationing and the war dictatorship of 1914 - 1918.

> On ne se saisit bien le passé qu'à lumière du présent. La dure école qu'a été cette guerre prédispose nos contemporains à nous entendre. ... les crises qui se succèdent sous leurs yeux leur donnent la clef des

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[1]Review of Jean Jaurès, Histoire socialiste, Vols. VII and VIII, in A.h.R.f., II (1925), 76.

[2]J.M. Thompson, "Albert Mathiez," English Historical Review, XLVII (1932), 620.

> grands drames politiques et sociaux, diplomatiques et militaires dont est tissé l'histoire de notre France révolutionnaire.[1]

The experience of the Bolsheviks, after the seizure of power in Russia in 1917, also had a similar effect on Mathiez, who came to speak of the Revolutionary government as a kind of dictatorship of the proletariat.

Mathiez espoused the Boshevik cause in Russia (this was one of the reasons he did not succeed Aulard at the Sorbonne), but whether or not he was a socialist remains in doubt.[2] His attitude towards Marxism was sympathetic and critical at the same time. It seemed to him a provocative and useful theoretical framework, but he was suspicious that it implied an a priori pattern of interpretation.

> C'est une hypothèse sans doute, mais une hypothèse féconde qu'il y a toujours lieu d'examiner et d'essayer de vérifier dans les faits. La méthode devient néfaste, si au lieu de se présenter pour ce qu'elle doit être, elle prétend s'ériger en vérité dogmatique et démontrée. Elle est néfaste, parce qu'elle préjuge à l'avance de la question posée. Elle fausse les faits pour les faire rentrer dans la théorie ....[3]

Mathiez was very much influenced by Marxism, but not to the extent that one could call him a Marxist.

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[1]A. Mathiez, "Robespierre et la politique nationale," La grande revue, XCVI (March-June 1918), 693.

[2]Georges Lefebvre, "L'oeuvre historique d'Albert Mathiez," A.h.R.f., IX (1932), 199.

[3]A. Mathiez in a review of Henri Sée, Evolution et révolution, A.h.R.f., VIII, 76.

What, then, is the historiographical importance of Mathiez? He was not primarily interested in the study for their own sake of the economic and social issues raised by the Revolution. His early studies were religious and then political and when, after 1915, he began to look more closely at economy and society, he was generally concerned with how they affected politics. Mathiez read Jaurès, praised him, and frequently quoted him--but he never probed any more deeply into the class relationships at the roots of the Revolution. On the other hand, he progressed further than Aulard by penetrating beneath the political divisions to seek their economic and social origins. Mathiez appears from our perspective as the historian who fused Aulard and Jaurès to provide a new basis for Revolutionary history. He popularized, through his journal and his numerous publications, the social and economic interpretations which Jaurès had been the first to attempt to develop.

At his death, Mathiez was only fifty-eight. Lucien Febvre, in the obituary he wrote, commented that it was unfortunate that Mathiez' education had not provided him with the critical tools which he had to develop over the years by himself, and of which he therefore was never the master.[1] Had he lived longer, Mathiez' contribution to

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[1]Lucien Febvre, "Albert Mathiez: un tempérament,

history from below would almost certainly have been greater, for in the last years of his life he began to look more closely at the lower classes in the Revolution. But his premature death left this research to be continued and to be built upon by others.

II: The Historical Work

Definition of the Proletariat

Mathiez was well aware of the need to show precision when discussing the composition of the revolutionary crowds and to come thereby to a better understanding of the motives which underlay popular behaviour. Far too many historians had fallen short of these goals. In a sharp criticism aimed at Michelet in particular, but also meant to apply to historians in general, Mathiez commented:

> "Le peuple, tout le monde," ces entités romantiques n'ont pas de signification precisé pour l'historien. ...
> . . . . . .
> Le Peuple (avec un P majescule) joue un peu trop, dans l'histoire du Michelet, le rôle du *deus ex machina* dans le drame antique.[1]

Mathiez himself was on occasion careless in this regard, but he usually did attempt to present the personalities and classes who took part in the events of the Revolution as being of varied interests and motives. He, even more

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une éducation," in his *Combats pour l'histoire* (Paris, 1953), pp. 346-47.

[1]"Les capitalistes et la prise de la Bastille," *A.h.R.f.*, III (1926), 578.

than Jaurès, unraveled the fabric of the French Revolution. Clemenceau had said that the Revolution was a block; he was wrong: "Il n'y a pas de bloc que la critique historique ne dissocie pour en analyser les éléments parfois fort disparates."[1]

But if Mathiez grasped the significance of conflicting class interests, and therefore sought to analyze the social elements at work in the Revolution, he was nonetheless hindered by what can only be called a defective understanding of class. He used no consistent scheme of class analysis in his work as a whole. He did not follow the Marxists in determining class by relation to the means of production; nor did he rely on the terminology of the Revolutionary period (sans-culottes, peuple, etc.) which, vague though it might have been, at least had the merit of conveying a living social reality. Venturi claims that the faults in Mathiez' terminology are explicable by the fact that his social language was "drawn from his living political experience" and "taken uncritically from the political polemics of the beginning of the century."[2] That may be part of the answer. Closer to the truth,

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[1]"La corruption parlementaire sous la Terreur," Annales révolutionnaires, V (1912), 160.

[2]"... tratto della viva esperienza politica sua" and "tratti senza critica particolare dalla polemica politica dell'inizio del secolo."--Venturi, Jean Jaurès e altri storici, p. 153.

perhaps, is simply the probability that Mathiez (whose deficient training we have seen noted by Lucien Febvre) never methodically thought out his conceptions of class. How else are we to explain such a phrase as "la classe des consommateurs, des artisans, des petits propriétaires et des pauvres,"[1] which combines such diverse elements into a single social class? Mathiez was not usually a sloppy thinker, nor a sloppy writer; he meant precisely what he put down on paper. In all likelihood, then, having no rigid preconceptions or methodology, he simply grouped men according to their social and economic interests at a particular time, and called the group a class. In 1793, consumers, artisans, small proprietors, and poor shared an interest in establishing the Maximum. To Mathiez, therefore, they constituted a class.

Thus, Mathiez could write in an elegant phrase of "la classe, encore inorganique, qui se cherche, des sans-culottes."[2] In reality, of course, the sans-culottes were an alliance of classes and not a single social class. They were certainly not a class "seeking itself," for with the attainment of class consciousness, the amalgam of petty bourgeoisie and wage-earners would of necessity

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[1] La Révolution française (3 vols.; Paris, 1922 - 1927), III, 77.

[2] Le club des Cordeliers pendant la crise de Varennes et le massacre du Champ de Mars (Paris, 1910), p. 28.

dissolve into its component parts. Mathiez also spoke of "les classes populaires" composed of artisans, ouvriers, and consumers,[1] which apparently corresponded to the sans-culottes. Elsewhere, he ventured further into inaccuracy by identifying the sans-culottes with the proletariat, as when he wrote: "ceux que l'on appelait alors les Sans-Culottes et que nous appelons aujourd'hui les prolétaires."[2]

Only in the last years of his life did Mathiez provide any detailed analysis of the Revolutionary proletariat, and this was in the form of two short articles which were explorative in nature rather than presenting any definitive conclusions. One, dealing with the various laws designed to redistribute the land of émigrés and suspects to the poor, considered the proletariat as a class of landless rural poor--the agricultural wage-earners.[3] The other article dealt with the urban as well as rural proletariat, which Mathiez calculated at a total of ten to eleven million people. The tendency here was to equate the indigent with the proletariat and generally to ignore the more pertinent question of the part they

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[1] La Révolution française, II, 3.

[2] "La politique sociale de Robespierre," Annales révolutionnaires, VI (1913), 552.

[3] "La Révolution française et les prolétaires," A.h.R.f., VIII (1931), 479-95.

played in the productive process. Mathiez concluded that on the eve of the Revolution the proletariat was increasing in both country and town. In the country, where the vast majority lived and worked, the reaction to a deteriorating standard of life took the form during the Revolution of demands against grain hoarding and for the raising of labourers' wages, the suppression of privileges, and a wider distribution of land among the population. The thrust of proletarian demands in the city--and this is directly related to the question ouvrière--were for an end to police regulation of labour, for large public works to provide employment, and for lowering the cost of living.[1]

The "Question Ouvrière"

Therefore, while he recognized that the social problem created by the existence of main-d'oeuvre (hired labour) was more acute in agriculture than in industry,[2] Mathiez did not ignore the urban wage-earner. As he wrote in a review of a book by Henri Hauser:

> M. Hauser a bien raison de proclamer que la question sociale qui se posait à la veille de la Révolution française n'était pas seulement une question paysanne, mais aussi une question ouvrière.[3]

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[1]"Notes sur l'importance du prolétariat en France à la veille de la Révolution," A.h.R.f., VII (1930), 520.

[2]La vie chère et le mouvement sociale sous la Terreur (Paris, 1927), p. 595.

[3]Review of Henri Hauser, Les débuts du capitalisme, in A.h.R.f., V (1928), 275.

This declaration contrasts with a statement which Mathiez had made almost twenty-five years earlier, in an article on the social question, when he wrote that in 1789 "la question n'était pas encore une question ouvrière ou paysanne, mais une question bourgeoise."[1] In fact, however, the views expressed in the article did not differ substantially from opinions which Mathiez later held--with this one exception. He had originally seen the question ouvrière as developing out of the events of the Revolution; he came to see it as existing prior to the Revolution, although not coming to the fore until after the bourgeois victory in 1789. It can therefore be said that Mathiez' approach to the question ouvrière never really progressed beyond the opinion he held in 1904. The arguments presented in the early article, indeed many of the very phrases and sentences used to express them, appear again and again in the later writings. Furthermore, nowhere else did Mathiez ever consider in such detail the question ouvrière without submerging it in broader social issues which concerned other classes in addition to the wage-earners.

The article is well worth more detailed consideration for that reason and for one other. In 1904, Mathiez

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[1]"La question sociale pendant la Révolution française," La Révolution française, XLVIII (1905), 386. This article is the text of a speech which Mathiez delivered at a conference at the Bourse du travail de Caen, on December 7, 1904.

was still the loyal pupil of Aulard, whose works he cited, quoted, and praised. But at the same time, Mathiez showed a familiarity with the history recently published by Jaurès and in many places he followed the socialist interpretation. The article makes explicit the degree to which Mathiez' interpretation of the question ouvrière was the result of a synthesis: it was at one and the same time political with Aulard and social with Jaurès. This, as we shall see, was both the weakness and the strength of Mathiez' history.

In this article on the social question, Mathiez argued that large industry hardly existed in France on the eve of the Revolution and that most ouvriers worked for master craftsmen in small ateliers. Between employer and wage-earner there existed "des rapports de camaraderie, de reconnaissance, presque d'affection."[1] Even in the large manufactories, there was no realization by the workers that their interests were fundamentally opposed to the employers'. "Les ouvriers marcheront donc longtemps avec la bourgeoisie qui les emploie ...."[2] Thus the Revolution began as the work of the bourgeois class. But:

> Il devait cependant arriver fatalement, et il arriva en effet assez vite, que l'alliance des bourgeois,

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[1] Ibid., p. 388. The same phrase occurs in "La politique sociale de Robespierre," pp. 551-52.

[2] "La question sociale," p. 389.

> des ouvriers et des paysans se rompit et que les uns et les autres commencèrent à prendre une conscience de classe distincte. Au cours même de la Révolution, la question sociale changea de face: elle cessa d'être à certains moments une question bourgeoise pour devenir une question paysanne et ouvrière.[1]

According to Mathiez, the peasantry broke with the bourgeoisie very early in the course of events, with the uprisings of July and Ausust 1789. The ouvriers (and here Mathiez was using the term loosely) were for a much longer time subordinate to their masters, "versant leur dang sans compter pour une cause qui n'était pas uniquement la leur." They provided the force on July 14 and October 5 and 6, 1789, and on August 10, 1792; yet the bourgeoisie excluded them from the national guard and from the suffrage. "Sur son privilège économique la bourgeoisie entait son privilège politique."[2] Mathiez saw the complete lack of popular response to the loi Le Chapelier--there were no disturbances or demonstrations--as symptomatic of proletarian docility in the face of bourgeois egoism. The proletariat sensed its lack of power and was incapable of arousing itself over any issue except one: the food supply. It was only the threat of misery and starvation which compelled the ouvriers to launch "une politique de classe."

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[1]Ibid., pp. 393-94.

[2]Ibid., pp. 398-99.

> A la fin de 1792 et en 1793, sous l'aiguillon de la faim, le prolétariat prit pour la première fois une pleine conscience de sa force et de ses droits.[1]

There arose a widespread popular movement, and almost spontaneously an entire school of socialist theoreticians, including Dolivier, Jacques Roux, and of course Babeuf. Popular pressure led to political equality after August 10, 1792 and to the imposition of the Maximum--which Mathiez called the first experience of collectivism. But under the reaction which ensued after Thermidor, the classe ouvrière fell back into inertia.

Mathiez concluded that, despite the situation at the beginning of the French Revolution, the course of events had indeed posed the question ouvrière.

> La question sociale, qui n'était en 1789 qu'une question bourgeoise, est devenue une question ouvrière. Et n'est-ce pas ... une grande leçon de l'histoire qu'au moment même où la bourgeoisie, le tiers état, s'installe au pouvoir, pendant le cours de cette Révolution qui fut sa chose, le prolétariat, le quatrième état, ait pour la première fois formulé ses droits à l'existence et que le droit ouvrier puise ainsi à la même source et à le même origine que le droit bourgeois.[2]

This article illustrates the confusion which surrounded Mathiez' approach to the question ouvrière, a confusion which he never cleared up. He realized that

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[1] Ibid., p. 401.

[2] Ibid., p. 411.

the question concerned the wage-earner, but at the same time he frequently used the term in a more general sense to apply to all small consumers, including master craftsmen and small proprietors. This is the corollary to his confusion about class terminology. It is frequently difficult to isolate the wage-earner in the work of Mathiez.

The simple fact is that Mathiez was not particularly interested in studying the question ouvrière independently of the wider crisis which faced the popular classes. For the most part, he studied the wage-earner within the context of what he called the class of consumers and in this way frequently submerged in a more general movement what might have otherwise stood out as distinct. It is significant that nowhere in his work did he analyze the impact of the loi Le Chapelier in any detail. When he dealt with the movement for increased wages, he presented it as almost incidental to the broader demand for the Maximum. Yet, paradoxically, it was Mathiez who first stressed the significance of the wage maximum and its political impact in Thermidor.

Therefore, it is no easy task to follow the thread of the question ouvrière through the fabric of Mathiez' work. It changes colour too frequently, blends with and becomes lost in the background. The only feasible approach

is to look first at the wage movement in isolation, and then at the more general manifestations of popular discontent in relation to the subsistence crisis and the course of political events. Only then will it be possible to generalize about the role of the wage-earner as seen by Mathiez.

The Wage Movement

The slight importance accorded by Mathiez to the movement of wage-earners can be gauged from his treatment of the problem in his three-volume history of the Revolution. It is only a relatively short (800 pages) summary of a complex series of events, yet even when that is taken into account one cannot but express surprise at the way Mathiez skimmed over major events in the history of the wage movement. He described the Réveillon riot in a single sentence and linked it to the grain riots in the provinces and the looting of shops in other cities. The riot in this way loses any distinctive significance, being absorbed into a single movement directed by the lower classes as a whole against "tous ceux qui exploitent le populaire et qui vivent de sa subsistence." Similarly, he only touched upon the loi Le Chapelier and cited one of its contemporary critics who spoke of the "mauvaise volonté des pouvoirs publics à l'égard des ouvriers."[1]

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[1]La Révolution française, I, 41-42, 165.

But this approach was not the product of ignorance about the question of wages and wage-earners. Mathiez believed that the basic cause of the subsistence crisis was the disproportion which resulted from wages lagging behind rising prices. According to the dogmas of economic liberalism, wages should have followed prices, but they did not. This was principally because the Constituent Assembly, when the wage-earners organized themselves to seek increased wages in 1791, had deprived them of the means they needed to coerce their employers by outlawing coalitions in the loi Le Chapelier. The result was a shift in the direction of workers' demands. They were compelled to turn to the state for aid in closing the wage-price gap; and they formulated their demands in terms of lower prices (the Maximum) rather than higher wages.[1] The wage movement ceded second place to calls for a Maximum, and therefore to a political movement. The question ouvrière was transmuted, in Mathiez' interpretation, into a question de subsistences.

Nevertheless, Mathiez did not ignore the movement for higher wages which did, despite the loi Le Chapelier, continue. He distinguished three periods of wage fluctuation. Before the imposition of the General Maximum (September 29, 1793), wages remained uncontrolled, like

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[1]La vie chère, pp. 114-15.

prices, although the loi Le Chapelier hindered to some extent the wage-earners' attempts to take advantage of this. The Maximum applied to wages as well as prices, but there was a period before the purge of the Hébertists during which the wage maximum remained unenforced in Paris. The third period saw an attempt by the Committee of Public Safety to maintain the balance between producers and consumers by enforcing the wage controls.[1]

The war had decreased labour supply and increased the demand for manufactured goods. This meant that wages had in fact increased significantly in the course of 1793, despite the law against coalitions. The wage maximum therefore appeared to the workers as a threat to their advantageous economic position, and all the more so in the war manufactories which were directly under government control and where the maximum could be more rigidly enforced than in the private sector of industry. In Paris, as long as the Hébertists retained control of the city government, the maximum on prices was rigorously enforced while the wage maximum was ignored. The reverse situation prevailed throughout most of the rest of France. The result was a widespread and concerted effort by the wage-earners to raise their standard of living. Recourse was taken to strikes, despite the hostility of both employers

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[1]Ibid., pp. 581-82.

and public authorities and in spite of the law.[1] The nature and extent of the movement made explicit the existence of a nascent class consciousness among the wage-earners:

> Cela suffirait à temoigner que la classe ouvrière prenait conscience de sa force et qu'elle n'hésitait pas à séparer ses intérêts de ceux des gouvernants terroristes eux-mêmes, quand ceux-ci ne lui accordaient pas ce qu'elle demandait.[2]

But the government had no intention of conceding all that was asked of it. The Committee of Public Safety saw the wage maximum as the necessary counterpart to the control of prices. Its aim was to maintain a balance between wages and prices, and concessions on wages would have meant the abandonment of its whole economic policy. In March, the Hébertists were executed. The Committee assumed an attitude of resistance to the demands of wage-earners in this respect.[3]

This policy had its repercussions in Thermidor. The wage-earners were discontented, and indeed on the very day of Robespierre's fall there was a demonstration before the Hôtel de Ville. The question of wages was not alone responsible for the defeat of Robespierre, since some of

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 586-88.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 608.

[3] *La Révolution française*, III, 171-72.

the sections which stood by the Commune the longest were those of the artisans and ouvriers of eastern and northern Paris. However, those who abstained from support because of their discontent, or who even gave support to the Convention, may have been enough to tilt the balance against Robespierre. Thus the wage-earners, according to Mathiez, played the dupe. To destroy the wage maximum, they assented to the fall of Robespierre, and in this way they lost the protection of the price maximum as well.[1]

The Subsistence Movement

One of Mathiez' major contributions to the history of the French Revolution is his detailed studies of the subsistence crisis and of the popular movements that responded to the threat of starvation, which ran like an undercurrent beneath the political history of the period. The popular movement had grave political consequences, and to a large extent determined the political and social policies of the Revolutionary governments. We will turn to this aspect later. At this point, it is well worth looking at Mathiez' approach to the subsistence crisis. The essays which he wrote on the subject, published in a single collection as La vie chère et le mouvement sociale sous la Terreur, remain an important work of historical

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[1]Ibid., III, 221-22; La vie chère, pp. 605-06; "Le maximum des salaires et le 9 Thermidor," A.h.R.f., IV (1927), 149-51.

scholarship and interpretation, despite the fact that Mathiez never found the opportunity to rewrite the essays, which had appeared over a period of some twelve years (1915 to 1927), nor to provide any connecting passages between individual essays. The result is more a series of detailed expositions in chronological order than a unified monograph.

The book begins with an examination of the _ancien régime_ when--except for a brief experiment under Turgot--it was a fundamental policy of government to regulate and control the grain trade to avert the danger of famine. The revolutionary bourgeoisie swept away the fetters of government regulation to create a liberal, free economy. The initial industrial and agricultural crises which had helped to spark the Revolution receded into the past; successful harvests and subsequent abondance seemed a justification of economic liberalism. Then, in January 1792, came the first of a series of crises over the shortage of foodstuffs. Disturbances broke out in Paris, precipitated by the scarcity and high price of sugar from the colonies--the result of slave rebellion and the falling value of the _assignat_. This crisis faded, in part because sugar was renounced in a patriotic gesture. But that spring there was a bread crisis, which could not be dismissed so easily.

> La lutte économique prend cette fois des allures d'une lutte sociale. Derrière le Tiers-Etat nanti le quatrième Etat affamé et farouche se lève à l'horizon.[1]

Before 1789, according to Mathiez, disturbances were not of immediate political consequence. People had endured famine and unemployment under the ancien régime, but now they were less willing to do so in time of revolution.[2] Inflation and scarcity coincided with a period when the Revolution "ouvrait au peuple de plus larges perspectives d'espérances."[3] Thus the impact of economic crisis brought the social question to the fore, compelling

> les sans-culottes à sortir de leur indifférence politique, à revendiquer leur part dans le gouvernement, à inaugurer une tactique de classe.[4]

This class tactic took the form of clamouring for the reinstitution of old policy:

> Alors ... le prolétariat, chose curieuse, reprit à son compte la vieille réglementation de la monarchie et essaya de la faire revivre comme un instrument d'émancipation ou tout au moins de protection.[5]

The public authorities had traditionally intervened on

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[1] La vie chère, p. 49.

[2] "Etude critique sur les journées des 5 & 6 octobre 1789," Revue historique, LXVIII (September-December 1898), 258.

[3] La Révolution française, II, 51.

[4] "La politique sociale de Robespierre," p. 556.

[5] La vie chère, p. 26.

behalf of the poorer classes; now Roland and the Girondins argued that the problem would solve itself, if only economic laws were left to function freely. But sentiment was against them. After all, the crisis was due in great part to monetary fluctuations resulting from the assignats. It was the Revolution which had caused the crisis. As Mathiez wrote, "C'était logiquement à la Révolution à panser les blessures que la Révolution avait faites."[1]

Under the kings, regulation and price-fixing had been successful because they were local in extent and were used only temporarily. Given the conditions of 1793-1794, the control had to be exercised everywhere and for an indefinite period of time. An identical policy therefore had to assume a very different character. It could be imposed only by force from below, taking the form of "une révolte des petits contre les riches."[2]

Mathiez went further than Jaurès had gone in emphasizing the elements of class struggle in the subsistence movement. He described the provincial disturbances of October 1792 as "un mouvement de classe. Le peuple s'opposait comme classe ... à la bourgeoisie elle-même,

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[1] Ibid., p. 115.

[2] Ibid., pp. 60-61.

aux propriétaires et aux employeurs."[1] He saw the Enragés as spokesmen for this "class," and describing them, he wrote:

> Au dessous de la Révolution officielle et bourgeoise, il y en eut pourtant une autre, tout populaire, qui est restée dans la pénombre parce qu'elle n'a pas réussi ....[2]

The question ouvrière was an integral part of this popular revolution; the ouvrier was a key component in the "class" which attempted to carry it out. This class was an alliance of all those who could not compensate for rising costs--"les consommateurs des villes, les rentiers, les gens à revenu fixes, les artisans ..., les prolétaires ..."--to fight against economic liberalism.[3] The Girondins embodied economic liberalism, the Enragés represented the new spontaneous revolutionary force which demanded effective economic controls, and the Mountain stood between. The subsistence movement was bound to have political ramifications. It was in the political form that the social question, including the question ouvrière, attained its fullest expression for Mathiez.

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[1]"La politique sociale de Robespierre," p. 557.

[2]"Un Enragé inconnu: Taboureau de Montigny," A.h.R.f., VII (1930), 209-10.

[3]La vie chère, p. 608.

The Political Role of the Proletariat

In his review of her study of the working-class movement during the Revolution, Mathiez observed of Grace M. Jaffé:

> Il [sic] n'a pas compris que les revendications ouvrières, surtout en temps de révolution, ne pouvaient pas être exposées à part du mouvement politique qui les éclaire ....[1]

Here was Mathiez' justification of his own concern for the political aspects of Revolutionary history. Popular movements gained their significance for him by the effect they had on the actions of the leading politicians and parties of the Revolutionary period, either by putting limits to these actions, or by pushing the assemblies to more radical measures. As a result, even when he dealt with the lower classes, Mathiez never really studied history from below. His viewpoint was--figuratively and literally--from the Mountain.

This perspective had its advantages and Mathiez made some major contributions to historiography because of it. Far more than anyone else, Mathiez understood, and demonstrated to his readers, the great social pressures under which the politicians worked. Repressive laws, social legislation, and the Terror were set in the context of these social movements transcending individual will.

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[1]Review of Grace M. Jaffé, Le mouvement ouvrière, in A.h.R.f., II (1925), 79.

Mathiez could in this way show that the policies pursued by the Jacobins, and more particularly by Robespierre and Saint-Just, were not the products of abstract theory and dogma, but rather responses to economic, social, and political forces. However, the drawback of this approach was that it kept Mathiez from looking at popular social and political movements in their own right. By this failure to detach them from what he saw as the greater dramas--the clash between France and Europe, the struggle of Montagnard against Girondin--he unintentionally distorted their significance. That is why the question ouvrière appeared only occasionally in Mathiez' writing, since it hardly ever impinged directly on government policy, at least to the same extent as the subsistence crisis or the sans-culotte movement.

Mathiez made the distinction--which we have seen almost all historians make--between the function of the popular classes as support for the bourgeoisie and their activities on their own behalf.

> Sous la Constituante et la Legislative [i.e. until August 10, 1792], les sans-culottes avaient mis gratis leurs bras au service de la bourgeoisie révolutionnaire contre l'ancien régime.[1]

But, as time passed, "Ils ne veulent plus être dupes."[2]

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[1] La Revolution française, II, 208-09.

[2] Ibid., II, 209.

August 10, therefore, marked the turning point, since it was the work of the sans-culottes and led to an end to limited suffrage.

> Pour la première fois, les travailleurs, qui n'ont pas d'autre propriété que leurs bras, accédèrent au pouvoir politique.[1]

This event was the fruit of political education, which the masses had received in political organizations under the direction of a sympathetic faction of the bourgeoisie. Mathiez noted:

> Je suis très frappé ensuite qu'à cette époque la démocratie artisanale n'engage la lutte que sur le terrain politique, même quand cette lutte a pour motif des revendications sociales.[2]

The period here described was 1790 - 1792, when the sans-culottes organized themselves in clubs and popular societies and in communal and sectional assemblies to defend their interests. By the spring of 1792, they would not hesitate to take to riot as a more direct means of expression.

In his review of Jaffé's book, Mathiez commented on the "liaison étroite" between the <u>coalitions</u> for higher wages in the spring and summer of 1791 and the parallel formation of fraternal societies which grouped together

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[1]<u>La vie chère</u>, p. 77. See also, <u>La Révolution française</u>, I, 217; "La politique sociale de Robespierre," p. 560.

[2]"La Révolution française," <u>A.h.R.f.</u>, X (1933), p. 19.

disenfranchised citizens.[1] This observation can be found in his study of the Club des Cordeliers, but only as a subsidiary theme. He was more interested in the attempts to organize politically the artisans and ouvriers and to form societies in which the theory of Rousseau's social contract, as Mathiez put it, "descend des hauteurs académiques et devient ... une arme politique, une arme de classe."[2] This political education of the popular classes prepared them for the demonstration on the Champ-de-Mars (July 17, 1791) and the more successful insurrections of August 10, 1792 and June 2, 1793.

The overthrow of the monarchy on August 10 opened a new phase in revolutionary politics. No longer would the delegates of the nation go unquestioned, nor would the Parisian rioters submit to the direction of the assembly, as compared to the earlier period when they "n'avaient voulu que seconder son action" and when the repression of the Champs de Mars "avait consacré sa [the Assembly's] victoire, qui était celle de la légalité et du parlementarisme."[3] But in Mathiez' eyes, class conflict became transformed into the struggle of parties. The Mountain, under pressure from the Enragés and the popular movement,

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[1]Review of Jaffé, p. 80.

[2]Le club des Cordeliers, pp. 29-30.

[3]La Révolution française, II, 1.

came to represent in the Convention the "classes populaires" of artisans, ouvriers, consumers: those who suffered from the high cost of living, unemployment, and the "déséquilibre des salaires." The Gironde, heir to the earlier assemblies, stood for the commercial and financial bourgeoisie, who saw their property rights as paramount.[1] Again and again in his work Mathiez returned to this theme: "La rivalité de la Gironde et de la Montagne ... n'était plus, depuis le 10 août, une rivalité purement politique. La lutte des classes s'ébauchait."[2] Thus the overthrow of the Girondins (June 2, 1793), which was once again the work of the sans-culottes, toppled what was not merely a political party but "jusqu'à un certain point une classe sociale."[3]

Mathiez emphasized that the Mountain was not itself a proletarian party, but only "des amis, des alliés des prolétaires."[4] Nevertheless, the dictatorship of the revolutionary government was "une sorte d'ébauche de la future dictature du Prolétariat."[5] The proletariat about which Mathiez spoke were not a wage-earning class. Rather,

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[1] Ibid., II, 3.

[2] Ibid., II, 69.

[3] Ibid., II, 222.

[4] "La Révolution française," p. 18.

[5] Ibid., p. 15.

he meant the whole range of the lower classes, including small peasants as well as urban poor. This once again stresses the confusion in Mathiez' mind about the question ouvrière. He was making obvious references to the dictatorship of the proletariat as conceived and practiced by Lenin, but he did not mean proletariat in any Marxist sense of the term. Furthermore, he argued explicitely that Robespierre and the Mountain were far from being communist. Nevertheless, their ideas were attuned to popular needs. Their alliance with the proletariat was expressed in two social policies: the General Maximum and the laws of Ventôse.

The first achievement of popular political action was the overthrow of the monarchy, followed less than a year later by the expulsion of the Girondins from the Convention. The Convention had imposed a maximum on grain one month before taking action against the Girondins, on May 4, 1793. On September 29, 1793, due to increased popular pressure, the General Maximum was decreed to extend controls to a variety of necessities in addition to food, including soap, candles, and fuel. The Mountain had moved to the left.

> Ils restaient partisans de la liberté. Mais la situation de la République était telle que le problème économique n'était qu'un problème pol-

itique. Ils se servirent du maximum comme d'une arme pour écraser la Contre-Révolution.[1]

It was not economic conviction which caused the Jacobin shift, but rather political expediency, which dictated reconciliation with the Enragés and the popular forces they represented. The demonstration of September 4 and 5 had shown an unmistakable demand for "une politique étatique mise au service de la classe des déshérités."[2] There was a war and a levée en masse; the economic situation was chaotic. "La taxe et la réquisition ne sortirent donc pas d'idées théoretiques, mais de nécessités impérieuses."[3]

On the other hand, Mathiez saw the laws of 8 and 13 Ventôse (February 26 and March 3, 1794) as more indicative of commitment to a genuine proletarian policy. It was Mathiez who first drew critical historical attention to these laws, designed to redistribute among poor but patriotic citizens the property of suspects detained in prison or sent before the revolutionary tribunals. Earlier confiscations, like the Church properties, had been sold; these were to be distributed free. There is no doubt that Mathiez exaggerated the significance of the decrees, since

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[1]La vie chère, p. 187. See also, La Révolution française, II, 201.

[2]La vie chère, p. 338.

[3]Ibid., p. 315.

the procedure for distribution was never clearly formulated and since they were never carried out. In addition, the land was intended principally for the rural proletariat and would have done little to solve the grievances of the ouvriers or sans-culottes. But to Mathiez the decrees were "une vaste expropriation d'une classe au profit d'une autre."[1] This plan explained for Mathiez the acceleration of the Terror in the spring and summer of 1794. The Terror was not intended as a simple extermination of political enemies, but was rather

> l'instrument effroyable d'un dessein politique et social longuement médité et mûri et déjà en voie de réalisation.[2]

The Terror was "une arme économique autant qu'une arme politique."[3] Through it, the government controlled the economic life of the nation in the interests of the proletariat. Thus, when Robespierre fell from power--partly as a result of the disillusionment of the wage-earning class--a social programme aimed at solving the social questions in France, including the question ouvrière, came to an end.

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[1]"Les décrets de ventôse sur le séquestre des biens des suspects et leur application," A.h.R.f., V (1928), 193.

[2]Ibid., p. 118.

[3]"L'oeuvre sociale de la Révolution française," La grande revue, CX (November 1922 - February 1923), 216.

Mathiez made a comment on the destruction of the popular movement which is particularly interesting because it indicates an awareness on his part of the weakness inherent in the purely political approach to fundamental social problems. The popular movement, he said, collapsed after Thermidor, but:

> Il en aurait été autrement si le prolétariat de cette époque, au lieu d'emprunter à la bourgeoisie ses organisations politiques, avait réussi à se grouper dans des organisations de classe. Quand les Sans-Culottes perdirent le pouvoir politique, ils perdirent tout.[1]

What exactly did Mathiez mean by "class organizations"? The phrase is certainly not at all clear. In all likelihood, he wanted to say that the revolutionary proletariat would have been better to remain aloof from bourgeois politics, in order to maintain its independence to press for social justice for the working class. The irony of this remark is that it was Mathiez himself who was too concerned with bourgeois politics. He avoided studying popular movements in themselves and therefore failed to notice the degree to which the sans-culottes movement did manifest independence and the more limited degree to which there was a distinct but limited movement of the wage-earners.

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[1]"La Révolution française," p. 20.

CHAPTER V

GEORGES LEFEBVRE (1874 - 1959)

I: Genesis of the Historian

Georges Lefebvre, no less than Jaurès or Mathiez, had strong political and ideological convictions; but while they did not hesitate to make their beliefs explicit (and their history polemical), Lefebvre was outwardly a model of restraint and detachment.[1] It has been commented: "Mathiez a peut-être agité davantage les historiens, mais Lefebvre les a élévés."[2] Such appreciation came to Lefebvre late in life. He published his first major work at the age of fifty, in 1924, and almost until the time of his death was not as widely known as Mathiez. A list of Lefebvre's publications is short by comparison to

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[1]For biographical information, see Gordon H. McNeil, "Georges Lefebvre (1874 - 1959)," in Halperin, Essays in Modern European Historiography, pp. 160-74. An excellent and interesting character sketch is provided by Richard C. Cobb, "Georges Lefebvre," Past and Present, No. 18 (November 1960), 52-67.

[2]Henry B. Hill, quoted in Leo Gershoy, Beatrice F. Hyslop, and Robert R. Palmer, "Georges Lefebvre vu par les historiens des Etats-Unis," A.h.R.f., XXXII (1960), 106.

Mathiez';[1] but what he wrote was painstakingly researched. As a professional historian, he was by far superior to Jaurès or Mathiez, but it was probably this very professionalism which long kept him out of the public eye.

When Mathiez died in 1932, it was Lefebvre who succeeded him as president of the Société des études robespierristes and director of the Annales historiques de la Révolution française. Perhaps it is because of this that he is often referred to as a pupil of Mathiez. Lefebvre himself explicitely denied such a connection, pointing out that he and Mathiez were both the same age, and furthermore that they had met only three times, although they corresponded after 1922. He was, he added, much more the pupil of Jaurès:

> Mais c'est à Jaurès que je dois le plus. C'est son Histoire de la Révolution qui a décidé de l'orientation de mes recherches .... Je n'ai vu et entendu Jaurès que deux fois .... Mais si l'on prend souci de me chercher un maître, je n'en reconnais d'autre que lui.[2]

Indeed, Lefebvre's interest in social history predated Mathiez'. In 1914, when the latter was still concerned with political and religious history, Lefebvre published a study of the subsistence crisis in the district of

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[1]See the list of Lefebvre's principal publications in Georges Lefebvre, Etudes sur la Révolution française (Paris, 1954), pp. vii-viii.

[2]Georges Lefebvre, "Pro Domo," A.h.R.f., XIX (1947), 189.

Bergues--his first publication. Mathiez praised it as "la meilleure étude que je connaisse sur le maximum, ses causes et ses conséquences."[1] Moreover, we now know that Lefebvre had already researched and written a social study of Cherbourg during his years of teaching at a Lycée in that city, from 1899 to 1903. The manuscript remained unpublished until 1965.[2] The work may have lacked the sophistication of Lefebvre's later research, but it shows how far in advance he was of most of the historians of his day.

Lefebvre's social history reflected his interest in the non-Parisian aspects of the Revolution. His first important work, which was his major thesis for the doctorat ès lettres, studied in depth the peasantry in a single département during the Revolution.[3] His last work, unfinished and published only after his death, was an equally substantial analysis of society and economy in the Orléanais region.[4] Lefebvre also possessed an

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[1]Albert Mathiez, review of Lefebvre, Documents relatifs à l'histoire des subsistences dans le district de Bergues pendant la Révolution, in Annales révolutionnaires, VII (1914), 736.

[2]Cherbourg à la fin de l'Ancien Régime et au début de la Révolution (Caen, 1965).

[3]Les paysans du Nord pendant la Révolution française (2 vols.; Paris, 1924). This has been published in a single volume, without notes or tables (Bari, 1959).

[4]Etudes orléanaises (2 vols.; Paris, 1962 - 1963).

ability for synthesis; his general histories of the Revolution, the Directory, and the Napoleonic period testify to this. But it was in local studies that Lefebvre excelled, and it was these above all which show his skill as an historian.

Lefebvre made no secret of his Marxism, and its imprint is on everything he wrote. He believed that the economic interpretation of history applies just as much to the substructure of society and slow transformations as it does to the rapid changes, like revolutions.[1] He was increasingly sympathetic to the French Communist Party, althought he remained a member of the united socialist party which Jaurès and Guesde had founded.[2] It was his Marxism which gave him insight into the question ouvrière, as when he said, at a conference in 1946:

> Il y a contradiction entre la souveraineté du peuple et le suffrage universel d'une part, ... et l'économie capitaliste où le salarié voit son travail, son salaire, et par conséquent sa vie, aux mains de celui qui détient les moyens de production.[3]

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[1]G. Lefebvre, "Quelques réflexions su l'histoire des civilisations," A.h.R.f., XXVII (1955), 102-03.

[2]McNeil, "Georges Lefebvre," pp. 168-69.

[3]Quoted in Albert Soboul, "Georges Lefebvre, historien de la Révolution française, 1874 - 1959," A.h.R.f., XXXII (1960), 19.

"Sans érudition, point d'histoire," Lefebvre insisted.[1] To him, erudition implied familiarity with documentary material--and not just a random selection of documents, but all relevant sources. He believed that the compilation of statistics was a basic requirement of any study of social structure: "il ne suffit pas de 'décrire': il faut 'compter.'"[2] He stressed the importance of local archives and suggested that collective projects would have to be undertaken if the task were ever to be completed. Lefebvre practiced what he preached to other historians. Seventy-nine years old, he set out to investigate the communal archives of the Orléanais, travelling by bus or hitching lifts with farmers. He called this his third honeymoon.[3]

But Lefebvre did not become so involved with numbers that he forgot description. He explained his method of historical writing in these terms:

> en ce qui concerne les classes, je m'efforce de décrire leur mentalité et d'en rendre compte, non seulement par leurs intérêts, leurs traditions et leurs préjugés, mais aussi par l'état du monde et les circonstances qui, dans une certaine mesure,

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[1]G. Lefebvre, "Recherche et congrès, Revue historiques, CCVI (1951), 2.

[2]G. Lefebvre, "Un colloque pour l'étude des structures sociales," A.h.R.f., XXIX (1957), 101.

[3]Cobb, "Georges Lefebvre," p. 59.

leur permettaient de se croire, de bonne foi, dans le vrai.[1]

These, then, were the skills and concerns which Lefebvre brought to bear on the social history of the French Revolution. He was concerned almost exclusively with the peasantry. Nowhere in his work is there any lengthy discussion of the question ouvrière; the problem crops up only occasionally and briefly. But Lefebvre could not be ommitted from this study. First of all, his work is closely related to that of Jaurès and Mathiez, especially the former. Secondly, when he did discuss the ouvriers, he did so with a clarity and precision which was an advance on Jaurès and an even greater improvement over Mathiez. Thirdly, Lefebvre's work provided a stimulus to much of the modern research on the urban history of the Revolution. Richard Cobb has said that "recent work by others on the urban revolutionaries owes much to his initial encouragement . . . ."[2]

Lefebvre's books are models of how social history ought to be written. They may be far duller than the poetry of Jaurès' soaring phrases or the strident tone of Mathiez' more militant pages--but they are also more

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[1]Lefebvre, "Pro Domo," p. 190.

[2]Cobb, "Georges Lefebvre," p. 61.

solidly constructed, with carefully reasoned interpretations argued with the support of a wealth of research. Had Lefebvre written only the Paysans du Nord, he would still have to be ranked as one of the leading historians of this century. Fortunately, he wrote more than that one book, for he lived according to the modest advice which he once gave a friend:

> Faites quelque chose, fixez un but à votre vie. Ecrivez un livre. Ensuite, soufflez un peu, mais n'attendez pas trop pour en écrire un autre ....[1]

II: The Historical Work

Definition of the Proletariat

When Lefebvre, writing in his general history of the Revolution, defined the participants in the Réveillon riot as "le faubourg Saint-Antoine,"[2] he lapsed into making the kind of broad generalizations which he usually strove carefully to avoid. Mathiez used class terms with an imprecision that ranged from vagueness to inaccuracy; Jaurès had, it is true, been much more exact, but he too was not immune to committing the common error of identifying the proletariat with the sans-culotte "class." But Lefebvre had far too acute a sense of the meaning of class

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[1]René Garmy, "Georges Lefebvre et l'homme (Souvenirs)," A.h.R.f., XXXII (1960), 84.

[2]La Révolution française (4th ed.; Paris, 1957), p. 129.

ever to make such a blunder. He held as fundamental the distinction between those who owned the means of production and those who were dependent wage-earners. He did not, however, leave his analysis at that simple level, but probed to uncover the more intricate subtleties of class relationships before the modern industrial era. Lefebvre's Marxism had of course provided him with a clear-cut definition of class; yet this cannot be the sole explanation of his analytical skill. Lefebvre himself was quick to insist that he based his historical analysis of class on documentary evidence and not on ideological dogma: "Si j'ai distingué un prolétariat manuel à Orléans, c'est le fait des documents."[1]

By the term "proletariat," Lefebvre meant the wage-earner whose survival depended on the sale of his labour to an employer who owned the means of production. There were rural and urban proletarians, whom the revolutionaries referred to with the collective (and disdainful) word, the populace.[2] On the other hand, the peuple was the petty bourgeoisie of artisans and small shopkeepers who may have worked with their hands, but unlike the proletariat managed to retain their economic

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[1]Letter of April 1957, quoted in Georges Dupeux, La société française 1789 - 1960 (5th ed.; Paris, 1964) p. 89.

[2]La Révolution française, pp. 56-57, 129.

independence.[1] This distinction between populace and peuple enabled Lefebvre to deal with the sans-culotte movement more realistically than any of his predecessors, for he avoided the error of speaking of a sans-culotte class:

> Ce n'était pas un parti de classe. Artisans, marchands, paysans propriétaires, compagnons et journaliers agricole formaient avec une minorité bourgeoise ce que nous appelons aujourd'hui un front populaire ....[2]

This concept of a "popular front" (which is the only noticeable intrusion of contemporary politics into his work) was central to Lefebvre's analysis of the popular movements during the Revolution. It indicated the formation of a broad alliance which brought disparate social elements together; but it did not mask the existence of latent antagonisms within the wider social movement. Lefebvre did not fail to remark on the schism which split the sans-culottes into two bodies:

> En résumé, ces artisans et ces boutiquiers, qui vont former le gros du parti sans-culottes ..., ils entendent ... garder la distance qui les sépare de ceux qu'ils appellent leurs 'serviteurs.'[3]

Lefebvre was acutely aware of the fragile nature of the sans-culotte alliance between petty bourgeois and wage-

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[1] Ibid., p. 50.

[2] "Préface" to Markov and Soboul, Die Sansculotten von Paris, p. viii. For an additional discussion of the "front populaire" see Lefebvre's review of Daniel Guérin, La lutte de classes sous la première République, in A.h.R.f., XIX (1947), 176; La Révolution française, p. 396.

[3] Etudes orléanaises, I, 135.

earner. He approached the question ouvrière with an unambiguous concept of class and, equally important, a clear understanding of social realities during the Revolution.

The "Question Ouvrière"

The primary interest of Lefebvre was not the urban wage-earner but rather the French peasantry. As a result, he wrote no article or book in which he addressed himself specifically to the question ouvrière (indeed, he never used the phrase), nor did he centre his general histories around Paris and the Parisian crowd, as had so many historians before him. His discussions of the ouvrier are to be found couched in general terms in his broad synthetic works or in detailed terms in his analysis in depth of the Orléanais region--there is nothing in between. But this does not mean that Lefebvre's approach to the question ouvrière is not worthy of study. Even if he provided no general analysis at length, the clarity of his thinking makes the few times that he ventured to discuss the problems of the wage-earner all the more precious for their rarity. Jaurès dealt extensively with the wage-earning class, but for all his insight he was not always clear on the meaning of "proletariat"; Mathiez confused and obscured the issue by merging the wage-earners into broader social categories. In the case of Lefebvre, there are no such

problems. He was both more precise and more concise than either Jaurès or Mathiez.

The traditional argument, which went back at least as far as Michelet, held that the undeveloped state of French industry meant that there could be no large-scale working-class movement in the course of the Revolution. Lefebvre could hardly have disagreed, and he did not hesitate to write that "le prolétariat ne se trouvait pas assez concentré, assez cohérent, pour constituer un parti de classe."[1] But he drew an additional conclusion from the fact of French underdevelopment:

> La France demeurait essentiellement agricole et artisanale; les progrès du capitalisme et de la liberté économique éveillaient une vive résistance. Ce fut de grande conséquence pour la Révolution: au sein du Tiers Etat, le désaccord apparut entre la grande bourgeoisie et les classes populaires.[2]

Hostility to the penetration of capitalism into the traditional economy was the common link which united the popular front of petty bourgeoisie and wage-earners. There existed "un sens de classe" binding together these groups, which shared a common life-style of manual labour and deprivation. The compagnons and ouvriers ranged themselves behind the petty bourgeoisie who were the real driving force behind the insurrectionary movements. But

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[1] La Révolution française, p. 396.

[2] Ibid., p. 38.

they did so as associates of the artisanal class and not as members of a distinct and separate class. The interests and concerns of the petty bourgeoisie and the wage-earners were not identical. The former hated capitalism because it threatened their position as independent producers; the latter hated capitalism in the form of the accapareur, whose lust for profit raised the cost of living.[1] But Lefebvre did not jump to the conclusion that, because they had distinct interests, the compagnons possessed a class consciousness. Rather, he concluded that:

> il serait anachronique de leur attribuer cette conscience de classe; la concentration capitaliste, la rationalisation et la mécanisation de la production n'avaient pas encore provoqué, en les rassemblant dans l'usine et autour d'elle, ce rapprochement physique si favorable à l'eveil de la solidarité.[2]

Lefebvre's treatment of the question ouvrière in the Orléanais exemplifies in more concrete terms what he said in such more general statements. In fact, many of his generalizations were based on the research for the Etudes orléanaises, for although the work was not published until after his death, Lefebvre began the study before the Second World War. He found that the ouvriers in the Orléanais did not participate to any great extent

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[1]"Préface," p. ix; Quatre-Vingt-Neuf (Paris, 1939), pp. 110-11. See also, La Révolution française, p. 57.

[2]"Préface," p. ix.

in the political events of the Revolution, but that they did take part in riots touched off by rising prices and scarcity, "et c'est le point essentiel." For, although they were conscious of the divergence of interests between themselves and the master artisans, the wage-earners could not imagine a recasting of society and did not attempt to adjust social relations by collective effort. They turned to the public authorities with demands for work and a sufficient wage. Their concept of social justice limited itself to the "droit à vivre de leur travail," which meant that they demanded either higher wages or, more usually, lower bread prices.

> Telle était leur manière de poser la "question sociale." Elle était oblique et confuse, car ils n'étaient pas les seuls que touchât le problème des subsistences, mais ils n'en concevaient pas encore d'autres.[1]

Lefebvre believed that the primary social conflict at the level of the popular classes was not wage-earner against petty bourgeois but both against the forces of nascent capitalism. The sans-culotte movement opposed to the bourgeoisie a traditional morality in the form of the just price.[2] This alignment was illustrated by the hosiery trade, where artisans and compagnons on the one hand resisted the encroaching capitalism of the merchant-manufacturer on the other hand:

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[1] Etudes orléanaises, I, 226.

[2] Ibid., I, 261.

> il s'agit en tout cela de la résistance qu'oppose à ce dernier l'artisanat moribond, et non pas le prolétariat. Rien n'indique en effet que les compagnons bonnetiers aient séparé leur cause de celle des façonniers.[1]

Another factor which, Lefebvre argued, hindered the development of a distinct proletarian consciousness was a psychological one. He remarked upon the significant fact that, before the Revolution, those ouvriers who caused the most trouble for the master artisans and the authorities in Orléans were not generally permanent residents of the city but compagnons passing through on the Tour de France, a traditional journey around the country. This indicated that a considerable role in working-class agitation was played by nomadic elements who were free of the social and psychological restraints of the closed community. One of the essential characteristics of the compagnonnages was that they broke through the confines of localism and encouraged a grouping of ouvriers at the national level. Lefebvre cited a letter of April 1791, to the compagnons charpentiers of Orléans from their counterparts in Paris, urging them to organize a strike for higher wages.[2]

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[1] Ibid., I, 221.

[2] Ibid., I, 221, 224.

But such evidence was not sufficient to permit Lefebvre to conclude that the question ouvrière posed itself as a distinct problem during the Revolution. Only in the nineteenth century would this occur:

> les conquêtes du capitalisme, en concentrant les entreprises, ont multiplié et simultanément aggloméré les salariés, précisé et accentué la lutte des classes, suscité l'organisation syndicale et politique du prolétariat ....[1]

At the time of the Revolution, the proletariat continued to cling to the ideal of economic independence. The ouvriers did not want large factories, but instead hoped that the abolition of the corporations would permit them to become independent producers. It was a petty-bourgeois ideal, in contradiction with the free economy which the Revolution created and which assured the concentration of capital in fewer hands.[2]

The Wage Movement

Although both Jaurès and Mathiez had described the wage movement, neither discussed its effects on the relations between ouvrier and employer; instead, they focused on the bourgeois reaction in the form of the loi Le Chapelier. Lefebvre, in contrast, emphasized the latent antagonisms which the wage issue brought to the

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[1]"La Révolution française dans l'histoire du monde," Etudes sur la Révolution, p. 326.

[2]"Sur la pensée politique de Robespierre," Etudes sur la Révolution, p. 97; La Revolution française, p. 396.

fore within the sans-culotte group. This negative aspect of the problem, as a catalyst which accelerated the disintegration of sans-culotte unity, seemed more important to Lefebvre than its positive side, as an indication of independent consciousness on the part of the wage-earner. He tended to discount the possibility that the demand for higher wages might have developed into a significant movement.

To begin with, Lefebvre pointed out that in many cases wages were not calculated on the basis of labour time, but the workers were paid according to piece-work. In the Orléanais, this practice was true of wages in the artisanal workshops as well as in the manufactories.[1] Furthermore, the initial wage movements were not the result of a desperate social situation, but rather it was the very prosperity of the economy as a whole which encouraged the proletariat to seek an improved standard of living. The result was coalitions in Paris and agitation by the compagnonnages elsewhere in France, supported by the fraternal societies and democratic journals.[2] Because of this movement, wages kept pace with the rising prices, and even sometimes surpassed them, except during short periods of rapid inflation. The freedom of the

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[1]Etudes orléanaises, I, 213-15.

[2]La Révolution française, p. 187.

Revolution was working out in favour of the proletariat:

> c'est grace à un événement, à la Révolution qui, en libérant momantanément les classes populaires de la contrainte de l'Etat et même, en temps de gouvernement révolutionnaire, en mettant ce dernier de leur côté, leur a permis de relever leur standing.[1]

But by the spring of 1793, the situation had deteriorated and social antagonism became intense. Prices soared far beyond wages, leading the municipal government to assemble patrons and entrepreneurs to fix a relative proportion between costs and wages; in addition, the municipality negotiated a new wage scale with the large manufacturers. But the ouvriers themselves were not consulted, and were warned that the law strictly banned their meeting. The Jacobins in the municipal government were willing to seek political support from the ouvriers and to extend to them a living wage in time of crisis--but they had no intention of giving them economic or social freedom.[2] This attitude corresponded to policy on the national level, for, as Lefebvre remarked, had the Mountain been genuinely interested in the workers' movement, it would have repealed the loi Le Chapelier. Instead, it

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[1]"Le mouvement des prix et les origines de la Révolution française," Etudes sur la Révolution, p. 167.

[2]Etudes orléanaises, II, 102-04.

adopted the Maximum as an emergency measure, and gave nothing else.[1]

The Maximum should have been a boon to the wage-earner, since it raised wages by one-half and prices by only one-third. But because the Committee of Public Safety did not rigorously enforce the price controls, the ouvrier did not profit to the extent that he had hoped. The maximum on wages was the responsibility of each commune and that led to inequalities from one place to the next.[2] In Orléans, labour was relatively scarce because of the war, so that the compagnons usually did not have to strike for higher wages, although workers in the manufactories, which lacked raw materials, were not in as advantageous a position. In general, increases were conceded because of humanity or the need to retain labour. When the wage-earners found it necessary to resort to strikes, the municipal government was sometimes willing to be tolerant. Indeed, it acquitted a wage-earner of charges of violating the wage maximum, thereby implicitly recognizing that the failure of the price maximum made the wage maximum invalid as well.[3]

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[1] La Révolution française, p. 399.

[2] Ibid., pp. 394-95.

[3] Etudes orléanaises, II, 265, 341.

What were the effects of the wage maximum? Lefebvre answered that, in Orléans at least, it failed to improve the wage-earners' economic position but only consolidated gains already made in the course of the Revolution, or even diminished the increases in some cases.[1] The wage movement had attracted the hostility of the artisans as early as the spring of 1791.[2] The wage maximum could only contribute to this antagonism. The compagnonnage may have been weakened by the loi Le Chapelier (although not destroyed, as a revival under the Directory and Consulate proved), but the popular movement of 1793 - 1794 kept alive the traditional hostility between the ouvriers and their masters. Nevertheless, the conflict took a basically political form, limiting itself to demands for justice in the name of democracy:

> Aucune idée nouvelle n'a pénétré leur esprit quant à l'autonomie de l'action ouvrière et leur résistance est demeurée individuelle ou sporadique.[3]

In a short study of the miners at Littry, who, because of a surplus of manpower were in a poor bargaining position vis-à-vis their employers, Lefebvre noted that their inability to extract better wages from their

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[1] Ibid., II, 277-79.

[2] Ibid., II, 46.

[3] Ibid., II, 349.

employers turned them instinctively against the peasants to demand fixed prices.[1] Although the general situation in the course of the Revolution was not quite the same, since there was (as Lefebvre described) a wage movement, there were manifestations of the same tendency. The proletariat turned to the state for economic controls, for the General Maximum. Like Mathiez, Lefebvre saw the subsistence movement as of more immediate importance and concern to the wage-earners than their own independent agitation for higher wages.

The Subsistence Movement

In his first published book, Lefebvre studied the enforcement of the Maximum in a single district of revolutionary France. His single most important work, Les paysans du Nord, lays great stress on the effects of price controls on the French peasantry. And the second volume of his last work, Etudes orléanaises, carries the subtitle: subsistance et maximum. Clearly, the subsistence crisis and its solution, the General Maximum, were of special interest to Lefebvre from the beginning of his career to its end. He tended to limit his treatment of this problem to the rural context, but sometimes he looked at the urban environment. To Lefebvre, the question des

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[1]"Les mines de Littry (1744 - an VIII)," Etudes sur la Révolution, p. 117.

subsistences was not only the most important component in the question ouvrière, but also in many critical moments overshadowed it as the most pressing problem facing the wage-earner. Lefebvre, like Mathiez, saw the subsistence movement as a genuine social movement, even though it involved more than a single class; but unlike Mathiez, he took care to distinguish the distinct role of the wage-earner from the wider part played by the popular classes as a whole.

The great enemy of the majority of Frenchmen in 1789, Lefebvre noted, was hunger, and this was true in the city as well as in the countryside. Civic administration worried about the least increase in bread prices, which affected not only the ouvriers but also an unstable floating population of occasional labourers and unemployed.[1] Historians other than Lefebvre, including Jaurès and Mathiez, had drawn attention to the influence of unemployment and famine, potential or actual, in mobilising the masses for revolutionary action; but Lefebvre believed that they had not given this connection sufficient attention. Instead, to explain journées such as July 14, 1789, they had put forward the argument that the popular classes shared certain fundamental interests with the bourgeoisie. Lefebvre challenged this view: "Je me suis efforcé, pour

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[1]La grande peur de 1789 (Paris, 1932), p. 7.

ma part, de montrer que la faim avait joué un rôle plus important qu'ils ne le disaient ...."[1] Yet, if hunger supplied motivation to revolt, it also had the effect of limiting the aims of the movement of "la masse" to the most basic:

> Ce qui la soulevait, ce n'était pas un désir prolétarien de transformer la structure de la société, mais le besoin du pain quotidien: elle demandait du pain, ni plus, ni moins.[2]

Because the petty bourgeoisie also shared this limited objective, it was possible to form an alliance with the proletariat. For the sans-culotte movement which resulted, the Maximum to control prices held great hope. It was "une forme juridique du droit à la vie."[3] The sans-culottes looked to the Mountain for implementation of the desired policy, and it was from this quarter that the Maximum finally came. But to the Committee of Public Safety, controls were primarily a war measure, essential for the maintenance and sustenance of a large army, and did not constitute, nor were intended to constitute, a social policy.[4] This was shown by the fact that at first the Mountain imposed regulations only to assure itself of

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[1]"Le mouvement des prix," p. 166.

[2]Review of Guérin, La lutte de classes, p. 177.

[3]La Révolution française, p. 395.

[4]Ibid., pp. 331, 390-94.

sans-culotte support (May 1793) but showed little enthusiasm for the policy. Only in the autumn of 1793, when the military situation required action, did the government pass the General Maximum and enforce it with any zeal.[1] The result was a civil war between city and country, which required the use of force against the peasantry: "la riposte à la disette était la terreur."[2]

But the Maximum was not interpreted in the same way by all elements of the sans-culottes. For the petty bourgeoisie, the Maximum meant low prices for agricultural produce and controlled wages paid to their ouvriers--nothing more nor less. They appreciated the Maximum only so long as it was to their exclusive profit. They resented and resisted its application to themselves:

> Obliger les paysans à les nourrir à peu de frais, contraindre les ouvriers à la discipline, rétablir même--qui sait?--le monopole corporatif, fort bien! Mais soumettre l'artisan et le boutiquier à la taxation, les transformer en employés municipaux, non pas.[3]

Because the provincial representatives of revolutionary governmental authority were recruited for the most part from among this element of the sans-culottes--the

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[1]Etudes orléanaises, II, 413.

[2]Ibid., II, 127.

[3]Ibid., II, 413.

shopkeepers and the artisans--there was little enthusiasm for application of the full rigours of the law.[1] The merchants, manufacturers, and artisans at Orléans could therefore violate the Maximum without danger, and could make a profit at it. If the Maximum had been decreed with the proletariat in mind, it benefited them little when their masters evaded it.

> Le maximum poussait à grouper séparément et à mettre aux prises ceux qui détenaient les moyens de production et ceux qui vivaient exclusivement de leur travail.[2]

In this way, the sans-culotte movement was shattered by dissension. The "front populaire" had come together to demand implementation of the Maximum; the manner in which the law was enforced led to the movement's disintegration. Petty bourgeoisie and wage-earners had been able to agree only on common measures against the peasantry. Once the former openly violated the Maximum, by the late winter of 1793 - 1794, the latter had no choice but to do so as well. The wage-earners baulked at respecting a policy and a law which they alone were expected to obey.[3] With the reopening of the social

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[1] Ibid., II, 359; La Révolution française, p. 394.

[2] Etudes orléanaises, II, 372. See also II, 358.

[3] Ibid., II, 291. 364, 395.

schism, the common movement was lost and the way was open to the triumph of reaction.

Thus, Lefebvre, in his treatment of the question ouvrière, never lost sight of its existence beneath the apparent unity of the sans-culotte movement. His concentration on small geographical areas permitted him to analyze in depth all the important archival sources, so that he came to understand the social forces at play beneath the more striking dramas of the Revolution.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Even the earliest histories of the French Revolution distinguished between the essentially bourgeois revolution launched in 1789 and the more popular revolution which was usually dated from August 10, 1792. This was an obvious distinction to make, and historians held to it throughout the nineteenth century. Only in the present century has a more sophisticated analysis become the more common interpretation, an analysis which sees the French Revolution not merely as a series of revolutions which unfolded consecutively but as a cluster of coincidental revolutionary movements. This line of interpretation was most highly developed by Lefebvre, who described four revolutions--aristocratic, bourgeois, popular, and peasant--each undertaken by a different social class and each with its own goals and its own dynamic.[1] The same kind of analysis is implicit in the works of both Jaurès and Mathiez, although neither of them developed it to the same degree as Lefebvre.

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[1]For Lefebvre's most concise presentation of this analysis, see his Quatre-Vingt-Neuf.

Jaurès, Mathiez, and Lefebvre were all three especially concerned with the popular revolution. By dissociating it from the bourgeois revolution, even as early as the spring of 1789, they were able to deal with it in a much more fruitful way than earlier historians had dealt with it. It is true, of course, that Jaurès in many ways continued to adhere to the earlier interpretive pattern, for he continued to argue that there was a joint interest--the struggle against the ancien régime--which united bourgeoisie and peuple. Mathiez was more willing to argue that the popular elements were to some extent duped into fighting the battles of the bourgeoisie. Lefebvre completed the evolution of the interpretation when he showed that from the beginning the peasantry and the urban masses pursued their own interests as they understood them, sometimes in conjunction with the bourgeoisie and sometimes against them.

By interpreting the Revolution in this manner--by unraveling the fabric of the Revolution, so to speak--the historians made it possible to study the classe ouvrière or the proletariat in isolation from the other classes of the period, even from the other elements of the popular or inferior classes. The nineteenth-century tendency to see the Revolution in terms of "un bloc" (as Clemenceau phrased it) militated against a clear perception of the question

ouvrière within the Revolution. There were before 1900 only a few historians who bothered making the attempt to deal with the question. This was not because they were intellectually superior to other historians, but rather it had to do with political and social events extraneous to their intellectual capabilities which led them to consider the social problem. And even their historical presentations of the question ouvrière were brief and simplistic.

Jaurès, in his Histoire socialiste, made the first extensive effort to study the question ouvrière within the Revolution. He stressed that French industrial development had not yet reached the point at which there could exist a considerable industrial proletariat and he therefore denied that the question ouvrière had been posed during the Revolution to the degree it would be posed in the nineteenth century. But Jaurès did discuss independent manifestations of working-class interests, like the wage movement, as well as the role which the wage-earners played in the subsistence movement and in politics. Jaurès also drew attention to the clash of interests between petty bourgeois and wage-earner which rent the popular classes into two antagonistic bodies. This last theme, however, Jaurès never fully developed. The tendency, which he showed at times, to treat the sans-culottes as if they were homogeneously proletarian, further contributed to

the confusion and imprecision which is often to be found in his analysis of the question ouvrière.

This confusion and imprecision is even more evident in the work of Mathiez. He advanced the history of the Revolution by linking the social interpretation as expounded by Jaurès to the political interpretation which Aulard had put forward. But Mathiez failed to develop many of the ideas and insights to be found in Jaurès history. His treatment of the question ouvrière therefore shows no progress beyond that of Jaurès, and indeed often shows retrogression. A prime example of this failure is the way in which Mathiez' treatment of the question ouvrière obscures the antagonisms between petty bourgeois and wage-earner which Jaurès had already pointed out. Mathiez submerged the wage-earners in a broader "class"--the labourers, artisans, boutiquiers, and small consumers who together constituted the amalgam known as the sans-culottes. As a result, he saw little difference between the question ouvrière and the more general economic and political crisis which threatened the sans-culotte movement as a whole during the Revolution. This interpretation was the consequence of Mathiez' predominant concern for the political history of the Revolution and of his determination to prove that the Jacobins under Robespierre exercised a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The work of Georges Lefebvre, who based his historical judgments on considerable and careful research in the archives, reached a far greater degree of sophistication than the work of either Jaurès or Mathiez. Although Lefebvre at no point in his career traced out a sustained analysis of the question ouvrière, he did occasionally touch upon the subject in the course of his detailed studies of social structure. He agreed with both Jaurès and Mathiez in arguing that there was no genuine class-conscious proletariat during the Revolution and that therefore the question ouvrière was not posed seriously during the course of events. But he also drew a sharp distinction between the wage-earner and the petty bourgeois. Jaurès had indicated the existence of such a social schism, but he had not discussed its implications; Mathiez had ignored the social division. Lefebvre, however, continued beyond Jaurès' work by describing how the impact of the Maximum sharpened the social conflict within the popular classes and shattered the sans-culotte movement, which he called a "popular front." Thus, Lefebvre's work justifies historical interest in the question ouvrière during the French Revolution by showing that it was largely responsible for the collapse of the sans-culotte movement which opened the way for the triumph of reaction.

Lefebvre's work, of course, does not mark an end to historical analysis of the question ouvrière and the Revolution. Other historians have continued to look at this particular social problem, and most of them have been strongly influenced by Jaurès, Mathiez, and Lefebvre. In this connection, we can look briefly at the research of seven historians. Of these, only two are Frenchmen--an indication of the extent to which the influence of Jaurès, Mathiez, and Lefebvre has extended beyond the borders of their own country. Furthermore, only one (Richard Cobb) is not a definite Marxist, a fact which is not without obvious significance.

Daniel Guérin explicitly set out to go beyond the work of Jaurès, Mathiez, and Lefebvre, whom he criticized for being too committed to a bourgeois interpretation of the French Revolution. Guérin put forward the view that, although the Revolution was undoubtedly a bourgeois revolution, there was within it "un embryon de révolution antibourgeoise, que nous appelons révolution 'prolétarienne' ..."[1] It was this inner revolution which provided the motor of the bourgeois revolution by compelling the bourgeoisie to adopt the radical measures needed against the counter-revolutionaries. Material conditions assured

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[1]Daniel Guérin, La lutte de classes sous la Première République: bourgeois et "bras nus" (1793 - 1797) (2 vols.; Paris, 1946), I, 2.

the final victory of the bourgeoisie over the embryonic proletariat, but during the course of the struggle, the proletariat did come to some consciousness of itself.

Guérin preferred not to use the term "proletariat," which he correctly regarded as anachronistic, given the predominantly artisanal character of French industry. On the other hand, "sans-culotte" he found too all-embracing, since it includes petty bourgeoisie as well as labourers. He therefore used a term borrowed from Michelet--*bras nus*--to indicate the ordinary labourers as opposed to the petty bourgeoisie. When he used "sans-culotte" he gave it this more restricted sense.[1] Despite disclaimers that he saw a difference between the *bras nus* and the modern proletariat ("nous avons souligné ... le caractère *non prolétarien* ou *semi-prolétarien* de la classe encore en formation ...")[2] Guérin in fact continually treated the popular revolutionary movements as more distinctly working-class than they were. He saw a clear link between the *bras nus* and the industrial proletariat, as when he remarked that the modern bourgeoisie

> reconnaît avec horreur dans les sans-culottes de 1793 - les ancêtres de ses ennemis, les ouvriers révolutionnaires d'aujourd'hui ....[3]

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[1] *Ibid.*, I, 11-13.

[2] *Ibid.*, II, 395.

[3] *Ibid.*, II, 367.

Such an interpretation has earned Guérin much criticism, which has centred around the accusation that he read later developments back into the past.[1] In a revised edition of his work, Guérin reaffirmed his earlier arguments, but it is significant that he modified the title of the book by dropping the subtitle "bourgeois et 'bras nus.'"[2] This can be interpreted only as a concession to his critics.

While Soviet historians have definitely rejected Guérin's thesis, they too have tended to emphasize the historic links which they saw connecting the popular classes of the Revolution to the proletariat of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sophie A. Lotté, for example, has written of a préprolétariat: "Ce groupe social comprend des couches diverses, d'où est sorti le véritable prolétariat ...."[3] Similarly, Jacques Zacker described the "aspirations préprolétariennes" of this

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[1]See, for example, Albert Soboul, Les sans-culottes parisiens en l'an II: mouvement populaire et gouvernement révolutionnaire, 2 juin - 9 thermidor an II (Paris, 1958), pp. 9-10.

[2]Daniel Guérin, La lutte de classes sous la Première République 1793 - 1797 (New edition, revised; 2 vols.; Paris, 1968).

[3]Sophie A. Lotte, in George Rudé et al., "I sanculotti: una discussione tra storici marxisti," Critica storica, I (1962), 388.

class.[1] This social group was made up of impoverished master craftsmen and wage-earners, who would develop into a modern proletariat with the triumph of industrialization. The problem with such a theory is simply that all popular social categories of the pre-industrial period were in some sense a preproletariat, the petty bourgeoisie as much as the wage-earners. It was not a single social element that evolved into the nineteenth-century proletariat but rather the whole range of eighteenth-century popular classes.

Far more in the tradition of Jaurès, Mathiez, and Lefebvre has been the work of three historians: Richard Cobb, George Rudé, and Albert Soboul. They are frequently referred to as if they constituted a single historical school. Armando Saitta, for example, has called them "an equippe created by Lefebvre."[2] Lefebvre himself called them "the three muskateers."[3] But Cobb, Rudé, and Soboul cannot really be placed together in a single school. They do share a common interest in "history from below" and more specifically in the urban masses during the Revolution. All three have continued along the lines

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[1]Jacques Zacker, in ibid., pp. 384-87.

[2]"... una equippe creata dal Lefebvre ..."--Armando Saitta, ed., Sanculotti e contadini nella Rivoluzione francese (Bari, 1958), p. 22.

[3]I owe this bit of information to Professor Rudé.

indicated by Lefebvre. But at the same time, they are by no means in unanimous agreement on the issues; and furthermore, Lefebvre certainly had no intention of founding a school. He simply did not believe in doing that sort of thing.

Of these three historians, only Rudé has concerned himself in any detail with the question ouvrière. This was in his doctoral dissertation, where he studied the role played by the wage-earners on the revolutionary journées. Rudé concluded that the importance of the question ouvrière and the capacity of the workers for independent action ought not to be exaggerated.

> . . . the wage-earners, who formed the largest group among the Parisian sans-culottes and contributed in such a large measure to the number of insurgents and demonstrators on the great days of revolutionary activity, played no distinctive part in shaping the events reviewed in this study.[1]

Therefore, it is not at all surprising that the thesis which dealt specifically with the wage-earners was transformed before publication into a more general study of the sans-culotte movement and this group's participation in the insurrections of the journées.[2]

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[1]George Rudé, The Parisian Wage-Earning Population and the Insurrectionary Movements of 1789 - 91 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 1950), p. 276.

[2]George Rudé, The Crowd in the French Revolution (London, Oxford, New York, 1959).

Richard Cobb, in contrast to Rudé, has not concerned himself with the question ouvrière and the wage-earning class. His definitive study of the armées révolutionnaires--organized groups of sans-culottes which went out into the countryside to assure the cities of an adequate food supply--stressed the preponderance of artisans and boutiquiers in the social composition of these bands, which was no doubt responsible for their frequently manifested hostility towards striking workers.[1] Cobb's collected essays show the same concentration on the sans-culottes, especially the petty bourgeois element, to the exclusion of the wage-earner.[2]

The principal historian of the sans-culotte movement is Albert Soboul, whose massive study of the Parisian sans-culottes is the authoritative study of the topic. Soboul was a student of Lefebvre and there are many similarities between his work and that of his teacher. Like Lefebvre, Soboul treated the sans-culottes as a coalition of classes which was split by conflicting interests:

... on ne peut identifier sans-culottes et salariés,

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[1]Richard Cobb, Les armées révolutionnaires: instrument de la Terreur dans les départements, avril 1793 - floréal an II (2 vols.; Paris, 1961 - 1963), I, 69, 211-12, 221, 343.

[2]Richard Cobb, Terreur et subsistances, 1793 - 1795 (Paris, n.d.).

> bien que ceux-ci en aient constitué l'élément le plus nombreux. ... Mais à l'intérieur même de cette coalition, l'opposition s'affirmait entre ceux qui, artisans et marchands, jouissaient du profit qu'ils tiraient de la propriété privée des moyens de production, et ceux qui, compagnons et journaliers, ne disposaient que d'un salaire.[1]

Soboul found no class consciousness among the wage-earning element of the sans-culotte--they shared in the mentality of the petty bourgeoisie--but he did discern "un certain sens de classe," which meant that the wage-earners did feel themselves a distinct social group.[2] Nevertheless, he argued like Rudé, there was no widespread, independent movement on the part of the proletariat.

From the standpoint of anyone interested in the question ouvrière, there is a major criticism to be directed against these continuators of Lefebvre's work. They have focused on the sans-culottes and have looked only to a limited extent at the social antagonisms within the sans-culottes, between petty bourgeois and wage-earner. Rudé did attempt to do this, with negative results, but he concentrated on the revolutionary journées when, one might expect, the unity of the sans-culotte elements would be the firmest. What is needed is a detailed study of the question ouvrière on a day-to-day basis. The closest any historian of the Revolution has

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[1]Soboul, Les sans-culottes parisiens, p. 1029.

[2]Ibid., p. 1030. See also, p. 453.

come to this is the work of Jeffry Kaplow, who has written a study of the working class in eighteenth-century Paris which is as yet unpublished.[1] However, the articles which he has published give a preliminary outline of the approach his book will take.

Kaplow does not distinguish a proletariat, or even a specific wage-earning class, but rather directs his attention to what he calls the "labouring poor" and their "culture of poverty":

> The poor were set off from the rest of society by so many differences of clothing, diet, working and living conditions, not to mention language, that they could not fail to develop some sense of themselves as belonging to a special community, that of the bottom dogs.[2]

Because they were not class-conscious, the labouring poor could serve only as a support for the bourgeoisie, but in the course of the Revolution they were shaken out of their lethargy and stirred to pursuing a programme of their own.

However, by his emphasis on the culture of poverty, Kaplow has obscured class differences rather

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[1]Jeffry Kaplow, The Names of Kings: Parisian Laboring Poor in the Eighteenth Century (New York, 1972). This book is due for publication in July 1972, unfortunately a few months too late to be used here.

[2]Jeffry Kaplow, "The Culture of Poverty in Paris on the Eve of the Revolution," International Review of Social History, XII (1967), 289.

than illuminated them. There is, moreover, an obvious resemblance between the labouring poor and the bras nus and preproletariat. All three are attempts to group together the poorer elements of the sans-culottes, but are not restricted to the wage-earners. It is true that there was a great deal in common between the wage-earners and the other elements of the popular classes. This cannot be denied; nor can one deny that these shared interests usually predominated over latent antagonisms due to a basic conflict of interests between wage-earners and petty bourgeoisie. But when stressing the shared interests, one should not forget the antagonisms. Labour disputes were endemic throughout the eighteenth century, and even during the Revolution. Lefebvre has shown that the Maximum widened the fundamental split within the sans-culotte movement.

Yet no historian of the Revolution has set out specifically to study this conflict which presaged the clash between labour and capital in the nineteenth century. The question ouvrière was undoubtedly relatively unimportant in the eyes of the men and women of revolutionary France who were more aware of other aspects of the social conflict, like rich against poor and bourgeoisie against sans-culottes. But that does not mean that we must ignore the issue.

The lack of a detailed study of the question ouvrière during the French Revolution is a major gap in the historiography of the period. Such a study would provide the answers to numerous historical problems. We have no definitive knowledge of the pattern of wage fluctuations in the course of the Revolution nor of the wage movement--this is needed, and not only for Paris but also for France as a whole. How effective was the repression of the compagnonnages? We know that they revived under the Directory, but we do not know to what extent they survived during the Revolution. It would also be extremely interesting and enlightening to study the relations between the compagnons and their masters, and more generally between the wage-earners and the petty bourgeoisie. And how did the behaviour of the workers in the manufactories differ from that of the workers in the artisanal workshops? To some degree, historians have already tackled these problems, and have even ventured to answer them in a general way, usually for Paris and only rarely for the rest of France. But there is considerable research which remains to be done before we have even the outlines of some conclusive answers. For, although Jaurès, Mathiez, and Lefebvre carried the study of the question ouvrière a long way beyond the speculations of the nineteenth century, it has yet to be carried much beyond their own work.

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The following abbreviations have been used:

Annales - Annales: économies, sociétés, civilisations

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