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The ideas of Marx's Socialist predecessors are generally described as 'Utopian Socialism'. As a socio-political doctrine, 'Utopian Socialism' implies a type of Socialism which is desirable, attractive but impracticable. The expression 'Utopian Socialism' presupposes the existence of another type of Socialism which is not utopian. The very title of one of Engels's most important Articles is significant: 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific'.

Socialism 'became a science', asserts Engels, only after two great discoveries by Marx: "the materialistic conception of history and the secret of Capitalistic production through Surplus Value".

Thus unlike Marxism, pre-Marxian Socialism was not based on the objective laws of social development and therefore, it was not scientific but utopian. The ancient and medieval thinkers had no idea of Socialism, for they ignored the problems of production and hence took for granted the existing system of production. It was in Thomas More's Utopia (published in 1516) that the ideal of common

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ownership as the basis of society's entire system of production and distribution was set forth for the first time.

The decisive period in the development of Socialism, however, was marked by the French Revolution. Though the French Revolution was a pure middleclass revolution, its immortal trinity — Liberty, Equality, Fraternity — removed the last ideological and psychological barriers to the development of real socialist movement.

As the 19th century dawned, socialist schools of thought began emerging and socialist movements gradually took ~~on~~ its ground in England and France — the two big nations in which capitalism was rapidly expanding. The most prominent and influential of these early 19th century socialists had been Utopian Socialists — namely — St. Simon and Charles Fourier in France and Robert Owen in England. Lenin has pointed out, though, 'French Socialism' as one of the Three great sources of Marxism. So the French component of pre-Marxian Socialism is important for 2 reasons — (1) it was on the French soil that Marx had, for the first time in his life, direct contact with the then socialist thinkers, (2) France being the first European country where the bourgeois revolution took place in 1789. French Socialism was the



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culminating point of pre-Marxian socialism, incorporating in a more enriched form, the various aspects of earlier socialist doctrines. (3)

Broadly, there were four aspects of pre-Marxian socialism:

- ① their conceptual frame of reference
- ② criticisms of capitalist system
- ③ visions of a future society where there would be no more exploitation of man by man.
- ④ the means by which such a society could be established.

The conceptual framework of these early socialists, was a fusion of three notions borrowed from the 18th century Enlighteners — The bourgeois democrats: 'Progress', 'harmony', 'reason'.

~~The early socialists' criticisms of the capitalist sys~~

Owen criticised the-then English society or by arguing that unregulated competition (laissez faire) caused men to act selfishly rather than for the good of the community. He would educate people to the idea of cooperation and unselfish community action. Owen sought to accomplish his ideas in Scotland and attempted to establish cooperative industrial communities in England. Owen ^{told me need to unite} organized all workers through trade unions and cooperative societies

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But Owen did not believe in class struggle. Instead, he appealed to the 'good sense' of the employers and believed that 'reason' and not 'class conflict' should be the agent of socio-economic transformation.

Marx - Engels were highly impressed by the 'practical character' of Owen's communitarian scheme. Yet they were fully aware of the utopian elements in Owen's theory.

Charles Fourier believed that universal happiness could be attained by organizing mankind into small communities, or Phalanxes. Production in the Phalanx should be proportional to the consumption needs of the citizens. Phalanx would be small, self-sufficient non-political communities.

Saint-Simon spoke of 'industrial society' in which he was living — it was a system — in which man is steadily mastering the forces of nature. This new process of interaction between man and ~~man~~ nature presupposes a general cooperation between man and man. With more and more cooperation a time would come, argued Saint-Simon, when rule over men would be replaced by 'administration of things' — ~~that~~ is which would ultimately lead to the disappearance of the state. In every epoch, Saint-Simon argued, the controllers of the productive arts

(5) constitute supreme authority in society. (5)

Saint-Simon's philosophy of history was based on two basic convictions: (1) Those who control the productive arts, also control the entire society. (2) The social and moral values of each age correspond to the level of development of productive arts.

These two assertions of Saint-Simon ~~are~~ constitute in a very crude and embryonic form two important elements of Marx's historical materialism:

— That economic factor is the most important determining factor. and that the ruling ideas of each historical period are the ideas of the ruling classes.

~~St~~ Owen, St Simon, & Fourier formulated the principles of a better society but did not look at all to political action for bringing about the changes. They believed that the desired changes could be achieved through appeals to the reason and sense of justice of those who already possessed power and wealth. They founded experimental communities and co-operative associations. But utopian as they were, all their attempts failed. Yet modern socialism is greatly indebted to Utopians. Marx and Engels drew much of the first materials from their writings.

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