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Contents

among peoples, and the rights of our common Humanity vindicated'.[157] Those who refused to support the campaign were guilty of terrible self-indulgence, giving into bourgeois sentimentality and allowing their 'anti-patriotic bias to run so wild as to kick over all the bounds of ethico-political logic'.[158] Bax compared the war to the European campaign against Napoleon. That campaign, he argued, had 'undoubtedly' been waged 'in the interests of the peaceful development of Europe'.[159] Victory against Germany would secure a similar result, bringing about the 'changes economical, political, and moral'[160] that would mark the beginning of the end of 'the idea of national *independence*' and pave the way for the principle 'of national *interdependence*'.[161] In other words, the defeat of Germany would bring to an end the struggle that had been initiated in the French Revolution.

Conclusion

The starting point for this article was the claim that Bax's philosophy inhibited his practical socialism. I have argued that Bax's theory of history profoundly affected his understanding of the French Revolution and its significance. Read through his revolutionary history, his philosophy helped to shape his theory of government and his critique of patriotism. The practical policies that flowed from it were clear: the workers were to be led to socialism by the actions of a compassionate and enlightened elite and they were to sacrifice themselves, largely in ignorance of their cause, for a humanitarian ideal defined in terms of compassion.

[157] *Ibid.*, p. 264.
[158] *Ibid.*, p. 258.
[159] *Ibid.*, p. 255.
[160] Bax, *German Culture*, p. 280.
[161] Bax, *Reminiscences*, p. 276.

Abstract

This article examines Ernest Belfort Bax's interpretation of the French Revolution and traces the impact that his idea of the Revolution had on his philosophy and his political thought. The first section considers Bax's understanding of the Revolution in the context of his theory of history and analyses his conception of the Revolution's legacy, drawing particularly on his portraits of Robespierre, Marat and Babeuf. The second section shows how the lessons Bax drew from this history shaped his socialist republicanism and discusses his support for Jacobin methods of revolutionary change. The third section of the article looks at the ways in which Bax's reading of revolutionary history affected his internationalism and shows how his 'anti-patriotism' led him to support the Anglo-French campaign in 1914. I argue that the Bax's understanding of the French Revolution gave body to his philosophy and greatly influenced his understanding of the socialist struggle. Bax believed that socialists had history on their side, but was so emboldened by the idea of the Revolution that he was led to advance a view of socialist change that undermined the historic values that socialism was supposed to enshrine.[1]

Introduction

Ernest Belfort Bax is often regarded as the flawed genius of Victorian socialism. His biographer John Cowley suggests that he lacked the political flair of friends like William Morris and nourished an unhealthy bourgeois 'enthusiasm for philosophy'. Bax was apparently strong on 'moral imperatives' but weak on practical guidance and he wrongly raised 'theory above the real

[1] I would like to thank Colin Tyler for comments on an earlier draft of this article.

needs and immediate struggles of the masses'.[2] Bax provided plenty of ammunition for such criticism. He happily drew socialists into complex theoretical issues, most famously engaging Eleanor Marx-Aveling and other feminists in an aggressive and often abstract debate on the 'woman question'. Yet, as Mark Bevir argues, Bax's ideas cannot simply be brushed aside as a sign of his inability to grasp political reality.[3] For Bax believed that philosophy provided a guide to action and however mistaken or awkward his political prescriptions appeared to be, they flowed from this assumption.

Bax's writings on the French Revolution provide a particularly good illustration of the close relationship between his philosophy and his politics. Bax understood the Revolution as a profound marker in the evolution of world history and as a turning-point for development of socialism. He was especially impressed by Jean-Paul Marat and François-Noél 'Gracchus' Babeuf, whom he painted as the bearers of progressive, evolutionary ideals. The philosophical insights he gleaned from the lives of these two great revolutionaries helped Bax to formulate his views on socialist government and on internationalism. In particular, their example encouraged him to a support a model of republican government that has sometimes been characterised as left-totalitarianism, and, on the outbreak of the First World War, to make common cause with the Anglo-French Entente.

The first section of this article considers Bax's understanding of the Revolution in the context of his theory of history and analyses his conception of the Revolution's social, political and ideological forces by way of his assessment of Robespierre, Marat and Babeuf. The second section discusses the influence of his analysis of the Revolution on his understanding

[2] J. Cowley. *The Victorian Encounter With Marx.* (London and New York: British Academic Press, 1992), p. 135.

[3] M. Bevir. ''Ernest Belfort Bax: Marxist, Idealist, and Positivist.'' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54 (1993): 119–121.

states the bearers of an ideological struggle between patriotism and internationalism. Though Bax voiced his suspicions about patriotism in the SPD as early as 1888, at this time still argued that France had 'fallen back from her position of leader in the revolutionary movement' and that Germany boasted the most 'intellectually advanced' workers.[151] By the time of war, he suggested that that 'the revolutionary tradition is, and has been since the Great Revolution, strongest in France'.[152]

Bax only became committed to the struggle against patriotism, as he saw it, when the SPD in the Reichstag voted for war credits for the Government. The day before this decision (Sunday 2 August 1914), he attended a stop-the-war rally in London.[153] After the vote had been taken, he accused the SPD of betraying 'the principles of SocialismyandyHumanity'.[154] From his point of view, the war was in a sense a revolutionary war, to be supported because it would secure the future development of socialism. Bax admitted that the Entente could hardly be regarded as a humanising force. On the contrary, he admitted that Britain and France possessed 'all the evil qualities in their governmental institutions, as in the economic system common to all existing States, that Socialist criticism ascribes to them'.[155] He also acknowledged that the allied campaign was driven by patriotism. For 'thousands of those who have volunteered for the front', he argued, 'the ideal object for which they are prepared to sacrifice themselvesy[is] England or the British Empire'.[156] Nevertheless, in resisting Germany the Entente was acting as a 'political-international police force to punish crime and aggression'; and whilst it was being fought by the 'servile' and 'stupid' it was still a struggle 'to see justice

[151] Bax and Morris, *Socialism From the Root Up*, p. 607.

[152] Bax, *Reminiscences*, p. 127.

[153] Cowley, *Victorian Encounter*, p. 111.

[154] Bax, *Reminiscences*, p. 251.

[155] *Ibid.*, p. 254.

[156] *Ibid.*, p. 195.

The dispute with Bernstein was bad-tempered: Bax dubbed Bernstein a 'bourgeois philistine',[145] no more a Social Democrat than Count von Bulow, the German Chancellor.[146] Yet for Bax the gravity of the dispute lay in the SPD's reaction to Bernstein's revisionism. Bax could not at first believe that Bernstein's views chimed in with 'the majority even of the leaders of the German party, let alone the rank and file'.[147] However, Bernstein's continued presence in the party, against Bax's calls for his expulsion, led him to believe that the leadership prioritised 'formal unity' over socialist principle and that it had become hopelessly corrupt. It too, had been affected by the Bismarckian system. Indeed, Bax argued that it had begun to deteriorate almost as soon as it was founded, its ideals suffocated by the Imperial state. His argument bore some similarity to Robert Michels' well-known critique.[148] Like Michels (whom Bax regarded as a man of 'acute and powerful intellect')[149] Bax suggested that party policy was devised by officers motivated only by personal ambition and shot though with a 'sordid practialism' (another term for opportunism). Genuine socialists were still attracted into the party's ranks but were always frustrated by the 'mechanical working of the party system' and powerless to initiate change.[150]

The repercussions of Bax's re-assessment were enormous: as his trust in the revolutionary potential of Germany diminished, France once again appeared to be European socialism's natural home. Indeed, at the very moment when the threat of war began to grow, he identified Europe's two most bitterly divided

[145] *Ibid*., p. 140.

[146] Bax, *Essays*, p. 104.

[147] E.B. Bax. ''Our German Fabian Convert.'' in Tudor and Tudor, *Marxism & Social Democracy*, p. 61.

[148] Robert Michels. *Political Parties: A sociological study of the oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy.* Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul. (London: Jarrold & Sons, 1915).

[149] Bax, *Reminiscences*, p. 145.

[150] Bax, *German Culture*, p. 272.

of the state, socialist government and revolutionary action. In third section I discuss how Bax's reading of the Revolution influenced his internationalism and led to his adoption of a war policy in 1914. It will become clear that Bax's philosophical bent did not inhibit him from making practical proposals, but that the policies he recommended were deeply flawed.

Philosophy and the French Revolution

Bax suggested that the French Revolution had a dual character, at once bourgeois and proletarian. The third estate was the Revolution's driving force and the 'final realisation of Bourgeoisdom' was its 'central idea and purpose'.[4] However, as the Revolution progressed, it unleashed a new set of demands and these had a distinctly proletarian character:

> on the outbreak of the great French Revolution all jealousy between monarchy and aristocracy was banished throughout Europe in the face of the threatening danger from the third estate; but … *bourgeois* and <em<grand seigneur—in their struggles for supremacy were oblivious of the rise above the social horizon of ''a cloud no bigger than a man's hand,'' in the shape of a new political factor—a fourth estate—destined to prove a menace alike to both their interests. This fourth estateywas none other than the modern Proletariat or working-class.[5]

Bax's designation of the Revolution as bourgeois was strongly influenced by his understanding of Marx, but it was a critical understanding, particularly in respect of the materialist

[4] E.B. Bax. *The Religion of Socialism.* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., n.d.), p. 132.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 73.

theory of history. Bax admitted that this doctrine offered a more persuasive account of historical development than the idealism that Marx had attacked, but he also considered it narrow and one-sided. To broaden it, he returned to the left-Hegelian roots of Marx's thought.

Following Hegel, Bax argued that philosophy contained the key to practical life and that the most advanced mode of philosophical reflection was based on the analysis of consciousness or experience.[6] Yet modifying Hegel and, more particularly challenging the work of British idealists like T.H. Green, R.B. Haldane and F.H. Bradley (whom he regarded as 'orthodox' Hegelians) Bax rejected the idea that experience was rooted in thought or reason and the associated idea, which he also attributed to them, that reality was a 'thought-process': an 'eternally evolving system of logic or synthesis of thought-relations'.[7] Instead, drawing on Schopenhauer, he identified the roots of experience in the alogical—in life, will, instinct and feeling. In doing so, Bax did not deny that consciousness had a logical aspect or that logic occupied an independent realm. Rather, he argued that conscious experience was based on an antithesis between its alogical and logical elements.[8] On this account, logic was the means by which philosophers described reality or experience, but it was only a tool, and it could never 'finally comprehend or explain' either.[9] Bax drew two principal conclusions from his analysis. First, because the 'driving force of all process in reality resides in the alogical—in sensation, in feeling, in will', he argued that evolution described a movement that was based on 'the spontaneity of the particular', open both to chance and to the action of the 'freak–individual'.[10] Second, whilst evolution progressed

[6] E.B. Bax. *Essays in Socialism New and Old.* (London, 1907), p. 19.
[7] E.B. Bax. *The Roots of Reality.* (New York, 1908), pp. 25, 44.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 97–98.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 98.
[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 314–315.

the state and by Bismarck's aggressive patriotism. Bismarck's ''unity'' of ''blood and iron'' had struck a cord with the people. Having 'willingly consented' to the establishment of the Empire, they continued to support it, enthused by its military success.[141] They had all become chauvinists, eagerly consuming the works of writers like Treitschke to feed their nationalist prejudices.[142]

The shift in Bax's thinking was intimately linked to his reassessment of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). This, in turn, was prompted by his dispute with Eduard Bernstein. The dispute centred on the issue of colonialism. Bax attacked Bernstein because Bernstein suggested that colonisation was a civilising force and something that socialists ought to support. Bernstein found nothing admirable in 'primitive' culture and, although he regretted the violence which accompanied capitalist expansion, he insisted that socialists had a passive duty to minimise this brutality, but not to assist in native resistance.[143] Bax, of course, disagreed and returned to his theory of history to support his view. Socialism, he argued, was a 'necessary consequence of capitalism', but history did not suggest that capitalism was always a necessary stage for socialism's realisation. It was perfectly possible that the 'standard-bearers of progress' would inaugurate the transition to socialism and that other 'less progressive' peoples would arrive at the same position without passing through 'anything which might properly be called a course of development'.[144] Underdevelopment, moreover, was not an indication of a 'lower' level of civilisation: backward nations could preserve their culture and traditions and still arrive at socialism.

[141] *Ibid.*, p. 258.
[142] *Ibid.*, p. 270.
[143] Tudor and Tudor, *Marxism & Social Democracy*, pp. 11–19.
[144] E.B. Bax. ''Colonial Policy and Chauvinism.'' in *Ibid.*, p. 143.

mind, he seized every opportunity to denounce British imperialism, protesting about 'English misrule' in India and, above all, opposing war in South Africa. Indeed, echoing precisely the principle of revolutionary patriotism he attributed to Babeuf, he declared himself an enemy of his country and a 'friend of his country's enemies'.[136] Not only did he lend his support to the prospective invasion of German social democrats, he also made common cause with the 'primitive' peoples whom the imperialists sought to exploit, recommending that socialists join organisations of 'native resistance in drilling, and in teaching the effective use of firearms'.[137]

In the latter part of the 1890s, Bax's concerns altered. Rather than looking at the way in which patriotism boosted the capitalist system, he began to examine its impact on the state. The problem was less an economic than an ideological one. Moreover, it was one that was centred on Germany rather than Britain. Bax had long despised the German state, regarding it as a quasi-absolutist, semi-despotic 'military and feudal-bureaucratic oligarchy'.[138] Yet in the 1880s he had also considered it the home of European socialism. In the years leading up to the war, he began to emphasise the extent to which the German character had been shaped by Bismarck and by the 'Prussian jack-boot' he had set 'on the necks of the German people' in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war.[139] Bismarck's system, he argued, had brought 'a moralydegeneration'. Not only had the hated middle class had become 'noticeably coarsened, vulgarized and blatant' under Imperial rule,[140] but all sectors of German society had been adversely affected by the construction of

[136] *Ibid.*, p. 102.
[137] *Ibid.*, p. 108.
[138] *Ibid.*, p. 130.
[139] E.B. Bax. *German Culture Past and Present.* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915), p. 257.
[140] *Ibid.*, p. 270.

'according to law', Bax suggested that philosophical reflection could provide at best only a fleeting insight into the meaning of reality. In the 'last resort', Bax insisted, philosophy was like a work of art: 'the handmaid of feeling'.[11] Philosophers might have an inkling about the future but the idea—which Bax attributed to the Hegelians—that was it possible to grasp the meaning of reality 'throughout its complete range, for all time' was 'an impossible and absurd chimera'.[12] The notion 'of tendency', Bax insisted, must take the place of 'complete actualisation'. We could not know the 'final goal of all things' and should be satisfied with 'glimpses of possibilities'.[13]

When Bax applied his reading of Hegel to Marx's materialism, he agreed that material rather than speculative factors had a 'dominating influence in human affairs', but suggested that Marx's disregard for metaphysics had led him to exaggerate the importance of the formal aspect of historical development and to exclude consideration of the alogical in history.[14] On his account, Marx was not wrong to suggest that economic forces had provided the most powerful dynamic for historical development. On the contrary, Bax admitted that 'historic evolution up to the present time' had been 'determined by physical (i.e. economical) conditions': the evidence was so 'overwhelming' that even the 'most unobservant' commentator could not fail to be impressed by it.[15] But Marx was wrong to argue 'that the social life of mankind on all its sidesyis either the direct or indirect outcome ofyeconomic conditions'.[16] In Bax's view, this argument suggested that Marx had mistaken what had been the predominant factor in historical evolution thus far—the need to secure material well-being—for its sole determinant. In doing

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 167.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 167.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 322.
[14] Bax, *Essays*, p. 13.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

so he had importantly overlooked the role that ideological factors, the 'speculative, ethical and artistic faculties in Man', had played in shaping history.[17] Moreover, because Marx and Engels had insistently represented ideological factors as the product of economic circumstance, they had adopted a simplified view of historical causation. In particular, they had wrongly suggested that ideas realised on the basis of a change in material conditions were necessarily the result of that change.[18] Attacking these propositions, Bax argued that history was shaped by the synthetic interaction of material and ideological factors. Changes in material conditions provided a context for the development of ideology, but ideology in turn had an impact on material conditions and could even trigger transformations by itself. Furthermore, each factor followed its 'own distinct line of causation', continually setting in motion 'new offshoots'—what Bax called the 'wheels within wheels'—which had a life of their own in the main synthesis.[19] Bax concluded that history consisted of the interweaving of these lines of causation and depicted its movement as a process of 'infinite spiral ascent'.[20] He characterised the ascent as a 'perpetual passing away of evil and a continuous realisation of good'[21] and, looking to the future, suggested that it was tending towards a new synthesis in which happiness was qualitatively and quantitatively increased.[22] Describing the same ascent in sociological terms, Bax anticipated the absorption of 'individuals or personalities' in 'a corporate social consciousness'[23] and the metamor-

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[20] E.B. Bax. *The Ethics of Socialism.* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., n.d.), p. 210.
[21] Bax, *Roots of Reality*, p. 320.
[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 247, 310–312.
[23] Bax, *Ethics of Socialism*, p. 30.

> lishment of Socialism, therefore, on any national or race basis is out of the question.[130]

Bax denied that this conception of internationalism pointed to an idea of unity that was too comprehensive to be meaningful. His was nothing like the vapid notion developed by 'sentimental socialists' that pledged individuals to the realisation of 'indefinitely high aims' in the 'equally formless indefinite'. On the contrary, it was riding on the 'sure historic highway' of evolutionary change and it was linked firmly to his conception of ethical development.[131] Even so, Bax believed that state-patriotism could easily run internationalism off the road, for whilst imperialism bolstered an otherwise fragile economic system, nationalism, no less importantly, inhibited ethical progress.

For the best part of the 1880s and '90s, Bax appeared to be preoccupied with the first of these problems and he diverted much of his energy to attacking imperial expansion—notably in Africa. Patriotism, he argued, promised capitalists 'an indefinite prolongation of present conditions'.[132] It offered new populations to 'rob and enslave', new markets 'to shoot bad wares into' and new lands 'to invest capital upon'.[133] If, he warned darkly, such expansion went unchecked 'the hopes of Socialism must be indefinitely postponed'.[134] Britain was the main target for this protest. Although socialists usually painted Russia as their pariah state and although Russian absolutism was to be deplored, Britain, he argued, was by far the most successful imperial power both in terms of the strength of its internal propaganda and the extent of its external conquests and, as such, it posed the greatest threat to socialist advance.[135] With this in

[130] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. 126.
[131] *Ibid.*, p. 99, 104.
[132] Bax, *Essays*, p. 106.
[133] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. 125.
[134] Bax, *Essays*, p. 130.
[135] *Ibid.*, p. 131.

principles of social democracy.[123] He defined internationalism as the 'the union of the several national sections on the basis of firm and equal friendship, steadfast adherence to a definite principle, and determination to present a solid front to the enemy'.[124] In constitutional terms, internationalism was based on a federation of 'socialised communities'.[125] In an ethical sense, it implied the transcendence of social divisions. Naturally, Bax identified internationalism with the 'aspiration towards a classless society and international brother-hood'.[126] But he also identified it with the abandonment of non-class distinctions. As socialism became established and 'the mere geographical boundaries of states-menylose meaning' then 'even the national distinctions of race and language will become absorbed in the larger unity of the socialised world'.[127] In its fullest sense, internationalism was a humanitarian ideal, a notion of ''human solidarity'',[128] a principle of 'human interest with its moral sanctions'.[129]

> For the Socialist the word frontier does not exist; for him love of country, as such, is no nobler sentiment than love of class. The blustering ''patriot,'' big with England's glory, is precisely on a level with the bloated plutocrat, proud to belong to that great ''middle-class,'' which he assures you is ''the backbone of the nation.'' Race-pride and class-pride are, from the standpoint of Socialist, involved in the same condemnation. The estab-

[123] Bax, *Essays*, p. 101.
[124] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. 127.
[125] Bax, *English People*, p. 20; Bax and Quelch, *Catechism*, p. 9.
[126] Bax, *Reminiscences*, p. 196.
[127] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. 80.
[128] *Ibid.*, p. 81.
[129] Bax, *Reminiscences*, p. 263.

phosis of the 'organic individual' into the 'social individual'.[24] And psychologically, he expected that it would lead 'toward a raising of the standard of sentimenty i.e., to sympathy and revulsion at the idea of suffering'.[25]

Bax's theory of history considerably enriched his understanding of the French Revolution's bourgeois character. The material context for the Revolution, he argued, was the slow degeneration of the feudal system. The collapse had begun as early as the sixteenth century, so that by the second half of the eighteenth, Europe stood on the brink of a transformation from the 'old world of land and privilege' to the 'modern world of great capital and free trade'.[26] The 'dissolution of the old feudal estates' together with 'new inventions' had stimulated capitalism as 'the leading economical form of society', encouraging 'the struggle of the rising middle or manufacturing and trading classes, to emancipate themselves from the trammels of the feudal or landowning classes'.[27] Running parallel to this economic change was a political transformation marked by the centralisation of state power. Bax insisted that the political transformation, like the economic, affected the entire Continent but he also insisted that in France, unlike Germany or England, for example, 'the political side of the great change was most prominent'.[28] In France, the centralisation of the state was pushed to an extreme and it set in motion an ideological movement that was directed towards the overthrow of the existing elite.[29] Bax acknowledged that the currents of thought that fuelled this revolutionary movement had

[24] E.B. Bax. *Introduction to Selected Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer.* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1891), p. li.
[25] Bax, *Essays*, p. 83.
[26] E.B. Bax. *Jean-Paul Marat The People's Friend.* (London: Grant Richards, 1901), p. 1.
[27] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, pp. 28–29.
[28] E.B. Bax. *The Story of the French Revolution.* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1890), p. 119.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

been born in England and that they had become the common currency of European political debate. But it was in France, he argued, that the ideas 'fructified', powered by the genius of Rousseau and the other 'litterateurs and publicists' of the Paris salons.[30] Faced with mounting political unrest, France was unable to make the transition from feudalism to capitalism peacefully. The peculiar condition of the country and its people made it a natural centre for revolutionary change.

Bax matched his analysis of the Revolution's causes with an equally rich understanding of its legacy. He found the lessons of the Revolution through a class analysis, but one which focussed on the ideological or ethical differences between the bourgeoisie and the nascent proletariat and which identified virtue and compassion as its two contending forces. Bax associated each of these concepts with particular revolutionaries, identifying Robespierre as the embodiment of bourgeois virtue and Marat and Babeuf as the exemplars of proletarian compassion.

Bax's studies of these three revolutionaries suggested that both virtue and compassion were directed towards the realisation of social goals and that they were driven by profound feelings of sympathy. Even Robespierre, whom Bax dubbed a '*petit bourgeois*, a Philistine to the backbone' was moved by a desire to improve the lot of the poor and oppressed.[31] Indeed, like Marat and Babeuf, he had been deeply inspired by Rousseau's *Social Contract*—to the point that he became a 'pedantic Rousseauite prig'.[32] Yet in Bax's view, the significant difference between virtue and compassion was not so much his subject's principal goals as the drives that shaped them. In

[30] Bax, *The People's Friend*, p. 6.

[31] Bax, *Story of the French Revolution*, p. v.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 80. See also E.B. Bax. *Jean-Paul Marat A Historico-Biographical Sketch.* (London: The Modern Press, 1882), pp. 117–118 and *The Last Episode of the French Revolution.* (London: Grant Richards, 1911), pp. 247–255 for the influence of Rousseau on Marat and Babeuf.

had become a cover for states' aggression against foreigners for the sake of capitalist gain.[117] Patriotism, Bax concluded, was the religion of imperialism, 'worked up … artificially in the Pressypreached by different Christian sects … inculcated through the Boy Scouts' movement andythe present-day education of our youth'.[118]

Anticipating modern debates about globalisation, Bax measured the costs of imperialism in cultural as well as economic and political terms. By encouraging imperial exploitation, patriotism was responsible for encouraging dull uniformity in the world, a process he dubbed 'anglicisation'. Though capitalism was an 'essentially *international*' system, operating under the cover of patriotism, it was 'used for national ends', encouraging the export of the same range of goods to all parts of the globe.[119] Thanks to capitalism, European travellers now found 'the same architecture—the big hotel, the railway station, the cheaply built house' wherever they went. For the most part they also found people sporting the same 'shoddy cloth of the ''world-market'', the Parisian ''cut'', the ''top'' or ''bowler'' hat'.[120] On the reverse side of the coin, non-Europeans found that their cherished customs, traditions and ancestral tribal lands were being destroyed by 'hordes of hired ruffians and buccaneers'.[121]

Bax believed that imperialist state-patriotism could be countered by French revolutionary model, but in order to avoid any confusion between his own socialist position and the modern state principle, he proudly declared himself an anti-patriot.[122] Anti-patriotism meant internationalism, a commitment that Bax identified as one of the four core

[117] Bax, *Reminiscences*, p. 276.

[118] *Ibid.*, pp. 196, 263.

[119] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. 81.

[120] Bax, *Ethics of Socialism*, p. 114.

[121] Bax, *Essays*, p. 108.

[122] Bax, *My Country*, p. 2.

tive policies. As part of this process, patriotism had become inextricably linked to imperialism and war.[112] Unlike J.A. Hobson, who famously expounded a financial theory of imperialism, Bax drew on a mixture of economic and non-economic factors to explain the phenomenon, describing four types of patriot to make his case.[113] First were the wealthy capitalists who enthusiastically invested their money 'to pay for ''patriotic'' articles by the yard, and ''patriotic'' speeches by the hour'. The second type was the jingo, usually fuelled by 'race-hatred' to be 'zealous of his country's honour'.[114] The third were mainly middle-class philanthropists who took the government at its word 'when it pretends its only object in undertaking ''expeditions'' to be the rescue of ''Christian heroes'' or the relief of garrisons, which have no right to be in a position to want relieving'.[115] And the last were the workers who eagerly joined in jingoistic music hall entertainments and state-sponsored demonstrations of loyalty, waving Union Jacks to brighten up their impoverished lives.

Bax admitted that each group was motivated by different causes. The most cynical, the capitalists, drew on patriotism in order to justify their plunder of foreign territories. The race-haters were simply flunkies, proud to dance to 'the pipe of capitalist greed'.[116] The philanthropists were often still tied to the ideas of pride, honour and enlightenment that the forty-eighters had bestowed on the patriotic cause, and the workers were hoodwinked into believing that their freedom and well-being depended on the subjugation of foreign comrades. Yet whether they were motivated by greed, bigotry, naivety or despair, each group demonstrated that patriotism

[112] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. 124.

[113] P. Cain. *Hobson & Imperialism.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 114.

[114] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. 123.

[115] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

the case of Robespierre, virtue sprang from a sympathy with the downtrodden that was mediated by reason. In contrast, the compassion of Marat and Babeuf was the product of raw emotion. When he considered the differences in more detail, Bax argued that Robespierre had mistakenly understood the Revolution as an opportunity to realise a single, abstract idea: he was the 'apostle of equality'. And for all his good intentions, he turned this idea into a fetish. This was Robespierre's undoing for it led him to lose sight of needs of the people whom he was first moved to serve and to consider as irrelevant any aim that was not consistent with his egalitarian ideal. Indeed, in his concern for equality, Robespierre drew in on himself, sowing the seeds of mistrust that led ultimately to repression. Here, Bax's account of Robespierre's error was not unlike Solzhenitsyn's description of Lenin's failing.[33] Solzhenitsyn's Lenin was so obsessed with revolutionary work that he suppressed his desire for rest, food and comfort. Likewise, Bax's Robespierre was so determined to realise equality that he 'sat upon' all the 'ordinary exits' for his 'natural appetites'. Yet his 'vice came out none the less'—and with terrifying results.[34] Where Solzhenitsyn's Lenin weighed his commitment to work against the temptation of delicatessen and confectionary, Robespierre measured his love of equality against the libertarianism of the Paris Commune, which he interpreted as libertinism. Where Lenin vowed to destroy all the caf!es in Switzerland in order to purge himself of temptation, Robespierre became the willing executioner of the Commune's leaders: H!ebert, Danton and their followers.[35] And as Lenin returned to his studies in anger and frustration, Robespierre, having guillotined his former comrades, resorted to dictatorship in his isolation:

[33] A. Solzhenitsyn. *Lenin in Zurich.* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), pp. 72–73.

[34] Bax, *Story of the French Revolution*, p. 118.

[35] *Ibid.*, pp. v, 118.

> When we first come across Robespierre, he was, although a prig and a repulsive prig at that, apparently actuated by as much honesty of purpose as any other leader. His services to the Revolution at all the great crises were real. But the germ of ambition and personal self-seeking, which was always observable, grew with the progress of events, until … he had developed into a monster, actuated by one aim—to become dictator, and prepared to make any sacrifice whatever for the accomplishment of this aim.[36]

Marat and Babeuf were quite different. Although Bax conceded that Marat was 'ambitious andyloved fame',[37] he insisted that Marat simply voiced the grievances of the oppressed. He had no other aim. For Bax, he was a man of 'intense earnestness and consistency', truly 'the People's Friend'. Few other men had 'so keenly felt the sufferings of his fellow-men'.[38] Marat embodied 'the noblest of human feelings, sympathy with suffering and its correlative indignation at oppression'. And this sympathy 'was of a unique kind; he seemed to feel literally in his own person the sufferings of those with whom he sympathised'.[39] Babeuf too displayed 'absolute sincerity, earnestness, and courage' in his work and, like Marat, he was single-minded in his devotion to the popular cause.[40] In the Conspiracy of Equals, his secret revolutionary society, he worked with 'unsurpassed energy' and was 'possessed of an emotional temperament which carried him away, quite regardless of personal considerations'.[41] Finally, both men lived in accordance with their principles: Marat had died with only

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 83.
[37] Bax, *Jean-Paul Marat*, p. 117.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 76.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
[40] Bax, *Last Episode*, p. 247.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 258.

be a primary aim of the party of progress'.[104] In the modern world, this 'impulse to the consolidation of nationalities'[105] could not serve as a liberating force. History proved the point. For all the 'rhetorical froth and v gallons of good black ink' that had been expended in the name of the new '"united nationalities"', each was now 'groaning under theymilitary and administrative budgets of their respective beloved fatherlands'.[106] Patriotism had succeeded only in breeding nationalism, '*i.e.* the independence and unification of nationalities'.[107] In the process it had been stripped of its revolutionary universal appeal. In patriotism the 'national or imperial State … the ultima ratio … [h]umanity is … a mere phrase'.[108]

Bax acknowledged that patriotism was still used to describe a sense of affiliation, but he denied that the sentiments attached to it were meaningful. The principle of nationality, to which patriotism was now attached, implied that political unity should be coterminous with race or language. However, the reality of the modern state was more complex and individuals were bound neither by race, language, kinship or history.[109] Patriotism was one of the bureaucratic state's main pillars.[110] But it described a 'bogus and sham sentiment, no longer of any service to mankind, but on the other hand capable of being exploited by interested persons in a manner which renders it one of the most dangerous frauds…'.[111]

Capitalists were the chief beneficiaries of patriotism. Acting through the state, they exploited patriotism to manipulate home populations and bind them to aggressive and exploita-

[104] Bax, *Essays*, p. 98.
[105] Bax and Morris, *Socialism From the Root Up*, p. 555.
[106] Bax, *Paris Commune*, p. 2.
[107] Bax, *Essays*, p. 98.
[108] Bax, *Reminiscences*, p. 196.
[109] Bax, *Essays*, pp. 93, 98.
[110] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. 30.
[111] Bax, *Essays*, p. 93.

democracy, connecting 'the cause of the people against governments and against the oppressions of a privileged class'.[99] The meaning of the term was perfectly understood by revolutionaries and reactionaries alike, as Dr. Johnson illustrated when he sourly claimed that patriotism was 'the last resort of scoundrels' (*sic*).[100]

In the Napoleonic era, revolutionary patriotism gave way to a new insidious principle of state-patriotism. Bax linked the corruption to political and economic changes: as production and government became increasingly centralised, 'the modern national patriotic sentiment developed also'.[101] But he believed that this latest expression of patriotism was driven by ideology and he described it as a middle-class sentiment. State-patriotism became dominant in 1848, the year of European revolutions, when a new generation of radicals—Kossuth, Crispi and Mazzini—took up its mantle.[102] Though he did not doubt the sincerity of the forty-eighters' emancipatory aims, he variously dismissed their campaigns as 'contemp-tible', 'miserable' and 'balderdash'. Even if it was understood in its weakest sense to mean 'love of country', he argued, patriotism necessarily inhibited unity amongst peoples. However well intentioned patriots of one county felt towards citizens in other states, patriotism was posited on 'a strong sensibility to the feelings of oneybody of persons and a comparative callousness to the feelings of other[s]yunder like circumstances'.[103] Yet the patriots of '48 had compounded this problem by allying their patriotism to an' idea of ''nationality'' which implied that 'the political ''unity'' and ''independence'' of a certain territorial aggrega-teyshould

[99] E.B. Bax. *Preface* to G. Hervé, *My Country Right or Wrong*. (London: A.C. Fifield, 1910), p. 1.

[100] *Ibid*., p. 1.

[101] Bax, *Essays*, pp. 91–92.

[102] *Ibid*., pp. 98, 105.

[103] Bax, *Ethics of Socialism*, p. 65.

'twenty-five sous' to his name, 'showing that he must have lived literally from hand to mouth'; Babeuf, having once lived prosperously and respectably, died penniless and disgraced. In contrast to 'certain living pamphleteer politicians' (who Bax chose not to name) neither man possessed 'that happy faculty of combining the disinterested service of humanity with large commercial profits'.[42]

Bax's study of Robespierre, Marat and Babeuf filled out his understanding of the French Revolution as a bourgeois revolution. In different ways they had brought to consciousness ideas and ideals that were still dormant in the minds of the masses. Like other great men—Charlemagne, for instance—they had given 'voice and definiteness to tendencies already born ofysocial andyeconomic development'.[43] Marat for example had laboured in the service of 'Humanity and Progress'[44] and given his life for 'Justice and Social Equality'.[45] Bax was clear that neither Marat nor Babeuf were socialists—he saw them as eighteenth-century men who wrapped their ideas in worn out 'Rousseauite garb'[46]—but by this standard he considered them precursors of socialism: their goals, and selflessness with which they defended them, were still very relevant to socialism. Indeed, Bax believed Marat's and Babeuf's compassion to be the first expression of the evolutionary force that he tracked in his philosophy as sympathy, the corporate social consciousness or the new social being. In their work, he was able to grasp the reality that could only otherwise be captured in an intellectual or abstract way. In short, in Marat and Babeuf

[42] Bax, *Jean-Paul Marat*, p. 111.

[43] E.B. Bax. *Will Socialism Benefit the English People?* (London: Freethought Publishing Co., 1887), p. 21. See also Bax, *Jean-Paul Marat*, pp. 19–20.

[44] Bax, *Jean-Paul Marat*, p. 118.

[45] Bax, *The People's Friend*, p. 348.

[46] *Ibid*., p. 348.

Bax found the seeds of an ethical contest which matched his conception of the burgeoning class struggle.

Jacobinism and socialist government

Bax took this complex conception of proletarian struggle forward into his analysis of the state in the post-revolutionary period and complementing the well-established Marxist view of the state as an instrument of class power, he turned back to Marat to develop an idea of the state as bureaucracy. Bax used this model both to map out an ideal of socialist government, which he called republican, and to consider the practical problem of revolutionary change. In Europe, he argued, the victory of republicanism over bureaucracy depended on the adoption of Jacobin methods. In view of his critique of Robespierre, his conclusion seems startling, yet it flows from the assumptions he made about the nature and role of compassion.

In Bax's view, the French Revolution had marked a watershed in the state's development, successfully consolidating the process of centralisation that had begun centuries before and securing the ascendancy of the middle classes over the aristocracy. Bax admitted that the new regime took some time to become really established. In France, the restoration and the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 testified to the challenges the state faced both from old counter-revolutionary and new proletarian forces. Nevertheless, he emphasised the continuity of the state's development in the nineteenth century, crediting Napoleon with setting the seal on the new political order and Louis Napoleon with encapsulating the nature of bourgeois rule.[47] The advertised principle of the new state was constitutionalism, but Bax described it disparagingly as 'law and or-

[47] E.B. Bax and W. Morris. ''Socialism From the Root Up.'' *William Morris Political Writings: Contributions to Justice and Commonweal 1883–1890.* repr. Ed. N. Salmon. (Bristol, 1994), pp. 538, 536.

Bax traced the origins of patriotism to the earliest forms of human society and argued that it referred to a complex of ideas. Initially, patriotism described a 'notion of kinship or blood relationship'.[93] In the ancient world, its meaning had been broadened and 'the zeal and love for tribe and clan' was transferred to the city.[94] Both were religious ideas in the sense that they were based on worship and devotion but in the course of the Middle Ages they developed in two different directions. Tribal-patriotism was grafted onto a feudal concept of patriarchal or personal rule and city-patriotism was 'superseded by the Christian cosmopolitanismyof a universal church or commonwealth of the faithful'.[95] In the eighteenth century, patriotism again metamorphosed. Whilst it retained its religious connotation it now described 'the pride of national maintenance and defence against any form of aggression'.[96]

In the French Revolution, patriotism was again transformed and was fleetingly allied to a noble, universal cause. Bax did not ignore the role that the nation played in French revolutionary thinking. The rising threat of invasion and war fanned the 'furious flame of French national enthusiasm'. And in 1792–3, when the Duke of Brunswick marched on Paris and the Vendée rose in insurrection, the capital survived largely because 'every republican in Parisyhad good reason to feel that both his own life and the future of his country were in immediate danger'.[97] Yet until the 'self-seeking conqueror Napoleon' used this enthusiasm to further his own ambitions, this patriotism was contained by the Revolution's spirit of universalism. For heroes like Babeuf patriotism referred to 'the rights of the people of a given country against its ruling class'.[98] It was a synonym for

[93] Bax, *Essays*, p. 89.
[94] *Ibid.*, p. 90.
[95] *Ibid.*, p. 91.
[96] *Ibid.*, p. 92.
[97] Bax and Morris, *Socialism From the Root Up*, p. 533.
[98] Bax, *Episode*, p. 14.

the Revolution.[91] But whereas Robespierre did not have any 'genuine and disinterested devotion to the cause of the people', Babeuf did.[92] Bax's advocacy of Jacobin methods was therefore justified and, Bax confidently asserted, would be vindicated when the free republic was established in socialism.

Patriotism and internationalism

Like his analysis of bureaucracy, Bax's critique of patriotism developed his from understanding of the Revolution's legacy. In his discussion of patriotism, however, he approached both the legacy of the Revolution and the question of the state's development in a slightly different way. Here, he was concerned with the ethical goal towards which compassion pointed rather than the personal quality which motivated action and, instead of looking at the internal dynamics of capitalist rule, he focused on the means by which that rule was sustained. Patriotism had a longer history than the state, but Bax believed it to be one of the capitalist state's defining principles and, probably, its most potent force. Patriotism thus overlaid bureaucracy and found its counterpoint in internationalism, which Bax mapped onto republicanism. Bax identified the threat of patriotism in imperialism. By promoting the imperialist system, he argued, patriotism not only diverted the working class from the real causes of its oppression, but helped to provide a new material basis for capitalist development. Unless it was resisted, socialism would fail: the moment of capitalist crisis would be postponed and the ethical movement towards socialism would be disrupted. The irony of Bax's position was that in the years leading up to the First War, his fear for socialism undermined his internationalism and led him to throw in his lot with the British state in their support of a patriotic war.

[91] *Ibid.*, pp. 116–117.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

der' and argued that its character was moulded by domination rather than consent.[48] Domination could take subtle forms. In the Second Empire Louis Napoleon relied on public building programmes and showy pageants to govern the new working class. Yet whatever form it took, the principle of domination remained the same, and it was one that Bax believed lay at the heart of all European states.

Bax explained domination in part as a feature of class rule. The modern state, he contended, 'is mainly an agent of the possessing classes and industrial or commercial undertakings run to-day by governmental bodies are largely run in the interests of these classes'.[49] In the other part Bax identified domination with bureaucracy. Leaving aside the 'direct economic power behind politics' he argued that:

> Even were the power of wealth entirely inoperative in directly or indirectly determining the results of elections, you still have the political and administrative power of class to contend with in the shape of the bureaucracy which is the real and direct governing power in the modern constitutional state. Every one who knows anything about the inner workings of the governmental machinery of modern times, knows that it is the permanent officials of departments who really govern and administer the affairs of a nation.[50]

Bax's understanding of bureaucracy owed much to Marat, whom he credited with a 'ceaseless *défiance*'[51] and distrust of officialdom, and it departed in significant ways from Weber's well-known analysis. Bureaucracy, he argued, had

[48] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. 30.
[49] Bax, *Essays*, p. 8.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[51] Bax, *The People's Friend*, p. 345.

developed concomitantly with capitalism, as a 'condition of the centralised state' and it reflected the state's own growing sense of purpose.[52] It posed a number of problems, not least factionalism. In the modern state, officials—by which Bax meant civil servants, politicians and judges—inevitably constituted themselves as a separate and oppositional force.

> …*beaurocracies* [sic] are necessarily opposed to popular interests; ythe existence of a state—of an official governing class—means the existence of a power possessing interests distinct from those of the peopley A politician who has once reached the Elysian fields of office can well afford to regard with a sober eye the interests of the poor mortals with whom he has in reality ceased to be identified. No mere change in political forms will remove this evil. It is common alike to Conservative and Liberal, Monarchical and Republican Governments.[53]

Again following Marat's lead, Bax argued that bureaucratic interests were founded on dishonesty and the betrayal of the public good, rather than on the mere application of rational rules, as Weber suggested. The 'bureaucrat, the functionary, the official' was 'necessarily by instinct a liar'. Whilst in private life, he 'may be a man of the strictest integrity and the most scrupulous truthfulness' in the public sphere he was 'a prevaricator in matters which concern his colleagues and his department'.[54] The judiciary was a favourite target for this line of criticism. Bax defined the judge as a man 'of inferior moral calibre' who 'deliberately pledges himself to functions which may at any moment compel him to act against his conscience

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[53] Bax, *Jean-Paul Marat*, pp. 26–27.
[54] Bax, *The People's Friend*, p. 346.

maxim '*à la guerre, comme la guerre*'. Further elaborating on this idea, Bax argued:

> An insurrectionary administration which has succeeded in establishing itself, becomes by that very fact (from the point of view of the insurrection) the sole rightful repository of power for the time being, and that the Government, against which the insurrection was directed, becomes in its turn the rebel power, to be crushed in the most expeditious manner possible.
>
> … The first thing for the leader of a revolutionary movement to learn is a healthy contempt for the official public opinion of the ''civilized world''. He must resolutely harden his heart against its ''thrills of horror'' its ''indignation,'' its ''abomination,'' and its ''detestation,'' he must learn to smile at all the names it will liberally shower upon him and his cause.[89]

Whilst Bax accused Robespierre of 'judicial murder' and of wading 'through a sea of blood' in his ascent to power, he denied the possibility of judging the actions of genuine revolutionaries by any 'ordinary ethical standards'. It might not be possible to approve of their actions 'while sitting comfortably in our chairs', but in Bax's view, good revolutionaries did what was necessary because they were moved by compassion.[90] Following the same logic, Bax even admitted that it was Robespierre who had first demonstrated 'the effective power of minorities' and who had taught Babeuf that an energetic elite could control the 'floating mass of inert sympathy' and 'the vast mass of inert stupidity' whilst silencing the enemies of

[89] *Ibid.*, pp. 84–85.
[90] Bax, *Story of the French Revolution*, p. 118.

pean Socialist party' as the body that should be entrusted with the task of gauging the public interest, he rested his claim to its legitimacy as 'an authoritative tribunal' on its 'consciousness of certain aims'.[86] Nor did Bax suppose that his recourse to Jacobin methods would cause the socialist struggle to follow the pattern of the French Revolution. When it came to revolutionary practise, however, his faith in the benignancy of Jacobin methods was sustained by his understanding of motivation rather than his trust in progressive evolution. Like Marat and Babeuf, Bax entered into the revolutionary struggle in order to free the oppressed: it was an act of sacrifice and devotion which demanded courage and steadfast resolve.

Bax made the point most graphically in his discussion of the Commune. Here his sense that the people were open to the manipulative power of the bourgeois state turned into a conviction that they would always recoil from using the force at their disposal against the enemy. The middle classes characteristically asserted that 'its governing bodies ought to have the uninterrupted enjoyment of an unlimited, and exclusive, monopoly of killing, as regards its opponents', and the proletariat were unlikely to challenge this contention. Indeed, Bax believed that the proletariat would fall victim to idea that it was morally right to kill in defence of the status quo, but not in order to attack it.[87] As a socialist he saw that this was hypocrisy of the worst kind. But he also remembered that, in 1871, the leaders of the Paris Commune did not see this and that they consequently 'allowed the Versaillese a free butcher's bill of thousands of its supporters'.[88] The duty of socialist revolutionaries, Bax concluded, lay not just in uncovering middle-class hypocrisy but in eliminating all those who sought to perpetuate or defend it. The 'ethics of insurrection' was caught in the

[86] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

[87] E.B. Bax. *A Short History of the Paris Commune.* (London, 1895), p. 78.

[88] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

and wrong another man. He deliberately pledges himself, that is, to be false to himself'.[55] At times Bax explained the duplicity of bureaucrats as a result of greed and the promise of material gain. For example, the judge 'makes this surrender of humanity and honour for ... filthy lucre and tawdry notoriety'.[56] More often, he pointed to the corrupting tendency of power. Bureaucrats—and judges in particular—derived sadistic satisfaction from their ability to victimise others.

> There is a mistaken conception ... that a judge ... in seeking to secure a conviction ... is necessarily acting disinterestedly, and therefore honestly. What personal motive- ... can he have for doing what he does? I will tell you: the enjoyment of the sense of power which conviction gives him over the prisoner in the dock. It is the prospect of enjoyment of the same kind which is the incentive to small boys ... of a cruel disposition, to kill flies, spin cockchafers, and hold up cats by their tails.[57]

What incensed Bax most about bureaucracy was its cowardice and hypocrisy. Bureaucracy was cowardly because, apart from any sadistic pleasure they derived from their power, bureaucrats behaved as automata, applying the rules mechanically and 'in conscious immunity from the natural or legal dangers to himself otherwise attending such an act'.[58] Bureaucracy was hypocritical because bureaucrats veiled their decisions with 'the plea of ''duty'''.[59] Bax suggested that the English were masters of hypocrisy and that French bureaucrats tended towards 'open black-guardism'.[60] Yet in

[55] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. 108.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[57] Bax, *Essays*, p. 82.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[60] Bax and Morris, *Socialism From the Root Up*, p. 556.

different ways both sets of officials represented their decisions as absolute moral obligations and consequently ended up justifying actions and behaviours that they routinely condemned in so-called criminals and terrorists.

Bax believed that bureaucracy left the people who were in the state's care both duped and bowed. In the capitalist state, bureaucrats and officials were treated as impartial public servants. Their claims of obedience to duty were treated seriously and their competence was rarely questioned. Moreover, when administrative decisions were investigated, as they often were in Royal Commissions and so forth, the rightness of their judgements was almost invariably defended and upheld. Evidence pointing to the defects of the administration was summarily disregarded. For Bax, the people's common acceptance of bureaucracy was a measure of its enslavement. Turning once more to the judiciary to illustrate his point, he argued: 'if we accept the judge's ''decision'' as authoritatively representing the will of the nation, we may as well accept the ukase of any despot who by fraud force or favour has attained to power as being equally so'.[61]

Bax found the answer to capitalist bureaucracy in the socialist republic. As he explained:

> Socialism, which aims at political and economic equality, is radically inconsistent with any other political form whatever than that of Republicanism. By this we do not mean any existing republican constitution, which is a quite superficial matter, but that the principle of republicanism is essential to Socialism. Monarchy and Socialism, or Empire and Socialism, are incompatible and inconceivable. Socialism involves political and

[61] Bax, *Essays*, p. 94.

liberate them from bourgeois ideology. In existing conditions, he observed, citizens lived in ignorance: manipulated and controlled by 'press, pulpit and platform', they were the 'victims of every sophism of middle-class economists and politicians'.[82] In their ignorance, he continued, they 'know that they suffer, they know that they want not to suffer, but they know not *why* they suffer, and they know not how they may cease to suffer'.[83] It was only reasonable that socialists coerce and cajole them in order to set them free. Bax acknowledged the illiberality of the policy, but insisted that the socialist who ignored the stated wishes of the people in this situation was no guiltier of tyranny than the man who forcibly held back a drunk attempting to alight from a moving train. The drunk did not want to be maimed or killed. Drunkenness had simply blinded him to 'what is conducive to his welfare'. Similarly, 'the workman who sides with one or other of the various political parties against Socialism, does not want to be the slave of capital': whilst coercion negated his '*apparent* aims', it affirmed his '*real* aims'.[84] In the late 1880s, Bax contemplated this argument with regard to a possible German revolution. Should German socialists invade 'the stronghold of modern commercialism' in order to forestall counter-revolution, the majority of Englishmen would undoubtedly resist them. Yet the duty of socialists would be 'to do all in their power to assist the invaders and crush the will of … the people of England, knowing that the real welfare of the latter lay therein'.[85]

Naturally, Bax did not see the similarity between his position and Rousseau's and, unlike Robespierre, Marat or Babeuf who followed their master in his conception of human nature, Bax understood the efficacy of Jacobin methods in the light of his philosophy. When, for example, he identified 'the Euro-

[82] Bax and Quelch, *Catechism*, p. 32.
[83] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. 119.
[84] *Ibid.*, p. 120.
[85] Bax, *Ethics of Socialism*, p. 128.

argued that the intervening period had witnessed the growing sympathy 'of all people of honesty and good feeling' for 'those suffering underythe more insidious oppression under which labour groans in constitutionally governed countries': 'law and order' was now on the retreat.[78] Anticipating the final act, Bax turned once more to the example of the great revolution and to Jacobinism to find the means of securing its end.

Bax's Jacobinism was a striking feature of his socialism. Though he would have rejected the criticism advanced by the German socialist Eduard Bernstein that his socialism was a 'type of Blanquism … mingled with Marxist phrases',[79] he openly admitted that his admiration for Babeuf flowed from his belief that Babeuf had succeeded in translating communism from a utopian ideal to a viable political goal—a feat he had achieved by promoting the idea of the seizure of political power by a 'coup de main on the part of a revolutionary minority'.[80] And not only did he endorse Blanquism, as Bernstein asserted, he painted himself as a latter-day representative of the Jacobin tradition. Remembering his decision, in 1885, to join William Morris's Socialist League, Bax recalled how he had hoped that the Party would follow in the footsteps of 'the federated Jacobin Clubs of the French Revolution'.[81] Yet the explanation for Bax's adoption of Jacobin methods lies as much in the correspondence between his idea of ethical change and the Rousseauean notion of perfectibility as it does in his romantic ideas. Just as Robespierre, Marat and Babeuf had attempted to raise the people to virtue, Bax wanted to

[78] Bax and Morris, *Socialism From the Root Up*, p. 562.

[79] E. Bernstein. ''The Struggle of Social Democracy and the Social Revolution.'' *Marxism and Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate 1896–1898.* Eds. H. Tudor and J.M. Tudor. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 159. See also Cowley, *Victorian Encounter*, pp. 34–35, 98–101.

[80] Bax, *Last Episode*, pp. 259, 251. See also Bax, *Ethics of Socialism*, p. 128.

[81] E.B. Bax. *Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Mid and Late Victorian.* (New York: Augustus M. Kelly, 1967), p. 81.

> economic equality; while Monarchy or Empire essentially imply domination and inequality.[62]

Bax openly admitted that the 'organised democratic society contemplated by socialists' was rightly regarded as a state.[63] Whilst he defended a form of federal organisation and sympathised with the anarchist critique of authority or the 'word of command' as he called it, he attacked the anarchist idea of statelessness as nonsensical.[64] The idea of republicanism defended by social democracy meant 'all for the people', but not 'the impossible absurdity that everything should be directly regulated by the people'. There would be work for a government in socialism and this, he continued, 'must be entrusted to suitably capable persons'.[65]

Bax's confidence that socialist republicanism would be unlike capitalist bureaucracy was based on his assumption of classlessness. He understood this principle in two ways. On the one hand, he associated it with the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange and the abolition of class power. On the other hand, he defined it in terms of the 'form' or 'quality' of class distinctions rather than the 'reality' or 'content' grounded in ownership.[66] In the first sense, classlessness was linked to the state's 'withering away'. Once ownership was abolished, Bax contended, the socialist state would no longer act as the 'agent of the possessing class', its 'officers will not be the agents of a class' and its exploitative function would disappear.[67] For Bax:

[62] E.B. Bax and H. Quech. *A New Catechism of Socialism,* 5th edn. (London: The Twentieth Century Press, 1907), p. 37.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[64] E.B. Bax and J.H. Levy. *Socialism and Individualism.* (London: Personal Rights Association, n.d.), pp. 32–33.

[65] Bax, *Essays*, p. 76.

[66] Bax, *Ethics of Socialism*, p. 103.

[67] Bax and Quelch, *Catechism*, p. 9.

> [t]he directive power of the Community whichyis destined to supersede the state of to-day, will be simply the organ of a Community politically and economically free and not, as to-day, a bureaucracy representing a governing class distinct from the Community.[68]

In the second sense, classlessness was associated with Bax's understanding of ethical change and human feeling. In this sense classlessness demanded that proletarians rid themselves of their 'servile brutality' and that the bourgeoisie divest themselves of their 'vulgar hypocrisy'.[69] In socialism these class instincts would be transcended in favour of 'humanity or human interest' and instead of looking to old class allegiances, individuals would start to behave as 'men'. They would replace the current '*physically disordered ''struggle for existence''* by the higher, the *intelligently ordered ''co-operation for existence'*.[70] Social relations would 'involve reciprocity', and 'a mutual obligation, a personal responsibility on either side'.[71]

Bax conceded that socialist republicans would need to make some constitutional changes to check the rise of a new bureaucratic class. One way in which he proposed to bridge the existing gap between governors and governed was by abolishing permanent heads of government departments and re-assigning the control of public services to the citizens.[72] In addition, Bax recommended that any actual abuse of power in socialism be met with strict sanction. The Thermidorians had set a useful precedent when they executed Fouquier-Tinville, the notorious public prosecutor, for acting in accordance with laws

[68] Bax, *Essays*, p. 9.
[69] Bax, *Ethics of Socialism*, pp. 101, 104.
[70] Bax, *Religion of Socialism*, p. 80.
[71] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[72] L. Barrow and I. Bullock. *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement, 1880–1914.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 42–43.

passed by the then government of France.[73] But the principle was Marat's: crimes committed 'under the guise of performance of official duty' were 'the most heinous of all' and that they demanded 'the severest punishment'.[74] Nevertheless, the health of the republic really depended on classlessness, not constitutionalism. In civil society, classlessness bolstered Bax's hope that individuals would shed their 'will-lessness' and develop the 'high sense of public duty'[75] that would be required to stimulate public deliberation and guard against the potential abuse of power.[76] In government, it supported his trust that officials would act without cowardice or hypocrisy. For the principle of socialist republicanism was that

> The right of no man ought to be admitted to divest himself of the personal responsibility attaching to his personal acts. No man is compelled to be a judge or executioner against his will, or being such, to remain a judge or executioner. He personally elects to put a law into execution, and as such ought to be prepared to abide by the possible consequences to his own person of his own act. There is no special sanctity in ''law'' merely as law, which may indeed be the expression of a lasting public opinion, but also may not.[77]

Bax characterised the struggle between bureaucracy and republicanism as the 'last stage of the great revolution inaugurated in France'. In the Commune, France had again provided the ground for the most recent skirmish between the two forces. Although this had ended in terrible defeat, Bax

[73] Bax, *Essays*, pp. 88–92, 96.
[74] Bax, *The People's Friend*, p. 346.
[75] Bax, *Essays*, p. 94.
[76] Bax, *Ethics of Socialism*, p. 122.
[77] Bax, *Essays*, p. 96.