



BLANQUI, LOUIS AUGUSTE (1805-1881)

French publicist, and early communist revolutionary was born on the 8th of February 1805 at Puget-Théniers, where his father, Jean Dominique Blanqui, was at that time subprefect. He studied both law and medicine, but found his real vocation in politics, and at once constituted himself a champion of the most advanced opinions. He took an active part in the revolution of July 1830, and continuing to maintain the doctrine of republicanism during

the reign of Louis Philippe, was condemned to repeated terms of imprisonment.

In 1834, with Armand Barbès and Martin Bernard, he organized the secret society *Société des Familles*, and after its discovery, the *Société des Saisons*. The name reflects the structure: the Society of the Seasons was constructed of units of seven people, who formed a Week, four Weeks formed a Month, and so on.

On May 12, 1839, this organization attempted an insurrection in Paris. It was unsuccessful, and in the course of the following months all of the most important participants were arrested and brought before the courts in two groups.

Implicated in the armed outbreak of the *Société des Saisons*, of which he was a leading spirit, he was in the following year, 1840, condemned to death, a sentence that was afterwards

commuted to imprisonment for life. He was released by the revolution of 1848, only to resume his attacks on existing institutions.

The revolution, he declared, was a mere change of name. The violence of the *Société Républicaine Centrale*, which was founded by Blanqui to demand a modification of the government, brought him into conflict with the more moderate Republicans, and in 1849 he was condemned to ten years' imprisonment.

In 1865, while serving a further term of imprisonment under the French Empire, he contrived to escape, and henceforth continued his propaganda against the government from abroad, until the general amnesty of 1869 enabled him to return to France.

Blanqui's leaning towards violent measures was illustrated in

1870 by two unsuccessful armed demonstrations: one on the 12th of January at the funeral of Victor Noir, the journalist shot by Pierre Bonaparte; the other on the 14th of August, when he led an attempt to seize some guns at a barrack. Upon the fall of the Empire, through the revolution of the 4th of September, Blanqui established the club and journal *La Patrie En Danger*. He was one of a band that, for a moment, seized the reins of power on the 31st of October, and for his share in that outbreak he was again condemned to death on the 17th of March of the following year.

In 1872 condemned along with the other members of the Commune to Transportation; on account of his broken health this sentence was commuted to one of imprisonment. In 1879 he was elected a deputy for Bordeaux; although the election was pronounced invalid, Blanqui was freed, and immediately

resumed his work of agitation.

A few days afterwards the insurrection which established the Commune broke out, Blanqui was elected a member of the insurgent government, but his detention in prison prevented him from taking an active part.

The July Revolution of 1830 brought an end to the French Restoration, but not to the monarchy - nor, consequently, to the republican secret societies, some of whose programs began to include social-revolutionary elements. Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) perhaps contributed more than anyone to the amalgamation of the two traditions, putting the radical-liberal tactics of a semi-military *coup d'état* at the service of his communist ideas. For him, secret societies were an almost natural way of association, and he even tried to lead them from the dozens of prisons where he spent more than half of his adult life.

After a speech at a revolutionary meeting in Paris, he was struck down by apoplexy. He died on January 1, 1881 and was interred in the Père Lachaise Cemetery.

His uncompromising communism, and his determination to enforce it by violence, had brought him into conflict with every French government, and half his life had been spent in prison. Besides his innumerable contributions to journalism, he published an astronomical work entitled *L'Eternité par les astres* (1872), and after his death his writings on economic and social questions were collected under the title of *Critique sociale* (1885).

