

## MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS TO CORPORATIVE THEORY BEFORE 1870

CORPORATISM is a contemporary phenomenon whose living importance has affected and may continue to affect people of this country. During the last two decades it seemed for a time that the twentieth century was destined to become, as one writer observed, the "century of corporatism."<sup>1</sup> Even though several corporative regimes—the Austrian, Italian and French—have disappeared, others still remain in Spain, Portugal and Brazil. And a leading voice in the Fourth French Republic—Charles de Gaulle—has been heard recently to enunciate doctrines strikingly similar to those of the corporatist Pétain.

Certainly the problems which corporatism endeavored to solve are still with us. The United States and a large part of the world must still wrestle with booms and slumps, unemployment, social security, inferior quality of products, and means of giving representation to economic interests in the government. Above all, the struggle between labor and capital continues.

French corporatists believed they had found the panacea for these and other political, social, and economic ills. Their theoretical system differed from that of Italy or Spain largely in the greater degree of autonomy and decentralization they bestowed upon mixed employer-employee trade associations or corporations.<sup>2</sup> Within such corporations, labor and management were to work together in an atmosphere of social peace for their mutual benefit, as well as that of the nation. With a minimum of state intervention, they would regulate production

1 Mihail Manoilescu, *L'Espace économique corporatif* (1934).

2 The French word "*corporation*" cannot be identified with the same American word, which signifies a joint stock company. Rather, the English term "guild" would be a closer equivalent, while the American concept of corporation must be translated into French as "*société anonyme*."

in quantity and quality, determine wages and hours, and provide for and administer various types of social insurance and technical education. Class strife, depressions, and insecurity would be phantoms of the past. All this would be accomplished without scrapping private enterprise, without reverting to an outmoded regime of *laissez-faire*, and without succumbing to socialism or other forms of statism. The state indeed would cease to be an oppressive leviathan, for much of its action in the economic sphere would be delegated to corporations. In turn, corporations would give counsel to the state on whatever economic-social legislation was necessary, and in this way the economic interests of the nation would secure a direct or indirect voice in the government.

The characteristic of corporations which most appealed to French theorists, which was in fact their central talking point, was their alleged ability to eliminate hostility between employers and employees. This function was to stand head and shoulders above all other corporative aims. Cooperation between classes was to replace conflict between classes. Social solidarity would supplant social disharmony. Functional organizations representing industry and professions would take the place of conflicting class unions; and within each corporation, those differences which did arise between employers and employees would be settled to the benefit of the organization as a whole.

Such a type of corporatism was preached, if not practiced, by the Vichy government. It had previously found numbers of advocates among French theorists of different political affiliation during the armistice which bridged the two World Wars of the twentieth century. Yet while French corporative theory attained its greatest significance during this century, it would be incorrect to assume that it was a full-blown creation of the present. A well-defined corporative doctrine emerged during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The growth of Marxism, of strikes, and of unemployment during this period stimulated Social Catholics, sociologists, and others to draw up cor-

porative plans which influenced their twentieth-century followers.

Although the term "corporative" was not employed in France until after 1870 and there was no cohesive body of French corporative thought before that time, certain political, social, and economic ideas espoused by various theorists later found their way into corporative doctrines. Here and there corporatists were even able to claim a writer such as Buret or Keller as one of their own. Therefore an examination of the ideas of some of these early thinkers from the point of view of what corporatists later drew from them would be profitable.

### THE MEDIEVAL TRADITION

Corporatists reached back even further than the nineteenth century for some of their concepts. Although they protested that their system was a modern one suited to modern conditions, medieval thought and institutions held a powerful attraction for them. They quoted from St. Thomas Aquinas, and they supported their arguments for corporatism by referring to ancient guild practices and to the medieval notion of the limited state.

Among the theories which corporatists borrowed from St. Thomas Aquinas were his stewardship concept of property, with "the implication that its use should redound to the good of society, and that compulsion might be used where the owner failed in his duty,"<sup>3</sup> and his theory of just price based upon objective value and just wage. They believed with St. Thomas that it was wrong to take advantage of another's need to exact more than the intrinsic value of a commodity, and an even greater offence to force a man in straitened circumstances to sell at a price below the intrinsic value of the object. Purchaser and seller should reap mutual advantage from any particular transaction. The cost of production was to be considered as the

<sup>3</sup> Austin P. Evans, *The Problem of Control in Medieval Industry* reprinted from *Political Science Quarterly*, XXXVI, No. 1, December, 1921, 603-616 (New York: Academy of Political Science, 1921), p. 607.

first charge against a commodity; and its sale price was to be computed upon that basis.<sup>4</sup> According to the doctrine of just wage, the worker's compensation should be sufficient to support him and his family adequately as befitted his status.

More than any other aspect of medieval thought and life, the institution of the guild influenced French corporatism.<sup>5</sup> Membership in the guild was in practice compulsory, since the guild possessed a monopoly of the local trade in its product. Members were classified hierarchically in the categories of apprentice, journeyman, and master. Theoretically, and often in actuality, it was possible to rise from the lowest to the topmost rank, and mutual rights and duties existed between the different levels of the hierarchy.<sup>6</sup> Close union and cooperation prevailed between masters and workmen in the more democratic guilds. In such guilds, journeymen were often given a voice

<sup>4</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 608.

<sup>5</sup> The origin of medieval guilds has been the subject of a great deal of controversy. Some historians suggested that they were survivals of older institutions such as the Roman *collegia* or *scholae*, or of the monastic orders or brotherhoods. Others have maintained that each guild was a separate spontaneous creation unconnected with the past. The truth probably lies between the two theories: "There was if not a definite persistence of that which already existed, at least a survival out of the wreckage, or a development of germs, which thanks to the surrounding conditions, underwent a complete metamorphosis." Georges Renard, *Guilds in the Middle Ages* (London: U. G. Bell and Sons, 1919) translated by Dorothy Terry, introduction by G. D. H. Cole, p. 4.

Saint Omer and Valenciennes were the sites of the earliest merchant guilds in France during the eleventh century. Craft or artisanal guilds, which are more important in their influence on corporative theory, were not organized in France until the first third of the twelfth century. In 1162, and more fully in 1182, privileges were granted by the king to the butchers of Paris, and from the beginning of the thirteenth century the corporative organization was applied to the artisans as well as to the merchants of Paris. The famous Book of Trades drawn up under the authority of Etienne Boileau, Provost of Paris, presents a clear picture of the organization of the Parisian guilds. François Olivier-Martin, *L'Organisation corporative de la France d'ancien régime* (Paris: Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1938), pp. 87-92.

<sup>6</sup> Renard, *op. cit.*, p. 17, and *passim*.



with masters in the election of officials<sup>7</sup> and occasionally allowed to choose their own representatives in the guild council. Recent corporatists have imitated this system by proposing compulsory membership of both employers and employees in the same corporation, with employees sharing the control of at least a part, if not all, of corporative activity. Many also advocated a hierarchical organization similar to that of the guild.

Several of the functions of the medieval guild had their counterpart in the plans drawn up by recent corporatists. Guilds lessened competition, set prices and production quotas, regulated quality, settled conflicts among members, fixed wages and hours, and controlled funds. They guaranteed to the qualified worker "ownership of his job." This was accomplished through a guild system of social security providing aid to the sick and unemployed, pensions to aged members, and funeral expenses. Such services were financed out of a guild fund or "patrimony" raised from subscriptions, donations, and fines paid by members.<sup>8</sup> In addition to adopting many guild functions, recent corporatists annexed the terms "ownership of a job," and "patrimony."

According to medieval political philosophy, the guild, together with other associations such as the family and Church, played an important role in limiting the power of the state. They were to stand as a barrier between the individual and the state, protecting him from tyranny. Corporatists similarly thought in terms of such "intermediate" institutions as a check upon the government.

The role of the medieval guild as the representative of the trade in relations with the political state also appealed to modern corporatists. A few of these—the industrialist Mazaroz, and the sociologist Durkheim, for example—went so far as to

<sup>7</sup> Variousy entitled *jurés*, *gardes*, *prud'hommes*, *visiteurs* and *adjoints* depending upon the region and craft. Olivier-Martin, *op cit.*, pp. 141-144. On the general subject of French guilds see: Emile Coornaert, *Les Corporations en France avant 1789* (Paris: Gaillimard, 1941).

<sup>8</sup> Renard, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-45.

advocate that the corporation become the fundamental political unit. This was an extension of the medieval practice of giving guild officials an important, and often dominant, position in the municipal government.

Although corporative theorists of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries drew heavily upon the guild system of the Old Regime, they did not accept it *in toto*. The local character or provincialism of the medieval guilds was condemned by many of them. Durkheim was perhaps the most emphatic in stating that since economic operations were on a national and international scale, the corporation should function on a national basis. There was little provision for inter-professional or inter-guild relations under the old system. Modern economic conditions necessitated the adjustment of the regulations of one corporation to those of the others. A national economic council or council of corporations, and a ministry of national economy or corporations were advocated by most recent theorists to coordinate the activities of all corporations in line with national economic policy. Many corporatists also realized that guilds interfered with the introduction of inventions and new industrial techniques. The nineteenth century saw the development of huge *sociétés anonymes* (corporations in the stock company sense), and the framework of the new corporative system was perforce enlarged to allow for these. Likewise, the latter portion of the century witnessed the rise of labor unions and these class organizations came to be considered as potential constituent parts of the future corporation. Social unrest, unemployment, depression, and class conflict in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reached proportions unknown to the Old Regime, and consequently recent corporative proposals have been oriented to a large degree toward the solution of these problems.

The guilds of the Old Regime were swept away in the destruction of the remnants of feudalism that accompanied the French Revolution. Their demise was made final by the law of

March 2, 1791.<sup>9</sup> Immediately vigorous protests arose from members of various trades and professions.<sup>10</sup> Horror was expressed at the lack of regulation and dire results were prophesied from the new system of laissez-faire. Those attempts to bring order into economic life which were made during the Consulate and Empire were considered ineffectual by upholders of guild organization. True, lawyers, doctors, butchers, and bakers were again organized into guilds,<sup>11</sup> but this only whetted the appetites of the partisans of the past.<sup>12</sup> The *Con-*

<sup>9</sup> The law merely put a formal end to an institution which had long been decaying. Its immediate effect was to cause artisans and workers in certain industries to form assemblies for the purpose of extorting higher wages from employers. This in turn resulted in the Chapelier Law of June 14, 1791 which deprived artisans of the liberty of association. Etienne Martin-Saint-Léon, *Histoire des corporations de métiers* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1817), pp. 509-516.

<sup>10</sup> Typical of the petitions to the government during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods was that of three hundred wine merchants in 1806, requesting the reestablishment of the former guilds in general, and their own guild in particular. Governed by a council of six members meeting bi-weekly, the guild of wine merchants would forbid the sale of diluted wine or any substitutes, and would conduct trimonthly inspections to seek out fraudulent practices. Under this plan, four years service and a registration fee of a thousand *livres* would be required for mastership. Masters would be limited to the possession of one shop and participation in the wine business only. The report of the Parisian Chamber of Commerce written by M. Vital Roux indicted all such attempts to interfere with free competition and the proposal of the wine merchants was unsuccessful. *Ibid.*, pp. 518-520.

<sup>11</sup> Lawyers, bailiffs and notaries were organized by the laws of 27 ventose year VIII and 25 ventose year IX, the professions connected with medicine by the laws of 19 ventose and 21 germinal year XI and butchers and bakers by the decrees of 19 vendémiaire year XI and germinal years VIII and X. *Ibid.*, pp. 516-517, 520-521. P. Hubert-Valleroux, *Les Corporations d'arts et de métiers en France et à l'étranger* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1885), pp. 187-206.

<sup>12</sup> Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angély, member of the Legislative Body, in a report presented on the tenth germinal year XI made known his longing for the stability which the former guilds gave to work, and deplored the abuses brought about by unlimited trade. Decrying the unfair competition, the perversion of rules of apprenticeship, and the frauds of his day, he explained several proposed remedies such as the reestablishment of guilds and the creation of a national label of guarantee. However, all he could offer as a cure were the following proposals: creation of consultative chambers

*seils de Prud'hommes*, or industrial committees of workers and employers set up by Napoleon in 1806 to settle industrial disputes,<sup>13</sup> to dispense justice, and to aid in the administration of labor legislation were thought by guildists to be but a sop to their demands. Napoleon's scheme of 1815 for the election of twenty-three out of the six hundred and twenty-nine members of the Chamber of Deputies from among merchants, ship-owners, and manufacturers<sup>14</sup> was regarded as a travesty upon the guild idea. With the Restoration hopes ran high that the guilds would be reestablished. In spite of petitions to parliament by masons, shoemakers, builders, and others, the proponents of laissez-faire ensconced in the Paris Chamber of Com-

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of manufacture, arts and trades; repression of the crime of coalition either of employers to lower wages or of workers to bring about a cessation of work or to prevent the work of others; regulation of apprenticeship. These measures became the law of germinal, year XI.

13 These *conseils* established by the law of March 18, 1806 were a step in the direction of corporatism. With minor changes, they have existed in France to the present. For an excellent account of their foundation, composition and functions see: Chester P. Higby and Caroline B. Willis, "Industry and Labor under Napoleon," *American Historical Review*, LIII, No. 3, 465-480.

14 The plan was part of the *Acte Additionnel* to the Constitutions of the Empire written by Benjamin Constant and approved by Napoleon. For the purpose of apportioning professional representatives, France was to be divided up into thirteen *arrondissements*, each including several departments and each choosing through its electoral college from one to four deputies. These deputies were to be chosen from a list of sixty eligibles for each commercial *arrondissement*, and one hundred and twenty for the *arrondissement* of Paris. The list of eligibles was to be drawn up by the Chambers of Commerce and the Consultative Chambers of Commerce of the whole commercial *arrondissement* meeting together. This list of desirable candidates should contain the names of those merchants who were most distinguished by their probity and talents, paid the highest taxes, engaged in the widest and weightiest operations in France or foreign countries, and employed the greatest number of workers. *Acte Additionnel aux constitutions de l'empire*, April 22, 1815, in *Nouvelles* (Metz: Veuve Verronais, 1815), pp. 81-92. Duguít et Monnier, *Les Constitutions de la France depuis 1789* (Paris: Pichon, 1898), pp. lxxv, lxxxvi, 197, 204, 461. *Le Moniteur universel*, April 23, 1815, pp. 460, 461.



merce and in the legislature won the day and the guilds were not revived.<sup>15</sup>

A number of pamphleteers of the Napoleonic and Restoration periods kept alive the guild tradition. Although their efforts for the revival of guild privileges and regulation were largely in vain, their arguments were reiterated by later corporatists. Chief among these early nineteenth century writers were: Stoupe, a publisher convinced of the necessity of restoring the printing guild and of limiting the number of printers;<sup>16</sup> Deseine, author of a work on the Royal Academies and pamphlets on guilds, who adulated the guilds of the Old Regime;<sup>17</sup> Bénard, a cloth merchant, who, decrying laissez-faire, de-

15 *Le Moniteur universel*, LVII (January 17, 1818), 74.

In 1819, M. Tritt, President of the Parisian master masons demanded the restoration of the guild of masons as essential to the interest and security of the public. Likewise the master masons, stone-cutters and carpenters at Fontaine, department of Bas-Rhin, solicited a law which would reestablish their guilds. They asserted that a great number of immigrant workers, often without knowledge of the trade, took away their jobs and that the solidity and safety of dwellings depended on guild organization. During the discussion in the Chamber of Deputies on May 1, 1817 when many of these petitions were debated, the Count of Marcellus made a vigorous defense of the guild system, characterizing it as "a profoundly useful institution and conservative of societies" which "tends to the prosperity of the social order and the stability of the monarchy." *Ibid.*, LVIX (May 5, 1819), 546.

Among the most vociferous critics of the guilds and supporters of laissez-faire were M. de Chauvelin, member of the Chamber of Deputies, M. Pillet-Will, banker, and M. Claude Costaz, pamphleteer and secretary of the Society for the Encouragement of National Industry. See: Chauvelin's reply to the Count of Marcellus in the debate of May 1, 1819, *loc. cit.*; M. Pillet-Will, *Réponse au mémoire de M. Levacher-Duplessis ayant pour titre: Requête sur la nécessité de rétablir les corps de marchands et les communautés des arts et métiers* (Paris: Chez Mongie), (Pillet-Will's pamphlet is discussed in *Le Moniteur universel*, LVII [January 1, 1818], 4); Claude Anthelme Costaz, *Corps de marchands et communautés d'arts et métiers* (Paris: Imprimerie de Mme. Huzard, 1821), 23 pp.

16 Stoupe, *Mémoire sur le rétablissement de la communauté des imprimeurs de Paris* (Paris: L'Imprimerie de Stoupe, an XII), pp. 16-29.

17 Deseine, *Mémoire sur la nécessité du rétablissement des maîtrises et corporations comme moyens d'encourager l'industrie et le commerce* (Paris: Imprimerie de Fain, 1815), p. 1.

manded letters of mastership for the exercise of a particular trade or profession;<sup>18</sup> and Levacher-Duplessis, a Parisian lawyer, who petitioned the government to reestablish guilds.

Of all the petitions and proposals at this period, possibly the most detailed and the most earnest one was the *Mémoire*<sup>19</sup> drawn up by Levacher-Duplessis, signed by four Parisian merchants, and presented to the king on September 16, 1817, supposedly in the name of the merchants and artisans of Paris. Although this document was rejected,<sup>20</sup> it was of importance because it contained all the arguments for a guild system current at that time, and because its later influence was great. The Social Catholics of the eighteen-eighties were particularly indebted to it, and in 1883 their magazine, *Association catholique*, reproduced it *in extenso*.<sup>21</sup> Large sections of the writings of the Social Catholic corporatist, La Tour du Pin, and many of the speeches of Pétain also savor of this work. In particular, they repeated its condemnation of economic liberalism, its reference to tradition, and its emphasis on morality, discipline, and order.

The *Mémoire* praised guilds, deplored the economic chaos which, it alleged, resulted from their abolition, and urged their immediate resurrection. It characterized guilds as "wise in-

18 Bénard's pamphlet itself was not available but large sections of it were quoted in: *Des Maîtrises et des corporations ou réfutation du mémoire sur le rétablissement des maîtrises et des corporations* (Paris: Librairie du commerce, 1824), 47 pp.

19 *Requête au Roi et mémoire sur la nécessité de rétablir les corps de marchands et les communautés des arts et métiers présentées à sa majesté le 16 septembre 1817 par les marchands et artisans de la ville de Paris*. In 1821 Levacher-Duplessis distributed to the chambers a pamphlet reproducing his first edition and adding an appendix.

20 Both the 1817 and 1821 pamphlets were rejected by parliament and the Paris Chamber of Commerce. The latter condemned the *Mémoire* in its sessions of October 8, 1817 and March 17, 1821. See: *Le Moniteur universel* LVI (October 16, 1817), 1142 (March 24, 1821); Martin-Saint-Léon, *op. cit.*, pp. 523-524.

21 *Association catholique*, XVI (1883), 174-208. References are to this edition of the *Mémoire*.

stitutions, in the shadow of which commerce and industry . . . long flourished." Under them, the petitioners asserted, "[we] enjoyed a fixed and peaceful status in which we were able to raise our families honorably and to leave to our children after several years of work a modest fortune. . . ." <sup>22</sup> The guild system was "favorable to public morality, to decent customs, to confidence, to the sentiments of patriotism, and to the family spirit whose maintenance and conservation is so important because it is the source of the finest social virtues." <sup>23</sup> Among its other merits, it encouraged perfect workmanship and good quality, essential to the preservation of the foreign market, and it cared for the honest merchant and artisan, victim of misfortune, as well as for the orphan, the widow, the indigent, the infirm, and the old. Worthy guild members could rise to distinction, not only in the guild, but also in the community and state, and by virtue of their position in the guild, were often called to exercise municipal functions. Furthermore, guilds helped to maintain a limited monarchy. The political philosopher, Bodin, was quoted to the effect that "just and limited sovereigns are maintained by the *médiocrité* of the guilds and [other] well-regulated communities." <sup>24</sup> The tyrant tried to abolish guilds, knowing that the "union of his subjects among themselves is his ruin." <sup>25</sup>

Since the destruction of the guilds, the *Mémoire* asserted, industrial and commercial professions had been guilty of the most shameful license. Workers without sufficient skill or capital had established themselves as artisans, and the consequent fraud and bad work had lost France the Levant trade. Bankruptcies succeeded upon bankruptcies. The discipline of workshops, the domestic authority of masters were destroyed, and engagements between workers and masters were no longer re-

<sup>22</sup> *Association catholique, op. cit.*, p. 174.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204. Cited from Bodin, *De la République*, Bk. III, ch. VII.

<sup>25</sup> *Loc. cit.*

spected.<sup>26</sup> Although certain laws had tried to remedy the sorry situation, they had proved but imperfect substitutes for the old guilds.<sup>27</sup>

The *Mémoire* concluded by pleading that France restore the guilds. She should renounce systems which isolated men and hardened their hearts. Instead, she should unite those whom occupations and interests brought together and should allow them to direct and defend their common welfare. As a result "you will soon see the cold calculation of egotism replaced by sentiments of public spirit and the noble results which it alone can produce."<sup>28</sup>

The attempt of Levacher-Duplessis and his colleagues to turn back the clock to a neat bandbox medievalism was doomed to failure. Economic liberals pointed out that guilds which had flourished under an agrarian, feudalistic, localistic, self-sufficient economy would be an anachronism in an industrial, capitalist economy based upon division of labor, the factory system, and laissez-faire. Although its importance should not be underestimated, the medieval tradition was to be but one of several ingredients in corporatism and was shortly to be supplemented by others more in tune with the changing times.

#### UTOPIAN SOCIALISM

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century a group of socialists whom Marx scorned as utopian dreamers, were de-

<sup>26</sup> *Association catholique, op. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>27</sup> The laws referred to were the following: the law of August 12, 1803 on apprenticeship, trademarks and the mutual duties of employers and workers; the decree of December 1, 1803 compelling workers to possess a *livret* and to obtain permission from an employer before leaving a job; the law of March 18, 1806 creating *Conseils de Prud'hommes*. The latter institution was especially criticized because its members had jurisdiction over disputes involving many professions. A *prud'homme* who was a building contractor might be required to judge a dispute relative to silk stuffs. Under a guild system, guild officials would only judge issues concerning their particular trade. The execution of all the above laws was very lax, according to the *Mémoire*, but would be efficient if entrusted to the guilds.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.



veloping ideas which to a limited extent found their way into corporative thought. Their proposals were a response to the challenge of the economic conditions prevailing in France. During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods French foreign commerce had definitely lost ground. Although the protective system established during the Restoration perhaps brought about a favorable balance of trade with England, government tampering with statistics has led authorities such as Prof. S. Charléty to conclude that from 1814 to 1829 imports to France remained stationary and that exports actually diminished. Such a situation in foreign commerce would affect the welfare of a portion of the French working class.

The period after 1815 saw the development of the Industrial Revolution in France, although it was only after 1830 that French industry made great strides. The growth of factories in the cotton and woollen industries, the prevalence of long hours, child and woman labor, low wages and absence of strong regulation of working conditions created many problems. Depression hit France in 1826 and continued unabated until 1830. After a period of credit expansion and high prices, low prices, restricted credit and reduced business activity resulted. The suffering worker did not look with friendliness upon a government in which he saw rule of the rich predominating. It was no wonder that Utopian Socialists and Proudhon sought for remedies.

Of great significance for their effect upon corporatism were the doctrines of Saint-Simon. Like Levacher-Duplessis, he was critical of the French Revolution, regarding its character as negative and its result as anarchy. Unlike the partisans of the past, however, Saint-Simon did not wish to return to the Old Regime. Instead he welcomed with enthusiasm the industrial age which was dawning. In common with corporatists, he stressed the importance of production and producers. In his view, the new society had no room for outmoded classes such as nobles, bourgeois, or clergy. There were instead to be only

two categories—the workers and the idle, the bees and the drones; and the latter would soon disappear. Between the various categories of workers, whether banker, farmer, manufacturer, or artist, the real difference would be that resulting from different capacities.

Industrial equality consists in each drawing from society benefits exactly proportionate to his share in the state—that is, in proportion to his potential capacity and the use which he makes of the means at his disposal, including of course his capital.<sup>29</sup>

Like corporatists, therefore, Saint-Simon did not favor the abolition of private property. Like many of them, he advocated a hierarchy based upon professional capacity. His anti-democratic political outlook, and his recommendation of government by the élite were endorsed by corporatists of the Third Republic including the nationalist Georges Valois (Alfred Georges Gres-sent).

The government, Saint-Simon thought, should administer public affairs, not control men. Economics should come first. The chief function of the government should be to defend workers from the unproductive sluggard and to maintain security and freedom for the producer. Since the activity of such a government would be primarily economic, the élite composing it should for the most part consist of persons important in industry and commerce. Thus Saint-Simon enlarged upon Napoleon's plan of 1815 for professional representation. In place of the twenty-three representatives of industry and commerce in the Chamber of Deputies proposed by Napoleon, Saint-Simon envisioned a chamber entirely recruited from the domains of commerce, industry, manufacturing, and agriculture. It should be charged with the final acceptance or rejection of legislative proposals submitted to it by the other two chambers, composed

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Charles Gide and Charles Rist, *A History of Economic Doctrines from the Physiocrats to the Present Day*. Authorized translation from the second edition of 1913 by R. Richards (New York: D. C. Heath), p. 206.

exclusively of savants, artists, and engineers. This whole plan of professional representation was to be characteristic of many later corporatists. For example, the scheme of government drawn up by Mazaroz in the eighteen-seventies developed this aspect of Saint-Simon's thought.

A contemporary of Saint-Simon and fellow Utopian Socialist, Charles Fourier, left a less easily discernible impression upon corporative thought. Like Saint-Simon, he emphasized production, although he stressed the encouragement of agricultural rather than industrial production.<sup>30</sup> He commended decentralization and in this he was followed by many French corporative theorists. In the *Phalanstère*, or consumer-producer cooperative designed by Fourier, where harmony was to be the law, class conflict between capital and labor or producers and consumers would be eliminated by welding their interests together. The worker would become a capitalist through owning shares in the cooperative. Private property would not be abolished, but would be diffused by being transformed into shares of stock. This scheme for giving workers shares of stock was advocated by certain French corporatists; and the guild life developed by Léon Harmel at the Val-des-Bois spinning factories in the eighteen-seventies, although differing in organization, bore some resemblance to the harmony and communal life and spirit which the great French Utopian Socialist wished to foster.

Another Socialist of this period whose ideas penetrated the minds of corporative theorists was Louis Blanc, famous for his scheme of social workshops or cooperative producers' societies. It is not unlikely that his plan for the organization of workshops for each branch of industry had some indirect effect upon ideas for the organization of each industry into a corporation. Also the reservation of part of the profits of the social workshop for the care of the aged, sick, and infirm revealed some similarity to the corporation's social fund. In addition,

<sup>30</sup> Gide and Rist, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

Blanc's hostile attitude toward interest, which he hoped would eventually disappear<sup>31</sup> (the Saint-Simonians also denounced interest), possibly was partly responsible for the bitter opposition of certain corporatists like La Tour du Pin toward interest. But under Blanc's scheme private property, which was sacred to most corporatists, was certainly weakened. Moreover, Blanc, as a pioneer of state socialism, could not have had an appeal to most corporatists, who were anti-*étatiste*.

Blanc exerted a more direct influence upon corporatism in his role as chairman of the Luxembourg Commission of 1848. This Commission, established by the French Provisional Government on May 29, was composed of approximately an equal number of employer and employee delegates representing numerous trades. In this respect, the Commission was corporative in character. Although the life of the Commission was short, it accomplished some reforms under Blanc's direction. It arranged for the establishment of a few cooperative associations of producers; it agreed upon the abolition of *marchandage*, a form of sweated labor; and it successfully demanded that the government reduce the working day from eleven to ten hours in Paris, and from twelve to eleven hours in the provinces. Of most significance for the history of corporatism, it provided for arbitration of labor disputes, and dealt so ably with strikes that Louis Blanc remarked: "Employers come to the Luxembourg by different routes, but nearly always they leave by the same path."<sup>32</sup>

#### PROUDHON

Blanc's contemporary, Proudhon, defies classification with the Utopian Socialists, or indeed with any group of theorists. "An irritating enigma to his own generation,"<sup>33</sup> he oscillated

<sup>31</sup> Gide and Rist, *op. cit.*, pp. 259, 260.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Shepard B. Clough, *France—A History of National Economics, 1789-1939* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1939), p. 166.

<sup>33</sup> J. Salwyn Schapiro, "Pierre Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Fascism," *American Historical Review*, L, No. 4 (July 1945), 737.



between the right and the left. His conservative outlook was reflected in his devotion to the institution of the family, his championship of the middle class, and his support of inheritance of property.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, his opposition to interest, to stock exchanges, and to centralized government seem to range him against the *status quo*. In spite of, and even because of, his contradictions, Proudhon left an indelible impress upon French corporative theory. He was quoted with praise by corporatists of both right and left. Those of royalist hue, like La Tour du Pin and Maurras, and those of fascist learnings, like Pierre Lucius, hailed Proudhon. A collaborationist journal published in Paris in 1943 declared that Proudhon had found a way to resolve the economic contradictions of society.<sup>35</sup> Through his leftist inclinations, Proudhon directly inspired French anarcho-syndicalism and indirectly French corporatism. Certain syndicalists, like Georges Valois and Paul-Boncour, turned toward corporatism, bringing with them their legacy of Proudhonian principles. Since Proudhon shaped corporative thought from two opposite directions, those portions of his voluminous writings pertinent to corporatism require examination.

Proudhon seemed to gaze almost wistfully back at the guilds of the Old Regime. He claimed his opponents

did not see that before '89 the worker existed . . . in the guild as the wife, child, and domestic in the family; that then, in effect, the working class did not exist in opposition to the *entrepreneur* class . . . . But since '89 the network of guilds has been shattered without equalizing the fortunes and conditions between workers and masters, without doing or providing anything for the distribution of capital, the organization of industry, and the rights of workers. Consequently, distinction arose automatically between the class of employers, owners of the instruments of production, capitalists, and great

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 734.

<sup>35</sup> *Les Nouveaux temps* (Paris: May 2-3, 1943), cited in *ibid.*, p. 737.

proprietors, on the one hand, and that of simple wage earners on the other hand.<sup>36</sup>

Proudhon praised the workers of his day because they demanded

workers' chambers and employers' chambers complementing each other, controlling each other, and balancing each other; executive syndicates and *prud'homes*, in sum a whole reorganization of industry under the jurisdiction of all those who compose it . . . .<sup>37</sup>

and because they wished to reconstitute on new bases the natural work groups, that is to say, guilds.

Certainly Proudhon was unalterably opposed to class warfare and in favor of the middle class, sentiments entertained by many French corporatists. Proudhon's whole plan of a people's bank, issuing exchange notes based on commodities and charging no interest, was the result of his fight against "interest," "finance," "capitalism," "stock exchanges," and "Jewish bankers."<sup>38</sup> The most important corporatist thinker of the nineteenth century, René de la Tour du Pin, who wrote largely between 1870 and 1900, likewise attacked these institutions and was vehemently denunciatory of "Jewish finance." Many corporatists also agreed with Proudhon's endorsement of mutual credit and insurance societies, and other autonomous economic associations.

Of prime importance to the development of corporative thought was Proudhon's support of federalism, decentralization and a "cluster of sovereignties,"<sup>39</sup> concepts very prominent in

<sup>36</sup> Pierre Joseph Proudhon, *De la capacité politique des classes ouvrières*. Vol. IV of *Oeuvres complètes* edited by C. Bouglé and H. Moysset. This volume edited by Maxime Leroy (Introduction and notes). (Paris: Librairie des sciences politiques et sociales, Marcel Rivière, 1924), p. 224.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 123.

<sup>38</sup> Schapiro, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 725.

recent French political theory. Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries corporatists and semi-corporatists paid homage to these concepts. Guild historians like Olivier Martin, members of the Pluralist school like Léon Duguit, leaders of the *Action Française* like Charles Maurras, are a few examples of the adherents to these ideas championed by Proudhon. The preamble to the law establishing the Pétain Regime stressed the importance of intermediate sovereignties such as the guild, local government, and the family. Even French Fascists rendered lip service to such sovereignties at the same time that they called for a dictator. They were thus guilty of the same contradiction as Proudhon, who was partial to the maintenance of local liberties on the one hand and to a strong leader on the other. However, most corporatists regarded local or intermediate sovereignties as an essential restraint and check upon central authority.

#### SOCIAL REFORMERS

During the period of the July Monarchy, a group of social reformers, building upon the ideas of partisans of medieval guilds, Utopian Socialists, and Proudhon, evolved principles and projects which exerted a demonstrable influence on French corporatism. Of their number, Sismondi, Villeneuve-Bargé-mont, and La Farelle were not entirely successful in discarding the doctrines of laissez-faire, while Buchez and Buret were more prepared to shake themselves free of the prevailing theory economic liberalism. They were all concerned with the alleviation of poverty, and felt that a new guild system constructed to harmonize with nineteenth century environment would be instrumental in achieving this end.

It is easy to understand why the attention of these writers was drawn to questions of poverty and class conflict. The industrial revolution was spreading in France, after 1830 at an accelerated pace, and leaving in its wake difficult social problems. Between 1832 and 1847 the number of steam engines grew from 525 to 4,853. The production of iron ore, coal, and

cast iron likewise increased. Important mechanical advances were made in the textile industries. The number of persons living in towns of 2,000 or more population mounted from fifteen per cent in 1830 to twenty-five per cent in 1846.

French industrial workers did not profit from this growth of industrialization and urbanization. Their real wages had not materially risen since the Restoration and had declined in the cotton textile industry. According to Agricol Perdigier, the wage of the industrial worker had been actually reduced by two thirds since 1830. The working day was eleven hours in Paris and thirteen in the provinces. Infant mortality and the number of foundlings became greater.

The worker was, moreover, helpless to ameliorate his condition. In addition to the prohibition of labor unions, the *livret*, or book containing a record of the worker's activity prevented labor organization. Despite these restrictions, some *résistance* organizations and workers' political groups were founded.

The economic crises of 1837-1839, and 1846-1847 made the workers' position worse, and the latter depression contributed to the revolutionary eruption of 1848. The failure of crops in 1846, and the accompanying deflationary process led to riots in industrial centers. Grain warehouses and bake shops were robbed. There were crises in the textile and metallurgical industries. Workers were dismissed and pauperism increased. To the solution of such problems certain writers on economic and social conditions addressed themselves.

Although Sismondi was a Swiss, and wrote his chief work on economics in 1819, his thought was so closely allied to that of French social reformers of the thirties and forties that he deserves to be classed with them. One belief which they shared was that guilds had served society well in the past. They had given the worker security, enabling him to rise easily from journeyman to master, and they had attempted to check overpopulation by restricting marriage to those who were at least journeymen and twenty-five years old. Yet Sismondi did not



wish the restoration of guilds as they had existed, criticizing their organization as oppressive. Instead, he demanded guilds whose main functions would be the organization of a kind of compulsory assistance and the limiting of population. "It is evident," he wrote,

that if the crafts could be organized into guilds for the purpose of charity only, and if the heads of the trade were under obligation to furnish assistance to all the poor of their trade . . . the sufferings to which the working class is exposed, the surplus of production which today ruins commerce, and the surplus of population which reduces the poor classes to despair would [all] be promptly ended.<sup>40</sup>

Since employers alone would bear the responsibility of social assistance to workers, they would have the right to pass on marriage applications of those whom they would aid in case of need.

This could be a matter of difficulty; but the worker once adopted by his trade, once married with the approval of his guild, would have assured the existence of his family, his status would be a property, a heritage which would put him forever beyond anxiety and need . . . . Instead of the precarious condition to which he is today condemned, he would be shown as object of his desires, a period of rest and ease, which he could achieve through good conduct . . . .<sup>41</sup>

Although Sismondi did not attempt to solve the problem of guild organization (he merely remarked that legislation should vary with each district and trade), he affected corporative theory through his attack upon laissez-faire and competition, his desire for a shortening of the hours of labor, and his demand for protection for the worker in sickness, old age, and unemployment by means of modernized guilds. Both Villeneuve-Bargémont and Buret were his disciples, and both his

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in P. Hubert-Valleroux, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

<sup>41</sup> *Loc. cit.*

spirit and ideas seemed to permeate the "moral economic order" of Buchez.

Philippe Buchez considered himself a follower of Saint-Simon until about 1830, when he founded his own school. His economic and social ideas were predicated upon deep religious convictions and upon a belief in the importance of the family as the basis of society, and in the precedence of duties over rights.

In an article which appeared in his *Journal des sciences morales et politiques* on December 17, 1831, Buchez unfolded a plan of a corporative nature for large industry. He proposed the creation of syndicates, composed half of manufacturers and half of foremen. He wanted to give these syndicates power to fix minimum wages, to regulate apprenticeship and professional education, to found social aid institutions, and to conciliate disputes between employers and workers. They were also to correspond with each other, and to exchange information relating to the labor market.<sup>42</sup> For small industry, Buchez, influenced by Fourier, advocated producers' cooperatives. He advised workers in the same trade

to combine together, to throw their tools into the common lot, and to distribute among themselves the profits which had hitherto gone to the *entrepreneur*. A fifth of the annual profits should be laid aside to build up a perpetually inalienable reserve, which would thus grow regularly every year.<sup>43</sup>

This scheme for small industry Buchez translated into practice by founding a cooperative of jewellers.

Villeneuve-Bargémont, one of the precursors of Social Catholicism, served an apprenticeship in administration as prefect in 1812, as councillor of state in 1828, and as a member of the national legislature in 1830. As a legitimist, he was forced to retire to private life under the July Monarchy, but during this time he visited Lille, making a thorough study of poverty there,

<sup>42</sup> Etienne Martin-Saint-Léon, *op. cit.* (1922 edition), p. 637.

<sup>43</sup> *Loc. cit.*

and within the next few years wrote several works on the subject. He expressed great compassion for the horrible conditions of the poor, and vigorously attacked economic liberalism and state non-intervention as largely responsible for those evils. Equipped with practical experience as an administrator and observer of conditions in the France of his day, and with a knowledge of the doctrines of contemporary social reformers, Villeneuve suggested ameliorative legislation.<sup>44</sup>

Among measures for the relief of poverty, Villeneuve-Bargémont proposed in his work, *Christian Political Economy*,

the institution of guilds of workers which, without disturbing industry and having the evil consequences of the ancient guilds, would favor the spirit of association and of mutual aid, would give guarantees of instruction and of good conduct, and would replace the deplorable institution of journeymen's associations.<sup>45</sup>

The new guilds would not possess "privileges and regulations contrary to liberty and to the progress of industry. . . ." <sup>46</sup>

Villeneuve-Bargémont was very vague on the organization of these guilds. He merely stated that

the ancient guilds should be replaced by the association of all the workers of the same profession, who would be authorized to choose syndics and to deliberate in certain circumstances on their common interests.<sup>47</sup>

Regarding their functions he was more specific. One of the tasks he allotted to the guild jury was the examination of workers, free of charge, at the end of their apprenticeship. If

<sup>44</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1912), Vol. XV.

<sup>45</sup> Vicomte Albon de Villeneuve-Bargémont, *Economie chrétienne ou recherches sur la nature et les causes du pauperisme en France et en Europe et sur les moyens de le soulager et de le prévenir* (Bruxelles: Méline, Cans et Compagnie, 1837), p. 469.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 480.

satisfied with their elementary education and industrial capacity, the jury would deliver to the worker a certificate to be placed at the top of his *livret*, a booklet stating his qualifications and employment record. Without such a certificate, the worker would be unable to rise above the rank of apprentice.

Preference and a higher wage being naturally the recompense of the skilled worker, the ignorant worker would be powerfully inspired to acquire the instruction necessary to obtain a certificate from the jury.<sup>48</sup>

Workers whose moral conduct was reprehensible would be warned and advised by the guild syndics. On the other hand, the syndics would have the right to deliver to workers who changed their residence or travelled about France, certificates of good conduct, which would recommend them to the associations of other cities. In this way, "the industrious, moral, and skillful workers would be assured of finding everywhere a favorable welcome. . . ." <sup>49</sup>

Like Sismondi, Villeneuve-Bargémont was troubled by the increase in the birth-rate especially among the poorer classes, and like Sismondi, he saw the guilds as means of

obtaining from workers prudence and foresight in marriage. This great amelioration can, in our opinion, only be completely inspired by religious sentiment; but without doubt the councils of syndics would be able to prepare it with success and this would not be one of the least advantages of this institution.<sup>50</sup>

Other functions of the guild would include the formation of mutual aid and provident funds, the creation of temperance societies, and the establishment of schools and public lectures. The guild "would rapidly and without danger develop the

<sup>48</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>50</sup> *Loc. cit.*



spirit of association which it is important to create and to fortify." <sup>51</sup>

One matter in particular which was to be outside the bounds of guild jurisdiction, was consideration—even consultative—of the rate of wages. Etienne Martin-Saint-Léon, one of the leading historians of guilds and the guild idea, roundly condemned Villeneuve for depriving the guilds of their most necessary attribution, since they would be unable to arbitrate "the most serious and most frequent conflicts, those which are caused by demands for increase or refusal to accept a reduction in wages." <sup>52</sup>

Although he did not think guilds should be permitted even to discuss wages, Villeneuve did believe that "a just wage-rate should be the first condition of all industrial enterprise." <sup>53</sup> In his opinion, the wage should be adequate to provide the workman a decent existence in accordance with the requirements of his locality—that is, nourishing food, clean and durable clothes, and a ventilated dwelling affording proper protection against the rigors of the seasons. He should be able to support a family, of at least a wife and two children under fourteen years of age, and to make some provision for times of sickness and for old age.

If the wage cannot provide all these things for the workingman it is no longer in conformity with the laws not only of nature, of justice and of charity, but even of political prudence.<sup>54</sup>

In his concept of just or sufficient wage, Villeneuve-Bargémont seemed to be an intellectual descendent of St. Thomas Aquinas and a theoretical forerunner of Marshal Pétain.

As in the case of Villeneuve-Bargémont, Félix de la Farelle (1800-1871) had a political career which increased his op-

<sup>51</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>52</sup> Martin-Saint-Léon, *op. cit.* (1897 edition), p. 529.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Parker T. Moon, *The Labor Problem and the Social Catholic Movement in France* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), pp. 22-23.

<sup>54</sup> *Loc. cit.*

portunity for firsthand study of social and economic problems. A lawyer by profession, he served as magistrate until the Revolution of 1830 when, again like Villeneuve, he was obliged to resign. In 1842 he returned to public life as a member of the Chamber of Deputies for the *Arrondissement* of Alais, a post he held for six years. In 1843 he was named to the commission charged with preparing a law on the penal system, and he was an active participant in debates relating to waterways and railroads. From 1848 until his death, he lived in retirement.<sup>55</sup>

The theories of La Farelle were expressed mainly in two works. The first, entitled *Of Social Progress for the Benefit of the Non-Indigent Popular Classes*, was published in 1839 and won one of the Montyon prizes of the French Academy. The second work, *Plan for a Disciplinary Reorganization of the Industrial Classes of France*, was published in 1842,<sup>56</sup> having been awarded first prize in a contest of the Royal Society of Agriculture and Emulation of Ain. It compromised to a greater degree with economic liberalism than the earlier work. For example, the 1839 essay provided for the compulsory membership of workers in guilds,<sup>57</sup> while the 1842 work modified this to voluntary membership. This change in viewpoint may perhaps be accounted for by the terms of the 1841 contest sponsored by the Ain society, which required the answering of two questions—first: Has not the abolition of the guilds left workers without organization and would not trade associations help fill the gap by giving guarantees of better work, aid, security, and discipline?; and second: In the case of an affirmative answer, what would be the means of “achieving this goal without pre-

<sup>55</sup> Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: 1867), X, 50.

<sup>56</sup> The edition used was that of 1847 which comprised both works bound in one volume. Félix de la Farelle, *Du Progrès social au profit des classes populaires non indigents; suivi de plan d'une réorganisation disciplinaire des classes industrielles en France* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1847).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 295-343, and *passim*.

venting free competition. . . ?" <sup>58</sup> If the change in emphasis is kept in mind, the *Plan* <sup>59</sup> may be regarded as supplementing *Of Social Peace*, for it fills in the details lacking in the general statement of the earlier work.

La Farelle repeated all the old arguments against economic liberalism. He deplored unrestrained competition, the increase of fraud, the lack of quality, and the absence of provision for the future among both workers and producers. To counteract these evils of liberalism, he proposed associations or guilds composed of merchants, artisans, or industrial workers. Each trade or profession in each city or district was to have its own guild. Within the guild there would be a hierarchy of masters, journeymen, and apprentices. Admission to mastership would be open only to those who served apprenticeship and passed an examination. An apprentice could not become a master until he had reached his majority. In the interval between the end of apprenticeship and admission to mastership, the former apprentice would bear the title of worker or journeyman.

The guild was to be governed by a syndicate composed of those who had been masters for ten years and who had been elected by masters of at least five years standing. However, in the 1847 edition of the plan, La Farelle was willing to allow journeymen over twenty-one years of age to be represented in the general assembly of all the masters and in the governing syndicate. Those who had served on the syndicate would be eligible for election to the municipal council of their commune as well as to the Council of *Prud'hommes* of their district.

The guild's functions were to be many and varied, but were to exclude the setting of maximum or minimum prices of goods and labor. Apart from this restriction, they would be empowered to examine products and affix a guild label, settle disputes between members and between outsiders and members (excluding wage disputes), and deliver *livrets* to all workers,

<sup>58</sup> Félix de la Farelle, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 457-462.

whether or not they belonged to the guild. Guilds would also act as mutual assistance societies. All guild members who paid the required tax would be eligible for sickness, old age, and unemployment benefits. Employers would contribute to the fund by means of a tax proportional to the annual profits of each, or according to the number of their employees. The fund would be managed jointly by employer and employee representatives. Decisions of guilds were to be subject to appeal to the Councils of *Prud'hommes*. These councils had existed since 1806, but La Farelle proposed to integrate them into his suggested guild system. Half their members, according to La Farelle, should be elected by and from guild officials.

Crowning the whole guild structure there was to be a permanent central bureau of commerce, of manufacturers, and of arts and crafts. It was to consist of nine members chosen by the king from among the most important manufacturers and merchants of France, who would consequently enjoy the rank of councillors of state. This bureau would have frequent and regular sessions with all embassies, consulates, and commercial institutes of the civilized world. It would publish and spread commercial news among the industrial class. Most important, the central bureau would direct national production, indicating needs and designating the most advantageous types of manufacture, and pointing out areas of demand. When the bureau observed a branch of the export industry in danger, it would propose suitable counter measures to the government. Such functions, it would seem, might interfere with the free competition which the managers of the *Ain* contest so ardently wished to preserve.

Finally, La Farelle devoted a section of his *Plan* to the relations between guilds and the state. This may be summarized briefly by stating that the government was to watch guild meetings and guild activity very closely. La Farelle was particularly insistent upon the point that guilds should engage in no political activities and he provided severe penalties for so doing.



In comparison to the schemes for reform of Sismondi, Villeneuve, and La Farelle, the system of Buret was a greater break with economic liberalism and more nearly akin to the plans of corporatists after 1870. Nevertheless, he was influenced by his contemporaries, particularly Sismondi, whose disciple he avowed himself. There are traces in his writings of the ideas of Villeneuve, Saint-Simon, and Fourier, as well as evidence of his familiarity with medieval guild organization.

Buret was born in Troyes in 1811 and died at the early age of thirty-one. From 1836 on he wrote for the *Courier français* a series of articles on political economy which were noted for elegance of form as well as for content. In 1840 he participated in a competition on the question of poverty sponsored by the Academy of Moral Sciences. A fragment of his two-volume work, *On the Poverty of the Working Classes in France and in England*, won the prize. He had undermined his health by overwork, and went to Algeria to recover. There, instead of resting, he devoted himself to writing a volume dealing with the reorganization of Algeria. He died a few days after his return to France.<sup>60</sup>

Even the opponents of Buret's doctrines praised his efforts. M. A. Cochut, one of the critics of *On the Poverty of the Working Classes*, wrote in the *Revue des deux mondes* of October 1, 1842:

Let us begin by rendering homage to the talent of M. Buret and to his generous sympathies. A real compassion for the misfortunes of others inspired him to write pages of which clever writers could be proud.<sup>61</sup>

In further tribute, M. Cochut considered Buret "a steadfast mind, a warm heart whose recent loss is most regrettable."<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Larousse, *op. cit.*, II, 1421.

<sup>61</sup> *Revue des deux mondes*, XXXII (1842), 155-156.

<sup>62</sup> *Loc. cit.*

A large section of *On the Poverty of the Working Classes*<sup>63</sup> was devoted to a description of conditions of the poor in England and France based upon direct observation and research. Buret drew a vivid picture of the English workhouses, London slums, and poverty in France. For such conditions, he offered several remedies—reform of the inheritance laws, creation of a national system of credit and social insurance, and establishment of a new system of industrial organization.<sup>64</sup>

Like Fourier, Buret was interested in transforming laborers into small capitalists. He proposed to achieve this through the annexation by society of one quarter or one fifth of the lands bequeathed each year to heirs, and the sale of such land cheaply to peasants. Collateral bequests should be prohibited. Society should also take one-quarter or one-fifth of the shares of industrial stock owned by a deceased person, and should sell such shares cheaply to workers, who thus would become stockholders.

Buret's national system of credit bore some similarity to the ideas of Proudhon on the subject, but Proudhon thought in terms of a local and not a national credit association. According to Buret, a national bank of agriculture and industry should be created to make loans up to two-thirds of the value of land. Industrial credit would consist in advances made by the bank on goods in warehouses.

Buret mapped out a national system of social insurance, on the premise that it would be sounder financially on a national than on a local scale. Most French corporatists did not follow Buret in this view, commending instead a purely guild and trade basis for insurance or assistance. Buret himself wavered on this point, for elsewhere in his book, he desired the professional organization to act as a welfare and mutual aid society.

If all these remedies were tried, Buret claimed that

<sup>63</sup> Eugène Buret, *De la misère des classes laborieuses en Angleterre et en France* (Paris: Paulin, 1840).

<sup>64</sup> These remedies are discussed by Buret primarily on the following pages of his work: 361-362, 389, 390, 394-414, 441-446.

one of the most active causes of poverty, the anarchy of production and consequently the anarchy of labor would nevertheless continue to exist. Like property, like all elements of human society, labor needs to be organized.<sup>65</sup>

Under the existing system, Buret declared,

the producer is obliged to work haphazardly; he possesses no sure means of knowing the true state of the market, and that is why he so often happens to employ his capital fruitlessly, by making it produce objects for which the market is already saturated.<sup>66</sup>

For the evils of such irrational production and unlimited competition, and for the curse of strife between employers and employees, Buret prescribed an antidote in the form of professional or trade organizations which later generations would term corporative.

In addition to its other advantages, Buret stressed the point that his system would promote solidarity between employers and employees.

Instead of making their grievances heard by means of revolutions and violence, workers would have through institutions, of which the present Councils of *Prud'hommes* give an idea, the facility for exposing them legally before arbitrators accepted by the two parties, workers and masters . . . . The goal of bringing about the *rapprochement* of employers and workers once frankly posited, great efforts of intelligence would not be necessary to attain it . . . . It would suffice to will it.<sup>67</sup>

Such arguments were used over and over again by corporative theorists later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Buret elaborated his project in as much detail as La Farelle, but he drafted it along more democratic lines. He had no fear

<sup>65</sup> Buret, *op. cit.*, p. 416.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 430.

<sup>67</sup> Buret, *op. cit.*, pp. 359-360.

of allowing workers equal rights with their masters in the organization. They would both be represented in the syndical chamber or family council which was the basic council in a series ascending through cantonal councils, departmental councils, and culminating in a supreme council of national production.

At the bottom of the pyramid the family council would be endowed with a variety of functions. Chief among these was to be the fixing of wages, since Buret, unlike Villeneuve and La Farelle, had no qualms about granting his organization regulation in this respect. The council would also own a shop for common supply, and serve as a welfare and mutual benefit bureau of the profession.<sup>68</sup> On the second level, the cantonal council would arbitrate disputes between workers and masters, punish frauds, and facilitate direct buying and selling between different industries.<sup>69</sup> At the top, the supreme council would regulate the relations of national production and consumption with foreign production and consumption. Although in theory Buret advocated a low tariff, he admitted that the supreme council could levy a protective tariff if information received from the cantonal councils and other sources showed they were necessary to prevent shocks and crises in domestic production.<sup>70</sup>

Many aspects of Buret's thought were reproduced in the works of later corporatists. Certain of La Tour du Pin's ideas on the structure of corporations paralleled those of Buret. Both men were equally anxious to see workers obtain a limited financial interest in industry. The sociologist, Durkheim, shared Buret's concern over the evils of inherited wealth. Such twentieth century corporatists as Brethe de la Gressaye, Paul Chançon, and the sponsors of the Plan of July Ninth seemed to reflect much of the spirit and work of Buret. Marshal Pétain seems to have had an intellectual kinship to him.

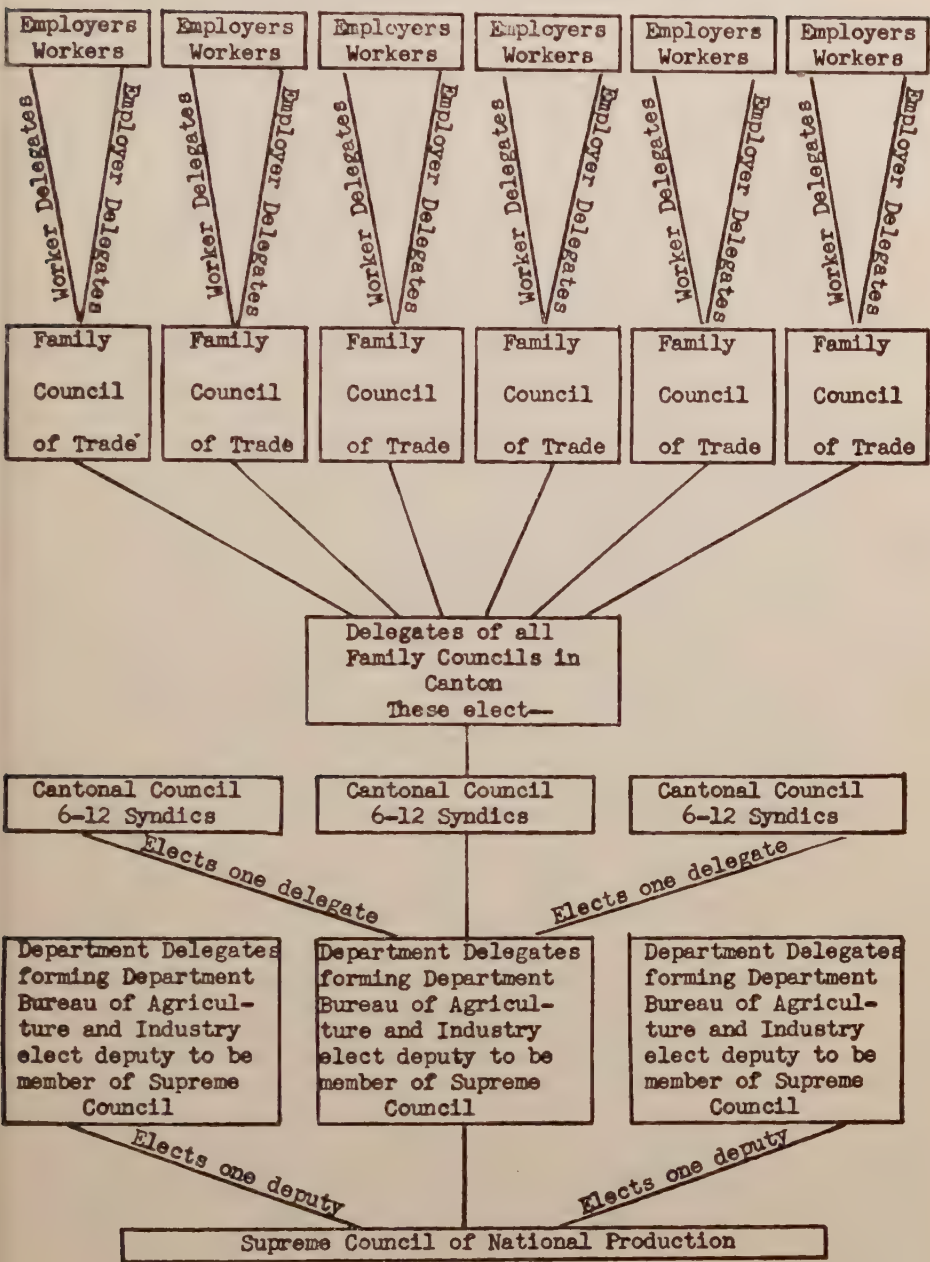
<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248, and *passim*.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249, and *passim*.

<sup>70</sup> Buret, *op. cit.*, pp. 423, 430-433.



BURET'S CORPORATIVE SCHEME, 1840



## POLITICAL THEORISTS

While Utopian Socialists and other social reformers were devising programs for the reorganization of industry and labor which affected corporative doctrine, certain schools of political thought offered theories about the nature of society and the state which in the course of time were adopted by many corporatists. Of these schools the royalist and the positivist contributed most to corporatism.

During the Restoration, two royalist noblemen, Louis Gabriel de Bonald, and Joseph de Maistre, developed anti-individualistic and anti-egalitarian doctrines based on traditional religious principles.<sup>71</sup> They regarded the family and not the individual as the real unit of society. Both considered completely artificial the conception of man as an isolated being. Both were to a degree precursors of the organic theory of the state, believing that nations are born, live, and die like men, and possess a soul and moral unity. They held that representative bodies in the state should be purely consultative and should represent not individuals but interests or classes. They also laid emphasis on agriculture, landed property, custom, nationalism, and Catholicism. Such doctrines recur as a refrain through corporative thought of the post-1870 period. Even some of the identical phraseology of these royalists appears in the works of corporatists.

The Comte de Chambord, legitimist pretender to the French throne from 1836 until his death in 1884, expressed ideas very close to corporative thought. His writings were often quoted, particularly by corporatists of royalist leanings. He insisted especially upon administrative decentralization and the erection of a new guild system. Attainment of these two objectives, he argued, would bring about the alliance of authority with order and liberty. The revival of provincial administration would

<sup>71</sup> For a brief discussion of the theories of Bonald and Maistre see: Charlotte Touzalin Muret, *French Royalist Doctrines Since the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933), pp. 10-34.

help to establish "a natural hierarchy, in conformity with the spirit of equality, that is to say of distributive justice. . . ." <sup>72</sup>

Claiming to be a friend of labor, the Count expounded his ideas on guild organization in his *Letter on Labor* (1865). The Revolution, which brought about the affirmation of occupational freedom and the abolition of liberty of association, was disastrous for labor, he contended.

The individual, being left without protection for his interests, has been made a prey to unlimited competition, against which he had no recourse other than coalitions or strikes . . . . At the same time, by the development of public prosperity there was constituted a kind of *industrial privilege* which, holding in its hands the existence of workers, was invested with a kind of domination which could become oppressive and bring, by a counter-blow, terrible crises.<sup>73</sup>

In spite of mutual aid societies, and savings and retirement funds,

protection is not yet sufficiently provided everywhere and the moral and material interests of the working classes are still suffering greatly.

As for the remedies, here are those which principles and experience appear to dictate: to individualism oppose association, to unbridled competition the counterweight of common defense, to industrial privilege the voluntary and regulated constitution of free guilds.<sup>74</sup>

As far as the specific organization of the guilds was concerned, the Comte de Chambord was vague. In addition to separate unions of employers or employees, the Count proposed "mixed commissions, syndicates of employers and of em-

<sup>72</sup> Comte de Chambord, "Lettre sur la Décentralisation" (November 14, 1862); "Lettre aux ouvriers" (April 20, 1865) in *Lettres d'Henri V depuis 1841 jusqu'à présent avec une lettre dédicatoire au Roi par Adrien Peladan* (Avignon and Nîmes: Roumanille et Imprimerie Lanfare, 1874), p. 158.

<sup>73</sup> Chambord, *op. cit.*, pp. 174-175; Moon, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>74</sup> Chambord, *op. cit.*, p. 175, Moon, *op. cit.*, pp. 73, 424.

ployees,"<sup>75</sup> which could maintain good relations and prevent or settle differences. The guild he envisioned was apparently to be a kind of outer shell embracing within itself separate unions of capital and of labor.

The state was to exercise surveillance over these organizations to prevent them from being used for purposes inimical to public order. Meetings were not to be held without preliminary notice and the state would have the right of representation at any meeting. However, the government would allow entire liberty in debate and transactions, and would intervene in labor disputes only in a friendly manner, at the request of both parties, to facilitate agreement.

Toward the conclusion of the *Letter*, the Count asked:

Who moreover does not see that the voluntary and regulated constitution of free guilds would become one of the most powerful elements of social order and harmony, and that these guilds could enter into the organization of the commune and into the bases of the electorate and of the suffrage?<sup>76</sup>

Here the Count seemed to imply a guild basis for suffrage or perhaps even a chamber representing guilds.

Many of the political and social doctrines of the Comte de Chambord and the royalist school bore a similarity to those of Auguste Comte, the founder of sociology and positivism. Like the royalists, Comte was a bitter critic of individualism and equality, and saw the family and the social group as the unit of society. He believed that individuals had no rights, but only duties, and that the living were always dominated by the dead.<sup>77</sup>

Comte attacked the economic liberalism of his day. He stressed the need for the systematization of industry, and deplored antagonism between workers and employers, farmers,

<sup>75</sup> Chambord, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

<sup>76</sup> Chambord, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>77</sup> See Muret, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-229, for a brief discussion of Comte's political ideas.



manufacturers, and bankers. He felt that the state should intervene to promote harmony in economic life. Denouncing popular sovereignty and the parliamentary system, he desired a strong state with a dictator at the helm who would choose his own successor. With Bonald and Maistre, he apparently embraced an organic concept of the state and like them, he recommended a consultative, not a sovereign assembly, representing groups, not individuals. There were to be three deputies from each department, one representing agriculture, another industry, and a third commerce. All these views of Comte permeated to a greater or less degree the thoughts of all French corporatists.

One disciple of Comte who declared his indebtedness to the founder of positivism was Charles Maurras, the chief exponent of the royalist *Action Française*, which accepted corporatism. He found solace in Comte's respect for order, in his emphasis upon duty and tradition, and in his advocacy of a strong ruler.<sup>78</sup>

#### THE SOCIAL CATHOLICS

The Social Catholics, who, after 1870, were among the leading champions of corporatism, were hesitatingly wending their way toward it during the Second Empire. In an environment where laissez-faire was so predominant, it was perhaps to be expected that they should fall at least partially under its sway. The government of Napoleon III did much to foster laissez-faire through the destruction of certain existing guilds. The first Napoleon had revived the butchers' and bakers' guilds, but Napoleon III suppressed them in 1858 and 1863 respectively.

Only a few concessions were made to workers and social reformers who demanded a modification of laissez-faire. Some needed changes were effected in the Councils of *Prud'hommes* created by Napoleon I.<sup>79</sup> Labor and trade associations, which

<sup>78</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>79</sup> Chester B. Higby and Caroline B. Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 480.

had been prohibited, were partially legalized in 1864, but they were fenced in by so many restrictions that their sphere of action was severely curtailed. They could not organize work stoppages or demand changes in the rate of wages. It was not until 1884 that labor unions were fully legalized.<sup>80</sup>

It was in such an era of economic liberalism that Frédéric le Play, eminent French engineer, economist, and sociologist, evolved his social doctrines. From the writings of Bonald and Maistre, of Comte, and of Villeneuve-Bargémont he derived his belief in the family as the keystone of society. Family manufacture and industry were prerequisites for a healthy nation. He insisted upon the inviolability of marriage, increase in the authority of the father, and restoration of freedom of bequest. The spread of organizations of mutuality to encourage thrift, and the acquisition of individual property among workers were desirable. All social reform, Le Play declared emphatically, depended upon moral reform.<sup>81</sup>

Le Play praised the guilds of the Old Regime but seemed to disapprove of their resurrection even in a modified form. They would destroy occupational liberty "which despite certain grave but remediable evils, is one of the rare features of superiority in our epoch of instability and antagonism."<sup>82</sup> He was even distrustful of labor unions.

Among the panaceas which have been lauded in our time, labor organization is one of the most overworked . . . These societies cannot afford . . . the same advantages as individualism or even capitalism, properly understood.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>80</sup> On the industrial and labor legislation of Louis Napoleon see: Etienne Martin-Saint-Léon, *op. cit.* (1922 edition), pp. 648-653; P. Hubert-Valleroux, *op. cit.*, pp. 359-373; Moon, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>81</sup> Georges Jarlot, *Le Régime corporatif et les Catholiques sociaux, histoire d'une doctrine* (Paris: Flammarion, 1938), pp. 18-21.

<sup>82</sup> Cited in Moon, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Le Play's negative view on guilds and labor unions did not, however, lessen the importance of the influence of his other ideas upon corporative thought.

Another Social Catholic writer of this period who emphasized the urgent necessity of moral reform as the basis for any social reform was Charles Périn. Although Périn was a professor at the University of Louvain in Belgium, his ideas, like those of the Swiss Sismondi, became an integral part of French intellectual development, exerting a major influence on French Social Catholic thought and hence on French corporatism.

Périn had almost as much difficulty as Le Play in parting from laissez-faire. Without destroying economic liberalism, he yet wished to eradicate the evils of extreme individualism. Therefore a degree of inconsistency characterized his writings. On the particular question of guilds, Georges Jarlot, a historian of Social Catholic corporative ideas, contended that Périn wanted brotherhoods (*confréries*) of workers and the patronage or charitable work of the employer classes.<sup>84</sup>

Périn's thought, however, was not static but changed with time. In his *Of Wealth in Christian Societies* published in 1869, he pronounced the impossibility of restoring the guilds of the Middle Ages which were suited to a time of small-scale industry and imperfect justice, and first fulfilled the good function of guaranteeing against abuses of liberty. Then the producers lent each other mutual support.<sup>85</sup> But soon guild regulations spread without intelligence and without measure and became a check to all progress. Hence their abolition was an advantage.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless in the same book, he stated that "solidarity is the natural law of human nature"<sup>87</sup> and that Christian associations of workers should fulfill a mission of fraternal assistance.

<sup>84</sup> Jarlot, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-29.

<sup>85</sup> Charles Périn, *La Richesse dans les sociétés chrétiennes* (Paris: Le-coffre, 1868), I, 306-307.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 301.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 259.

In *Christian Socialism* published in 1879, Périn contended that the medieval guild did not limit free competition enough to reduce production and that if it did so later it was unfaithful to its principle.<sup>88</sup> In *Economic Doctrine of the Last Century* published in 1880, he asserted that all the ties of labor were broken when the guilds were suppressed, that laissez-faire created the proletariat, that of all associations the guild was the most complete and most powerful, and the one which best developed and protected man's industrial activity. There was thus a need for a return to the guild formula, but, said Périn, in liberty and as Christian charity conceived it. Wages should continue to be regulated by the law of supply and demand, but a new guild system would bring this law back to procedures of peace and equity and away from existing injustice and conflict. Examples of such a new association given by Périn were the Catholic Professional Association of Printers, Booksellers and Binders in Paris, and the guild founded by Léon Harmel at Val-des-Bois.<sup>89</sup>

Périn's thought thus advanced from rejection of guilds in his writings during the Second Empire to a gradual acceptance of them as indicated in his works of the Third Republic. Perhaps his increased toleration of guilds after 1870 was due in part to contact with the corporative writings of La Tour du Pin, for these two prominent Social Catholics mutually affected each other.

Less contradictory and less impregnated with economic liberalism than the works of Le Play or Périn was the book by the Social Catholic, Emile Keller, published in 1865. This volume entitled *The Encyclical of December 8, 1864 and the Principles of 1789*,<sup>90</sup> was avidly read by La Tour du Pin and Albert

<sup>88</sup> Jarlot, *op. cit.*, p. 23, note 5.

<sup>89</sup> Charles Périn, *Les Doctrines économiques depuis un siècle* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1886), p. 234, and *passim*.

<sup>90</sup> Emile Keller, *L'Encyclique du 8 décembre 1864 et les principes de 1789, ou l'église, l'état et la liberté* (Paris: Poussielgue, 1865).



de Mun in a German prison cell during the Franco-Prussian War, and made a great impression upon these two future leaders of the Social Catholic movement in France.

Keller attacked liberalism and liberal economy. He contended that a new feudalism had replaced that of the Old Regime, namely the feudalism of financial barons. The night of August 4, 1789, had abolished political classes, but economic liberalism, by opposing capitalism to the proletariat created the class struggle. There had been a progressive concentration of financial power and a progressive proletarianization of the masses. Keller deplored the monopoly engendered by free competition and bewailed strikes and permanent class war.

In all this Keller took a much stronger attitude than either Le Play or Périn. He believed that the economic system itself should be modified and that the reform should be moral, social, and economic, not merely moral and social.

Furthermore, Keller advocated a guild system in which there would no longer be unlimited occupational freedom, and in which employers and workers would be placed in a position of collaboration and mutual support rather than of rivalry. Guilds would build up a collective and inalienable reserve to provide for the needs of their members. This conception of "guild patrimony" or fund for the aid of members of the trade has found an important place in the doctrines of most corporatists.<sup>91</sup>

#### THE EXTENT OF CORPORATIVE THOUGHT BEFORE 1870

Many of the principal elements in corporative doctrine were present prior to 1870 and became a part of the pattern of corporatist theory as it developed in the ensuing years. The concept of an organization combining employers and employees regulating each industry, trade, or profession was suggested by the guilds of the Old Regime, and their advocates in the early nineteenth century, and by social reformers like Villeneuve, La

<sup>91</sup> Keller, *op. cit.*, pp. 280-290 and *passim*.

Farelle, and Buret, and Social Catholics like Keller. Guild patrimony, ownership of a trade (*propriété du métier*), hierarchy of apprentice, journeyman, master, just price, just wage, and maintenance of quality production were further notions traceable to the same origins and adopted by corporative theorists of the period after 1870. A belief in economic and political decentralization, professional representation in the government, and encouragement of family life and morality was drawn not only from these sources but also from the writings of Utopian Socialists and Proudhon. The organic concept of the state was derived from medieval theory, Bonald, Maistre, Comte, and others.

There was thus no coherent, unified body of corporative doctrine preached by a school of corporatists before 1870. Of all the theorists before this date, Buret most closely approximated corporatism of the post-1870 era. The Social Catholics had not yet adopted it. Nevertheless, an evolution, a progression toward corporative doctrine may be discerned in the writings of the succession of theorists with corporative tendencies from 1800 to 1870. During the Napoleonic and Restoration periods the chief interest of Stoupe, Levacher-Duplessis, and others lay in restoring the guilds of the Old Regime with most of their privileges and monopolies. That they made no headway against the tidal wave of economic liberalism is understandable. The trend was away from a circumscribed medievalism and in the direction of serious study of contemporary problems. The lure of the Old Regime was not obliterated—it never really disappeared—but merely slipped into the background while new elements appeared in the foreground. The social consequences of laissez-faire industrialism, and the protests of Utopian Socialists and Proudhon led certain reformers of the July Monarchy like La Farelle, to elaborate guild schemes more adapted to their own generation than the medieval system. For the most part these theorists, like their Social Catholic successors in the Third Empire, could not tear themselves completely away from economic liberalism.