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THE MAKING OF FRANCE

THE MAKING OF FRANCE

THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF
THE IDEA OF NATIONAL UNITY

(Histoire de l'Unité Française)

by

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This book is a translation of Marie-Madeleine Martin's *Histoire de l'Unité Française*, which was first published in Paris in 1948 and was awarded the Historical Prize of the French Academy.

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PREFACE

IN THE confusion of ideas which is a root cause of the present upheavals throughout the world, one of the most sorely misused concepts seems to be the idea of *country*, *fatherland*, *patrie*. It is none the less one which rouses the keenest interest.

For the West has sought, through blood and destruction, new formulae for the grouping and unification of peoples. Since, however, the Utopian ideas of some march hand in hand with the brutal ambitions of others, the inhabitants of the different countries rightly fear that the independence and genius of their own native land will be swallowed up in these new organizations.

At the same time, within each state, thousands of self-styled patriots are condemning their political opponents to death, accusing them of 'betraying their country'. Yet quite apart from the problems of actual treason and apart from attacks which result from the unleashing of passions in periods of crisis, the fact that such a conflict can exist among people who are heirs to the same land and to the same history serves to remind us of the existence within each people of a keen awareness, a sense of patriotism, which, under the name of nationalism, is one of the most characteristic developments of our time. What is the exact place in the evolution of patriotism of this new development? Can patriotism itself be reduced to certain abstract ideas, to certain feelings simply expressed, or rather was it not, in earlier times, an infinitely richer and more complex reality, more in tune with the laws and diversity of life?

The second problem thus leads us back to the first, since the quarrels mentioned, like the dreams of a new Europe, are woven round the old words: *country*, *fatherland*, *patrie*. We have seen in our own day the confusion that political reformers have wrought amongst perfectly distinct political entities. There are those who seem to be totally unaware of the exact relationship between the ideas expressed by the words 'country' and 'nation'; others view the 'nation' as identical with the 'race', others again make it a synonym of 'state', and there are even some who identify it with the 'linguistic group'. A study of the etymology of these words should bring some order out of this chaos of ideas, since it shows that a 'nation' is a society composed of men who belong by birth to the same 'country', that is to say, a group of human beings which has been welded by history into unity and which may be composed of elements whose race or language often has widely differing origins. As for the 'country', 'fatherland' or *patrie*, it is essentially the

land of one's ancestors—the *terra patrum*—that is at one and the same time a land and an inheritance. It seems necessary to recall the exact meaning attributed by the Romans to the word *pater* the better to understand the meaning of the term which developed from their word *patria*.

Pater had a much wider meaning than *genitor*, the physical father. It contained the ideas of majesty and of power commanding respect. The *pater* was not only the begetter of life, he was the august head of the family; he initiated into traditions which had their origins in the depths of time; he was both law-giver and priest to the cult of the family.

The word *patria* has something of the fullness of the term from which it is derived. The *terra patrum* is the land handed down by one's ancestors, together with a whole amalgam of habits and customs, of advice silently expressed in stone remains or hidden in the sounds of a language, of traditions permeating the civic law, like prayers murmured at the foot of an altar. It was above all, for the Ancients, the site of religious cult, handed on from age to age, as Fustel de Coulanges has proved in his admirable study of *The Ancient City*.

Yet this brief study of the meaning of the terms only stimulates the desire to investigate further the problems that have sprung up around them. Contemporary battles over the ideas of 'race', 'nation' and 'language' bring us back a third time to the term 'country' and the idea it conveys.

The themes thus briefly touched upon have aroused and still arouse discussion among philosophers, whilst polemicists find in them the occasion for bitter debate. Although we refuse to espouse the passion of the partisan, we have thought it worth while before entering upon the abstract discussions of the philosophers to seek enlightenment from the history of France. For Frenchmen it cannot but prove fruitful to study the past in questions like this in which tradition plays so essential a part. Furthermore, the example given by France has a particular importance for the whole of Western Europe. And this is so not only because France was the first European country to achieve unity and so appears by comparison with younger and less experienced countries to be an experienced elder, but chiefly because the most important lesson to be learnt from the formation of France is that of the humanity with which she was fashioned. She is the child of slow and patient labour, of exceedingly gentle development tending to widen the growing human circle with a minimum of violence. The history of this peaceful assimilation, pursued in subservience to the rigours of the laws of the universe and with respect for the necessities of time and of history, is undoubtedly one of the lessons from which our age can derive greatest profit.

For this reason we have sought to recall not only the history of the native country of the French but the manner in which the concept

that native country took hold on men's minds as it was being formed, as well as the way in which patriotism came into being and developed amongst the French. Whilst examining how France was made, we have studied how the idea of France was gradually revealed to the mind and heart of the French. The unassuming patient work of the historian seeking proven facts seemed to us particularly necessary in this sphere in which errors soon arise when pure abstractions are opposed. The creation of the country of the French is, in fact, that living, real thing, the work of men's hands, bearing the marks of men's passions and of men's efforts. Sometimes it is a patient advance, sometimes a kaleidoscopic changing of frontier lines as a result of conquest by the sword or by diplomacy, as a result of political testament or expedient marriage, as a consequence of the cupidity of neighbouring states or the strife of internal dissension. At the same time it represents the adventure of a people tracing upon their soil the new pattern of man's unchanging destiny. It is a compromise between the counsels of Nature and the efforts of man, a pact made with the sometimes friendly, sometimes hostile universe and with the gods of creation. From out of these feelings, these ideas and these deeds of a people united by their common lot there has gradually emerged a pattern of civilized life, handed down through the centuries, which is as important a constituent of France as the very soil that the ancestors bequeathed to their sons.

As a new reality took life and form, men have always tried to descry the idea behind it. We know in advance that those whose opinions will help us in our study are not the Utopian dreamers, who have sought to confine the idea of country within the narrow limits of their passions or their dreams. Those whom we can most profitably consult are the few who persistently restated the general laws of the State or the particular characteristics of its tradition at those periods when the people had not awakened to their destiny or when, in periods of tragedy and confusion, they forgot it. There is a long uninterrupted chain of such men from the time when during the Middle Ages, in a world torn asunder by wars and divided into a hundred sovereign states, the clerks whispered in their clumsy Latin to barbarian kings of the wisdom underlying the unity of the old Roman Empire or of the Augustinian dream of the City of God. We know too in advance that, transcending the efforts of philosophers and law-makers, there arises from time to time in the history of a country the miracle of a poet who, in the rhythm of his song, can contain the physical aspect of a country, the virtues of a race, the secret wonders of a language, the historical recollections, the whole long patient continuity and loyalty to tradition which constitute for a people its own particular way of life that is shared by no other group of men. Only the poet can offer to his

fellow-countrymen a picture of their community that transcends the petty details of life.

It is not only in the spoken or the written word that the idea of the native country is expressed. It shows itself in acts which may be simple or heroic, in inexplicable customs as well as in sublime sacrifices, in certain consecrated deeds of generosity or of abnegation, in impulses and in silences that are more eloquent than poems. That is why to question the past on the subject which concerns us is to go on the most exciting of pilgrimages in quest of a complex and disturbing human message. For, in addition to the many easily discernible realities which are expressed in this idea of country, there must also be taken into account secret and obscure forces and the mystery which accompanies them and gives them strength. Perhaps, after all, there is nothing more comforting for a man during his troubled pilgrimage here on earth than to evoke the long travail which gave him birth, the murmur of the thousand lives which determined his and the order they achieved to shelter him from the storms of human life. In the discovery which he makes of himself and of the world as he experiences the pains and the pleasures of human life, at times when the mystery surrounding man seems overwhelming, he can stretch out his hands to this abiding answer which it has taken centuries to formulate, which is rooted in the soil and in the life of the community, and which sets familiar limits to his anxiety concerning his own destiny.

Moreover, since the birth of a country is the victory won by all the forces of concord over hostile passions, since it requires the united effort throughout the ages of a multitude of hands firmly outstretched in the same task of conservation and defence, it cannot but give, as the Philosopher would have it, the inspiring help of that highest form that has ever been assumed on earth by human friendship.

It is indeed the consciousness of this friendship which has helped us to bring this work to completion at times when the boldness of the undertaking seemed foolhardy. The idea of this book has been with us, not only in the silence of libraries and archives, where the very dust has life, but also along the familiar byways of our own beloved country of France, through its beautiful scenery now war-scarred, in the heart of battered villages and devastated cities. It has accompanied us in our journeyings in search of the secret mysterious messages of which we have spoken and which can be culled from no book. We have borne it with us in districts where the very appearance of the land bears eloquent witness to the persistent care which has gone to its shaping, to districts where words that are no longer in general use still ring in the dialects, and where, in the peace of the evening, the echo of the bells of Rheims or the acclamations of Versailles and of Paris can be heard in ballads which call up fairies and kings alike.

At such moments, a task which was really too heavy a burden seemed light, and our only wish was that this book should take its place as one more link in the chain of the many labours mentioned in its pages, that it should be like one of those humble stones that built up the cathedrals of the Middle Ages, wrought with such care and fervour by the masons in order that their devotion might compensate for the inadequacy of their work and might serve as an excuse and a messenger to bear their effort up to the utmost limits of their daring hopes.

MARIE-MADELEINE MARTIN.

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

GAUL

SEVERAL centuries before Christ the writers of Antiquity had described, at the extreme west of the old continent, a land well defined by seas and mountain ranges and showing such fortunate harmony in the arrangement of its rivers, in the position of its mountains and its plains, in the fertility and variety of its soil, that it seemed predestined to become the home of a great nation. The Mediterranean and the Pyrenees formed its southern frontier, the Atlantic bordered it the west, whilst to the east the Alps traced a third boundary. Then, in the first century A.D., Julius Caesar, in his writings, gave it the Rhine as its fourth natural frontier, one that had probably been mentioned already by the geographer Posidonius, and which was henceforward to be classic.

For a long time the region within these boundaries had no name of its own. It was only at the end of the second century B.C. that the word *Gallia*, or Gaul, became the usual term applied to it.

Moreover, the geographers, when they considered Gaul, were wrong to become too enthusiastic, as if a particular decree of the gods had made the existence within its borders of a nation-state a *necessity* without any effort being required of man. To begin with, these frontiers which seemed so clearly defined did not, on the whole, form impassable barriers. The Pyrenees and the Alps were full of passes. As for the Rhine (which could easily be crossed, despite the statements to the contrary made by some ancient writers), there converged on its valley all the roads from the north and from the centre of Europe: those from the north leading from the pirate-infested coasts, those from the centre leading from Asia with its seething, restless hordes.

Indeed, the same factors which made Gaul so fortunate were also her misfortune. She would always be coveted as a prize; she would always tempt the invader: and if any people wished to settle and make a home in this country so favoured by the gods, if any wished to hand down their inheritance from age to age, they must pay particular attention to its defence. Here they would learn, at the hand of Nature herself, that the gifts of Nature alone would not furnish an adequate basis for their fortunes.

For several centuries, in fact, Gaul was the happy hunting-ground of successive invaders, and she became a vast melting-pot for various peoples.

In the sixth century B.C. the country was inhabited by tribes whom the Greeks called *Λίγυες* and the Romans *Ligures*. They covered the whole of Western Europe as well as Gaul. Then the Ligurians were submerged by the invasion of the Iberians in the south, by the arrival of the Greeks in the region of Marseilles, and above all by the wave of Celtic invaders, who in a relatively short time completely subjugated the original inhabitants of Gaul.

Was this the birth of a real nation on the soil of France? The newcomers belonged to tribes of men with similar features and customs, who gave themselves a common name—Celts—thus making themselves a group apart in the midst of families of the same race. They had a common language and religion. They united in war and sometimes continued for a while to be allies in peace. Were they to bring about in France that identification of a people with its soil which would be the origin of the French nation?

In reality, until the second century B.C., the Celts do not seem to have considered Gaul as their own country any more than any other part of Europe. Just as the Ligurians appeared in Italy, in Spain, in the plains and mountains of Germany, in Great Britain and so on, at the same time as they appeared in Gaul, so the Celts were masters of a considerable Empire, and a geographer of the fourth century C. gives the name of *Κελτική*, Celtic, to all the land between Marseilles, the Pyrenees, the Atlantic, and the Elbe. About the same time, the Celts in Gaul suffered an invasion by tribes who came from the north as they had done, and who gave themselves a name which the Greeks transcribed as *Γαλάται*, the Romans as *Galli*, the Gauls. This name was soon to be used for all the tribes who had come from the northern plains toward Gaul: the Celts of the first conquest and their brothers of the later invasions. That is why in the third century B.C. the majority of the tribes who had settled in this Western land so admired by the Ancients were known as Gauls.

The race of these different peoples—Ligurians of the first-known settlements, Iberians, Celts, etc.—has not yet been touched upon. In the present state of historical knowledge this question seems to be shrouded in obscurity. In the writings of antiquity the names of peoples have a political or geographical but not a racial meaning, and so ancient sources throw no light on this subject. Ethnologists are still debating whether the Ligurians were Aryans or not. It is only in the vestiges of the different languages that there can be found features common to the different peoples who invaded Gaul—with the exception of the Iberians—and these connect them with the groups of peoples characterized by the use of Indo-European languages. It is very probable that the various peoples who conquered Gaul up to the fourth century B.C. were more or less alike, that their languages were akin, and that their manner of

life was in no way dissimilar to that of the rest of Europe at that time.

• These conquerors then belonged to a very complex group whose only common characteristics of a linguistic nature led to their being known as Aryan and who, more than two thousand years before Christ, controlled the whole area extending from the Alps and the Adriatic as far as the steppes of Asiatic Russia, and from the coasts of the Baltic to northern Greece. These peoples were the product of the fusion of the tribes from Russia and Turkestan with the former inhabitants of the Western lands.¹ The centre of Europe, which was to be Germany, was for a long time the principal home of this Indo-European entity whose characteristics are so fragile, complex and difficult to define, and to which it is impossible to give a racial significance. Expansion towards the more westerly parts of Europe took place during the course of the second millennium B.C., and during this expansion the Celts gradually emerged from out of these vast groups.

This question of the racial origin of the French, which raises a thousand problems, for the most part insoluble, is not regarded as of prime importance for this study. What European nation can, without incurring ridicule, invoke the purity of its origins? In such circumstances, what importance can be assigned to the discussion of a question in which the only certainties are a few very general characteristics? When the formation of France has been studied, the various aspects assumed by the racial problem as the national community was being formed will be revealed. Certain forms of privilege or self-defence which are undeniably of great interest and importance will be encountered. For the time being, this mystery on which present knowledge throws but little light can but be emphasized.

The Celts were then, at this period, masters of the greater part of Gaul. In the third century they continued their life of conquest and migration, which led them to Asia Minor. They had no intention of staying within the boundaries of Gaul. They were still a collection of tribes greedy for adventure and eager for new territories which they might acquire by force.

They did not, however, prove capable of retaining their conquests because of their lack of discipline and the essential anarchy of their institutions, and, after their brief hour of glory, they were gradually driven back to this western country which was to become their chief abode.

By now all the conditions requisite for the establishment in Gaul of a nation-state seemed fulfilled. The Celts occupied almost the whole land; they had assimilated without too much friction the tribes who had settled there before them, and also those which joined them as

¹ G. POISSON, *Les Aryens*. Paris, 1934.

a result of fresh invasions. Henceforth Greek and Roman writers call all the peoples occupying *Gallia* by the same name. A community seemed to be rising out of those local or regional groupings which had been all that the Ligurians had known. The Gauls had common customs, a common religion, a common language. What more then did they need to mould France into its first rough shape? Unfortunately, they lacked the essential: a political form to their unity, a collection of institutions which would be at one and the same time the visible sign of the cohesion of their society and its guarantee. What did it profit them to possess in common a rich country, to participate individually in a common civilization? Nowhere did they find concrete evidence of their unity. In peace they retained the rough organization of warrior tribes united by the necessities of battle, and afterwards they returned to their dissensions and their divisions. There were Gallic cities, there were small Gallic states, there was no Gallic 'nation'. Each state lived as it pleased, made its own alliances and did not feel itself bound in any way to the neighbouring state, its brother in name alone. Even within each state the tribes retained their independence and often quarrelled one with another. Neither did the family show that unity which made of the Greek γένος and the Roman *gens* such strong communities, their members united even through time and space. Fierce individualism and resulting anarchy remained an essential factor in Gallic society.

No doubt the extremely independent spirit of each of the Gallic cities was not an insurmountable obstacle to the formation of a community extending to the extreme frontiers of the territory; but it would have been necessary for some powerful organism to federate these differing states, to realize the common interest and to pursue it, and the Gauls were never able to achieve any political order. Camille Jullian has expended an infinite amount of knowledge and talent in the effort to prove that Gaul would have become united without the help of Rome, and he mentions in support of his statement the effort accomplished by Kings Améligat, Luern and Bituit, who, long before Vercingetorix, had at various times achieved a momentary unity in Gaul. To give to these warrior chiefs the title of fathers of France would be indeed to pay them a great honour since they were but displaying the normal virtues of the conqueror. The effort of one man is not sufficient to found a nation unless he establishes institutions which will give enduring life to what was valuable in his ephemeral deeds. The alliance of several tribes in time of war was no new thing in the history of the Celts: it was to recur at the time of Vercingetorix. However, it seems never to have served to keep alive in time of peace the recollection of the unity achieved in time of danger. Even on the occasion of the greatest revolt against Caesar, the Emperor found allies in many Gallic cities, and all the help that Vercingetorix obtained was partial, hesitating and short-lived. This

proves once again that his effort, like that of his forerunners, was much more the expression of the heroism and genius of an individual than that of the spirit of a community.

For this reason it is difficult to share Camille Jullian's regrets at the Roman conquest. The celebrated scholar has yielded, it seems, to a kind of romantic nostalgia for independence. This is quite superfluous here, as the sense of national community was almost non-existent among the Gauls. It was Rome who brought to Gaul the political constitution *without which she would never have become the home of one single nation*. It can never be too often repeated that, from the beginning of French history, Nature had shown herself both accommodating and harsh towards the peoples who wished to make Gaul their own property for ever. In their case the need for a strong organization was unusually great, and since the Gauls had never been able to achieve this organization for themselves they remained the prey of various conquerors, and their territory remained a battleground for invading armies where clans might have intermingled for centuries without a real nation-state ever being organized.

It seems idle to reconstruct history after the event, and to dwell upon the dream of what might have been. But the work of Rome plays too large a part in French history, and especially in the field under review, for it to be dismissed without adequate discussion from the outset. Moreover, the opinion of Jullian and his disciples can be explained not only by the sentiment mentioned earlier, but also by the need to react against the rather exasperating fetishism sometimes displayed by the admirers of Rome. The French had for too long considered the Gauls as extremely primitive barbarians and paid Rome the honour of regarding her as the dispenser of all the gifts of their civilization. When the progress of historical science made it possible to review certain of the statements of ancient writers and at the same time to supplement much of their information, Jullian discovered the glory of Gaul and seems to have been taken by surprise and dazzled. He showed that many roads had already been made in this country where it had been thought that nothing existed but dense forests and marshland. In several places the towns were surrounded by walls. Economic life was fairly well developed, and there was a strong organization among tribes settled in the same district, who had a common market, common sanctuaries, and common ensigns for war. He showed that the Celts were the creators of the majority of the markets, the centres of population, the villages and the towns of France, as well as being the basic elements of the great mass of the French. Then, as he did not care to make a comparison between the intellectual life of classical Rome and this poor country Gaul, in which the teaching of the Druids, who despised the use of writing, was restricted to a caste, he stressed instead the relations of Gaul with the

Greek world through Phocaean Marseilles, and he asserted that, under Greek influence, Gaul might have given birth to a refined civilization with a character of its own which the Roman conquest killed for ever.

Once more let it be said that the reconstruction of the past on the basis of 'what might have been' is pointless. Even though one were to agree with Jullian about the strength and value of Gallic civilization, there is no reason at all for regretting the Roman conquest. Would Greek influence alone have helped the Gauls to reach the degree of civilization achieved by classical Rome? At the time of Caesar and Vercingetorix, Greece had been a Roman province for a hundred years. Gaul would therefore have been influenced by this Roman province. In fact she was influenced by Rome herself, steeped in all that was worth saving of Greek culture. Nor could Greece have given Gaul that political order which was essential to her and which Rome provided. Would Gaul at least have remained independent? Nothing is less certain, and the reasons have been made sufficiently clear already. It was Rome who protected Gaul from invasion for three hundred years, giving her the only long period of peace she had ever known. The continued importance for three centuries of the defences built along the Rhine, shows the greatness of the danger and at the same time the value of the protection. Jullian says that this defence assured by Rome was only a convenient theme invoked by the propagandists of the Roman Empire to justify its conquests. The apologetic intention of most of the Latin writers who celebrated the *Pax Romana* may be conceded, but it sometimes happens that propagandists utter profound truths. In this case the facts prove them right. The Gauls had never succeeded in raising a coherent and disciplined army, any more than they could set up the other institutions of a real state. Here is a crucial point which shows the benefits brought by Rome to be undeniable and essential to a people which had not the means to preserve its independence and never possessed a real feeling of unity.

The victory of Rome cannot be considered as a disaster inflicted on a nation which did not exist. Gaul had provided only the confused *elements* of what was to be France, and it was only after the conquest that they were to achieve some order. All that deserved to survive did so. A vigorous people, full of courage and passion, which henceforth provided the Imperial army with its best soldiers, learnt from Rome that even if a nation does not survive without war-like virtues, it cannot live on those alone. A talkative, boasting people, delighting in the play of words, was initiated into the rigours of dialectics necessitated by the cult of long ornate speeches in an Empire of jurists. Finally, the small regions of land on which the Gallic and sometimes even the Ligurian tribes had firmly established themselves were to outlast the Roman conquest, and so were those in which several tribes had banded together to

from the Gallic states which the Romans called *civitates*. They effected the necessary compromises between the counsels of Nature and the work of man, so that almost all endured, basic elements of a more widespread future community, through the vicissitudes which one day culminated in the formation of France. The city of the Arverni became modern *Auvergne*, that of the Lemovici *Limousin*, that of the Biturigi *Berry*, and so on, and if in Gallic times these cities were never able to develop into true minor states they had at least received at this period the features essential to their future destiny.

The history of Gaul has shown the existence of certain elements probably capable of forming a nation-state in the future, but gives no certitude that it will ever exist.

One young warrior alone had dreamed of future unity: the solitary grandeur of Vercingetorix's personal achievement must be recognized. It seems clear that this achievement was in no way the synthesis of the aspirations towards unity of a people, but remained a dream ripening in the minds of solitary heroes. Such dreams, when shaped by real creators, vanish in time. Gaul, undisciplined and full of confusion, before it disappeared left to future centuries the image of a champion of unity. And Vercingetorix himself, whose destiny was so magnificent yet tragic, who at the very time of his insurrection was having Latin phrases engraved on his Gallic coins, seems to have understood from which direction would come the discipline and the law without which the effort of courage alone would be fruitless.

CHAPTER II

'PAX ROMANA'

AFTER the victory of Caesar over Gaul it was universally believed that the old myths celebrating the domination of the world by one conqueror had been fulfilled in the achievements of Rome. A single city ruled most of the territories of both East and West and, compared with its glory, the exploits of a Cyrus or an Alexander seemed extraordinarily fragile epics, sustained only by the ephemeral desire of one man. For Rome had found the way to *endure*, by perpetuating in institutions the fleeting action of a genius or a hero. Mistress of the greater part of the known world, she also possessed the secret which ~~exercises~~ all conquests; to the fortune of war succeeded the prestige of lasting benefits; and her authority in no way resembled a crushing tyranny, for she respected all that was worthy to endure in the conquered country.

In this way there had developed along the shores of the Mediterranean that extraordinary Empire in which so many different civilizations found their place in the harmony of a protecting order. Rome left to all men their customs, their work and their gods, but she thrust on them the double bulwark of her armies and her laws. Then, the impressiveness of the benefits she brought being bound up with that of her force, she achieved by patience a more complete conquest than by her first victory. Gradually each people came to see in Rome, not a foreign protector but its true mother country, the source of its language and the home of its gods.

Rome at that time appeared no longer simply as the arbiter of contemporary life, she also endowed the conquered with the glory of her past. By gradually granting to every subject of the Empire the title of Roman citizen she welcomed them into the jealous groups of her families and her original tribes, she imposed on them her age-long memories, she forced them to feel bound to the founders of the supreme city and alongside their real fathers she set traditional ancestors at the very roots of their past. For each inhabitant of the Empire, during the three centuries of the *Pax Romana*, the idea of fatherland became identified, despite a host of subtle differences and marked peculiarities, with this city which gave its name to the West.

Let us see what happened in Gaul. The apparent paradox is that it was the conqueror who was the first to assure through solid institutions the independence of the conquered country. It was Rome who definitely decided the particularistic destiny of Gaul.

First of all the name *Gallia*, which the Latin authors used according to convention for this land inhabited by separate tribes, became the visible sign of a political unification which unceasingly developed. In the first century, when Augustus set up two separate governments for *Gallia Togata*, the province, and *Gallia Comata*, the rest of Gaul conquered by Caesar, he was only emphasizing, by means of an artificial distinction, the seniority of the province in the Roman community, for he gave the same law to these two parts of Gaul, determined the powers of the governors in the same way and imposed identical tributes and taxes. When Agrippa bestowed the benefit of a huge network of roads on the territory conquered by Caesar he not only introduced the solid backbone of the Imperial highways, the milestones marking them and the police organization to protect them, he built a unified system of roads emphasizing or completing for the first time the advice of Nature, namely to make of Gaul the patrimony of one nation. Rome also gave her new province a single monetary system with coins of fixed weight and value. In this way she endowed the conquered country with all those institutions which combine the most primitive interests of men, merge their daily habits, unite them in their daily tasks and prepare them for a community of ideas and feelings. In each tribe Augustus gradually imposed the principle of the municipal civilization of antiquity which made of an important town the very heart of a nation, whether large or small, the living centre where economic interests and the noblest aspirations met. The Gauls, whose *civitates* had always been rent with quarrels between tribes, now saw new states arising and at the centre of each one a large town with its houses, statues and temples, the vigorous signs of a common civilization. Finally, at the junction of important roads and rivers, on a spot which seemed to constitute at the same time the geometrical centre of Gaul, the sign of her attachment to Italy and of her orientation towards Rome, the town of Lyons became the capital, partly because of its economic importance and partly because of the spiritual glory by which it was surrounded. The sacred town of the Imperial cult, the centre of Gallic Christianity, it provided the province conquered by Caesar with a new and grandiose symbol of unity.

But at the same time as she was accomplishing this work of internal unification Rome was preparing the cohesion of Gaul in another way. After Roman attempts to penetrate into Germany had failed, Gaul was given a very special and well-defined place in the Empire as a frontier district facing the barbarians. The die was cast. It was several centuries before those on the far side of the Rhine became the defenders of the advanced borders of the West against the threat from Asia. The rampart of the Roman Empire was in Gaul, and the River Rhine, which writers had already indicated as the frontier of the country conquered by

Caesar, became the limit on which Rome built her defences, epitomizing for France, in a striking image, the continual menace which overhangs its destiny. Julian himself admits that the Roman conquerors, 'by leaving on the border of this land an enemy ever to be feared, showed the men of Gaul the wisdom of unity and the need for agreement. When they fixed the limit of the Empire at this great river, Augustus and his successor determined the destiny of Gaul.'

Unifying measures, a vivid demonstration of a common danger making agreement advisable, such was Rome's contribution towards the creation of one fatherland on the soil of Gaul. But she did not stop there. A model conqueror, she let the qualities and essential peculiarities of lands and peoples remain in all their strength and exuberance. Thanks to her, some of them developed so magnificently that the country's own originality was more manifest in its defeat than had been possible in its period of independence. Indeed one of the first consequences of the *Pax Romana*, of the long period of tranquillity and security which it bestowed, was the turning of the people from the constant waging of war towards the arts of peace. Who till then had really developed this rich land of Gaul? The earlier efforts made by the Ligurians and the Celts must be borne in mind, but they are quite unrelated to the extraordinary prosperity of agriculture throughout the period of the *Pax Romana*. It was under the guidance of Rome that Gaul first realized to the full the wealth that the gods had bestowed on her in her rich soil.

It was Rome too who at last gave a code and a certain order to those Gallic soldiers whose bravery, if not their discipline, had dazzled antiquity. It was Rome who created throughout the land those schools of rhetoric in which a people with a certain skill and dexterity in the use of words hastened to learn that eloquence has its rules, and in a short while provided the Empire with its best jurists,¹ as well as with its finest soldiers. And so the authority of Rome, by means of the blessing of order, brought about the triumph of what had been up till then only confused riches and barely perceptible qualities. It allowed Gaul to reveal three features which fixed more than any others the particular role of the province among all the other provinces of the Empire: the richness and extraordinary variety of the land, the mettle of her army and a taste for wit and for playing with words.

So it seems that within the great community of the Roman Empire Gaul showed for the first time real and sure signs of its future unity. The geographers, the artists and the poets of the Empire moreover recognized its particularism, and this country, with its boundaries clearly fixed by the administrative system of a strong power, reminded

¹ Domitius Afer, Petronius, Sidonius Apollinarius and Ausonius were Gauls, and Agricola was educated at Marseilles.

the Roman writers' of all the glory of the migrant Celts of former days. It was to this society, fixed between the Atlantic, the Pyrenees, the Mediterranean, the Alps and the Rhine, that they now attached the weighty inheritance of those who, greedy and passionate, eager for war and adventure, had passed through so many countries of the old world. By linking the past with the present, by their imaginative evocations, they ascribed to the Gaul of earlier days the unity which in reality it had not known.

It was Roman Gaul which presented the first outline of a real native country. What idea did those who lived in this country form of it?

Undoubtedly the citizen of each circumscription in Roman Gaul must have felt a local loyalty (dating from far-off times) towards those small areas which were each the home of a single tribe and which, as we have seen, had long ago acquired a unity that both Nature and men's needs prescribed.

But the Gaul of former days was certainly less attached to his land, because he had remained a migrating conqueror and also, above all, a warrior. So Rome, by bringing peace, strengthened the feeling of attachment to the land in communities which became more settled. But especially did she develop the feeling of social unity in her *civitates*, within which trade and contacts were multiplied by the establishment of roads, by economic prosperity, unity of administration and, above all, the benefits of a single civilization. The particularist tribe now experienced fusion with other tribes in the embrace of a State which imposed its strong organization on diversities allowed to exist but kept in check.

When the Gallo-Roman of the new *civitas* pronounced the words *patria, terra patrum*, he was necessarily including among his ancestors both those of Caesar's people and those of the people of Vercingetorix. All was merged, adapted, reconciled. Along the roads, by the side of rivers, in the heart of valleys, at the entrance of mountain passes, villages and sacred places, fortresses and market-places kept Ligurian or Celtic names, recognizable under their Latin cloak, and the old gods who peopled the land and the waters and the skies of the Gauls did not die. But from now on these represented only the most primitive roots of patriotism, old obscure links and almost petrified tokens. Like new blood infused into a mummified body, it was the life of Rome which regulated the destinies of Gaul, which was able to render the most ordinary actions of men instinct with the presence of her dominating genius, which reared above the family hearth her enduring stone roofs, threw her bridges and massive aqueducts across river and valley, gave to the farmer in his work and to the merchant in his trade new tools and wiser customs. It was Rome who built towns, raised theatres and triumphal arches, opened schools, promulgated laws and maintained the sword of defence vigilant upon the ramparts. It was she who demanded

to be worshipped as were the very gods in her temples, just as if heaven and earth mingled boldly in the heart of eternal Rome. And the cardinal symbol of her intrusion into the everyday life of the peoples lay in the fact that it was her language which was on all lips, which gave names to the features of the land, to the differing occupations and days, and which bore the prayers of men towards the gods.

Through this language which henceforth set its mark upon the most tenacious survivals of the Celtic past,² through the legal adoption of every Gaul into the ancient family of the sovereign people at the time when the right of citizenship was being more widely granted,³ the memories and traditions of Rome became the common heritage of conquerors and conquered. Thus there can be no mistake about the form assumed by the idea of patriotism for a Gallo-Roman. If henceforward Gaul was aware of its own individuality it was as a province of a great Empire which was the true mother country of all.

It is true that during the centuries of the *Pax Romana* writers recognize the well-marked particularism of France. Sidonius Apollinarius, in his correspondence, calls Gaul '*patria nostra*' on several occasions. But, like the other writers of his time, the great prelate reserves his homage above all for that higher loyalty which was on the way to becoming universal. All praise the Rome which the *Digest* calls '*Roma communis patria*',⁴ which Pliny had already named '*tua cunctorum gentium in toto orbe patria*', and which Sidonius Apollinarius exalts as '*unica totius mundi civitas*'. Tacitus noted that the Gauls loved Rome as their true fatherland.⁵ The Emperor Claudius emphasized the close bonds which united Gaul to the Empire as displayed in the obstinate fidelity of a whole people to the city which for the first time gave the world the hope that a unified system of law might govern all peoples.

Well before the fourth century there appeared in popular language the word *Romania* to denote the Empire, and there is no more characteristic example of the spreading among all the conquered peoples of the feeling that all belong to a common mother civilization, that the differing nations are knit together beneath the mantle of Rome.

The time was at hand when the overstrained system was to show weaknesses, the dream to change and fade, the protecting power to be transformed into a vexatious tyranny. But at the beginning of the third century the *Pax Romana* is the cement which binds the West together.

² It is probable that the native languages of Gaul began to disappear in the fourth century. They were not completely obsolete for another one or two centuries.

³ The edict of Caracalla in 212 granted citizen rights to all the inhabitants of the Empire, but this measure, which had been one of the most cherished dreams of Caesar, had already been very widely applied in Gaul, particularly during the reign of Claudius.

⁴ *Digest*, I, i, 33-XXVII, 1, 6, 11, xlviii, 22, 18.

⁵ '*Nec amore in hanc patriam nobis concedunt*' (*Annales*, xi, 24).

CHAPTER III

THE COLLAPSE OF AN EMPIRE

TOWARDS the end of the third century the life of the Roman Empire was disturbed by various events which at first seemed to herald a passing crisis but which, as it happened, modified from top to bottom the very structure of the State that governed the life of the West. First of all as soon as the hereditary principle ceased to determine the succession to the Imperial throne rivalries and bloody struggles followed the death of each sovereign. Then barbarian tribes overthrew the defences of the Rhine, swept into Gaul, and wrought appalling destruction on the country. Finally internal risings, following on the disorder and general distress, increased the anarchy and ruin into which the country was suddenly plunged.

These events did not endanger the existence of the Empire, but they did cause irreparable harm and changed for ever the social organization of the peoples united by Rome.

A decisive change took place in the town life of Gaul. The devastated towns were rebuilt on a smaller scale, and became strongholds of defence against the ever-present barbarian menace. Life in them became mean and dreary. The municipal privileges which constituted one of the most characteristic aspects of the Gallo-Roman political order had received a mortal blow. These municipal privileges, thanks to which the towns had been granted a fair measure of autonomy, officials elected by themselves and their own revenues, these privileges which left the urban groups full liberty to manage their private affairs once the public obligations of tax-paying and military service had been fulfilled, were the best guarantee against the omnipotence of the state. Henceforward the central government in Gaul was no longer counter-balanced by flourishing local governments.

These latter lost all their strength through the increasingly marked disappearance of the middle class. The destruction and disorder of the third century carried to extremes the division of Roman society into classes: there were property owners who were the only possessors of riches, and commoners who were reduced almost to slavery. During the first three centuries A.D. a regular rise from class to class had been the general rule of Western society, and a powerful stimulant to hard work by all. Not only could slaves be enfranchised, plebeians could rise to the rank of *curiales* (a class of small landowners), and *curiales* to the rank of senators (senatorial rank being restricted to the richest

men). But, following the disturbances of the third century, work slowed down in the Empire, and the progress of the common people stopped short at the very moment when the middle classes were on the brink of ruin. So the importance of the aristocratic class grew out of all proportion, for it alone possessed landed estate in a society in which personal estate was almost non-existent. In the depopulated towns, as in the devastated country districts, the population was soon reduced to two groups: a powerful despotic aristocracy and a common people with no influence.

'From now on', writes Fustel de Coulanges, 'the landed class, which had always been preponderant, became absolute master, and ruled the whole society. The absence of personal wealth inevitably made the small estate dependent on the large. . . . So the small landowners, like the common people, were at the mercy of the large property owners.'¹

The vast rural domains acquired, moreover, an essential importance after the destruction of numerous Gallic cities. Almost everyone returned to live in the country,² and so, in Roman Gaul, independent political entities began to take shape: those small proud sovereign states which, during the centuries to follow, were through continued advances to take to themselves the attributes of the central power. The political and social cohesion of the Roman Empire was not destroyed by the invasions of the fifth century. It was broken much earlier by the internal changes caused by the destruction and anarchy of the end of the third century.

The great Gallo-Roman landowners of the later Empire enjoyed at first an almost regal authority because their lands were considered to be outside the area of the city. This increased their prestige. They were feudal lords before feudalism. In their vast luxurious dwellings with their innumerable apartments, their splendid halls, their porticoes and their baths, they divided their time between managing their estates and the pleasures of hunting or of literature. The important public posts were reserved for them, and it was gradually becoming clear that their power was coming between the inhabitants of the domain and the State.

These inhabitants of the domain were far from being all slaves. Certainly the master still employed slaves to tend the part of his property which was for his own use. But another considerable part was cultivated by freedmen, farmers and husbandmen, a whole community whose condition was that of free men, but who were tied to the soil and bound to the master by obligations, contracts and bonds. The scarcity

¹ FUSTEL DE COULANGES, *La Gaule romaine*, pp. 193-4.

² In the third century an inhabitant of the *civitas* might be called either *incola* or *civis* (cf. VERCAUTEREN, *Les civitates de la Belgique seconde*).

of money increased their importance, and their condition tended to become gradually more uniform. The landlord was, however, the real master of all those who worked on his land. Soon he exercised over them the essential prerogative of the State, that of justice.³ It was during this period that *patronage* developed, that is the principle of personal bondage which became the essential characteristic of feudal society. 'The man who took a *patron*', writes Fustel de Coulanges, 'became the servant of another man, and thereby ceased to be the servant of the State. So the Empire gradually lost an infinite number of subjects who went to swell the ranks of those dependent on the great landowners.'

At this point the Imperial government, wishing to take counter-measures in the face of this threatening situation, succeeded only in making it worse. This event is of capital importance to our inquiry. For the idea of the *State*, the idea of an organism inspiring and co-ordinating all the elements of a society which had the same inheritance, had been the chief contribution brought by Rome to all peoples and particularly to Gaul. But this idea, like the twin-faced divinities of antiquity, had its good and bad aspects.

It was good in that it showed that political order is the essential basis for prosperity and for the perfection of communities of men that wish to persist and preserve their material and moral patrimony. It was bad when it exaggerated this beneficial idea into the *idolatry of the State*, which, from being the regulator of the prosperity of all, might become a tyrant and exact payment for its service through unbearable oppression.

Nothing is better nor more *indispensable* than that the State should maintain order among the various cells of the social body, should be the arbiter of conflicts and should preserve, above the clash of particular interests, the sense of the general interest (Gaul had provided an example of this, for she had been really united and become conscious of her destiny only within the order of the *Pax Romana*). But when the same State penetrates into realms where it opposes the essential liberties of man and where it usurps sacred rights, then its action becomes harmful, it chokes the life of a nation instead of regulating its movement.

The Imperial government made this capital mistake in the third century. It imposed restrictions on the daily life of men within the cities as on the country estates. Free farmers, freedmen and husbandmen were bound to the soil they cultivated lest their desertion of the countryside should endanger the collection of the land taxes which were essential for the healthy condition of the finances of the State (a State which was becoming more and more omnipotent, interfering everywhere, multiplying the number of its officials and consequently enorm-

³ Justice was exercised by the *dominus* and by the bishops from about the fourth century.

ously increasing its expenditure). And in the towns, Rome officially imposed the burden of certain public offices on people who wished to escape them.⁴ Yet these tyrannical measures only increased the state of anarchy. Cities which had enjoyed a fairly autonomous existence began to decay as soon as they became mere cogs in the administrative machine and felt themselves checked by the sovereign power instead of being protected by it. Their inhabitants fled into the country. On the country estates the farmers and husbandmen were tied to the land they tilled and also bound, but more closely, to the master of the land. So throughout Roman Gaul men felt themselves more and more withdrawn from a far-off mechanical unchanging power and drawn closer to local authorities which were familiar, efficient and suited to the local needs of the time.

At the very moment when the power of the State over the society it was seeking to control was diminishing so considerably another force was about to undermine the old-time devotion of the peoples towards Rome. According to ancient ideas the worship of the gods was closely bound up with the government of the city. The magistrates of the towns were priests as well. Their functions embraced not only civil duties but all the ceremonies, games and prayers which the worship of the gods entailed. In consequence, when Rome demanded worship for herself, she was committing no sacrilege towards the Pantheon of her heavenly protectors, since she considered herself as the home of gods and men alike, the geometrical point at which the influences of earth and heaven converged. Worship of Rome involved worship of her gods, for they were mingled with her just as within each home the invisible *lares* shared the day-to-day existence of the small community of the living.

Now in Roman Gaul the end of the third century saw the spread of Christianity, whose victories before that time had been negligible. Henceforward there was a clear distinction between the city of Caesar and the City of God. The Roman State demanded the service of both the body and soul of man, his adherence to a divine and human order, summed up in the name of a town. But the Christian Church broke up this bold synthesis; it taught men that, though they were bound to Caesar in so far as was necessary to ensure public order and justice, they belonged in their secret soul to the invisible world over which Caesar had no power. In the very town of Lyons, which Rome had made the capital of the Imperial cult, the martyrdom of a little slave-girl called Blandine (who was to be the first saint of the Gallic Church) showed the peoples that the hierarchy of the kingdom of souls could

⁴ The Empire entrusted the local senates with the task of providing what were called *tax-collectors*, it being fully understood that with the depreciation of the currency the tax consisted for the most part of commodities that had to be requisitioned, stored and distributed, etc. This necessitated a great many officials.

overthrow the proud order of the classes of their cities. The idea of the Divine State had had its day, and it was in vain that Rome threw the Christians to the beasts during the games in the circuses. The blood of martyrs raised a harvest of new converts. Within the towns magistrates refused to fill offices which obliged them to worship idols, and in the year 314 Rome accepted the victory of the new religion and granted Christianity the freedom of the Empire. Throughout Gaul, beginning in the fourth century, bishops established the strength of their spiritual sovereignty at the side of the civil power. No doubt these prelates did not oppose the power of the State with which they had made peace, but they were separate from it. They freed souls from the complete and undisputed adherence they had paid to Rome for so long. So, at the very moment when a breach had been made in the power of the Roman State by the new sovereignty of the owners of the rural domains, the spread of Christianity robbed it of its moral strength and the greater part of its spiritual domination over the subject peoples.

The Empire, now much weakened in its internal structure, was at the same time increasingly threatened by the barbarians on its frontiers. By the third century, numerous bands of Germans had already infiltrated into the Western Empire. Gradually they filled the ranks of the army. They were accepted in several parts of the Empire as confederates, allies or fellow-countrymen. Each day it became more and more evident that their young unbridled strength represented the third heir to the effective power of which Rome was already being deprived by the local suzerainty of the great landowners and by the moral power monopolized by the Church.

The invasions of the barbarians in the fifth century only brought to a violent end the evolution that had begun two hundred years before in Roman Gaul. In reality the break-up of the Empire had been taking place slowly for two centuries.

The events that have just been summarized indicate the modifications undergone by the idea of the native country in this new world in process of formation. As we have seen the country, the *patria*, of a Gaul in the first, second and third centuries was Rome, the great Rome that was a mother to all the peoples under her sway. And it is important to notice that in spite of the faults of the Empire and all the upheavals that had taken or were taking place, writers still thought of her in the same way. In the fifth century, at the very moment when the city of Clermont was being besieged by the Goths, a young man undertook to compose a public declamation. When the barbarian was knocking at the gates, was it not necessary to evoke the inheritance of one's fathers and the civilization one was about to defend? Now this young

rhetorician, living in the ancient Gergovie of Vercingetorix, wrote a *epulogy of Caesar*. In the same period Salvien calls his Gallic compatriots *Romani*, and various letters or chronicles of the time use the same name for the inhabitants of Gaul. The Gallic poet Rutilius Namatianus invokes in Rome the incomparable conqueror who has created a single mother country for unlike peoples and has 'given the name of a town to what was formerly the universe'.⁵ For all thinkers and scholars the native land of a Gaul is always Rome.

It must be said here, however, that the works of writers no longer expressed a state of mind common to all. Beginning in these years during which the Empire was breaking up, there came to exist in Gaul a more and more marked opposition, which lasted for many centuries, between the political ideas of certain thinkers and the reality forced on men of a society divided. Most writers expressed regrets, recollections, wishes. Their work consisted in preserving for better times this Roman idea of the unity of the State, around which would one day be born the true French motherland.

The reality of life, however, was the breaking up, the division of society. When they talk of the mother country, thinkers, sovereigns and people all have in mind differing conceptions and different facts.

Much time, patience and effort were to be necessary before a community brought together by men of action rose once more on the soil of Roman Gaul, in which the political teaching of the city had made men aware of the miraculous advice of geography. When a historian turns to the history of France he is tempted to see an inevitable continuity in the succession of events which led to the unity of the country. But an examination of the facts restores its rightful importance to the part played by leaders and founders, reminds one that a country does not make itself, nor is it made by some obscure will of the people, and that the idea of continual progress in the life of nations is nothing but a myth. In the fifth century there was nothing but chaos and disorder throughout the whole of Roman Gaul, and none could maintain that one day a community would come to life on this territory, at that time a confusion of rival warring barbarian states.

Out of this hurricane of disaster and destruction two ideas of country in particular seem to take shape in the minds of the majority of men, parallel with the ideas of the writers. The first is the attachment to the invisible world where so many misfortunes and sufferings will find their explanation and be alleviated. All historians who have studied this period emphasize the disdain then shown for a public life full of horrors and evils and on the other hand the importance assumed by the King-

⁵ *'Fecisti patriam diversis gentibus unam: Urbem fecisti quae prius orbis erat'* (RUTILIUS NAMATIUS, *Itiner*, v, 63).

dom of Heaven. At the end of the fourth century monasteries were organized for the first time in the West on the model of those of the East and they were soon filled with people disappointed with earthly cities. It is very significant too that during the last years of the fifth century there disappeared completely from the inscriptions on Gallic funeral monuments any indications of what had been the family, the profession, the social rank or the city of the deceased, details to which the pagans had been so attached. Henceforward what did all the distinctions of this world matter to neophytes burning with a new faith? These Christians wished for no other title than that of servant of Christ. The City of God tended to replace completely the city of Caesar. In the works of St. Augustine the word *patria* is several times used to denote the next world, and this is not just a writer's formula, but the exact reflection of a state of mind common to many men of the time.

The second conception that was taking shape was that which permeated so many centuries of the Middle Ages. Men's idea of the community to which they were attached became narrower and narrower, and patriotism became limited to the family and the small corner of the earth where one was born, the jealous clan and the restricted region where one belonged to a master who was near at hand.

These two ideas of country are due especially to the influence of the only power transcending the general chaos, that is to say to the Church. It was the Church which, by retaining the administrative frameworks of Roman Gaul for her own ecclesiastical districts, maintained for the peoples the thread of tradition which bound them to the social groups of their ancestors. The Gallo-Roman *civitates* almost all became the dioceses of the bishops of Christian Gaul. Moreover, the great evangelists of the time, like St. Hilary and St. Martin, almost always built their sanctuaries in the sacred places of paganism, so that new generations of Christians knelt at the very spots where their fathers had prayed, thus finding in the call of a new religion the memories which bound them to the community of the dead. In this way the Church maintained the traditional framework in Gaul and so saved the Gallo-Roman community from complete destruction. It was the Church too which directed this society more and more towards thought about the invisible world which seemed so important to men of that time that it deserves a place in a history of the development of patriotism.

However, Christian doctrine on this subject was about to be defined. Already in 314, at the first council of the Gallic Church held at Arles, citizens who refused to do military service for Rome, claiming that a Christian should hate war, were excommunicated.⁶ Did not Christ say that his kingdom was not of this world, and that duties towards Caesar

⁶ 'De his qui arma proliciunt . . . placuit abstinere eos de communione . . .' (Concil. Arél., I, iii).

should be fulfilled as well as those directly ordained by God? Does not the Fourth Commandment require men to defend their ancestral inheritance? The greatest philosopher of the fifth century, St. Augustine (reminding men that the kingdoms of this world are transitory, that the fall of Rome should not surprise them and that other cities will arise remembering her glory), also affirmed that the Church has no intention of usurping the power of the State.⁷ So the question remained open in Gaul: secular power would not be assumed by the Church.⁸

⁷ Concerning Christian soldiers who accepted service under Julian the Apostate, St. Augustine writes that these men have succeeded in making the distinction between their heavenly master and their temporary master here below, and that it is in order to show obedience to the social order desired by God that they have remained in the service of an ungodly man. '*Distinguebant Dominum aeternum a domino temporali et tamen subditi erant propter dominum aeternum etiam domino temporali*' (St. AUGUSTINE, *O.O.*, I, xv, pp. 75-6).

⁸ It is true that St. Augustine means that the power of the State should be subordinate to the Church. But the important thing from our point of view is that he makes a distinction between them. If later on during the Middle Ages his teaching often became a convenient flag for ecclesiastical domination, it remains true that in the fifth century it expressed only the priority of the spiritual over the temporal.

CHAPTER IV

'FRANCIA'

BIT BY bit Gaul fell into the hands of the barbarians. It seemed at the end of the fifth century that the Visigoths were about to form a great Empire consisting of Spain and the south of Gaul, the capital of which would have been Toulouse. Then suddenly the face of destiny changed and Clovis the Frank opened the gates of the future to his tribe. Clovis conquered all the barbarian kingdoms (Visigoth, Burgundian, etc.) as well as the phantom Gallo-Roman state between the Loire and the Seine which perpetuated the memory of *Romania*. It was the Franks who were to guide the destinies of the greater part of Gaul, and the Church brought them all the support of her moral prestige over the different tribes. In front of the Baptistery of Rheims, Bishop Rémi consecrated the warriors' victory.

So the audacity and skill of a barbarian re-established unity in this land. Unfortunately this was but the semblance of unity for the Frankish sovereigns (whether Merovingians or early Carolingians) who were to succeed each other up to Charlemagne, were to behave like mere chieftains of warrior tribes, conquering territory here and there and then dividing it up among their children according to the principles governing the regulation of private property in Teutonic society. The kingdom of these turbulent Franks was to have unstable and uncertain frontiers, unceasingly modified by the fortunes of war and stretching at various times to Bohemia, to the Vistula, to Carniola, to Istria, to Lombardy, to Tuscany and so on. As in the time of the migrating Celts, Gaul no longer seemed to form a single kingdom. She was one part of a huge domain in which territorial divisions were perpetually changing their chiefs and their names.

It is to be noted that the Frankish kings, in the titles of their official documents or in the inscriptions on their coins, always called themselves *rex Francorum* and not *rex Franciae*. They were the kings of a people and not of a country. Their attitude remained that of tribal chieftains. The kingdom for them was not a definite inheritance, the seat of an equally definite civilization, it was the spoils of war, the fruits of conquest, which they could add to, take from or share out as they would a heap of booty taken from the enemy. Contemporary chroniclers, writing of the subjects of the Merovingians, persistently use the terms *gens*¹ and *natio*

¹ From the time of the later Empire the word *gentes* was often used for armed forces, particularly barbarian forces in contrast with Roman troops (which strengthens our argument).

Francorum, two words which can be translated by 'people of the Franks'. They also called the kingdom the *regnum*; but these two ideas of 'people' and of 'kingdom' had no other meaning for them than that of 'possessions of a warrior chief'. Territory and subjects were only the changing booty of a victorious king, not the synthesis of a land, its people and the civilization that has brought them together after the effort of a long line of ancestors.

It is true that the Frankish kings seemed to take to themselves the inheritance of Roman institutions. Moreover, the distant sovereign reigning at Byzantium considered the establishment of the Western barbarian dynasties as *de facto*, not *de jure*. Ideally the Empire continued to exist. Even when the Merovingians (as their power increased) affirmed more and more their separation from the body of the Empire, they still preserved in appearance the traditions of the Roman sovereigns of the fourth and fifth centuries. Several of their palace customs were survivals of that period. The titles of their official documents were borrowed from the Imperial Chancellery; their way of dating their records often brought to life again the names of the Roman Kalends; certain of their officers bore the names of officials of the later Empire. Most of their coins (at least during the sixth century) were replicas of Imperial coins. The edicts, the letters and even the laws of the barbarians were written in Latin. Finance and justice were much the same as during the Roman decadence. These barbarians, who knew nothing but the art of war, had to borrow from Rome all the institutions of peace.

Nevertheless the distinction must be made between appearance and reality. The Frankish kings, faced with the legacy of Rome, were like children fascinated by scenery, costumes and formulae, all the exterior garb of institutions whose essence they did not fathom. The traditions to which they became attached were hardly more than a fragile empty shell, a façade covering the anarchical customs of triumphant barbarians. It has already been emphasized that with them the idea of State became completely clouded over, since the kingdom seemed to them a private property that could therefore be shared and modified. Under their rule Gaul was the scene of family quarrels, in which brothers killed each other for the possession of a piece of land. The idea of public service was completely foreign to them. They did not even pay their officials or their soldiers. They did not make it their business either to protect the weak or to render justice to the oppressed. Moreover, their power being above all founded on physical force, they knew the frailty of their rule, but, unlike Rome, they did not know how to perpetuate in institutions the passing victory they owed to the sword. They had recourse only to the old methods of minor chieftains. They required allegiance from their subjects to their *person*, since they would have found it difficult to win it for power, a power representing so little

protection and justice, the essential attributes of a state. The reign of personal influence, of *patronage*, was setting in. With the extension of the personification of power there was no longer, overriding men of the same country, that authority, permanent in character, incarnate in the continuity of a family or a city, which is a synthesis of the strength and warrant of law. There was only an ephemeral chief, menaced by all the caprices of fortune or the jealousy of other chiefs, a despot too, uneasily restrained by the remonstrances of the clergy or the opposition of the great. The essence of the political legacy of Rome was flouted by the Franks at the very time when they were affirming their fidelity to it, for their anarchical power destroyed the formula of unity brought by Caesar to the Gauls. From Rome the Merovingians took, together with the fossilized tradition of external trappings, all the faults of the administration and government of the later Empire, and they increased their weakening effect on the State by behaving like warlords let loose. Bloody struggles were to set by the ears the men from the different regions of this province which had been unified by the *Pax Romana*, struggles which were to hasten the dismembering of the country which began in the disorders of the fifth century. Aquitanians fought with Neustrians, and Austrasians with Burgundians in battles in which the unity of Roman Gaul was undone.

Nevertheless, while political cohesion was five centuries old, a new racial element was about to be absorbed by the Gallo-Roman population.² What of this Frankish people that settled in the country? The name of *Franci*, which appeared in history for the first time in 240, was applied to a federation of several Germanic tribes, each of which had its own name (Salians, Ripuairians, etc.). When they conquered Gaul, it seems that the Franks settled more especially in the eastern and central districts, a 'region stretching from the Seine to the Lorraine plateau, to the upper Scheldt and to the Jura'.³ In any case, works of contemporary history have shown the complete fusion that took place between conquerors and conquered throughout Roman Gaul. The political equality of both in the eyes of the barbarian state is an incontestable fact. Franks and 'Romans' were both called on in the same way to fight. (Every freeman had to take part in war, whatever his nationality.) Together they rendered justice at the regional tribunal of the *mallus*, they rubbed shoulders in the palace of the king, who chose most of his officials from among the 'Roman' population. As, moreover, it was only a very short time before marriages between the invaders and the conquered were permitted, the mingling of the blood

² The ethnical contribution of the Romans in Gaul was almost non-existent. This is the reason for neglecting the question in Chapter II.

³ Cf. F. LOT, *Les invasions germaniques*.

of the two peoples was soon just as complete as were the converging of their interests and the cohesion of their sentiments. The conversion of the Franks to Christianity at the very time of the conquest also prevented there being any religious struggle between them and those they had just conquered. Finally, there was no plundering of land, which would have caused implacable hatred between Franks and Gallo-Romans. Certain customs of the conquerors slowly became integrated and amalgamated with those of the conquered. The Gallo-Romans took Frankish names: in the seventh and eighth centuries most of the names of men and women in Gaul were of Germanic origin. A multitude of new words⁴ found their way into everyday vocabulary: 'What an exchange of familiar thoughts there must have been between invaders and original inhabitants', writes Gaston Paris, 'for the latter to have followed the former in their names for natural features, for farming terms, for natural objects, for groups of trees or plants, for animals, for the very parts of their bodies', for many colours, that they should have borrowed from them 'some adverbs, and in the moral and emotional sphere, a mass of nouns, adjectives and verbs'.⁵ So the immigration into Gaul of a fresh people did not cause any kind of division in the country, whereas the political circumstances referred to earlier had such a disintegrating influence.⁶ The only inhabitants of Gaul who were not assimilated into the Frankish community were the Jews, against whom the Church and the Christian kings were beginning to enact the prohibitive decrees which were to fill the years of the Middle Ages.

At the same time, amidst the storm of battle, towns were either completely disappearing or else becoming fortresses contained within narrow walls. Intellectual life died out almost everywhere, economic life came nearer and nearer to a standstill. The organization of Gaul became a closed economy, commerce declined in the general anarchy, relations with the East were cut after the Arab conquests. There was a shortage of currency, an increase in barter, wealth consisted exclusively of land, and the great rural landowners tended to bring together in their hands authority and wealth and (even more than at the time of the later Empire)

⁴ 'It is well known that French borrowed from Frankish terms of war and of command, names of arms and clothes, furniture, amusement, food, etc., and also words indicating parts of the body (*échine, hanche, lippe*, etc.); animals (many of them); plants and berries (*roseau, fraise, framboise, groseille*); natural features (*bois, lande, haie, jardin, jachère*). Still more indicative of a deep influence are the cardinal points (*Nord, Sud, Est, Ouest*); colours (*blond, blanc, blême, gris, fauve*); finally moral terms: nouns (*honte, orgueil*); adjectives (*joli, laid, hardi, frais, franc, riche*); verbs (*choisir, effrayer, honnir, hâter, hair, épargner, tricher, gagner, garder*)' (F. LOT, *La France des Origines à la Guerre de Cent Ans*).

⁵ G. PARIS, *La littérature française au moyen âge*, p. 25.

⁶ Nevertheless from the linguistic point of view the Frankish conquest was fatal to Latin speech in two regions: in the east to the country which was to become Alsace, and in the north to a part of Lorraine, which was one day to be the home of Flemish.

to take to themselves the attributes of a shadow state. The peoples of Gaul felt more and more attached solely to their small plot of land and to their overlord, for these meant to them effective wealth and protection near at hand.

In 614 the bishops and the lords forced the king to choose the principal officials of his provincial administration (the counts) from among the large landowners, a measure which, though it was not often applied, yet shows the increasing power of these landowners in the State. Trades which had deserted the ruined cities found refuge on the lord's domain. There clothes were woven from wool and flax, and the tools necessary for work on the land were made. (The vast majority of the peasants were husbandmen, hereditarily attached to the land as during the later Empire, while slavery was dying out, partly through the moral influence of the Church, partly because of a technical discovery, the water-mill, which in the sixth century replaced the hand-mill.)

But the real leader is always he who grants protection and justice. As at the time of the collapse of Rome this was done chiefly by monks and bishops, the men of God, who alone could make the barbarian chiefs bow the head, who, on their large estates, offered conditions of work more humane than anywhere else, who directed the only schools that existed in Gaul after the coming of the barbarians and the complete ruin of the Roman establishments, who distributed alms, took care of lepers, arranged the ransom of prisoners and consoled the worst afflictions of this age of the sword by conjuring up a hope that did not fail. In the sixth century there was a considerable increase in rural parishes which till then had been quite rare (the Church's advance having been made especially in the towns). The establishment of these parishes was of considerable importance in the history of the formation of a country, a *patrie*, in this land. The rural churches, built either on the site of a sanctuary sacred to paganism or within one of the domains (where the social groups were for political reasons the strongest of the time), made a powerful contribution towards the maintenance, amidst the general anarchy, of the tradition of local communities which dated from the time when Gaul was independent and which had continued in Roman Gaul. As political society disintegrated, soon the only groups that remained compact, united and alive were these parishes, which, simply because of their religious unity, were to become the only social unity. In the same way, in the heart of the depopulated towns, the bishop represented the highest moral authority, and also the most effective material authority. As the wealthy owner of almost all the land of the town, he provided the artisans with work and protection. Thus the Church, in the midst of the general anarchy, was the only cohesive element for a people that was being torn asunder.

But the importance of the Church's role in the development of our story is not confined to her maintenance of the smallest social groups, the legacy of Roman Gaul. A country is not only an inherited territory but a spiritual tradition. The credit for avoiding a complete break between the patrimony of the ancient West and the civilization of the peoples of medieval Gaul is due entirely to the Church. It was she who perpetuated the living tradition of Rome, whilst the barbarian kings gathered only dead formulae or ossified customs. She became, for long centuries, almost the only repository of the ancient civilization in the radiance of which Roman Gaul had flourished. In all that she preserved from the past and defended were contained the assets round which, one day, a real nation-state would be formed on the territory that had been Gaul. The Church kept the counsel of *unity* which Rome had given to the world. She organized her internal administration according to the authoritarian and hierarchical rules which formed the essence of the political wisdom of the Empire; she maintained and saved, in the drawing up of her canon law, the rules which do honour to superior civilizations—the stability and cohesion of the family, respect for women, protection of the child, of the weak and of the oppressed—and this at a time when public administration under barbarian influence was tending to forget most of these laws. She sought to retain for men the security and stability of a plot of land and a family.

No doubt, by the sixth century, the secular clergy no longer deserved the title of guardians of civilizing traditions in the former territory of Roman Gaul. So true is it that political order is the first condition of the perfecting of all classes of society. In the general anarchy many of the clergy forgot what was the essential nature of their profession. Forced to assume time and time again political and social responsibilities of which an organized state would have left them only part, they soon found the things of this world wonderfully attractive. The cupidity, immorality and ambition of most of them scandalized their contemporaries. At the same time ruthless and ignorant bishops cursed all memories of ancient civilization and treated the great writers of classical Rome as 'scoundrels'. To judge by certain appearances it would seem that the influence of the clergy in Gaul broke the link with the Greco-Roman tradition just as much as the action of the barbarian chiefs themselves.⁷ Moreover, did not the progress of Christianity correspond to a real invasion of Oriental influence in the country? In the fourth and fifth centuries the liturgy of the Church was quite Oriental, the sanctuaries built by her were often copies of those of Asia Minor, the movement of pilgrimages to the Holy Places, which she encouraged, led to massive importations of Asiatic models and symbols, which were already being

⁷ This is the reproach that many nineteenth-century writers, who had not delved deeply enough into their subject, made against the Church.

brought into Gaul in large quantities by Oriental merchants who had come from Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, and who, in the fifth and sixth centuries, captured the monopoly of trade in the West. The baggage of these merchants, like that of the pilgrims, contained precious stuffs woven in Persia, in Egypt or at Byzantium and decorated with traditional Eastern patterns; it contained Byzantine, Coptic or Syrian ivories and objects worked in silver or gold, the great centre for which was Antioch. So Gaul, inundated with new images and symbols (in which the fantasies of a disordered imagination or the convention of a traditional symbolism were displayed), was subjected to a veritable assault of Asiatic influences.⁸

But although the clergy had made some contribution towards the momentary triumph of a style of art completely free from Greco-Roman influence, it was nevertheless through them that Western civilization was finally to triumph in Merovingian Gaul. Not only was the Church the living memory of the best political and legal traditions of the Roman Empire, but now, alongside a decadent secular clergy, the influence of the fully organized community of monks was increasing. Did this body of the elect, aiming at escape from a world of massacre and destruction, have any idea that their retreats would become the only strongholds for the civilization of a whole world? In Gaul especially, did they understand that they alone, in the seventh and eighth centuries, formed the link with the legacy of their ancestors while all round them the past seemed to be crumbling and the continuous travail of the past to be falling into oblivion? The very essence of Greek wisdom and Roman order, all that was best in the message contributed by Antiquity and Christian revelation concerning the problems of the universe and of man, seemed, in the seventh and eighth centuries, to have taken sole refuge in these monasteries of the Benedictine order whose spiritual influence was preparing to cover soon all the lands of Europe that had been overrun by the barbarians. The work of the great hermit of Monte-Cassino is one of the most important foundations of Western life in medieval times, and cannot be over emphasized in a history of the French nation. Eastern monasticism, if it had become rooted in Gaul in its primitive form, would have brought ideas and customs entirely opposed to the genius of the West. And as the monasteries were for hundreds of years to be the directors of the intellectual and social life of the Europe of the future, the result their influence would have had in that event can be imagined.

St. Benedict did not impose on his monks the constant contemplations and meditations in which human frailty vainly strives to lose itself in the infinity of God. Although his sons still have the duty of reminding

⁸ Cf. LOUIS BRÉHIER, *L'art en France, des invasions barbares à l'époque romane*. Paris, 1930.

the world of the priority of the spiritual, yet their great prayer is work. To a society which was forgetting in the disorders of war most of the arts of peace the Benedictine monks were to teach once more the benefits of clearing land and of ploughing, and the humble patience necessary for all daily occupations. Eastern monasticism imposed penitences and extravagant mortifying of the flesh: St. Benedict thought the highest human effort should be accomplished at the highest point of the soul and that all morals should be based on exact psychology. It is not for man to compare himself with the angels when he tries to rise above himself, but modestly to take into account a nature which he can subdue but not ignore. So the thought of the great founder is in harmony with one of the essential themes of Western civilization which makes knowledge of man the most important science and the material world the hard solid base for strivings towards an invisible world. Thanks to St. Benedict, the Christian West was to remain faithful to the highest achievements of classical thought. One of the favourite works of this order was the copying of the manuscripts containing that thought. Not that the monks had any other aim than that of preserving models of fine language, since the language of the conciliar records and of the altar was becoming corrupted through the influence of Vulgar Latin, but their effort and their piety were to decide the future of letters in the West, in the same way as the rule of their order was guiding the steps of a whole civilization.

It is now possible to understand the fate of the concept of patriotism in the territory that had been Roman Gaul, from the victory of the Franks at the beginning of the sixth century to the founding of Charlemagne's Empire.

For thinkers and writers the Roman Empire continued to exist as an idea. In the seventh century the poet Fortunat still used the word *Romania* when addressing King Charibert. The chroniclers did not separate the history of Gaul from that of Italy or of Spain, any more than from that of far-off Byzantium, where the fictitious sovereign of the Western States reigned in his oriental pomp. The most cultured clerks of the Merovingian period were still faithful to the memory of Roman majesty which they regretted. But, as has already been pointed out, the dreams of the scholars no longer expressed the reality of the political community to which they belonged. The Empire was quite dead in the West and the kingdoms which replaced it were based on its breaking-up and division. How could the men of Frankish Gaul henceforward feel that they belonged to one country since they owed loyalty first to one chief, then to another, and since this chief represented, for the poor, a power as remote as any Emperor of the time of the later Empire, for the great, a leader of armies whom they had to follow in peace and war, not to safeguard or defend their land, but to keep a promise made

by one man to another? The only 'country' that could mean anything to the population as a whole was the small area belonging to a neighbouring lord where, in the shadow of an altar dedicated to some saint,⁹ were to be found the bones of the dead, as well as the material remains of the legacy of their fathers and the example, whether obscure or clearly defined, of which their work and their daily tasks continually reminded them. In all the legal or political texts of this period the word *patria* is employed almost solely as a synonym of the terms *pagus* and *regio*, which shows how this word, which should have referred to the common inheritance of a whole people, was reduced to having a strictly local meaning.

So the Frankish government brought to a climax the political dislocation begun at the time of the later Empire in Gaul. The dividing-up of the country increased under their rule, as did the gradual passing of the power of the State into the hands of several individuals.

It would perhaps be well to consider these facts before assessing the value of the statements of those scholars who claim that the first glimmering of the idea of France originated with the establishment of the Franks in Gaul. It is always tempting for the historian to judge of the past in the light of results verified in the present, to tie up the threads of events according to the consequences which are now known but which were by no means inevitable. As early as the sixteenth century historians yielded to this seductive illusion and hailed the Franks as the fathers of France and the French people. This venerable tradition, followed to the present day by several scholars, has some truth in it. But if one follows step by step the story of the slow development of the idea of France, without allowing oneself to rebuild the past in the light of present facts, the Frankish contribution to the formation of the common patrimony and the unity of its people seems much less important. If it is true that the fusion between Gallo-Romans and conquerors was absolutely complete from the political as well as from the ethnic and linguistic points of view (and that this took place only in this land out of all the provinces of the invaded Empire) it will be clear that Merovingian rule retained for what had been Roman Gaul a semblance of unity calculated to avoid a complete dislocation. 'The Merovingian dynasty, imperfect as it was', wrote Jacques Bainville, 'was better than chaos. In the very cradle of Roman power in Italy, there was, after the fall of the Empire, no equivalent of the Merovingians, and Italy, broken up into pieces, remained for thirteen hundred years without recovering her unity.' This wise remark can hardly be gainsaid, but all the facts already studied have shown with what extreme reserve the contribution of the Merovingians to French unity should be treated. It must similarly be remembered that

⁹ The worship of saints and of holy relics (which contributed to the foundation of many churches) spread into Gaul in the sixth century.

the territory of the Frankish kings from the fifth to the sixth century was no longer identical with that of Gaul. (Now it is this continuity which is of prime importance if the Franks are to be credited with maintaining the tradition.) There were not necessarily Frankish regions corresponding to the provinces of Roman Gaul, for Brittany, Aquitaine and Burgundy were gradually detached from the community situated between the Atlantic, the Pyrenees, the Alps and the Rhine, whilst on the other hand many lands to the east of the Rhine formed part of the area unified under the rule of the Franks. What was known as *Francia* in the seventh century and for three hundred years thereafter was an area comprising the whole of present-day northern and eastern France, as well as the countries which were one day to be called Belgium, the Rhineland, Franconia and Bavaria. Who at that time could have thought that the name France would one day be reserved for the former Roman Gaul? Certainly neither kings nor peoples, and it would be wrong to credit them with a conception that a study of the facts compels us to reject. From the seventh century onwards the name Frank made its appearance in texts for every subject of the Merovingian kings whether of Frankish race or not, but at the very same time the Gallo-Romans to the south of the Loire were still called *Romani* and were so called for another hundred years. *Francia* is a country growing up in the provinces of the north,¹⁰ and the first result of government by the barbarians was to create a profound schism between the two halves of what was to become France. It has already been made sufficiently clear how the subsequent unending wars and the general anarchy added to the divisions of the land and its people, so that it is unnecessary to demonstrate at greater length that the Frankish kings accentuated the break-up of the Gaul of the later Roman Empire.

In fact only the Church played any part in maintaining the heritage of Roman Gaul between the sixth and ninth centuries. Moreover, when one reads the chronicles of the period or the correspondence and minor works of writers one realizes that it was in fact the clergy who created the identification of *Francia*¹¹ and *Gallia* by their simple statement that there existed a *spiritual* inheritance. When the waves of the barbarian invasions began to engulf the land, Sidonius Apollinarius had already written to one of his friends who was a prelate: 'At least secure liberty for the Christians so that the Gauls may *remain united by their faith* even if they must acknowledge different rulers.' It is very clear that this idea of a Christian Gaul surviving the dismemberment of the political Gaul of Roman times was present in the mind of every cleric of the time. And as history was recorded by them,

¹⁰ The capital of Roman Gaul was Lyons, whilst the capitals of the Merovingians were Rheims, Paris, Orleans, etc.

¹¹ The modifications in meaning undergone by the word *Francia* from the sixth to the tenth century will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

they transformed their desire quite unconsciously into a reality. They identified the former *Gallia* with these territories of uncertain and changing boundaries, the dominions of Frankish and Christian kings. Beneath the mantle of spiritual unity they gathered together provinces and regions which were no longer linked either politically or economically.

One of the factors tending to unify the province of the Gauls was the role assigned to it by Rome of a barrier region against the barbarians, a rampart of Western civilization. Now in the sixth century the Church gave to the Frankish kingdom the same task of salvation and so forged a marvellous link of tradition between the Gaul of former days and the *Francia* which in fact inherited so little. It was the Church which attributed to *Francia* a characteristic which was to be that of Capetian France as it had been that of the Roman province: *Francia* was to be the rampart of Christendom, which was itself to be identical henceforth with the civilized West.

In the sixth century the Arian heresy threatened to overthrow the whole orthodoxy, and it was Clovis, king of the Franks, who destroyed the forces of the heretical sovereigns. In the seventh century the Arabs flung themselves into the conquest of the continent, and when they were already in possession of the whole perimeter of the Mediterranean the Frankish king Charles the Hammer broke their advance and drove them back towards the south. In the eighth century St. Boniface, about to begin the evangelization of the Germanic tribes, sought before his departure the protection of Charles the Hammer. So it was that, shielded by the sword of the Franks, the emblem of Christ advanced among the Barbarians:

'The Frankish crown', wrote Pope Gregory the Great to King Childebert II, 'is as far above the other crowns of the world as royal dignity surpasses the functions of individuals. It is a small thing to reign, since you are not the only kings, but what gives you a unique title that other kings do not deserve is the fact that you are Catholics. And just as a torch burns all the brighter in the gloom of a dark night, so the splendour of your faith shines forth amidst the shadows of unbelief which envelop other peoples.'

CHAPTER V

FRESH ATTEMPTS TO FOUND AN EMPIRE

FOR THE scholars and clerks the memory of the Roman Empire had never died. The glory of this great political order, of the unity and civilizing peace it brought to the West for several centuries, appeared more dazzling as time went by. The past always seems more or less a golden age to those who dream of it. In the early Middle Ages the people of a Western Europe divided by wars and plunged into ruins and ceaseless massacres had even more reason for marvelling at the sight of the *Pax Romana*. Gradually the clerks came to believe that the organization of the Empire had been the almost complete realization in the temporal realm of the union between souls desired by the Church in the realm of the spirit. The idea occurred to them that a return to political unity would favour Christian unity: gathering people together under one sceptre the better to lead men to a single religion seemed henceforth to some the best way to build on earth the city of God.

— From this ecclesiastical idea was born the Western Empire, inaugurated by the coronation of Charlemagne. In the eighth century the Papacy, violently threatened by the bold attacks of the Lombards, turned in its distress to the Frankish kings whom since Clovis it had considered its privileged sons. For the first time since the foundation of the Church a pontiff had to flee from Rome and even from Italy and take refuge in the land of the Franks. And it was by the converted barbarians that the successor of Peter was restored to his throne and the pontifical state founded.

The papacy had found the force that would protect it and on which its spiritual conquest of Europe was to depend. It was for this force that the titles and august privileges of the Rome of the past were to be recreated. There was no longer to be in the West that breaking up into kingdoms which had succeeded Roman unity: all peoples were to be united under the banner of Christ and the sceptre of the Franks.

So for Charlemagne and his immediate successors power was a ministry. The sovereign felt responsible for the salvation of the Christian people; in his capitularies he inserted the decrees of the Church Council and gave them the force of law, he spent his life waging war in order to bring to baptism people who were still pagan, he intervened in the disputes on Church dogma, he ordered his *Missi* to provide him with information concerning the moral state of his subjects, he saw to the intellectual formation of the clergy and guided them in the evangelization

of souls, and if he caused free schools to be established everywhere for the poor it was so that all might receive instruction as a means of becoming acquainted afterwards with the law of God, and so of achieving salvation more easily.

This religious aspect of the Empire was a much more marked feature than the restoration of customs inherited from the Roman sovereigns which the Carolingians and the clerks of their palaces resuscitated with all the care of archaeologists: the seals adorning Charlemagne's precepts bore the bust of a Roman Emperor surrounded by an inscription after the manner of the Byzantine sovereigns. Official charters bore a golden bull on which were the words *Roma* and *Renovatio Imperii Romani*. Certain legal reforms of the period were taken from Roman law.¹ At his court, Charlemagne entertained a few chosen companions who bore classical names, and throughout his Empire he encouraged a renewed acquaintance with the language, letters and arts of ancient Rome, to which it was possible to give the name 'The Carolingian Renaissance'.

But the real aim of the Empire was the christianizing of the West, and the essence of its nature comes from the religious idea which gave birth to it. Clerics like Bishop Jonas of Orleans proclaimed the complete fusion of civil and religious powers. The king was the defender and protector of the Church and the patron of Christian society. A royal edict at the end of the ninth century affirmed that 'this Christian society was one with political society'. For the first time too, kings received from the Church their anointing, that is to say the religious consecration of their power. After the year 753 all royal documents were endorsed with the words 'King of the Franks, *by the grace of God*.' Here the clergy was continuing not a Roman but a Biblical tradition. The king was the anointed of the Lord, as was David or Saul.

But did this fusion of the ancient Roman dream of unity with the dream of unity of the Christian Church, that gave the Carolingian Empire its form, correspond to a reality? Did the peoples of the West, in the eighth and ninth centuries, experience a revival of the way of life of their ancestors? Were they gathered together under one name, members of one State, connected with the same tradition, grouped in one civilization? The reality was far different. The Imperial idea in Carolingian times was never anything but the dream of a handful of clerks and not the expression of the way of life of a community.

The Carolingians, like the Merovingians, borrowed from the political tradition of Rome not its essence but its outward forms. One must not be misled by the fine Latin formulae of the public records which at the time of the Carolingian Renaissance replaced the clumsy language

¹ Cf. in 815, 830, 840 the distinction between the *causae majores* and the *causae minores*, inherited from the later Empire.

of the documents and charters of the preceding period. In order to achieve a real revival of the Empire it would have been above all necessary to recover the political wisdom in which lay the secret of its success. The Carolingians, like their predecessors, had no conception of *state* or of public service animating their rule. They continued to divide up their territory according to the Germanic laws concerning private inheritance which were adhered to by the Frankish kings. As they possessed no organized administration they had neither army nor regular finances, and these nominal masters of a colossal Empire were forced to bring to a sudden end their wars in distant parts and to return with their soldiers to live on their country estates where the harvest would feed an army that had not been paid.

Although the only wealth of these rulers of a financeless state was their landed property, in order to retain the loyalty of the most powerful of their subjects they were forced to part with more and more land, and so each day saw them becoming poorer. In other words, they could not stop the drift towards anarchy which from the fourth and fifth centuries had been causing the power of the state to pass into the hands of private individuals. The only really prominent political organization of their Empire was vassalage, the bond of man to man, a personal loyalty. These Emperors were only the fictitious rulers of a political society whose real leaders were the members of the ecclesiastical aristocracy and those who were beginning to be called the 'lords'. Far from checking this movement towards the breaking-up of their sovereignty, the Carolingians made it worse by encouraging each of their subjects to choose a *senior*, by multiplying privileges and by parting with lands and power which went for the most part to the clergy but also to the great laymen. It almost seems that the Carolingians, having understood the times in which they lived, having realized that the idea of the general interest had completely disappeared and that only the idea of personal obligation remained, had tried, not to hinder this great movement of vassalage, but to bring it under their control. There would no longer be free men. Each would be bound to one more powerful than himself, but the more powerful would themselves have sworn fidelity to the Emperor, and so the principle of a unifying authority would be safe.

The idea seems magnificent. Unfortunately there is no escape from the laws of the universe, and the rightness of a political system does not depend entirely on the beauty of its theory, but on the consonance of that theory with the laws of nature. It is always dangerous to base a system of government entirely on the virtue of men; wisdom indicates on the contrary that one should found institutions to provide for human weakness or malice. As long as the great vassals remained faithful, the Emperor could be certain of ruling his state effectively, but

if the vassal revolted he carried with him in his disobedience all his own vassals, who naturally preferred to follow a master who was close at hand and known to them, and on whom they depended for their daily bread, than to remain loyal to a distant sovereign whose power was for them as vague as was his image.

So, in spite of the titles and the fine Latin formulae, the Carolingian Emperor was still only a Frankish king (and he knew it so well that Charlemagne, in the headings of his charters, puts after the solemn names of *imperator* and *augustus* the old Merovingian title, *rex Francorum*). He was but the head of a kind of federation of warriors, of an aggregate of tribes united or divided according to the hazard of constant wars,² and within their community was working this pre-feudal movement which had its beginnings in the later Empire and which was now reaching its height. Moreover, after the beginning of the ninth century, terrible invasions were to attack Gaul: Hungarian raids after 817, Norman expeditions after 840. Monasteries and churches were burned, the country districts were terrorized; the people were in terrible danger. From whom should they seek help? From the distant Emperor, whose army was disorganized, whose power ill-defined, whose protection so imperceptible? Or else from this nearby lord, from the count whose name was no longer connected with an administrative power delegated by the king,³ but with a local and independent function, with the actual possession of lands and riches?⁴ The 'lords,' who had constructed fortresses for the common defence, later refused to destroy them in spite of the protests of the sovereign and, sheltering behind their threatening walls, they more than ever mocked the central power. Progressively the counts acquired the habit of bequeathing their responsibility to their children.⁵ The feudal dynasties were at hand, the 'lords' were in possession of their powers, whilst the Empire was but a great organization without life-blood, a fragile construction undermined by a thousand local powers.

The anarchy of the Carolingian Empire was not only due to its lack of cohesion but also to the fact that its origins were half political and half religious. The fusion of civil and ecclesiastical powers so praised by

² Eginhard mentions, in one of his writings, *Alamania*, which had deserted 'the Frankish confederation'. This characteristic fact recalls the findings of the previous chapter. The Franks were first and foremost a tribe, a warring people, and they never completely linked the fate of this people with that of a definite territory.

³ In the sixth and seventh centuries the word *comitatus* was always employed only for an *office*. It is not till 783 that it is used in the sense of *comte*. The evolution of the word is complete by the ninth century, and it is then a synonym for *pagus*. The count has become the master, the owner of a region of which he was formerly but the administrator.

⁴ The master of the domain from the eighth century onwards levied taxes upon his tenants without consulting the king.

⁵ The capitulary of Kiersy-sur-Oise in 877 recognized this state of affairs.

the theorists of the time was in fact of no advantage either to the Church or the Emperor. The clergy became public officials,⁶ claimed lands, wealth and privileges,⁷ obtained the right of coining money and, when they saw the throne occupied by a weak prince, hastened to satisfy their appetite for domination by taking complete charge of the conduct of affairs of state. The clergy lost its spiritual quality and its internal order, and the confusion of powers allowed it no protest in its turn when the king seized its wealth and took upon himself the right to nominate bishops, and when the lay masters of the great domains considered the country church as their property. Once more it was proved (by a *reductio ad absurdum*) in the Carolingian Empire that political order, the essential legacy of the *Pax Romana*, was the only thing that would support human communities that sought to endure. The Empire was not founded on this order. It existed only in the dreams of a few men, and was not in harmony with the true way of organizing Western society.

Nevertheless the former territory of Roman Gaul, the future domain of the France that was to be, was now included in its entirety in the territory of the Empire. The *Francia* of the Merovingians left outside its frontiers Brittany and most of the provinces of the south of what was once Gaul. The Carolingian Empire, bounded on the west and on the north by the Atlantic, the Channel and the North Sea, was to stretch as far as the Elbe, to reach the course of the Thaya and the Morava, and as far as the south of Istria, while, with its tributary states, it was to touch even the Theiss and the Save. Three-quarters of Italy and the north of Spain were to be under its rule.

But being undermined by the policy of dividing up the land, it was to have no more cohesion than the unstable kingdom of the Merovingians, and the geographical outlines are just as misleading as the many phrases proclaiming the unity of the West. In Gaul particularly it was only for a very short while that Carolingian policy was able to keep Brittany, Aquitaine and Provence under its rule. The dislocation of the provinces of the country was to grow worse, as in the preceding period.

These features of the community known as the Carolingian Empire indicate how the idea of country manifested itself during that period. As in Merovingian times, the ideas of the scholars and political thinkers must be distinguished from the reality imposed on the people as a whole.

⁶ Under Louis the Pious the Metropolitan Bishop was at the same time obliged to be the *missus dominicus* of the Emperor.

⁷ The privileges of *immunity* (which exempted a domain from royal justice and taxes and gave increased sovereignty to the master of the domain) were much extended in all parts of the land by the Carolingians and chiefly in favour of the ecclesiastics. In the ninth century immunity was the normal status for abbeys and all Carolingian 'diplomas of immunity' were concerned with ecclesiastical property. The reason lay in the Emperor's realization of the increasing power of the counts and in his hope of offsetting it by gaining the support of the great prelates. In fact, the latter became independent rulers like the counts.

For the clerks, the Empire had really been revived and could not be too highly praised; the unity of the West had been realised; the sceptre of the Franks had brought about a rebirth of the *imperium* of Rome, glorifying it through the Christian idea. Deacon Florus of Lyons expresses this indescribable glory in his regrets after the sharing of territory among the sons of Louis the Pious.

'A fine Empire flourished under a brilliant Crown. There was only one prince and one people. What bliss if it had realized its good fortune, this Empire which had Rome as its citadel and the bearer of the keys of heaven as its founder!'

The Lombard Paul Diacre calls Charlemagne 'a beacon for Europe and founder of Aix-la-Chapelle, the second Rome and the Rome of the future'. And the poet Naso rejoices at seeing Rome born again into the world in a new form.⁸ At the same time other clerks give to the group of Carolingian states the name *Romania*, which recalls the *Pax Romana*. The Roman tradition of education and the evangelism of the Church were united in Charlemagne's influence, and did not the Frankish Emperors make a reality of both 'the dream of Caesar and the dream of St. Boniface: to civilize the Germans through Roman culture and Christian truth'? Curious genealogies were published at that time claiming that the first known ancestor of the Carolingians, Arnoul of Metz, came from a Gallo-Roman Christian family.

Nevertheless for the clerks the religious form of the Empire was much more important than the aspect of it as a revival of Rome, however much they venerated that city of wondrous memory. First of all it was in the Bible and not in the history of former Emperors (except for a few Christian Emperors) that they sought examples to set before the Frankish sovereigns. They sought their counsels in the Psalms, the Book of Wisdom, Proverbs, Tobias, Kings, Isaiah, the Epistles of St. Paul and so on. Moreover, the clerks saw in the Empire the realization of the City of God dreamed of by St. Augustine. Loup de Ferrières writes that Jesus, when he ascended into heaven, assured the government of the Church by dividing the power between the priests and the kings 'so that very pious kings might observe and enforce the observance of the teaching of the Holy Pontiffs'. Charlemagne writes to Pope Leo III: 'It is our duty to defend the Church of Christ from the attacks of the pagans, from enemies without, and to strengthen her within in the true faith; yours to raise your hands to God like Moses, so that your prayers may assure our victory'.⁹ And the poet Ermold-le-Noir makes Louis the Pious, addressing Pope Stephen II, say: 'The people whom you and

⁸ '*Rursus in antiquos mutataque saecula mores,
Aurea Roma iterum renovata renascitur orbi.*'

(NASO, L., i, v, 26.)

⁹ JAFFE, *Regesta Pontificum romanorum*, p. 356.

I direct.' And Bishop Jonas of Orleans: 'All the faithful must know that the universal Church is the body of Christ, and that in this Church there are two characters, one representing the priesthood, the other kingship.'

Such were the ideas of the clerks concerning the Empire: through an intellectualist fiction they saw in it a Roman revival; into this fiction, because of their desire to evangelize nations,¹⁰ they inserted a combination of Biblical memories and Christian traditions which formed a highly individual compound.

But once again it must be said that this Empire existed only in their dreams and in their desires. And their writings would hardly have had any value save that of curious documents of the period had they not, from certain points of view, played a part that was of great importance for the future. Their studies, their devotion to Rome, their fervour which animated the Carolingian Renaissance, caused them to reveal the essential political ideas of the wisdom of the Ancients which had been completely forgotten in an entirely feudalized world. These ideas were to be the leaven in the France of the future. The idea of public service bound up with the concept of royalty, the idea of the State, are sometimes as alive in their works as they were in the time of Rome's glory. Loup de Ferrières, commenting on a defeat suffered by the Emperor, sees in it a misfortune of the State (*respublica*); on another occasion he says that it is the public interest (*utilitas publica*) which takes the king to a certain district; he suggests that the sovereign should choose counsellors who prefer 'the public weal to their private advantage'.¹¹ The word *respublica*, which completely disappeared in Merovingian times, frequently reappears in the works of historians of the time of Charlemagne, Louis the Pious, Eginhard, Nithard or Thégan.¹² These words and phrases, scattered throughout the writings of scholars of the Carolingian Renaissance, certainly do not express a very strong political tradition; they often reveal nothing but the habits of learned men familiar with ancient authors; none the less there runs through them a slender thread which connects the cohesion of Roman Gaul with the unity of the France of the future, thanks to their passing reminder of the laws which bring order to societies.

In the Carolingian period the use of the word *patria* for the whole of the Frankish Empire in acts emanating from the sovereign authority can be considered from the same angle. The members of the royal chancellery at this period were all clerics. Their polished formulae, in the careful Latin of a first Renaissance, should not be allowed to obscure the

¹⁰ And in the case of some, because of a desire for ecclesiastical domination.

¹¹ LOUP DE FERRIÈRES, ed. Levillain, letter 37: '*publicam dilectionem hoc est totius populi, praeferant privatis commodis.*'

¹² E.g.: '*Quoniam quisque eorum propria quaerebat respublicam penitus negligebant*' (NITHARD, I, 4). '*Respublica quoniam quisque cupiditate illicitus sua quaerebat, quotidie deterius ibat*' (id., I, 3).

real fact any more than, in the Merovingian Period, the traditional phrases inherited from the scribes of the later Empire should be allowed to give a false impression concerning the essential anarchy of the Frankish State. These formulae prove that the clerks were familiar with Latin authors, they in no way express what was a reality for the peoples or even for the kings.¹³

Indeed, the idea of Empire was just as difficult for the sovereigns to grasp as for the peoples to assimilate. In reality the Carolingian Emperors remained Frankish kings, and for them that was the only title which corresponded to some solid power. Their idea of the tie that bound them to their subjects was above all, like that of their Merovingian predecessors, one of a loyalty of man to man. When a province broke away from the community of the Empire or became a part of it there was no question of demanding from the deserters or the new-comers anything but this promise of personal loyalty to a prince: not a slow assimilation to the customs, traditions and form of civilization of a whole country. The Carolingian Empire, like the unstable Merovingian kingdom, was a federation of warriors forever coming together or dispersing according to the hazards of war.

The extremely varied use of the word *patria* in texts is a true reflection of the confusion in the political organization of the Empire. Although the clerks persist in considering the whole of the dissimilar provinces of the *regnum Francorum* as a single country, although a great prince like Charlemagne was able to identify himself with this conception,¹⁴ when this word is used as it is most often, just as in Merovingian times, to indicate province, region or district, it is much more in keeping with the anarchy of the Frankish land-division.¹⁵

The same variations appear in the use of the word *Francia*. No doubt

¹³ Here are some examples of the use of the word *patria* applied to the whole of the Frankish Empire (a very rare use): The great Assemblies are always convoked to discuss 'de salute patriae et de utilitate regni'. Several Capitularies enjoin the monks to pray 'pro statu Ecclesiae et salute regis vel patriae'. See also the Edict of Pistes in 869. '... ut pax et justitia ... inter nos omnes et in regno nostro maneat et omnes sint semper parati, ut, si nobis necessitas evenierit, ad defensionem patriae, contra paganos aut contra alios Dei et nostros inimicos, sicut consuetudo fuit tempore antecessorum nostrorum' (*Capitularia regum francorum*, p. 337, 20).

¹⁴ We read in the *Divisio regnorum* made by Charlemagne between his sons in 806: '... ut nullus eorum fratris suis terminos vel regni limites invadere praesumat. ... sed adjuvet unusquisque illorum fratrem suum et auxillum illo ferat contra inimicos ejus ... sive infra patriam sive contra exterarum nationes.' The word *patria* here evidently means the whole of the *regnum Francorum*. This agrees with all that we know of the ideas of Charlemagne.

¹⁵ (a) Here is an example of the word *patria* applied to a local kingdom: 'Hlotharie, Hludowici et Karoli conventus apud Narsnom Secundus: ut suum fratrem ibicumque necessitas fuerit et infra patriam et foris patriam aut per se ipsum, aut per infantem vel fideles suos et consili et auxilia sic adjuvet.'

(b) There are in the Capitularies numerous examples of the word *patrie* used as a synonym of region, 'des patries et des provinces de l'empire' or 'des patries des Goths' being the equivalent of 'province des Goths', etc.

certain writers give this name to the whole of the *regnum Francorum*; but the territory to which this is most usually reserved from now on is that which the Emperors considered to be the solid centre of the federation of their peoples, where they could speak, without being contradicted, of the 'sacred commandments of our ancestors',¹⁶ a district which really constituted for them a stable inheritance, a *patrie*, because for several centuries without a break it had been in the possession of Frankish kings like themselves, whose heirs they felt themselves to be in spite of the palace revolutions which had brought about a change of dynasty. It was the region where, at the time of the invasions, the Franks had settled in the greatest numbers, as well as the one which had been the cradle of their race, a territory stretching in the west from the mouth of the Loire to that of the Scheldt, in the east as far as the district of Maine, its southern borders being those of Aquitaine and Burgundy. It was this region alone which was called *Francia* in popular language.

Whether *patrie* was used in its narrower or wider sense, the only bond of unity between men at that time was loyalty to a master. Under the Carolingians, the development of the feudal system took enormous strides. 'The real unity of this period', wrote Fustel de Coulanges, 'the only one that most people could conceive of, was not unity of laws, of country, race or language, it was loyalty to a supreme lord. Not because he was the Emperor and one was his loyal subject, but because he was a powerful lord.' So the system could endure only with a strong master like Charlemagne, and it collapsed twenty years after his death.

The people felt no other bond of community between them than that of an oath of allegiance to a prince. Since these princes were always changing through the vicissitudes occasioned by the way the Franks divided up the land, how was it possible for a single one to incarnate for everyone the idea of country? At the time of the wars between Lothar, Louis and Charles the Bald, the last-named was to complain that his brother was taking his men, that is to say his feudal subjects. At this period Neustrian lords were to become the vassals of Lothar, while the powerful lords of Burgundy and Aquitaine became Charles the Bald's men, and those of Germania were to attach themselves to Lothar. No idea of the general interest nor of being bound to a country enters into these struggles; it is a question of bands of vassals following their changing masters into battle. The principles of patronage and loyalty which had already been customary in private affairs in the later Empire and more than ever under the Merovingians penetrated through the Carolingians into State matters. Authority lost all the characteristics essential to its function—unification, protection, justice—

¹⁶ '*Regula sancta patrum*' in a speech credited to Louis the Pious by Ermold le Noir.

and the tendency was to avoid it and protect oneself from it rather than to reverence it. In the former Roman Gaul the ancient provinces were drifting apart under cover of the magnificent Imperial unity that was officially proclaimed.¹⁷

It was not only that the larger regions were becoming detached autonomous communities, but these were increasingly breaking up into small feudal units, a process which by this time was approaching its zenith. The bond of unity between men at that time was indeed loyalty to a supreme master, but in that huge Empire how distant and unknown seemed that master, when the subjects closest to him (bishops, abbots, counts) were completely separated from him by the privilege of immunity. In Roman times the possession of a domain was sanctioned by the State, which claimed the land tax, a sign that its power transcended that of particular authorities. Henceforth, thanks to the privilege of immunity, this bond itself was broken and this sign of dependence done away with. The agents of royal authority were hindered at every step by safeguards, privileges and complete surrender of sovereign power. The dukes, counts, bishops and abbots were now the absolute rulers of a district and of a portion of the population. How was this population to enlarge its conception of 'country' beyond the horizon limited by the power of the only master it knew, the possessor of huge domains whose importance was becoming even greater than in the preceding period?¹⁸ This was the result of the political anarchy of the Franks. Whether it took the form of Merovingian royalty or the pseudo-Empire of the Carolingians, it brought the peoples to a state of political division where only the rule of brute force remained. This could give rise to nothing but battles and incessant quarrels in which all civilization was to be engulfed. Between the fourth and tenth centuries what their 'country' meant to all the inhabitants of Roman-Gaul can really be expressed in the most primitive sense provided by etymology: the idea of a family inheritance, of a piece of land whose boundaries are known and which has its own particular customs¹⁹ and self-contained life.

¹⁷ In one of his poems Ermold le Noir describes the departure for the wars of the men of *Francia* and those of *Pépin* of Aquitaine. He is careful to name them separately. In another poem he exhorts the Breton chief to think of his *country* ('*con-sule patriam*'), that is to say his 'region'.

¹⁸ Henceforth the whole economic system was based on the existence of these domains. They formed little self-sufficient worlds of their own, in which all trades flourished. Exchange difficulties obliged them to produce and manufacture everything necessary for the life of the community they contained. In the domains of Charlemagne there were blacksmiths and carpenters, armourers and tanners, weavers, shoemakers, etc. The great abbeys which multiplied and which owned a considerable amount of land established throughout the country small quiet islands where the traditions of crafts and all the arts of peace continued amidst the universal madness of destruction.

¹⁹ It is in the eighth century that in the legal sphere customs become territorial and no longer personal, which is a sign that certain communities have become attached to a definite district.

In the midst of all these upheavals what became of the particularist destiny of the land that was to be France? There can be no question of finding in the Empire any sign of the unity to come. For a century German and French historians quarrelled, wishing to appropriate Charlemagne at any cost for the history of their respective nations. But this debate only reflected the passions of a period and the mania which induced certain historians of the recent past to transfer the ideas of their time to an age in which they had no part. In fact, even though it was only in imagination that Charlemagne was Emperor of the West, he was neither a French nor yet a German king. He was the lord of immense territories, the living centre of which remained this *Francia*, whose capital, Aix-la-Chapelle, is a fair indication of its northerly situation, and which stretched north of the Loire and as far as the Rhine, to the west and to the east, bringing in German provinces, as well as their western neighbours. To bring into this state of affairs the idea of a France or a Germany is childish to introduce into the past changes brought about by the passage of time, but which were unthought of then. Nevertheless quite objectively it must be recognized that the French argument (just as absurd as the other from the point of view of the history of the period) can be explained and defended better than the German one. The latter claims Charlemagne as a German emperor, invoking the idea of race, which was just as much a dead letter for the men of the time as the 'nationalist' idea. Men frequently moved from one province to another, and there were many mixed marriages. Many men from Aquitaine went and settled in Germany, and inversely Germans continued to pour into Gaul. The only groups that the men of this period, which was dominated by vassalage, could conceive of were circles united round the master whose quarrel they embraced. The peoples of the Empire did not obey Charlemagne because they saw in him a *Germain* or a *Romain*, but because he was the most powerful lord of their time.

The French argument, on the other hand, depends on the tradition of spiritual inheritance. It has been shown how in the continuity of a country this counts really as much as the transmission of land. It was in the *Francia* of the West, in what was to be France, that the task dreamed of by the great Emperor of the West, the building of a superior civilization, always ready to fight barbarism, was to be remembered.

Roman Gaul had soon become materially the most prosperous, and intellectually the most refined, province of the Empire. It was within her borders that the Church, the great teacher of the West after Rome, had found its most zealous defenders of orthodoxy. The kingdom of the Franks no longer coincided with the area of Roman Gaul, but it had assumed the same task as the fair province of earlier days: to stand against the barbarians as the keystone in the defence of Christendom.

(that is to say, at that period, of Western civilization). For this reason, one day, long before overzealous nationalist historians appeared, the knights of Capetian France, eleventh-century crusaders in search of fine deeds to accomplish for a great cause, were to recognize as their ancestor the old Emperor, always in the saddle, sword in hand, riding to unite the peoples under the banner of Christ. For the same reason, into the mouth of his nephew Roland they were to put the first words of love that the land of France had ever heard in its native tongue. For them, as for the Frenchmen of the sixteenth century (who were to proclaim themselves the authentic heirs of the Franks), Charlemagne had brought to fruition a dream which, alone amongst European countries, medieval France had understood and perpetuated. In this respect the warriors were right – and the historians who imitated them had some excuse.

Since, however, this study is concerned with following the slow changes in the concept of country on the soil of France without allowing the dreams of one period to intervene in the history of another, it must be noted that the Carolingian Empire, in the minds of the people of the West, implied no notion of French or German nationality.

Under cover of a fair dream of scholars and ecclesiastics (and at this time churchmen alone were educated) it did in fact, in all the territories under its rule, increase feudal divisions, since, from the time of Charlemagne, a rule of private conduct was erected into a system of government and thus helped to dim the idea of the state.

It had a still more corrupting influence on this idea through the absolute confusion of lay and ecclesiastical powers which was to have an immense influence throughout medieval Europe and in the constitution of the future land of the French. The Carolingian Empire was in large part responsible for the excesses of pontifical theocracy during the Middle Ages, and for the quarrels over the relations of Church and State which were to fill the whole period of the *Ancien Régime*. As early as the ninth century it was easy to foresee the importance of such a state of affairs in a world where the Church represented the only impregnable force in a society profoundly penetrated with religion. It was in the time of Charlemagne that a body of doctrine took shape to which the name 'political Augustinianism' has been given, because, based on principles taken from the *City of God* of St. Augustine, it deduced from certain isolated statements of the great Bishop of Hippo absolute conclusions of which the latter had never dreamed. Political Augustinianism, indeed, was not content with affirming the primacy of the spiritual over the temporal, it completely absorbed the power of the State into that of the Church, it proclaimed ecclesiastical sovereignty in all domains, private or public. In this way in Carolingian times a fatal blow was struck at the strong idea of the State founded on natural law, and proclaiming a distinction between civil and ecclesiastical

power, an idea that the founders²⁰ of the Church and its first doctor²¹ had both respected.

Nevertheless it remains true to say that this period of troubles and indecision was dominated by a very great man to whom homage should be paid apart from the blame attaching to the institutions of his time. In the case of Vercingetorix and Clovis the emphasis was on the solitude of magnificent personal achievement within communities governed by bad principles. All the faults of the Carolingian government, the feudal anarchy and the confusion of political and ecclesiastical power were yet dominated, surmounted and controlled for twenty years, thanks to the heroic grasp of this leader of peoples, whose dream of unification remains imposing and to whom the West owes the great civilizing movement called the Carolingian Renaissance, a movement recalled by many place-names of the France of the future, whether it be Tours, where Alcuin taught, or Ferrières, domain of Loup Servat, or Orleans and the Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire of Théodulfe, or the walls of the little Romano-Byzantine Chapel of Germigny-des-Prés, situated on the bank of the Loire, which survives, together with that of Aix-la-Chapelle, as the only remains of Carolingian architecture in Europe.

It is also true that by the force of his genius alone Charlemagne established during his reign the autonomy to which the West had been slowly accustoming itself for centuries, on the fringe of the Imperial Byzantine authority. Through his personal action he made a powerful contribution towards the conquest of the West of the old continent by Christian orthodoxy and towards its spiritual attachment to the Holy See, that is to say towards the shaping of that Christendom which was to represent the first outline of the civilizing unity of Europe. It was on this extra-political plane that his work took on its full sense: Charlemagne helped the Papacy to give to the men of the West the idea of a country with spiritual boundaries; to this country belonged all those who clung to Christian truth, as defined by the authority of Rome. In the centuries to follow this idea of Christendom was to reach its full development: the real 'foreigner' for a Western European was to be the 'non-Christian'.

²⁰ 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the King, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers and for the praise of them that do well. . . Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King' (1 Pet. ii).

²¹ Similarly St. Paul: 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil' (Rom. xiii, 1-3). 'Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour' (Rom. xiii, 5-7). 'Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work' (Titus iii, 1).

The great Emperor's work, if it were to last, needed to be backed by strong institutions. But this short-lived effort of one man was the manifestation of such a beautiful dream that men's imagination remained dazzled by it, and at the time of the pilgrimages to the shrine of St. James of Compostello clerks and troubadours were to find in the legends and oral traditions of the people of France the memory of the great leader of the West. This devotion was to be the reward of the man who, hampered by a bad political system, had at least been able to entertain a great idea, and, not content merely to accept it intellectually, had given it life with all the fire of his heart.

CHAPTER VI

'FRANCIA OCCIDENTALIS'

THE DATE of the Treaty of Verdun, 843, seems to be one of capital importance in the history of the formation of France. 'In this year', say many manuals, 'the future destinies of France and Germany were foreshadowed.'

A closer examination of the facts shows a Carolingian partition of land, according to the usual Frankish custom, without any geographical or ethnical considerations. The sovereigns divided up the territory into different districts having approximately the same area and value and destined for each of the heirs. So might a war-lord make several piles out of the heap of booty he is about to distribute. In 843, as on so many occasions after the advent of the Frankish monarchy, it was only a question of giving to each claimant a share of approximately equal value, containing about the same number of prosperous towns or rich fields. In this way, Louis the German received all the countries on the right bank of the Rhine and in addition Mayence, Spire and Worms on the left bank, to provide him with wine, according to the texts. Anyone wishing to find in the thoughts of these princes the seed of the principle of nationalities must obviously make a great effort.

The dismemberment of the Empire in 843 was nothing but a partition between greedy rivals, like so many others before it, and, like them, it was not final. In 869 and 870, by a fresh division of territory, Charles the Bald annexed Friesland, the district of Liège, the Ardennes etc., then in 875 that part of Burgundy which lay beyond the Jura mountains, and Provence and Italy. Some years later, on the other hand, it was a German Carolingian who took back Provence, and in 884 Charles the ~~First~~ took possession of all Charlemagne's Empire and brought it once more under one crown. The partition of Verdun did not represent for the Frankish sovereigns an arrangement any more final than the others, nor one that aimed at a greater respect for natural frontiers, for racial or linguistic considerations or for customs common to several peoples.

Nevertheless, though it would be rather childish to try to see in the treaty of 843 a modification of Frankish anarchy, a desire for a more reasonable territorial or ethnical unity, it will not be fruitless to study, at the moment when the ephemeral Empire of the Carolingians was about to collapse, the characteristic features of these provinces which were to remain separate for another forty-five years, not useless to examine the results within their boundaries of a policy of continual partition which had been practised since the fall of Rome.

The first point to note is that the *geographical* names of the larger regions of the Roman Empire remained unchanged; there was still a *Gaul*, a *Germany* and an *Italy*, from the point of view of simple territorial description.¹

What a multitude of peoples had commingled within the limits of *Gallia* since the collapse of Rome! The Franks had been completely assimilated with the Gallo-Roman population and, especially in the northern and eastern districts, where the invaders had settled in greatest numbers, they formed one really homogeneous people with the native inhabitants. But the Franks had not been the only ones to infiltrate into Gaul since the fourth century, and, as the laws of the period showed the greatest indifference to distinctions of race, it is easy to imagine the complexity of the mixture of different bloods. Visigoths had settled in certain parts of the south of France, Burgundians in the Saône and Jura regions. Small Saxon colonies had established themselves at the mouth of the Loire between the fifth and seventh centuries, and especially along the Channel coast at the time of their conquest of what was later to be England. There were Alamans in the neighbourhood of Switzerland. Bretons (a branch of the Celtic race established in very early times in England) fled to the continent when their island was invaded by the Saxons and formed at the western point of Gaul a colony which soon became organized into a fiercely independent state. At the end of the sixth century the Basques, driven from the north of Spain by the Visigoths, settled in the south of Gaul. Saracen and Norman invaders did not fail to leave behind, after every raid, several descendants. Finally in most towns the greater part of the trade and financial business had been, especially since the sixth century, in the hands of the Lombards, the Jews and the Syrians, whose communities had a certain numerical importance.² There was no racial barrier between all these peoples; only the Jews remained apart, because they were cut off from a community of peoples already permeated with Christianity, and because both Church and State wished to keep them away from the followers of the Christ whom they had not recognized.

Was this remarkable medley of peoples dominated by at least a unity of language? No doubt in the greater part of Gaul Latin triumphed over the idiom of the different invaders. More exactly it was what the texts of the period call *lingua romana* (or *lingua gallica*): a Latin derived from the popular language of Roman soldiers and merchants, a Latin full of barbarous expressions, violently transformed by an unrecognizable syntax and a vocabulary teeming with Frankish words, a Latin in

¹ 'Charlemagne, King of Germany, Gaul and Italy', writes Alcuin in 796.

² The Syrians were especially numerous in Paris and Orleans. The name of Syrian was used for all Orientals.

which the declensions had almost entirely disappeared and which became that clumsy early form of French, the first moving example of which is preserved by scholars in the text of the solemn oaths sworn to each other at Strasbourg on the 14th February 842 by Charles the Bald and Louis the German. Nevertheless there were certain regions outside this unstable linguistic community: Flanders, where the means of expression was a Low German dialect; western Brittany, which used the Breton language; and the Basque country, where Euskarian triumphed. Even in the rest of Gaul political dislocation soon gave rise to increasingly marked differences of dialect between regions where the *lingua romana* was predominant.

In the ninth century political divisions within the unstable Frankish community became more and more distinct. *Francia*, Aquitaine, Brittany, Burgundy, Lorraine and Provence, their frontiers changed in detail many times through partition, were nevertheless so many individual cells, gradually detaching themselves from the nucleus. Faced with this mosaic of states, how is one to call to mind the memory of Roman Gaul, that fine province united under a strong administration, or, confronted with this chaos, to imagine the unity of the France of the future?

— Besides, which part of the Empire was to keep the name of *Francia*? Sometimes the word *Francia* had been used for the whole of the *regnum Francorum*, but much more often for a more limited area in the neighbourhood of the Rhine. Further the term *Francia* had many other applications. First of all the eastern Franks, inhabitants of what was to be Germany, claimed the name of Franks just as keenly as their neighbours in Gaul. Had not the cradle of the Frankish nation been situated in one of their provinces (the future Franconia)? Consequently they insisted on calling the Frankish kingdom of the east *Francia*. In many records written in German districts in Carolingian times, in many texts ~~which~~ owe to Lombard chroniclers, in the deeds of the Chancellery of the German Carolingians, *Francia* is the German part of the Frankish Empire.

But this regional pride made no impression on the chroniclers writing to the west of the Rhine, since for them also there was only one *Francia* (theirs), the *Francia occidentalis* which was allotted to Charles the Bald, the land in which the influence of the royal courts, the maintenance of prosperity and civilization had been most remarkable for three centuries.

Moreover, obstinate regional vanity was not in itself enough to impose a particular use of the word. In spite of the efforts of German writers, a tendency becomes obvious in the seventh century, in all the Western texts, to reserve the name of *Francia* for the districts situated to the west of the Rhine, when it is desired to distinguish them from the

eastern ones. At first the tendency was slight, but between the seventh and ninth centuries it slowly gained strength, and by the time *Francia occidentalis* was allotted to Charles the Bald it was already quite definite. From now on it is permissible to foresee that this country alone will keep the name of France. Texts of this period exist in which the contrast is not between western and eastern Franks, but between *Franks* and *Germans*.³ Similarly, whilst in general many different adjectives were used to distinguish western France from the Francia of the east (*Francia latina*, *Francia gallicana*, *Francia romana*, *Francia occidentalis*), sometimes, but very rarely, the word *Francia* was used as a synonym of *Gallia*. This identification occurs in the glossary of Reichenau and in the writings of Englishmen or Italians for whom the differences between continental countries must have been a little confused by the very fact of their remoteness. None the less it is worth noticing that they never identified *Francia* with *Germania* nor called the latter simply *Francia*, and that more and more frequently *Francia* was considered as *west* of the Rhine.

How is one to explain this very slow change in the meaning of a word of which the etymology has been shown in the history of the preceding periods to be quite independent both of the idea of the Gallo-Roman frontiers and of our modern national distinctions? M. Ferdinand Lot thinks that it is 'no doubt because the old country of the Salians, the home of the founder, was united with Neustria'. This is possible for the earliest period. Another possible reason for this use of the name is that western *Francia* was in the Frankish period a much richer country, far more prosperous, developed and civilized than its neighbour on the far side of the Rhine. The large towns which were the Merovingian or Carolingian capitals were all to the *west* of the Rhine: Rheims, Metz, Aix-la-Chapelle, etc. The centre of government, the vital organs of the vast Frankish confederation were therefore becoming grouped more and more to the west, which was perhaps the reason why the custom gradually grew up of giving the name *Francia* to the part of the province that was most alive, the part in which Frankish power, the influence of the royal courts and also intellectual culture and the intensity of religious life were concentrated. It was in western *Francia* that the vital centres of the Carolingian Renaissance had been formed, and it is true to say that in the ninth and tenth centuries it was only in the region bounded by the Atlantic, the Loire and the Rhine that any centres of civilization were to exist, whilst the south of Gaul, Italy and Germany fell into a state of semi-barbarism.

From the end of the ninth century it became by slow degrees the

³ In the *Astronomer's Chronicle*, written at the end of the ninth century, we read: '*Populi Franciae et Germaniae*'; and again: '*Nominatus est tam a Francis quam a Germanis*.' Similarly the monk of St. Gall always uses the words *Franci* and *Galli* as synonymous.

general custom to use the name 'Franks' *exclusively* for the inhabitants of a region situated to the west of the Rhine and more precisely of the Meuse. The other former inhabitants of *Francia* were either Lorrainers (land of Lothaire, Lotharingie, Loheraine, Lorraine) or *Germani*s. A little later the custom began of calling the western *Franci* by the diminutive *Francisci* (from which we have made the word *Français*). Thus the name *Francia* retreated more and more towards the centre of Gaul.

It may also be thought that the slow identification of *Francia* with territories situated exclusively in what had once been Roman Gaul was due in a large measure to the role that the Church assigned to the kingdom of the Franks. Christian Gaul had from the beginning been a defender of orthodoxy. It was in Gaul that St. Hilary had risen against the Arians and St. Irenaeus against the Gnostics. Later the Frankish kings had overthrown in battle the heretic sovereigns, once again on the soil of Gaul: at Vouillé in 507, where Clovis fought the Arian Visigoths; near Poitiers in 732, where Charles the Hammer saved the West from the attack of Islam. The tradition was unbroken: although *Francia* was not a continuation of Roman Gaul it was the heir of Christian Gaul.

At a time when the Church exercised undisputed sway over a chaotic society, it can scarcely be doubted that this fact played a part in the gradual establishment of the name *Francia* in Gaul.

Finally it was to be expected that the process of breaking up into regions should increase in the West since the Franks had never been able to construct a political order capable of federating unlike regions and peoples. Eastern and western *Francia*, with different languages and traditions, could not but become more and more conscious of their differences amidst the anarchy which everywhere prevailed. They separated in the same way as Aquitaine and Brittany, Burgundy and *Francia* became distinct, that is to say they became enemy territories or provinces ~~without~~ the slightest 'national' consideration having anything to do with it. Once they had separated, the name *Francia* remained with the country most capable of transmitting the legacy of a civilization.

This division between the two parts of *Francia* is very evident in the ninth century, and though it would not be correct to credit the Treaty of Verdun with an immediate political influence which the facts belie, it is permissible to gather together all those signs which gave to the ephemeral kingdom of Charles the Bald, at the end of the ninth century, the weight of a tradition or the hope of a great future.

The records of St. Bertin and those of Fulda, written in this period in western and eastern *Francia*, reveal very curious traces of the independence of the two regions. Several historians have said that certain abuse of Charles the Bald in Fulda's records is a sign of the birth of German

patriotism, but the insulting of one prince by the followers of another implied at this period nothing more than the reactions of vassals at war. Many other signs, however, do have a bearing on this subject. The records of St. Bertin (the greater part of which were written by the celebrated archbishop of Rheims, Hincmar) state that 'it was likely that the Imperial crown would remain in western *Francia*', and here this simple pride shows that the author is conscious of the value of the land in which he lives, and of the part played by this land—a very different feeling from that of loyalty to a sovereign. Hincmar desires the expansion and the strengthening of his country, he praises its valour and wishes it to be pre-eminent in the midst of an Empire that is breaking up. The Latin he uses in his chronicle is full of constructions that are specifically French and Provençal, which strengthens still more the impression of proud particularism left by his text.

Writers in eastern Francia at the same period, a Raban Maur and a Wahlfried Strabon, show the same pride in the language of their fathers and in the customs of their lands: 'The Romans will think me ridiculous,' Wahlfried Strabon says somewhere. (He pays no heed to the laughter of these refined people who are capable of despising the 'barbaric' words of his vernacular and the 'barbaric' customs of his land which stir him like a whispered secret.) Raban Maur, one of the great figures of the Renaissance of this period, one of the most fervent and studious adepts of a revival of classical culture, preached everywhere in German to the people and wrote a Latin-German glossary to the Bible at a time when Charlemagne's clergy in Gaul, in order to be understood by their flock, had also to give up preaching in Latin. This shows how superficial was Charlemagne's attempt to bring about a unified Empire. Fifty years after the death of the great warrior chief the partitioning of the West into rival countries became more certain and more definite.

Similarly, in his *Life of St. Rémi*, Hincmar of Rheims, making a collection of legends that had grown up within his bishopric, enriched the old tales that had brought wonder to humble homes and gave them a symbolic value capable of inspiring the whole people. He was the first to reveal the existence of the wonderful Holy Ampulla, the glory of the Church where Clovis was baptized. At a time when the consecration of kings was assuming so great an importance, the bishop, in his pride of city, showed the princes of the future the place where they were to be anointed. Why should they be crowned in an Italian or Rhenish town? The anointing of Frankish kings should be done with the baptismal ampulla of Clovis. All the legends to which the ardent local particularism of Hincmar gave life were to feed the immense fervour which was to turn towards Rheims the crowds of Capetian France, heralding the time when national leaders were to find, on their own

territory, the Rome of their coronation. This bishop made a great contribution towards the future spiritual unity of western *Francia*.

A second pointer to the future is that from the time of Charles the Bald's reign it was St. Denis, a Saint of the Parisian region, who was chosen as patron saint of the kingdom, and his basilica was already the necropolis of the Merovingian kings. And so another future spiritual centre of the realm was designated. On the very rare occasions when one of the Merovingians had brought the *regnum Francorum* under a single rule he had come and settled in Paris. Each time it had been only a question of a brief residence of a few years, but in the ninth century the Church gave the support of spiritual consecration, and added the devotion of the crowds to what had been only the simple beginning of a political tradition. It was also at this period that Abbon, Abbot of Saint Germain-des-Prés, sang the praises, out of all the towns of Gaul, of the Lutetia that had delighted the Emperor Julian. Amid the ruins of the Empire it was possible to foresee what capital was destined for western *Francia*.

The situation at the end of the ninth century was that the Frankish kings, whether Merovingian or Carolingian, had destroyed the unity that had been achieved under the *Pax Romana*; several provinces situated near the natural frontiers seemed to wish to throw in their lot with neighbouring countries, others to shut themselves off in fierce independence. But over and above the mixture of peoples, the splitting up into regions, and the differences of dialect, other factors making for unity, other kinds of grouping can be observed within the limits of the Frankish Empire, particularly where *Gallia* is concerned: cohesion due to a common spiritual tradition summed up in the word *Francia*, of which Gaul was now to have the monopoly, and the unity of a common language which had almost come about. Did there not also exist those old dimly perceived links, those traditions of community life now centuries old, which certain districts, limited in area, had had the privilege of preserving through their existence as Gallo-Roman *civitates*, as ecclesiastical divisions in Christian Gaul, and finally as the new *pagi* of the Carolingian period?

Some at least respected the ancient borders and so perpetuated remote connections between land and men, old pacts between the unchanging countryside and the deep-rooted family, habits as decisive for the establishment and the cohesion of small communities as are the even older rhythms of life within human bodies.

But the example of Vercingetorix's Gaul has shown that it is not sufficient for a people to have a common language, a common civilisation and common traditions for it to continue to exist and to preserve

its traditions, that is to say its sense of nationhood. It needs political cohesion.

How much more delicate was the problem in Gaul now than in Caesar's day! First-century Rome had only to give a framework, a skeleton, to a spiritual community that was already strong. From now on, because of the many invasions and, in addition, the ceaseless internal warfare, the restoration of unity seemed much more problematic. How the divergences, diversities and disagreements had multiplied! What a delicate task there was in store for the power that would one day establish itself! Combining force with discretion, it would have to adapt itself to a thousand different particularisms, and would succeed in obtaining a rigid enforcement of the law only by arousing the mass support of feelings, interests and loyalties. In the fifth century the collapse of Rome seemed to face the Western state that was to inherit its tradition with the acute problem of conciliating authority with liberty. How much more difficult did the problem become after the anarchical despotism of the Merovingian war-lords and the fictitious sovereignty of the Carolingians, undermined as it was by the principle of vassalage! A thousand individual tyrannies were now opposed both to a unifying authority and to the liberties of all.

Western *Francia* did not seem very likely to become one day a nation-state. The tool that could unite it seemed too difficult to forge.

CHAPTER VII

THERE WILL BE NO FRANCE

AT THE beginning of the year 887 the last Carolingian Emperor, Charles the Fat, was deposed by the nobles, and thus there came to an end the fiction of a Western Christian Empire dreamed of by the clergy. The feudal system invaded the whole of Europe; the only law was that of 'might is right', and in what had once been Gaul anarchy reached its peak. The tenth century was a period of fighting and violence; the only protection to be found in the ravaged countryside was that provided by the fortresses of the great lords. Yet the keep which watched over harvest and crafts and mounted guard against invasion could also become the occasion of private war, the prize coveted by a greedy neighbour.

For it became clear that the bond of man to man, that is to say loyalty, could not long resist primitive human passions: in the absence of any controlling authority that administered justice the intoxication of strength and the love of battle often effaced the memory of an oath sworn on sacred relics, or of the handclasp that sealed the bond of homage. From the end of the ninth century onwards one vassal could have several lords, that is to say he could hold fiefs from several people: in fact, he recognized none of them. Insubordination reigned at all levels of society: a powerful vassal would keep up a lively struggle against his lords, at the same time brandishing his sword against rival neighbours. Laws and contracts were observed only in so far as they could be enforced by might. Moreover, since the erection of formidable fortresses by the great lords had completely transformed the nature of military tactics, he who attacked a keep and found it too strong could do little else but pillage and lay waste the lands surrounding it. Amidst the red glow of fires, villages disappeared and harvests perished; the population was reduced to a state of extreme destitution. No sovereign authority was now anywhere acknowledged: the lords no longer administered justice, collected taxes and exacted armed service in the name of king or emperor: they did so in their own name. The king's effigy disappeared from all coins; henceforth only the lord figured on them.

Moreover, powerful seignorial dynasties rose above the ruins of local government. Although some set up kingdoms that were only ephemeral, others succeeded in giving a certain permanence to tendencies to independence that had been developing for six centuries:

for example Brittany and Aquitaine, never firmly attached to the Frankish kingdom, definitely withdrew and became independent flourishing duchies.

The die was cast: there was not to be a France. One day, perhaps, a powerful lord would revive in the West some more or less grandiose dream of unification. But why should this dream fit into the boundaries of the Roman Gaul of old? They had long been forgotten. The Empire arising in Germany might well claim all Frankish lands situated between the Rhine and the Rhône. A conqueror coming from Spain would find, in the Toulouse district, the booty once seized by Charles the Hammer from Abd-er-Rhaman. What community was there to oppose their ambition? What factor to group the various peoples and make them conscious of the solidarity of their destiny? For too long they had been drifting farther apart and losing their unity.

As soon as there ceased to exist any sovereign independent principle of unity to hold together the different parts of Gaul the land dissolved more markedly than others into rival antagonisms and interests. The very soil was a contributory factor, quite apart from the passions of the inhabitants, and this truth, evident from the dawn of history, was strikingly apparent in tenth-century Gaul. When Gaul is left completely to itself, to its secret genii and its demons, the historian can see more clearly the amazing variety concealed beneath apparent unity. The firm outline of sea and mountain, the rivers stretched out to join opposing banks, all becomes blurred, and what is apparent is only the great difference between the storm-swept western coasts and the sun-lit shores of the Mediterranean, the contrast between the mournful mists of Flanders and the clear atmosphere of the Loire region, and the fact that certain mountains (the oldest in the world) seem to provide inviolable retreats. How is one to find any resemblance between the villages in the forests and those in the plains, between groups of fishermen and companies of ploughmen, to establish any harmony between pink sandstone houses and those of white limestone, between huts, caves and log cabins made from trees of such diverse shapes and foliage? The whole history of civilization is no doubt the conciliation of a thousand contrasts, but Gaul was too rich in such contrasts, too rent by differences, too teeming with variety for a plan of perfect harmony to arise spontaneously.

Moreover, if the geographers of antiquity had returned in the tenth century they would not so much have marvelled at the wealth and beauty the gods had bestowed on Gaul as bewailed the dangers that her geographical position implied and that the history of the early Middle Ages had acutely revealed.

This land of Gaul lay exposed alike to the misty northern seas and the sun-drenched seas of the south, while every plain of the old continent

was prolonged to within its boundaries (so that traveller and plunderer alike might approach by sea or land). For ten centuries Gaul had been enriched by the contributions of every race, had suffered the impact of every invasion, had been initiated into new customs, had learnt new legends, new arts and new rituals, had been counselled by new wisdom and tempted by new errors. In the midst of these successive and complex contributions several influences no doubt were particularly important: some providing simple constituent elements (influences of the Gauls, the Franks and the East); others acting as co-ordinating principles (Greek wisdom, Roman order, Christian revelation). And dominating all this it was the Church which left the greatest mark on this chaotic society.

How could Gaul find any principle of unity in these elements? The Celts had occupied other lands than this, the Franks had invaded other countries; neither had taught Gaul particularism. Barbarian, Byzantine and Oriental influence had been at work in the Italy of the Lombards and in the Spain of the Visigoths, just as in Merovingian Gaul; here again no privilege marked Gaul out from the other countries of Europe. In the tenth century even the glory of a role she had for long assumed in Western Europe was snatched from her: that of defence against the barbarians. A new Empire arose in Germany, thanks to the energetic family of the Dukes of Saxony, and in turn took its place as the frontier of civilization. Otto the Great drove back the pagan Slavs who were attacking the line of the Elbe, pursued the Hungarians who had been making devastating raids, and after having himself crowned Emperor in the Rome which had seen Charlemagne's coronation, set himself up in the eyes of the West as the privileged supporter of the Papacy.

No doubt Rome had once foreshadowed the unity of Gaul. But who in the tenth century remembered Rome? Only the Church. The Church's business was not to help nations to differ one from another but to group them all in a spiritual community. How could the influence of the Church alone assume the task of resuscitating Roman Gaul? When the Church built sanctuaries or proclaimed a code of laws she did it for all the countries she was evangelizing. Her canon law was soon to be a synthesis of compilations from the East or from Africa, formulated in Spain as in Gaul, in Italy as in Ireland. Her temples were the same throughout the Christian world.

There was to be no France.

Gaul was no longer to be anything but a geographical expression, and as such would fit into the vast structure of Christendom. Western Europe, which had once attained self-realization under the order of the *Pax Romana*, now revealed itself in a new form of unity imposed by the Church. Henceforth there was one Christendom, facing the Byzantine Empire 'which was exhausting the formulae of a degenerate Hellenism', facing the Mohammedan power which occupied the southern shores of

the Mediterranean, facing the Asiatic invasions which periodically beat against the Christian defences of the German borderlands, there rose a community united under the protection of the Church, foreshadowing the spiritual destiny of Europe. The Eastern Church had also become more and more detached from the Roman Church: its liturgy, hierarchy and the art it inspired were profoundly different from those of Western Christendom. The limits of a new world were thus defined. In fact Europe was born, for a common ideal had been given her, and the name of Europe, which had been only a geographical expression, henceforth summed up the common aspirations of a multitude of peoples united despite all the barriers of the feudal system.

In such a period, in the midst of such a society what was to happen to the idea of country in what was once Roman Gaul?

There were still clerks, obstinately shut up in the ivory tower of their dream, to celebrate the Frankish Empire and hail the unity of the West. Adso, a monk of Moutier-en-Der, exclaims: 'As long as the Frankish kings continue to exist, the Roman Empire will be maintained in them and the revolution that is to precede the reign of Antichrist will not be seen.' Similarly Folcuin, a monk of Saint Bertin, identifies Frankish power with the *Pax Romana*.¹ Is there any need to say that their conceptions were then even more anachronistic and outmoded than in the time of the Merovingians and of Charlemagne?

Patrie for a man of the tenth century was the logical development of an idea which was already taking shape in the anarchy that arose in the later Empire: restricted in the extreme (because man had gradually been separated from the larger groups which enclosed his life), it had almost become detached too from any basis in a definite territory. In the tenth century loyalty most often did not extend beyond the *familia*, the group of father, mother, children and servants, the only enduring entity in a chaos in which the house and the field forming the paternal inheritance so often disappeared. There was no longer any security even for this *terra patrum* reduced to its strictest sense, not even the certainty of permanently preserving the site of a well-localized tradition. Such was the final consequence of the deficiencies of the State: even the smallest patrimony disappeared in its turn. Then with all about him in ruins, man turned once more to the primitive wisdom of Nature, enriched by all the old laws of Western tradition and ennobled by the teaching of the Church: he took refuge in the spiritual shelter of the family, and if there were no longer any family hearth he clung to those loyalties preserved in hearts through which the same blood flows and attached himself to the mysterious forces which bring a few human beings together round every cradle and every coffin, united in a joy or a sorrow beyond the reach of the rest of humanity.

¹ 'Francorum imperium, quod . . . in Romana republica est connumerandum.'

The bonds which, centuries ago, united the men of Roman Gaul had been broken and the laws and customs had disappeared; all that remained in the turmoil was the miniature state, the family, which had become the *mesnie* (from the Latin *mansionata*: *maison*, 'house') and which was rather like the Greek *γένος* and the Roman *gens*; Gaul returned to the clans of primitive societies.

Nevertheless the Christian idea continued to hover above this torn and shattered world. 910 was the year in which the monastery of Cluny, which was to regenerate Christendom, was founded in the land that once was Roman Gaul. Fifty years later two thousand Cluniac monasteries covered Europe, and the Cluniac monks, clearing forests and founding villages, building churches and protecting the weak from being brow-beaten by the strong, held aloft above all feudal barriers the dream of the City of God. The Gallo-Roman of the tenth century was also a citizen of this ideal country: shut in by so many narrow frontiers, he nevertheless knew he was one of a community whose country was the world, and which called him to Jerusalem and the Holy Places, to the tomb of St. James and to those of so many other martyrs, and to the relics kept in churches whose names evoked mysterious lands and endless travels. Just when his patriotism was becoming restricted to the narrowest limits possible the inhabitant of Gaul was offered another social grouping by the Church: he was to belong to Christendom. Just as *Romania* stood in opposition to the barbarians, so Christendom divided the world into two groups: the followers of Christ and pagans. The fact that they came from diverse races, spoke different languages and had varied customs would not separate men; but baptism was to decide whether or no they were members of the same society. As there was no other communal passion to conflict with nor counterbalance religious feeling, faith quickly took on a violent, even an aggressive character; hence the restrictions imposed throughout Christendom on heretics and Jews, hence also, a century later, the stupendous impetus of the Crusades.

It is a curious fact that this conception of Christian universality was at its height at the very time when feudal partitioning was most intense; but for a man of the Middle Ages it was a question of a perfect hierarchy of duties. Duties rendered to the feudal lord were the first level of an order of which Christ was the keystone, and if in the service of an earthly master he had to wage war on Christians, in the service of God he had to fight against the Infidel. Thanks to this gradation nobody was shut up within the over-rigid boundaries of countries ignorant of the universe without.

Most historians, faced with the phenomenon of feudalism, have gone to extremes of blame or praise. Romanticism had vitified the feudal lords as tyrants over the country folk: progress in the historical sciences

brought agreement that feudal fortresses had, in their time, represented an authority preferable to complete chaos and often hailed, with joy. Since then history has come to venerate an institution once held up to public obloquy: Jacques Flach and Frantz Funck-Brentano contrast with the anonymous implacable machine of the Roman state these instruments of power founded on human bonds of loyalty, protection and family patronage.

Any history of the idea of France owes it to itself no doubt to take particular care to avoid partisan judgements in such matters. It is undeniable that the tenth century was a turning-point in French history: during that century an organization of society completely alien to the Roman conception which linked public service with the idea of the state attained its fullest development. But what was the result of this organization? The answer is that at the end of the tenth century it could be said that there would be no France, nor even any Western civilization, if society continued down the slope it had begun to tread in the fourth century. Certainly groupings restricted to the family and those under feudal patronage were touching human reactions to universal anarchy, an effort to re-establish phantoms of order in the midst of chaos. But what were the results of the continuance of this régime? What check was there on the greed of the mighty, what restraint on the revolts of the humble? Who was to co-ordinate rival interests for the public good? Who was to right wrongs, who to limit the encroachments of force? The Church itself, which had for so long remained unaffected amidst the collapse of other institutions, had seen all its internal organization slowly crumble amidst feudal anarchy. In the countryside parishes became henceforward holdings which the feudal lord exploited like any other part of his domain: he could if it pleased him give the Church to a layman. In consequence the rural priest, having become the vassal of the lord, married and sought to bequeath his Church to his children. In the town the bishop or the canon behaved like the lay-lord and was to be found, with helmet and drawn sword, provoking his neighbours to war. The whole of society was decaying solely through the absence of any political order. And the Church itself, a human society divinely established, could not but become corrupted too in the midst of the general disorder, if not in its dogmas, at least in the life of its members.

Nevertheless it remains true that the stirring traditions contained in the practices of homage and loyalty were henceforth to animate the community that would arise out of feudal disorder on the territory of Roman Gaul. These traditions, developed through so many centuries, springing from the needs of troubled times, permeated with old Germanic customs and ennobled by Christian ideas, were to give to Roman wisdom a livelier flexibility, a more human warmth and more subtle variety. For Rome's counsel was not so much enclosed in strict unchanging

formulae as symbolized by a superior order of which the form might vary in a thousand ways. If Roman order dominated the feudal mosaic and at the same time became enriched by it, would not the problem of the conciliation of authority with liberty be solved?

But all this was only a dream; there was not to be any France. No one appeared to fulfil the wish formulated for centuries by so many tenacious clerks in their lonely wisdom, no one profited by the work of the passing individual who alone had preserved the Roman idea of unification in a society that was breaking up. Salvation was not in sight. The last kings of Charlemagne's family, forgotten by the people and mocked by the nobles, were no longer anything but phantoms. Men looked in vain for a real leader, that is to say a protector.

Two famous warriors fought against the Norman invaders in the place of their defaulting sovereigns. Their family was firmly established in the valleys of the Loire and the Seine, which henceforth were the only regions to retain the name of France. The first of these warriors was called Robert the Strong, and his son, the defender of Paris, one day usurped the throne of the Carolingians. No doubt it was an ephemeral event: so many dynasties were founded and faded away in those troubled times.

This son of Robert the Strong was called Eudes, Count of Paris.

CHAPTER VIII

FRANCE IS BORN

IN 987 a bishop of western Francia judged it wise to put an end to the shadow-rule of the last Carolingians and had Hugues Capet, great-grandson of Robert the Strong, raised to the throne. Feudal anarchy seems to have been at its peak at the time and the crowning of a noble to have consecrated it. Were they really kings, these petty princes who for a hundred years were to rule a territory centred around Paris and Orleans, and who could not go from one of these towns to the other without encountering pillaging barons or brigands? Were they kings, living as they did like great landowners on one or other of their estates, thus giving to the financial operations of the monarchy of the time a rural, homely flavour, smacking of harvest and vintage, which gave little promise of the dazzling fortunes to come? Was their policy of patiently amassing territory anything more than the normal administration of an estate which resembled so many others? Were the contemporaries of the first four Capetians, and these Capetians themselves, conscious of participating in a task which was to modify six centuries of history? Nothing could be farther from the truth. None the less it was the Capetian dynasty that began the forging of France. The history of the eleventh century is of capital importance for our theme, for the accession of the new king meant more than a change of dynasty. It was also much more than that consecration and climax of the feudal system that many historians have considered it to be. It was the installation of a political order that was at last capable of federating the different parts of Gaul; just as distinct from the brutal conquest of war as from the theoretical contracts of constitutions; a *natural* political form which was, like the work of Nature, to have a gradual growth, miraculous and subject to chance, the patient, difficult and at times painful birth of a living mystery; it marked the coming of hereditary power. Indeed the most important political event in the history of the first Capetians was the establishment of hereditary transmission of their sovereignty by right of primogeniture. The anarchical partitions of the kingdom of the Franks on the death of each sovereign thus came to an end. The way was thus prepared for the *possibility* of French unity. When Hugues Capet had his son Robert crowned while he himself was still alive, he explained his action in these terms: 'If I were to be killed in battle there might be strife between the nobles, the bad might tyrannize the good and consequently the whole people might fall into captivity.'

There were other important consequences of this new institution: when it became hereditary, royal power emancipated itself from the control of those who formerly had done the electing, that is to say the nobles and the clergy. In this way, from its very nature it received the two essential aspects of its mission: it was to destroy feudal tyrannies; it was to oppose the incursions of the clergy into the domain of the State which had occurred under the Carolingians.

But this is far removed from the humble picture of the Capetians of Orleans! Only in appearance, though, for the essential characteristics of this period consist in the accomplishment of a great work, in the modesty of the means employed, in the resolution of the preceding disorders by a return to the primitive springs of man's venture, in the triumph alike of Roman political wisdom preserved and enriched by the clerks and of the humble principle of *family* patronage extolled by feudalism.

In the preceding pages it has often been repeated that history has a duty to avoid anticipating from one century to another, leading to one period the foresight born of subsequent results. However, it would not have been rash to forecast in the tenth century that Capétian action would endure, because here was the perfection of a strong and wise *institution* which would palliate the mediocrity of certain men and strengthen the inspired action of others. That is why the historian can, from this date, be sure that France has been born, although all that apparently happened was that one feudal domain was constituted and developed among the others.

No doubt the Capetian was not the only one to found his power on heredity, and other great feudal lords imitated him or even preceded him in this practice. Neither was he alone in possessing a coherent, fertile domain which he was to unify by ceaselessly policing the roads and strongholds, sword in hand, helmet on his head, astride his charger. He was not alone in taking advantage of the principles of feudal law, of inheritances and marriages, in order to round off his lands and increase his wealth.

But he was the only one to receive holy unction, which made of him the lord appointed by God to rule both common people and nobles. He was the only one to be the ally of the greatest power of the time, the Church, absolute mistress of souls. He was the only one to become the chief administrator of justice, to annex this essential prerogative of the State to his uncertain power. Above the rival powers scattered over the whole of Roman Gaul a prince had appeared who proclaimed himself the defender of law, the protector of the weak against unjust tyrannies. And for the first time this prince took the form of a master close at hand, like the lords of the manor who for centuries had gradually obscured for the people the image of the sovereign they did not know.

His ancestors had had titles which evoked past battles common to many peoples of Gaul: Duke of France, Count of Paris, names which recalled struggles against the Norman invaders and which had made King Eudes the legendary hero claimed by Aquitaine and Burgundy, as well as by small, central *France*, the prince whose effigy was to be seen even on the coins of southern Gaul, because at one time he had symbolized protection and safety for all. Certainly the inhabitants of Gaul were very far from thinking of unity! The well-established feudal dynasties obtained the loyalty of all their vassals within a clearly defined territory. But the new sovereign of western *Francia* was to arouse this loyalty everywhere, and it was a feeling which for centuries was to be invoked incessantly. His will not be the distant power whose Olympian majesty delegates an army of officials to deal with the inhabitants of a kingdom that is too vast. He is a lordling, whom all the tenants of his domain can meet and whom the vassals of other lords feel to be fairly close to them as well. After so many centuries in which the idea of patriotism had become for the inhabitants of Roman Gaul so whittled down as to refer exclusively to a small territory and to one's own family it was no doubt impossible to bring about an extension of this idea except by making use of the very old customs that had gradually become more and more firmly anchored in the hearts of all. The commonalty of Frenchmen was to arise from an extension of loyalties that were to grow progressively wider till they embraced the boundaries of the Gaul of old. *France was first to become herself in a common appeal to the protection and justice of the king.*

This is disappointing to those rhetoricians who can conceive of the idea of France only as a rather vague abstraction, but such are the facts. The French did not become conscious of their unity through the gradual development of some obscure feeling of collectivity (an argument dear to the Romantics); on the contrary, geography and history more often emphasized their antagonisms and their rivalries than their unity. Neither did they realize it suddenly as a result of a foreign invasion (for it would have been necessary for 'foreigner' to mean the same to all the inhabitants of Gaul); nor yet at the call of some strong-willed but mortal leader of men: for the construction of a country is a gradual task; its foundations are established by patience; it is a task for which man must take into account laws which transcend him, and make a pact with time by basing his work on solid institutions. *France was born on the day when the Capetian dynasty made the construction of a nation-state the ceaseless concern of one family.*

There are two pitfalls of different kinds here. Some theorists proclaim: 'France was made by the will of the French people', but they are opposed by those who say: 'France was made by her kings alone.' It is perhaps necessary to draw a distinction here. It is certain that the Capetians did

not create the contributions of geography, nor the bonds of common interest, nor certain common memories, nor the linguistic affiliations, all of which served to unite several regions of what had once been Roman Gaul. But it has been shown that neither geography, nor a common language, nor economic reasons (even less a unity of race which did not exist) had *by themselves* been able to group the various provinces of the France to be. Each of these unifying factors also emphasized divergencies for which there was no solution and repelled from the common centre many territories and many men. The power of the Capetians was the strong yet supple backbone, the nervous centre around which the various regions came together because they kept their own individuality even as they found in themselves a principle which made them kin. This principle was the bond of protection, the feeling of loyalty to a living man, to a being of flesh and blood, and not the adhesion to legal formulae or some contract which in fact did not exist.

Neither did the Capetians create the enormous mass of passions, habits, customs and vague memories hidden beneath the idea of a nation-state when once a whole people has become conscious of it; it was not through them that there arose the scholars and the geniuses, the heroes and the saints through whom a country expresses the best of itself, but their very existence, the traditional continuity of their authority and the benefits of the institution represented by their power established a new world, ensured its continuance, and gathered together all the wealth, all the glory and all the misfortunes of a people under the cloak of regal majesty. By its very etymology *patrie*, or 'country', is essentially a continuous handing-on of an inheritance. Henceforth there existed in what had once been Gaul a long chain of continuity provided by a dynasty set above the multitude of families and the many varied and scattered family heritages. In it the permanence of a common destiny was *incarnate*.

That the rule of the early Capetians appears entirely feudal should not mislead us. It was the Roman principle which linked public service with the idea of the State that came to light once more with these lords whose power was so flimsy. This was affirmed by the clergy on the very day of Hugues Capet's coronation. 'Choose happiness rather than calamity for the State',¹ said Archbishop Adalberon to the nobles who were about to elect the Duke of France.

An idea of the State similar to that prevailing in the later Roman Empire, a tyrannical, dominating, mechanical idea leading to abuses, could no longer be accepted in Roman Gaul in the tenth century, divided ~~as it was~~ amongst so many independent powers, jealous of their prerogatives. The embodiment of the idea of the State in the despotic

¹ *'Reipublicae beatitudinem magis quam calamitatem optate.'*

power of a war leader or in the absolute sovereignty of an Imperial master was even less suited to all their varying aspirations. Then it was that the Church pronounced the key word that was to reconcile all contradictions: 'Elect the Duke. In him you will have a father', said Adalberon to the nobles who were about to nominate Capet as king. All contemporary thinkers echoed the Bishop of Rheims. In the eleventh century Hugues de Fleuri wrote: 'The king is the father of his kingdom.' The king's protection had indeed become in ecclesiastical thought a function quite distinct from the *mundium* of the barbarian kings, from the protection afforded by the warrior chief to his companions in battle. In the first centuries of the Christian era a definition of kingship had been established by the clergy. St. Isidore of Seville used this definition. It was repeated by ecclesiastical writers of the Carolingian period as it was to be by many theorists during the course of the Middle Ages. The name of 'king' (*roi*) was derived from 'to govern justly' (*régir droitement*). The king must govern with godliness, justice and mercy; otherwise he was not a king but a tyrant.² In this way the Church combined the idea of the necessity of authority which derived from Rome, the Biblical tradition of a prince appointed by God for the salvation of the people, and the German custom of military loyalty, which became enlarged and transformed into a peace-time institution. The king was to be the father of his subjects. Protection and justice were to call forth the strength and the affection characteristic of newly instituted societies and were to arouse feelings and enthusiasms at the same time as they reconciled ambitions and satisfied interests.³ Just as the words *patria*, *terre paternelle*, *terre des aïeux* ('country', 'land of one's fathers', 'land of one's ancestors') had, in the heyday of feudalism, indicated the territory over which the power of the lord of the manor extended, so the country of France was to be the land over which several separate peoples were one day to recognize a common protector. A unified country was to be achieved on the day when all the prodigal sons were to return to their father's house.

This idea, which was due chiefly to the Church, illustrates her immense influence in the State, especially in Carolingian times. Here again the Capetian innovated and revolted. He did not adhere blindly to tradition in all its aspects. A Christian prince among Christians, at one with the clergy on the ideal plane, he was never to be the toy of ecclesiastical power. On his accession he claimed the prerogative of administrator of justice which for too long had been monopolized by the Church alone; and gradually he was to take back from the ecclesiastical tribunals certain cases which during the anarchy of the preceding centuries they had improperly made theirs. It was no longer the clergy but the king who made the barons swear to keep the 'peace of God'

² Cf. A. LEMAIRE, *Les lois fondamentales de la Monarchie française*. Paris, 1907.

because the settlement of private wars appertained to the supreme role that he had assigned himself. Moreover, by instituting hereditary succession he showed his determination not to allow the Church to dispose of the throne at will. Anointing by the clergy was to consecrate his power, not to create it.

It is quite evident that in the tenth century the inhabitants of what had been Roman Gaul were in no way conscious of such an upheaval in their lives. From the beginning the sovereigns, in spite of the smallness of their domain, claimed the title of lords of all western *Francia*. Moreover, the clerks who wrote the histories of their reigns acknowledged their claim. 'Robert the Pious', wrote his biographer Helgaud, 'king of the Western peoples from the river Meuse to the Atlantic.' And Abbon de Fleury: 'The king must govern the whole of the kingdom.' Moreover, all the great feudal lords of the former kingdom of Charles the Bald, even the most independent, came and paid homage to the petty lord of Orleans whom the privilege of coronation had made the heir of the Carolingians. The Capetians proclaimed themselves to be the legitimate successors of Charlemagne. They did not even seem impressed by the Imperial title which some German sovereigns had adopted and which implied that the latter were lords of all the West. From the very beginning of their rise to power the Capetians shattered for ever the Frankish Emperor's dream of unification. Western *Francia* was no longer part of the Empire, and they themselves were never to be the vassals of an Emperor. (Thus Robert the Pious, requesting an interview of this Emperor, instituted a ceremonial which placed him in the position of an equal and not of a subordinate, and Hugues Capet, at the very beginning of his reign, tried to add lustre to his young dynasty by a marriage with a princess of the Imperial dynasty of Constantinople, as Otto I had done.) The Capetians proclaimed that they were the equals of these German lords who were really only continuing, like themselves, to govern a part of the former Frankish Empire. Even if their effective power did not extend beyond narrow territorial limits their spiritual sovereignty set itself vaster limits. At a time when the mass of the inhabitants of Gaul had as yet no idea of a common mother-country, this idea existed in the minds of those who were patiently building it.

Here again over-zealous eulogists of 'nationalism' intervene. They see in the power of the *Capetians* a dynasty that is by birth and race *national*, in contrast with the Germanic dynasty of the Merovingians and the Carolingians. It has been shown that questions of race had played no part in the nature of the Carolingians' power; but it must be recalled here that all the learned research concerning the origin of the Capetians is far from having produced any certain result, and the birth-place of their family is still the subject of controversy, some saying that

they were descended from Saxons who had emigrated to Gaul, some proclaiming them to be the native lords of the region of Anjou, and still others that they came from the Parisian merchant class. Dante spitefully drew attention to this last view in the *Divine Comedy*, and Francis I became very angry when he read the poem. There seems no good reason for deciding in favour of any one theory rather than another, and in fact it is not of great importance. The origin of the Capetians played no part either in the establishment of their power or in its form. To justify its usurpation, the dynasty needed nothing more than the consecration given by the Church to the benefits wrought by their protection in fighting for the public safety and the identification of their efforts as headstrong lords with the fortunes and misfortunes of a people.

The clerks, too, at this period had some idea of a native country. They had never ceased to maintain political ideas which transcended the barriers of feudal division and they could imagine the unity of France at the very time when the peoples of this kingdom were separated by their loyalties to different lords. Moreover, for these clerks, as for their forerunners, there was no break in continuity between the Gauls of the early centuries and the Franks of their own time, since the community living in the territory of the old Celts still had the same civilizing part to play: that of a pillar of Christianity and a rampart of the Church, just as in Gallo-Roman times it had been the citadel of *Romania*, opposed to the barbarians. Consequently the inhabitants of the Capetian kingdom were always called either *Franci* or *Galli* by the clerks, who did not distinguish between the two terms. Gauzlin, Abbot of Fleury-sur-Loire, when undertaking the erection of his church, wished it to be worthy to serve as a model for the whole of France (*opus tale quod Galliae sit exemplum*). Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, wrote in 1112 to the Emperor John Comnenus in order to recommend to him the King of Jerusalem, the Prince of Antioch and 'all the Frenchmen' of the East (*pro universis Gallis nostris*). The historian Richer used the words *Franci* and *Galli* indifferently. Eminent chronicler of the feudal struggles of his time, he did not fail to give them an air of nationalism as a result of his recollections of his eager reading of Roman history. Thus he credits King Eudes with speeches exhorting his vassals in which he evoked the ancient valour of their ancestors and proclaimed the honour that was to be found in dying for one's country (*decus pro patria mori*). But scholars now know that Richer, who was a zealous imitator of Sallust, composed for his book several eloquent passages whose only value lay in their character as school declamation. An accurate picture of the customs of the period is not to be found therein. Moreover, this historian contradicts himself, for, in all the wars which he narrates, the only principle that is affirmed is that of feudal alle-

giance towards an overlord. Many authentic inscriptions, charts and documents of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which conjure up the daily preoccupations and real customs of a people better than imaginary speeches, show the word *patria* used in the restricted sense of 'city' or 'region'.

The same precautions should be taken when noting allusions to so-called 'national' hatreds in some writings of the early Capetian period. Suger, the historian of Louis the Fat, says concerning the quarrels between his master and the Plantagenet Kings of England: 'It is neither right nor natural either that England should be subject to the French or France to the English.' This remark shows this monk to be singularly in advance of his times, for an impartial study of the wars of the time between the Capetians and the Plantagenets shows the supporters of both sides animated solely by feelings of dependence on their respective masters. It would be a mistake to identify the civic ideas of the learned Abbot of Saint-Denis with those of all the inhabitants of a kingdom that was still very divided.

At this period too the authors of the *Chansons de Geste*, the first writers to employ anything but the Latin of the clerks, also had the idea of a native country. Was Christendom for them in the eleventh century anything more than a vast network of roads leading to celebrated tombs, to wondrous sanctuaries and sacred shrines? Every road in the West echoed at that period with the fervent tread of pilgrims. Travelling to Jerusalem and to St James of Compostello, to Our Lady of Vézelay and to Rome, the crowds were to discover for themselves ancestors animated by the same love and the same faith. It was then that the monks and the minstrels erected before them all the image of the wondrous conqueror of the Christian West, of a Charlemagne whose breast-plate was an eleventh-century shirt of mail, and whose peers were like the knights of their own time. The dream of the Emperor was to become the dream of eleventh-century France. 'Sweet France, holy France, glorious France',³ because it was in France alone that the spiritual legacy of the lord of the West had remained.

France was the land favoured by Crusaders. 'Whenever the Popes are in great trouble', wrote Guibert de Nogent, 'they come and ask the French for help.' This sentence explains once more the place of the thread of tradition, justified neither by geography nor political history, joining Roman Gaul, rampart of civilization, with *Francia*, corner-stone of Christendom, with *western Francia*, and finally with the brand-new France of the Capetians, the eldest sons of the Church. The German Emperor had not long kept the promise which seemed to be a part of his Roman coronation. Far from imitating Charlemagne, sword of the Holy See, he rose against the power of the Pope, and the struggle that

³ 'France la douce, France l'assolue, France la louée!'

ensued did not seem to be nearing its end. It was then that the Popes remembered the ancient pact binding the Franks to the west of the Rhine to the successors of Peter. When the Cluniac Urban II came to Clermont to preach the Crusade in 1099 he addressed an anguished appeal to the 'beloved French elect of God'; he reminded them of 'the exploits of "their" ancestor Charlemagne', and entrusted to them the mission of leading Christendom against the Infidel. It was this wondrous role which gave to the France of the *Chansons de Geste* all the titles with which her first poets adorned her. First of all she was the most beautiful land on earth:

*'Quand Dex eslut nonante et dix roiaumes
Tot le meilleur torna en douce France.'*⁴

Our poets are even astonished that the Son of God should have spent his time on earth anywhere but in France.

*'Merveille moi de Dieu le fil sainte Marie
Qui chi se hebergea en ceste desertie. . .
Mex aim d'el borc d'Arras la grant castelerie
Et d'Aire et de saint Pol la grant caroterie
Et de mes blaus viviers la riche pescherie
Que tote ceste terre. . .'*⁵

For the land which the author contrasts with the deserts of Palestine is obviously his local feudal district, his familiar horizons, the monuments he has known since childhood, the names pronounced by many generations of ancestors in their rich brogue, and when he says 'France la Douce' he immediately sees his steeple, his house and his land, not a vague, indefinite image arbitrarily created for the word 'France'.

France was also pre-eminently the land of bravery and honour:

*'Quar France est un pais el'quel on doit trouver
Honor et loidut  et tout bien savourer.'*⁶

This idea held by the feudal warriors was unknown to antiquity and to the East (with the exception of Japan), that is to say the idea of knightly honour which now became of prime importance in the people's civilizing traditions.

These songs of enthusiasm about sweet France do not always indicate the exact limits of a well-defined territory. Sometimes in these simple poems the name of France is used only for the region which was to become the Ile-de-France, sometimes it means the whole Empire of

⁴ 'When God chose a hundred realms, the best of them he made into sweet France.'

⁵ 'It is to me a wondrous thing that God, the son of Saint Mary, should have taken refuge in that desert. . . I prefer the great stronghold of Arras town, the great causeway of Aire and St. Pol, the teeming fish in my own fine pond to the whole of that land.'

⁶ 'For France is a country in which honour and loyalty are to be found and where all good things may be enjoyed.'

Charlemagne which they were thus beginning to treat as a 'nation', but this incertitude concerning *Francia* on the part of the minstrels takes on, in the light of the work the Capetians were doing, a sense that could not be attributed to the divergencies of the Merovingian and Carolingian scribes. There was now an institution which was to enlarge the small province of *France* to the limits of the former kingdom. It was already claiming the spiritual boundaries of the most important Western community. There was now in existence an institution which was to provide the sole basis for the various acceptations the name of France would assume.⁷

On every side the oppressed were the first to recognize the rising power. The churches molested by ruthless lords claimed royal protection (and this was sometimes a way for the Capetian to extend his authority over the whole of a lord's domain). The free towns gradually became accustomed to considering themselves as dependent exclusively on the king. Foreigners obliged to acknowledge themselves serfs of the lord on whose domain they lived placed themselves in the king's keeping in order to escape from their hard lot. In the reign of Louis the Fat it happened that one day, when the king was besieging the fortress of a formidable noble who was given to pillaging, a parish priest came at the head of his parishioners and himself tore down the stockade to make a way for the royal army. The worthy counsellor Suger said that the king now held the 'sword' for the punishment of evil-doers. 'I swear', said Philip I, on the day of his coronation, 'that I will render to each man the justice due to him and do right by all men.' Gradually the king's agents infiltrated into the domains of the great feudal lords in the name of this beneficent justice, and by the time of Louis VII's reign countless appeals were being addressed to the king over the heads of the lords. The impetus was thus given for centuries to come. The various peoples of what had once been Gaul were to know henceforth where to seek redress from the excesses of all feudal powers, even when in the towns that were again springing up the power of gold was to arise as a rival to the privileges of family.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries, during which the power and the renown of the Capetian dynasty developed, were not a continuous idyll between the people and the king. It is not correct to consider the princes of the new dynasty as born protectors of the free towns or definite

⁷ To make clear this distinction which is essential to my theme I have in this chapter translated the word *Francia* by *France*, and the term *Franci* by *French*; whereas in the history of the preceding centuries I have kept the words *Francia* (or *Franci*) and *Franks*, so as to emphasize the more all that distinguished the Frankish confederation from what is included in the idea of France. It was moreover in the tenth and eleventh centuries that the term *Francisci*, from which was to come the word *Français* ('French'), became predominant and general.

champions of the enfranchisement of the serfs. Here, as elsewhere, the new power compromised with circumstances, moulded itself to embrace contradictory facts, and slowly and hesitatingly, even on occasion retracing its steps, it mapped out a line of conduct that it would be a mistake to imagine as undeviating. But the very *nature* of this sovereignty inclined it towards measures which no individual king would have taken on his own initiative. His existence could not be conceived of apart from the struggle against the excesses of the feudal lords, that is apart from the alliance concluded with those who suffered from these excesses. Philip Augustus, when he was dying, was to say to the future Louis VIII: 'My son, protect the humble and the Church people. That is our principal task and the reason for our existence.'

The worthy Suger told how in 1120 subjects hastened from all corners of the former kingdom of Charles the Bald to the side of King Louis in order to oppose the invasion of the German Emperor Henry V. Modern historians see in this event a manifestation of patriotism, but it is not really possible to use this word about the early twelfth century, especially with the meaning it has today.

Already at this period the Capetian envisaged a Western kingdom that should be distinct from the Empire, and should reconcile the regional differences due to the feudal system. But the vassals themselves knew only the loyalty due to the leader in war, and the followers of each particular lord undoubtedly welcomed the advent of an overriding administrator of justice. These men had no conception of a nation-state, but the idea was already springing up in the imagination of poets, and it had been indefeasibly preserved by a few scholars.

CHAPTER IX

FRANCE AND CHRISTENDOM

THE ILLUSTRIOUS Capetian who died in 1223 had made of his reign the epitome of all the efforts that his predecessors had attempted. In the first place, *they had patiently increased their domain* by the use of such feudal methods as were the right of the sovereign king, *e.g.*, confiscation, by turning to profit such means as fortune offered, *e.g.*, inheritance, marriage or friendly transfer, or by resorting in the last instance to war, courageously waged with the ruler at the head of vassal lords. Secondly, *they had sought firm bases for their rule both in the feudal polity of the bishoprics and rich abbeys of the Church*, protector of a vast army of the faithful that it willingly led after the king chosen by God, and also amongst the burgesses of the new towns that were rising with their newly acquired wealth in opposition to the decadent tyranny of many a lord. Finally, the Capetians had *extended their influence amongst the oppressed peoples in all quarters of the realm*, whether they were serfs on the royal domain, foreigners from neighbouring baronies, or victims of unjust tribunals appealing with outstretched hands from all sides to the king. Philip Augustus had made a synthesis of the wisdom enshrined in the efforts of his ancestors; the small Capetian domain was no more than the centre of a wider realm that must be acquired by patient and tenacious conquest in which the forces and wealth of Nature, as well as men's aspirations, were to be made accomplices instead of being despised or violated.

This France dawning in the thirteenth century, which needed only four great fiefs for the real domain of the Capetian to be the same as the theoretical kingdom of Charles the Bald, was soon to become the France of St. Louis. It was now no longer a mosaic of rival states at the centre of which the head of one small domain shaped a dream of unification of which the people as a whole knew nothing. It had become the first kingdom in Europe, and the two powers struggling at the time for supremacy on the continent, that is to say the Papacy and the Empire, learnt of the pride of the Capetian and his desire to be independent of all suzerainty.

But France aimed higher still; boldly claiming the spiritual legacy of antiquity and the glory of being at that moment the 'conscience of Christendom', blending the dream of pagan Rome with that of the Church, she was shaping a civilization instinct with universality and was subjugating the world without wishing for one moment to enslave it. It was an unparalleled triumph of spiritual influence. During the twelfth

and thirteenth centuries it was France who, to use Péguy's expression, *invented* the Crusade; it was France who gave a pattern to the knight-hood of the whole of the Western world; it was the manners of her court that were imitated at the courts of the Spanish, Italian and English kingdoms, and those of Bohemia, Poland and Hungary; it was the University of Paris which, not content with attracting students from the whole of Europe and the most renowned teachers from all nations, became the chosen place where the Universal Church defined its theology and annexed to the faith the highest synthesis of the wisdom of Antiquity; it was France who, with the corporative organization of trades, found a solution that gave social peace, the key to which had been sought in vain by Western urban civilization; finally it was in France that unknown masons of the Parisian region, perfecting the principle of the arches of the Gothic cathedral, invented the boldest and most sublime prayer in stone which men have ever directed to the gods. And the language of central France, which was one day to be called the Ile-de-France, not content with ousting the countless dialects of the former kingdom of Charles the Bald, was cultivated in England as in Italy, by the lords of Germany as of Norway, in Morea, in Cyprus and throughout the Eastern Empire created by the Crusades, whilst French words stand out from time to time in the murmur of the strange poetry of the Norse Sagas.

A kingdom had been born which, at the very moment when it was feeling its unity and drawing its bonds closer, yet assumed a striking universality. This was no doubt an extraordinary event. In any case it is very instructive for any history of the idea of France. In order to understand it fully that new form of community which the France of the period presented and the idea which those she grouped together had of her must be studied very closely.

The Capetian kings of the end of the twelfth century and those of the thirteenth century had, like their ancestors, a very vivid idea of the independence and integrity of their kingdom, and of its importance. A chronicler of the time of Philip Augustus credits the king with these words: 'I am wondering one thing, whether God will grant me the favour of raising France to the same heights as she attained in Charlemagne's time.' The chronicler wrote in Latin, so he used the word *Francia* as in Frankish times. It is obvious, however, of which France Philip Augustus was thinking: the Capetian realist was not looking at Italy, or Spain, or the lands on the right bank of the Rhine; his ~~present~~ policy aimed at reclaiming from the feudal lords all the territory allotted in 843 to Charles the Bald, and perhaps even then at extending this influence ~~over~~ the ill-defined territories that had formerly composed the kingdom of Lothar.

There were, however, two suzerains over the king of France: first of all the Pope. It was the period of the formulation of the famous theory of the *two swords*—the spiritual and the temporal—and certain Pontiffs wished to wield them both. St. Bernard wrote to Pope Eugene III: 'The material sword is certainly yours; even if it is not your hand that draws it, it seems that it must not be drawn without your consent. Both swords belong to the Church, both the spiritual and the material, the former drawn by her, the latter for her. . . .' Was not such a theory calculated to beguile the Most Christian King of France? Not at all. The Capetians of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries continued to maintain the careful distinction established by their ancestors in this sphere; privileged Christians, they were quite willing to be obedient sons of the Church in observing and defending the Faith, but they would not allow any Papal interference in the political administration of their kingdom. When Innocent III attempted to interfere in the quarrel between John Lackland and Philip Augustus, the king retorted: 'This is a question of feudal law. . . . I am not obliged to obey apostolic orders on this point. . . . Matters in dispute between kings are no business of the Pope.' The same attitude was shown in the refusal to start on a crusade against the Albigensians at an inopportune moment.

The most saintly King Louis IX, a worthy grandson of Philip the realist, was unyielding in his defence of his rights. He made a stand against the pervasiveness of the pontifical fiscal policy with a firmness which left no room for any misunderstanding.

On the other hand, the Papacy too wished to maintain its position of suzerain over the Christian kingdoms, and to safeguard its inquisition into the developments of the civil powers a distinction was made: the Pope did not intervene in political disputes for the sake of interference, but because of the *moral* aspect of some of these disputes (*ratione peccati*), which was most indisputably his province. Though theoretically valid, in practice the argument contained many snares, for it is very difficult to define where the moral aspect of a political problem begins and ends; but the Popes were to find in the Kings of France sons who were always bent on safeguarding their independence. It was a constant characteristic of the Capetian dynasty that from the very beginning it worked incessantly to destroy the confusion between Church and State which had come about under the Carolingians, and to distinguish its own power from that of the clergy.

The other suzerain threatening the independence of the young Capetian kingdom did not invoke any spiritual motives. It was the powerful authoritarian Frederick Barbarossa, a character famed in legend for his conquests, who greedily pursued titles of glory and increase of power. With him the Germanic Holy Roman Empire openly claimed to be the

successor of Rome the all-powerful, and soon the time was to come when the doctrinarian Martin Gosia was to hail the new Western chief with the title *dominus mundi*. The Capetians obstinately protested, in spite of Frederick, who treated them as 'petty kings' (*reguli*). It was the Pope himself (bent on finding support in France in his struggle against the Emperor) who was the first to proclaim that the King of France 'recognizes no superior in temporal matters'. And the victor of Bouvines gave a glorious and spirited reply in arms to the claims of Otto of Brunswick. St. Louis was one day to write proudly to the Emperor telling him not to indulge in an illusory dream of supremacy, 'for the kingdom of France is by no means so weak as to be willing to march at your spurs'. We are very close to the affirmations of the jurists that the King of France is 'emperor in his kingdom'.¹

In this way the sovereigns of the period defined clear boundaries for France and withdrew it from the authority of the other earthly powers. Were their subjects equally conscious of the legacy they shared?

The writings of the poets and chroniclers reveal ideas and sentiments already found in the *Chansons de Geste*. If sometimes the name of France is used for central France, for the small province of France which was the real domain of the Capetian, there very often appears also the idea of a larger country, embracing a larger expanse of territory, a civilization common to several groups of men, and ignoring feudal barriers. This civilization was no longer known only for its religious fervour or its renowned honour; it also claimed science and wisdom as amongst the finest flowers in its crown. 'Books have taught me', said Chrestien de Troyes, 'that Greece once occupied the place of honour in knowledge and courtesy. Both passed to Rome, then emigrated to France where they are now enthroned.' Joinville says:

'It was because Our Lord Jesus Christ specially wished to illuminate the Kingdom of France with Faith, Wisdom, and Chivalry, that the Kings of France formed the habit of bearing in their coat of arms the fleur de lys represented by three leaves, that these may proclaim to the whole world: "Faith, Wisdom and Chivalry are by the grace of God provided more abundantly in our kingdom than in others."'

Even when the Crusade brought the Christian peoples together in a struggle for the same cause, the pride of the French combatants claimed its rights. To an Archdeacon of Mayence who made fun of French warriors, Guibert de Nogent retorted: 'If you think the French so weak and cowardly that you can insult by your jokes a name celebrated as

¹ But as the time had not yet come when Capetians were to annex to their customs governmental formulae from Roman law, Philip Augustus, by means of a Papal bull, had the teaching of this law forbidden at the University of Paris, knowing that the Emperors justified their ambitions by basing them on principles drawn from the *Institutes* of Justinian.

far as the Indian Ocean, tell me to whom Pope Urban II applied when he was seeking help against the Turks? Was it not to the French?' The chronicler Raimond d'Aiguille noted that in the Christian camp in the Holy Land everyone said from which province he came, but the pagan enemy knew them all only as French.² Such are the echoes reported by the chroniclers. Can these writings be said by then to reflect the mentality of a whole people?

It certainly seems as if a certain awareness of the French community was coming to light and showing itself in a certain open suspicion of and ill-humour towards the inhabitants of foreign countries. Joinville says of Blanche of Castille that she 'had not many friends in France as she had come from Spain.' Popular songs were composed attacking the Queen and reproaching her with her birthplace:

'If Madam had been born in Paris'
And had been Queen by right.'

But for a just appreciation of these first manifestations of the idea of a common country distinct from neighbouring kingdoms it must be remembered that a queen born in many a province that is French to-day would in the thirteenth century have been open to the same reproaches as Blanche of Castille, so regional in character had patriotism once more become for the people of this period as a whole. Although the former domain of the Capetians (the districts of Paris and Orleans) no doubt enjoyed complete political unity, the regions that the king was progressively annexing to his crown were still permeated with all the provincial particularism that feudalism had imposed on them.

It is frequently observed that the small feudal states, by causing groups of people to live under one lord who was jealous in preserving his frontiers, succeeded in organizing definitively in the former Roman Gaul what had proved impossible for the Gallic cantons, the Gallo-Roman *civitates* and the *pagi* of the Frankish period: that is to say, real petty provincial nationalities that were to endure for centuries and centuries; provinces whose unity cannot be explained entirely either by geography (Burgundy, from this point of view, is an absurdity), by the existence of a common language (Flanders is half Flemish, half Romance) or by race (Brittany was composed of Bas-Bretons and Gauls who were as different from each other as were the inhabitants of the lower valleys of the Seine and the Orne in Normandy from their Danish invaders), provinces bound together only by the feeling of feudal loyalty which has been mentioned.⁴

The complicated and important event of the Albigensian War also

² *'Inter hostes autem Francigenae omnes dicabantur.'*

³ *'Si Madame fust née de Paris
Et elle fust roine par raison.'*

⁴ Cf. F. LOT, *La France des Origines à la Guerre de Cent Ans*, Paris, 1934:

had shown what considerable differences existed between the northern and southern districts of what had once been Gaul, districts that had been so completely separated for centuries that they now differed in language, law, customs and almost every aspect of civilization.

Faced with such a state of affairs the Capetian dynasty forced no violent changes. It proceeded by means of a skilful, prudent assimilation, confirming regional privileges and the privileges of both towns and trades, respecting customs and allowing autonomy to continue. External loyalty was required, *real attachment was to come without effort* through increasing recognition of services rendered, through interest which inclined men towards a strong beneficent power, through the patiently increasing spiritual attraction of a superior civilization which made an appeal to the soul. Here was all the wisdom of the *Pax Romana* informed by the warmer Christian precept of charity. It was a difficult task, however, and even in the districts of Maine and Anjou, so near the original domain, there continued for many a year a certain sullenness against the 'French of France'.

Moreover, each province had its own dialect which it used even in literature. The most ancient texts in which Latin at last gave way to the vernacular date from the twelfth century, and are not written in *francien* (the language of the Ile-de-France), but in the languages of Normandy, Picardy, Champagne, or Aquitaine. The king's language was not to be that of his kingdom until the political influence of his capital was strong enough to impose its own speech and make it the most important language. At this time it was still only one provincial dialect among many others. At the end of the twelfth century Garnier de Pont Sainte Maxence wrote: 'My speech is good, for I was born in France' (that is to say in the Ile-de-France). Similarly, Conon de Béthune wrote: 'Though my speech is not French, yet can it be understood in France.'

It is obvious, however, that loyalty and gratitude to the king were increasing on all sides and were building the foundations of an incomparable spiritual unity. There are many accounts by the chroniclers of the feelings of the common people; the enthusiasm after Bouvines of the crowds of peasants on the roads and in the village squares cheering Philip, victor over the most formidable coalition that had opposed the Capetians for two hundred and fifty years; the fervour of the people during the minority of St. Louis at the time when the Queen Regent had to face the revolts of the great vassals. The people of town and country thronged round the little king as he passed, wishing him long life and victory, and affirming the alliance between them ~~in the~~ struggle against the excesses of the nobles.

But side by side with the crumbling of regional autonomy the peoples and the influences of the whole world were still crowding, mixing and

jostling each other in France. A symbol of this is to be found in the construction of those towns which, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, arose all over Gaul, a country which had been devastated by so many centuries of war and whose civilization was purely rural. In the plan and organization of these towns are to be seen many influences which give fairly precise information about the prodigiously different characteristics which coloured the civic life of the inhabitants of the Capetian kingdom, and about the relationships in space as well as in time of which these inhabitants were becoming conscious.

The towns were built to conform both with the remaining Gallo-Roman ruins and the vestiges of feudal times and also with the advice of returning victors or travellers who, in France, gave new life to old plans forgotten in some corner of Asia. They were also the expression of the faith that turned men towards Jerusalem, the City of Cities. Finally, they were a demonstration of the pride and wealth of these urban communities whose life blossomed in a search for comfort, glory and display which was soon to achieve harmony and impose it on the framework of daily activity, on the form of the city and on the design of its monuments.

France had nevertheless passed the stage at which it had been but a meeting-place for influences and populations; the Capetian kingdom of the thirteenth century had arrived at the moment of synthesis. Just as in 1254 (for the first time in the history of the country) the royal decrees bore the words *roi de France* (King of France) instead of the old Merovingian Latin title of *rex Francorum* (King of the Franks), so the France of St. Louis was to show to the world what a country becoming conscious of its origins and the characteristics of its civilization could do. The Capetian dynasty, by assembling scattered pieces into a territory and dispersed groups into a people, provided a centre for a spiritual community that was seeking its formula in vain. But this community refused to resolve itself into particularism. Boldly it sought to speak a language common to all men, and to that end it invented an order which throws light on the connection between the idea of mother-country and that of humanity, as it was understood in this great century. This order found its best expression in the supreme work of art of the age of faith. The Gothic cathedral is a witness to it.

In the cathedral the complexity and harmony of the world were carefully observed and in no way obscured by the thought of God. Prayer rose to such audacious heights only because it accepted the necessary stages offered to human weakness. The face of the earth, the garland of the seasons and the myriads of stars were to begin to form a familiar circle in the sculpture of porches and the capitals of columns and were to recall not only the nearby orchards and forests but also the heavens glimpsed in the tales of pilgrims and travellers. But the

whole miracle of Nature was made only as a setting for the miracle of man. It was for him that in the design of these triumphant massive edifices rising towards the heavens there were welcoming doors that held no terror. Nothing about man was forgotten, neither the loving modelling of his body (in thirteenth-century French sculpture which rediscovered the secrets of the beauty of the Greece of Phidias), nor the picturesque details of his costume, nor the variety of his daily occupations. This patient, humble observation was to serve as a firm basis for the search after the radiance of the soul. Between the terrifying mien of vice and the calm grace of virtue, between the tender smile of a queen and the sublimely impenetrable expression of a saint, there ran the whole gamut of human passions, victorious or heroically overcome. From now on the dream of the artist could leave the earth: he had found so much pleasure there and it had dazzled him so much that there was no longer any risk of his totally forgetting its laws on his supernatural travels. *Let him now embody his wildest imaginings in monsters; let him seek a shape in stone for the most sybilline symbols and dream of heaven and hell without attempting to restrain his ecstasy, or his terror; this sublime architecture would impose its discipline on such seething forces through the sheer necessity of building to last; sustained and strengthened by their perfect harmony with the visible world, the lofty arches would dismay the prudence of the half-hearted: the soaring spires and towers would send beyond the stars the call of a hope that was certain it would be fulfilled.*

Such is the lesson of the thirteenth-century French cathedral, which represents an art form permeated with faith but making use of all the support afforded by human reason and charged with arranging a physical world which the artist knew well and which he had observed closely. This lesson makes clear the form that the country of St. Louis took and the complex strength of the idea expressing it. The incomparable effulgence of this king who excelled as an administrator of the law might no doubt give one a picture of a unity which the Capetian dynasty had not yet achieved in all respects either in its own domain or in the ideal kingdom over which it reigned. Certainly this picture would have a foundation of reality, for the result of the prestige of St. Louis was the sublimated synthesis of everything in the Capetian effort that sought to attract minds and souls, ignoring the yoke of political loyalties. But still more concerning our theme can be learnt from this reign. There is a lesson in the order that had at last been found for all the various inherited elements of land and people. A form of mother-country in complete accordance with earth and heaven was at its best.

France was no more an idyllic society in the reign of St. Louis than at any other period: greed and violence rubbed shoulders with holiness; opposing forces wounded and harmed each other. The great nobles had

no conception of the public weal and continued to consider the central power as a rival of whose domination they were impatient; their country lay wherever the quest for adventure and deeds of prowess led them; the wealthy middle-class of the towns was beginning to form throughout the West commercial groups based on interests whose frontiers were not necessarily to coincide with those of the kingdom; the regular clergy, bound exclusively to Rome, avoided any acquaintance with the 'national' passions of the secular clergy, who, like the king, were anxious to escape from the over-assertive omnipotence of the Papacy; the peasants, taking advantage of the new peace brought by the Capetians, were establishing themselves throughout France on small country holdings in their progress towards independence. But the King of France accepted these seething divergencies and found a hierarchy for them. Let the peasant confine his loyalty to his field and his parish; let the merchant busy himself with the needs of his trade, with his exchanges across land and sea and with his motley fairs; let the warrior love only the noise of his sword; let the philosopher and the artist find their country wherever they discover a brotherhood of thought; and let the monk imagine a country as vast as universal Christianity. Each was in his place in the scheme of things and he, the king, was in his, claiming loyalty from each and affording in exchange protection for all. They would make the country a melting pot for all kinds of complexities, he would achieve harmony out of these many forces and desires. He would call to him the wisest men, to whichever class they belonged, for he must needs be aware of all efforts, know the nature of all needs, and seek the aid of all discoveries. He bore on his own shoulders the weight of the destiny of the kingdom for which he would one day render an account to God.

First of all, on the temporal plane this kingdom was France; at a higher level it was Christianity. The interests of the two kingdoms had to harmonize just as in the stone cathedral the kingdom of orchards and forests was to serve as a substructure for the kingdom of souls. In such a way a truce might be called to enmity with neighbouring states because of the higher consideration of Christian peace. For that there was no need to call on Utopia. Why not have the backing of force when seeking agreement? Why abandon the lessons of prudence when considering appeasement? Each political duty had its own particular plane; the essential was not to hasten towards the universal and forget the difficulty of the successive steps that led to it. Faced with Papal theocracy, this sovereign ~~was not~~ to reconcile his role as son of the Church with his title of prince of earthly cities; had he not the power then of harmonizing the various spiritual loyalties? For King Louis there was no discord between duties because each in its way led him to God. A passionate and violent warrior, a pitiless knight who stated that 'there should be no

discussion with a Saracen. You should drive your sword into his body as far as it will go', there was no question of his being a Utopian ready to accept any defeat. He thought of universal Christian peace only as something to be achieved after all the requirements of human prudence had been satisfied. But this man of reason did not reject the mystic ideal, and when, ruler of a prosperous kingdom, he went away to die on the bed of ashes of a vanquished Crusader, it was because he knew that in the invisible world such actions, unknown to our philosophy, were accounted wise.

His political testament can be considered as the finest message left by thirteenth-century France to all peoples because it harmonizes all the duties that the various social groupings of which he is a part impose on man, from the most limited to those which relate to the whole of mankind. Beside these teachings of St. Louis the most celebrated writings of civic wisdom fade: the treatises of Solon appear icy, the thoughts of Marcus Aurelius show all the moral grandiloquence of a man pursuing greatness without appreciating his proper place in relation to other men and in relation to the gods. The advice of St. Louis bears the marks of the peace of a soul which has achieved certainty, but it is also increasingly pervaded by the warmth of a heart possessed with real charity. It is simple and discreet, for it came from a man who had a horror of sanctimonious hypocrites ('Seneschal, tell me why a man of integrity is worth more than a devout person?'). And it cannot be read without emotion:

'My son, I beg you to make yourself beloved by the people of your kingdom, for in truth I should prefer that a Scot should come from Scotland and govern the kingdom well and loyally than that you should govern it ill. . . . Be gentle and merciful to the unfortunate and comfort and help them as much as you are able. Lend your support to the good customs of the country and fight the bad. Do not be a greedy ruler. Do not burden the people with taxes and tolls except in case of dire necessity. In deciding between right and wrong be strict and keep faith with your subjects, turning neither right nor left but keeping always to the straight path. Support the complaint of the poor until the truth be established. . . . Abstain from making war except after very great deliberation, especially against any Christian man. If needs be protect from any harm the Holy Church and those who have done no evil. Bring to an end as soon as possible all war and conflict, whether yours or your subjects', as did St. Martin. . . .⁵

⁵ 'Beau fils, je te prie que tu te fasses aimer du peuple de ton royaume, car vraiment j'aimerais mieux qu'un Écossais vint d'Écosse et gouvernât le royaume bien et loyalement que toi tu le gouvernasses mal. . . . Aie le cœur doux et pitoyable aux malheureux et les conforte et leur aide selon que tu pourras. Maintiens les bonnes coutumes du royaume et combats les mauvaises. Ne convoite pas sur ton peuple que le charge pas de taxes ni de taille, si ce n'est pour la grande nécessité. Pour injustice et droiture garder, sois raide et loyal envers tes sujets, sans tourner ni à droite ni à gauche mais toujours droit. Soutiens la plainte du pauvre jusqu'à ce que la vérité soit éclairée. . . . Garde toi de faire la guerre sans très grande délibération et surtout contre tout homme chrétien. S'il faut la faire garde sainte Église et ceux qui n'ont en rien méfait, de tous dommages. Apaise le plus tôt que tu pourras guerres et conflits soit tiens soit de tes sujets, comme Saint-Martin faisait. . . .'

Joinville was to say of his hero: 'Never did a man work so hard to bring peace to men.'

Side by side with this empirical wisdom taught by its sovereign, thirteenth-century France found the perfect theoretician of the hierarchy of societies in the person of St. Thomas Aquinas. This great philosopher, who gave all his attention to making clear the order of the universe in relation to the Supreme Being, conciliated the idea of country and that of humanity by bringing them into harmony with the idea of one's duties towards God. If strict justice requires that we should render to each what is his due, then after God and before all else, we owe perfect devotion (*piété*) to those who gave us birth and so to the ancestral inheritance which moulds and guides our being more than anything else.

St. Thomas was not afraid of using the pagan Roman word *pietas* because, once more, he found there was agreement between the idea evoked by this term and the teaching of revealed theology. God's commandment which orders us to respect and love our parents implies, he says, devotion to our country.⁶ This devotion is but just, considering the great services rendered by the inheritance that is transmitted, but it is also in accordance with charity. For there is a hierarchy in the love which we owe to human beings, and those with whom our lives are most closely associated have also first call on our love, and so allegiance to one's country is the best form of the love of humanity.

Certainly it is not a question of affection by predilection, for it is quite possible that by personal choice we might find ourselves to have more in common with foreigners than with our own compatriots (and St. Thomas did think of this eventuality, for he gives several definitions of the word *patria*, and in particular that of the country which brings together, across the vast universe, like minds and souls). It is a question beyond choice, that of the recognition of a real fact, of a duty imposed by the chance of birth in which our choice has had no part.

And it is also, because the welfare of all is more important than that of an individual that the sacred duty of taking part in just wars to help one's country finds its justification⁷ (it being quite understood that the love of one particular country should not in itself imply a desire to make war on one's neighbour). In this way the philosopher conciliated the idea of country and that of humanity. He gave it too a different form from the idea born of pagan antiquity, for Rome exalted the fatherland above all and brought together in the heart of a city the worship of the gods and the efforts of men. St. Thomas, according to his custom, considered the hierarchy of material beings only in relation

⁶ *Summa Theologica*, II a, II a e, q. CXXII, a. 5, ad 2 um.

⁷ *Summa Theologica*, II a, II a e, q. XXXI, a. 3, ad 2 um.

to the Supreme Being: one's country could not become an idol, since it was only a secondary cause in relation to God, the prime cause. Its rights remained sacred, however.

In this way, in thirteenth-century France, the fusion of the political wisdom of the Romans and the sublime counsel of Christian theology was taking shape. Nothing was rejected which, whether it came from the past or the present, whatever its origin, could find a place in the synthesis of Truth. Nothing suggested by the great lesson of the physical universe and the untiring search of human reason was neglected; nothing even was forgotten of the share which, in a humble way, should be allotted to the mystic element.

Yet France at this period could show much more than the magnificent theory of a great mind. The work of St. Thomas Aquinas, moreover, belongs to the Universal Church, and if the glory of the University of Paris at that time consisted in its being the centre of all the civilizing efforts of the West, these efforts must not all be credited with a 'national' character which they did not have. But for thirty years the kingdom really did, as though by a miracle, correspond to the picture of itself which thinkers and artists were presenting to the world. And perhaps the presence of the incomparable ruler whose wisdom and holiness have just been admired was necessary for this country and this people to give to the universe an example which up till then had been formulated by the Church alone.

As the kingdom of the Church is not of this world it was quite logical that she should always spread the idea of the union of all men under a purely spiritual yoke. It was much more extraordinary that a country whose foundations were earthly and temporal should succeed in conquering other peoples by its civilizing prestige alone. But such was the reputation of the King of France at that time that all the princes of Europe called for him to arbitrate, that the Pope and the Emperor wished him to judge in their quarrels and that in his death he gave to the whole universe the supreme message of Western chivalry.

This moment in France's history was as fine as any legendary Golden Age. It was a period when the harmonious hierarchy of the kingdom bore at its apex a man who had himself arrived at the apex of his soul.

CHAPTER X

ROMAN REVIVAL AND FEUDAL TRADITIONS

DURING the reign of St. Louis the Capetian monarchy had attained sublimity in the moral attraction it exerted. It was the centre of spiritual co-ordination for a future national community, the centre of a wider sphere of influence, which, in a very real way, brought the idea of one's country into harmony with the idea of humanity. The France of St. Louis, to all appearances only a small feudal domain, had proclaimed to the whole world that it was the spiritual descendant of Rome, the bringer of unity, and that it had embodied in the destiny of an earthly state the dream of the Universal Church.

The successors of the great king were to profit by the glory now surrounding their dynasty. On the site of Roman Gaul the existence of a certain group of human beings was to become more evident. Its diversities were to develop and become more marked, but this time increasing loyalty was to bring about a willingly accepted unity. The changes would sometimes take place gradually, sometimes with imposing suddenness that was nevertheless kept within bounds by an awareness of a common spiritual inheritance.

The material inheritance was still difficult for anyone to perceive; the France of Philip the Fair and his sons was a vaguely defined territory lying between Flanders and the Pyrenees, but broken by considerable wedges of feudal territory (Brittany and Guyenne) encroaching in the south on Catalonia and in the east coming up against the formidable thrust of the Empire, which reached as far as the Saône and the Rhône. Although the sovereigns relentlessly continued their policy of slow gnawing away at territories and their tenacious reconquest of the domains annexed by the great feudal lords, their subjects were much less interested at the time in the increase in the *territories* of the kingdom than in agreement over the idea of a *spiritual inheritance*. This idea was still based on loyalty to the king.

One social class was now emerging in the kingdom and clearly becoming stronger and seeing its importance increase from day to day; it was the middle class, which had benefited by the struggle of the Capetians against feudal tyrants. There were the business men to whom the king's peace had brought security for their commerce, and there were the lawyers, all those legal advisers who from the time of Philip Augustus had swarmed at the Capetian court side by side with the nobles bidden by

feudal tradition to wait on their sovereign lord. One of them, Guillaume de Nogaret, has described them thus: 'They are the king's knights because the king has accepted them as his men; their honour and their dignity derive from this, and for this reason are they called the king's knights.'¹

This is a new aspect of the Capetian struggle against feudal tyrants: to the hereditary nobility the king was to be constantly adding a nobility born of merit and loyalty to his service. It consisted of these lawyers, men of humble origins, often chosen from the ranks of the people. They were the first to become aware of the new community arising under the protection and the justice of the king. The great feudal lords could hardly conceive any idea of territory other than the narrow one of domain. On the spiritual plane they knew only of the existence of a body of knights absolutely free from national restrictions, or else the principle of loyalty to a sovereign lord—their nearest approach to the idea of frontiers. But the middle classes from the flourishing towns, the studious race of lawyers, whose entire rise to prominence depended on the successes of the Capetians, were in a better position to realize the importance of these successes for the unification of a whole people. These jurists were to give strength and permanence in their legal formulae to what were still only vague aspirations or ill-defined inklings of community.

As often happens, the idea of the mother-country was to find its first definition (in the Latin sense of the word, that is to say it was to find its *limits*) in the midst of struggles and conflicts against what opposed it. The existence of a country is often revealed for the first time in reactions against those who wish to stifle it, those from whom it finds itself distinct. Medieval France was aiming at freeing itself from the two great powers which then dominated the Western world: the Empire and the Papacy. What Capetian policy had been alone in affirming for several decades was now to be expressed by the voice of the entire people.

At the time of the terrible quarrel between Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII, writers (and particularly legal writers) took care there should be no misunderstanding about the position of France. Since it was the great quarrel between the Empire and the Papacy which at that time dominated the history of Europe, did not France, by struggling against a Pope, seem to declare itself subject to the Emperor? But feeling was unanimous on this point: France was not *in* the Empire, the Kings of France were not vassals of the Emperor. They were his equals, if not in territorial strength, at least in spiritual prestige.

John of Paris wrote that France was heir to the old *regnum Francorum*

¹ 'Ils sont chevaliers du roi, parce que le roi les a reçus pour ses hommes: de là ils tiennent leur honneur, leur dignité et ils s'appellent chevaliers du roi.'

and that the Franks had never been subjects of the Roman Empire – and he unearthed the old legend, already treasured by the medieval clerks of the seventh century, which evoked the Trojan origins of the Franks and their independence with regard to Rome. Moreover France, for these publicists, was a kingdom that from time immemorial had been free of any yoke (*'a tempore ex quo non exstat memoria'*, says the *Rex Pacificus*), and a real 'national pride' was apparent in all the writings of the time. Guillaume du Plaisian, on the occasion of a lawsuit, originated the famous formula that was to have an enormous success under the *Ancien Régime*: 'The king, our master, is Emperor in his kingdom, and can command on land and on sea.'

Philip the Fair, like all his predecessors, protested with remarkable pride against the claims of the Holy Roman Empire: in 1302 he claimed that he derived his power from God alone. In reply Pope Boniface VIII, on the 30th August, 1303, insisted on the absolute priority of the Imperial power, declared that the Emperor was the one supreme lord of kings and princes (*'monarcha omnium regum et principum terrenorum'*) and directly attacked the kingdom of the fleurs-de-lis: 'The French err in proudly claiming they have no overlord; legally they remain vassals of the Empire.'² Acrid memorials were drawn up by the partisans of the Imperialist cause and it was against both that the French jurists were to rise in public protest.

To the writers who claimed that 'Legally, public rights are indefeasible. No Treaty of Verdun could share them. Territories may be divided, political subjection remains,' the lawyers replied: 'Custom is also a legal fact, and it is an age-old custom to recognize as absolute in the temporal sphere the power of the king.' To those who claimed that 'The Empire is the normal form of human institutions. Thus there was the Assyrian Empire, then that of the Medes and Persians, then that of Alexander, then that of the Romans', the French replied: 'Kingdoms existed before empires, and even survived them. Great philosophers like Aristotle consider, moreover, that kingdoms are more normal communities than empires. Finally, as far as the particular position of France is concerned, the fact of her long emancipation from the Imperial yoke constitutes a prescription.'

But the arguments polished with the greatest affection by the jurists were not only the legal and political ones, but the mystical and historical. They recalled the vocation of the French nation, and assembled pell-mell to support their theory the glory of the Franks who had been the pillars of Christendom, the royal power of curing scrofula, the oil of the Holy Ampulla, the Capetian care for religion and the more recent holiness of St. Louis. In short, the traditional independence of France is

² 'Non, l'orgueil français ne peut se prétendre sans supérieur; en droit les Français restent vassaux de l'Empire.'

supported by the greatness of her spiritual mission. 'The name of the kingdom of France implies as many privileges and honours as the name of Empire,' says the *Disputatio inter clericum et militem*. The *Rex Pacificus* states: 'The king in his kingdom, the Emperor in the Empire.' Pierre Dubois also stresses 'the sovereign liberty of the king'. And the jurists unearthed the old formula of Innocent III: 'The king of France does not recognize any superior in the temporal sphere.'

The conflict with the Papacy was much more complex. It was at this period that the quarrel latent in the Capetian struggle for the reconquest of the powers of the State came to a head. In the anarchy into which the Western world had gradually sunk since the sixth century the Church had annexed numerous powers and privileges of the State, asserting and increasing them during the confusion between Church and State that took place in the Carolingian Empire. Philip the Fair sought to recover his rights. But if the principle was clear, the problems were in reality very complex. It cannot be denied that it was the greatness of the civilizing role the Church had played for centuries that caused its influence to be felt in every manifestation of public or private life in the Western states. As they grew to know themselves better and moulded their own destiny, these states could not but become more conscious of their spiritual relationship. In particular could Capetian France cut itself off from the Church? It claimed the Frankish legacy of the title of pillar of Christendom, and in the time of St. Louis had just affirmed the sublimation of this inheritance. Was the Most Christian king to be head of a State which lacked the Christian ideal? On the other hand, was the king to be the vassal of the Pope?

The time had come to bring into harmony and order the many contradictory ideas that had come from both pagan and Christian Rome. The time had come for France, now finding herself, to transform in the eyes of the Christian world the political message of Rome, to affirm the importance of political order, the maintenance of society and the distinction between civil and religious powers, while yet recognizing that the spiritual had priority. This task was to be performed in Nature's way, its end to be born in tragedy in the rending of a brutal struggle amidst the effervescence of passions and ideas and in the brutal clash between an uncompromising Papacy and a kingdom whose independence was too new for its replies not to resemble a puppy's bites. It was at this period that the theory of Gallicanism, a question connected with the idea of country and of great importance in this study, seems to have been developed.

The Kings of France would not accept the advice of the Pope in the managing of their temporal affairs. When legates of the Pope came to Philip the Fair in 1327 and told him to conclude a truce with England,

he replied: 'The government of my kingdom belongs to me alone, and I recognize no superiors in this matter. I will never submit to any living soul in this respect.' This attitude found a resounding echo amongst the lawyers and, through them, amongst the people whose loyalty towards the King was becoming stronger and stronger. On the 10th April, 1362, during the struggle against Boniface VIII, Pierre Flote, in the name of the King, made this communication to the representatives of the nobility, the clergy and the middle class who had met together:

'We have received letters from the Pope. He claims that we are subject to him in the temporal government of our country, and that it is from the Apostolic See that we hold the crown. Yes, it would appear that this kingdom of France, shaped with God's help by our ancestors, through their industry, and thanks to the qualities of their people, after they had driven out the Barbarians—this kingdom which they have till now governed so wisely, is not, as we had always thought, held by us from God alone, but from the Pope.'

The protestations were so violent ('the French were never subject to anyone', proclaimed the *Quaestio in utramque partem*) that they soon went too far. The king and his lawyers, who rightly thought it just to emphasize the distinction between temporal and spiritual powers, forgot this distinction when building an argument in favour of uncompromising royal prerogative. The *Rex Pacificus* affirms that in the Old Testament the kings gave orders to the priests, and it was soon the king who was to condemn the Pope and to claim the right to convene a Council against this authoritarian Pontiff.

But the final position of France was juster and wiser: it gave the key to the new problem, defining the relations of the Papacy, decadent sovereign of a Europe that was becoming divided, with the first nation-state developed on the continent. Some French theoreticians found a middle course. They affirmed the spiritual supremacy of the Church without compromising the normal independence of the State.

It cannot be denied that the jurisdiction of the Papacy was in principle restricted to the spiritual domain. But it could sometimes extend to temporal matters (*casualiter*, Innocent III had said). The two powers, Church and State, were equally sacred, distinct in aim and independent in the normal sphere of their action, according to the author of *Quaestio in utramque partem*. Nevertheless the two powers were interdependent, and although the independence of the State could be affirmed dogmatically, yet in practice there were cases in which both were concerned and both opinions were necessary. John of Paris was to write that the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal meant that the Church could govern the *conscience* of the sovereigns, not their politics. The Church, sovereign over souls, could propound to the heads of earthly states its views, remonstrances and sanctions. In this way it could reach the

political sphere, not directly but through its influence over Christian consciences. Moreover it could intervene in cases where both powers were involved and also *ratione peccati*. In this way political Gallicanism escaped excommunication by making clear a necessary distinction in which the suggestions of natural law, the counsels of pagan Rome, and the civilizing contribution of Christendom all found a place.

The Gallicanism of the French clergy raised special problems. Their patriotism showed itself in a certain attachment to customs that were special to their own kingdom and by protests against the unreasonable demands of the Papal treasury (the king did not always support them in this when circumstances urged him to keep the Pope's support). But over and above these particular grievances the French clergy were thinking of a more important problem of unity and remembering the historic vocation of France. In 1302 they wrote to Boniface VIII begging him 'not to destroy the age-long union between the Church, the king and his kingdom'.

This conflict between France and the Papacy gave rise also to a very curious manifestation of national pride which was common to all classes of society and is of great importance since it reveals a state of mind which was constant in France throughout the *Ancien Régime*. Philip the Fair's title of privileged son of the Church was something to be taken advantage of rather than a lesson in the necessity of submission. If France owed a great deal to the Church, what did the Church not owe to France? Traditional supporter of the Papacy, pillar of orthodoxy, sword of the Christian West, the kingdom of St. Louis intended its spiritual superiority and the mark of election openly bestowed on it by God to be recognized. Let the Pope beware! To attack France was to offend God in the person of his best earthly soldier. A pamphlet of the time accused Boniface VIII of being a bad Pope because he had attacked France, 'column of the Roman Church'. This national vanity was based on beliefs of very ancient origin. Did not the very Prologue of the Salic Law, in the sixth century A.D., proclaim: 'Long live Christ, who loves the Franks'? And Jean Bodel, in the twelfth century, had sung: 'God caused his angels to crown the first king of France with ceremony and with song, commanding him to be his deputy on earth, to mete out strict justice and uphold the law.'³

In 1268 Jacques de Vitry accorded the French nation the first rank among Christian peoples: '*Christianorum sunt gentes et in varias sectas divisae quorum primi sunt Franci... et isti puri Catholici sunt.*' St. Thomas Aquinas in his turn had written that 'Gaul was destined to be

³ 'Le premier roi de France fist Dex par son command
Coroner a ses angles dignement en chantant
Pour la commander estre en terre son serjant
Tenir droite justice et la loi mettre avant.'

the country in which the religion of the Christian ministry would flourish the most.' Similar beliefs were to be made obvious some years after the death of Philip the Fair by the force with which the kings of France and their publicists insisted on installing or keeping the Papacy at Avignon. Charles V was to write to the Roman Pontiff to remind him that already in the time of the Gauls the inhabitants of the country were noted for their piety, that France was the chosen land of the holiest relics of Christendom, that in France ecclesiastical studies flourished and, moreover, that according to the best geographers, France was the navel of the world.

Here was a fresh manifestation of patriotism in France; not content with affirming that it was independent of the powers of this world, the kingdom of the fleurs-de-lis affirmed that it was particularly favoured by heaven, and proclaimed proudly and vigorously that it alone of all nations enjoyed these unique privileges. It was a new definition of the elements forming its culture, its spiritual inheritance, and therefore a step forward in the development of patriotism.

So, at the dawn of the fourteenth century, the inhabitants of the Capetian kingdom discovered their independence and also the constraints of their heritage. Just as a human being reaches an awareness of his own existence through a gradual discrimination between himself and the outside world, so this new country, forged by a family of kings, slowly arose by the light of its own particularism, stretched like new limbs the confines of its territory, and discovered the strength of its spiritual power in opposition to the forces that limited it.

After this stage of elementary awareness, however, came the moment of discovery of the traditions which mould human life, or society, more than do the original characteristics of its individuality. The France of the *Chansons de Geste* was already aware of its spiritual inheritance: the wisdom of Antiquity, Christian faith, knightly honour, warlike courage. But thirteenth- and fourteenth-century France, feeling a new political unity, returned to the counsels of the Mother of States, to the true teaching of Rome and the strictness of her laws. By so doing, she was to affirm both her devotion to and her independence of her august mother. In the fashion in which the Frenchmen of this period returned to Roman traditions there is to be found yet one more striking manifestation of patriotism.

During the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries the texts of Roman law were rediscovered. In the town of Bologna, in Italy, they were studied again, and soon the whole of the Western world was keenly enthusiastic about them. There was a native school of Roman studies in France, but the enthusiasm of the scholars there was not shared by the kingdom as a whole. To begin with the Kings of France distrusted

the spreading of formulae which were being used by the German Emperors to justify their desire for universal domination. The inhabitants of the south of France, who had always lived under the sway of Roman legal principles, would not accept the substitution of a written legal code for what had become a simple custom (all the more since the Gallo-Romans had never known the Justinian code which it was sought to impose on them: the inhabitants of the south followed the legal traditions customary in their part of the country since the formation of the *Provincia*).

The reaction was naturally even more marked in districts where custom was the rule. At the end of the twelfth and during the thirteenth century the customs of many feudal regions had been drafted. Normandy, Brittany and the regions of Paris and Orleans had found patient devoted collectors of all the old traditions born of the economic, social and legal needs of their inhabitants; customs that had become rules, old usages that had risen to the privilege of law, the contribution of many generations groping towards the formation of a certain social order. In these districts Roman law was called upon only in cases where custom held out no solution to the problem (just as canon law served as a supplementary law). They recognized the doctrinal value of 'written reason' (*la raison écrite*). They did not allow it entirely to replace the counsels of experience, polished by hard wear, nurtured by patient experiment and made flexible by repeated adaptation to the lesson of facts. Moreover throughout the whole kingdom adherence to Roman law, revived in its doctrinal purity, met with protests. A decree of July 1312 stated that the kingdom was not ruled by the written code, although, with the authorization of the king, the inhabitants of a part of the kingdom used this code (but that was because for them it was customary). The French followed the Roman code only because it was in conformity with wisdom and equity; in all particular cases where a custom was found to be superior to a principle of this code it was the custom that was applied.

This is an admirable characteristic of French patriotism: reverence for the past combined with liberty, the spirit of tradition in harmony with the counsels of reason, the idea of continuity united with that of innovation. Patriotism supposes in fact a certain attitude towards the past, since essentially it evokes the connection between the past and the present. Medieval France, that had just found a strong political unity, did not reject her connection with the august source of political wisdom. But her feeling for tradition was not an archaeologist's devotion, the repetition of formulae learnt at school, a childish attachment to the changing legacy of the past; it was a loyalty to the forces of life, the sure feeling that there was a universal wisdom expressed in many ways. Moreover, the spirit of tradition of the French community, the spirit of

French patriotism, far from following rigid theories and systems, were based on continuous harmony with the lessons of reality. The French accepted theories and principles, but only as filtered through the experience of centuries, warmed by the murmur of the voices of their ancestors, shaped by many events which they did not know but which nevertheless harboured those obscure forces which also make their contribution to the common soul of a people.

In the same way the common tongue now triumphed throughout what had once been Roman Gaul, and the French of the Ile-de-France now appeared in political and legal texts instead of Latin. Was Rome forgotten in the new language? Certainly not, but her memory was blended with all the contributions of other peoples, and transformed by many customs. Her order remained victorious, but it was an unformulated victory.

Thus throughout the kingdom respect for the traditions of a community gradually increasing in strength retained an aspect of changing living loyalty. Feudal traditions still remained vigorous in a society which was nevertheless finding superior principles of hierarchy. These principles did not need to be formulated in rigid axioms; it sufficed for them to permeate daily life.

France was seeking her real self. France was in fact finding herself.

Histories of France which were to spread throughout the kingdom the consciousness of the tradition on which it depended were beginning to be written at this time. Formerly history had been written in Latin and had remained a matter for the clerks alone, but in the thirteenth century historical works in the vernacular were becoming as numerous as those in Latin. Henceforth history accessible to the public consisted no longer only of the huge romance of the *Chanson de Geste*, it became the reasoned recital of a prodigious but real adventure; it related the continuity of the effort of very remote generations, whose activities were sublimated and summarized in the unifying action of a dynasty of leaders.

A fabliau tells of a simple villein, who, standing in front of Notre Dame, tried to recognize the Old Testament kings over the porch and identified them with the Kings of France. This little fact is very significant. The villein, spelling out on the walls built by universal Christianity the particular history of his neighbouring lords, at the same time traced, in his new-found curiosity, the outline of a mother-country of which he was becoming more and more conscious. After the sovereigns who called France to a life of unity, after the theorists who suggested definitions of her spiritual and material patrimony, it was now the whole people which was giving proof of new feelings.

At the beginning of the twelfth century a village in Champagne bore

the name of Sissonne-l'Allemande (*Sissonne-la-Tioise*) in memory of the small Saxon colony by which it had been founded. Towards the end of the reign of St. Louis the inhabitants asked for the name of their village to be changed so that it should not be thought that they were part of the Empire, but that all should recognize that they belonged to the kingdom of the fleurs-de-lis. The village became Sissonne la Française.

The purely feudal conception of war gradually gave way to that of struggle against a foreigner who threatened the common life of the kingdom. The jurist Guillaume Durant explained the forbidding of private wars, first by St. Louis and then by Philip the Fair, in this way: if a baron summoned his vassals for a private quarrel and at the same time the king called on them to fight against the German king who was attempting to seize the kingdom of France, it was to the king that obedience was due, since he was summoning his men *pro defensione patriae*.⁴

Thus the idea of feudal royalty coincided with that of public safety. Just as the king freed his power from feudal constraints, yet without attacking the mass of customs which made him the suzerain of the barons, so the many diverse traditions of the various parts of the country were assimilated and preserved in the ancient wisdom of Rome, and made their contribution to the spiritual patrimony of France.

⁴ The *Quaestio in utramque partem* states that the function of the king is to punish the guilty, to maintain order in the State and 'to defend the country against its enemies'.

CHAPTER XI

FRANCE SURMOUNTS A CRISIS

AT THE beginning of the fourteenth century the kingdom of France seemed the most powerful in Europe, as well as the richest and the most thickly populated. Its towns were numerous and wealthy, its countryside prosperous. Paris was already a large town, the finest in the West. At the king's court, amidst the dazzling festivals of chivalry, were to be seen princes from all Europe, friends, allies and dependants of the redoubtable lord of France. Yet this extraordinary good fortune was to be jeopardized and to be succeeded by the most utter distress as a result of the unleashing of the Hundred Years' War.

This was quite a new phase in the existence of the kingdom of the fleurs-de-lis. It was something quite different from the conflicts to which the Capetian dynasty was accustomed: struggles against the ambitions of those feudal lords who wished to keep the country divided, struggles against the Imperial or Papal hold on the whole of the West. This was a conflict between two *mother-countries*, developing into a conflict between two *nations*: two ways of life were opposed, two peoples were fighting each other.

Though originally the war may have seemed to be purely feudal in character (the King of England held his possessions of Guyenne in fief from the King of France, and his revolt might at first have seemed merely an offence against his suzerain), the real reasons for the conflict were soon quite apparent. As neither the Empire nor the Papacy had succeeded by the end of the Middle Ages in restoring unity to the West it became obvious that the era that was beginning was to become an era of kingdoms. Over the feudal domains these larger groupings were taking shape, forbidding any Western Emperor to dream of supremacy. The hour of ideal Christian unity had also passed, and so too the time when princes composed their private quarrels in order to undertake the War of the Cross. Each king was too occupied with his earthly domain to succour the City of God, and the requirements of the *primum vivere* were to absorb the greater part of the activities of states. The wisdom of St. Louis had harmonized the needs expressed in the various loyalties of men's souls; but half a century had passed since the time of St. Louis, and the balance of political forces in the West had changed. On the continent itself France had no rival to fear since she had affirmed her independence of the Holy Roman Empire; Italy was

rent by conflicts between the principalities and the towns; Spain was still a welter of small kingdoms perpetually quarrelling; but at the extremity of the continent the island of England was also a flourishing state, with a political structure very different from that of the Capetian kingdom, but one which was nevertheless well suited to the calm tenure of a country bounded by the sea.

For three hundred years the Capetians had been aware of the threat to their dynasty represented by these English kings who were also lords of many domains on the continent. In the fourteenth century the greatness of the ambition of these kings was made clear. The English kings wished to be Kings of France, and the union of the two monarchies would make them virtual masters of the West. For the first time in its history the Capetian kingdom realized a new aspect of its dual role as a maritime and a continental power: this state, so isolated and well protected in its island, was the rival destined to arrest France's progress on the continent. The new policy which was to safeguard the independence of the country formed by the efforts of the Capetians was henceforth to be a game of skilful alliances, a system of equilibrium between adventure on land and on the sea, a system which was to draw its inspiration from the facts of Nature and the wisdom of men, from the counsels of geography and the experiences of history, from the teachings of tradition and the needs created by new events, a system in which Utopias and vain imaginings were to be paid for very dearly.

The Hundred Years' War sacked the flourishing kingdom of the Capetians and a storm of disasters descended on the country with the successive invasions it suffered: after several resounding defeats had wiped out the French fleet and disorganized the feudal army the towns were in ruins, the fields laid waste, and the population decimated by famine and epidemics. The mercenaries went through the countryside shamelessly killing, robbing and torturing. With the weakening of the central authority, all the feudal powers raised their heads, the powers of gold as well as those of blood; princes came to blows over their ambitions and the wealthy urban middle class tried to set up the rule of wealth. Destitution drove the people to revolt and the Jacquerie burnt and killed in the country, while in Paris the workers massacred and looted. Throughout the kingdom there was an end to economic life, trade was almost suppressed; political factions divided the nation.

How did the French community emerge triumphant from a century of dissensions and wars, both civil and foreign? How did patriotism manifest itself in France during this troubled period? Can one attribute the final victory to the miracle of Joan of Arc alone, or does the mission of the little shepherdess appear to have been but the sublimated synthesis of the impulse of a whole people? What is one to think of the

affirmations of certain historians: those who attribute patriotism at this period to the people alone, and those who praise the monarchy above all? Facts will give the answer.

One undeniable fact is the extent of local resistance throughout the Hundred Years' War, the number and the magnitude of the efforts to oppose the conqueror. Many chroniclers expressed the collective feeling of hatred for the English; at the end of the thirteenth century the Norman Wace wrote in the celebrated *Roman de Rou*:

*'Si les Français pouvaient leur pensée achever,
Jà le roi d'Angleterre n'aurait rien deçà mer;
A honte l'en feraient s'ils le pouvaient passer.'*

The poet Jubinal, at the beginning of the Hundred Years' War, in an exhortation to King Philip VI, took up this theme of the expulsion of the English from their continental possessions:

*'Fais leur tantôt apercevoir
Que Gascogne est de toi tenue,
Et te fait seigneur droit clamer
De tout ce qui est deçà mer;
Soit la mer borne et dessevrance
De l'Angleterre et de la France.'*

'Let the sea limit and divide England and France!'

There is an abundance of examples to show that resistance to the foreigner was not merely exalted by writers, but was actively carried out by the whole people. One has only to remember some of the celebrated defences of towns besieged by the English. Everyone will recall the defence of Calais, but many other towns gave an example just as heroic: in Orleans in 1429 the women handled the lance; in Caen and Rouen the whole population rushed to the ramparts, and women and children helped with the fortifications. Throughout the whole country convents became fortresses, free towns opposed the reconstruction of bridges, and the local inhabitants defended passes and fords. Hatred increased throughout the countryside when the King of England, who had been quite generous at the beginning of the war, soon became exasperated by the resistance of the population and let his soldiers pillage. When Caen was besieged, under the regency of the future Charles V and during the captivity in London of John the Good, there fought at the side of the Regent's men-at-arms 'peasants who were not in his pay, and who bore themselves very valiantly'. How could one forget the exploits of Guillaume l'Alouette and Le Grand Ferré whose memory has been kept green for us by the chronicler Jean de Venette, himself a man of the people, the son of a serf? *Les grandes chroniques de France* relate that the members of the Regent's council,

after the signing of the Treaty of London by John the Good (a treaty which deprived the kingdom of many provinces) declared that this agreement 'could neither be approved of nor put into practice, and therefore ordered war to be waged on the English'. The writer added that to 'all the people of France' the treaty seemed 'very displeasing'. The sailors of Normandy and Picardy were planning to go to England and free King John; Paris followed their example, and it was then that the capital was allowed, as an honour, to substitute a warship for the barge of the boatmen of Lutetia on their coat of arms.

How could one forget either the inhabitants of Cahors who, after the disastrous Treaty of London in 1352, saw their town delivered to the enemy and, weeping, could not bring themselves to open the gates to him? Those of La Rochelle declared 'that they would prefer to be deprived each year of half their fortune than to be in the hands of the English', and they added 'that they would acknowledge the English with their lips, but their hearts would never be stirred'. In a letter written on the 1st July, 1370, and addressed to the Duke of Lancaster, King Edward recognized that the loss of Aquitaine was due at least as much to the initiative of the inhabitants as to the action of the King of France ('*ipsorum incolarum voluntate spontanea*'). And a poet has kept us this account of the recapture of La Rochelle by the troops of Charles V: at the sight of the fleurs-de-lis:

*Plusieurs à genoux se mettent dans le pré
Pleurant si tendrement et par telle destinée,
Qu'oncques n'y eut alors seigneur français
Qui de joie et pitié n'ait pleuré la journée.'*

Similarly, when the English laid siege to Orleans, the inhabitants of the town asked for help from the whole of France, and little groups were formed in secret at several places in the country to take help to the town that was in danger. When the city was freed by Joan of Arc bonfires were lit in the countryside, in the midst of fallow fields and on the site of ruined villages. Finally, when the Maid was a prisoner, public prayers or processions were ordered at Blois, Orleans and Tours and in Dauphiné to supplicate Heaven for her release.

Moreover, even before the opening of hostilities, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the question of the succession to the throne and the adoption of what was claimed to be the Salic Law had already found the French in favour of a solution which showed the decay of simple feudal customs and a very clear sense of the general interest and the 'common advantage'. People were afraid of the dangers to which certain princely marriages might expose the State; and the feeling of community was already strong enough to reject with horror the idea of a 'foreign' king. 'The inhabitants of France', said the author who continued the chronicle of Guillaume de Nangis, 'were indignant at the

thought of being subject to English rule', and although in the assemblies that were called at that time several persons well versed in canon and civil law favoured Edward's side, the general opinion upset the jurists' arguments and imposed the force of the collective feeling. Fifty years later Commynes was to write: 'Do not doubt but that the law and decree was made in France that daughters should not inherit the kingdom so as to avoid its falling into the hands of a prince of a foreign nation and of foreigners: for the French would have found that extremely hard to bear.'

It is therefore impossible to deny that many of the French united at this period in the face of certain events, nor that there existed during the war many centres of resistance to the enemy throughout the country. Ought one to conclude from this that the people of the kingdom were absolutely united against the enemy and to see in this unity the real cause of the final victory? Facts are against such a conclusion, which was nevertheless the one drawn by a whole school of historians whose aim was to show that public events were determined by obscure 'collective wills', by mass movements. For a long time it was fashionable to state that the French people were undaunted in their patriotic feeling during the whole of the Hundred Years' War, whereas the kings and nobles did nothing but accumulate errors, fanciful exploits and mistakes which profited the enemy. The truth was that the great crisis of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries illustrated once more the eternal law whose importance had been recalled from the beginning of the history of Gaul: human communities quickly fall apart as soon as their unity is no longer maintained by political order. In fact, how did the various classes of the population behave once they were left to their own initiative?

The great nobility had almost no idea of patriotism. It had remained strictly feudal in character, and now gave an example of complete blindness to the changes in military tactics or the upheavals in society. It thought only of maintaining a decadent idea of chivalry, reduced to the accomplishment of theatrical heroic deeds. The chronicler Froissart has left us a faithful picture of this brilliant, dangerous nobility, loyally attached to international chivalry, to the union of all nobility transcending the barriers of country. Did the powerful middle class of the towns, on the other hand, save the country when it was in danger? To affirm this one would have to forget the anarchy brought about by the audacious actions of a new feudal power whose influence was summarized and synthesized in the destiny of Etienne Marcel.

This person has been placed on a pinnacle by most of the historians of the nineteenth century: he was for Michelet a 'hero of the people', the son of the nation who rose to bring tyrants to their senses and to save the country which had been endangered by bad kings and bad lords! Party feeling makes historians commit errors which are often amusing. For it is really ironical to see transformed into a hero of the 'people'

this man of the upper middle class, animated by the most violent class-consciousness and symbolizing the new ambition of the feudal power of money, which was just as arrogant as it was possible at the time for the feudal power of blood to be, and just as selfish as well, just as eager to put the profit of one class before the general interest. It was to satisfy his ambition that in the end Marcel became a traitor, became an ally of the pro-English merchants of Flanders, sought the friendship of Charles the Bad and opened the gates of Paris to the enemy. His revolt against the royal power was not, in spite of appearances, an attempt at a better defence of the interests of the country, it was, like that of the princes and the great feudal lords, an insurrection against the public weal, an attempt at party domination. It must also be pointed out that the great bodies of the State, the *Parlement* and the University, rallied to the enemy, especially after the Treaty of Troyes in 1420. One may also recall that the English had no difficulty in finding the abominable judges of Joan of Arc among the higher ranks of the clergy and that the profound significance of the trial lay in its attempt to prove the unworthiness of the Dauphin's servant, in effect, that is, the legitimacy of the English power in France. Paris was almost constantly pro-English, or more exactly pro-Burgundian, from 1380 onwards, and the majority of the towns in the north of France welcomed the Treaty of Troyes with relief, and did not bother to inquire whether the rest of the country remained united to them or not. The truth is that on each occasion when there was no sovereign authority (during the captivity of John II and during the madness of Charles VI) France immediately broke up into rival factions which waged desperate war on each other: partisans of Charles the Bad, followers of Etienne Marcel, Armagnacs and Burgundians. Deprived of the uniting influence of the Crown, divergent interests split the country: the loyalty of many petty lords in the south was to the King of England; the great merchants of Flanders, whose economic activity was bound up with that of the country on the other side of the Channel, inevitably lent their support to it.

The writings of the chroniclers, which were very numerous during this period, also reflected the disunity of the French. The writers were most often in the pay of an ostentatious prince, whose quarrel they embraced and whose propaganda they furthered. The wealthy court of Burgundy, the most brilliant in the whole of the West, kept a train of party pamphleteers. Other lords asked from those whom they patronized only that they should celebrate with their pen their heroic deeds and the glory of their house, whence the abundance of the biographies that have been called 'domestic' and which do nothing but praise a war leader without concern for the public weal. Even the ambition of a great chronicler like Froissart was only to please the many hosts who welcomed him in turn: the King of England, the Count of Luxemburg and

the Count of Foix. The 'Citizen of Paris', author of the celebrated newspaper which brings to life before our eyes the daily life of the capital, was to insult Joan of Arc, in whom he saw 'the heroine of the Armagnacs', not the glory and the salvation of the land.

Thus an objective examination of the facts obliges one to recognize both the certain existence of manifold resistance to the enemy and the disintegration of this resistance and its dispersal each time anarchy triumphed. It is impossible to deny that in the face of a foreign occupation a collective feeling appeared (the French, forced to endure an oppressive and constricting military conquest, brought into brutal contact with men whose language they could not understand and whose habits were strange to them, learnt to feel their community in a completely new way and more keenly than ever before). But it is equally impossible not to notice that all these scattered efforts were gradually reduced to impotence as the uniting authority disappeared. From this derives the character of Joan of Arc's mission: she did not come to accomplish superhuman exploits of war, nor to drive out the foreigner by some magic surprise. She came to restore to individual efforts, which were bound to be dissipated in anarchy, the political framework which alone could give stability to man's successes. The day after the coronation at Rheims *she announced that her mission was finished*. Was the Englishman driven from the kingdom? Not at all, but Joan had restored to the country the principle of its unity around which were to collect in a living group all the individual efforts of resistance otherwise destined to disintegrate in chaos. The salvation of France could not come without deep loyalty to the laws essential to the life of societies. That is why the unfolding of events during this long century of anguish shows that the country was restored to life each time the confused aspirations of the people were joined to the action of a strong power, while the return to anarchy plainly led to the division of the French community.

The Capetian dynasty was not during this century represented by kings of any great worth (except for the prudent and shrewd Charles V), which demonstrates even more clearly the advantage of institutions, often more useful in politics than the genius of individual men. After errors or acts of folly which are inherent in every work of man the royal government soon realized once more the essential character of its function, which was to conciliate private interests with the public welfare. There are many examples of this: on the eve of Crécy Philip of Valois addressed his nobles and urged them to forget their individual passions, their 'hatred', their 'envy' and their 'pride', in order to defeat the common enemy. This same Philip VI appealed to the whole of his people on the occasion of the first English invasion, and this appeal was read by every parish priest at the Sunday sermon. In it the king

announced his intention of resisting 'servitude' with the 'help of God' and 'the good and loyal people of his kingdom'. The sovereigns asked each member of the national community to help the common cause by an activity in conformity with his function: the nobles were to offer their sword, the clergy their prayers, the free towns their money.

Charles V, one of the best kings France ever had, understood best of all the necessity of this beneficent fusion of the guiding effort of the sovereign and the many diverse activities of his people. He is credited with these fine words: 'I have no strength, save what you give me.'³ All his tactics against the English, and those of Guesclin, can be explained by this confidence in the efficacy of local fighting and in the spirit of resistance of the nation. Rather than chance the fate of the country again in a great hazardous battle like Crécy or Poitiers, the king let the enemy armies disperse, counting on loyal groups scattered here and there, as well as on the skirmishes directed by the High Constable, to wear them out. When he was still Regent Charles V had one day replied to Etienne Marcel that he was the defender of the *general interest*, and these words defined the essential character of the Capetian dynasty rather than the aim of this particular king.

Whereas patriotism appeared to the mass of the people in a thousand different lights, sometimes simple, sometimes in disorder, sometimes hesitant and sometimes obscure, and whereas some Frenchmen were defending only the independence of regional or local particularities, and others feudal loyalty to their legitimate lord, others still were drawn by selfish greed or by misguided passions, the action of the uniting power embraced these opposing forces and, inspired by them, fed by them and shaped by their differences and their influence, it used them to bring about the salvation of the country.

The gesture of Charles V on the death of the glorious Du Guesclin was symbolic. The High Constable, who had remained a man of the Middle Ages in his feudal conception of war, owing allegiance to the Duke of Brittany, then to Charles V, then to Henry of Transtamare, but above all retaining the keenest affection for his native province, had asked to be buried in Brittany. The procession which was bringing back his body was met at Le Mans by a messenger from Charles V. The King of France demanded the body of the High Constable that he might give it the Capetian necropolis of Saint-Denis as a resting-place. Through the wish of the King this warrior who had known only loyalty to various masters became the hero of a nation-state. Perhaps it was not by chance that the word *patrie*, taken from the Latin, was used in France for the first time at this period, by Jean Chartier, who was the chronicler, not of some prince, but of King Charles VII. The word, like the country itself, came to life under the protection of the Capetian.

³ 'Il n'y a en moi, force, fors ce que m'en donnez.'

Certainly, faced with the presence of the foreigner, the whole people become conscious of the idea of their country, and that is why this people was to become a *nation*. To suffer together from the devastation and sacking of their land by a greedy conqueror was no doubt a rather primitive conception of the idea of country, since it meant that they realized their link with a certain portion of earth; but to know that one belonged to a well-defined group in the midst of other human beings, to feel a kind of inexplicable familiarity with others simply because they had similar obscure deep-seated habits and everyday reactions and to know by that alone, before there was any clearer awareness, that those who did not share in this similarity of language, customs and instinctive actions were really 'foreigners'—that, for all the members of the community, meant realization that they belonged to the same civilizing culture and had a common past.

Typical of this was the reply of the Marshal de l'Ile Adam to the King of England, Henry V, the day after the Treaty of Troyes. The sovereign was astonished at the pride of the French who dared to speak to a king without looking down: 'Sire', replied the Marshal, 'such is the custom of the French. If a man speaks to another, whatever his estate or position, with lowered glance, we say that he is a bad man, since he dares not look in the face the man he is addressing.' Differences in customs and shocks to their sensibility in the little details of daily life, that was what the French, who had now occupied their land for a long time, had not known since the accession of the Capetians, and what they experienced as a result of their conflict with the English. After the Hundred Years' War there existed a *French nation*, a people conscious of sharing the same inheritance.

In the works of the chroniclers of this period who did not follow a faction or a party leader, in the writings of Alain Chartier, Eustache Deschamps and Robert Blondel, for instance, a keen awareness of France was affirmed. It was a powerful sentiment, now accomplished and complete, and it found most eloquent expression. 'It is very horrible', exclaimed Juvénal des Ursins, after the Treaty of Troyes, 'to think that any Frenchman, noble or not, could approve of this treaty, or even see or hear it without hating it.' Christine de Pisan desired 'to lament the fate of the kingdom of France more than any other calamity'. And Alain Chartier exclaimed: 'Let all these misfortunes fall on my family and on me, but may God save France!' The author of the *Débat des hérauts d'armes* expressed his patriotic pride and his feeling of the greatness of his country compared with another kingdom in this way:

'I beg God to give our lord the king courage to make us fight at sea, for there lie the rods with which he may chastise and cool your pride. . . . You say that the English are lords of the sea, that they are wondrously powerful and have fine ships. Fine ships, I grant you. But we can make just

as fine and at less cost. And what devoted sailors we have! No doubt the noblemen of our country prefer war on land to war at sea, which is so hard and ill-suited to nobility . . . nevertheless so valiant and so good at manoeuvring are our crews that a French vessel, matched evenly with an English one, always defeats it.'

Alain Chartier extols the feeling of natural affection that one has for the country of one's birth in this way: 'Will you then live amidst a foreign nation, regretting the simple sweetness of your native land, which always remains imprinted on our hearts?' The same writer found these words, magnificent in their strength and simplicity, to express the idea of country and the common link created by this idea between the members of a nation:

'I do not see how our divisions, our harsh words, in public or in secret, against each other, can bring us out of the dangerous pass in which we are. It would be better to put our backs into it and take the bit between our teeth. . . . You are obliged by Nature, above all things, to work for the common salvation of the country of your birth and for the defence of that domain in which God caused you to be born and to live.'⁴

The feelings of popular patriotism have been preserved for us in the poems or songs of the time with a vivacity which leaves no place for doubt.

'Let each of you village folk who loves the king of France take courage to fight the English. Let each of you take a hoe, the better to uproot them; if they will not go spoil their faces with your fists. Don't be afraid, go and fight these fat-bellied blusterers, for one of us is worth four of them, or at the very least three. . . . They thought they would always empty our glasses and contaminate these valleys. They thought they would always enjoy great happiness and comfort on our lands. Let us all drink! Let us drown the memory of the days of distress in this wine. Free kingdom of France, rejoice, since they no longer have courage nor power. They thought that by their presumptuousness they would conquer you and keep you in bondage; and they usurped your inheritance. But now God fights for you and shows that He is entirely on your side. Their great pride He has completely overthrown, and has given you back Guyenne and Normandy. . . .'

'English and Normans, there in Pontoise, flee, take to the fields, forget the river Oise and return to the brew on which you are all bred. I have no doubt that all the inhabitants of Normandy who have sided with you, be they great or small, are traitors. The king has come to put all to rights, for treason does not please God.'

Finally it was in this period that France was given the loftiest and most complete example of patriotism: that of Joan of Arc.

Joan's patriotism was no doubt a sublime exception; this young saint, in the solitude of her soul, perfected with one bold stroke the confused aspirations of a community which was discovering its unity. And yet Joan, marked out by a fabulous destiny, became deeply identified with

⁴ ALAIN CHARTIER, *Quadriloge invectif*, Œuvres, 1617 edition, p. 436.

the adventure of the whole people. Just as her whole history emphasizes the fact that it is easy to combine the natural and the supernatural, a fact which is the key to the whole history of the Middle Ages, so her mission, though born of a miracle, yet as it progressed respected the strictness of earthly laws; in the same way her patriotism, however exceptional and transcendent, was a faithful mirror of the ideas and the feelings of the French of her time.

The chief characteristic of Joan's patriotism was its profound harmony with the most familiar realities of the ancestral inheritance, a physical attachment to the land and to certain scenes, a love hurt by the visible scars on the face of France: cities in ruins, villages destroyed, harvests trampled underfoot. Then there was a perfect instinctive loyalty to the most obscure and most confused sources of a tradition: stories of fairies and sprites, which no doubt made her smile, but which she knew as she knew the rounds and the songs, the old rites of her village and the festivals which combined on equal terms the Christian homage paid to the saints and the pagan idea of a universe peopled with invisible beings which, multiplying prodigiously, animated the spaces which separate men from gods. Naturally we know quite well, in spite of the malice of her judges, that Joan's clear good sense had never wandered in the phantasmagoria of witches and gnomes. Yet it is of importance that her words should have so completely echoed the evocation of the ancestral patrimony which had permeated her childhood, for in a people the patriotic idea expresses, as well as very obvious realities, the mystery of secret and obscure influences, the murmur of fables harmonized with the colour of the sky or with customs that have come from many districts.

Joan's patriotism, based on such primitive foundations and strengthened by them, was then extended to the idea of the kingdom: a collection of all the regions like her own, a fusion of all the traditions that were kin to hers. At the time it was nothing but the prize of the foreigner. Then the struggle against the English became a necessity of the first order, the essential form in which loyalty to one's country was to be expressed. Hatred of the foreigner was not now a blind chimerical passion, an unreasoned phobia, it was the very expression of the vital instinct of a whole people, it was demanded by the most pressing needs of its existence. That is why, before her judges, Joan was to express her hatred of the English with magnificent calm and was to find the cleverest and most dazzling answers to the clergy who wished to confuse her by contrasting patriotism with charity towards all men. The wisdom of the saint was equal here to that of the greatest theologians and, with 'Thomist' rigour, it set forth the hierarchy of sentiments that should be inspired in us by the different social groups to which we belong.

'Were the inhabitants of the village of Domrémy friendly to the Burgundians?'

'No. They had only one follower in the village, and I should have liked his head chopped off, if that had pleased God.'

'Does St. Margaret speak English?'

'How should she speak English since she does not side with the English?'

'Are you a prophetess?'

'No. Of the future I know only one thing, that is that the English will be driven from France.'

'Does God hate the English?'

'I do not know whether God bears the English love or hate, but I do know that they will be forced out of France, all except those who die there, and that God will send the French victory over the English.'

'When you were a child, did you hate those who belonged to the party that opposed your king?'

'I hated the English, and the Burgundians who were the allies of the English.'

'Did the voices tell you to hate the Burgundians?'

'I have liked them less since I knew that the voices were for the King of France. I know that the English will have me killed. They hope that after my death they will win the kingdom of France; but were they a hundred thousand stronger than they are they would not keep this kingdom.'

Finally, for Joan, as for the Frenchmen of her time, the essential touchstone of patriotism remained loyalty to the king. If France could not belong to the English it was chiefly because it was the fief of the legitimate ruler who had been crowned at Rheims. The Maid was to write to her enemies: 'You, King of England, and you, Duke of Bedford, who say you are Regent of France, make you peace with the King of Heaven. You will not hold the kingdom of France from God the King of Heaven. It is King Charles, the rightful heir, who will hold it.'¹ The hereditary right of Charles VII was for her the strongest assurance that God would not allow the foreigner to remain in the kingdom. Her whole mission was concentrated round the coronation at Rheims: the torn country had to be shown the only sight capable of renewing the unity it had lost, that of the Capetian consecrated by God.

Such seems to have been Joan of Arc's conception of her native land: a clear and complete idea of the ancestral inheritance, supported by an astonishing awareness of what was needed politically to maintain this inheritance. But in her as in her contemporaries there was more: in the face of the foreigner the idea of nation took shape side by side with that of country. Joan was to find most moving terms to express her love of the community to which she belonged. It was not only France she loved, the rise and fall of her mountains and her plains under the changing sky, her girdle of seas and her impetuous or lazy rivers; not only the cities built by men, the towns with strong ramparts and the villages watched

¹ 'Roi d'Angleterre, et vous, duc de Bedford, qui vous dites régent de France, faites raison au roi de ciel. . . Vous ne tiendrez pas le royaume de France de Dieu le roi du ciel, mais le tiendra le roi Charles, vrai héritier.'

over by their belfries; not only the lord 'of land and souls', the King of France, whose abiding function embodied the continued material and spiritual effort of succeeding generations. She loved those who like herself were French, liegemen to different lords, villagers from many different districts who all realized in the face of the English how small seemed the differences between the languages, customs and ways of life of all the provinces of France in contrast with those that separated them from the conqueror. They were all, as a consequence of Joan's stirring struggle, to follow her on the road to Rheims, and find it noisy with cheers and songs in which, rebels or loyal subjects, waverers or deserters, they all recognized their bond with the supreme upholder of the common heritage.

CHAPTER XII

LITERARY DEFINITIONS OF FRANCE

THE Hundred Years' War had provided the opportunity for the French to become really conscious of a communal unity which had been in the making for four centuries thanks to the efforts of the Capetians. And the miracle of Joan of Arc had given to confused aspirations and orderless efforts the solid framework of a unifying authority. The prestige of the French monarchy increased considerably after the final victory and during the reign of Louis XI, in the course of which the great feudal lords were finally defeated. With the destruction of the power of Burgundy there was an end also to the dream of Charles the Bold, whose aim had been to rebuild a strong Lorraine which should be a threat to France. Progress in the material and moral unity of the kingdom kept pace with the affirmation of the sovereign power and, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, France, prosperous, rich and contented, was fully and genuinely aware of her individuality and her power.

It was then that there arose a multitude of poets to glorify her. Their greatest ambition was in truth to be the magnifying of their country, not only by extolling her greatness as the first kingdom in the West, but also by seeking to define her origins and her civilization so as to show their nobility. It seems that the many writers of the period, whether men of letters or lawyers, who devoted the greater part of their work to singing the praises of their country, did not give way to common vanity or unreasoned pride; they were anxious to *define* their country both for their fellow-citizens and for the whole world, to situate her in space and in time: an example to the universe surrounding her, but also a model comparable to the greatest there had ever been throughout the ages. In a history of patriotism in France the work of the poets of the *Pléiade* and of the legal writers of the sixteenth century is important in a curious way. In no period of French literary history did writers show such unanimity in obeying a plan, voluntarily made and tenaciously followed, of praise and glorification of their country. This unanimity is all the more noteworthy since it was not prearranged (except for the group of poets of the *Pléiade*): it was connected with the great movement of political transformation which was causing the West to pass more and more from the ideal of a united Christendom to the existence of different nations. Each country, under the guidance of a prince whose power was ceaselessly increasing, was affirming its individuality and becoming

more conscious of it. Since France had been the first country on the continent to achieve her unity this awareness of patriotism, expressed in the works of writers of talent, was in Frenchmen great beyond compare.

Men of letters or jurists, these French writers clearly proclaimed the end they were pursuing in their historical or legal research. Joachim du Bellay, in the preface to his *Défense et illustration de la langue française*, affirms that nothing 'had induced him to undertake this work' except 'natural affection for his country'. Etienne Pasquier was to begin *Les Recherches de la France* 'largely to have the satisfaction of having wished my country well'. Many similar quotations could be gleaned from other works of the period all showing, in the inspiration of the work, a clear desire to render public service.

But, before studying in detail the intellectual work of poets and lawyers, one must remember that their patriotism was a result of their most elemental links with the region of their birth, with its scenes and the colour of its sky. These men who manifested a desire to justify by reason their pride in being French and to discover the spiritual roots of their kinship, a desire which was quite new, found some of the tenderest and truest of lines to express what might be called 'instinctive' patriotism, that is to say unreasoned affection and that indefensible and unexplained preference felt for the familiar scene of the ancestral home. Everybody remembers the famous lines of Joachim du Bellay:

*'Plus me plaît le séjour qu'ont basti mes aïeux,
Que des palais romains, le front audacieux,
Plus que le marbre dur me plaît l'ardoise fine.
Plus mon Loyre gaulois que le Tybre latin,
Plus mon petit Lyré que le Mont Palatin,
Et plus que l'air marin, la douceur angevine.'*

Ronsard, in *L'Hymne à la France*, recognizes that this feeling of blind affection for the country of one's fathers is common to all peoples:

*'Tous jours le Grec, la Grèce vantera,
Et l'Espagnol, l'Espagne chantera,
L'Italien, les Itales fertiles,
Mais moy, François, la France aux belles villes. . . .'*

So these seekers of rational or learned proofs of patriotism knew first of all the primitive affection that is born of a long familiarity with a land and its scenes, and the instinctive and often indiscreet pride which every man feels when he compares his own country with others. Ronsard, in *L'Hymne à Henri II*, conjures up the various kingdoms and congratulates himself that his sovereign has his own:

*'... en un lieu tempéré,
Long, large, bien planté, de villes remparé,
De châteaux et de forts dont les murs qui se donnent
Au ciel, de leur hauteur les estrangers estonnent.'*

In many writings of the time there are pledges of ardent tenderness for what many Frenchmen then called with emphatic possessiveness 'my France'.

Meurier's *Le recueil des proverbes*, which appeared in 1578, says that one must 'espouse one's country.' Most men of this country felt that they really participated in the life of their country, and that they were one with it thanks to obscure bonds that they were to seek to define.

Moreover, it was at this time that the word *patrie*, employed by Jean Chartier alone in the fifteenth century, came into common use. Baiff said: "'Pour la Patrie" . . . c'est un beau mot'. Naturally the poets of the *Pléiade* especially welcomed with affection this term, impregnated as it was with the civic fervour of ancient Greece and Rome. Several Frenchmen protested and would have liked to keep the word *pays* instead of accepting a neologism which was too obviously taken straight from the Latin. 'He who has a country does not need a fatherland,' exclaimed Charles Fontaine, blaming du Bellay. 'The word *pays* is of Greek origin. All the old French poets and orators used it, and you too. But the word *patrie*, and other Italian corruptions, came into France recently, indirectly. Our ancestors would not use the word, for they avoided mutilated Latin words, and were content with their own sound one.'¹ But in spite of disapprobation the word spread and, moreover, whether *pays* or *patrie* was used, it was principally the idea of *France* that was making progress, the idea affirmed in the popular songs of the beginning of the century, as well as in certain private correspondence; the idea of the cohesion of a kingdom and a people; the idea gradually being perceived of the linking of a whole group of men with the same material and spiritual inheritance which became as *real* as a living person.

What did the writers of the sixteenth century want? First of all to leave monuments written in honour of their country. Etienne Pasquier, in *Les Recherches de la France*, devotes a whole chapter to studying the 'mistake made by the Gauls of old and their predecessors in not bothering to leave to posterity a written account of their valour.' French writers must glorify France by every means open to them. Would no poet arise to give his country an epic like those of Antiquity which place the origin of the Franks in the genealogy of the gods? And Ronsard wrote in the *Franciade*:

¹ 'Qui a pais, n'a que faire de patrie, duquel nom pais, venu de fontaine grecque, tous les anciens poètes ou orateurs françois ont usé, et toy mesme aussi. Mais le nom de patrie est obliquement entré en France, nouvellement, et les autres corruptions italiqes; duquel mot n'ont voulu user les anciens, craignant l'escorcherie du latin et se contentant de leur propre et bon. . . .'

‘*Jupiter à main gauche a tonné
Favorisant le François qu’il estime,
Enfant d’Hector, sa race légitime
Qui de là-haut nous a transmis ses lois.*’

Just as Virgil, in the *Aeneid*, made voices from the distant past and the depths of Hades murmur prophecies of the future greatness of Rome, so Ronsard ransacked the universe to find prophets of French renown.

But primarily these men of letters wished to serve their country by defending its language and adding to its beauties: ‘The same natural law’, said Joachim du Bellay, ‘which bids each man defend the place of his birth, obliges us also to protect the dignity of our language.’ Besides, it is through its language that the influence of a country’s civilization is able to spread throughout the universe, and this is the conquest most to be desired.

‘... Princes’, wrote Ronsard in his *Abrégé de l’Art poétique*, ‘should be just as anxious to spread their language throughout all nations as to widen the bounds of their empire.’ Joachim du Bellay set out the means by which writers could glorify their language.² French should not be despised *a priori*, for it was chance and men’s skill which made languages more or less beautiful, not some innate characteristic which divided them from the beginning into noble or vulgar. If the French would pay as much attention to their language as the Greeks and Romans did to theirs they would bring it to as high a point of perfection as that reached by the languages of Antiquity. Moreover, the French language was not as poor as some made out: every aspect of thought could be expressed by it, since it could be used to translate everything that had been written in foreign languages. It was not inferior to the languages of Antiquity; it was only younger. Just as the Romans had added to their means of expression by imitating the Greeks, so the French language must be ‘amplified’ through the imitation of the ancient Greek and Roman writers.

Du Bellay’s fashion of envisaging this imitation is most instructive, for it illustrates an aspect of the French spirit of tradition which is common to every period. The idea of patriotism, being the idea of a material and spiritual inheritance, implies also a certain attitude towards this inheritance, and it is noteworthy that at almost every period France, faced with the knowledge of her past, showed herself much more concerned with a loyalty that would produce something new than with lifeless imitation. Du Bellay did not desire a formal imitation of the classics and the care and reverence of an archaeologist. He wanted to make use of the best of their wisdom and their method, so that their

² *La défense et illustration de la langue française* was written by J. du Bellay, no doubt with a great deal of help from Ronsard, and published in 1549.

greatness might be an encouragement for France to invent a work worthy of their finest lessons.

Nothing indeed is more moving than the anxiety of French authors to raise their country above all others, just as they were showing her the perfection of the classical models. Yet, intoxicated with the ardour of the Renaissance, attached to the civilization of Antiquity by careful and unwearying study and the emotions of a revived loyalty, they did not cease to proclaim their faith in the transcendence of the civilizing destiny of their country. France, though recognizing in Greece and Rome the most august sources of Western civilization, was nevertheless created in order that she might give to the world a model of equal greatness. Let but her sons work for her glory and endow her with the means of expressing perfectly the message which up till now she had only murmured in the great deeds of her history, 'for up till now great deeds, not great words, have been the occupation of the French', and the universe would know that, in modern times, a country existed whose civilizing genius had not been surpassed by the Ancients.

It was to a conquest and a victory over the past that du Bellay and his friends called their fellow-citizens, not to a smug pilgrimage of copyists. They knew that true greatness is willing to learn from good advice. Should they imitate the classics? It was necessary because in them perfection had been attained, but what pride and audacity, and what creative ardour must be manifested during this imitation! At least the French should not feel humiliated:

'Frenchmen, march courageously towards that proud city of Rome and (as you have done more than once) build your temples and altars from her ruins. . . . Attack lying Greece and there sow once more the seeds of the famous nation of the Gallo-Greeks. . . . Remember your Marseilles of old, which was a second Athens, and your Gallic Hercules, pulling nations after him by their ears, with a chain attached to his tongue.'³

Ronsard echoed this proud diatribe in the second preface to the *Franciade*: 'I very humbly beg those whom the Muses have favoured with inspiration not to use Latin or Greek any more but, like good children, to take pity on their poor natural mother. . . . For it is criminal treason to abandon the living, flourishing language of one's country in order to unearth some ashes of the classics'.⁴ This is how writers

³ 'La doncques, François, marchez courageusement vers cette superbe cité romaine, et des serves dépouilles d'elles (comme vous avez faict plus d'une fois), formez vos temples et autels. . . . Donnez en cette Grèce menteresse, et y semez encore un coup la fameuse nation des Gallo-Grecs. . . . Vous souveniez de vostre ancienne Marseille, seconde Athènes, et de vostre Hercule gallique, tirant les peuples après luy par leurs oreilles, avecques une chaîne attachée à sa langue.'

⁴ 'Je supplie très humblement ceux auxquels les Muses ont inspiré leur faveur, de n'estre plus latineurs ni grécaneurs et prendre pitié, comme bons enfants, de leur pauvre mère naturelle. . . . Car c'est un crime de lèze-majesté d'abandonner le langage de son pays, vivant et florissant, pour vouloir déterrer je ne sçay quelle cendre des anciens.'

showed their devotion to the teaching of the past. Glad at having rediscovered their Gallo-Roman soul, and praising the message of wisdom and beauty left by Antiquity, they thought only of preaching a *living* tradition. Their country was to revere its origins. It was not to be caught in the toils of the past. As a plant draws from Mother Earth the sap it needs to increase its strength, but then lets it shoot forth in new branches and buds, so France would ask of the glories of Antiquity that they should feed and guide the growth of her future creations.

The writers of the *Pléiade* moreover wanted their language to be enriched as much with the aid of the obscure distant traditions of their physical ancestors as by the counsels of their spiritual ancestors. The Greeks and the Romans taught an *order*, but in this order all the elements of France's linguistic inheritance, all the old words of popular speech, deformed by local and provincial usage, could find a place: terms whose origin was now hidden by mysterious corruptions, and capricious and absurd accretions. In them were enclosed relics of invasions and echoes of travels, the murmur of fables and the secrets of trades, and by them there came to the living the whole obscure inheritance of ancestral customs, taking its place in the wealth of a country beside so much lofty advice and so many precise traditions.

So French was to achieve perfection by taking as a model the Greek sentence which was like its own, and by adopting Latin and Greek proper nouns to increase its vocabulary, but at the same time incorporating all the infinite richness that sprang from the old land. In these imitations, as in this enrichment, the French language was to find its full development, for, said du Bellay, 'my principal aim is the defence of *our language*, its adornment and its amplification'.

It is very curious too that the authors of the sixteenth century, not content with carefully defining their attitude to the teaching of Antiquity, as heirs who were at the same time creators, eagerly recalled at the same time their Gallic and Frankish origins. Usually one thinks of this age as steeped in admiration of Greece and Rome and absorbed in the imitation of Italy, but when one reads the writings of the time it is apparent that few periods were so keen to claim originality and individuality for France, trying to find it even in ancient times. It was chiefly at this period that pseudo-proofs of the Frankish origins of the French, already cherished by many clerks in the Middle Ages, were brought to light. It is strange to see the French Romanizers deny so guilelessly that their country participated in the *Pax Romana* for centuries. For them the kingdom of the Franks was above all a territory that had been *free* since the beginning of the world, impatient of any yoke, and never subject to foreign domination. And they hastened to magnify Gaul, or, better still, their original *Francie*, civilized without

the help of the Romans. Etienne Pasquier proved at length that 'Julius Caesar did not consider the Gauls as Barbarians' and that the glory of the Gauls would be better known if the writers of Antiquity had not, in their jealousy, deliberately obscured their renown. Similarly du Bellay was to defend *The History of France against the History of Rome*. 'If we are less well thought of than the Romans,' he said, 'it is because we are less well known and because the latter have written many lies about us.' Ronsard insisted a great deal on the Germanic origin of the Kings of France, and Etienne Pasquier paid particular attention to proving that the Capetians were descended from the Saxon Witiking. Charles du Moulin was one of the first legal writers to seek the origin of the fundamental laws of the kingdom in the laws of the Franks even *before* the Roman conquest (which again shows the same desire to separate French annals from the ancient history of Rome): 'It is historically certain that today, in the year 1561, the kingdom of the French has endured and persisted for more than sixteen hundred and thirty-two years.' One of the most daring writings on this subject was the *Franco-Gallia* of François Hotman, which, when it appeared in 1573, was important more as a political pamphlet⁵ than as a historical study. In it François Hotman affirms that two races combined to form the French nation, the Gauls and the Franks. From this discovery he drew a large number of tendentious conclusions, seeking to extol new political institutions which according to him arose out of the ancient laws he attributed to the Franks.

This strenuous attempt to separate the past of France from that of Rome may be explained by a preoccupation with controversy that was particular to the period and quite foreign to a concern for historical accuracy, or even for objective research into the origins of France. At that time Jean du Tillet was almost alone in showing any desire to arrive at a true knowledge of the past, for he undertook to compile the annals of France according to the authentic documents left by earlier periods. His attempt is chronologically the first in the literature of French scientific history. At the time of the struggle between Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII, the necessities of the Gallican campaign had already caused the production of histories of a Frankish kingdom completely independent of Rome. It would seem that pamphlets like that written by Hotman are also and primarily to be explained by the importance they assumed during the wars of religion in the attack made by the Protestants on the Holy See. In the same way the extreme infatuation that too many sixteenth-century Frenchmen displayed for the artistic contribution revealed by Italy was quite capable of exasper-

⁵ It will be studied from this point of view in a later chapter. The *Franco-Gallia* had an enormous influence during the whole of the *Ancien Régime*, and the polemicists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were to borrow from it without acknowledgement.

ating all who sought to ensure that the French Renaissance retained its characteristics of free inspiration, of vigorous and original adaptation.

Transcending these ephemeral preoccupations, these attempts to throw off the Roman yoke display an eminently traditional trait that was typical of a state of mind constant in old France. The country had always refused its unqualified adherence to the legacy of Rome. In the first place it repudiated anything in Roman political thought that seemed too systematic, too hardened into formulae remote from the complexities of real life. In addition it rejected the idea of an earlier submission to Roman dominion. This arose from a feeling of pride and honour which, however ingenuous it may appear from the purely historical point of view (it credited the Gallic community in fact with characteristics which it did not possess), remains infinitely moving and worthy of respect. It is indicative of a spirit of independence that is truly *essential* to the civilizing legacy of France. (Although this concern with independence did not, in ancient times, assume the 'national' quality that sixteenth-century French writers generously attributed to it, it is at least indicative of the very clear sense of the meaning of country that those writers had in their own time.)

Yet throughout the centuries the French seem to have sought to affirm their connection with Rome, first of all by the unconscious tribute of retaining its language, then by a definite adhesion to the transcendent political order it had brought to the West. France venerates in Rome the messenger by whom the loftiest counsels of Greek wisdom and Christian revelation were transmitted to the West, the soldier who raised the rampart of the harsh laws of the cities of men against abuses of reason and certain excesses of mysticism. But every time Roman culture took too particularistic (we should say today too 'national') a form, or Rome became too possessive a father, or affirmed its message didactically, the fierce spirit of independence of the French drove them to emphasize all that distinguished them from Rome, and to claim loudly their right to develop an original civilization, rivalling that of their august parent.

However that may be, the writers of the sixteenth century tried in their writings to complete a kind of synthesis of France. In this way they discovered her really original contribution: the transmission of a living legacy that is always growing. France was now a country and a nation. She, too, could teach the world. One of the most marked characteristics of her message was indeed the chief glory of highly civilized societies: the sense of justice. This characteristic, which had made all Western men turn towards the kingdom of St. Louis, and which was complacently emphasized by an Arab historian at the time of the Crusades ('On peut se fier a la justice des France'), was now again claimed by French writers as one of the essential traditions of their

country. In his *Discours sur le sacre du Très chrestien Roy François II* du Bellay defines the particular mission of the King of France among the other kings of the world:

*'Laisse aux autres seigneurs leurs terres et leurs droits,
Et soit ainsi qu'un dieu entre les autres Roys
Les peuples estrangers arbitre le choisissent
Et par luy leurs débats et leurs guerres finissent.'*

This King of France, who was an arbiter of justice, was naturally a friend of peace, not of a Utopian peace but of one based on prudence and inspired by a real feeling for humanity. These sixteenth-century writers were proud in their knowledge that their country, which, under the rule of St. Louis, had been a shining light to the West, had never ceased to preach its horror of war for conquest, and to enjoin the unifying of societies adhering to a common civilization. Throughout the episode of the Pichrocolian war Rabelais contrasts the pacific king Grandgousier (who knows how to maintain general concord while giving powerful protection to his possessions) with Pichrocole, the conqueror who is mad with pride. Dismissing a prisoner with great honours, Grandgousier says to him:

'The time has passed for such conquest of lands with the damage it brings to man's brother Christian; thus to imitate the ancients is to run counter to the teaching of the Gospels by which we are commanded to defend, to save, to rule and to administer each one his own land and territory; not hostilely to invade those of others.'

Here is his admirable programme for a model conqueror seeking to conciliate the newly conquered populations:

'You must therefore note this, that the way to maintain and to retain a newly conquered land is not . . . to pillage, to compel, to requisition, to ruin, to harass and to rule the people with rods of iron . . . like a newly-born child they must be nourished, cradled and fondled . . . so that of their own accord they conceive the opinion that there is in all the world no king or prince whom they would less desire as their enemy, or rather choose as their friend. These are the philtres, bonds and attractions of love by means of which one peacefully retains what has been painfully conquered.'

These writers were also lost in admiration of the fact that the realm of France had endured and been maintained for centuries, whereas many of the most famous empires and kingdoms had come to a swift end.

'Whenever,' said Etienne Pasquier, 'I reflect in my heart upon the vicissitudes that our kingdom has known, I cannot but be lost in astonishment and admiration and hold as one of the greatest miracles which have ever come to pass in this world the fact that it has been able to endure until our time whole and entire; the more so since, if you pass in review the greater number of kingdoms which rose to greatness out of the ruins of the Empire, you will find them to have been very transient, and, as one might say, to have vanished in smoke in less than no time.'

In searching for an explanation of this continuity these writers firstly considered it the result of a particular predilection of God. Ronsard, in his epic poem, made France the object of Jupiter's benevolence. Etienne Pâsquier, after giving many examples of the extraordinary good fortune of France, said: 'When I here name Fortune, in order to give no occasion for scandal to any man, I mean the mysteries of God which cannot be discovered by our human wisdom.' Joachim du Bellay, addressing Henry II in his *Hymne au roy sur la prinse de Callais*, exclaimed:

*'Mais à qui faut-il, Sire, attribuer l'honneur
D'une si grand'victoire et d'un si grand bonheur
Fors à Dieu.'*

The perpetual intervention of the miraculous in favour of France was not, however, a theme which entirely satisfied the writers, who no doubt thought that Heaven helps those who help themselves. The continued maintenance of the realm of France was therefore to be explained not only by the beneficence of Providence, but by the perfect wisdom with which the realm had been organized. In his *Recueil des roys des Franks* Jean du Tillet wrote: 'There is no empire, realm nor state so well ruled as France, which is the noblest and oldest of all, and would not have endured so long had it been misruled.'

The secret of French political wisdom lay in as perfect a conciliation as possible between the needs of authority and the just claims of liberties. It lay in the setting up of an order in which all the forces and all the material and spiritual resources of the country could flourish and find harmony. France, said Charles du Moulin, was 'a monarchy with a seasoning of aristocracy and democracy compounded and tempered in the Estates or orders.' Bernard du Haillan said: 'Those who have been pleased to discourse upon the state of this realm have considered that upon this joint policy, which was common to king and people, depended all the greatness of France.' In the same way Claude du Seyssel stated: 'There is one other matter which I hold to be a principal cause of the preservation of this monarchy, namely that the ruler and all the members of the realm are regulated according to so good an order that only with difficulty might they come to great dissension and discord.'⁶ 'The King', said Jean Bodin, 'must reconcile his subjects one with another and all of them with himself.'⁷

Jean Bodin in praising the political organization of his country

⁶ CLAUDE DU SEYSEL, *La grande monarchie de France*, 1541 edition, I, viii, Folio XI r, Folio XII r: 'Une autre chose y a que j'estime la principale pour la conservation d'icelle monarchie, c'est que le chief et tous les membres d'icelle sont réglés par si bon ordre, qu'à grand'peine peuvent venir à grande dissention et dissonance.'

⁷ 'Le roi doit accorder ses sujets les uns aux autres et tous ensemble avec soi.'

compared the rule of Polycletus⁸ which was so strict and rigid that it could not be bent one way or another, with the Lesbian rule, 'which was leaden so that when it bent it might be adapted in all directions.' He said that it was necessary, 'to avoid the immutable rigidity of the rule of Polycletus as well as the variety and lack of certainty of Lesbian rule, to fashion a third which should not be so rigid that it could not be gently bent when there was need and not straighten out immediately; that is to say in governing the state . . . one must pursue justice and harmony.'⁹ This is a typical definition of the political system of old France, as far removed from unbridled autocracy as from levelling state control or from anarchy. Fundamentally the political framework of France displayed a *profound harmony with the laws of the world*. Therein was the secret of its success.

To a tradition petrified in formulae or frozen into a system France preferred a living tradition, transmitted by means of custom and bringing into synthesis the gradual and unending contributions of time. The political constitution of France did not exist as a written text; it was a matter solely of tradition and custom, 'by reason of the fact that the French in ancient days, great warriors and wise statesmen, were more given to acting and to doing good than to speaking or writing.'¹⁰ What then can the French be taught by those who defend a purely historical tradition, those who would like to mummify the people in an attitude of archaeological respect for the past? *Le petit traité de l'excellence du gouvernement royal*, which bears the signature of Loys le Roy (1575), furiously attacked for this reason 'inquisitive antique-mongers' who were upsetting the established system on the pretext of archaic loyalties towards venerable pseudo-laws: 'The realm of France has been ruled from most ancient times according to a system better than any other that is known. . . . What madness is it then, what folly, what frenzy to seek to corrupt this old-established order and to break up the fine body of the realm! . . .' What have we to do with this digging up of the pseudo-laws and customs of the Gauls and the Germans at the time when they dwelt in 'their great marshes and forests of the North'?

As much to be condemned as those historians who enshrine mummies are the makers of systems, the inventors of immutable laws. Why have they not studied the movement of life, the perpetual motion of Nature to which French tradition is so well attuned? 'Everlasting laws or customs cannot be found, for they change as habits change, some perishing

⁸ Polycletus (c. 480-412 B.C.) was renowned for his human statuary. His most famous work, displaying the ideal proportions of the human form and complemented by a treatise on the harmony which gives rise to beauty in the human body, was by him called the *Canon*. Jean Bodin is comparing this harmonious, if rigid, canon of perfection with the unbridled licence of Lesbos, Greek order with Lesbian disorder.

⁹ JEAN BODIN, *Les six livres de la république*, VI, vi, pp. 1019 and 1020.

¹⁰ GUY COQUILLE, *Institution au droit des Français*, Pt. 3, p. 22. Paris, 1609.

simply because they are old, others changing by the silent consent of peoples or put aside as new and seemingly better ones are introduced.’¹¹

Do the makers of systems and the creators of theoretical constitutions not know too that the differences between countries make the adoption of uniform and absolute political plans very difficult? ‘Failure to take this into account has ruined several fine great republics, attracted by a fine political scheme borrowed from a republic of entirely different character.’¹² The only constant factors are the prime principles of every human society, which are based on the unalterableness of the essence of things and the nature of man.

¹¹ ‘Historians’, said Bonaventure Despériers, ‘wish to know the origins and sources of all our Gauls and Franks, although that is beyond their power.’

¹² ‘*Aquoy plusieurs n’ayans pris garde, ont ruiné de belles et grandes républiques, sous l’appast d’une bonne ordonnance, qu’ils avoyent empruntée d’une république du tout contraire à la leur.*’

RELIGIOUS SCHISM AND POLITICAL UNITY

AT THE end of the sixteenth century, with the forty years' discord of the Wars of Religion, France was to pass through a crisis just as terrible as that of the Hundred Years' War. Once again France seemed almost finished. The flames of doctrinal disputes were fanned into fanaticism and, combined with feudal quarrels and popular risings, they divided the country and led it to the brink of the abyss. Not only did two religious factions confront each other with unparalleled violence, but powerful lords threatened to reduce to ashes the unity achieved by the Capetians through six hundred patient years. The great bodies of the State, the *Parlement* and the University fought the sovereign authority, and the town population revolted as in the time of Etienne Marcel. Once more too the foreigner sought to get a hold on France whilst she was rent by faction. The Spanish ambassador claimed to be the protector of Catholic France, but under the mask of religion it was not difficult to esp^y the political ambition of the son of Charles V. The Queen of England posed as defender of the Protestants, but she claimed towns and ports that the Hundred Years' War had taken from her country. The situation was terribly confused. 'It is the misfortune and at the same time the greatness of periods in which conflicting beliefs contend with each other for domination over the world', wrote M. de Meaux, 'that the power of States does not seem to be the only nor even the principal matter at stake.' This power, however, as it continued to exist, had to think of protecting its existence. There now approaches one of the richest and most complex of the periods coming within the scope of this study. The Wars of Religion raise an infinite number of questions connected with the idea of loyalty to one's native land. What place should the defence of religion hold in the protection of the spiritual legacy of one's ancestors? Does not the very transcendence of the truths of religion imply that their preservation must dominate every other interest and every other loyalty, even towards the country of one's birth? This was the problem that now for the first time and in terribly acute form confronted the inhabitants of the realm of the Capetians who until this time had been united for centuries in respect for one doctrine and in the practice of one religion.

The new religious conflicts raised for the government the problem of their system of alliances with foreign kingdoms. Should these alliances be considered purely from the ideological point of view alone, and

was an alliance necessarily to be made with states which practised one's own religion? Should one, on the other hand, absolutely ignore the differences in ideas and consider only the preservation of the territorial and political independence of the country? One's country consisted of a material legacy and a spiritual legacy. Was it not possible to preserve them both as far as possible, to accept the struggle on all planes, making the best use of the different combinations of circumstances, keeping a sharp watch on the balance of the powers in question, sometimes sacrificing a thousand lesser preferences and a great wealth of detail in order to save the bare *essentials* of the physical and spiritual legacy?

The struggle also brought the government face to face with a problem of internal order, the question whether the king should impose on his subjects the religion he thinks best. That would be a violation of one of the most sacred rights of the individual. But he could not let a whole nation perish in bloody conflict without intervening. His was the role of arbiter; he could not take part in a purely doctrinal dispute, since in taking sides his function would be impaired. He could, without there being any suggestion of his replacing the theologians, confine himself to conciliatory action, bearing in mind always the idea of the unity of the fatherland, that is to say the solidarity that unites the generations through time. He could thus, on the one hand, maintain the principle of national unity above the dissensions of the French, and, on the other, bring about, in the struggle of conflicting doctrines, the triumph of the essential elements of the civilization of a country. This was the attitude consistently adopted by French kings during these years of anarchy.

But if the Wars of Religion presented the government with a thousand problems concerned with patriotism, they also raised them for the entire French nation. There are few periods during which participation in a struggle has been so universal. A whole nation rose in furious battle. There were countless individual, local and regional struggles in which all classes of the people took part, struggles which were echoed in an unbelievable number of angry lampoons and pamphlets seething with passion, written in sixteenth-century language which compels admiration by its vitality, its violence and its appeal, a language admirably adapted to the most furious controversy. From these innumerable writings one can obtain a fair idea of this period of passion in which people lived in a kind of ecstasy, killing with the greatest disregard for life, in which bare-faced vice existed side by side with superhuman self-sacrifice,¹ on which there kept watch in the shadow, beside diplomats and warrior chiefs, the traitor's dagger or the witch's poison,

¹ Protestants and Catholics rivalled each other in stoicism in their acceptance of martyrdom. There are staggering accounts of the calm courage with which the members of the Reformed Church in France and the Catholics in Protestant countries accepted torture.

while the aesthetic ecstasy of the Renaissance did not prevent the primitive savagery of scenes of riot or torture. This account of the characteristics of the end of the sixteenth century is necessary if one is to understand how terrible was the struggle which divided the country and how difficult the task of those who sought the solution of so many complex problems.

First of all there were the fanatics. For them, whether Protestants or Catholics, there was no hesitation. The doctrinal dispute was all that mattered. No consideration of personal affection or patriotism should intervene in the struggle for religious truth. Earthly cities did not count. The City of God alone existed.

'I know', wrote Calvin, in 1540, to Mme. de Cany, who was about to emigrate to Geneva, 'that it is hard to have to leave the country of one's birth, especially for a woman of position and of advanced years like yourself. . . . But we must reject all thought of difficulties for a higher consideration: namely that we should prefer to our own country any part of the world where God is adored in purity . . . and that we should desire no better rest for our old age than to dwell in His Church.'

In 1593 the extremist members of the League, in the *Dialogue du maheustre et du manant*, were to express on their side the absolute subordination of any political attitude to the religious idea:

'If it pleases God to give us a King from the French nation, blessed be his name; if from Lorraine, blessed be his name; if from Spain, blessed be his name. If he is a devout Catholic and sent by God it is a matter of indifference to us to which nation he belongs. We are not concerned with the nation but with religion.'

Side by side with the religious fanatics were the political revolutionaries to whom any period of civil conflict or foreign wars offers a favourable opportunity to criticize the very foundations of a society. Since the political structure of a country provides its frame, the collapse of this structure leads in a short time to the division of the country and its almost complete disintegration. That is why the pamphlets of this period of struggles are so important in any study of it. Once more it was the authors' aim to prove that the religious struggle, taking absolute priority over all other considerations, could legitimately involve the complete overthrow of the State, even the assassination of a heretical ruler. The audacity of the theorists is nowhere better seen than in the famous lampoon called the *Franco-Gallia*, written by François Hotman, which has been mentioned in a preceding chapter. 'The chief and sovereign administration of the Kingdom of the Gallo-Franks', says the author, 'appertained to the general assembly which has since been called the assembly of the Three Estates.' Thus the king retained his sovereignty only in so far as his will corresponded to the general

will. He had no right to go against the desires of his people (even were they wrong or foolish). In the *Résolution claire et facile sur la question tant de fois faite de la prise des armes par les inférieurs*, La Noue defends the duty of rising against a prince who is a traitor to his own crown. And the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* of Duplessis-Mornay explains that as the defence of the faith is sacred, obedience to the prince contrary to God's commands would amount to the same thing as preferring the inferior to the superior.

It cannot be denied that these writings contain arguments that are theoretically valid, but it can be imagined that, thrown amidst a people seething with quarrels, they were calculated to unleash the worst excesses. For the members of each party the 'tyrant' was the king who did not share their views. If the Protestant pamphlets were the first to adopt revolutionary propaganda of the greatest audacity, yet the palm for anarchical violence undoubtedly belongs to the Catholic preachers of Paris at the height of the power of the League. To read their sermons is to feel astonished that there were not more men like Jacques Clément.

Under cover of the religious quarrels a complete political doctrine was taking shape at the end of the sixteenth century, and it contained a very precise formulation of the principles which in 1789 were to be hailed as discoveries. The *Réveille-Matin des Français* clearly proclaims that 'the Three Estates are in the position of sovereign magistrates over the King'; and here is a conclusion which goes further than pure theory: 'Moreover, I say with the Ancient Romans that the most illustrious, and magnanimous of all generous deeds is to kill the tyrant.'²

The few Frenchmen of this period who were not blinded by passion could not avoid seeing to what an incredible degree the religious dispute was mixed up with a political struggle. It was obvious that all classes of the nation, under the pretext of defending their faith, were pursuing ends very different from the purely religious. The feudal lords were trying to revenge themselves on the house of Capet which had brought about unity. The legal class, the *Parlement*, were finding a new excuse for satisfying their appetite for power, and were investing it with specious legality. The petty country nobility, who were almost ruined, had mostly welcomed the Reformation because it made it easy for them to take possession of ecclesiastical property. The members of the League served the interests of the Spaniard, while the Huguenots favoured the old continental ambitions of the English!

Yet, fundamentally, a religious dispute did undeniably exist, and it is impossible to explain it completely as the result of personal or political quarrels.

² 'Je dis d'avantage avec l'ancien peuple romain que d'entre tous les actes généreux, le plus illustre et magnanime est d'occire le tyran.'

It was then that a gradual reaction took place amongst the wiser Frenchmen. They did not attempt to resolve the doctrinal conflict by hazardous theological discussions, but they invoked the authority, which was the most certain to guide them towards a solution acceptable to all. They consulted the civilizing tradition of their country. Did Catholicism represent theologically the true religion? They did not discuss the matter on the dogmatic plane, since the competent authority had decided at the Council of Trent that it did. Even if the Protestants rejected this authority and consequently its decisions, those who were to be called the *Politiques* (Moderates) based their position on the teaching of all the generations of ancestors who had preceded them, and it is true to say that it was the idea of France that saved them. They began to consider that the Roman Catholic religion was not solely the theory of a party that had suddenly arisen in the nation. They were careful to distinguish the cause of Catholicism from the fanaticism of the League, which represented but the current form of the eternal ferments which throw societies into a state of anarchy. Above the clamour of the League there was that long tradition of national faith which for fourteen centuries had shaped every aspect of the life of a people. To reject the religion of their fathers was to repudiate the most essential roots of their own existence. There is no doubt that the triumph of Catholicism at that time seemed necessary to the French as a whole much less for theological reasons which they could not understand than because of a desire to remain loyal to the spiritual legacy of their ancestors.

The sceptical Montaigne thus announced his final separation from the cause of the Reformation: 'Wife, let us live in the old French fashion.' And in the *Essais* he says: 'In this dispute through which France is now disturbed by civil wars there is no doubt that the best and most sensible view is the one that retains the ancient religion and government of the country.'³ The ecclesiastics evoked the traditional link between France and the successors of St. Peter. At the Estates General at Blois, Pierre d'Epinaç, Archbishop of Lyons, recalled the Catholic vocation of the French nation, 'a rock and bulwark of Christianity', and the coronation oath that had been taken for centuries by the Kings of France: 'To maintain the Catholic religion and further it without tolerating any other.' It was the same spirit of tradition that throughout the conflicts was to animate the sovereigns in their unswerving loyalty to Catholicism. Certainly they realized the importance of the questions of dogma raised by the Reformers, but they were, above all, conscious of their traditional vocation of eldest sons of the Church and of the long-continued loyalty of the French towards a religion that held

³ MONTAIGNE, *Essais*, II, xiv: 'En ce débat par lequel la France est à present agitée de guerres civiles, le meilleur et le plus sain parti est sans doute celui qui maintient et la religion et la police ancienne du pays.'

an essential place in the formation of their civilization. At the end of an expiatory procession ordered in Paris on the 21st January, 1535, after the Lutherans had slashed to pieces an image of the Virgin Mary, Francis I publicly proclaimed: 'Our fathers showed us how to live according to the teaching of God and our Holy Mother Church, within which I desire to live and die, and wish to show that I am Most Christian, warning you that I desire these errors to be put down and driven out of my Kingdom. . . .'⁴ Catherine de Médicis, too, was not essentially concerned with dogma, but with the fact that in France Catholicism was the State religion. Henry III made this recognition of Catholicism as the State religion one of the fundamental laws of the French monarchy. It was in this spirit that Sully, himself an unswerving Huguenot, advised Henry of Navarre to abjure Protestantism: 'Either live continuously in the saddle, helmet on head and pistol in hand . . . or take the other way, to accommodate yourself in your religion to the desire of the greatest number of your subjects; you would not have so many enemies, trouble and difficulties.'⁵

The first argument used by the Moderates, whether subjects or sovereigns, in order to put an end to the quarrels, was loyalty to the spiritual teaching of their forbears. There was another, inspired and nourished to an equal degree by patriotism, and that was the consideration of the total destruction of the country and the people in the midst of the conflicts. What the Moderates most reproached the Protestants with was not so much having introduced a 'heresy' into France as having brought a ferment of terrible discord amongst the French and provoking the ruin of the country. It is certainly not true that religious passion obscures in man every other consideration. As the pilgrimage on earth is an essential part of man's condition, it is also necessary to defend the communities which alone enframe and make possible individual lives. Many a Frenchman of the time felt anxious about the fate of his country, which was so completely forgotten by the fanatics: 'And truly', said Montaigne, 'innovations have already cost this poor state so much that everything considered I am renouncing them.'⁶

Ronsard reminded his friend Bèze that the land he was laying waste:

*'Ce n'est pas une terre allemande ou gothique,
C'est celle où tu naquis, qui, douce, te reçut. . . .'*

⁴ 'Et nous ont montré nos pères à vivre selon la doctrine de Dieu et de nostre mère Sainte Eglise, en laquelle je veulx vivre et mourir et veulx montrer que je suis très chrétien, vous advertissant que je veulx que ces erreurs soient mises et chassées de mon royaume. . . .'

⁵ 'Ou avoir, continuellement le cul sur la selle, le casque en tête, le pistolet au poing . . . ou bien que, par l'autre voie, qui est de vous accommoder, touchant la religion à la volonté du plus grand nombre de vos sujets, vous ne rencontreriez pas tant d'ennemis, de peines et de difficultés.'

⁶ 'Et de vray, la nouveleté couste si cher jusqu' à ceste heure, à ce pauvre estat qu'en tout et par tout, j'en quitte le party.'

Agrippa d'Aubigné put these lines of despair into the mouth of France, reprimanding the children who were tearing her apart:

*'Vous avez, félons, ensanglanté
Le sein qui vous nourrit et qui vous a portés.'*

'We have almost lost both King and kingdom, all being changed to the ruin of our country', lamented Michel de l'Hôpital in his Testament. Gérard François, doctor to Henry IV, was to publish his book, *De la maladie du grand corps de la France*, in 1595. In it he was to define his position in the midst of the struggles of his time thus:

'Sire, as by God's will I was born a true *François* both in name and nationality, and consequently a very humble servant of their Majesties, and very devoted to the welfare of my own country, when in the dead season of my autumn I saw her sore distressed and in her extreme affliction imploring the help of her children, in my compassion for her plight I could do no less than offer her all the help that every well-born child naturally owes to his mother.'⁷

La Boétie has left us this fine verse expressing so much affection for the motherland at a time when many Frenchmen were becoming resigned to emigration: 'Whatever the place that receives me in my weariness – and would to Heaven it were with you, my friends – no, never shall I be able to tear from my heart the disaster of my country. Everywhere it will follow me and I shall see the image of its dejection and desolation.'⁸ Louis de Bourbon, Prince of Condé, who was killed at the battle of Jarnac, had as his motto: 'It is sweet to incur danger for God and one's country.'⁹

The *Satire Ménippée* was to attack in violent fashion the fanatical members of the League who forgot their country's fate in their struggles over matters of doctrine. Here is how it made fun of their partisan fury: 'Kill, massacre and boldly burn everything. The Papal Legate will forgive all. . . . I will be a father confessor to you and to France as well if she is wise enough to die as a good Catholic, and to make the Lorrainers and the Spaniards her heirs.'¹⁰ This is how Pierre Pithou in

⁷ Note that the word *patriote* appears in the *Livre des marchands* of Régnier de la Planche, a Protestant writer, who wrote in the middle of the sixteenth century and whose work is a pamphlet against the League. But Jean Chartier had already used the word, which, throughout the *Ancien Régime*, was synonymous with 'compatriot'.

⁸ The original version is in Latin:

*'Hic, quicumque manet fessum locus, haud sine vobis
Utinam, socii, vix est ut pectore toto
Exutiam casum patriae. Quacumque sequetur
Prostrata facies, tristisque recurrit imago.'*

⁹ 'Doux est le péril pour Dieu et la patrie.'

¹⁰ 'Tuez, massacrez et bruslez hardiment tout: M. le Légat pardonnera tout. . . . Je vous serviray de père confesseur, et à la France aussy, si elle a le bon esprit de se laisser mourir bonne catholique et faire les Lorrains et les Espagnols ses héritiers.'

the *Satire* denounced the ferments of political anarchy, hidden under the veil of religion, which would bring disaster to the country. After evoking the feudal quarrels between the Châtillon-Montmorency and the Guise families Pithou exclaimed: 'For all the bloody tragedies which have since been played on this pitiful French stage arose and proceeded from these first quarrels, and not from difference of religion, as simpletons and idiots have been made to believe until now without any good reason.'¹¹

The lawyer class, from which the principal authors of the *Satire Ménippée* were recruited, distinguished itself very particularly at this period by its patriotic awareness. Perhaps this was a result of the influence of Roman law, so exacting with regard to civic duties. The Chancellor de Thou, in the seventeenth century, was to recall in these terms the patriotism which was a part of his childhood and which animated his ancestors in the sixteenth century:

'It is a maxim which has been handed down to me, not only by my father, whose probity was generally recognized and who was very loyal to the old religion, but also by my grandfather and my great-grandfather, that after what I owe to God nothing should be dearer and more sacred to me than the love and respect I owe my country, and that all other considerations ought to give way to that. I brought this state of mind to the administration of affairs, being of the opinion of the Ancients, that one's country is a second divinity, that laws come from God and that those who violate them are sacrilegious parricides.'

But, as one would expect from the tradition and very nature of the Capetian monarchy, it is in the mouth of the sovereigns that one finds the truest expression of the idea of the general interest which must be safeguarded in the midst of fratricidal struggles. In 1589 Henry IV wrote to Henry III: 'Pity, confusion and wretchedness everywhere. . . . In the name of all I beg peace from my Lord the King, for me, for all the French and for France.' And to one of his own faith he confided: 'What would you have me do? If I do not become a Catholic, tomorrow, France will be finished.' On the 19th October, 1562, Charles IX had appealed to his subjects, bidding them relieve Rouen, which was being attacked by the English and German Protestants at the request of their French co-religionists. He called on:

'All those who wish to come and help drive the English and the Germans from the Kingdom of France . . . and all those who bear their COUNTRY some love . . . in this war it is no longer a question of religion, but only of our Crown. . . . We cannot think that there is any man in this Kingdom

¹¹ Note that the *Satire Ménippée* was the expression of opinion of the Moderates, or pure *Politiques*, who, in opposition to the religious fanatics, undertook to consider only the political aspect of the struggles.

who is aware of his COUNTRY and the love he owes it . . . who could find it good or approve that our subjects should deliver our towns into the hands of those who have been the oldest enemies of our Crown.'¹²

This anxiety about the existence of the mother-country, this affection which in the midst of misfortune and disasters was becoming greater and more definite, was soon to take the form of hatred for the foreigner, as at the time of the Hundred Years' War. The principal speech in the *Satire Ménippée*, put into the mouth of Aubray, expresses a lucid and complete patriotism, a clear conception of the ancestral inheritance, of the conditions on which its defence depended and the policy necessary to maintain it. Naturally it took the form of a vehement diatribe against the conquering Spaniard:

'It must be confessed that this blow has thrown us more into serfdom and slavery than are the Christians in Turkey or the Jews in Avignon. We no longer have anything of our own. Everything belongs to you, gentlemen, who keep your foot on our throats, and fill our houses with troops. Our privileges and ancient freedoms have disappeared. . . . O Paris, who art no longer Paris, but a cave of wild beasts, a fortress of Spaniards, Walloons, and Neapolitans. . . . Thou art in chains, thou dost suffer the Spanish Inquisition, a thousand times more intolerable and harder to bear for spirits born in liberty and freedom, like the French, than the cruellest deaths. . . . We know only too well that the Spaniards and Castilians and Burgundians are our old mortal enemies, who desire one of two things: either to subjugate us and make us slaves, if they can, in order to join Spain, France and the Low Countries and make them one; or, if they cannot do that, at least to weaken us or bring us so low that we should never, or at least for a long time should not be able to rise and attack them. . . . If I were to see here French princes of the blood and peers of the crown, who are the principal personages without whom just and legal Estates cannot be met: if I saw a Constable, a Chancellor . . . the Presidents of the sovereign courts . . . Ah! I would really hope that this assembly might bear much fruit. . . . But I see here none but passionate foreigners, yelping after us, and athirst for our blood and our substance . . . all men of noble birth and all men of worth are on the other side, with their king and for their country. You, M. de Pelvé, don't you approve of the cause of the King of Spain and the rights of Lorraine being preached in this company, you, I say, who are French, and whom we know to have been born in France yet to have renounced your chrisam and your nation in order to serve your idols of Lorraine and the demons of the South? You should also have brought the Duke of Feria here, and Mendoza, and Don Diego, and had them sit here on the fleurs-de-lis, so that you might take their advice on how France should be governed: for they are interested in the matter. . . . But their presence is unnecessary, since they have their agents and advocates here, who have

¹² 'A tous ceux qui voudront venir servir pour déchaîner les Anglais et les Allemands du Royaume de France . . . tous ceux qui ont quelque amour de leur PATRIE . . . en cette guerre n'est plus question de religion, mais seulement de cette Couronne. . . . Nous ne pouvons estimer qu'il y aye homme en ce Royaume qui aye quelque ressentiment de la PATRIE et de l'amour qu'il doit à sa PATRIE . . . qui puisse trouver bon ny approuver de voir nos subjects mettre nos villes entre les mains de ceux qui ont esté les plus anciens ennemis de cette Couronne.'

so worthily spoken for them. . . . I am a friend of my country, as a good citizen of Paris should be: I am jealous of the preservation of my religion. But . . . there is no Braggadocio of Spain, no Neapolitan swagger, no Walloon rebellion, no bravo of Anthonis nor of the Temple, neither any fortress, with which we are threatened, that can prevent us from desiring and asking for peace.'

Rancour against Spain was paralleled by the fury of Gallicanism renewed by Roman interference in the political affairs of France. As in Philip the Fair's time the pamphleteers chiefly considered the Pope as the temporal ruler, the political sovereign of a State whose interests did not coincide with those of their own country. It was really a national passion that animated their protests against the intrusion of Roman power in the political life of France and against its enfeoffment to the Spanish cause. When the Pope released Frenchmen from their loyalty to a Huguenot king, the Bishops of Beauvais and Bayeux declared that the Bulls had no power over them, as they came from foreigners who were enemies of France. Legal writers and the *Parlement* now made use of the traditional theories of the jurists who had preceded them in the fourteenth century. Kingdoms were established by God before ever the name of Pope existed. 'The Pope is a usurper when he interferes in a dynastic question.' The reaction of the *Parlement* when Henry IV was excommunicated by Gregory XIV. was even more violent. The magistrates met at Tours and declared the Bulls to be 'worthless, abusive, seditious, damnable, full of sacrilege and imposture', and witheringly apostrophized, in the manner of Nogaret, 'Gregory, who calls himself a Pope, enemy of peace and of Catholic unity, supporter of the Spanish plot and abetter of rebels'.

The *Satire Ménippée* commented on this: 'What is the Papal Legate doing here? . . . He is Italian and the vassal of a foreign prince. There should be no rank nor position for him here. This is the place for matters which touch Frenchmen nearly, not for the affairs of Italy and Spain.' Thus the feeling of pity and love which certain Frenchmen felt when they saw their country torn apart expressed itself in a fierce hatred of all those who did not belong to the national community. But Pithou was also to express in the *Satire* the synthesis of national aspiration in loyalty to the king:

'We want a King so that we may have peace, but we do not want to imitate the frogs. We want a natural, not an artificial, King and leader: a King already made and not still to be made. In this matter we do not wish to take the advice of the Spaniards, who are our inveterate enemies, and who wish to tutor us by force. . . . The King we ask for has already been made by Nature. He was born in the real garden of the flowers of France, a straight green shoot from the stem of St. Louis. Those who speak of making another are mistaken. . . . We can make dozens of marshals and peers . . . but not a King. He alone must be born of himself, if he is to live and be worth while. . . . We also wish to observe our laws and ancient

customs. We do not want an elected King, nor one chosen by lot. . . . In a word we wish the lieutenant¹³ to know that we recognize as our true legitimate King, our natural and sovereign lord, Henry of Bourbon, formerly King of Navarre.'

Pithou went on to explain that a king cannot be turned from the throne for religious reasons: thus the Arian Emperors were not dethroned by their orthodox Catholic subjects. Moreover, all authority derives from God, and Jesus Christ told his followers to obey Tiberius; St. Peter and St. Paul obeyed Nero. Finally, his peroration truly expressed the movement of national pride of a whole people:

'What prevents us from now driving out these unwelcome guests, these pitiful fellows, insolent animals, who devour our substance and our goods like grasshoppers? . . . Come, Sir Legate, return to Rome. . . . Come, agents and ambassadors of Spain, we are tired of serving you as gladiators fighting to the bitter end, and tired of killing each other in order to afford you pleasure; we tell him¹⁴ loudly and clearly, and we tell all you gentlemen, his cousins and allies, that we are French, and that with the French we will risk our lives and all the goods that remain to us in order to help our King, our good King, our true King.'

Thus, as in the fifteenth century, the idea of France, discovered and hailed with enthusiasm by a few clear-minded Frenchmen, led them to call for the political order necessary for the re-establishment of unity. But how were they to find within the divided country a satisfactory solution of the conflict? The Moderates took too narrow a view when they emphasized the aspect of civil war and the struggle against the foreigner, but at least they stressed the prime condition for peaceful concord, the restoration of political order. The mission of Joan of Arc, in the fifteenth century, had not revealed any other means of salvation. But this was the first time that the King of France had had to reconcile his subjects over a religious problem. Or rather, during the Middle Ages, according to the customs of the time, the liquidation of religious conflicts could take place only by the extermination of the heretics. That was how a period of ardent and fiercely exclusive faith had felt about it. Years had passed; the King of France knew full well that now the dream of the coat without a seam, which symbolized the religious unity of the West, was dead. Christendom had made way for divided kingdoms, and Pope Sixtus V, in this sixteenth century, had just been bemoaning the end of the crusading idea in Europe:

'The Turks, in all their enterprises, have only their own interests to consider; on the other side the interests of the Christians are so diverse that they hinder each other. France fears Spanish domination, Spain does not want Venice to become any stronger, Venice thinks the same with regard to all the other powers. Thus passions and individual enmities take precedence over the common interest, and the enemy triumphs.'

¹³ Mayenne.

¹⁴ Mayenne.

Moreover, in opposition to the voice of the Pope calling the followers of Christ to the help of the City of God there had arisen the voice of a theorist who would not consider anything but the earthly interests of kingdoms. Since different states had now taken shape in a changed Europe, and they were each day greedier and more powerful, how could one still dream of going to war for ideologies? One thing alone counted, said Machiavelli; that was *the interest of the State*, the maintenance and the protection of the political society, for it was the necessary basis for the prosperous life of the whole nation. 'When it is a question of the country, the citizen should take into account neither justice nor injustice, neither pity, cruelty, honour nor shame; but, leaving aside every preoccupation, should ensure that the country is saved, be it with honour or with shame.'¹⁵

The Kings of France refused to be guided by this new doctrine. They found in it what they had always rejected in the exaggeration of the political teaching of ancient Rome: an absolute glorification of the idea of State, a worship of political order which went so far as to deny the spiritual needs of human beings. Although France could no longer reply to the exhortation of the Pope, as in the times when she 'invented' the Holy War in a world for which faith constituted a categorical imperative, she refused to abandon completely the idea of the Crusades in the new world order. She knew that loyalty to the legacy of one's ancestors required the defence of their spiritual wealth as well as of the walls of their cities. Since the laws of the world commanded *primum vivere*, and the relations between men often resembled the relations between wolves, the King of France was to think *in the first place* of the defence of the very existence of the country, the basis of the maintenance of her civilization. But this civilization was to be defended by him, without faltering, and his country, solidly based on the earth, was not to forget to turn towards the sky.

So the king, above the factions which were rending the country, began by evoking the *natural* brotherhood of those connected by birth with the same country. 'I come', said Henry III on his return from Poland, 'with arms outstretched to receive my subjects all alike without distinction.' Similarly Catherine de Médicis said: 'Frenchmen should not think of other Frenchmen as Turks. There should be brotherhood and love between them.' Finally Henry IV:

'I call on you as Frenchmen. I espouse no man's passions. . . . I am not blind. I see clearly. I wish members of the Faith to live in peace in my kingdom . . . not because they are of the Faith, but inasmuch as they have been loyal servants to me and to the French crown. . . . We are all French and fellow-citizens of the same country.'

¹⁵ MACHIAVELLI, *Discourses on Titus Livius*, II, xli.

After this first appeal to the natural fraternity of his subjects, born in the same land, the king turned to defending the spiritual supremacy of Catholicism, to which he adhered because of the national tradition, through obedience to the coronation oath, and through ancient loyalty to the tradition of Rome. There lay also the ancestral heritage, and, opposing those of his subjects who were too Gallican, the king, though himself so opposed to all ecclesiastical domination, praised the orthodoxy of the power of Rome because he felt that on the doctrinal plane he must needs differ here from the Huguenots. When the Pope was delaying the absolution asked for by Henry IV the latter did not imitate the revolts of the *Parlement* which threatened Rome with its customary weapons: the royal petition and the appeal to the General Council, and so on. The sovereign approved the resistance of the French to Papal interference in the wider political sphere, but he defended the ancient loyalty of his throne and of the whole country to the spiritual authority of Rome.

There still remained the Protestant problem: though Catholicism was re-established in France as supreme, the king was not to reject from the family circle the followers of a new religion. He had reminded them so many times of their common links with their Catholic brothers; surely there was no need to renounce all friendships in earthly cities when one has ceased to believe in the same city of God? The fanatics could not envisage anything but conflicts between disembodied souls, but the head of a kingdom was master of a land and protector of beings of flesh and blood. As the existence of a city was necessary for the existence of these human beings, the walls of this city must be maintained. In it first place was to be given to the altars venerated from time immemorial by the ancestors, but neophytes of an unwonted faith were to be allowed to practise a different religion from their brothers. However, the city was to be protected from their possible political rebellions, since they now formed a new body within the national group.

It was the same in the realm of foreign alliances, and now that Europe was no longer a united Christendom, the King of France would never take into account ideological conflicts alone, nor consider opposing material interests by themselves—*Primum vivere*, no doubt, but without forgetting to defend the spiritual elements in the country's tradition.¹⁶

¹⁶ Henry II, at the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis, sacrificed his alliance with the German Protestants and with the Turks (which, from the purely political point of view, seemed necessary) on account of the exigencies of the defence of the faith which was threatened within his realm. On the other hand, he had (in a moment of urgency, when the very existence of the land was in peril) delayed his attacks on heresy in order to safeguard certain alliances which were necessary to his foreign policy: 'I swear that if I can settle my disputes abroad, I will make the streets run with the blood and the heads of the vile Lutheran dogs.' Henry III and Henry IV showed the same concern first to defend the earthly city, but at the same time to watch over the safety of the civilization that it sheltered.

The idea of the Crusade had not disappeared; it was subordinated to a harsher political wisdom, because the times too were harsh. Machiavelli was not reviled in the realm of St. Louis: he was merely corrected; and his wisdom, which was limited to the earth, was given an indispensable complement which allowed it to join forces with a mystery even vaster than the vaults of heaven in which the other planets turn and the stars sing.

CHAPTER XIV

COUNTRY AND UNIVERSE

WHEN THE early Capetians set themselves to enlarge by degrees their small domain of Orleans they did not think their task complete when they had conquered a certain piece of territory. They were always anxious to secure the deep affection of the holders of the land which had become theirs. In order to do this they conformed to the old immortal teaching of Rome: the conqueror never really vanquishes the conquered except through his benefactions. These benefactions were sometimes of a very humble nature, for men are not angels, and they are motivated generally by interest rather than by any other passion. Therefore the kings tried to make life easier for their new subjects, and to facilitate their daily tasks. In the second place they secured their loyalty by bringing the benefits of a just administration. They made themselves the supreme arbiters of justice, defenders of the law against the encroachments of force. In the end the new participators in the national culture were won over by the influence of the civilization of the kingdom combined with the attraction of material profit. The Capetians also made use of the old feudal attraction, the custom of loyalty to a living chief, in order to win for the existing family of their people new brothers, filled with a love and a respect similar to that of their elders. In this way, throughout the centuries of the Middle Ages, through means modest or sublime, the slow expansion of France had been achieved.

Although times had changed, and the Capetian dynasty had prospered so that the petty country lord of days gone by was now the most powerful sovereign in the West, the principle had remained the same. The people of the kingdom of France were only to be really united through spiritual bonds, and the common father directed his whole effort towards achieving this. That was no doubt why so many provinces which were still outside the frontiers of the kingdom in the sixteenth century were already looking to France because of their customs and language as well as the geography which placed them within the old natural frontiers of Gaul. Such was the case, for example, of Franche-Comté, which was only acquired in the reign of Louis XIV, but which had already been French in language for a long time. Similarly, in the reign of Henry IV, after the king had won several districts near the Alpine frontier from the Duke of Savoy, only La Bresse was retained by France in the treaty which followed. A Venetian ambassador recounted at the

time that the population of the provinces given back to the duke considered that 'the people of La Bresse were in Paradise, while they themselves remained in Purgatory'. Similarly again, in 1501, Wimphiling denounced the existence in Alsace, especially at Strasburg, of a whole party looking towards France: 'Most of us favour the Kingdom of France more than the Empire.'

One should not draw hasty and therefore erroneous conclusions from these moving examples of France's prestige as a civilizing power. The unity of the kingdom was not completed without difficulty, nor did it come about by the spontaneous wish of the people. In the last provinces to be absorbed by the monarchy, as well as in those which had been wrested from the feudal lords with such difficulty by the Capetian, regional particularism manifested itself in the seventeenth century with a violence which made assimilation with the rest of the kingdom difficult. It must not be forgotten, and it has been stressed before in this book, that the feudal system, the principle of loyalty of the inhabitants of a region to the family of the local overlord, had succeeded in creating in Gaul territorial divisions which were miniature nation-states, strongly autonomous and firmly independent. Take, for example, the case of the provinces united to the rest of the kingdom by Louis XIV.

What do we find in Flanders? A population sharing all the feelings of the Spanish Low Countries. In 1641 the citizens of Aire deserved this judgement on the occasion of a battle fought against French troops: 'They were so eager against the French that it was extremely difficult to make them withdraw and call a halt. They were all intent on the fight and urged by the desire to remain under the rule of their natural prince.' Richelieu wrote of the citizens of Arras: 'They are all sworn enemies of the French and more Spanish than Castilians.' (It must also be noted that in Flanders, in Hainault, and throughout the Low Countries, municipal patriotism was very strong and the autonomy of towns strongly established.) The state of affairs was hardly more favourable to France in Roussillon. One of the first governors installed there by the King of France was one day to write to Paris: 'The people of Roussillon call themselves Catalans and think of themselves as such, and they would feel degraded and insulted if they were called French.' (It is probable that M. de Ponté d'Albaret was exaggerating slightly in his description of their feelings; but the general picture was a true one.) In Lorraine regional particularism was stronger than anywhere else; loyalty to the family of the duke was truly fervent in character, and there was great opposition between the territories of the Three Bishoprics, which had been attracted to France for a long time, and the rest of the country. The young men in the villages that had remained part of Lorraine, and those in the districts which had become French hurled defiance at each

other almost every Sunday and exchanged blows in support of their convictions in order to stress their 'national' differences.

The attitude adopted by the French monarchy of the *Ancien Régime* to such a state of affairs was exemplary. The king's first care was to confirm everywhere the liberties, privileges and customs of the different towns and regions. It is most instructive to read the concessions obtained by the various cities. When Dôle was surrendered the Parliament of Franche-Comté obtained a treaty in which it was stated: 'As regards privileges, freedoms and immunities all shall remain as at present in Franche-Comté.' Later Strasburg received the same promise: 'His Majesty will confirm all the ancient privileges, rights, statutes and customs.' We are so used to the centralized and unified administration of modern States that it is difficult for us to realize how far this respect for regional autonomy went in France at that time. After she was conquered Franche-Comté retained her freedom of administration, her right to raise taxes (which were voted by the Estates of the province and spent within her boundaries) and most of the privileges which had earned her the name of free—*franche* ('the fairest name after that of France that any region has borne', said an old historian). Alsace, nominally annexed by the treaties of 1648, continued for thirty years to see her towns paying marks of allegiance to the Empire, whilst her religious liberties, which were often different from those of the kingdom, were formally guaranteed. The following anecdote illustrates these independent loyalties. At the siege of Barcelona in 1695 the regiment of Alsace was the first to attack. Vendôme begged his colonel, the Prince of Birkenfeld, to be more careful. The officer replied: 'I am all the more intent on remaining at my post, since the breach is defended by the Germans of the Empire, commanded by my cousin Darmstadt. I want to show them that the Germans of France can do their duty.' 'The Germans of France'! Does not the combination of these two words, which would amaze our contemporaries, strongly emphasize the prodigious diversity of the peoples, languages and customs which the king allowed to flourish within the unity of loyalty to the Crown?

In certain newly acquired provinces over-zealous officials sometimes wished suddenly to enforce French customs and the French language. Their hasty and clumsy attempts were not approved by the government. All the same, Louis XIV did not lose sight of the assimilation of the peoples newly wedded to French civilization. In his *Mémoires* he wrote: 'In order to strengthen my conquests by closer union with my existing territories, and as I do not see my way to practising what the Greeks and Romans did, namely sending colonies of their own subjects into freshly conquered territories, I tried at least to establish French customs in them.'

But this introduction was made very slowly, and with infinite pre-

caution and care. First of all the *advantages* ensuing from union with France were stressed. This will not fail to disgust theorists who forget *primum vivere* and feel that willing citizenship of a country could be inspired only by noble feelings and sublime thoughts. French statesmen of the day were more acquainted with human nature and had not yet heard it praised for its perfect goodness and its faultless nobility. Their imagination was realist and they mistrusted day-dreams. In 1658 Mazarin wrote, in his will, that he was creating the college of the Four Nations so that the children of the new provinces should come and learn in Paris 'the advantages of being the subjects of so great a King'. An *intendant* stated that the newly conquered territories should be administered with the greatest possible care, 'so that the good treatment of those whom we rule may serve as an example and an attraction to those we claim.'

This desire to appeal to the interest of the population and to consider its humblest needs is picturesquely illustrated by the following anecdote concerning the subjection of Dunkirk. Louis XIV had just acquired the great port, and numerous accounts of the way his new subjects were behaving told him that the sailors were constantly mutinying and deserting. Rebellion? An unconquerable feeling of independence? The famous Jean Bart provided the key to the enigma, which was of a much more modest character: since the town had become united to France the sailors had been served with French rations, and they liked neither meat nor wine! Jean Bart indicated that they must be given butter and beer and stated what quantities they needed. And Dunkirk sailors became obedient and loyal! So true is it that respect for humble customs is important in the development of a people's patriotism.

Yet although the most banal realism is a necessary basis for this development it is obviously accompanied by the arousing of many feelings which may reach the sublime. The attraction of the language is one of those which form the best synthesis of the numerous and varied contributions to a new civilization. The language was not to be imposed on the conquered peoples, but everything was to be arranged so that it should be adopted naturally. In imitation of Roman policy French became the official language of the new provinces; there was no law about its becoming the common tongue. The system adopted, moreover, varied in many subtle ways from province to province. In Artois, Hainault and Franche-Comté there was no difficulty, since French was the language of the region even before the conquest. In Flanders, on the other hand, the native language was so respected that the study of French was not introduced even into Flemish schools, for there was a very jealous linguistic particularism in the country. In Roussillon the population showed such a great fondness for the French language that the king was able to establish the study of French in even the most humble

schools. The case of Alsace was one of the most characteristic. German had been spoken in this province since the time of the Frankish conquest; yet for a long time there had existed in Strasburg a centre of French culture, and Germans from beyond the Rhine came to learn French in this half-French town (*halb französische Stadt*). That is why the monarchy respected the provincial dialect in Alsace whilst promoting French as the language of the élite.

Such was the variety and such the extent of the shades of difference in the methods by which the conqueror achieved the expansion of France. Absolute respect for habits and customs, and the attraction of profit: these were the humblest means of peaceful conquest. There were others. Who, in Europe at that time, would not have felt proud to belong to a kingdom which was proving the most powerful and the most civilized of the known world? Not only did Louis XIV legislate for Europe, but on the sea his squadrons held their own against the fleets of the proudest empires, and daring pioneers were preparing colossal empires for him in the snows of Canada or the savannah lands of the Mississippi. And French writers and artists were announcing that the time had come for France to become the rival of Athens and Rome, initiator into a wisdom and a beauty that had reached the limits of perfection. How could the new provinces be insensible to so much glory and good fortune? When Louis XIV came to offer a *Te Deum* in the cathedral of Besançon to celebrate the conquest of Franche-Comté, Archbishop Antoine Pierre de Grammont addressed him thus: 'Sire, even as we succumbed to the strength of your arms we admired your virtues. We will praise God for the prosperity with which He continues to crown your reign, and thank Him for the fact that if Providence has destined us to remain under your Majesty's rule, it has given us to the greatest of all kings.' And Mazarin, founding in his will the college of the Four Nations, considered that the education received by the children who came from the new provinces would help to facilitate their complete adhesion to French civilization and 'that in the end all our provinces will become French of their own free-will, just as they are so now through the domination of His Majesty'.

Nevertheless it was the king's chief aim to make use in the new provinces of the mainspring of his government, the prestige of affection and loyalty to a living being who was the incarnation of the country and who could make its unity more real than did any edicts or propaganda. He knew full well that the synthesis of the particularism of each newly won region lay in loyalty to an overlord. He too would present himself as a legitimate overlord, he too would arouse emotion in hearts which aspired to the protection of a person beloved and admired. But here too Louis XIV was careful not to violate feelings. Thus, on the occasion of his first visit to conquered Flanders, which he knew was animated by violent affection and loyalty to the Spanish dynasty, he took

the Queen his wife with him, knowing that the people would acclaim her, not as the companion of the King of France, but as the granddaughter of Charles V. The desired result was obtained, and the historian Pellisson gave this account of the journey: 'The Queen's carriage was followed by as many willing slaves as the King had encountered armed enemies. She found a means of conquering after him. She went straight to the heart of the Flemish and converted as many as she did look upon.'

Thanks to so much skill, so much effort to conciliate and so many benefits, there was soon unity between the new populations and the remainder of the kingdom, although sometimes loyalty was slow in coming. (After the Treaty of Nimwegen the Mayor of Saint-Omer had resigned, and the members of the nobility and the clergy had avoided swearing allegiance to the King of France. In 1676 there had been a rising in Perpignan in Roussillon. In Alsace some of the magistrates of Colmar boasted that on the occasion of one of Louis XIV's victories they had sung the *Te Deum* officially but that in their houses they had sung the *Super Flumina Babylonis*.)

But now at the end of the reign there was abundant proof of the loyalty of the newly won provinces. The inhabitants felt that they did indeed belong to the country, and were moved by its joys and its sorrows. In 1674, when the whole body of vassals was called to the colours, the decree did not apply to the conquered provinces, but of their own accord they furnished volunteers equalling in number the contingents of the districts which had formed the original France. During the war of the League of Augsburg noblemen and citizens of Lille raised companies at their own expense for the king's service. In May 1709 Baron Schmettau, a Prussian minister, in a memoir which is biased, but through the exaggerations of which one can perceive certain truths, wrote that Alsace was 'on fire with love for France'. In 1713, when the Flemish towns, for a time lost by France, were retaken, Marshal Montesquieu wrote: 'The magistrates came in their robes to the gate of the town to pay their compliments, and there arose such a ringing cry of "Long live the King" that they were never able to speak because you could hear nothing.' Until the last days of the monarchy the loyalty of the late-comers to the French family was to grow stronger, and Lille, in 1777, and Strasburg, in 1781, were to celebrate with enthusiasm the centenary of their adhesion to France.

Moreover, from now on it is possible to find throughout the country, and among all classes of the population, strong manifestations of patriotism. Letters by obscure Frenchmen dating from the middle of the seventeenth century contain the words 'to die for one's country'. In 1654 a professor at the Academy of Saumur wrote: 'Let us love our country like good Frenchmen and let us not entertain other thoughts because of

our particular interests or our discontents.¹ In 1709 the magistrates of Toul, learning that it was possible their town would be ceded for political reasons, wrote to Louis XIV:

'Since our town has formed part of the realm nothing has been more dear to us than to unite ourselves by inviolable loyalty to our Kings and the State. Our fathers inspired us with these sentiments and we leave nothing undone to ensure that they shall be handed on to our children. . . . To abandon us to another ruler is to bring eternal desolation among us. Let His Majesty dispose of our possessions as he wishes, but let us always enjoy the good fortune of being his subjects and members of his State.'

But if the King of France showed himself in this way capable of bringing into his family so many people who were at first unwilling, where were his ambitions to stop? Would there be wise limits to his idea of France, or would this idea urge him on to unlimited conquests? The policy of the French sovereigns no doubt led them to make ephemeral acquisitions, like those that took place during the Italian wars (and which should be judged only in the light of the customs of a period which was steeped in the habits of feudal inheritance, and not in ideas of 'natural frontiers' about which nobody then bothered). But on the whole the French monarchy attempted to bring into its fold only regions bordering on its original possessions, regions already steeped in French civilization. In order to establish its 'meadow square'² it took into consideration the safety of the provinces and especially the protection of the capital in districts where there were no natural defences. The French monarchy cast its eye on regions with an uncertain destiny like those of the former domain of Lothar, both because these regions served as a natural cover for the boundaries of the kingdom and because their situation prevented them from ever being able to live as autonomous states, and obliged them to become integrated, whether they wished it or no, with one of the great states which were their neighbours. It seems to have been only in this sense that the Kings of France pursued a policy of 'natural frontiers' for their country, and not in obedience to a systematic plan of reconquest of the territories which had once made Gaul.

Their intentions appear most clearly in the manner in which they extended their power to the east and north of France in the area where a reconquest of the left bank of the Rhine, indicated by Caesar, came up against regions which had for centuries eluded the sway of the Capets. It must not be forgotten that as far back as Carolingian times the boundaries of western Francia were only the Saône, the Meuse and the Rhône, not the Rhine. The boatmen who descended the Rhône called its right bank 'the King's bank', its left bank 'the Emperor's bank'.

¹ A. Amyrault, *Séjour sur l'éclipse*, Saumur, 1654, p. 46.

² Vauban, see p. 155.

Now, on the one hand, the Kings of France could not confine themselves to this boundary without being threatened with extinction by the ambition of the Empire or of another State like the formidable Duchy of Burgundy; but, on the other hand, they nourished no dreams of conquest as definite as those elaborated by geographers and historians in the silence of their studies.

Here again the kings displayed their wisdom, always alert to watch over the fickle movement of events and recognizing only one unchanging political end: the preservation and defence of their land. In the east and north they were obliged to protect the capital by accumulating buffer-provinces and pushing the frontier further and further away. As far as the Rhine? Possibly—if the occasion demanded and because a frontier backed by natural defences is always desirable. But, first of all, every addition patiently acquired necessitated the organization of a solid bloc, the consolidation and fortification of the new frontier, rather than the pursuit of an illusory plan of 'over-rapid expansion that ran the risk of a rapid end. (In this connection it is very interesting to compare the patient Rhenish policy of Old France with the policy of the Revolution—the latter based entirely on 'intellectual' considerations, on geographical and historical conformity, and taking no account whatsoever of suitability of time and place.) The Kings of France bore in mind, on the one hand, the strength of the feeling for independence in the Spanish Low Countries, and, on the other hand, the firmness of English opposition to the establishment of France in that area. It is also quite certain that during the reign of Louis XIV the influence of France was as great in some regions on the east bank of the Rhine as on the west. On both sides of the river the population was sympathetic towards France, and the idea that Old France must have the Rhine as its ultimate destined boundary had such slight hold on men's minds that Frederick II himself said: 'To the East, France has no other limits than those imposed by her sense of moderation and justice.'

It was not until the sixteenth century, at the time when the Gallic and Frankish origins of the French were being passionately exhumed, that the idea of 'natural boundaries' in the sense given to the term today took definite shape. A Lorraine doctor, Jean Le Bon, wrote in 1568 a pamphlet called *Le Rhin au roi*. Several seventeenth-century pamphleteers followed his example; and the principal disciple was of course the writer who drew up the famous *Testament* of Richelieu, which credited the Cardinal with the decided aim of seeking 'to make French all that had been Gaul'.³ It is quite evident that these writers were not entirely mistaken in attributing plans for expansion to their monarch or to his ministers,

³ 'Hic igitur ministerii mei scopus restituere Galliae limites quos natura praefixit, reddere Gallis regem gallum, confundere Galliam cum Francia et ubicumque fuit antiqua Gallia restaurare novam.'

but we must recognize that they gave too systematic a form, a pedantic rigidity to a policy that was flexible and patient, a suiting of plans to the possibilities of the moment and the play of circumstances, a wisdom that was more concerned with the gradual building of a coherent domain than with the sudden realization of an ideal geographical pattern. Each of the peace treaties of Louis XIV's period shows, for example, that the frontiers established for the conquered provinces did not blindly follow geographical boundaries. *Necessity* guided the selection of plans and sites: here a bridgehead was assured, there a hill of particular strategic importance was claimed; the greatest realism always presided over the slow extension of France's boundaries.

In regions where geography could suggest no clear frontiers (as was the case for the frontier that Louis XIV tried to erect in Flanders) the selection of areas was once again determined by concern for the construction of a firm and coherent line of defence, not by a desire to reach some line suggested by a more or less ancient tradition. The most important adviser on this question appears to have been the ingenious Vauban, since it was he who made good by his vast works the defective defences of Nature. On the 9th January, 1673, at a time when the northern frontier was still an imperfect sketch, he wrote to Louvois:

'Seriously, my Lord, the King ought to give some thought to establishing his "meadow square". This profusion of friendly and hostile forts, mixed up with one another, does not please me at all. You are obliged to maintain three for the sake of one. . . . For this reason . . . believe me, my Lord, you should always preach the squaring, not of the circle but of the meadow.'

There is no mention in this passage of *historical* boundaries or of a more or less ideal geographical plan; it is the voice of necessity which counsels the building of an edifice of assured security, a 'square' solidly based.

However, this slow development of the outline of France's frontiers towards a more stable pattern was connected with an immense group of diplomatic problems raised by the relations of France with the other political powers in the world. Patriotism does not imply simply a material and spiritual inheritance, it also involves awareness of the exact place of that inheritance in the vastness of the universe. In Old France the structure of the State left the central government enough independence for judgement on the higher claims governing relations with distant or neighbouring States to be finally decided by the competent authority. The people as a whole might indulge in instinctive phobias, in habitual hatreds or, on the other hand, in unreasoned infatuations for foreign nations; they could scarcely be aware of the complicated questions of high policy which must guide a State in its alliances.

In the seventeenth century diplomatic relations between powers

assumed a certain regularity that they had not hitherto known, and there is one striking feature to be found in the instructions given to French ambassadors at the time: aloofness from all passion, the refusal to acknowledge any feeling of affection or hatred for a particular people, a fidelity to the most empirical of wisdom, as well as the flexibility and the variety of the alliances which were always dictated by the sole consideration of the *interest of France*. Not that the policy was Machiavellian; the rules of justice and honour were constantly observed (as will later appear, a high concern for religious crusade was often mingled with concern for the safety of the earthly city). But political alliances were never concluded from motives of passion or out of ossified loyalty to some friendship or enmity that was deemed traditional. The solid realism with which the relations of France with her neighbours were envisaged at the time is exemplified in the following passage from the instructions given to the Count of Stainville in 1756: 'It is important for us . . . to retain the princes of the Empire within our system by protecting them rather than by subsidizing them; in general it would be desirable for them all to be dependent upon us through their needs; but it will always be perilous to make our system depend upon their gratitude.' Here can be seen the justified mistrust of human nature that has already been referred to.

But the most striking example of the living and wisely progressive character of the diplomacy of Old France is furnished by a scrutiny of the relationships between France and the House of Austria over a period of two hundred years. In the sixteenth century that power seemed to menace the independence and the very life of France; every effort was made to resist it. With the passage of time the respective strength of the two States changed and the French Government modified too its system of alliances. These are the instructions given in 1750 to the Marquis of Hautefort, the representative of France in Vienna: 'The King is in no wise affected by the old distrust which ever since the reign of the Emperor Charles V has caused the House of Austria to be considered as a dangerous and implacable rival of the House of France: enmity between these two powers must no longer be a guiding principle of policy.' And then in 1757 the Count of Stainville was given instructions on the same matter before his departure for Austria:

'By his close union with the Court of Vienna, it may be said that the King has altered the political system of Europe, but it would be wrong to think that he had altered the policy of France. The political aims of the Crown are and always will be to play the high role in Europe that befits its great age, its dignity and its greatness, to cast down any power which might attempt to rise superior to it, whether by seeking to usurp its possessions or by arrogating to itself an unjustified pre-eminence or else by trying to rob it of its influence and credit in general affairs.'

What is the justification for the new principle of an alliance with Austria, formerly an implacable enemy? Simply necessity. Circumstances having changed, wisdom demands that the attitude of France change too.

Then there occurred a series of events in the light of which the interests of France and Austria were identical. In 1763 the coalition of Prussia and Russia menaced Poland and Turkey:

'The interests of France and Austria are essentially the same in this respect' (so we read in an instruction given to the French envoy Durand in 1770): 'to maintain the independence of Poland and to contain the ambition of Russia and dam the overflow of its power are two points of which the two courts have long since recognized the utility and the necessity.'

However, time was still passing: and during the reign of Louis XVI a new development occurred when it seemed that Austria was about to make use of the French alliance as a mask for her own territorial ambitions. This could not be permitted: France broke off the alliance with Austria.

'There is reason to believe', wrote Vergennes in the instruction given in 1783 to the Marquis of Noailles, 'that his Majesty is causing displeasure to the Emperor because his steps directly tend to destroy or at least to shake the fabric of the plan for expansion which, to all appearances, is the sole object of the views and manifestations of His Imperial Majesty. But however attached the King may be to his alliance with the House of Austria and however sincere may be his friendship for Joseph II and his desire to gratify him, the justice, the dignity and the interest of His Majesty's crown must weight the balance.'

These lines summarize for us the reasons which inspired modifications in the diplomacy of old France: 'justice, dignity and the interest of the crown' were the major determining motives.

But the world is vast and the existence of the country of France was not bound up only with that of the States which were its nearest neighbours. It was part of the universe too and part in the first instance of a group of lords and people which was called the West and which had always offered a stubborn resistance to the menace of Asia. The Asiatic menace had from the earliest times been led by widely differing peoples: for that reason, here again, France did not maintain an undying hatred for a particular nation but opposed the one which, at the time, was in its turn making itself the spearhead of the Eastern assault on Europe. The Greeks of old had vanquished it at Plataea during their struggle with the Persians. From the victory over the Huns in the Catalonian Fields to Charles Martel's triumph over the ~~Arabs~~ and the counter-attack of the Crusades against the Turks, there is no break in the tradition: it was always France which set the example first for the defence of the West.

Times had greatly changed, however, since the Middle Ages. Some

historians give the sixteenth century as the date for the end of the Crusading spirit in Europe. It might be wise to examine the facts a little more closely and to separate in the crusading idea the purely religious motive from the element of high policy which was linked with what later became known as the Eastern Question. It is quite true that from the sixteenth century onwards Western States, having become more powerful, more unified and more defined, were always fighting amongst themselves and that they had to think primarily of the preservation of their local frontiers: it is entirely false to suggest that European civilization was ever for a moment capable of showing disregard for the problems raised by the manoeuvres of Asiatic powers. It is equally false to maintain that after the sixteenth century the Kings of France never again displayed any concern, when choosing their alliances, for the defence of Christendom. In this connection, Francis I's celebrated gift of a ring to the Sultan Suliman is generally quoted as a sign of the change in the times. But it must not be forgotten that all the agreements that the Kings of France consented to make with the Infidel in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were of an extremely short-lived character, that the kings resigned themselves to agreement only at moments when the very existence of their land was in deadly peril. When the Turkish danger once again took the form of a heavy attack on Europe the Kings of France immediately resumed their role as leaders of the Crusade. Francis I had never concluded a true alliance with the Sultan; Henry II was the first to resign himself to it, but an earlier chapter has already shown that the violence of the Wars of Religion quickly led him to return to his 'Most Christian' attitude. Similarly Richelieu, so willing an ally of the Protestant princes in his struggle against Austria, never at any time agreed to a general pact with the Huguenots, for he intended that all his agreements with the opponents of his own faith should be characterized by expediency and not by principle.

The French kings could never bring themselves to conclude true and enduring alliances with the Infidel, and their fundamental feeling on the matter was again evidenced in the reign of Louis XV. In 1733 the Marquis of Villeneuve, who had been charged by the Grand Vizier to propose to the King of France an alliance (the Turks making of this alliance the absolute condition of their aid in the War of the Polish Succession), wrote to Versailles: 'I know how contrary such a plan is to the sentiments of a prince as devout as His Majesty; I am also aware that only the authority of justice and absolute necessity can justify an alliance with the Infidel.' The king's Council, which was at that time dominated by the views of Cardinal de Fleury, rejected Villeneuve's proposal and refused to come to an agreement with the Sultan. Moreover, Francis I too had dreamed of a crusade, and he was furious when he saw the Emperor occupying his place as leader of Christian Europe. However,

the extremely precarious situation of France, which was being strangled at the time by the ambition of the Emperor Charles V, compelled him to adopt an attitude calculated primarily to safeguard the very existence of the realm.

Then the Turks suddenly and violently resumed their assault on Europe. Almost all Hungary was invaded and, in 1664, Hungary, Moravia and Silesia were laid waste. As in the Middle Ages the lands of Germany became once again the marches of Christendom: the bells in every German church rang every day at noon, by order of the Diet, to call the inhabitants to pray to God to preserve their land from the Turkish peril.

What was the King of France to do? The House of Austria was then his greatest enemy: he hesitated to declare himself the adversary of the Sultan, who might be useful to him, but he did not wish to permit the Emperor to head the Christian League that the Pope was trying to form in Europe. To avoid the difficulty, he decided to make war against the Infidel in his capacity as a member of the Rhine League, as protector of the German princes threatened by the Turks. The battle which took place on the banks of the Raba, near the monastery of St. Gothard, gave rise to deeds of valour on the part of the French which finally swayed the outcome. It was on this occasion that Louis XIV had struck and widely distributed in Germany among the princes he patronized a medal which bore the legend *Germania servata*. It is interesting to compare this with the legend that the same king was to have engraved towards the end of the century on the coins commemorating the total annexation of Alsace by France: *Clausa Germanis Gallia*. In his anxiety both to close France completely to the Germans and to preserve the Germans from conquest by Asia, Louis here provided as perfect an example as that given by St. Louis with respect to the hierarchy of duties involved in preserving both the land and the soul of the country and in giving that country its rightful place in the different categories of the universe.

— We must not allow ourselves to be deceived by appearances. We must admit the propagandist aims of Louis XIV when he elaborated the inscriptions quoted, but his policy with its vast designs could widen its scope in this way only because of the preponderance of France in Europe at the time. In the seventeenth century France was not only the repository of civilization but also the most coherent, most wealthy and most populated of States (France had more than twenty million inhabitants, Austria between twelve and thirteen million, England between eight and nine million, Russia ten million). This table of the forces opposed sheds a great deal of light on the plans adopted by Louis XIV: the realist Kings of France entertained only those projects that were in harmony with their capacities. The Crusading idea was retained by them, but they

showed a wise concern for their strength and they also took care to ensure that no greedy opponent might make use of the religious pretext to slake his conqueror's thirst. This is the same concern with realities that we have already noticed in studying the religious conflicts of the sixteenth century: the conciliation of the exigencies of *primum vivere* with those of the City of God.

Richelieu's policy is just as instructive on this issue as that of the last of the Valois. In spite of all that has been said the great Cardinal was alive to higher political aims than the mere conquest of 'natural boundaries'. His confidant, collaborator and friend, Father Joseph, pursued but one end: the pacification of Christendom as a prelude to the union of Christian nations against the Infidel. In his view two obstacles stood in the way of such a pacification: the Protestants and the House of Austria. By dividing Europe they rendered her impotent in face of the Turkish peril. Yet neither the Cardinal nor his companion ever allowed himself to be diverted from the most pressing political problems to give instant effect to the vision which they both cherished. Papal emissaries were constantly arriving in the attempt to draw them into alliances inspired by purely spiritual considerations. One day the Cardinal replied to Father Hyacinthe de Casal that it was his enemies who prevented him from bearing aid to the City of God: let the Spaniards first evacuate Valtellina and the Palatinate, then France would do great deeds for Christendom! Whereupon the envoys of the Holy See fulminated and Father Joseph, a Crusader at heart, was accused of being a disciple of Machiavelli. In reality the French Government wanted neither to be duped by certain proposals for a Crusade nor to treat them lightly, for they called to mind the exigencies entailed in the preservation of the spiritual inheritance of the country.

It would seem that in fact the French monarchy had, between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, adopted in turn three attitudes towards the idea of a European crusade. At times when the land was faced with the urgent needs of a *vital* struggle every means of preservation was called into action, and temporary union with the enemies of the faith was accepted if it helped in the defence of the essentials. In periods of great political power France defended her territory and served her civilization at the same time: Louis XIV did so at the outset of his reign. Finally, it would seem that Old France most frequently effected a reconciliation between the immediate necessities of life and the requirements of the fight for the spiritual City by arranging that the ~~crusade should~~ be fought by the States most threatened by the Asiatic peril. Thus France often incited the Emperor into war with the Infidel, which had the advantage both of preserving her from Austrian ambition and of saving Europe from the threats of the Orient. 'If the Emperor wishes to add to his greatness and not to leave his troops idle'—so run

the instructions sent to a French ambassador—'he should busy them with waging war against the Turks; it is against the Infidel that conquest should be directed, at their expense that his officers and soldiers who ardently desire this war should be employed.' Such skilful encouragement to encumbering neighbours is frequently repeated in the Instructions given to French envoys in Austria.

It appears to provide convincing added proof of the ease with which in modern times the kings of France reconciled national with universal interest in their policies and reconciled the patriotism of St. Louis with the patriotism of Machiavelli.

CHAPTER XV

'L'ÉTAT, C'EST MOI'

PRECEDING chapters have given sufficient proof that from the fifteenth century onwards the idea of France was clearly conceived and given expression by the majority of writers. In the seventeenth century, however, the ideas formulated by the writers and jurists of the sixteenth century were to materialize. French civilization, attaining its highest peak, was at the same time to create something having universal validity. France has best succeeded in identifying herself with the human race when she has achieved consciousness of her own being: thus there was to be under Louis XIV a repetition of the thirteenth-century miracle, by which St. Louis' realm, in defining its own essential characteristics, discovered the synthesis of Western civilization.

At the height of the great king's reign Bossuet uttered these words: 'Under Louis XIV, France learnt to know herself.' It is a fact that the literature of the period mirrored the climate of opinion of the whole land, recognizing the reflection of its own essential genius in the perfect models of it that writers and artists offered to the world: perpetual curiosity disciplined by reason, search for beauty within the framework of order, pursuit of a new grandeur in conformity with tradition.

Versailles offers a true conspectus of seventeenth-century France. It did not require the passage of time for France to see herself mirrored in this poem in stone, with balanced masses and sober lines, set amidst the magnificence of formal gardens, of playing fountains, of statues and colonnades of trees. This majestic aggregate wherein Nature was constrained to wed her scenes to the work of man, wherein the symbol of legend mingled with the decisions of wisdom, wherein fantasy and ~~miracle~~ miracle trod their measure to the tune of an overriding order, wherein all forms of art (even naïveté, repetition, copy and pastiche) were blended and moulded into a happy synthesis, this truly represented the country's civilization acclaiming its victorious king.

Contemporary pride and the conception of French greatness can be seen equally well in the work of jurists as in that of chroniclers, in the writings of poets and in the sermons of the clergy, in dedications on monuments and in inscriptions on coins, in the correspondence of ministers, marshals, countryfolk and sea-captains. Awareness of belonging to a common country was universal at that time in France, and there were many affirmations too of acquaintance with the individual characteristics of the French community. The cohesion of the entire people

was visible and real; undeniably a *nation* existed because the country was solidly constructed. Louis XIV said of the crossing of the Rhine: 'I was present at the crossing, which was bold, vigorous and brought glory to the nation.' After Denain the king exclaimed: 'My troops displayed a courage that I cannot adequately praise; in it I recognized the whole valour of the nation.' At the most tragic moment of the War of the Spanish Succession, by means of a letter read at the Sunday sermon in all parishes, Louis XIV addressed his people, invoking justice and the honour of France. 'Its success was all that had been hoped', said Saint-Simon; 'there was a unanimous cry of indignation and a call for vengeance; on all sides men offered all their goods for the prosecution of the war and made other similar extreme proposals to display their zeal.'

As in the thirteenth century, there was a definition of the true coherent theory of patriotism, its legitimacy and the form it assumed within the framework of French civilization. Corneille, who was pre-eminently the national poet of his day, has left us many fine lines on the subject. Those in *Horace* are not relevant since they deal with a Roman conception of country which is not always identical with the conception elaborated by French civilization. But the idea of civic duties makes its appearance in many other plays. In *Médée*, Jason prides himself that:

'Il n'a jamais trahi son père ni sa ville.'
(Act II, Sc. 2.)

The *Cid*, seeking death in his despair, is exhorted in the following terms:

'Il n'est pas temps encor de chercher le trépas,
Ton Prince et ton pays ont besoin de ton bras.'
(Act IV, Sc. 1.)

To Chimène, seeking vengeance on Rodrigue, the Infanta addresses the reproach:

'Tu poursuis en sa mort la ruine publique
Quoi! pour venger un père, est-il jamais permis
De livrer sa patrie aux mains des ennemis!'
(Act IV, Sc. 4.)

These lines, and many others that could be quoted from the works of the time,¹ recognize that there exist exceedingly strong natural bonds

¹ 'Mais bientôt, rappelant sa cruelle industrie,
Il me représenta l'honneur et la patrie. . .'

Ah, seigneur est-ce ainsi que votre âme attendrie
Plaint le malheur des Grecs et chérit la patrie?
RACINE, *Iphigénie*.

Quoi, lorsque vous voyez périr votre patrie
Pour quelque chose, Esther, vous comptez votre vie?"

which link a man with the land of his forbears and from which ensue imperative duties. The contemporary notion of patriotism was most completely expressed by Bossuet, who defined its characteristics and its justification. In accordance with the customs of the clergy from the Middle Ages onwards, it was primarily upon the teaching of Scripture rather than upon Roman tradition that the prelate sought a rational foundation for the patrimony to which natural law already gave its encouragement.

In his *Politique tirée de l'Ecriture Sainte* Bossuet first studies the most instinctive and primitive bases of patriotism:

'Human society requires us to love the land in which we live together; we look upon it as our common mother and nurse, we become attached to it and this unites us. This is what the Romans called *caritas patrii soli*, love of country, and they regarded it as a link between men. Men do in fact feel linked by some powerful tie, when they reflect that the earth which bore and nourished them in their life will receive them into its bosom when they are dead: "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge", said Ruth to Naomi, her mother-in-law, "thy people shall be my people . . . where thou diest, will I die and there will I be buried."'

*'Demain quand le soleil rallumera le jour,
Contente de périr s'il faut que je périsse,
J'irai pour mon pays m'offrir en sacrifice.'*

RACINE, *Esther*.

*'Écoute, grand héros, la voix de ta patrie,
C'est elle que tu vois, c'est elle qui te prie.
(Scudéry, Discours de la France à Mgr. Le Cardinal Duc
de Richelieu après son retour de Nancy. Paris, 1637.)*

*'Est-ce ainsi que votre âme aux périls aguerrie
Soutient sur ces remparts l'honneur et la patrie?'*

(BOILEAU.)

The Abbé de Marolles wrote in his memoirs: 'A man should have a high esteem for the place of his birth, that he be moved to perform noble deeds for its glory that may serve as examples to posterity. Esteem and love for our native country should never be out of our minds; a man must defend the soil of his country with courage and with arms; it is sweet and honourable to die for one's native country.'

Corneille, about to undertake his translation of the *Imitation of Christ*, discussed the question of the authorship of this immortal work and said he hoped it was the work of the Frenchman Jean Gerson: 'Love of country', he said, 'would make me willingly agree.' In the prologue to the *Toison d'or*, Corneille, in his old age, showed his pride in his nation by his glorification of Louis XIV after the Treaty of the Pyrenees: 'It is good that France should always be the victor.'

Mme. de Motteville, discussing in her *Mémoires* the victory of Nordlingen, wrote: 'The emotion that love of country arouses in the heart always shows itself on such occasions.'

Vauhan in *Mes oisivetés*, refers to the affection which binds him to his dear country.

Colbert's device was '*Pro rege saepe, pro patria semper*'.

Mme. de Sévigné, having had news from her son who was with the armies, wrote: 'The Baron writes to me that he thinks that in spite of all their diligence, they will not arrive soon enough. God grant it be so! I crave my country's forgiveness for the wish' (1828 edn., v, p. 399).

Bossuet continues:

'[Patriotism] is a feeling natural to all peoples. Themistocles, the Athenian, was banished from his country as a traitor; he plotted its ruin with the King of the Persians, to whom he had delivered himself, and nevertheless, as he lay dying . . . he commanded his friends to bear his bones into Attica; there to give them secret burial, since the rigour of the public decrees did not permit it to be done otherwise. When death approaches, when reason returns and vengeance fades, love of country awakens again in the heart. Themistocles thought to propitiate his country and to be recalled from exile after his death; and as men said in those days, he thought that the earth would lie gently and lightly upon his bones.'

At the beginning of his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, Bossuet, tracing the principle of each nation back to God, considers patriotism as a sacred obligation. The *Histoire des variations des Églises Protestantes* begins by reproaching the Huguenots for their rebellion against their land and its civilization: 'I shall discover unto you that your Reform is not Christian, since it is faithless to its Princes and to its Country.' (Here is once again to be seen the tradition of the Roman Church which from the beginning had been based upon the saying of Christ, 'Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's', and upon Saint Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*: devotion to the city of this world is a fundamental duty and is commanded by the natural order itself.) Bossuet also rebukes Pastor Junien for substituting the criticism of free inquiry for certain traditional loyalties which are in fact essential parts of the spiritual legacy of man's ancestors:

'He no longer remembers even that he is a Frenchman: he talks disdainfully to us of the Salic Law, whether true, he says, or so called, just like a man come from the Indies or from Malabar: so lost is he to all memory of what is most deeply graven in the heart of every Frenchman since the very beginning of the nation.'

The indignation of Bossuet may seem somewhat naïve, it is true, but it certainly symbolizes his absolute devotion to the tradition of a common patrimony.

It is in his *Oraison de Michel le Tellier* that he most admires the virtue of patriotism, seeking to show that Christ himself praised it:

'Could he make to God a finer sacrifice than to offer him a soul free from the iniquity of his age and devoted to his ruler and his country? Jesus has given us the example: even the Jews recognized Him as so good a citizen that they thought they could not recommend the centurion to Him in a better way than by saying to our Saviour: "He loves our nation." Did Jeremiah shed more tears than He over the ruins of this country? What did the merciful Saviour not do to ward off evil from His people? Loyal to prince and to country, He did not fear to excite the envy of the Pharisees by defending the right of Caesar: and when He died for us on Calvary, He desired that the dearest of His Apostles should know that He died especially for "His nation".'

For Bossuet as for St. Thomas, patriotism springs from natural law and is in accordance with the truths of Revelation. The annals of mankind too teach him the virtue of the idea: in his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, studying the causes of the greatness and the decline of the Romans, he concludes that they were great so long as love of country dwelt in their hearts and that they degenerated as they lost that feeling.

The assurance and serenity of Bossuet's orthodox views on this subject provide a curious contrast with the fevered inquiry and the subtle paradoxes of a writer like Pascal. The two authors present us with the two extreme poles of the seventeenth-century French attitude to patriotism. For Pascal the idea, in its absolute form, is completely devoid of logic, and he satirizes the consequences which result from it in this way:

'Why do you kill me?—Well, do you not dwell on the other side of the water? If, my friend, you dwell on this side, I should be but a murderer and it would be unjust to kill you in this way; since, however, you live on the other side, I am a brave man and what I do is just.'

In another paragraph in the *Pensées* he says:

'Can there be anything more amusing than that a man has a right to kill me because he dwells on the other side of the water, and because his prince has a quarrel with mine, although I have none with him? . . . *Veri juris*. We no longer have any: if there were any amongst us, we should not hold it a just rule for each to follow the customs of his native country.'

This first sceptical aspect of Pascal's thought is, however, no more than a stage on the way to a juster notion, to a wider search after order in the world. Pascal then makes a distinction between the abstract realm where pure reason moves and has its being and the realm of man with its unalterable laws. It is possible that patriotism may appear illogical in theory, in fact it is justified by the inescapable necessities imposed by the order of the universe. And Pascal in the *Pensées* goes on to say: 'It is ~~just that~~ what is just be obeyed: it is necessary that what is strongest be obeyed: force without justice is tyrannical. . . . *Therefore justice and force must go hand in hand.*' Pascal is here clearly conscious of the realities that confront the organization of human societies, and while he pays homage to Machiavelli he also corrects him—this, as we have already seen, is one of the most typical aspects of the political wisdom of Old France.

In addition to literature there is the whole body of law regulating life in France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to show the continued triumph of the idea of France, parallel with the advance of the king's sovereignty, throughout the varying provinces. Immediately after the end of the Hundred Years War the central government had ordered an official record to be made of all customs throughout France,

but this record began to make headway only after the letters delivered by the king at Moulins in 1497. It was continued without respite until its completion in 1583. Some commentators regretted that customs were not permitted to interact naturally one upon another, so that of themselves they might create a common code of custom law. Others, however, considered that royal authority could replace such a spontaneous movement towards unification and could more speedily and efficiently create a single code, in conformity with old traditions but modified in part in accordance with the promptings of natural equity and reason. In any event, for sixteenth-century lawyers this codification of custom was bound up with their desire for the greater glory of France. Commenting upon the collections of law established in his own day, Charles du Moulin composed an *Oratio de concordia et unione consuetudinem Franciae*. Its very title bears witness to some awareness of the idea of France.

Similarly, from the fifteenth century onwards, a 'fundamental law' of the realm was gradually defined: it was the idea that the crown domain was inalienable – an extremely important point for our theme. The territory of the mother-country is no longer simply the feudal property of the supreme baron; it belongs to the entire nation and the king is but its principal warden. It was apparently only from the reign of Charles VI onwards that the king on the day of his coronation took the oath to preserve inviolate the rights of the crown of France.² Another ordinance clearly bears witness to the definite victory won in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the idea of unity over medieval principles. By the Edict of Villers-Cotterets of 1529, Francis I laid down that the French language should henceforth be used, in place of Latin, for official deeds, processes and judgements. In 1629, during the reign of Louis XIII, the *Code Michaud* was to extend this measure to the registration of religious rites: baptism, marriage, burial.

All these laws, moreover, bear witness to the fact that the idea of France slowly progressed along with the victory of the sovereign's rule only as the Roman principle of unity triumphed over feudal anarchy and partition. The making of France was now complete, in obedience to the ancient counsel of the conquerors of old. But now that she had become truly herself, that she possessed all the characteristics of a clearly defined moral and spiritual inheritance, it is easy to see in what free and original fashion she had followed the precepts of Rome.

Her eternal debt to the wisdom of Rome lay in knowledge of the principles essential to the life of prosperous human societies. Within this transcending framework were integrated and blended the vast contribu-

² The exact form of the oath reads: '*Et superioritatem, jura et nobilitates coronae Franciae inviolabiliter custodiam et illa nec transportabo nec alienabo.*'

tion of Christian civilization and the immense labours of many generations ceaselessly welding the wisdom of their forbears with their own discoveries and with the many new customs suggested by the peoples that invasion or travel brought within the realm. Out of this blending and this labour there arose a conception of the State absolutely new and so profoundly 'human' that it too was able to furnish an example to the universe. 'You will never become a country unless you possess a well-ordered State', was the message Caesar brought to Gaul. His prophecy was confirmed by the feudal partitioning born of six centuries of anarchy after the Roman Peace was ended. But in the seventeenth century France was able to turn towards Rome with the words:

'I have become a country, but I have outstripped your wisdom; the State you forged served for the pacification of men, but it sometimes offended the gods. You desired your country to annex heaven and earth, to subjugate both body and soul. I have left Olympus to the Olympians, and the more I have demanded the adhesion of my sons the more have I respected in them that in their being which aspires to things greater than the universe.'

The moment when it reached its highest point seems the best at which to examine briefly the form of the State which was for centuries the frame of France and which she had seen gradually moulding itself in consonance with the nature of her civilization. A detailed analysis does not fall within the scope of this work. (Moreover, jurists would no doubt remind us that government by the Crown in France from the coming of the Capetians to the fall of the monarchy underwent notable modifications.) In consequence, we shall here consider only the vital principles which remained identical for six centuries, and which allow us to trace the characteristics which are permanent in the structure of the French community.

The first problem which confronts us is that of the relationship between Church and State. Pagan Rome, city of Caesar and City of God, had confused the two homelands; Christian Rome had distinguished them. The Franks, charged in the person of Charlemagne with the setting up of Western Christendom, had renewed the confusion of the two worlds. But France, the country born of the efforts of the Capetians, protested against the establishment of a clerical dictatorship. The problem was not a simple one, however, for the whole burden of the periods of feudal anarchy remained and with it the survivals from the many centuries during which the Church assumed unaided the tasks of civilization. On the other hand, Christian doctrine taught that, although the Church had no direct power over the State, it yet possessed indirect power in the sovereignty it reserved to itself over the souls of men. The Most Christian king, the King of France, eldest son of the

Church, acknowledged this religious obligation, but it could not but appear to him on occasion as a mask for the intrusion of ecclesiastical authority into the realm of his own authority. There were cases when the rights of both seemed definite: the king rigidly maintained his independence, Rome did not insist and peace was soon restored between the Apostolic See and the Most Christian king. Other cases presented more complicated features: the court of Rome levied tithes in France, the king took umbrage at the financial greed of the Holy See and protested. When, however, he himself had need of money he forgot the separation of powers and claimed the right to dip deep into ecclesiastical coffers! There were still more difficult cases: the king would not acknowledge the authority of the Pope to free, in certain circumstances, his subjects from their oath of fidelity, especially when this measure, coinciding with an enemy attack upon his kingdom, took the form of an alliance with the enemy, of an attack on the cohesion of the land. How were the powers to be defined? The duty of defending one's native country was an obligation in natural law, and the king of France, in virtue of his office, was the true guardian of that obligation. In difficult situations it was inevitable that each of the adversaries should overstep his rights: the king never went so far as open schism; he negotiated, he equivocated, he bowed his head, but he never yielded his primordial duty to defend the interests of the earthly city.

In this matter of national independence of Rome, known as Gallicanism, the king was fundamentally less intransigent than his lawyers showed themselves. They were true descendants of men like Pierre Flote and Nogaret: the least semblance of Roman authoritarianism made them start up, ready to do battle in the name of national independence. Their susceptibilities, moreover, found supporting arguments which were the more vigorous because, although the primacy of Rome had been traditionally recognized from the earliest Christian era, it was not proclaimed as a dogma until the nineteenth century. For this reason, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century all protestations by the *Parlements* against the sovereignty of Rome took the same form: to the autocracy of the Pope was opposed the threat of the power of conciliar assemblies. At the time of the Great Schism the Council of Constance, in which French prelates were dominant, had proclaimed a large degree of independence for the bishops as against the See of Rome and the superiority of the Ecumenical Council over the Pope. Jean Gerson and Pierre d'Ailly had been particularly outstanding in this Council. When Louis XII was engaged in his struggle with Julius II, some French cardinals attempted to summon a Council at Pisa in opposition to the Pope. As during the time of Nogaret and Boniface VIII France announced her wish to reform the Church by driving out an unworthy Pontiff. In place of Rome, France assumed the title of the

model for Christendom. (This form of national pride is indeed, as we have seen, to be observed from the sixteenth century.) A campaign of literary satire and a flood of very disrespectful caricatures directed against the Pope made their appearance in France at the time.

The Gallicanism of the *Parlements* grew as time passed, and it proved to be animated more by a punctilious concern with national pride than by a desire to define justly the rights of the Church and those of the State. On the contrary, it threw off the shackles of Rome the better to impose upon French clergy the weight of royal absolutism, to increase the rights of the State over the national Church. Sixteenth-century lawyers retained the same intransigent attitude: their fear of provoking schism was much less than the king's: the tone they adopted towards Rome was more wounding than proud. In this connection Pierre Pithou was to recall the long tradition of his native country and 'the things that our ancestors practised rather than wrote'. In his opinion they constituted a kind of system of custom law that tended to limit any Papal prerogative in France: the French monarchy could summon national and provincial Councils and might even guide them in the elaboration of disciplinary canons. No Papal Bull could be admitted into the realm until the sovereign had first examined it, and so on. France enjoyed a privileged position in Christendom.

Then, however, the Lateran Council vigorously affirmed Papal supremacy, and Machiavelli made the following commentary on this important act: 'There was a time when the meanest of barons considered he had the right to despise the power of the Pope; today it commands the respect *even of the King of France*.' In spite of this, French jurists remained as uncompromising in their passion for independence. An earlier chapter has shown how the pride of the *Parlements* led them to support Henry IV when Rome excommunicated him. There was still a very keen sense of the privileges conferred on France by her title of ~~Eldest~~ *Eldest Daughter of the Church*: 'The Kings of France', wrote André Duchesne in 1609,³ 'were so pleasing unto God that He chose them to become His lieutenants on earth.' The pamphleteer Jérôme Bignon⁴ demonstrated that the Kings of France owed their realm to God and to their sword alone. (This, it is to be remembered, had been one of the forms assumed by the protests of Philip the Fair's lawyers against the Pope's efforts to dominate the West.) In 1614 the Estates General similarly proclaimed that France was immediately dependent only on God.

Until the very end of the *Ancien Régime* the protests of the *Parlements* against Rome were to remain the same. The limits of this subject

³ ANDRÉ DUCHESNE, *Antiquités et recherches de la grandeur et de la majesté des roys de France*. Paris, 1609.

⁴ *De l'excellence des rois et du royaume de France*.

allow no more than a brief summary of them, but any history of French patriotism must perforce emphasize the centuries-long violence of these manifestations of national independence in a country that was Christian amongst Christians. There are many explanations of the fact: a very old heaven, of anti-clericalism, tinged with satire, was always to be observed in the land where the *Fabliaux* originated, and it was moreover no enemy of profound faith; mistrust of Roman ambitions to dominate the West was similarly traditional after the campaign waged by Philip the Fair's lawyers, during which the temerity of France had scandalized Christendom. This in fact represents a constant manifestation of men's awareness of France as their native country; it was just as keen as that which unceasingly proclaimed France's independence of the Empire. Finally, it must not be forgotten that the king often made skilful use of the verbal temerity of his jurists to frighten Rome with the threat of a schism and so to bring her to a conciliatory attitude which was useful to him in discussions concerning his rights over the clergy in France.

The clergy too had fairly consistently manifested an attitude of independence towards the Holy See, of which it was none the less, in the realm of dogma, the faithful servant. During the course of the Hundred Years War the clerics of the University of Paris formulated a Gallicanism based upon propositions that were clearly schismatic. During the Wars of Religion, the bishops, upholding Henry IV, angrily greeted the Bulls which freed the subjects of the king from their obedience to him. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Richelieu, invested though he was with the Roman purple, entrusted the Jesuit Pierre Marca with the task of drawing up a semi-official account of the relations between the Holy See and the Gallican Church. This was the *De Concordiâ*, in which there is a restatement of the privileges peculiar to the Kings of France out of all Christendom: 'The Kings of France enjoy particular privileges in ecclesiastical matters on account of their singular merits.' Finally, the great explosion of ecclesiastical Gallicanism during the reign of Louis XIV was to provide a fairly exact synthesis of the various tendencies that had been manifest in France during the preceding centuries. It must, however, be noted that in the famous speech he made at the opening of the Assembly of the French prelates Bossuet outlined a Gallicanism that was not exaggerated (it remained, moreover, a matter for individual judgement until the Vatican Council). Therein, he made it clear that Christian kingdoms must not throw off the yoke of Rome.

In this way, after each one of the campaigns for independence waged against the Holy See, both king and clergy returned to their traditional devotion to the Successor of St. Peter and drew away from the total independence often recommended by the *Parlements* in revolt. Out of these battles and rebellions there yet took shape a doctrine of some

constancy that is of direct interest to our subject. Although there is no need to examine in detail the struggle between Pope and king on, for example, their respective rights over ecclesiastical property, it can be clearly seen that this resulted from the confusion set up in the early Middle Ages between the rights of the Church and those of the State. The Capetians had already performed a useful service by forbidding the interference of ecclesiastical authority in political affairs (although they were willing to respect the teaching of the Church in the form they gave to their power and to their administration). However, during the course of the *Ancien Régime*, the Papacy and the monarchy, in seeking to establish precise legal distinctions in the matter of finance and manorial tenure, had acted under the pressure of events with too much petulance and opportunism ever to arrive at anything more than provisional solutions. (Such were the various 'Pragmatic Sanctions,' 'Concordats' and so on.) France was here confronted with the most difficult of the questions that Feudalism had bequeathed to her; so great was the confusion between the authority of the Church and that of the State that she could not discover a course of behaviour which would do away with conflicts. However, she was able to give to Christian Europe the best of examples by making a distinction between her suspicion of Roman ambitions for power and her fidelity to the spiritual authority of orthodoxy. When, in the sixteenth century, Western Christendom suffered the assault of Lutheran theory, in the midst of countries won over to Protestantism, France did all she could to retain her title of eldest Daughter of the Church. This permits us to see that Gallicanism, taken as a whole, and in spite of much excess, was a manifestation of feeling for country which generally recognized the subordination of country to higher spiritual principles. None the less it unfailingly showed too that in practice the safety of the earthly city provides a justification for certain refusals and the adoption of certain safeguards against a power which, ~~charged~~ with purely spiritual duties and working on the plane of the eternal, may well be unaware of the precise needs contingent upon the manning of the ramparts. Deplorable excess in speech or in writing must not be allowed to obscure the fundamental rightness of certain of the protests made by French kings against Rome.

The relations between the earthly city and the City of God were therefore both complex and clear in the France built by Capetian labours. What harmony was to be found there between the concepts of country and humanity? What was the significance of the term *foreigner*?

In pagan Rome it was the *jus sanguinis* which determined who was foreign; in feudal law it was the *jus soli*, which is understandable since the whole political organization of the times was bound up with land. The feudal conception was initially to prevail in Old France. Provincial

separatism was the first form assumed by the distinction between native and foreigner; loyalty to different lords was the principal barrier between regions and peoples. It was this which, at the outset of the Hundred Years War, raised town and village against the English. In the sixteenth century the lawyer Bacquet defined for the whole of France a conception that was still impregnated with feudal habits: 'True natural Frenchmen are those born within the realm, land, territories and dominions under the sway of the King of France.' This implies the continued triumph of the notion of *jus soli*, but also and primarily the idea of loyalty to the king, who always represented the sum of the bonds linking each man to the land of his fathers.

From the sixteenth century, therefore, there had crystallized a theory of the rights of the sovereign over the persons of his subjects which recalled the ancient principles regulating the relations of the feudal lord with his vassals. Whoever he might be, the king's subject was not free to leave the realm without the authorization of the king. On leaving the realm the individual owning landed property lost his status as Frenchman and his prerogatives; his property was confiscated. In 1614 Louis XIII forbade lords and commons to leave to undertake foreign service. Louis XIV maintained the ban: 'You are well aware', Colbert wrote to Pomponne, concerning a few French sailors who had crossed into Holland, 'that the obligation towards his sovereign that every subject contracts at birth can be annulled only with the sovereign's consent.' This is still the feudal notion of allegiance to the lord. However, since the fourteenth century lawyers had been striving to accommodate the solutions given by French custom with Roman laws. As early as the seventeenth century Pothier was to write that 'children born in a foreign land of a French father who had not abandoned the hope of returning' were French. This was one step towards the *jus sanguinis* that the Revolution was to adopt.

What, however, chiefly differentiated the conception of ~~foreigner~~ current in Old France from present-day conceptions was not legal regulations more or less distinct from present-day legal customs, but rather a whole body of habits and customs, entirely alien from those created by the violent nationalisms to which we are now accustomed.

How can we understand today, for example, the composition of the armies of Old France with their preponderance of foreigners over Frenchmen? Armies today are first and foremost *peoples under arms*, rising against the foreigner like the embodiment of every individual hatred. On the other hand, the armies of Old France were primarily made up of bands of paid foreigners. Provided that these troops co-operated in the declared aim of defending the territory, no one imagined that they ought to be inspired by any patriotic sense: it was for the king who employed them to use them in the general interest. Such a conception

can obviously only be explained by the survival of habits of feudal loyalty: in that system the man fighting needed only to recognize the oath made to the lord leading him; respect for his plighted word was the sole criterion for him of the value of the cause he was defending.

Now as their prestige spread throughout Europe the kings of France found it increasingly easy to enroll bands of professional warriors whom the love of battle and the attraction of good pay did not render completely insensitive to the pride of serving a powerful master. The officers who raised these regiments abroad for the king of France displayed in the highest degree their zeal for service under him, without, however, manifesting any kind of contingent nationalism. (It is well known that the celebrated Maréchal de Saxe, who gained the greatest victories of Louis XV's reign, had first fought against the armies of Louis XIV.) Here we are in the presence of survivals of those medieval ideas of chivalry which gave expression to the concept of a warrior caste, knowing no national boundaries. It is at all events a fact that French armies during the *Ancien Régime* were always largely made up of soldiers belonging to the most diverse peoples.

Since the time of Philip-Augustus, who preferred to leave the inhabitants of his kingdom at their work and employ in war vagrants whom he attracted with the bait of generous pay, the Capetians had not changed their conception of protecting their subjects and safeguarding them from the perils of combat. Undoubtedly the development of the State had entailed the formation of a regular army, but this obliged only a small fraction of the country's inhabitants to set off for the wars. The tradition of cosmopolitan armies was in this way continued long after the Middle Ages. A chronicler tells us of the Great Companies of the Hundred Years War: 'There were English, Gascons, Hanoverians, Germans and other men amongst whom were many thieves and murderers.' From the sixteenth century onwards, although they ~~continued~~ to pay mercenaries, the kings of France borrowed regular troops from neighbouring sovereigns. After the Hundred Years War there were many Scots in France, for Scotland, not yet united with England, had continued to remain the ally of France. Flemish, Brabant, Spanish and Greek soldiers were also to be found in French armies. The Italians provided famous *condottieri* like the celebrated Trivulce of Francis I. Many Germans were enrolled, from the sixteenth century onwards, in the armies of Charles VIII, Louis XII and Francis I. They were generally levied by the many minor rulers who were the traditional allies of France against the Emperor. It was the famous Black bands (6,000 dreaded lansquenets belonging to the Duke of Guelders) who decided the eventual victory at Marignan. From the sixteenth century onwards, too, the Swiss were among the most faithful of the French king's soldiers, their loyalty so complete and absolute that it led to their

death, pike in hand, on the steps of the Tuileries in 1792, in obedience to their oath.

Richelieu maintained that the French were too ebullient for tiring guard or routine duties: he hired Hungarians, Italians and Spaniards to replace them. In the seventeenth century Hungarian Hussars, an Irish Brigade and many Swedes were enrolled. In the reign of Louis XV the Maréchal de Saxe recruited Turks, Croats, and Negroes. 'Everyone agrees', said a Swede, 'that in France war is carried to the highest pitch of perfection.' Louis XIV continued the tradition of his predecessors and when, in 1693, the Papal Nuncio congratulated him on his victory in Flanders, the king replied, according to Dangeau: 'In future, sir, my enemies will not, I think, be happy to find themselves faced by an army of Frenchmen, but I am wrong to say Frenchmen, I should say a *French army*, for mine is made up of various nationalities, who all conducted themselves equally well.'

But foreigners in Old France not only filled the ranks of the army, they played an important part in many national activities, and the attitude adopted toward them by the monarchy is extremely important for the history of the idea of France. It is a fact that, at all times, the French people has shown itself extremely welcoming to foreigners. Was this attitude the result of the particular geographical situation of France or the survival of a very ancient tradition come down from its far-off inhabitants? (Ancient writers have all remarked on the attraction exercised by the Celts on the foreigner and the traveller.) In any event, the attitude remained constant throughout the whole of the *Ancien Régime*. Yet the attitude of the king towards newcomers welcomed into the realm differed considerably from that of the people. In the first place, the French preferred to leave certain trades and industries to the foreigner: banking to the Lombards, Florentines, Germans and Dutch; maritime transport to the Hanseatic Germans, Spaniards, Portuguese and Dutch; mining to the Germans; the hotel industry largely to the Swiss...

In the second place, the kings, as well as regional and municipal authorities throughout France, sought principally to attract into France either specialized workers, whose skill might be useful for the education of the native population, or students who spread the renown of French schools throughout the world. The monarchy gave special protection to the latter: their usages and customs were respected, they were permitted to celebrate their own festivals. When, in the sixteenth century, every country adopted the custom of arresting foreigners residing within the realm when it went to war with the country of origin of those foreigners, students enjoyed extra-territorial rights. The kings also sought to retain in their land the most valiant of the soldiers and sailors they hired from abroad: privileges and honours were offered to their leaders, favours to the men.

All writers have noted this propensity of the French to welcome foreigners. If an embassy arrived from a far-off land, if there were a princely marriage which occasioned the festive gathering of many inhabitants of neighbouring countries, then the whole French people would be seized with an irresistible infatuation for the fashions, manners and even the language of the newcomers. It was against such exaggerations of the attitude that the kings of France sought to react.

In the sixteenth century naturalized foreigners were so numerous that a contemporary writer complained of the 'denationalization' of France. Many restraints and safeguards were then imposed by the monarchy for the protection of its subjects. Generally foreigners were initially gathered together in one spot, their behaviour was watched, and according to their conduct it was decided whether or not to keep them. Measures were taken against quarrelsome groups, against groups composed of unsatisfactory elements: Bohemians and gypsies were tracked down and hunted. After the Hundred Years War prohibitions were enacted against the English in the towns where they had been in control.

All these facts show one admirable aspect of patriotism in France. France appears as completely permeated by the Christian tradition, sinking national barriers in a wider concept of humanity. No foreigner was initially debarred from community with the French. Questions of race and language were completely scorned; the only barrier raised was a spiritual one; in order to become a Frenchman, a man had to be a Catholic.⁵ The idea of pagan Rome was thus still dominant: unify men by their minds *and* souls. And yet the most earthly wisdom was allied with their sublime conception: the King of France protected his heritage and his people; charity did not become utopianism, the friendly gesture was no deceitful act. A member of the human race, the master of France was primarily the protector of those nearest to him: the hierarchy of the two cities was carefully respected.

It is moreover remarkable that, in the question of the attitude to be adopted towards foreigners, as in many another manifestation of the sense of country, the central government was often alone in retaining the notion of the common well-being. Certain classes of society remained faithful to the feudal conception. The treachery of Condé and Turenne in the middle of the seventeenth century, the rising of the great feudal powers in the Fronde, are examples showing that the great nobility was still almost entirely unaware of the idea of France. What an immense benefit to the land was the existence, then, of an independent government, dominating the contradictory passions of its peoples! For it was able to employ them in the interests of the general good instead of suppressing them. All that was dangerous in the feudal passion

⁵ Throughout the *Ancien Régime* the Jews were, as a result of this concept, catered for by special ordinances.

for war, the pride of tenacious independence, the taste for deeds of valour that were sometimes reckless, provided also a magnificent reservoir of energy and also formed part of some of the most dazzling pages in the ancestral spiritual legacy. The king thus neutralized the anarchic exaggerations of the nobility by offering them positions of honour directing his armies and by demanding of them only feudal allegiance. They wanted nobility, the solid burgesses of the towns, the people of cities and fields, were much more closely in touch with the realities of the common patrimony. But more often than not they too lacked any conception of the general interest. To read the *Livres de raison* of Old France and, fingering the pages of that vast anthology of austere accounts, to trace the history of so much obscure labour, of so many lives limited by the horizons of their own land, and by the joys and misfortunes of their own family; to read these accounts of grief and pleasure, of birth and death, of slowly accumulated possessions and patiently tended crafts—to do this is to realize how powerful were the family dynasties spread throughout the land, how widely their traditions differed and how greatly their own history, or else their local and regional feelings, daily excited their passion without any idea of the political events which were shaking the world ever entering their heads. How could their reactions to such events have been other than often unsound? That is true of all peoples and of all times. And yet the nation, by the king's will, always remained in close touch with the great events of war and peace alike. (In this connection there is much to interest us in the letters written by Francis I to his people at the time of his captivity in Madrid, and also in the message sent to his subjects by Louis XIV during the War of the Spanish Succession, as well as in the appeal already quoted that Philip VI addressed to the parishes of France during the early days of the Hundred Years War. Similarly Louis XI maintained paid propagandists who went and mingled with the people in the market-place and explained certain decisions of the sovereign authority—so great was ever the concern of the government of France to rule by general consent.)

One simple fact must be borne in mind: the continued co-operation of king and people was carried on with due respect for certain hierarchies and with due regard for the different competencies of each. It was in this way that great masses of dissimilar powers and passions were brought into unity in the heart of France: the many activities of the native French, the services rendered by the foreigner, the divergent aspirations of different classes, the often contradictory interests of families, regions and crafts.

In the seventeenth century as in the sixteenth century the admiration of both philosophers and lawyers for the form of the French State was

unqualified. Bossuet wrote: 'France can rightly boast of the finest political constitution that is possible.' In 1666 the lawyer Loyseau claimed: 'The kingdom of France is the best-established monarchy that exists or ever has existed in the world.' Bossuet again, in his *Oraison de Marie-Thérèse d'Autriche, reine de France*, exclaimed: 'What need is there to speak of the Most Christian House of France . . . which alone in all the world and in all ages can consider itself after seven hundred years an established monarchy (to say nothing of the discoveries or fancies that such great and remote origins might inspire in the curious investigator of antiquity), which is alone, I say, after the lapse of so many centuries, in the enjoyment of its strength and its vigour, and still possessed of the most illustrious realm there ever was on earth, in the sight of God and of man.' 'The Kings of France', wrote André Duchesne, 'are kings elect and chosen of God, kings after His own heart, kings who, thanks to the divine imprint that His finger has set upon their brow, have the honour of standing in the van of all kings in Christendom. . . .'

In the study he made of the monarchical system Pascal proceeded in the same way as in his observations on patriotism. The French government may be absurd, if judged from the abstract and theoretical point of view, but it is perfectly adapted to the inescapable order of the universe and to the laws of nature. For the city of man, in fact, the greatest of evils is civil war, which in the briefest of spans rends asunder the most prosperous of peoples; hereditary monarchy which wards off this peril and which is primarily responsible for the stability of a country must then be prized as the wisest of political systems:

'Those things in nature which are most contrary to reason become by virtue of man's waywardness most reasonable. What is less reasonable than the practice of choosing as ruler the eldest son of a Queen? For the command of a vessel one does not choose the passenger who comes of the best family. Such a law would be ridiculous and unjust. But because men are and always will be wayward that law becomes reasonable and just. For whom should we choose: the most virtuous and the cleverest? That brings us immediately to blows, since every one claims to be the most virtuous and the cleverest. Let us then assign this function to something that is indisputable. He is the King's eldest son: that is clear and there is no dispute. Reason can do no better, for civil war is the greatest of evils.'

And Pascal went on to clarify the point: 'The greatest of evils is civil war. . . . The evil to be feared from a fool who succeeds by right of birth is not as considerable nor as certain.'

These thinkers then hailed stability as the prime virtue of the organization of the French State. It is a quality closely allied with the benefits of authority. Was this authority to be unrestricted, absolute, like the authority of oriental despots, of the 'tyrants' of antiquity, or of certain Imperial rulers? Was it to be similar to that preached by the philosopher

Hobbes, whose translated works spread throughout France in the course of the seventeenth century?⁶

It is important to stress once more the aversion for despotic government seen in France in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and throughout the *Ancien Régime*. For in reality it was the desire for liberty, wisely understood, which claimed the right of appeal to an authority which rendered justice and which was capable of setting limits to the excesses that might be committed by ungoverned pride or arbitrary force. Such was the authority of the King of France, the born enemy of feudal powers. 'To govern men', Louis XVI was to write, 'does not mean to seek to enslave them; it is to preserve men's liberty that government of them is necessary.' Bossuet made the comment, familiar to all political thinkers, that conversely the appeal to theoretical liberty most often ends in the triumph of a real tyranny, and that 'Demos paves the way for Caesar'.

'When one examines the history of usurpers', said the Bishop, 'one finds that almost always they flattered the people. It was either their liberty that was to be restored to them or their possessions that were to be assured. . . . They accepted the flattery and the yoke. Their sovereign power that is so praised leads but to this, and it is clear that those who flatter the people are but the instruments of tyranny.' And Bossuet continues: 'It is not that there is any absolute law of government valid for the human race, but there do exist fundamental laws that cannot be altered without shaking the foundations of the earth.'

These laws arise out of the very nature of men and things. To flout them is as stupid as to disdain the laws of gravity. Bossuet, echoing the jurists of the sixteenth century and most of the philosophers of his own day, congratulated himself that the form of government in France had 'its foundation and its exemplar in nature itself'.

The monarchy, however absolute it might be in theory, was in reality subjected to many checks in the exercise of its power. The greatest of them, in the ages of faith, was the moral obligation, the fear of divine judgement that would one day be visited on the monarch.⁷ In reality, too, the kings of France always shared the thought that King Charles V, in the fourteenth century, had been pleased to have defined by his philosopher friends who translated Aristotle and who sought the wise political maxims of antiquity: the authority of the sovereign is limited by the requirements of the common weal. This power is but a means: its end is justice for all.

⁶ Hobbes, observing that absolute freedom accorded to the people leads to a state of war, drew the conclusion that no right must be accorded to it, and made the will of the ruler the supreme law.

⁷ Those who are tempted to make light of this barrier against absolutism would do well to remember the importance it assumed in times of unquestioned faith: it is a fact that all the jurists of the *Ancien Régime* mentioned it as a limitation on authoritarian rule.

The next check on despotism is to be found in the countless usages, liberties, freedoms and customs that prevailed throughout France. The provinces enjoyed virtual autonomy; most of them had only agreed to be bound to the king's realm by a tie which left them equality of powers and made of them a kind of co-state (Brittany and Provence are cases in point). Marseilles was an independent republic, as were Bayonne and Bordeaux. There was an immense variety of privileges: towns exempt from taxation, towns which the king's troops had no right to enter. Every trade corporation, every local group, every regional particularity was protected in this way, defended against the encroachments of the sovereign's authority by rights which seem to us sometimes so exorbitant that we do not understand how such a realm could realize its unity. On this point, however, the evidence of foreigners is unanimous. As early as the sixteenth century the Venetian ambassador reported: 'There are States more fertile and more wealthy than France, such as Hungary and Italy, there are greater and more powerful ones like Germany and Spain: there is none so united.'

The reason lies in the fact that our contemporary notion of the unity of a land would have amazed our ancestors: we cannot imagine a coherent State without uniform administration, uniform language and uniform policing. Our thought is permeated with the theoretical simplifications of the eighteenth century, which led a man like Mirabeau to call the kingdom of France 'an aggregate of disunited peoples' and a man like Bonaparte to express astonishment at the spectacle of 'a chequered France, lacking unity of laws and of administration, more like twenty kingdoms assembled than a single State'. The eighteenth century, in fact, could not understand how the elements that made up the realm could know cohesion without accepting similarity, how their vast differences and their stubborn independence had contributed to the formation of a single culture. That was because the eighteenth century had renewed for its own purpose the most systematic form of Roman political wisdom, and it could no longer conceive of public unity except in the shape of the levelling apparatus of law. It would have done well to reflect upon the celebrated sentence attributed to Louis XIV: '*L'État, c'est moi.*'

If, indeed, the State is considered as a central organization co-ordinating the scattered strength of a society, no formula will be found more accurate than Louis XIV's dictum. *Nothing except the person of the king truly unified France under the Ancien Régime.* The different portions of the territory were not all similarly attached to the French heritage; regional autonomies did not relinquish their independence of one another; there was more than one language; social classes did not all equally feel concern for the common weal; similar laws did not regulate

the affairs of identical peoples. (Moreover the king would often say 'my peoples' or 'my States' when he spoke of his realm, showing in this way his recognition of the existence of many subordinate authorities.) However, the king represented the common father in the eyes of all men. The principle of loyalty, which had redeemed by its virtue many a defect in the feudal system, found its perfect fulfilment when complemented by the wisdom of Rome: *the lord had become the embodiment of the commonwealth*. The State was not identified with the country, it served it; the State was not the essence of the country, it simply maintained its cohesion. Finally, the State was not an anonymous organism, it was incarnate in a living man. In consequence the rigour of law could be adapted to meet all the subtleties of life, and implacable justice could be tempered with the charity that prompted a human heart.

The king had gradually come to symbolize, however, more than the State. Having become the focus to which appeals, supplications and traditional fervour were directed from the most important sections of the realm, *he had come to symbolize the country itself*, the unity rising out of the many French autonomies. There is therefore no cause for astonishment that loyal cheers for the king's person were for centuries sufficient expression of their love of country for the men of France. They must not be accused of not knowing the meaning of patriotism because they gave its principles concrete shape in a living image. 'The Spaniards', observed the Archbishop d'Embrun, French ambassador in Madrid in the seventeenth century, 'love their State more than their rulers, whilst the French love their sovereign personally.'

This identification of the State with a person was in fact quite peculiar to France. In *Paul et Virginie*, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre explains why the prince thus seemed to Frenchmen to summarize their highest aspirations. On a ship in peril at the height of a storm the sailors and passengers together shouted 'Long live the King'. 'For', says the author, 'that is what the French cry in moments of great danger as well as in times of great joy, just as though they were calling their prince to help them in their peril or as though they wished to prove at that moment that they were ready to die for him.' One of the most sceptical writers of the sceptical eighteenth century, Rétif de la Bretonne, on the morrow of Louis XVI's execution, wrote, in spite of his Jacobin convictions: 'He was only a man, the semi-philosophical reasoners say when they talk of the king—he was only a man, *but he was the rallying point for twenty million men*, that is why everyone was dumbfounded.'

It is extremely difficult to make our contemporaries understand the great fervour that the King of France could inspire in their ancestors, and especially to make clear the identification in their eyes of patriotism with loyalty to the king. In times like these the idea of monarchy seems no more than a party label, it arouses theoretical discussions upon the

forms of government; in Old France it was an essential element in daily life and in the life of the community; as real as the unchanging scene of one's native land, as respect for family affections, as the memory of the living past. It was a part of men's very awareness of their community, unified only by such love as this. Never did it call to mind the thought it suggests to men today: a party principle.

'If one of the king's subjects in France,' said Macchiavelli in the sixteenth century, 'said that he was of the king's party, he would be punished, for such a phrase would mean nothing more than that there existed in the land enemies of the king . . . and because the king wishes that all his lands shall be united in friendship and without faction.'

It is equally difficult to make our contemporaries understand the incarnation of country in a living image because of the distance which separates their ancestors' conception from the exaggerated myth of the 'leader' to which contemporary States have accustomed us. The feelings inspired by the King of France under the *Ancien Régime* were compounded as much of old fading memories as of present affection; they were aroused much more by the function and the symbolic continuity of a family than by an individual. They had no need to be stimulated by the appearance of a genius or a hero: their loyalty was homage paid to the far-off memory of a dynasty of protectors and to the mystic union consummated between land and people by that dynasty. That is the explanation of the familiarity shown by the French to their sovereigns; foreigners were shocked by it, but it was better proof than any symbol of the horror felt by Frenchmen for slavery and of the undivided union of ruler and people in a national community. The tradition had not changed since the eleventh century, when Guibert de Nogent contrasted the paternal affability of the kings of France with the aloofness of foreign rulers.

'There are nations', wrote Louis XIV, 'in which the King's majesty largely consists in not letting himself be seen, and that may indeed be understood amongst men accustomed to slavery, who can only be ruled by fear and terror; but that is not the way of the French, and from the remotest times of which history can tell us, if there has been any unusual feature of our monarchy, it has been the free and unlimited access of subjects to their prince. There is equality of justice between him and them, and that keeps them together, so to speak, in sweet and open companionship.'

It was not, however, only by reason of the love he inspired in all hearts that the king symbolized and embodied the country, it was not by identifying himself completely with the everyday aspirations of those who

⁸ When, in the sixteenth century, Italian customs were introduced into France, and the king's name was prefixed by the title of Majesty, many Frenchmen protested: 'What are these mimeries, these idolatries, these barbarous fashions?' said the indignant jurist Claude Dupuy. The king is a father and not a master: it is essential that his subjects be able to show him the familiarity that one has with a member of one's family, who is respected but not idolized.

dwelt in his realm, it was also because his function was perennial. 'In France, the king does not die', wrote Pierre Dupuy in the seventeenth century, and the majority of jurists under the *Ancien Régime* used the formula. In fact, when each sovereign disappeared, the herald would proclaim above his tomb, 'The king is dead, long live the king!' The Chancellor of France, who personified the authority of the king, never went into mourning on the death of a sovereign, in order to show that the monarchy endured, undaunted, transcending the passing of individuals. Now a country is not only a *common* possession, it is also a possession *handed on* by inheritance and transmitted from the past to the future. For his subjects the 'immortal' king of France gave material substance in this respect also to his country, the wealth of the dead and the living. Transcending its servants who passed away, transcending the unclasping of hands, his crowned image endured, triumphing over destiny, and it seems that the immutability of the Crown made men forget the passing of ephemeral faces, just as the continuity of France overlay and dominated the passing generations of Frenchmen.

In this light it is possible to imagine what civic passions these ancestors of modern France felt and expressed when they cried 'Long live the king', especially when the cry rang out above the battlefield on which they were defending their native country. Were one to believe some historians, the French never thought of dying for France until the day when Kellerman exclaimed: 'Long live the nation!' in front of the mill at Valmy. We must do more justice to the past. We must recognize that patriotism then, even though it had assumed forms different from those of today, existed none the less and was certainly no less profound. We must recall one among many examples⁹ of the zeal of Frenchmen of the past 'to die for their country'.

It was an episode during one of the most glorious of eighteenth-century battles. The attack was headed by soldiers from the peasant militia that had come from every parish in France. The officer in command showed his men a somewhat raised enemy position that was to be captured. The little band attacked with a shout of 'Long live the king'. The enemy reply was savage. Five times the French were compelled to fall back, leaving many dead upon the field, but their dash and vigour were undiminished, and after each compelled retreat they again rushed at the enemy. When, for the sixth time, the remnants of the heroic little band charged to attack, the Prince of Orange, who was watching the manœuvring of the armies from the height of a mound nearby, burst out angrily: 'Oh, what an insolent nation!' And so the ruler of

⁹ To these examples we might add the fact that one infantry regiment in the seventeenth century is quoted as bearing on its colours the device: *Pro patria mori, vivere est*.

England learnt that he was no longer confronted by bands of warriors united only by the will of their leader, but by a people animated by a clear awareness of its individuality and its independence.

Agreement had been reached between the unitary political principle taught by Rome and the principle of family patronage exalted by feudalism. The peasants who died in defence of their land, with a cry of homage on their lips, were not simple vassals manifesting in their death the love and honour they owed their master. They were dwellers in a *country*, not knowing any better way of giving expression to their sacrifice in defence of a material and spiritual inheritance than to call upon the living symbol of the cohesion of unlike regions, of the unity of differing peoples, of the continuity of a patrimony and a civilization maintained by a leader '*who never died.*'

CONCLUSION OF PART ONE

THE HISTORIAN who seeks to trace through the ages the different stages of the adventure which culminated in the formation of France realizes one fact more clearly than any other, and we hope that we have succeeded in making the reader as conscious of it as we are ourselves. This fact is that the destiny of a country does not describe some inevitable curve, that the existence of France is no phenomenon implied in world history, that France was created by the incessant effort of man, aided by certain contributory natural factors.

In consequence, at this stage in our study, we feel that historians commonly give much too early a date to the beginnings of the history of France. For the majority of Frenchmen, France is the beautiful hexagon they saw in their school atlas and they think it allotted to them from the very earliest times. Within its boundaries Romans succeeded Gauls and Franks succeeded Romans, like similar links in an unbroken chain, like everyday and similar heirs succeeding to their inheritance. We should like to feel that we have been successful in showing how much the kingdom of the Franks, to which the country and the nation owe their name, grew from lands and peoples grouped in a way quite foreign to our present-day nationalist conceptions; that the memory of the frontiers of Roman Gaul gradually died away until it completely disappeared during the grandiose efforts of the Carolingian attempt at unity; and that at the height of feudalism, after fifteen centuries of Western history, *France as yet did not exist*. The best historians of the early twentieth century (even minds of the calibre of Jacques Bainville) were drawn into serious error through writing the history of the origins of France under the sole and unconscious influence of a sense of nationalism which is essentially present-day and which seems to us so vital, so much a part of our being, that we ingenuously think it familiar to our ancestors in the remotest of times.

In reality there existed in Europe for centuries forms of human grouping, systems of community life, that are entirely foreign to our conceptions today. No one can of course deny that the history of those far-off centuries is necessary for an understanding of the ancestral heritage of the French, or that the racial contributions and the spiritual traditions of Gauls, Romans and Franks can justifiably be claimed by the French as the roots of their life. But it would be well to remember that these many bequests were not contained, from the most ancient times onwards, within the borders of present-day France. It would be

well to distinguish more precisely in school textbooks the history of the period when there was a *France before the birth of France*, as M. Ferdinand Lot has so happily phrased it in one of his books. The prodigious struggles and the constant efforts by which the country was created and then preserved would then be more apparent. Better-informed justice would be done to those who truly founded France by unceasing struggles waged defiantly against the universe, but in harmony with its inescapable laws.

At the same time, however, as one is struck by the fact of the non-existence of France for whole centuries, another fact impresses: it is that its ancestors had acquired the habit fostered by the clerks in the early Middle Ages of believing, with complete disregard for historical truth, in the ancient origins of their native land. Why, until the birth of scholarship, did they believe that they were the descendants of the Franks? There is no more reason from the purely historical point of view for the name *Frenchmen* rather than *Gauls*, for the kingdom of the Franks pre-figured France no more than did the vast state of Celtic times. (Writers hesitated for some time in Old France, between the use of the two terms, especially in Latin *Franci* or *Galli*.)

This touching mistake seems to be a striking lesson for those who see their country in the shape of a completely rational and logical abstraction. It is natural that, in addition to facts, which are alone worthy of acceptance, the traditions on which patriotism is nurtured should include, alongside the greatest of certainties, the truest of memories, a whole host of fables born in the imagination of celebrated or obscure poets, legends whispered to children in their cradles, dreams turned into literature by a story-teller's fancy, confidences transformed in their murmured passage from village to village and turned into familiar beliefs rooted in the heart of successive generations. So much the worse for scholarship: the French call themselves French because their forefathers did so for centuries and because they cherished that primitive historical fancy with great fervour at the same time as they were wakening to consciousness of their solidarity and at the very time that they were jealously asserting their pride in their particularism. And so this word which has been borne down to us on a chain compact of innumerable deeds of love and loyalty, of steadfast service and unyielding effort, of untold joys, tears and sacrifices, has acquired an authenticity which is infinitely stronger than any that could be furnished by the new proof of some archaeologist.

Here again is to be found a lesson, not unlike that given by France on the question of the State: just as the constitution of Old France was no collection of *formulae* drafted by jurists, so the idea of France was neither in its origins nor in its traditional acceptance the work of

scholars. Scholars undoubtedly helped to make these concepts precise, but did not give them birth. Whereas certain younger lands, in order to attain sudden awareness of their individuality, have been obliged to invoke the help of learned research into their origins, as if this were essential, France became aware of the continuity of her destiny through the unfolding of centuries of struggle and strife, glory and grief, rather than through reading chronicles and almanacks. The traditional concept of country was in France a living idea that was in harmony with and part of the very birth of the national community.

Did the idea of France exist however equally and continuously widespread throughout the whole of the population? To this question we can give the definite answer: No. The impartial observer cannot for a moment accept the theories that have been cherished for the last 150 years and that attribute the major share in the shaping of the destinies of France to the masses, to the collectivity. However, as we have seen, at some periods the entire national community showed complete awareness of its individuality and its cohesion. But it is impossible to forget that France was created *before* the population had become aware of its unity. Nor must we forget the periods of anarchy and the periods of complete neglect when the idea of the native country was saved thanks only to the efforts of a few leaders. Beside these periods must be set the years when the whole people seemed to be obscurely groping for the path of its destiny while some scribe, shut up in his retreat, was preserving in a few lines threatened by many hazards the only spark of the wisdom and of the loyalty that his contemporaries had forgotten. It is, indeed, quite untrue that a people left to itself can work out its own destiny: it is guided and saved by heroes, scholars and saints. Further, it is *upheld*, and that principally by institutions which give it structural support.

There could be no more admirable lesson than that to be learnt from the Old France. Whilst reminding man that human communities cannot endure without the presence of a political order capable of maintaining their cohesion, it also shows that this order can be based upon a happy combination of authority with liberties, that it can add the necessary benefits of government to the natural flourishing of subordinate autonomy everywhere. This recalls the care the Capetians took to govern always 'with a very large body of advisers', as Philip of Beaumanoir put it. It recalls too the words spoken by the Chancellor of France to the Estates-General in 1454: 'The king desired you to be acquainted with his business and to be associated with his deliberations. . . . *He desired you to become his collaborators.*' They are words which bring to mind the whole political structure of Old France. In the sixteenth century

Bernard du Haillan had said: 'Although France is a monarchy it seems that she is made up of three forms of government, that is monarchy, aristocracy and democracy.' Such a sentence, evoking the Aristotelian ideal in politics and also impregnated with the Christian respect for the individual man, seems to call to witness the three principal guarantors of the political knowledge of Old France: Greek wisdom, Roman order, Christian revelation.

The statement that France was made by the French is here seen in all its significance. It conceals no ridiculous 'demagogic flattery, but expresses that communion in which the efforts of the leader blended with those of his people to animate France. This example of a nation too proud to accept serfdom, but finding its true greatness in loyalty, is unique in the world's history. The multitudinous regional and local particularisms that geography inspired and history finally moulded, the many aggressive individual characteristics and scattered efforts, would never, in the former land of the Gauls, have submitted to any omnipotent levelling authoritarian power; yet they welcomed *paternal* protection that was flexible enough to maintain their obstinate independence, and strong enough to preserve the principle of the common weal transcending their diversities.

Another very valuable lesson is to be learnt from the history of patriotism in France: the important part played by spiritual traditions in the make-up of the ancestral heritage. When Capetian France, for example, made the claim that Charlemagne was a 'national hero', it was not based upon territorial considerations nor upon racial and political resemblances, but solely upon an emphasis given to fidelity to a common ideal. The great Emperor had sought to create a Christian State, defending civilization against barbarism; in his magnificent dream France recognized the essential feature of her own destiny. Consequently it seemed to her right to make Charlemagne into an ancestor of the 'French' kings, just as in ancient Rome, the mother of Western civilization, she saw the principal agent responsible for launching her on her mission in the universe.

In the selfsame way, the French monarchy drew the most dissimilar of provinces into a unity of culture by relying on the attraction exerted by a civilization, by emphasizing the spiritual similarities between men rather than by insisting on racial likenesses or correspondence of material interests.

This statement must not, however, lead us into the error of 'idealism', which has already given rise to too many mistakes. For throughout the period of the *Ancien Régime* in France patriotism always flourished in accord with vigorous realism. It gathered its great strength from living forces, was born of tangible realities, and rooted in an unbroken

harmony with the daily routine of the universe. This no doubt is what most distinguishes it from patriotism as it is now understood, and this is the reason for bringing to an end Part I of this work with the eighteenth century. The coming of the Encyclopedists and the men of the Revolution was to see the triumph of an abstract conception of the native country, a primarily rationalist attitude to inherited tradition. Because they cut away the living roots from which patriotism sprang, without requiring perpetual expression—because, at a single stroke, they had broken the link of fidelity to a common ruler whose protection had given unity to the divergent appeals of the many French ‘republics’, they were obliged to replace these natural forces and emotions by an abstraction that drew its life from emotions too. It became necessary for every individual to carry within himself a historical knowledge of his country’s past, a complete picture of its ancestral heritage, which was no longer manifest to him as of old in daily contacts, in unrecognized but living bonds, in unspoken but powerful traditions. When it made a clean sweep with the past the Revolution drained away by the same deed the real substance of what might be called instinctive patriotism. Hence the importance assumed for every future Frenchman by the ‘intellectual’ definition of France, for if this failed him what bond remained to link him with his land?

As a consequence, the idea of nation seemed henceforth to replace that of country. The link between Frenchmen was to be not so much devotion to a common patrimony as consciousness of *present* participation in a single human community, consciousness of the fact that together they made up a single *nation*. But this nation was to find it necessary to emphasize its particularism, to assert violently its difference from neighbouring peoples, to become morbidly conscious of the distinctions which set it apart from other human societies. Under the *Ancien Régime* Frenchmen could indulge their sympathy and their curiosity concerning the foreigner without endangering the safety of the land, since a superior and independent organization watched over the common weal. Henceforth every individual was to be burdened with the full weight of the destiny of his land, and his opinion concerning another people was to have great influence upon the life of his own country. A sentence in the Encyclopaedia under the heading ‘Patriotism’ casts considerable light on the matter. It states that ‘the preservation of Empires is dependent upon the sacred flame of patriotism’. Old France in her wisdom would no doubt have proclaimed that ‘the preservation of Empires’ was primarily dependent on the real state of their power, their cohesion and their internal order. Henceforth the safety of the community was to depend upon the passion of the individual for the common weal. For that reason, in time of peril, it became necessary to assure the whole nation violently of its particularism. Xenophobia,

often in direct contradiction with the lessons of reality, was the result, for henceforth bitter hatreds gave best expression to patriotism, whereas in the past it had included many and strong affections.

Moreover, the continued repetition of the word 'France' without any attempt to recall at the same time the realities it implied, the separation of the idea from its material substratum, led to the presentation to every generation of a notion into which each could introduce its own intellectual fantasy or its own emotional content. The necessity of discovering a material basis for the idea 'France' subsequently led to identification of it with a statue or a flag. The exaggerated importance given to awareness of country inevitably led the idea of country to assume little by little in the mind of every man the status of an individual opinion.

It is in consequence not surprising afterwards to find citizens cutting one another's throats on the sole pretext that one considers that his idea of country is more accurate than his neighbour's. Once the argument remains on the abstract plane, to what criterion can appeal be made in order to separate opposing sides? Anyone can with equal facility give the support of ingenious oratory to the argument that his own view is the only true one. Not that a more definite awareness of the meaning of country is to be considered regrettable in itself. It must be pointed out none the less that it should have taken place without men being cut adrift from all the living bonds which attached them to the inheritance of their ancestors. In Old France the meaning of country was *lived* rather than *defined*: the definition could have been arrived at without its living elements being repudiated.

The ancestors of the French did of course symbolize their country by an image on occasion. Long before the time of André Chénier poets represented France as a person. Alain Chartier, as early as the Hundred Years' War period, imagined his land in the guise of a noble lady cast down and afflicted by the blows of fate. Many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poets were to imitate him. However, these writers, when thus making use of this charming symbol, fully realized that it was nothing more; they remained fully aware of the realities from which the symbol took its life. Under the *Ancien Régime* Frenchmen as a whole could scarcely know more about their country than these realities and their occasional transposition in the imagination of poets. Each city and province was above all keenly conscious of its own particular characteristics: its scenes, its material wealth, its customs, manners and language, all so different from those peculiar to other cities and provinces. This consciousness of difference only became part of a sense of wider community under the influence of a concrete image: that of the king, the federator of provinces and cities. Therefore when some event of general import provoked varying reactions amongst the inhabitants of France, when party passions created violent rivalries amongst them,

as they always do, at least the strength of their devotion to the soil, to their trades and customs, exercised a real restraint upon Frenchmen, preventing them from indulging in Utopian fancies. And when the French were again reminded of the wisdom that lived on in their different little countries, even if the differences continued to separate them, it was no abstract notion which sought to curb the violence of their respective passions: it was a feeling. Once again it was an age-old deep-rooted sentiment which came to renewed life within them, coupled with an instinctive and traditional loyalty: it was love for the king, for the king of France 'who never died', and who, therefore, gave concrete expression to the abiding reality of his country. Obedience to him, though mingled with protestations and ill-concealed revolt, could yet, by its appeal to the heart, bring back minds to the path of wisdom and wills to the path of submission. Love gave permanent support and warmth to the just fear that authority inspired.

It was in such ways, through familiar images, through their vague and instinctive yet strong affections, that the French were formerly led to a knowledge of their country. In contrast with their descendants they ran far less risk of completely divorcing their conception of country from the realities it included, far less risk of giving way to the temptation to create personal and individual conceptions of country, of experiencing a patriotism unconnected with the vital forces that gave it birth. They could afford to indulge, as men always and everywhere have done, in quarrels, schisms, and fits of destructive madness, for their institutions soon led them back into the path of safety. Bossuet in the seventeenth century could call it a matter for congratulation that the French possessed a form of government having 'its foundation and its pattern . . . in nature itself'.

The same fidelity to the counsels of nature, the same obedience to the rhythm and to the laws of the universe, informed the devotion of the men of Old France for the heritage of their forbears. Once again it must be stressed that the meaning of country bears an essential implication the idea of handing on a patrimony. For centuries the French truly *lived* on this idea of continuity between generations without needing to define it in words, to give it formal expression. The value placed upon custom, the fidelity manifested for the wisdom of the ancestors, were the very basis of the organization of the State, just as they were of the daily life of every inhabitant of the country. It was, however, a tradition that was intelligently understood, seeking its justification in the light of reason, welcoming the call of the future as a renewal of its strength. It was no less a tradition strongly rooted in the facts of everyday life and able to dispense with incessant appeal to those stiff images of the past that narrative history has petrified or buried in museums.

Such are the lessons that Old France can eminently bring to the world of today: a renewed realism conferred upon the word 'country', the attuning of a political system to world order.

There is also, however, a more general lesson—that of harmony. Aristotle said that the origin of cities was the principal proof of man's love for his fellow. The making of the country of the French provides an almost perfect illustration of the way in which groups of men can attain harmony, can increase their bounds and can unite with others until they include the whole world. We hasten to add that such an example must not be confounded with Utopian internationalism after the fashion of the eighteenth century. That does not convey the true message of the France which proclaimed itself heir to Rome, the incomparable creator of spiritual unity. On the contrary, history shows that whenever men attempt to deny the harsh laws of existence here on earth, to scorn the obvious differences which separate all peoples, to forget conflicts of interest, custom, race and language, in order to build a Utopian universal city, they succeed only in giving greater emphasis to individual differences, in violently arousing the wrath of myriads of independent beings.

France made the world resound with many other messages of amity beside her revolutionary Utopias. We must not forget the medieval kings, of whom St. Louis was the sublime prototype, and who had learnt how to ally great wisdom and a keen sense of the laws of the universe, with a desire to bring unity and peace to mankind. Eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism, by turning a deaf ear to the voices of the earth and of kinship, by ignoring the needs and the very existence of the national community, was to cause men to launch upon ideological wars. The kings of France, on the other hand, dreaming of founding a universal Christendom, never failed to make their first care the safety of the cities in which men actually lived—their homes, their village boundaries, their town walls, the protection of the trade corporations and the provincial castles.

Although the kings of France showed themselves hospitable to foreigners, being anxious to attract to their own land artists and scholars from neighbouring countries in order to add new glories to the world reputation of France, they none the less continued on the political level to maintain laws which by safeguarding and defending privilege prevented a too extensive foreign community from ever exercising power over the natives of the country. It is true that newcomers who proved to be in harmony with French customs and laws and who showed a desire to become part of the French family were accepted without undue delay as equal subjects with the natives. The rulers, however, required either the proof of time, a continued loyalty, or else some extraordinary

service as a justification for adopting the foreigner. Though they recognized their duties as men, they never forgot the prime interest of the family to which they were fathers.

It is when man is most firmly attached to the basic natural groups which form part of his everyday life that he is best able to comprehend the idea of a wider community. Political duties find their right hierarchy when they are pursued each on its own plane. When a man is assured of the safety of his daily habits, his familiar contacts, his most instinctive customs, there remain no reason why he should not welcome the idea (fashioned by Rome and exalted by the Church) of a community composed of several peoples linked by fidelity to a common civilization, and of the union of all men on the spiritual plane.

Even when the idea of Christendom in the West was dead, the kings of France never gave up their desire for universal concord. Accepting the new existence of opposing *nations*, their political wisdom sought to ensure peace by the organization of a dynamic balance of power. In establishing this equilibrium, in seeking and concluding political alliances, they sought to show themselves neither passionate nor partisan nor enslaved by habit, but faithful to the lessons of reality, attentive to the experience of history, concerned to show empirical wisdom, fully conscious both of the existence of unchanging laws and of the incessant change which characterizes the universe.

Once again the political organization of France allowed her to discover with greater ease than other communities a just attitude towards the 'foreigner'. The nation itself might well experience some infatuation or some detestation for some other people, a particular social class might feel sympathy or opposition towards the subjects of a neighbouring king on account of economic interests or intellectual affinities; but what was the value of these individual or collective sentiments when viewed in the light of the interest of the country? Yet such sentiments could not be entirely despised, since they were an echo of the amalgam of facts and ways of life that played their part in the very existence of the country. It was here that the central government came into play: not despotic, it was obliged to pay considerable attention to the feelings of the people as a whole; being independent, it could prevent these feelings from being the sole arbiters of the country's policy.

In this way the form adopted by the French State allowed it to bring harmony, within the country, out of the complex passions which there threatened conflict, and in the world at large to accommodate the exigencies provoked both by men's hatred and their affections.

PART TWO

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DOCTRINAIRES

IT HAS already been stated that in the eighteenth century there was a complete rupture in the historical development of the idea of France. Under the *Ancien Régime* this idea, continually nourished by contact with concrete realities, and related to the deepest roots of everyday life, had been summed up for the people in its loyalty to a family of rulers who symbolized an enduring inheritance and a link between the past and the present of the nation. During the eighteenth century a school of philosophers arose to counsel a complete break with the habits of the past.

Henceforth the idea of *la patrie* was to seem to the French an entity having its own absolute value. It was to become an abstraction which must be severed from a living though often unconscious traditionalism in order to become perfect. Thus, at the very time when the theorists invited the French to loose their links with the past, they sought to make them realize in its exactitude a concept which, in point of fact, postulates respect for the past.

The *terra patrum*, the native country, had for eight centuries meant the patrimony slowly accumulated by the Capetian dynasty under which the whole people, throughout the long, eventful years they had traversed together, had acquired similar habits and customs. Traditions, whether of family, of trades, of cities or of provinces, had been unified in the common tradition of fidelity to the king. Underlying this there had been the wisdom of the departed, silently but powerfully animating the efforts of the living. It was in this way that the 'country', a material and spiritual capital handed down, had taken form.

Towards the end of the reign of Louis XV, when the new theories, which we shall discuss later, were meeting with their greatest success, a Paris lawyer, Rossel, eulogized the realistic patriotism of the old France as follows:

'Patriotism or love of country is but that zeal, that noble attachment that every man feels towards the land in which he was born. It has, I know, been maintained that this sentiment can be found in all its force and purity only in the heart of the republican, but I also know that there is no Frenchman who does not feel it at the bottom of his heart. It is the history of the French which has inspired in me this conviction. All the great features which enrich that history seem to me to spring from that source. I would go so far as to say that this sentiment is more living and generous in the citizen of France than it ever was in the most patriotic of Romans.

'If the latter performed in ancient times any prodigy of valour or of heroism, it was himself he avenged: he saw the republic in him self. Whereas when the Frenchman sacrifices himself, when he does great deeds, he forgets himself as it were and thinks but of the glory of his king, or of the honour and interest of his nation. If this be so, can I doubt that this principle is indeed the mainspring of every event recorded in the history of France. . . . From the battle of Clovis under the walls of Soissons to the Treaty of Fontainebleau signed by Louis XV, I can only see throughout the nation a spirit of zeal for the strengthening of the throne and the monarchy; in the Kings themselves I can only perceive a spirit of love for their people whose glory and happiness they have procured and assured, in greater or less degree according to the circumstances in which they found themselves. This principle, as true as it is sublime, standing in the forefront of French history, necessarily imparts a completely new lustre and a new interest to the facts recounted. It would be difficult to peruse them with that indifference that is accorded to most records.'¹

In the eighteenth century thinkers gave short shrift to respect for the habits of one's ancestors. Both in religion and in politics they proposed henceforth to make reason their sole guide in the search for law and wisdom. Not, moreover, a reason which might seek to enlighten and justify traditions or direct the investigation of reality, but a reason which should proceed *a priori*, which should function in an ideal universe and discover political and social institutions, valid not for the man of a particular race and a particular land, but for man in the abstract, divested of the burden of inherited traditions. Even though it be impossible to find on the face of the earth such a man, unaffected by the myriad customs of land and race, it was none the less upon this individual that the philosophers focused their interest.

Political thought founded upon *a priori* reasoning was not, in truth, entirely novel, since its principal features can be detected in the writings of some of the scholastics and also in the works of most of the Protestant political theorists of the sixteenth century. These, however, were all opposed to the traditionalist school of thought which extolled the very form of the State in their own land. The traditionalists indeed held that the constitution of the kingdom of France had been founded upon use, custom and tradition, that these in turn changed in the way that life evolves, that is to say *naturally*, without shocks or leaps, without any sudden break with what had gone before, and moreover without any denial of certain deep and immutable laws, as *necessary* as the motion of the universe.

The traditionalist thinkers laid it down that the permanent *basis* of man's life in society was in the first place dependent upon eternal laws which man could not escape, try though he might, and in the second place was compounded of habits welded into a whole by many circumstances, by innumerable and varied events, by climate, by race,

¹ Rossel, *Histoire du patriotisme français*, Paris, 1769.

and by religion. It lay within the power of no ruler and of no people to change fundamental principles that had been accepted—not in virtue of a contract, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau was to maintain—but as a result of unconscious agreement to be faithful to a tradition. It was for this reason that the *Ancien Régime*, aware of the many undertones and the many complexities inherent in that living organism that is a nation, had never thought of drawing up a *written* constitution that should rule the kingdom of France. It would, however, be puerile to deny the existence of such a constitution, though it was not petrified in formulae: 'The constitution of a people', Bonald was to write in 1796, 'is the very manner of its existence; when a people has been in existence for fourteen centuries and still lives, to question whether it has a constitution is to question whether it has the wherewithal for existence when in fact it exists.'

But the philosophers threw off the habits of mind of their predecessors. They meant to discover the *ideal* political order suitable for the *ideal* man. They thought that a State could be founded, a kingdom *created* by committing mathematically exact formulae to paper. Their first task was to obliterate completely ancestral traditions in order to draw up a theoretically perfect constitution. In consequence the idea of country immediately became an abstraction that had to be justified at the bar of reason, since it was no longer a living idea nourished by tradition and reality.

Their first preoccupation was to repudiate the old custom of fidelity to the monarch, which the French had 'irrationally' confused with devotion to country. Could not the country exist independently of the prince? And so the philosophers, in their need to forge with all speed a framework that would maintain the cohesion of the people, resuscitated the old Roman theory of the sovereign-state, the divine-state, to which Old France had always refused to subscribe. In 1755, in his *Dissertations pour être lues*, printed in Holland, the Abbé Coyer, whom Diderot quotes as an oracle in his *Encyclopedia*, lamented that the word 'country' had disappeared from currency in the town as well as at Court and in the countryside.

'I question the citizen who goes ever armed: what is your function? I serve the king, he tells me. Why not the country? The king himself is there to serve it. We have lost the notion that was attached to this great word. Every word represents an idea; if the idea grows weak and dies away, then the word no longer springs to the lips. We must therefore resurrect the idea if we are to re-establish the word.'

Thus, after several centuries in the life of a people perfectly aware of its relationship with a common heritage, the Abbé Coyer felt it necessary to 'resurrect the idea of France'. It would seem that lawyer Rossel,

who has been quoted, had sufficiently disposed of this incongruity. In reality, what this reforming Abbé sought to resurrect was none other than the imperious and oppressive civic notion of Roman antiquity. Since the French were to reject the common father whose sole function was to safeguard the common weal, each citizen must needs henceforth himself assume the protection of that common weal. 'We shall revive the word "country" only by ceaselessly winning over citizens from private interests to the common interest, from their houses to their country. . . . 'If you desire to rear citizens, no word must be more often repeated to children than the word "country".'

The *Encyclopedia* of Diderot and d'Alembert made a still greater distinction between country and king. Reproaching Colbert with having in former times confounded 'kingdom' with 'country', the Encyclopedists made no secret of the political attack that they proposed to make on the power of the Crown in their new fervour for a conception of country derived from antiquity. 'There can be no country under the yoke of despotism,' they declared. And, as is well known, at that time any authoritarian rule was very soon termed 'despotic'.

In the same way Montesquieu praised the civic notions of antiquity whilst severely criticizing those of contemporary Frenchmen:

'The ancients must have had a greater devotion to their country than we French: for they were always buried in their country's ruins. Were their city taken, they were enslaved or killed. We do but change our ruler.'²

'It was love of country that gave to the histories of Greece and Rome that nobility which ours lacks. There it is the mainspring of all actions and it is pleasing to find everywhere this virtue so dear to all men of good heart.

'To think of the pettiness of our motives, of the meanness of our devices, of the avarice with which we seek contemptible rewards, of our ambition so unlike the love of glory, is to discover astonishment at the difference come upon the scene, and to feel that since those two great peoples are no more, men have lost a cubit's height.'³

For Montesquieu, too, in spite of the facts of history, France became united not as a result of the attraction exercised by a common personal rule, but in exactly the same way as the states of antiquity, as a result of the influence of one city upon others.

'That which in particular creates the general temper of a nation is a great capital; it is Paris that creates the French: without Paris, Normandy, Picardy, Artois would be German with Germany; without Paris, Burgundy and Franche-Comté would be Swiss with the Swiss; without Paris, Guyenne, Béarn and Languedoc would be as Spanish as the Spaniards.'⁴

The important aspect of this new civic piety, preached by the philosophers, lay not only in its break with ancestral customs, nor even in

² Montesquieu, *Cahiers*, I, p. 488.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 243 v° and 244.

⁴ *Ibid.*, III, f° 136 v° and 137.

its resurrection of the ideas of the ancients, but in the progressive submerging of the idea of country in that of humanity. All traditionalist political thinkers in the France of the *Ancien Régime* had always established a hierarchical order in their love of neighbour. In the time of St. Louis the notion of Christendom did not conflict with the primordial devotion to the cities that were closer to man; and the love of a small corner of one's native land took precedence over love of the planet.

Henceforward the philosophers thought of humanity before restricting themselves to the narrow confines of the welfare of a people. 'I am a man before I am a Frenchman', said Montesquieu, '... or rather I am of necessity a man but by chance a Frenchman.'⁶

This then was the new patriotism offered to the French by a few *doctrinaire* thinkers.

It was in the first place a concept taken from Roman customs, having no link with the habits of the French of earlier days.

It was, secondly, a purely abstract concept, taking the place of an idea in conformity with reality.

Finally, it was an idea which was destined to oblivion and submergence in the face of the notions of humanity and universality, instead of being put forward as the first and necessary form of these notions.

⁶ Ibid., I., p. 344.

ÉMIGRÉS, VENDEANS, JACOBINS

THE ACTIONS of the revolutionary heirs of the eighteenth-century philosophers were inspired by the new conception of their country that had just been taught and they followed it to its most extreme consequences.

In the first place, in imitation of their teachers, the disciples undertook to wean the concept from that fidelity to the past which had flourished it throughout the *Ancien Régime*. Under the pretext of suppressing certain indefensible abuses bequeathed by the past (such as most of the feudal dues which had survived in the eighteenth century without the justification of the corresponding services which had first brought them into being), they also abolished with a stroke of the pen customs which were closely bound up either with the very essence of the life of Old France or with the fundamental laws governing all societies.

One of the customs which was most firmly rooted in the heart of Frenchmen of the *Ancien Régime* was loyalty to the king, which, as we have seen, was for them inseparable from their idea of their country. It was therefore essential to prove to the French that 'country' can be clearly conceived quite apart from any devotion to a ruling family.

In June 1789 Mounier was satisfied with the declaration: 'Let us remember that we love the monarchy for France's sake, not France for the sake of the monarchy.' This might have seemed to be a simple statement of the fact that formerly devotion to the king had coincided with care for the common weal and had been merged with it. However, other ideas rapidly appeared amongst the revolutionaries. After July 14th, when the king arrived in Paris, he was greeted with shouts of 'Long live the king and the nation!', a cry that would never have entered the head of any Frenchman of the *Ancien Régime*, to whom 'Long live the king!' had always meant as well 'Long live France!' In the same way, when the municipalities were organized in 1789, the oath laid down was 'to the nation, the law and the king'. The same oath was to be proposed at the *Fêtes de la Fédération*.

Madame Roland, the Egeria of the Girondins, displays in her letters her constant irritation at finding that her fellow-countrymen continued the old tradition of embodying their country in the living image of their king. In a letter dated 4th September 1789 she wrote to her friend Bosc as follows: 'The French are easily won over by the fine appearance of their masters, and I am persuaded that half the Assembly was stupid enough to be touched at the sight of Antoinette recommending her son

to them. B* God, it's not a child that is at stake. It's the well-being of twenty million men.' This persistent affirmation that the king's person is henceforth distinct from the community of the nation attained its climax on the 20th August in the arrest of Louis XVI. Thereafter the orators of the Convention sought to lay it down beyond all possible doubt that 'the nation exists independently of the person of the king'. 'Frenchmen are at last men', wrote Brissot in the *Patriote Français* after the deposition of Louis XVI.

The defenders of the traditional conception attempted vainly to protest. In vain Louis XVI affirmed after July 14th, 'I myself am as one with the nation', and Mirabeau declared, in opposition to the more violent members of the Assembly, 'the indivisibility of the king and the people'. The doctrinaires pursued their task without faltering and more and more tended to impose their new view.

Moreover, religious traditions were no more to be respected than political customs. The Revolution began to pursue with a methodical hatred the traditional religion of Old France. The persecution of Catholicism soon assumed wider proportions, and the Civil Constitution of the clergy tended to sever completely the links which bound French priests to the Roman Church.

The suppression of the corporations set aside the traditional customs of the trades. The abolition of provincial boundaries shattered the memory of age-old groupings of society. The organization of the family received its death-blow as a result of the new arrangements for estate inheritance.

Old France had lived its life, and on its ruins a new order was to be constructed.

The first attempt to regroup the different portions of the land of France without the aid of the royal person took the form of crystallizing the provinces around a mother-city, after the fashion of the city states of classical antiquity. The dictatorship exercised by Paris over the rest of France for several years is common knowledge. All reforms in the organization of the administration tended, moreover, to impose a system centralized around the capital such as Old France had never known.

Next, the revolutionaries sought to inculcate in the French the idea of a 'contract which linked them with another', in accordance with the philosophical discoveries of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The *Fêtes de la Fédération*, repeated frequently during the first months of the Revolution, were organized to this end, and at one of them La Fayette pronounced at the *altar of France* 'the oath which unites all Frenchmen with one another . . . to defend liberty, the Constitution and the laws'. As during the Roman Empire, the word 'law' became the keyword, not with the meaning of living custom that it had for Old France, but with the doctrinaire rigidity inspired by the Roman State.

Furthermore, since henceforth all sovereignty resided in the nation, it must worship itself, make an idol of itself. Had not Rome burnt incense to Rome, the goddess? Who then could wonder that the French should from now on adore France, the goddess?

It is here that we can observe the seed of all modern nationalisms and their dogmas, which feed upon an exacerbated realization of the individuality peculiar to each people. The French revolutionaries resurrected the old theory of the sovereign-state, the divine-state, to which Old France had always refused its belief. 'It is with emotion that I recall', wrote Madame Roland, 'those moments of my youth when, in silent seclusion, enriching my soul with the study of ancient history, I wept with vexation that I had not been born in Sparta or in Rome.' The reformers imposed upon each and every man a new cult, that of an imperious and exalted country divorced from the natural attachment of man to groups touching him more nearly. Henceforth Frenchmen must 'live and die' for the State. As *Le Chant du Départ*, the farewell song of the soldiers, put it:

*'La République nous appelle,
Un Français doit vivre pour elle,
Pour elle un Français doit mourir.'*

In a little catechism entitled *Elements of Republican Instruction*, drawn up during the Revolution by Citizeness Desmaret for the instruction of the children of France, there occur the following lines: *

'Who are you?'

'I am a child of my country.'

'What do you contribute to society?'

'My heart to love my country, my arms to defend it.'

In the private papers of Robespierre, found after his death, this characteristic note was discovered: 'The child, the citizen, belong to their country. . . . Children belong to their mother until they are five if she has fed them, and thereafter they belong to the Republic to the day of their death.' The State was now to take over the education of children up to the age of twenty. The family was to concede all its rights to the nation.

In this way the gently compelling customs of Old France were replaced by a categorical imperative; the idea of the general community suppressed all man's natural bonds, instead of drawing strength from them. 'Thanks to the Revolutionaries', wrote Albert Sorel in his book *Europe and the French Revolution*, 'the idea of patriotism which the centuries had, so to speak, embodied in every Frenchman, became vaporized into an abstraction and seemed at the same time to lose both its justification and its reality.'

This brings us to the most important and the most tragic result of the breach occasioned by the revolutionaries with the past of their country: this abstraction was only too soon to be refashioned by each man according to the tenor of his ideas and his own individual feelings. This disembodied country, this ideal fatherland, which every Frenchman had to fashion in the fastnesses of his own heart, displayed a different face to every one of them. How could it have been otherwise? France was no longer that great concrete reality made up of families, occupations, villages and provinces under the protection of a common father, it was a new goddess, a statue whose very features had to be invented. That is no doubt why the Republican Danican was able to say as early as 1792 that the word 'patriot' was like 'a set-rhyme to which every man composed his own poem'. Every Frenchman was in fact soon to be seen with his own private picture of his country.

The reforming middle class, which led the way in the remoulding of institutions in 1789, first set itself up as the sole representative of the nation: 'The resolution of the Third Estate', said Necker in his 1788 Declaration, 'when it is a unanimous resolution and in conformity with the general principles of equity, will always represent the resolution of the nation.' In the same spirit, the Constituent Assembly, largely composed of middle-class elements, declared: 'The only true citizens are the property owners.'

The boldest of the revolutionaries soon brought this violent partisan and class spirit to a fever pitch. Giving the signal for the sounding of the tocsin which let loose the September massacres, Danton cried: 'The tocsin is sounding for our assault against the enemies of the country.' ('Enemies of the country' means, of course, those Frenchmen who incurred the suspicion of Danton and his friends.) Very soon aristocrats and priests were to become the prime traitors in the eyes of the Jacobins. Religious persecution that had sought to liberate the mind from the burden of centuries of obscurantism very soon revealed its fanatical nature. 'The Constituent Assembly', writes Albert Mathiez, 'had sought to create a National Church . . . and had only succeeded in creating the Church of a single party, the party in power.'

Then the most terrible discord began to ferment between the various classes of the nation. On the lips of those who sang the praises of the new unity patriotic fervour soon failed to conceal partisan fury. Only those were held to be 'patriots' who agreed to accept certain philosophical conceptions. A strange dawn of liberty when an idea of France that had been made by a few men from one faction had to be imposed on all Frenchmen! 'The Declaration of Rights must become the national catechism.'

For a full understanding of this partisan transformation of the sense of the term 'patriotism' it must be borne in mind that, from the outset

of the reign of Louis XVI, the word 'patriot' had acquired a strictly limited meaning. It was applied *exclusively* to men, like La Fayette, Brissot, Condorcet and their friends, who showed unquestioning agreement with the new ideas and the religious, political and social reforms preached by the Encyclopedists. In the same way, throughout the revolutionary period, the principal publicists used the word 'patriot' solely to distinguish those who supported the new ideas.

In the Constituent Assembly the 'patriot' group was to be a small, turbulent, active and bold party, composed principally of jurists and young priests and resolved upon the most radical reforms. The news sheets of the period use the term only in this very restricted sense (e.g., *The French Patriot* of Brissot; *The Patriots' Friend* of Adrien du Quesnoy; *The Patriots' News* of Carra and Mercier, etc.). The best known of the revolutionaries give the term the same meaning. Madame Roland's letters are particularly instructive on this matter. From her retreat in the provinces, where she spent most of the early months of the Revolution, this intelligent and severe young woman addressed rousing letters full of revolutionary ardour to the influential group of her friends in Paris. What then did she most frequently recommend to them? To spread far and wide the ideas of 'patriotism', to which she complains the majority of Frenchmen are quite indifferent. She reiterated unceasingly, 'We preach patriotism', and what she meant was, 'We are spreading these new ideas.' When on a particular occasion Marat spoke of the 'patriotic party', he made it even clearer, by his paradoxical conjunction of mutually exclusive terms, that the men of the Revolution really meant to identify the country with a faction.

The views of the French as a whole did not matter to them. Their ideology must triumph. Madame Roland wrote to her friends in Paris: 'Our stupid provincial towns are in every respect a hundred years behind you. It seems to me that we need a civil war if we are to be worth anything.' Minister Roland indignantly noted the manifestations of love for the king which, at the Fête de la Fédération, rose from all sides. His young wife complained of finding throughout the provinces a lack of enthusiasm for the new ideas and, what was more, an outmoded devotion to the monarchy which the French should have renounced if they were to be citizens in the Roman fashion. Madame Roland recommended her friends to put on in Paris plays likely to inculcate in the French the new idea: let them perform Corneille's *Horace*, Voltaire's *Brutus*, both of which praise 'country' as the ancients understood it.

But the best way of separating the French from their prince would clearly be to suppress him. At the time of Louis XVI's trial, Saint-Just frankly admitted that the decision of a few bold men was to be preferred to the general will of the people. To those members of the Assembly who proposed that it should not deliberate on the fate of the king until

an appeal had been made to the people of France Saint-Just retorted: 'Appeal to the people? . . . That means reviving the monarchy.' Thus did these 'patriots' make plain that they preferred their own individual decision to the wishes of the whole nation.

At the very time when they revealed their true aims in internal affairs the revolutionaries inaugurated in foreign policy, still under the guise of 'patriotism', ideological propaganda on an international scale that was far removed from the concern with realities which had impelled Old France to safeguard its material and spiritual legacy against her neighbours. In the European wars which they embarked upon the revolutionaries were concerned first and foremost, not for the safety of their own land, but for the victory of a particular philosophy.

They sought to build the Universal Republic of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. They proclaimed the sovereignty of the people, called upon all nations to revolt against their kings, and persuaded the French that it was their duty to fight, not in defence of their land, but to 'regenerate the world by destroying all privilege and reconciling all peoples'. In August 1792 M. J. Chénier requested the Assembly to consider as 'allies of the people of France those writers whose works had undermined the foundations of tyranny'. To quote Albert Sorel again:

'Since justice must be based on reason, since it was the duty of the Revolution to establish its reign and since this was intended not for a single people but for all humanity, country became as all-inclusive as law. There was one country for the whole of humanity and it dwelt where reason reigned: patriotism was confused with support for the Declaration of Human Rights. The patriot was a citizen of the world.'

In this way, in foreign affairs as in domestic affairs, patriotism no longer involved the defence and protection of the living elements in the legacy of the past but the attempt to ensure the victory of a new ideology.

It was not the first time in their long history that Frenchmen had set off on a crusade, but when they did so in the Middle Ages they had not for that reason denied their own country; on the contrary, in the Holy Wars they had affirmed the importance of the spiritual traditions bequeathed by their forbears and had defended their altars no less than their city walls.

In contradistinction the men of the eighteenth century invented a crusade completely unconnected with the welfare of their land; they created a cosmopolitan ideology which made a clean sweep of the basic needs of their country. They concluded alliances on the sole basis of intellectual and emotional affinity. Here, too, they struck at the roots of true patriotism. We see them henceforth, like their philosopher guides who wrote the *Encyclopaedia*, delighting in the idea that they are

citizens of the world, human beings set down upon the planet, without a past, without ancestors, without a fatherland. The account of a revolutionary festival held in 1790 contains the following passage: 'Monsieur Danton had the good fortune to be called on to speak first. He said that the only bounds to patriotism should be the universe. He proposed a toast to the health, liberty and happiness of the entire universe. His motion was greeted with the enthusiasm it deserved.' The men who drafted the Declaration of the Rights of Man said: 'We wish to draw up a declaration for all men, for all lands, for all time, and to give an example to the world.' ('How could one expect these sublime architects of a new world', exclaimed Rivarol, 'to bother with the little corner of earth and water known as France?')

The Jacobins, however, profited by the ambiguity of the term 'patriot', which was always on their lips, and events favoured them in this. Far from making public confession of their partisan aims, more and more they affirmed that their cause was the country's cause, that they alone were concerned with the common welfare. Moreover, the foreign invasion, as well as the attitude of the *émigrés*, of whom more will be said below, gave them the opportunity of transforming the task of their clique into an effort to save the common weal.

When the European armies, provoked to battle by the Girondin declaration of war, invaded French territory, the revolutionaries suddenly became transformed into defenders of their threatened land. While they continued to proclaim their desire for an ideological war, their concern to free peoples by attacking kings, they found themselves by the very force of events compelled to group all the living strength of the nation in a surge to defend and save it. These men who had done so much to separate Frenchmen from the real wealth of their inheritance became, by a strange decree of fate, the sole champions of the welfare of that inheritance. To the aid of their mother-country they called sons of the same soil and of the same civilization; they proclaimed that the country was in peril and compelled a whole generation of youth, fanatically devoted to the new idea of the Universal Republic, to defend the old land that had been moulded by kings. The ideas of the Jacobin warriors, as we shall see below, remained inspired by a Utopian cosmopolitanism and bore in themselves, because of their preoccupation with ideological propaganda, the seeds of new and incessant conflicts. But what did that matter in 1792? Men's fantastic dreams were overborne, as so often happens, by the logic of events. The Jacobins, who had gone to war to free all men, found themselves obliged to become the defenders of Richelieu's 'meadow square'. In 1793, Danton cried out: 'The enemy is at our gates and we are destroying one another. Do our quarrels kill a single Prussian?' Isnard, a member of the Convention, declared at the

same time: 'We can no longer discuss formalities, we have to save our country.'

It was the old password, which had put an end to the violence of factions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which Joan of Arc and Charles VII had recalled to the Armagnacs and the Burgundians, which the Moderates and Henry IV had proclaimed before Huguenot and Papist. The novelty now lay in hearing this word pronounced by men who had first done their best to rob it of all real living strength: That is why the patriotism of the Jacobins was no more than a fugitive defence measure; that is why it could not for long become the unifying, friendly and pacifying principle that the patriotic idea had formerly been.

In order to endure apart from the exigencies of war, it was compelled to become heady and to feed upon violent passions, to retain, as it were, a memory of the battlefield, and of that furious surge which had inspired the soldiers of France in their new conquests against other peoples. The patriotism of the Jacobins contained the seeds of that principle which has inspired the most violent forms of modern nationalism. For ten centuries patriotism had summed up for the French all that they loved; with the Revolution it came to mean mainly a healthy hatred. Formerly, to be a patriot meant to respect and to defend the legacy of the past. Henceforth it meant, principally, that one hated the foreigner. The feeling of patriotism was defined far more by what *one was not* than by what *one was*. Nationality overwhelmed country. Down with the past: the peoples praised their present difference. Each formed an entity, a group separated from the rest, and each sought to clarify and to realize more vividly that which differentiated it from the rest.

At all events, in 1792, the 'patriots' owed it solely to chance that their factional aims assumed the sudden aspect of the general good.

None the less, in the storm-battered France of that age, men of other parties too drew away from a realistic conception of their country and gave in their turn tragic proof of the dividing spirit that patriotism can foster when cut from its roots. The *émigrés* professed that they served France when they fought against the land of France?

In considering the attitude of the men of Coblenz it must be remembered, first, that the principles of class warfare had been preached by the Revolutionaries to all Frenchmen. As we have seen, from 1789 onwards the reformers had sought to identify the common weal with the triumph of a faction or of a class, while 'aristocrats' and priests had become objects of anathema and public opprobrium. It must be added that the attitude of the great nobles towards the end of the *Ancien Régime*, the vexatious arrogance of a few men whose privileges were no longer compensated by any services rendered, apparently justified a great deal of the fury, and gave a certain force to the provocations of

the ringleaders. However, the early *émigrés* were able to claim with justice that they fled as a result of threats directed as much against their persons as against their possessions.

But why did their flight carry them beyond the frontiers of France? Why, in particular, did it lead them into the ranks of foreign armies which were one day to invade the soil of their country?

Dispassionate consideration leads to the conclusion that many of these noblemen simply indulged a selfish desire for partisan revenge. In their eyes the overthrow of the revolutionary government primarily meant the return of the advantages they had enjoyed in the past. What they intended to restore in France much more than the monarchy was an order of things favouring their own privileges, even the least defensible.

But the flight of the French *émigrés* cannot be entirely explained by the individual hate of a few individuals. Others who fought in the Coblenz armies, though not necessarily seeking personal profit, were yet defending a mummified traditionalism. They had forgotten that the world 'country' involves the idea of *continuity*. To set Old France against New France was as lamentable an error of judgement as that committed by the revolutionaries in their frenzy to construct a new land unconnected with the efforts made by the men of the past. Over against these opponents, singing the praises of innovations without roots in the past, the *émigrés* stood petrified in their defence of a past heedless of change. Their effort too was doomed to failure.

However, to understand the very essence of the French movement towards emigration and to explain that aspect which is most repellent in the eyes of the modern patriot, namely the alliance with the foreigner, it is necessary to recapitulate the conclusions reached in the foregoing pages concerning patriotism in Old France. The great nobles in particular had throughout past centuries remained unaware of what country implied and had known only the principle of feudal loyalty to a ruler. For the nobility, more than for the generality of Frenchmen, the bond of devotion to the king was therefore the only form and the only guarantee of forming part of a country. The habit of entering into family alliances throughout Europe, the survival of a kind of international chivalry transcending the customs of contemporary war, kept the aristocracy strangers to that feeling of being different through which a people becomes aware of its own individuality.¹ The Revolution, by its suppression of the king, removed at the same time the only bond which united the aristocrats with the remainder of Frenchmen. The

¹ Here we are dealing only with the great nobles, the courtiers of the eighteenth century, and not with the country gentry, who were devoted to their local lands, in close touch with the peasants in their villages and most of whom, moreover, stayed in France, often protected and hidden by their vassals.

king's liegemen found it just to take arms against a people that had killed its king. This was the logical consequence of a principle that had feudal origins.

Yet feudalism was dead, and when the *émigrés* took their stand by it they appeared to forget the eight centuries of unification effected by the French monarchy. It was long since the Capetian had been but one lord amongst others: he had built France upon the ruins of the feudal powers. And this living country had become the birthright of the whole people which had been welded by centuries of unifying loyalty. The *émigrés* were acting in just as partisan a spirit as their Jacobin enemies when they set up their single principle of personal loyalty against the real France, which was a common possession. They went further; they completed the separation desired by their enemies between the king and the nation. M. Albert Sorel has made this clear in a masterly passage which confirms the view here expressed that the conceptions of the *émigrés*, like those of the Jacobins, could have arisen only as a result of the purely abstract nature of their idea of country.

'Whilst some Frenchmen, repudiating the whole of the past of their own race, thus imagined a country without frontiers, without territory, without memories and without tombs, others, starting from the other extreme, yet impelled by the same urge, replaced this universal and intangible country by a kind of personal and errant country which each man bore on his travels with him. Misled by that same logic and passion for abstractions which led the revolutionaries to confuse country with revolution, the *émigrés* confused it with monarchy. Conceiving of a monarchy without a realm, a king without a state, a state without a nation, a nation without territory, they elaborated a phantom France, a 'true France' which would be ever with them and which they opposed to the real France, the France of Nature and of history which they had been compelled to leave behind.'

In this way the *émigrés* succeeded in increasing the ambiguity that sheltered the 'patriots' of the revolutionary government. Claiming to defend the monarchy with the help of foreign invaders, claiming to re-establish the king while destroying France, they turned their opponents at the same time into champions of national safety and broke down the age-old identity in France of fidelity to the crown and love of country. It had proved possible for those declaring themselves the king's messengers to enter into alliance with the enemies of France. Consequently the people of France could justifiably believe the theorists of the government in Paris who declared themselves to be 'patriots' and who called the struggle inspired by their own partisan passions 'a struggle against treason'. Several years later the royalist Joseph de Maistre was to write these words: 'All things duly considered, it is apparent that once the revolutionary movement was well established, France and the monarchy could be saved only by Jacobinism. . . . For, as a result of seeking the

conquest of France, the *émigrés* sought her division, her destruction and the degradation of her monarch.'

The *émigrés* made the Jacobins the fathers of the country.

What was the part played by the revolt in Vendée in the development of the Frenchman's idea of his country? Here more than ever it is essential to forget modern conceptions and to view events from the standpoint of the period studied. The Vendean war unleashes partisan reactions among historians. Some view it as an act of treachery which criminally paralysed the defence of the land at a critical moment in the life of the country. Others descry in it the epic story of the last defenders of the monarchy and praise the men of Vendée as martyrs. Whether they praise or blame, they see the revolt as no more than a party struggle and the attitude of the party is identical for them with that of the men of Coblenz.

Such a judgement seems to us a complete mistake which the simple recital of the origins of the war in Vendée will suffice to reveal. The French rose in the West only when they saw the group of reformers in Paris wipe out certain essential traditions in the spiritual heritage of France. Before fighting for the king, they rose in defence of the Catholic religion, against the attacks of the rationalist revolutionaries, and in defence of the Church, threatened by the Civil Constitution of the clergy.

Was it then a war of religion? The truth is humbler and more subtle, for the most important aspect of the Vendean revolt lies precisely in its entire absence of theory, in the fact that it was an instinctive and domestic revolt. The rebels were defending the old customs of their villages, the God of their Church, the altars at which their dead fathers had worshipped through the centuries. And if patriotism is primarily an awareness of the legacy of man's forefathers, how could one deny the title 'patriot' to the men of Vendée, since, in contradistinction with the *émigrés* who scorned their land and also with the Jacobins, who were devoted to the figment of a theoretical country, these men were defending the nearest and most real traditions in their inheritance? It was they who revealed the ambiguous use of the word *patrie* by the revolutionaries. They reproached a government of factions with attempting to equate France with their party ideology. Long before the arrest of Louis XVI, during the first months of the Revolution, the inhabitants of Châtillon wrote to the king expressing their unanimous view that 'the cause of the misfortunes which afflict this realm lies in the violence of a small number of ill-intentioned persons who do not blush to call themselves Friends of France'. At the time when Paris proclaimed France to be in danger, the Vendéans were grieved to see that those who were being denounced as the prime enemies of France were the priests of their familiar churches, who were extremely respected amongst them, and the country gentlemen who had remained so close to them in spirit

and in way of life, living on their modest estates and maintaining, in the harsh tasks of husbandry mutually shared, the old feudal bond between the master and those he protected.

In other words the Parisian reformers appeared to the peasants in the West as destroyers of the whole traditional order without which they could not imagine even their daily life. Moreover, when one remembers that during the *Ancien Régime* the French had rather *lived* their patriotism than *defined* it, when one remembers that this patriotism was in its essentials simply faithful observance of traditions rather than the expression of an abstract idea, one cannot but conclude that the uprising in Vendée was, by its origins, a revolt of instinctive patriotism, of realistic patriotism, against the hypocritical and theoretical constructions of the government in Paris.

The problem soon showed itself, however, to be more complex than this initial simplification. The country had indeed under the *Ancien Régime* existed only by integrating individualist movements, different traditions and divergent conceptions into the life of a wider community. Even in the sixteenth century the wars of religion had been compelled under the guidance of the king to take into account the safety of earthly cities and the principle of the common good. The men of Vendée could not defend the France of vital traditions against the France that was being invaded, nor could they save the spirit of France as opposed to the soil of France. The civilization of a land is always based upon the safekeeping of the territory on which its altars and its tombs are erected. Here the constructive loyalty of the Vendéans finally joined hands with the destructive loyalty of the *émigrés*. As the foreign menace became more urgent they became enemies of the nation. 'The administrative departments seek to frighten us with news of the formidable arms of the foreign powers', said one of them, 'whereas we call them to our aid with loud voices and hold out our hands to them, convinced that they are our friends.'

It was France's misfortune that during the revolutionary era her quarrelling sons each defended one aspect of the legacy of the past and she could find no common meeting-point for so many contradictory forces—the unifying ruler was no more. Undoubtedly the responsibility for this division belonged to those who had dreamt of creating a France cut off from all her sources of strength and who had refused to lend to future change the strong support of past experience. Yet at the same moment those who bore the responsibility for this catastrophe were the only visible defenders of French unity, which had been a major concern of the Capetian family for eight centuries.

The revolutionaries, in spite of their partisan aims, seem alone to have understood the new aspect that France was tending to assume in the eyes

of her sons during the last stages of the process of unification under the king. A growing awareness of the link between the land and the people was the logical eighteenth-century consequence of that patriotism which we have studied in its slow transformation through the ages. For this reason no doubt historians generally accord to the Revolution the honour of discovering patriotism in its full meaning: the merging of the particular loyalties felt by Frenchmen with former times in the concept of one single France.

This oversimplified view has already been criticized in Part I of this work. The *Ancien Régime*, as has been seen, was not unaware of France as an idea even though it was very alive to the diversity of the elements it refined and merged. The revolutionaries, in consequence, had no need to invent a form of patriotism that was already in vigorous life, even although it had assumed a form different from that it has taken on in our own day. Moreover, it has been made clear that just as they did not invent the idea of France they also committed the error of perverting it.

Preaching an ideal France, founded on the total ruin of the real France of the past, they took from the concept of country its strongest support, the solid basis that etymology itself indicated for the 'land of one's forbears'—for *terra patrum* is primarily the legacy of the past. They accustomed the French to identifying France with the ideology of a party, to create each man his own individual notion of France, thus furnishing a new disruptive element for the civil wars of the future.

The French had of course very frequently quarrelled amongst themselves through the course of the centuries, but formerly they had been wont to confess in simpler fashion the motives for their quarrels. The Burgundians of the fifteenth century had frankly admitted that they were pro-English and were fighting their legitimate king; the Papists of the sixteenth century had roundly confessed that they preferred a Spanish Catholic king to Henry IV, the traditional heir but a Protestant.

On the other hand, beginning with the Revolution, the French, in imitation of the 'patriot' party of 1792, were perpetually to mask their different ideologies under a uniform affirmation of patriotism. The future Armagnacs and Burgundians would alike swear that they each fought solely for the well-being of France. If one day time were to resurrect *émigrés*, rebels and Jacobins, they too would be heard, each of them alike, to declare that he was defending his native country. Thanks to the revolutionaries the old term for historic unity was to become the hypocritical mask of the parties.

And so disappeared the conciliating aspect of this principle of amity which the thinkers of Antiquity had seen presiding at the birth of cities: the amity of the living for the work of those dead, and an amity among men of the same people for one another that transcended their party differences.

It is true that, by the revolutionary epoch, some thinkers and writers had garnered the heritage of the realistic and conciliating tradition of patriotism; had, at that time, attuned the collectivist ideas of the new era with the old ideas in which individualism was so vital. The poet André Chénier bewailed the dire fate of a nation reduced to the choice between 'Coblenz and the Jacobins', that is between two factions. He declared that he repudiated 'democratic rage' as much as 'feudal injustice'. He reproached those who dared:

*'Trahir toutes les lois au lieu de les venger
Et renverser l'État au lieu de le changer.'*

He stigmatized the Jacobin societies which 'holding each other by the hand form a kind of electric chain round France' and in which 'an infinitely small number of Frenchmen seem great in numbers because they are united and because they shout'. Then he called upon true patriotism, which is compound of love, not hate, which unites quarrelling brothers in the safeguarding of a common heritage:

*'Français, notre salut n'a point d'autre espérance,
Français, nous périssons, si vous n'aimez la France.'*

He besought his fellow-citizens to secure the triumph of the true France over all factions:

'Ye citizens of France, all ye whose hearts can recognize goodness and honesty, who have a country and know what country means; ye, who knew the meaning of your oath when you swore to defend your country, who hold that it is better *to live free men or else to die*; ye who have sons, wives, parents, brothers and friends with whom and for whom you seek victory, with whom and for whom you are resolved to die, how long shall we talk of liberty and still remain slaves to impious factions? Raise your voices then, show yourselves! Let the nation come forth. . . .'

It appears, moreover, as though the realist conception of country had on all sides quietly prepared its triumph in face of the errors that divided men.

After a few months in exile the *émigrés* recaptured the memory of the solid bonds which linked them with the ancestral heritage. In addition to the laying down of arms by a man like Chamisso, who resigned himself to becoming the *man who has sold his shadow*, that is lost his nationality, there grew up among those who had fled, out of the mirages of exile, a nostalgic patriotism which evoked their land and customs, all the material and spiritual charms of the old land they had left.

In the same way patriotism finally triumphed among the Vendéans when at the outset of Napoleon's reign the re-establishment of Catholic worship in France consecrated the posthumous victory of the rebels of the West. For this spiritual victory was on a par with the civic victory of

the Republican defenders of the threatened mother-country. At the time of the Concordat Catholic preachers reminded Vendée, the home of the unconquerable 'brigands', of the religious basis of patriotism: 'The Christian warrior', said the Bishop of Vannes, 'knows that when he dies for his country, he obeys his God.' 'Religion', the Bishop of Nantes affirmed, 'commands men to fight and to die for their country.'

Finally, the Jacobins, imbued with party ideas, had, in the face of the foreigner, rediscovered the notion of a country that had to be defended in common and, on the fields of battle which gave their names to the victories of France, the tricolour flag of the Parisian insurrectionists had become the symbol of the unity of the entire people.

It was in this way that the people of France, at the very time when they were suppressing the monarchy, gave the most striking proof of the success of the centuries-long effort of the Capetians. Speaking of the surge throughout the nation which produced the revolutionary armies, their best historian writes that in it could be witnessed the triumph of 'all the united and patriotic passions that the monarchy had, for centuries, held it to be its glory to develop in the people of France'. It was therefore the France of the past which continued to inspire the most durable of the new constructions of her ungrateful sons, and the work of the dead continued to rectify the errors of the living. The continuity of the mother-country was quietly affirmed even when the new 'city' claimed to be breaking with all that had gone before.

In the near future, however, which was to triumph? The dividing principles of the new France or the unifying legacy of past centuries, already disparaged and doomed to increasing oblivion?

CHAPTER III

FRENCH CONQUEST BREEDS NATIONALISM IN EUROPE

IN PART I of this study it has been made clear that patriotism does not involve only an awareness of a material and spiritual legacy but also implies a recognition of the exact place of that legacy in the vastness of the universe. The subject has consequently led us to study, from time to time, not merely the principles which dominated the internal structure of the country of France, but also its diplomacy: the totality of its relations with the lands and peoples of the world.

Revolutionary France, having profoundly modified the idea of country traditional under the *Ancien Régime*, also completely altered the lines of its foreign policy.

As we have seen, the diplomacy of the old order was inspired by a robust realism. It was based upon the observation of facts, patient, foreseeing and intelligent. It held to no rigid system of alliances; it was always moulded upon the diverse and changing phenomena of life, recognizing as unchanging only those laws more powerful than man which are a consequence of the immutability of human nature and the immutability of things. Although it recognized the primacy of the spiritual, it would never have sacrificed the immediate interests of civic life to a quixotic 'crusade'.

The men of the Revolution proposed to act quite otherwise. For them ideological propaganda was the first concern of any State worthy of the name. France was called upon to 'liberate' the peoples of the world, to sow widespread the seed of liberty, and so it became the duty of France to declare war on kings, the representatives of an unjust tyranny. Their enthusiasm for this inspiring task led them to neglect those clearly valuable conditions for general political stability which should inspire any prudent diplomacy. For them only the 'aspirations' of the peoples mattered: henceforward these were to be the mainspring of European policy and of the general organization of the world.

(However, these doctrinaire thinkers were soon to be confronted, both in domestic and in foreign affairs, by consequences unforeseen in their systems, consequences produced by the ineluctable nature of things. The armies of the Revolution, which had marched off to war amidst the din of pompous speeches from demagogues, heady songs and triumphal music, were soon to know the intoxication of general victory. It was then that from being the liberators they became the conquerors. The work of Napoleon carried on without interruption

the gigantic territorial expansion that the policy of the revolutionaries had initiated.

But, as France increased her possessions, she provoked in the invaded lands the disquiet that foreign occupation always produces. Even although the warlike courage, the dash and heroism of the soldiers of the Revolution and the Empire were worthy of the best military traditions of France, these soldiers found themselves in the same position as all occupying armies which live on the conquered land: their presence and their security required the execution of harsh measures which greatly upset the life of the inhabitants.

These inhabitants were the more ready to listen to the call for independence in that the ideas of the Revolution had spread widely and deeply among them. The new France had preached the sovereignty of every people, had extolled the individuality of every nation, and called the men of every land to a vivid awareness of their own difference from others. Such teaching bore fruit as the long Napoleonic domination spread and prospered. Every land annexed by the Emperor found its own poets and martyrs to awaken it to a sense of its own individuality and to hatred for the unwanted foreigner. Just because the Revolution had aroused every people to exalt its own obscure forces and deep instincts in the shape of a myth personifying and idealizing it, Napoleonic Europe, under cover of a precarious unity maintained by France, soon seethed with a thousand independence movements ready to burst into action.

Moreover, Napoleon, a true son of the Revolution, was inspired in his treaties, not by the prudence of the older diplomats but by the new principles set forth by the reformers. In obedience to these principles, he himself contributed to the creation of the unity of rival nations and to the drawing of more convenient frontiers for them. In this way, for example, Old Germany, divided into 360 states by Richelieu, was reduced to 36 states and became very ready to listen to the voices of more compelling creators of unity. At the end of the Imperial wars it was a Europe that had been aroused by the revolutionary principles of France which imprisoned France, the heir of the Revolution, within boundaries more confined than those of Louis XVI's reign.

'The war curiously simplified the map of Europe', writes M. Albert Sorel. 'Many frontiers had disappeared: nations, formerly cut to pieces, had been fitted together again. At the time when the deeds of her armies were bringing men together, France was teaching men, through the writings of her thinkers, that there is nothing more splendid for a nation than independence, that this can most surely be attained by union, and finally that nations are sovereign and should employ their sovereignty in the first place to achieve their freedom.'

It was in this way that the ideas spread by the Revolution, though aimed at the creation of a phantom universal country based on accept-

ance of the principles of 1789, yet culminated in the building of a Europe that was more divided than ever before.

(There is a very curious and striking parallelism to be observed in the results of the abstract policy of the Revolution inside France and outside France. Within France the proclamation of the unity of the nation, the exaltation of the idea of the State, resulted not in the greater coherence of France but in the provision of the principle of new discords throughout the nation. Since an abstract definition of country had been offered to every man, everyone gave to it his own individual meaning.

Beyond the boundaries of France the results were similar. Because of their abstract nature the principles of the Revolution could be differently interpreted by every nation, and by attempting to discount the considerable diversity in the traditions of different peoples the Revolution impelled them to assert themselves the more. In the conception of man that the Revolution offered to the world, in the theoretical person whose sovereign rights it proclaimed, each people saw its own image, and discerned the confused mass of its own desires, its own stifled revolts, its own vague feeling of power.)

'The end of the wars which are a direct consequence of the French Revolution marks the beginning of a European Revolution of which France only too keenly experienced the consequences: the rise of nation-states. And so a revolution which called on humanity in general and summoned only citizens of the world to its ideal city replaced the relatively cosmopolitan Europe of the eighteenth century by the ardently national but profoundly rent Europe of the nineteenth century.¹

(The word 'nationality' was moreover created during the period of the Napoleonic domination over Europe.) As we have already said, (the Revolution tended generally to replace the concept 'country' by the concept 'nation', that is to say it impelled the peoples to dream more about their present individuality than about their links with the past and the future. 'Nation' was already a more abstract, less concrete notion than 'country', even although it was based upon a sense of an already existent community. The French nation was made up of that people which was linked with the heritage of the country of France. On the other hand, a 'nationality' is a kind of theoretical State which can in fact have no existence as yet, a State desired by a few men, (that poets sing before its birth) that publicists claim to bring to birth by giving to its fictional form the life of their own desires and their own creative spirit. (Some were to base it upon a common language, inviting all peoples who spoke that same language to unite even although they had never previously formed a State. Others were to base it upon racial

¹ ALBERT SOREL, *L'Europe et la Révolution française*.

unity, and claimed to discover ethnic groups that had remained pure amidst all the mingling of races which fills the pages of European history. Yet others sought to resurrect the geographical limits of the past and to revive some medieval State of which the memory had been lost in the drawing of modern frontiers. There was from now on to be talk of old 'historic rights', and 'national' rivalries were to become archaeological quarrels. Confusion reigned!

But this confusion must not be allowed to obscure the original single cause. It arose logically out of the new right, proclaimed far and wide, according to which peoples should be self-determined without regard for any other consideration than a recognition of their inner call and their individual impetus. Just as the Revolution taught men to know their rights without teaching them that their freedom is limited by laws which transcend those rights, so it encouraged peoples to hearken to their most fantastic inner desires, without reminder that these desires must accord with the general order of the world. The Revolution neglected to observe how States are organized, the strength and passions of neighbours, the capacity for action and the actual power of a land. It praised only this vague, ill-defined right to live which is no more than a dangerous dream if it is not fitted into the confines of a beneficent general order.

This principle of individuality soon manifested itself on all sides and has complicated European politics down to the present day by linking with the passions and greeds which had always dragged the peoples into war a new motive for unbridled appetite which led certain peoples to expand without limitation and to discover continually that they had new and greater 'rights' to life, living-space and power.

The men of '89 had viewed the nation as a people assembled together in a voluntary contract entered into by individuals. Germany was soon to proclaim that this contract between individuals could be swollen with limitless desires for expansion. Was the living being not 'perpetually becoming' in the eyes of German philosophers? If the nation too is pre-eminently a 'person' it must in consequence obey the laws of other living beings. 'The nation-state' (*Volkstum*), wrote the German Jahn at the beginning of the nineteenth century, 'is what is common to a people, its inherent essence, its *moving life*, its power of regeneration, its *ability to reproduce itself*.'

This word *Volkstum* was increasingly lauded by German thinkers during the first half of the nineteenth century. It is to be found in the works of Novalis and of Humboldt, in the teaching of Frederic Schlegel and of Fichte.² The latter was soon to set before his audience the theory

² The *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française*, by Boiste, does not give the word *nationalité* until its 1823 edition, and then it figures as a new word. It had, however, already been used before 1814. From 1830 it was in current use.

of the existence of an 'elect people'. This was the culmination of the individual pride that the Revolution had made the basis of the new idea of nation.

The abstract nature of the term, as usual, allowed it to become the slogan of a thousand differing theories. 'This entirely new word', writes M. Georges Weil, 'owed something of its popularity to its very vagueness. Every theorist, every party, every land could make of it what it pleased, what would legitimize its aspirations.'

In Italy Mazzini made the word 'nationality' the *leitmotif* of his intellectual propaganda. In Eastern Europe too, and in Poland, the term served to crystallise the aspirations for rebellion and independence of various racial groups. Littré, at the end of the nineteenth century, defined the principle of nationalities as that 'according to which portions of the human race *tend* to constitute a single political body'. In other words it was clearly the vagueness of 'becoming' which was predominant in the new principle, and as it spread the ferments of war multiplied.

The concept 'nation', carried to extremes, had produced *nationalisms*, exaggerated manifestations of the individual differences that distinguished peoples that had long been unified.

This individualism, pushed to its extreme consequences, was now becoming the *principle of nationality*, and adding to the separatism of age-old traditions in a divided Europe new and imprecise dissensions, the stronger for their unrestrained violence.

All the warring rivalries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries lie in germ in this sketch of Europe at the close of the Napoleonic wars and the Utopian crusades of the Revolution.

In 1868 Emile de Laveley, a Belgian writer, could say in an article published in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*: 'The question of nationalities inflames the passions of our contemporaries with a fire as burning as religious ideas created in the sixteenth century, and, like them, it will change the face of the world. . . . It mocks at treaties, takes no account of historic rights, sets diplomacy by the ears, threatens all that is settled, alarms all interests, and will, tomorrow perhaps, unleash the curse of war.'

In 1875 Albert Sorel in turn wrote in his *Histoire diplomatique de la guerre franco-allemande*: 'The system of nationalities has already provoked and will provoke more wars than religious quarrels did formerly and than regal ambitions do today.'

In 1933, ending an inquiry into the national grouping of peoples, Fortunat Strowsky was to sum up: 'In my inquiry, I have learnt that the modern principle of discord between the peoples is, in addition to

³ Op. cit., II, p. 368.

the old eternal causes of disorder and war, nationalism, which has replaced natural patriotism almost everywhere. The strength of this nationalism often arises from its confusion and vagueness. In substance it is the concept a people has of its place and its mission among the other peoples."

Because it had made the impossible attempt to divorce man from the age-old traditions which make him, the Revolution ended by imprisoning man more narrowly in those traditions; because it had attempted to talk of *mankind* without observing and following the gently rising steps that lead to the universal, the Revolution dragged man back to the primitive violence of a civilization in which faction was life.

In 1910, Charles Maurras wrote: 'If the movement that has begun continues, every nation, every civilization will jealously take its stand on the principle which is cardinal to it and on the characteristic which is typical of it. There will be Swiss and French traditionalists, English, German, Russian nationalists; there will be fewer and fewer men.'⁴ '... The modern world lags not only behind the Roman Empire, but also behind the Middle Ages, since it is less unified.'⁵

⁴ CHARLES MAURRAS, *Quand les Français ne s'aimaient pas*, 1926 edition, p. 179.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF THE NEW PATRIOTISM

ONE of the principal political reforms of the French Revolution had been to suppress the head of the State in France in order to transfer his power to the entire nation.

As we have seen already, in the course of their history the various classes of the French people had frequently lost sight of the principle of the safety of the realm: the often blind and violent passions and revolts of the people, the selfish greed of the middle-class financier, the passion for domination of the aristocracy, together with its hereditary taste for war, the Utopian dreams of certain thinkers and writers had only too often been in direct contradiction with the principle of general security and with the needs of life within France. However, in the power of the monarchy, which was both the geometrical focus of the aspirations of the whole people and also an organ *independent* of the fluctuations of opinion, there resided the essential function of safeguarding the common good. In this way the dividing tendencies resulting from needs and passions, often in contradiction, were cancelled out.

Henceforth the nation itself was obliged to keep watch over the nation. It was consequently vital that it should become increasingly aware of its own individuality. It has already been suggested that the appearance of *nationalism* is in the first place due to the disappearance of the royal dynasties which had for centuries served as a mirror in which people and country could see their own image without overmuch consideration of the characteristics peculiar to them. The assertion of these peculiarities too became more violent (as we have seen) during the twenty years of war in Europe as a result of the brutal contrasts and comparisons that foreign peoples made at that time. These comparisons were more general and more widespread simply because the new laws for the organization of war compelled whole populations of different lands to march away to battle, whereas before wars had been fought by the small groups of professional armies. From its very origins, then, the new patriotism acquired an essential characteristic of vital importance: *from the beginning it was by definition primarily hatred of the foreigner.* To show oneself a patriot one had boldly to distinguish the land and the people to which one belonged from its neighbours.

*'En épelant le doux nom de patrie
Je tressaillais d'horreur pour l'étranger*

ran one of Béranger's songs.

These two lines might well serve as the device for patriotic writings in all European countries at this period. It is a transfer into peace-time of a mentality that can be justified only in time of war. Let us recall the medieval view of country; whilst it imposed the duty of defending the ancestral heritage from any aggression it in no way claimed that the men of one country should bear perpetual hatred against their neighbours. By contrast, such hatreds became more and more important, first after thirty years of European war and then as there grew up in Europe during the nineteenth century, and even in our own day, that national self-idolatry which had replaced the old dynastic loyalties. Many historians have been astonished by this, not realizing that the process of evolution was logical and that such an exaltation of individuality became even necessary as soon as the natural protector of the State had disappeared. Concern for the common weal was now the daily business of every citizen, whereas he had for centuries been able to go about his personal affairs free of such cares. The safety of the State required that every man should henceforth have perpetually in mind a picture of the national community.

From then on for the same reason writers and publicists who took it upon themselves to offer to the peoples simplified pictures of themselves grew increasingly important. At the heart of each land political questions henceforth depended in large measure on the influence exercised by the group of men that a recent historian has called 'the republic of letters'. With the spoken and the written word, orators and authors created national myths. From 1815 to 1830, throughout a Europe more and more tormented by latent convulsions, the influence of newspapers, of secret societies and of all kinds of writers persuaded the peoples to believe in sweeping generalizations which were designed to sum up their destiny in simple words. Nations that were already living and those still to be born followed the same course and the same path.

In Italy Mazzini and then Gioberti were undertaking the 'education of the Italians' and were preparing the political unification that the House of Savoy carried out in 1870.

In Germany, where Fichte had created the theory of the 'people elect', Hegel was seeking to prove that civilization, first the possession of the Greeks, then of the Romans, had now fallen undoubtedly to the lot of the Germans. Droysen was exciting the yearning for unity. A whole school of archaeologists, philologists and professors was devoting its scientific work to the service of the cause of the unification of the German people. *Sanctus amor patriae dat animum*. Towards 1840 songs of hatred for France appeared in Germany: the *German Rhine*, the *Watch on the Rhine*. Every feeling of anger that had been born during the Napoleonic wars and occupation was feverishly re-kindled by poets who made themselves the heralds of their nation.

Prussian political power was slowly giving precise shape to the dreams of these intellectuals: soon, towards the middle of the nineteenth century, Bismarck's menacing work was to loom up.

In England, Carlyle was praising the obstinately calm and silent men of his race.

Everywhere, moved by a new and passionate concern, the peoples were seeking to know their titles to glory, the characteristics of their individuality, were viewing themselves in the grandiose mirrors presented by their poets, and were from these mirages drawing new passions that became more and more intense, but would have mattered little if the new political system had not given them important parts to play in international politics.

As early as 1853 Gobineau, a Frenchman, introduced into this conflict of ideas the new theory of the racial question that was to engender so much dissension. 'The inequality of races which combine to form a nation', he said, 'is sufficient to explain the whole complicated pattern of the destinies of different peoples'. This theory earned immediate and enormous success in Germany, and its grave consequences were to be felt right into the middle of the twentieth century in certain features of the Hitler movement. Soon after 1900 Gustave Le Bon was discussing the lack of energy of the Latin races and Demolins composed a book to explain 'the reasons for the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon races'.

Thus the motives for dissension and hatred between peoples increased, all of them rising out of the call to magnify those 'rights' of peoples which the French revolutionaries had preached to the whole continent. It has been necessary to sketch this rapid outline of the evolution of nationalism in Europe in the nineteenth century because that evolution is closely linked with the history of the French view of country in the same period, and one would be incomprehensible without the other.

The new French patriotism found its popular expression (on the morrow of the Napoleonic wars) in the *Chansons* of Béranger, which enjoyed an extraordinary vogue in town and country alike.

They repeat all the guiding principles made fashionable by the orators of the Revolution: praise of the 'nation' and a naïve personal vanity, curiously bound up with dreams of a universal republic and overflowing love for all peoples.

The 1815 songs, inspired by grief at the foreign invasion, are; in their incredible mediocrity, the most free from imaginary abstractions, so completely was the patriotism of that era defined by difference from the foreigner.

*'J'aime qu'un Russe soit Russe,
Et qu'un Anglais soit Anglais
Si l'on est Prussien Prusse,
En France soyons Français,*

*Lorsqu'ici nos cœurs émus
Comptent des Français de plus!
Mes amis, mes amis,
Soyons de notre pays,
Oui, soyons de notre pays.*

*Redoutons l'anglomanie!
Elle a déjà gâté tout,
N'allons pas en Germanie
Chercher les règles du goût.
N'empruntons à nos voisins
Que leurs femmes et leurs yins.
Mes amis, mes amis,
Soyons de notre pays,
Oui, soyons de notre pays.*

*En servant notre patrie
Où se fixent pour toujours
Les plaisirs et l'industrie,
Les beaux-arts et les amours,
Aimons, Louis le permet,
Tout ce qu'Henri IV aimait.
Mes amis, mes amis,
Soyons de notre pays
Oui, soyons de notre pays.¹*

*'Gai, Gai, serrons nos rangs.
Espérance
De la France,
Gai! Gai! serrons nos rangs.
En avant, Gaulois et Francs!*

*D'Attila suivant la voix,
Le barbare
Qu'elle égare
Vient une seconde fois
Périr dans les champs gaulois.
Gai! Gai! serrons nos rangs,
En avant, Gaulois et Francs!*

*Renonçant à ses marais,
Le Cosaque
Qui bivouaque
Croît sur la foi des Anglais
Se loger dans nos palais.
Gai! Gai! . . . etc.*

*Le Russe toujours tremblant
Sous la neige
Qui assiège,
Las de pain noir et de gland,
Veut manger notre pain blanc.
Gai! Gai! . . . etc*

¹ 'Le bon Français', May 1814, *Chansons de Béranger*, 1858 edition. Geneva.

*Ces vins que nous amassions
Pour les boire
A la victoire
Seraient bus des Saxons!
Plus de vins, plus de chansons!
Gai! Gai! . . . etc.*

*Pour des Kalmouks durs et laids
Nos filles
Sont trop gentilles,
Nos femmes ont trop d'attraits.
Ah! que leurs fils soient Français!
Gai! Gai! . . . etc.*

*Quoi! ces monuments chéris,
Histoire
De notre gloire,
S'écouleraient en débris!
Quoi! les Prussiens à Paris!
Gai! Gai! . . . etc.*

*Nobles Francs et bons Gaulois
La paix si chère
A la terre
Dans peu viendra sous vos toits
Vous payer de tant d'exploits.
Gai! Gai! serrons nos rangs
Espérance. . . etc.'*

But generally the popular poet invited all men to join in an ideological crusade, the legacy of the Revolution. France must take the sword only to crush tyrants and free peoples.

*'Reine du monde, ô France, ô ma patrie,
Soulève enfin ton front cicatrisé.
Sans qu'à tes yeux leur gloire en soit flétrie,
De tes enfants l'étendard s'est brisé.
Quand la fortune outrageait leur vaillance,
Quand de tes mains tombait ton sceptre d'or,
Tes ennemis disaient encor:
Honneur aux enfants de la France! (bis)*

*Prête l'oreille aux accents de l'histoire:
Quel peuple ancien devant toi n'a tremblé?
Quel nouveau peuple, envieux de ta gloire,
Ne fut cent fois de ta gloire accablé?
En vain l'Anglais a mis dans la balance
L'or que pour vaincre ont mendié les rois:
Des siècles entends-tu la voix?
Honneur aux enfants de la France! (bis)*

*Dieu qui punit le tyran et l'esclave
Veut te voir libre et libre pour toujours.
Que tes plaisirs ne soient plus une entrave!
La liberté doit sourire aux amours.*

*Prends son flambeau, laisse dormir sa lance,
Instruis le monde, et cent peuples divers
Chanteront en brisant leurs fers:
Honneur aux enfants de la France! (bis)²*

*J'ai vu la Paix descendre sur la terre,
Serrant de l'or, des fleurs et des épis.
L'air était calme et du Dieu de la guerre
Elle étouffait les foudres assoupis.
Ah! disait-elle, égaux par la vaillance,
Français, Anglais, Belge, Russe ou Germain,
Peuples, formez une sainte alliance
Et donnez-vous la main.*

*Que Mars en vain n'arrête point sa course.
Fondez les lois de vos pays souffrants.
De notre sang ne livrez plus la source
Aux rois ingrats, aux vastes conquérants.
Des astres faux, conjurez l'influence:
Effroi d'un jour, ils pâliront demain.
Peuples, formez une sainte alliance
Et donnez-vous la main.³*

Heightened national awareness in the various peoples aroused in each of them a new curiosity for the past of their land and gave to the study of history very great importance.

In France the appearance of this feverish sense of history represented yet another important breach with past customs, for it was a land which, as we have seen, had never known the 'archaeological' worship characteristic of the newly arisen peoples who were eager to docket their antecedents. France had always preferred a living sense of tradition, an unswerving attachment to immemorial custom, which had made it possible for the past to inspire the acts of the present without the help of artificial and theoretical reminders. However, as a result of having been violently separated from their ancestral traditions, the Frenchmen who came after the Revolution were compelled to seek artificial bases for their brand-new patriotism.

The consequences would not have been so unfortunate if the teaching of the revolutionaries had been limited to recommending a new curiosity for research into the past. Such a curiosity might have strengthened or else given grounds for many an unformulated reverence and many an instinctive loyalty.

Unhappily the reformers also laid down disrespect and scorn for the past. And so, for fifty years, French historians were to seek in the deeds of their ancestors nothing more than facts to justify contemporary political passions. Thanks to them the records of France become nothing

² *'Les enfants de la France'*, 1819.

³ *'La sainte alliance des peuples'*, 1848.

beyond the painful maturation of the historic miracle represented by the movement of 1789. Augustin Thierry invented the myth of the two races, conqueror and conquered, which since the fifth century had been waging perpetual war on one another until the delayed victory in the eighteenth century. Some historians tried to find the secret of French civilization in the Celtic contribution to France, others to find it in the Frankish contribution. Following Thierry's views, Guizot thought that for thirteen centuries France had been made up of a victorious people and a vanquished people who had quarrelled unceasingly until the decisive battle in 1789. Finally Michelet wrote a long paean of praise to the masses of the French people and attributed every change in the fortunes of France to the hidden power of these masses and their struggle for freedom.

About 1870 Fustel de Coulanges was to write: 'For sixty years our history has been simply the history of a civil war. Our historical theories are the starting-point for all our dissensions.'

This statement emphasized the inherent contradiction in the 'patriotism' of the heirs to the Revolution who had attempted to set up a principle based on respect for the past at the same time as they set about the methodical destruction of the work of that past.

The new cult of the Romantics for archaeology, the delight they took in this German habit of digging up the past, could not redeem the tragic separation that had suddenly been effected between old France and modern France. A land cannot be *created* from anything that lies to hand, with or without the help of ancient documents, when from the outset that law which states that both present and future are based upon the enduring successes of the past is derided.

Moreover, most writers, like the historians, showed throughout their work that party spirit which the revolutionaries had injected even into the word 'patriotism', and they were faithful to that counsel of division which was implied in the new theories. The view they took of the country of France was impregnated with the principles of the Revolution, and for them France had truly begun to exist only in 1789. 'Rationalist, individualist and humanitarian ideas are the heart of the country of France', wrote one of the editors of the nineteenth-century *Grande Encyclopédie*. He continued: '*Noblesse oblige*. The heirs of the Revolution have duties: we must be the representatives and guardians of nationalism.' Ernest Lavisse was to declare: 'Our patriotism is identical with modern reason.' For the majority of writers of the period France is summed up in the substance of the Gospel of the Revolution.

Now the 'humanitarian patriotism' of the Jacobins had consisted, first and foremost, in the proclamation of a desire to free all peoples.

The same quixotic sentiment became more and more firmly established in France as the cult of the Revolution was propagated by writers. The restoration of the French monarchy in 1814 had, of course, prevented French diplomacy from being officially conducted until 1848 in accordance with the new principles. Louis XVIII, Charles X and Louis Philippe carried on a prudent and patient policy for the recovery of France after the upset of war, and their primary consideration in concluding alliances with foreign countries was the necessities of French life.

However, side by side with their power, there was growing the power of writers and orators who were inflaming the minds of the people with Romantic pictures of the Revolution and the Empire. It must in fact be stated that from then onwards nations were becoming more and more susceptible to the facile generalizations concerning their destiny that writers set before their eyes. Above all they were influenced by the elemental emotions of naïve personal vanity, of love or of hatred for particular nations, which tended to take the place of the realistic motives that had traditionally animated policy. Popular movements, inspired by a few clever orators, were to be heard calling for peace or for war, demanding or denouncing some particular alliance, according to the changing tumult of contemporary emotion. The very deputies in the sovereign assemblies espoused on their own behalf the Jacobin desire for ideological crusade and liberation of the peoples. Their speeches called for systems of alliances primarily calculated to flatter popular fancy.

This enduring current of intellectual revolution arising from eighteenth-century theories triumphed in 1848 and under the Second Empire, when the entire foreign policy was inspired by the ideology based on the principle of nationality. The debates on foreign policy of the period abound in statements that have a Jacobin ring.

Thus did the changes operated by 1789 in the French view of country culminate in two currents that were apparently in complete contradiction. On the one hand they led to an increase in the individualism of nations and accentuated the intellectual and emotional gulfs between peoples; on the other they proclaimed the abolition of frontiers and distinctions between human groups as well as the dawn of the universal republic of peace and fraternity.

The misfortune lay principally in the fact that the humanitarian ideals met with most response in France at the very time when, on the other hand, nationality was being magnified in Europe. It may be that France had been too long established as a country to fall a victim to the excessive and puerile vanity implied in the new nationalism. Whatever the reason, French statesmen, worshipping the same Utopian ideals as their ancestors of 1792, thought solely of giving a helping hand to the new nations

and thus worked with their own hands to create new and threatening units in Europe. Napoleon III, for example, strengthened and brought to birth both the unity of Italy and the unity of Germany.

It is a truly astonishing task for the historian to turn the pages of the books written in France at the time, to study official speeches and the products of the most generally accepted publicists. They display an extraordinary blindness to the political state of Europe. Never was the fraternity of all peoples more loudly proclaimed than at this moment when the lairs of the great beasts of prey were being fashioned.

Lamartine, Hugo and the majority of Romantic poets prophesied the coming of the universal republic of peace. In 1838, in his *Qde aux Gallois*, Lamartine announced:

*'Un Sinat de paix entre les nations,
L'homme n'est plus Français, Anglais, Romain, Barbare,
Il est concitoyen de l'Empire de Dieu.'*

In his *Marseillaise de la Paix*, dedicated this time to the Germans, he goes further:

*'Et pourquoi nous haïr et mettre entre les races
Ces bornes où ces eaux, qu'abhorre l'œil de Dieu?
De frontières au ciel voyons-nous quelques traces?
Sa voûte a-t-elle un mur, une borne, un milieu?
Nations! mot pompeux pour dire: Barbarie!
L'amour s'arrête-t-il où s'arrêtent vos pas?
Déchirez ces drapeaux; une autre voix vous crie:
"L'égoïsme et la haine ont seuls une patrie
La Fraternité n'en a pas!"*

*Ce ne sont plus des mers, des degrés, des rivières,
Qui bornent l'héritage entre l'humanité:
Les bornes des esprits sont leurs seules frontières;
Le monde, en s'éclairant, s'élève à l'unité . . .
Ma patrie est partout où rayonne la France
Où son génie éclate aux regards éblouis!
Chacun est du climat de son intelligence;
Je suis concitoyen de tout âme qui pense.
La vérité, c'est mon pays!*

*Et tissons de repos, l'alliance et de joie
L'étendard sympathique où le monde déploie
L'unité, ce blason de Dieu!*

'There will come a day', wrote Jules Simon, 'when there will be but one nation, one country, the human race.' Victor Hugo apostrophized his land as follows: 'You will no longer be France, you will be humanity. You will no longer be a nation, you will be everywhere. You are destined to be wholly dissolved into radiance'.

This cosmopolitanism, united with the idea of partisan propaganda that the Jacobins had always linked with it, was soon to assume two particularly menacing forms. The revolutionaries had never conceived of the union of all men otherwise than in common adherence to the new principles. They had called throughout the world, across the boundaries separating countries, upon all men animated by a like spirit of revolt, to join together in a solid community.

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century this cosmopolitanism took an unexpected shape. The growth of mechanization, the new way in which industry was organized, the coming of international capitalism, the appearance of the proletariat, the acuteness of social problems, gave birth in every land to new suffering and new hunger as well as to a seething up of new ideas. In the midst of this agitation the first proclamations of Karl Marx and working-class socialism rang out. The First International was founded in 1848: 'Workers of the world, unite.' In their first manifesto, Marx and Engels affirmed that 'the proletariat has no country'. And this principle was to be reiterated unflinchingly by the new party well into the twentieth century.

An international ideology united with the party spirit was in direct line of succession to the legacy of the Revolution. It led to a complete negation of the concept of the native country.

At the time an identical denial of country manifested itself in the writings of many thinkers. Most of them had not failed to be struck in the long run by the ingenuous and artificial side of the self-satisfied vanity which was the widespread expression of the new 'patriotism'. In reaction they sought refuge in an intellectual universalism which linked up with that political cosmopolitanism which has just been studied.

*'Je suis concitoyen de toute âme qui pense.
La vérité, c'est mon pays!'*

said Lamartine. "Nationalism" is the latest pretext for great crimes. There are but two races, the thinkers and the others: the frontier which separates them is known as ignorance,"⁴ wrote J. Péladan.

Furthermore writers, disgusted with the childish exaggeration of nationalist pronouncements (counterfeits of true patriotism), came to hate the legitimate conception itself and the sacred feeling which inspired it. And so they disparaged it without mercy: 'Patriotism is the most foolish of passions and the passion of fools', Schopenhauer had written. Gustave Flaubert in his turn proclaimed: 'Patriotism has always seemed to me narrow, limited and extremely stupid. I am the brother in God of all living beings.'

⁴ *'Le sentiment national est le dernier prétexte aux grands crimes. . . . Il n'y a que deux races, celle qui pense et l'autre; la frontière que les sages s'appellent ignorance.'*

There was nothing new in these complicated paradoxes and the attempts to shock, by which these literary anarchists strove to express their individual revolts. Many ancient philosophers had amused themselves in the same way. Their elegant nihilism was not over-important so long as it remained a literary pastime. It became tragic at a time when writers were considered as the leaders of public opinion.

Nevertheless a common-sense reaction began timidly to make itself felt in France during the reign of Louis-Philippe. In face of the increasing threats of danger, Thiers showed himself opposed to the principle of nationality, recognizing it as the agent responsible for the simplification of the map of Germany, whereas the division of Germany had long guaranteed the integrity of the French boundaries. Albert de Bröglie and the Orleanist writers supported Thiers and recalled the 'federal charter of European society' that had been observed in the great treaties of 1648, 1713 and 1815. In opposition to Garnier-Pagès and Rouher, Thiers defended the realistic policy of the past both under the Second Republic and under the Second Empire.

The most utopian of men were suddenly converted by the harsh lesson of facts. After the Prussian victory at Sadowa which set the seal on German unity the Socialist Barbès was overwhelmed and wrote to George Sand criticising the illusions of the Republican pacifists. Marc Dufrasse, in his *Histoire du droit de guerre et de paix*, commented furiously on those 'politicians' full of fanciful ideas, who wanted to compel France to draw the sword perpetually to save other nations. Edgar Quinet violently attacked Lamartine's Romantic mania for Germany, and, in his patriotic alarm, penned this prophetic sentence: 'If French democracy becomes cosmopolitan, as it will be the only one to detach itself from its native soil, it will inevitably become the dupe of all others.'

Finally, since the implacable logic of the laws of the universe is more powerful than men's fantasies, the war and the defeat of 1870, hurled like a thunderbolt from the idyllic heaven that the new 'patriots' were gazing upon, invited the French to count the cost of a century of utopian citizenship. 'France', Joseph de Maistre had written, 'is an impetuous nation which never returns to the truth until it has exhausted all errors.'

CHAPTER V

LOST ILLUSIONS

THE Treaty of Frankfurt, amputating two prosperous French provinces, brought the country in brutal fashion face to face with the problem of the realities of life. Had eighty years of ideological war or pacifist sermons prevented the ancient cupidity of human nature from bursting through? The recent war had stated more cruelly than ever the problem of the relationship between might and right in safeguarding the life of the land. Was the proclamation of universal peace sufficient to establish it? Was an appeal to the kind-heartedness of neighbours enough to transform them into lambs? Or, on the other hand, were not the old principles of traditional policy, which took into account the evil instincts of human nature, the expression of abiding wisdom? The French, blinded by so many dreams, suddenly began to consider the stern lesson of facts when confronted with a Europe built up on the principle of nationality. It was the pain caused to them by this wound inflicted on the very body of their country which led them to think out anew their conception of patriotism and first of all to study the value of those innovations introduced by their eighteenth-century ancestors on which they had enthusiastically fed for so many years.

In addition, the sight of Alsace and Lorraine being roughly torn away from the land of their fathers, the revolt of the inhabitants against the annexation of their province by Germany, these things brought home with painful effect the problem of man's link with society. They gave to abstract discussions a very real and tragic ending.

The affirmations of loyalty to France that the inhabitants of the two provinces made during the next fifty years proved to be the most touching confessions of faith and despair that France had ever inspired. Those Frenchmen who were preserved from the misfortune of their brother countrymen could now no longer remain indifferent to this gap in the land and family of France.

The deputies of Alsace elected to the National Assembly in 1871 had expressed their views thus: 'We hereby proclaim for ever inviolate the right of Alsatians and Lorrainers to remain members of the French nation, and we swear, in our own name, in the name of our constituents and in the name of our children and their descendants, that we will claim that right at all times and in all ways in the face of all usurpers.' In 1874 the first elections held by the Germans resulted in the sending to the Reichstag of deputies uniformly opposed to annexation, and dur-

ing the memorable session of 18th February, Teutsch, the member for Saverne, proclaimed their devotion to their lost country in these terms:

'Our annexation by Germany can be justified neither on moral grounds nor on the grounds of justice. We shall never be able to give our approval to such methods which revolt our reason no less than our heart. Our hearts feel irresistibly drawn towards France and did we not experience such feelings we should not be worthy of your esteem. After two centuries of thought, efforts and deeds in common, the links which unite us with France have become so powerful that neither your arguments, much less brute force, could break them. . . . We have all, every man of us, been sent by our electors to proclaim our devotion to France as well as our right to decide our own fate without foreign interference.'

The case of Alsace-Lorraine set before Europe, in all its gravity, the problem of nationality. Was it just to do such violence to men who had been attached to a civilization for centuries by sympathy and for two hundred years by annexation? This was indeed a violation of that right of the people that had been so ardently proclaimed for the last hundred years. But, as against this, did proclamations suffice to guarantee a right, and was the very wish of the population effective when in contrast every device of policy recommended by prudence and caution for the real protection of national independence was held up to scorn? Certain Frenchmen, unable to find an immediate reply to this burning question, and disturbed by the dilemma it contained, were impelled as a result to revise first of all their conceptions of country and nation.

On the 5th November, 1871, *La Revue des Deux Mondes* published an article with the title, *La transformation de l'idée de patrie*. Its author, Emile Montégut, showed, by a detailed study, how the concept had been sensibly weakened since 1789 because the suppression of local loyalties in the progress of uniform centralization had cut it off from its solid and concrete bases. At the same time the breach with the past had taken from it its essential strength: 'When it carried out this bold reform [the suppression of local loyalties], what was the Revolution doing but robbing the concept of patriotism of all concrete and material characteristics, and reducing it to the state of a pure abstraction, a metaphysical generalization?' He went on: 'Without a past there is no country. Now the Revolution broke openly with the past. This breach was to inflict a deep wound upon the idea of country.' The conclusions of Emile Montégut's article seem to point to the three stages through which patriotism was in fact to evolve during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. While the general tendencies in governmental circles closely followed the revolutionary ideal there grew up in France an intellectual movement comparable in scale with that of the *Encyclopædia* of the eighteenth century. Its guiding principles on the question of patriotism were to be those outlined in Montégut's article:

1. An examination of revolutionary principles concerning the organization of society.

2. A return to the true foundations of patriotism (family, trade and provincial traditions).

3. A renewed respect for the past.

The criticism of the principles of the Revolution during the latter part of the nineteenth century was undertaken according to an entirely new method. Before that the Encyclopedist philosophy of the eighteenth century, the basis of the ideas of the Revolution, had been opposed only by the Catholic clergy fighting against it in the name of Christian doctrine, and the petrified traditionalism of certain social classes which were inimical to any change whether for good or ill and which sighed for the past, regretting it simply because it was the past. What was not known or was little known was a critical method based upon the very weapon which the eighteenth century had used, namely Reason. No doubt doctrinaire thinkers had begun during the very years of the Revolution an intellectual task that might be called Anti-Encyclopedism, but their works remained unknown and their influence non-existent. It was in fact only at the end of the nineteenth century that the younger school of philosophers began both to take a lively interest in the teaching of these unknown predecessors and to reach the same conclusions as a result of critical work objectively pursued with all the rigour of scientific method so much in favour at that time.

Henceforth the attack upon a sociology which had claimed to be the sum of intellectual achievement was carried out on intellectual grounds. The new philosophers used reason to re-order the data of reality in their opposition to the rationalism of the Encyclopedists. No period in the history of patriotism had been more important since the birth of the Encyclopedist movement.

In 1876 Hippolyte Taine began to publish his *Origines de la France contemporaine*. It was the first scientific study of the revolutionary epoch and the books of which it was composed appeared in succession until 1884. Taine's work is of capital importance for the subject under discussion here since it suddenly confronted the general public with a criticism of the philosophical abstractions upon which the men of the eighteenth century had built their science of society and dealt so serious a blow at the old realistic conception of country.

'Apply the social contract, if you wish', wrote Taine, 'but do not apply it to the men for whom it was designed. They are abstract men of no time and no place, pure entities born at the bidding of a metaphysical wand. They were in fact made by deliberately subtracting all those differences which distinguish one man from another, a Frenchman from a Papuan, a modern Englishman from a Breton of Julius Caesar's day, and only what they had in common was retained. Thus an infinitely minute residue was

obtained, an extremely abbreviated extract of human nature, that is to say, according to the contemporary definition, "a being who desires happiness and has the faculty of reason", nothing more and nothing less. Upon this model were fashioned several million beings absolutely similar to one another; then, as a result of a second simplification as tremendous as the first, they were all supposed independent and equal, having no past and no relatives, without liabilities, without traditions, and without habits, like so many arithmetical units, all separable, all equal in value, and it was imagined that being together for the first time they were conversing for the first time.

From the nature that was imagined for them and the situation in which they were placed, it was not difficult to deduce their interests, their will and their contract. But because that contract suited them it does not follow that it will suit others. On the contrary, it follows that it will not suit others, and its unsuitability, if it is imposed on a living people, will be very considerable, will be measured by the immense distance which separates an empty abstraction, a philosophical fancy, an unsubstantial dumb show from a real and complete man.¹

And Taine added:

'It is immediately obvious how different real Frenchmen are from the simple, separate and invisible monads that the philosophers insist on substituting for them. *They have no need to create an association, it already exists: for eight centuries there has existed among them a corporate body.* It was their interest, their duty and even their inmost will to promote the safety and prosperity of that body. If contracts can be spoken of in this connection, their quasi-contract exists, has already been entered into. At the very least one primary clause is laid down and overrides all others. The State must not be dissolved. The nation, even if it be unanimous, has no right to dispose arbitrarily of the body corporate, to expose it to risk for a whim, to subordinate it to the application of a theory or the interest of a class, even if that class be the most numerous. *For the body corporate does not belong to that class but to the whole community, past, present and future. Each generation is only the temporary director and the trustee responsible for a precious and glorious legacy which it has received from its predecessor and which it is bound to hand on to its successor.* In this endowment in perpetuity to which every Frenchman since the birth of France has made his offering the intention of the innumerable benefactors is clear for all to see; they gave conditionally, the condition being that the endowment should remain intact and that each beneficiary should be no more than an administrator. Should one beneficiary out of over-confidence and levity, haste or bias, impair what has been entrusted to him, he injures his predecessors whose sacrifices he nullifies and he injures his successors whose hopes he nullifies.'

Taine called the men of the Revolution 'political geometricians'.

Almost at the same time the powerful studies written immediately after the Terror by Joseph de Maistre and Count de Bonald were revived with renewed success. Like Taine, these writers had criticized the abstract and theoretical principles of eighteenth-century thinkers and their claim to study man in isolation from his natural ties with his land and the customs of his ancestors.

¹ TAINÉ, *La Révolution*, I, Book ii, ch. ii, par. 2. •

'The chief and possibly the sole cause of the evils which we are experiencing', de Maistre had written, 'is contempt for antiquity, or, what comes to the same thing, contempt for experience, when, as Bossuet put it so well, there is nothing better than what has been tried. The idleness and the proud ignorance of this century take much more kindly to theories which cost nothing and flatter pride than to the lessons of moderation and obedience that have to be painfully sought in History.'² 'The more human reason confines itself within its own bounds, the more does it seek to find all its methods within itself; the more absurd it is, the more it shows its weakness. . . . Not only can a people not give itself a constitution, but no assembly of any kind, a small number of men in comparison with the total population, can ever carry out such a project. A crowd of men gathering to create a constitution recalls the naive story of the Tower of Babel. "Come," said the Children of man among themselves, "let us build us a city and a tower whose top shall reach unto heaven, in order to make our name famous before we are scattered abroad." But the work is called *Babel*, that is to say *confusion*: each man *speaks his own language*: no one understands his fellow and dispersion is inevitable. There never has been, there never will be, there can be no nation constituted *a priori*.'³

On another occasion Joseph de Maistre mocked at those who believe that 'nations can be made with ink'.

In 1875 Fustel de Coulanges, the greatest historian of the period, endorsed the conclusions of de Maistre: 'Political institutions are never the work of a man's will; even the will of a whole people would not suffice to create them. . . . Peoples are not governed according to their wishes but according as the totality of their interests and the background of their opinions demand.'

Maurice Barrès was later to ridicule the 'intellectual' in politics: 'Intellectual: an individual who supposes that society should be founded upon logic and who does not realize that in fact it is based upon needs pre-dating and possibly alien to individual reason.'⁴

The Anti-Encyclopedist philosophers charged their ancestors then with having confused rationalism and reason; with having, in their discussion of society, preferred a purely abstract and intellectual method to the *investigation of reality*, to the making of syntheses from *faits*, to the 'lesson of experience'. They had neglected what Bonald called 'those eternal laws which take precedence over men and ages and which wise men in all times have acknowledged. . . .'

The striking feature of these political studies, whether new or re-discovered, was the modesty of their authors' conclusions, the lack of emphasis, in which they strongly contrasted with eighteenth-century writers. These had boasted of reviving the golden age, of inaugurating the Age of Progress (in capital letters), of making all men happy and of founding the perfect society. Their successors, having completed their

² J. DE MAISTRE, *Étude sur la souveraineté*, II, ii.

³ J. DE MAISTRE, *Mélanges*, pp. 238-9.

⁴ MAURICE BARRÈS: *Scènes et Doctrines*, Vol. I, p. 48.

studies and learnt the complexities of man's life in society, simply said: 'These are the lessons of the past and these the common-sense conclusions.'

'I do not say: here is my system', wrote Bonald, 'for I am not making a system, but I do go so far as to say: here is the natural system for the political organization of societies, in so far as it appears from the history of societies.' And at the end of his *Théorie du pouvoir* he concluded: 'I submit the political part of my work to the test of experience.'

Such was the method used, in complete contrast with the proud ideology of the Century of Enlightenment. It was peculiarly capable, especially at the end of the nineteenth century, of attracting those minds which were faithful to the rigour of scientific method triumphant on all sides at the period. Towards the turn of the century the novelist Paul Bourget discovered with astonishment that 'there is no difference between scientific politics and traditional politics'.

Thus there grew up on all sides a critical attack on the principles of the Revolution and gradually men were reminded of the laws on which patriotism had been based in Old France.

One of the most important stages in this revival was a renewal of respect for the past of France.

'Si nous avons ce terroir,
O frères, ô frères,
Si nous avons ce terroir,
C'est que nos aïeux l'ont eu'

sang Frédéric Mistral.

Ernest Renan wrote:

'Let us then renounce the belief that the 1789 Revolution relieves us of the need to penetrate farther into man's past. However important that event may be, it produces in us an optical illusion, just as the last range of mountains always limits our view and hides from us the higher mountains which lie beyond. The Revolution makes its strong initial impression on us by the haughtiness of its bearing and by the atmosphere of violent passion common to all stories which are enacted in the street. It long dazzled me. I was well aware of the intellectual mediocrity and of the lack of education of its makers; but I persisted in discovering in their work vast political consequences.

'Since then I have realized that with a few exceptions the men of the period were as innocent of political knowledge as of philosophy and history. Seeing few things at a time they did not notice what a complex mechanism human society is, nor what slight adjustments affect its very conditions of existence and its splendour. They were entirely lacking in any deep knowledge of history; a certain grandiloquent bad taste troubled their brains and put them in that state of intoxication which is peculiar to French minds and which, though it often produces great things, yet makes impossible any forecast of the future and any breadth of political view.'

⁵ E. RENAN, *Essais de morale et de critique*, pp. 44-6.

Moreover, Romantic History, on which the French had fed for three-quarters of a century, was deposed by History reconstructed by scientific and methodical research. 'History is not an art, it is a pure science', affirmed Fustel de Coulanges. This sounded the death-knell of the facile deformations of Old France that had been current since the Revolution. The beginning of this renewal should no doubt be dated from 1840, the year in which Guizot's example encouraged the habit of documentation everywhere. Henceforth historians were to attempt to base their view of the past upon texts or upon precise indications.

The work of Fustel de Coulanges marked the decisive turning point. This modest but sound writer declared in 1875 in the preface to his *Histoire des institutions politiques de l'ancienne France*: 'In writing this book we have had no thought of praising or decrying the ancient institutions of France. *We have sought solely to describe them and to demonstrate their continuity.*'

Thus a true picture of Old France reappeared before the eyes of her forgetful or ungrateful sons, her age-old unity, her solid foundations and the primitive strength of her civilization were revealed. Frenchmen learned that their heritage was not that novel construction of paper and formulae, the logical perfection of which had been so lauded. There took shape before their eyes a picture of the efforts made in close collaboration, by the royal house and by the people, to accumulate the territory and to associate the inhabitants in spite of pains and difficulties. They became conscious of the unaging glories of France, its victories with sword and spirit, its privileged place in Europe and in the world for so many centuries. They learnt to understand that the greatest triumphs in a people's history are not the violent shocks, the abrupt changes, the upheavals of Revolution, but the miracles wrought by patient effort, by care and by love to ensure the permanent safety of the national inheritance and the protection of its heirs. ⁹

In 1875, Ernest Renan wrote:

'By the tenth century *Francia* has become a nation and in effect during the second half of that century she replaces the Carolingian . . . by a family truly wedded to the soil, the family of the Dukes of France which has its own domain and not simply an abstract title like the Carolingians. It was then that there began with Paris as its centre the admirable process of national development.'¹⁰ ' . . . No nation has ever created a fuller legend than that of the great Capetian dynasty, a kind of religion born in Saint-Denis and consecrated at Rheims with the help of the bishops, having its own rites, its liturgy, its holy Ampulla and its oriflamme. Every nationality has its corresponding dynasty in which the genius and the interests of the nation are incarnate; national consciousness is only firm and stable when it has contracted an indissoluble union with a family which binds itself by that contract to have no other interest separate from that of the nation.

'Never was this identification as perfect as between France and the House

⁹ E. RENAN, *La réforme intellectuelle et morale*, p. 129.

of Capet. They were more than kings, they were priests. Priest-king like David, the King of France wore the cope and bore the sword, and God guided him in his counsels. The King of England was little concerned with justice, he defended his rights against the barons; the Emperor of Germany was even less concerned with it, he spent all his time hunting in the mountains while the great orb turned as it would; the King of France was just: surrounded by his counsellors and his solemn scribes, justice in his grasp, he resembled Solomon. His coronation, imitating that of the kings of Israel, was something strange and unique. France had created an eighth sacrament, administered only in Rheims, the sacrament of kingship."

Fustel de Coulanges emphasized the consequences that this new science of the past would have upon contemporary ideas of patriotism:

'Love of the earth alone is not patriotism. To it must be added love of our history. Geographical France is of little account if the love we bear it is not heightened by respect for its history. Its history is as much our possession as the soil. We have no right to neglect it. . . . During the last fifty years history has chiefly taught us to hate one another. Whatever it did it attacked some side of France. . . . Hence there arose a strange and peculiar kind of patriotism. For many among us, to be a patriot meant being the enemy of Old France. . . . Fundamentally such patriotism means hatred for all that is French. It inspires in us distrust; instead of uniting us against the foreigner it drives us straight into civil war. . . . True patriotism is not love of the earth, it is love of the past, respect for the generations which have preceded us. Our historians have taught us only to curse them and have counselled us only to avoid resembling them. They interrupt French tradition and yet imagine that French patriotism will remain. They continually state that foreign countries surpass France and yet suppose that we shall love France. For the last fifty years we have loved England, we have praised Germany, we have admired America. Everyone finds his ideal outside France. We consider ourselves liberal-minded patriots when we have spoken ill of our own country. Involuntarily, and without noticing it, we have acquired the habit of blushing for France and denying her. In the depths of our souls we nourish a kind of unconscious hatred towards ourselves. That is the opposite of that love of self which is said to be natural to man, it is renunciation of self.'

Fustel de Coulanges was not of course preaching uncritical praise of one's own traditions. That would have been as puérile as the vanity of the nationalisms of his time and would have been a lie of a different kind. He called for an end to the unjust disparagement of the long centuries that had moulded French unity.

This return to respect for the past represented a reaction against the work of the Revolution, which had sought a complete break with the past. At the same time the philosopher Auguste Comte, in spite of being an ardent worshipper of Progress, declared that 'the living would be increasingly governed by the dead.'

Alongside this new cult of the past and its lessons there was a growing revival of those feelings which had nurtured the concrete patriotism

⁷ Ibid., p. 250.

of Old France: respect for the real wealth of the land and its civilization. Beneath the theoretical chequerboard of the new Departments there was a renaissance of the living unity of the old provinces and a powerful regional movement took shape in the East and the South, in the West and the Centre of France. It was a regionalism similar to that of bygone days, that is without any separatist intention but providing the general idea of France with manifold and life-giving roots.

In the East Maurice Barrès published from 1897 onwards a series of novels aiming at the confrontation of 'the cosmopolitan, humanitarian and individualist theories' inspired by the 1789 Revolution with the lessons drawn from ancestral tradition, thanks to which Frenchmen would be led to renew their contact with certain realities and certain abiding laws.

'We are the prolongation of our parents,' said Barrès. 'To fortify our own selves we must take our place in a continuous process and link ourselves with those from whom we inherit. . . .'

'Although my love of order, a love to which I compel myself, and although my instinctive feeling of gratitude, since I acknowledge that I am indebted to all civilizations, although these feelings convince me of the respect due to all who presided over the development of the various nationalities, yet I experience but little pleasure in the municipal museum of Correr and in San Giovanni e Paolo where the effigies and bones of the leaders of Venice are to be seen. When I travelled through Greece I must admit that the fortresses interested me more than the remains of Hellenism. It was not that I was dreaming of the great trading warriors of Venice but that my heart was with my natural lords and masters, the adventurous knights of Burgundy and Champagne.'⁸

At the opposite extreme of France, in Provence, with its Mediterranean sun and its Latin traditions, the poet Frédéric Mistral was reviving with his song the civilization of a province and was at the same time emphasizing the consequences his efforts would have on the work of restoring natural patriotism based on tradition.

'France must once again grow green in our memories. It is only by steeping ourselves in the past, by encouraging the new shoots which are budding in folklore, that we shall free ourselves from the dangerous weakness of cosmopolitanism and from the platitudes of the universal leveling process. . . . France, our mother-country, was of old the Queen among nations in the arts of peace and war. But the world then led a more natural life and no man blushed for his own village nor was it necessary to speak French to be able to love France. For whether one was Knight of Arras or Drummer at Arcole, when one had to die one died. . . . The true patriotism springs from one's devotion to one's land, one's family and one's customs; the best soldiers, believe me, are not those who sing and shout after drinking; they are those who weep when they leave home.

Consequently, if we seek to revive our country, we must revive the

⁸ MAURICE BARRÈS, *Amor et dolori sacrum*, p. 19.

sources of love of country: religion, traditions, national memories and ancient dialects, and we must compete city by city and province by province in study, work and honour to glorify in every way the name of France.'

Mistral never ceased to make it clear that his cult of the province was the starting-point of love for France as a whole: it was not the barren pride of local particularism, which would have been destined to failure. 'None better than he has set out the hierarchy of affections in local and national patriotisms.

'It is a wondrous thing to be called a son of France', he sang in *Les Iles d'or*, '... men of Provence, burning as with one flame, we are frankly and loyally men of greater France. . . . Our people must know that our ancestors, freely but with their dignity intact, merged into France the generous, but retained their tongue, their customs, their way of life. Just as the Durance eventually flows into the Rhône the gay realm of Provence finally fell asleep in the heart of France.'

A few years later Charles Péguy was to call upon Orleans, the province of his forebears, with its fields tilled by the unrelenting work of ploughmen and vine-dressers, with its white sandy beaches along the rippling Loire, its willow-covered islets, to become the basis for his love of the wider country of France:

'The tenacious peasants, the vine-dressers, my ancestors, the ancients of Vennecy and Saint-Jean-de-Braye, of Chécý and Bon and Mardié, the patient ancestors who, from the trees and bushes of Orleans Forest, from the sands of the Loire, wrested so many an acre of good vine-land, they have not been long, the ancients, they have lost no time, it did not take them long to wrest their grandson back from the bourgeois world, from bourgeois society. . . . In me, around me, within me, all conspires, above me, all contributes to make of me a peasant, not of the Danube, for that would still be literature, but simply a peasant of the valley of the Loire, a woodman in a forest which is not even the immortal forest of Gastine since it is the mortal forest of Orleans, a vine-dresser on the slopes and sands of the Loire. . . .'

*'Le long du coteau courbe et des nobles vallées,
Les châteaux sont semés comme des reposoirs,
Et dans la majesté des matins et des soirs,
La Loire et ses vassaux s'en vont par ces allées.
Cent vingt châteaux lui font une suite courtoise,
Plus nombreux, plus nerveux, plus fins que des palais.
Ils ont nom Valençay, Saint-Aignan et Langeais,
Chenonceau et Chambord, Azay, le Lude, Amboise.'*

And side by side with his native province Péguy evoked all the other jewels of the real face of France:

'I would give Versailles, Paris and Saint-Denis; they were given to him, Versailles and Paris and Saint-Denis, and others too were given him; for him were made and to him were given the towers of Notre Dame and my local village steeple; for him were made and to him were given Versailles, Fontainebleau and even Rambouillet, the homes or as they are called

the residences of the king . . . and many an admirable French cathedral entire, Notre Dame entire, Amiens entire, Chartres entire, all the other cathedrals all entire . . . and many an admirable little parish church . . . and many an admirable village and town, many of those admirable little French towns . . . and the simple villages with their roads and their paths, long villages, linear, threadlike, rather scattered, rather dispersed, rather straggling along the road, for they are naught else but the little white pebbles of Tom Thumb: they help us to find our way as we return to the home of our father, these many villages, not humble but modest, outstretched on the warm mother earth.⁹

After a hundred years of turgid praise to the hollow statue of an abstract country, poets were now forgetting André Chénier's goddess France and rediscovering the features of a real face composed of earth and water, a hexagon surrounded by mountain and sea, drawn at the western edge of the continent by generations of planners and builders, an ancient mosaic of field and meadow, trodden by millions of ancestors, with diverse horizons, with varied landscapes under the joint sway of the mists and the sun. And the poets sang of the myriad powers which had blended without loss throughout the centuries to form at last the diverse harmony of unified France.

In 1895 Paul Bourget, a young novelist then at the height of his fame, undertook a journey through America, and on his return he summed up in a few celebrated pages the faith of the new generation. The infatuation of the eighteenth century for America is well-known and so too is the enthusiasm with which the 'philosophers' of Louis XVI's reign had greeted the land of Freedom and Right and its virtuous and upright citizens, so different from those of the old Western societies in which civilization was, according to Rousseau, entirely perverted. The 1895 traveller, in contrast, admitted that he had frequently experienced in the course of his travels a nostalgia 'for a land with a history, where past generations uphold the present', and after close observation and a detailed study of American democracy, he concluded with these words, which would have greatly astonished his eighteenth-century ancestor, and which seem to summarize the current of ideas that we have just studied:

'America is a conservative democracy, that is, exactly the opposite of our own. This is due to the fact that America has instinctively put into practice the maxim which presides over the life of nations as over that of individuals: *'res eodem modo conservantur quo generantur'*, things are preserved by the same conditions as give rise to them . . . (In America) all regions built up in this way logically from their origins have the same profound unity and the same elasticity, whatever the nature of their government may nevertheless be. . . . We can learn this lesson from American democracy, but if we are to apply it we shall need to work in an opposite direction from that taken by the democratic party in France over the last hundred years.

⁹ CHARLES PÉGUY, *La France*, ed. Pierre Péguy, 1939, pp. 37-9.

We must seek out what yet remains of Old France and adhere to it with all our strength, rediscover the naturally unified traditional province hidden beneath the artificial and divided Department, municipal autonomy beneath centralized administration, local living Universities beneath the official dead University, reconstruct the family and its estate by restoring freedom of bequest. . . .

This is the advice which an impartial observer can deduce from all these observations about the United States. If their democracy is so living and so strong, it is because the individual is free and powerful in opposition to a State whose powers are reduced to a minimum. If that democracy combines all individual wills in one vast harmony it is because it is truly national. It is because it set up a system by which the State centralized in itself all the strength of the land and because it broke abruptly all historic links between our past and our present that our Revolution has so deeply drained the resources of French vitality. This is no new criticism. Balzac, Le Play and Taine, setting out from such different standpoints and with such different methods, all arrived at this same conclusion.'

The principles of the eighteenth century had however not only dealt a terrible blow at patriotism: they had given an exaggerated and perverse value to the concept of the nation, as we have seen already.

As a consequence of this the critics of the later nineteenth century found it necessary to go beyond their effort to revive true patriotism through a study of the realities from which it springs, and to conduct a searching investigation into that idea which their forefathers had cherished.

The problem was of European importance, but France was particularly concerned to find a solution of it since she had first spread, then for a hundred years upheld, throughout the world, the concepts upon which the principles of nationality had been founded. Worship of race, worship of language, exhumation of so-called 'historic rights', all these dangerous novelties had been born of the call launched in 1792 for the 'liberation' of all peoples, for the glorious emergence of national individualities, for the strengthening of hostile differences.

The defeat of 1870 prevented Frenchmen of future generations from speaking of the peoples' 'right' with the same light-heartedness as their theorizing ancestors. It was the Alsace-Lorraine question which led Fustel de Coulanges, directly after the annexation of the eastern provinces, to contradict the German historian Mommsen in a celebrated article, in which he underlined the fact that French thought henceforth condemned the oversimplified and dangerous ideas that resulted from the principle of nationality:

'Neither race nor language makes nationality. Men feel in their hearts that they belong to the same people when they share ideas, interests, affections, memories and hopes. These make a country. These are the reasons for which men are willing to march together, to work together and together to fight, live and die for one another. One's country is all that which a man loves.'

Ernest Renan, replying to the German Frederic Strauss, said that to call upon ethnography to determine nationality would lead to 'wars of extermination, zoological wars'. He amplified his criticism with force and penetration in *La réforme intellectuelle et morale*:

'History has drawn the boundaries of nations. . . . We must beware lest through erudition and philosophy we lose touch with humanity and justice. There will be incessant war if we do not admit some limitation in time for past violence. Lorraine was undoubtedly once part of the Germanic Empire; but so also were Holland, Switzerland, Italy even as late as Benevento, and, prior to the Treaty of Verdun, so was the whole of France, even including Catalonia. Yet before being invaded by the Germanic race Alsace was a Celtic land, as was part of southern Germany. We do not deduce from this that southern Germany should be French; let no one therefore maintain on the other hand that, by ancient rights, Metz and Luxembourg should be German. It is impossible to say where this kind of archaeologizing would stop. . . .

'With such a philosophy of history the only legitimate rights in the world would be those of the orang-outang, unjustly expropriated through the treachery of civilized man. We must be less absolute. We must, alongside the rights of the dead, give some small place to the rights of the living. We cannot admit that humanity should be bound indefinitely by the marriages, the battles, the treaties of those limited, ignorant and selfish beings who in the Middle Ages were at the head of affairs in this poor world.'¹⁰

At the very same time Michelet was repeating in *La France devant l'Europe* his condemnation of the racial theory.

Though France had herself given birth to the principle of nationalities, she at least vigorously opposed the theories which made racial or linguistic questions, and endless archaeological research, the basis of nationality.

It is, however, evident that if the majority of Frenchmen of the period were very strongly opposed to certain deformed versions of the principle of nationality they none the less did not mean to deny the principle itself. Renan and Fustel were as 'Jacobin'-minded on the question as Michelet. Nor did any among them succeed in constructing a logical theory or a complete system on this burning question, for they did not go to the deepest roots of the problem. Although their conclusions were undoubtedly decidedly superior to those to be found elsewhere in Europe at the time they were still imperfect, and even on occasion gave signs of inner contradiction.

In 1882 Renan gave a famous lecture in the Sorbonne, asking 'What is a Nation?' He studied the different ways in which ancient and modern peoples had formed groups, the vast agglomerations of the Chinese or the Egyptians, the Hebrew or Arab tribes, the cities founded on the

¹⁰ Op. cit. pp. 195-7.

pattern of Athens or Sparta, the Israelite community maintained by a religious bond, the States federated after the fashion of Switzerland or America.

He declared that Antiquity had not known the 'nation' in the modern sense of the word, that no people had been aware of the community which it formed as were those in the contemporary period. What was the basis of this perfected fusion of a people? Not a racial principle, nor the sharing of a common language, nor yet religion, which was no longer, as it had been in Antiquity, merged in the cult of the city itself. Nor did a community of interests produce such a result. 'A *Zollverein* is not a mother country.' Is it then geography and the earth itself which give birth to a nation? Michelet on the one hand and Taine on the other, as is well known, declared that climate and environment were almost sufficient in themselves to effect the unification of a people. But it is not so. No, they were not responsible.

'The earth provides the field for battle and for work. Man provides the soul. Man is everything in the making of that sacred thing called a people. A nation is a spiritual principle arising out of the profound complexities of history, it is a family of the spirit, not a group fashioned by the dictates of the soil. . . . A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things which really are but one make up this soul, this spiritual principle. One lies in the past, the other in the future. One lies in the common possession of a rich legacy of memories; the other in present consent, the desire to live together, the will to give continuity of value to the inheritance that each individual has received. Man, gentlemen, cannot be improvised. The nation is, like the individual, the product of a long past filled with effort, sacrifice and devotion. Ancestor-worship is the most legitimate of all cults, our ancestors have made us what we are. . . .

'To share in the common glories of the past, to have a common will in the present; to have done great things together, to desire to do yet others, those are the conditions essential for the existence of a people. . . . One's love goes to the house that one has built and that one is to hand on. The Spartan hymn "We are what you were; we shall be what you are" is in its simplicity the essence of every country's national anthem.'

This passage from Renan, so splendid in form and so noble in content, is undoubtedly a synthesis of compelling force and penetration compared with the clumsy generalizations which, as we have seen, developed in France and Europe after the proclamation of the principle of nationality. Nevertheless it seems to be based on inadequate information and does not fully satisfy the mind. Although it destroys most of the illusions, it does not provide a perfectly coherent doctrine that can replace them.

When Renan said of the nation that it consisted *solely* of the common will of the people he was in fact *restating the principle which had given rise to the theories he was combating*. To call a nation a spiritual principle is to repeat the abstractions of eighteenth-century political thought and to give new form to the old error of the social contract.

For a nation is real and concrete before ever it becomes an attitude of mind. A nation is the real heir to a long past before ever becoming the will to continue that past. Renan also said that the life of a nation is a daily plebiscite. No doubt, but that plebiscite is not simply the sum of individual wills, either now or in the past; if man's action is to endure he must make a pact with time by basing his effort on institutions.

At the end of his lecture Renan moreover admitted the weakness of certain sections of this theory based solely upon the will of the individual. 'Human wills change . . . nations must therefore have an end. And yet their existence is the guarantee of liberty which would be doomed if the world had but a single law and a single master.'

Renan ended then on a note of resignation. Basing his concept on the individual will, he denied the possibility of the continuance of the nation while yet affirming the absolute necessity of its continuance.

The idea of the nation, of a communal consciousness, having resisted the illusory deformations imposed upon it by the Revolution, thus came down into modern times to strengthen the traditional conception of love for the fatherland. But is it condemned to fall into a sterility which will make it untenable for future generations?

For over a hundred years this idea had been the standard behind which grave errors, with infinite social and political complications, had marched. Was this due to something wrong in the fundamental idea or to something pernicious in the form conferred by those who had advanced it, but not essentially present in the idea itself?

This dilemma was not solved by those French writers and thinkers who, at the end of the nineteenth century, set out to rediscover patriotism. They did not succeed in determining the exact and complete definition of these new principles, nor the way in which they harmonized with the legacy of the past, nor—more important still—with those laws which are unaffected by the passage of time.

ATTEMPTS TO RECONCILE NATIONALISM
AND PATRIOTISM

AT THE very end of the nineteenth century, whereas in the official circles of the newly established Third Republic fidelity to the principles of the eighteenth century was maintained, the intellectual movement born in the '70s developed and spread.

As a result of the increasingly evident eclipse of patriotism and the sentiments which inspire it a reaction in defence set in on every side. There was an attack on the abstractions and illusions which denied patriotism the support of its props in reality. There was an attempt to nullify the influence of German thought (then triumphant throughout university circles and conducive to neglect of the most essential traditions of French genius). There was a struggle against the growth of internationalism (both working-class socialism and intellectualism). The reaction similarly showed itself to be a necessary opposition to other extremely violent European nationalist movements.

It must be remembered that the influence of the revolutionary principles concerned with patriotism had produced very different effects in France and in Europe. Of the spiritual legacy of the Jacobins France had particularly cultivated the idea of cosmopolitanism, whereas Europe on the other hand had fastened upon the idea of setting up violently assertive national states. Some Frenchmen realized at the end of the nineteenth century that patriotism was losing more and more ground in France just when, at her frontiers, nationalism was conjuring up more and more threatening spectres.

These necessities of defence gave birth at the beginning of the twentieth century to the movement later known as *nationalism*. In fact it was to undergo many changes from its origins until it attained perfection and fulfilment.

At first nothing more than a battle-cry, it might have dissolved into a childish jingoism as a result of the atmosphere of passion and violence in which it moved and had its being. It grew angry too and hot-headed from feeding on the desire for revenge which followed the 1870 defeat. This first form of nationalism that we shall study produced then, like the movement that had preceded it, a provisional, temporary, incomplete transitional body of thought. 'Nationalism' as a term still masked a good deal of ambiguity. At times it praised principles essential to the life of societies, at other the puerile traditions of impenitent Jacobinism.

In opposition to the defenders of internationalism and the counterfeiters of patriotism and nationalism, it brought no final solution to the problems which had already defeated its immediate predecessors. Two names are chiefly connected with the history of this reaction: those of Maurice Barrès and Paul Déroulède.

Soon, however, there was to be constructed an intellectual system much more complete than its predecessor, for which the merit must be largely attributed to Charles Maurras. While it made a vigorous contribution to the discussions and polemics peculiar to the period, it rose above the incomplete and partial victories of the hour. Achieving a complete synthesis of the criticisms formulated by the Anti-Encyclopedist movement of intellectuals, it sought the eternal truths of the study of society. It aimed at defining and justifying the concepts of country and nation and at emphasizing those of their elements which are both enduring and *necessary*. It freed these ideas from the deformations which had betrayed their meaning for a hundred years. It showed them to be in harmony with the supreme conquests of civilization and with the desire for universal peace between men.

In this chapter we shall first examine the early incomplete *nationalism*.

As we have already seen, on the morrow of 1870 Maurice Barrès was impressed by the need to restore to French patriotism the concrete support of respect for 'the land and the dead'. This is the constructive section of his work as a social thinker, and in it he renewed the earlier criticisms of the greatest philosophers of the nineteenth century (concerning the abstract form given to patriotism by the revolutionaries) and rediscovered the eternal laws which govern societies.

Déroulède too commented in 1909 that doctrinaire thinkers had gradually brought 'the nation to a state of indifference towards its country'. He reminded his hearers that:

'The mother-country is the material and non-material domain acquired and transmitted by our ancestors. Its existence enfolds and preserves our individual life. . . . Some theorists tell us that we are citizens of the world, but what is a citizen without a city?'¹

'To set mankind the example of a just and fraternal country is to do humanity a service a hundred times more worth while than to preach the suppression of country. Of all the methods of civilization aiming at making men help their fellows . . . none . . . has ever borne a nobler title than Country (*Patrie*), land of our fathers, spirit of our fathers, speech and soul of our fathers.'²

The movement of return to the real bases of patriotism continued to extend and to prosper. At the outset of the Great War Antoine Redier showed the need for it in an interesting passage which makes clear the

¹ PAUL DÉROULÈDE: *Discours*, 1909.

² PAUL DÉROULÈDE: *Discours*, 12 July, 1904.

incapacity of the official version of patriotism, which had been preached for a hundred years, to provide anything more than a defensive system in time of war without being able to come to terms with the tasks and preoccupations of peace.

Antoine Redier questioned a soldier who was full of the idea of what he was fighting, the enemy, but almost ignorant of what he was defending, France. Here are Redier's thoughts:

'Patriotism has retained only two places of refuge: the land and tradition. To realize that France exists and to love her a man must live close to her soil and must know her history. This man works in the town. He is attached to no field, no meadow, no familiar stream, and the books that are given to his like have taught him nothing about our past except mistakes.'

'If I ask a peasant the same question, he will not display any greater eloquence. Those miniature countries which were our villages have been wounded, if not killed. To recognize France in one corner of land it is not enough to pass one's days there in happiness or sadness. What gives value to a patch of land is the fact that our ancestors too owned it each in turn: they bore the names of the men of to-day, performed similar deeds in their season, made merry on fair-days with songs and dances that have not changed, went to pray in the little church which is still there and, dressed in clothes to which their bodies were accustomed, led a simple life that was rich in memory and in promise.'

'A peasant who retained all these customs would, without further reflexion, be a patriot like his ancestors, if not like the thirty-nine millions of his living Brothers. He would love France in her perennality, not in her present size and strength; knowing little, but more history than geography, he would still be capable of dying on a battlefield and of knowing why.'

Moreover, in the countryside there were voices which were heeded as they widened the horizons of the poor and showed them the full extent of their country around them: the old women told heroic tales, the priest gathered his flock together to sing the *TE DEUM* after the king's victories, the lord who went off to the wars brought back an echo of the nations' wars.'

Thus Joan of Arc, while still a child, could think of France in her lost village of Domrémy. Yet France to a peasant girl of those days, when there was no telegraph and scarcely any post, no railways and few roads, constituted an empire more distant than the whole universe to a man of the twentieth century.'

'Today the native-land no longer has the same values. The old songs are forgotten; peasants and shepherdesses gabble, music-hall choruses. The church is deserted and the old women are silent. They do not recognize their descendants in these children disguised as city folk. . . . There is no affection for the dead; they were ignorant and are blushed for. . . . Some little provincial patriotism has alone survived in the soul of the countryman. It is narrow and exclusive, but that does not offend me. . . . To strengthen and enlarge this frail love that each bears for his little corner it would have been enough to teach them the glories of the common mother-country.'

'What did the newspapers tell them on the outbreak of war? That they were going to fight for civilization and the freedom of the world. Not one of our popular writers thought of singing the praises of his land and of claiming for that land alone the benefit of the French blood that was to be shed in torrents.'

Yet our humanitarian soldiers are there, faithful to the new duty which has arisen. They keep their watch, some without understanding, others misunderstanding. Some inner force impels them. Just as faith proves God, so their patriotic instinct gives moving tribute to the everlastingness of the race.

The simple souls, who scarcely know what they are doing here, and the dupes, who fight for words, are under the spell of a third kind of Frenchman: those who know and love their country.

For there are men who have succumbed neither to ignorance nor to fatal errors. Whilst the demagogues were preaching social war they silently prepared their souls for national war. Those in office were concerned with the happiness of mankind; these thought of the greatness of France. The army was being disorganized; they cherished it as the supreme resource. These wise men were rarely to be seen in public; they lived in their homes. Devotion to family precedes devotion to country; to live life one is to serve the other. Throughout France there are very many admirable families, rich or poor, who have offered up to their land their finest blood.

My look-out, who angrily watches the Boches, does not think of all that. He hates the enemy, that is all. *That may be enough in war-time. After the peace it will not be enough.*³

One remark strikes us particularly in these pages, since we are familiar with it from studying the evolution of patriotism in France subsequent to Jacobinism. It is that the exaltation of nationalism, of the individuality of any people, in place of the realistic conception of the mother-country, is proved to be especially valuable in times of war and not in times of peace. Yet it is the arts of peace which set the seal of beauty on the conquests of human civilizations.

The Nationalists sought at the same time to make the French aware of the formidable power created by Prussia and of the threat which that power constituted to France. Barrès and Déroulède both showed their distress at the international development of working-class socialism; they supported the anti-Semitic movement which had begun during Louis Philippe's reign (at the time the new power of international finance made its appearance) and which Edouard Drumont had made popular after 1885 by the publication of *La France juive*.

All these efforts sought to defend at all costs the mother-country which was threatened with material and intellectual defeat. Soon a new battle became urgent. France, in fact, which had been territorially wounded ever since the 1870 defeat, was also gravely threatened spiritually.

'Immediately after 1870', one commentator on the work of Barrès wrote, 'nationalism was to become not only a protest against territorial mutilation but also an attempt to organize resistance to all the non-French elements that France was welcoming, particularly to German philosophy and science.'⁴

³ ANTOINE REDIER: *Méditations dans la tranchée*, 17 October, 1915.

⁴ JACQUES MADAULE: *Le nationalisme de Maurice Barrès*. Paris, 1943.

It is well known that the cosmopolitanism of nineteenth-century French writers had very frequently disintegrated into a passionate infatuation for some one or other of the other nations of the world. But the Anglomania of eighteenth-century philosophers and the Germanomania dear to Mme. de Staël and to the Romantics had taken gigantic strides forward as the French relinquished love of their own traditions.

French thinkers had reached the point of misunderstanding or denying the whole essence of the spiritual capital that had been accumulated by their ancestors and of affirming that France had made no contribution at all to the work of civilization. In philosophy, in politics, in the realm of the arts, all wisdom and all beauty had been taught to France by the English or the Germans. Renan's boundless admiration for German science and the romantic passion Michelet, Lamartine and George Sand had avowed for 'honest Germany' are well known. The whole of the University was, at the end of the nineteenth century, enthusiastic about Kant and German historical methods, so different from the traditional French methods.

The craze in University circles was echoed by the noisy praise of propagandists. Laurent Tailhade wrote in 1895: 'History, philosophy, music, all the arts and all the sciences, were learnt by us from the German genius.' In the same year a literary review, *L'Œuvre Sociale*, declared: 'Everyone now admits that for a century Germany has been the greatest reservoir of ideas of which human thought can proudly boast.' 'We have exhausted', said the same review, 'all the latent possibilities of the Latin mind' and we must bring into effect 'the possibility of the social forms which Kant and his glorious disciples have brought into the human field.'⁵

Just as it had attempted to revive respect for the legacy of the past, Nationalism now reacted vigorously to defend the civilizing tradition of the French people. 'There are already a few of us, aren't there, my dear Barrès', wrote Charles Maurras in 1900, 'who are raising, you in the Vosges and myself by the lakes, what you would call the first bastions of intellectual nationalism.'

In his novels, Barrès perfected his subtle but vigorous, ironic and penetrating criticism of the characteristics of the German mind and contrasted them with those of French traditions. Again and again he told what strength a man's thought acquires when it draws its sustenance from the sources of the civilization to which the man belongs by birth. Charles Maurras was later to write the story of the efforts of the French Nationalists about 1900 to revive respect for the genius of the past.

⁵ 'Germanolatry is the seed of the new cosmopolitanism', said Charles Maurras indignantly.

'When the French were out of love with themselves^a they could bear nothing made by their own hand nor by the hand of their forbears. . . . No art, no literature, no idea found favour in their eyes unless it came from elsewhere. . . . Our Nationalism began by being esthetic. It ained at restoring to France the merits denied her, or else ill known or neglected. Without for a moment losing sight of the fact that art and reason seek the universal we brought once again to light the services and the homage rendered to beauty and truth by men of French blood. . . . The anarchy of the Barbarians discomfits us because we have allowed ourselves to renounce our historic and civilizing order. . . . (Now) there does exist a noble and pure French tradition which is to be recognized by this sign that it smiles upon the French, that works inspired by it are completely successful and that outside it we achieve nothing pure. . . . (It is) the firm and lithe support, the solid substance of the greatest, of the most fortunate periods of our history, the seventeenth century, the Renaissance and the heart of the Middle Ages. A tradition which first developed in innocence, by natural inclination and simple nobility of heart, then later with clear intent, the most human feature of our heritage from Greece and Rome.'

Maurice Barrès was impressed too, as Balzac, Taine and Renan had been, by the progress of the centralization of administration carried on in France, especially since Bonaparte had practised a rigid application of the principles of the Revolution. He discovered that the French mother-country of former days had flourished with a prodigious swarm of local, regional and individual freedoms, and under a central authority that was not tyrannical. He discovered that these fruitful differences, these dissimilarities that had been maintained, corresponded, moreover, with the very nature of the soil of France as well as with the continuous tradition of French life; that the essence of the French motherland had always been unification, without restraint upon the diverse local autonomies. For these reasons he became a vigorous apostle of regionalism and of administrative decentralization.

He felt, however, the danger of extolling too loudly the merits of provincial autonomy in a land that was already divided by so many quarrels and so greatly weakened. The only remedy he could see was some kind of military dictatorship, since the army appeared to him the only remaining healthy and truly national element in the land, and it was here that he made common cause with Déroulède and the party of the *Revanche*.

The weakness of his conclusions, however, is evident, and also the fact that they are contrary to the nature and tradition of France, which has always been the enemy of tyranny and of the ephemeral and violent adventures of dictatorship. Like almost all Barrès' political activities, these conclusions represent merely a temporary expedient, a weapon to hand for desperate defence. In common with the violent speeches of Déroulède

^a This well-known sentence is often wrongly interpreted. It means 'when the French did not love themselves', and not 'when they did not love one another'.

⁷ *Quand les Français ne s'aimaient pas*, 1926 edn., p. 140.

the recommendations of Barrès seem to us; after the lapse of time, of a piece, with the purely defensive patriotic notions of the Jacobins or Gambetta. In each case, under the spur of necessity, there was the same hasty construction of a rough system in a land that was deprived of its permanent principles of cohesion; there was a kind of siege mentality, stimulated by an overheated atmosphere. Jacobin patriotism had never been anything but a war-time creation; it could not adapt itself to peace.

Moreover, Barrès and Déroulède, like Renan, thought solely of basing the safety of the land and its people upon individual wills alone—that is to say upon unstable and momentary forces. In spite of their criticism of certain of the principles of the Revolution they kept returning to the *individualist conception dear to the revolutionaries*, and it is quite certain that, like Renan, they were conscious of the weakness which undermined their demonstrations and their struggles.

Renan, basing the nation's welfare upon the present will of its nationals, had ended: 'As human wills change nations must perish.' If they had had the courage Barrès and Déroulède would no doubt have pronounced the same judgement. Their nationalism was similarly based on the wills of individuals. What if those wills were to conflict and cancel one another? What if the power of the destroyers were greater than that of the constructors? The problem remained to be solved.

The struggle of Barrès, Déroulède and their like often gives the impression of a despairing quixotic crusade. There comes to mind the picture of doctors seated at the sick-bed of France, curing a wound here and there, without succeeding in discovering the secret which would restore to the great vigorous body its former health. The often heroic obstinacy of these men and their stirring efforts did not fundamentally arrest the disease with which their devotion and their grief were tainted. Their efforts were provisional remedies.

The first attempt at constructive nationalism after 1870 was the sad and magnificent struggle of a people who intended to die standing, but who none the less accepted the sentence of death.

CHAPTER VII

THE RECONCILIATION

WE HAVE seen that the conception of patriotism throughout the nineteenth century was dominated by the revolutionary idea. On the one hand the appeal for the emancipation of peoples led to the creation of a Europe divided by various highly inflamed individualistic nationalisms; on the other hand the isolation of man from his primitive ties by the Encyclopedists divorced him from his traditions as from enslaving fetters and led many to deny allegiance to country or nation and to seek refuge in the illusory ideal of a universal Fatherland.

But by the beginning of the twentieth century a reaction had set in.

It was becoming more and more apparent that dissensions between Frenchmen were so profound that it was scarcely possible to believe that unity would long endure of its own accord. Consequently the Nationalism of Barrès and Déroulède was simply a halt on the downward path, a noble attempt to delay for a few years the disappearance of the mother-country.

A more effective and more complete attempt to reverse the trend now made its appearance.

Charles Maurras gave the doctrine of 'Integral Nationalism' a forcefulness that it had never before attained by distinguishing, among the elements in its composition, those that were bound up with the eternal laws of human societies and those which belonged solely to the temporary strategy that the misfortunes of the moment made necessary.

No one has more forcibly emphasized the fact that the contemporary division of the people into rival separate nationalisms constitutes a step backwards in the history of civilization. Looking out upon the world of 1900, Maurras told those who were announcing the coming of universal brotherhood and general peace: 'The world is moving not towards cosmopolitanism but towards national barriers, not towards universal democracy but towards jealous and competitive aristocracies, and this change which was perceptible ten years ago is today quite obvious.'

He also wrote, however:

'French Nationalism is very far from maintaining that the practical necessity in our day of a rigid national system represents progress in the history of the world or represents an absolute postulate in law and in philosophy; on the contrary it views the idea of nationalism as a most

regrettable decline from the unity of the Middle Ages, it continually expresses profound regret for the unity of mankind that the Republic of Christendom represented.

French Nationalism was in no way to be confused with pseudo-mystical doctrines current in Europe which took decadence for progress: 'What, in French Nationalism, has been a necessary defence against the rigours of the times is, by contrast, in German nationalism, presented, constituted and systematized as good in itself.'

These were the modest terms in which French Nationalism initially defined itself: *a necessary defence against the rigours of the times*. It was well aware of its place in the history of human civilization, but the state of France and the world dictated its immediate and imperative duty. For to dream dreams of universal citizenship in a world violently divided into rival groupings was to sentence oneself to be duped by one's neighbours and to speedy disappearance. The threatened city must therefore be defended.

At this point there arises the fundamental problem: can the idea of the fatherland be justified, since it is the only possible rallying idea in times of conflict? For a hundred years many Frenchmen had denied this concept, which their ancestors had venerated without being clearly aware of it. The idea of cosmopolitanism had made giant strides. The 'humanitarian' reformers claimed that the idea of a fatherland was simply a despicable relic of primitive civilization and that in future the human mind could pay no heed to it.

Moreover, since J. J. Rousseau had declared that societies are based solely upon a *contract voluntarily entered upon* by individuals, it follows that the contract could be revoked or change its form. Even the defenders of Nationalism, from Renan to Barrès, had based their revival of certain principles solely upon the changing individual wills of men of the same nation. Since, therefore, many Frenchmen henceforth refused to revere their country, in what way was it possible to justify in their eyes any struggle in which Nationalism was involved?

Charles Maurras realized more clearly than all the critics who had preceded him that the Nationalist effort could achieve its full scope only after men had been reminded of fundamental truths to be observed in the development of all human societies and which thus become the justification on the eternal plane of the passing quarrels of the moment. Once the illusion of national pride had been destroyed it was immediately vital in view of the progress made by cosmopolitanism, to prove that temporary deformations in no way impaired the strength, the rightness or the lawfulness of the idea of country.

Maurras recalled that man when he comes into the world and as soon as he opens his eyes to the light is already indebted to the civilization to

which he belongs without any effort of his own individual will having been involved.

'The little chick breaks his shell and begins to run. It would be almost true for him to say, "I am free." But it would be far from true for the little man. Long before he runs he must be delivered from his mother, washed, clothed, fed. Before he can be taught his first steps, his first words, he must be protected from mortal risks. The little instinct he has is quite incapable of assuring him the cares he needs; he must receive them all, arranged for him, from others.

'He was born. His will was not born, nor, strictly speaking was his power to act. He has said neither "I" nor "Me", and is still far from doing so by the time that a circle of speedy protecting acts has been described around him. Almost lifeless, the little man, who would die if he were left, to face raw nature, is received into the precinct of another nature, eager, tender and human; he lives only because he is a little citizen of this society.'

Here we have the essential justification to man of the idea of country; the individual contracted an original debt before his will, before any 'contract' was involved.

'We do not know whether it is just that a son cannot choose his father', said Charles Maurras, 'or that a citizen should be thrust into a race before he has manifested his free will, his free choice. We do know that things cannot happen in any other way. Man thus receives, before he has given anything, the immense benefit of the work of his fathers, their earthly patrimony and their spiritual heritage, the *terra patrum*: a land, a civilization. Thus is imposed on man a duty which is entirely just: I have received, I must pay.'

This lawful duty apart, it is moreover purely a question of personal interest for the citizen to safeguard his mother-country; if the society to which he belongs disappears, all the material and spiritual wealth which it alone guarantees him disappears with it. Life in society is an essential part of the nature of man, who is absolutely incapable of existing without it. The nation-state is one mode of that natural state. It can be called a 'fact of nature'.

From the outset of his work, Charles Maurras, following in the footsteps of all the Anti-Encyclopedist critics, took care not to base his political thought upon the illusion of an ideal man. In order to attain the highest achievements of civilization, his method was to keep to the strict natural order, of which man can modify the form but can never destroy the unchanging principle. He did not, however, sink into fatalism or oppressive determinism, but calling upon his fellow-countrymen to change the course of history and to halt the march of a decadent philosophy he extolled the magnificent liberty of man and his power to modify the paths of destiny. But man's power over things and living beings must first be based upon an act of submission to an order which

surpasses him. 'Immediately man begins to work with nature', said Charles Maurras, 'the effort is as it were reduced and shared.'

In all his definitions of country he therefore began by emphasizing the *real* elements in its composition which the eighteenth-century philosophers had so scorned.

'It is an *ideal* France which figures in the jargon of the English, German or Swiss disputants who preside over the cult of the Republic. We are citizens of a *real* France. By France we understand a reality that is more precious and more beautiful than all else, not a vague idea. *Pulcherrima rerum*, the most beautiful of things, as the Roman would say of his native country: for us it means the earth and its variety, blood and its rich lives, traditions, interests, feelings. We think of houses, altars and tombs in which holy relics repose.

'The finest definition of country is linked with the very name country. *Patrie terra patrum*, that tells one all, earth, blood, *their community of soul*, and the divine genius which brought them together.'

All the nineteenth-century political thinkers, even the most vehement critics of the civic ideas of the revolutionaries, had, however, chosen to extol the abstract elements in the concepts 'country' and 'nation', the spiritual principle which they enclosed. Now a thinker had arrived who besought his fellow-citizens to concern themselves with the solid wealth their fathers had bequeathed them, and then to raise their eyes with greater certainty towards the wealth of the world invisible. 'My excellent masters once taught me', said Charles Maurras, 'that between the natural and the supernatural there is no opposition but *composition*: the supernatural being limited to raising up and completing nature.'

Once justified by abiding truths Nationalism had no subsequent difficulty in proving the urgency of its immediate activity. For a century France had been disintegrating in material strength and in wealth and at the same time had been deeply undermined by attacks directed against the most vital features of her genius. Could the remedy, however, be supplied by the totality of individual wills that constitute a people, as had been believed by every one of the reformers of the Nationalist movement that was born of the defeat of 1870?

Here Charles Maurras contributed the most important element in his doctrine. Although a nationalist he had no illusions concerning the power of a *nation* to retain its unity indefinitely if unaided. 'Nationality is a fact of nature, but it is not as strictly necessary as the need to live in common. . . . It is quite true that States have been founded on amity, but it is quite false that once founded they are based on that alone.' And Charles Maurras went on to explain: 'Nationality derives from human nature defined and qualified by society. It corresponds to a vast mass of desires, passions, needs, aspirations, customs, habits, ways of living, thinking, talking; it often even affects the physical mould, and in

it the considered thought and the deliberate will of men play a part which may be primordial but is not always nor most frequently so. . . .'

Within a nation there exist great conflicts of interests, differences and deep antagonisms which strive to neutralize and to cancel one another. A citizen may very well not feel any kinship for most of the men of his nation nor cultivate any great friendship for them. What an illusion is it, then, to seek to base the unity of the nation and the safety of the country on such shifting sands of contradictory impulses, desires and wills! Some co-ordination and motive organization must maintain harmony between such opposing forces, for their own real interest lies in concert; some State, independent of the nation though blended in it, must preserve and safeguard, sometimes *in spite of it*. Man's age-long effort must be prolonged in institutions that will ensure the endurance of its rewards.

The most important discovery made by Charles Maurras in his political system was the revival of this truth which no one else had emphasized in the same way since the eighteenth century. The new nationalism, in consequence of its firm definition of the eternal principles which served as its basis for action, went much further than the provisional 'fighting ideas' dealt with in an earlier chapter. From the outset it aimed at a synthesis comparable with the most complete philosophies of politics, like the Aristotelian, the Platonic or that of the medieval schoolmen.

Even from the point of view of its contemporary value as a fighting philosophy this 'conservative' nationalism is very different from the aggressive and emotional ideas which had flourished throughout Europe in the nineteenth century. This difference is perfectly analysed, in our view, by Father de la Brière in an article published by the *Revue Philosophique* in June 1927. He distinguishes two quite different senses of the term 'nationalism'.

The term, in its first meaning, is bound up with the principle of nationalities, with the theory of the right of peoples to self-determination, to break away if they please from the State to which they belong or to adhere to another, according to their transient aspirations.

But, in its second meaning, nationalism is

'the political conception which, in the governing of the State, is chiefly concerned with the national interest rather than with any other juridical or social consideration. The national interest is proclaimed supreme *in its sphere*, in its own kind, not by comparison with every other value and every other right, but by comparison with each of those particular social and political objectives which may legitimately and reasonably hold first rank in the preoccupations of statesmen and in the management of public affairs. Nationalism then appears as a healthy and beneficial reaction against hostile or anarchical forces, against disintegrating influences.'

For fifty years many thinking Frenchmen had looked for someone who might come forward to undertake the salutary task of combating the decline of the patriotic idea in France. Charles Maurras besought his contemporaries to look beyond their own time and its problems to a future in which France should still be a reality for coming generations, and to fight for the restoration of those institutions which alone give endurance to fugitive human effort, those institutions which are the necessary framework of a country. He called all Frenchmen to make an effort to defend their country; but he never stopped pointing out that this effort would be disappointingly short-lived if it were not integrated into a succession of cumulative achievements, and if it were not supported by those sustaining forces by which alone the well-being of mankind can be perpetuated.

Following after the best of the Anti-Encyclopedist thinkers and all the traditionalist philosophers of Old France, Maurras realized that the secret of preserving the heritage of France and of safeguarding it throughout the centuries resided in a political framework which would make it possible for one generation to build on the work of another, which provided the means of extending the work of the genius or the hero, and of palliating the results of weaknesses, errors and contemporary mediocrity. That is the meaning of his famous phrase '*Politique d'abord.*'

In this way true nationalism was defined and set in its position in the universal order, not extolled as an absolute but as a temporary effort necessary solely to rediscover the lost thread in a tradition of material and spiritual inheritance. 'What our ancestors did by custom and feeling we ourselves must do with scientific certainty and assurance, by reason and by will-power.' If the French would not lend themselves to this effort the direst prophecies would prove well founded. 'The last Frenchman will be able to write on the last French field: We did not adequately defend what we had in common. We did not adequately defend our truest selves.'

The new nationalism began, in consequence, by drawing up a kind of inventory of the material and spiritual riches which constituted the heritage of the country of France, without making of the French community a god above the rest of the world.

It would seem that many of those who have studied Integral Nationalism have not realized that it was primarily a reconciliation of patriotism. Instead of insisting solely upon the contemporary pattern of the French community it evoked all the riches inherited by that community. Recalling the origins of nationalist activity and its struggles against the influence of German thought, Charles Maurras wrote:

'Our deductions were based upon the historical and territorial characteristics of France, the land and its races, the provinces and the State, the records and the legends, the abundant treasure of ideas, poetry and art. Patriotism based upon these non-material factors is yet the most realistic of all. . . . The patriotism of our middle-aged elders, a so-called *idéal* patriotism, was purely moral and judicial; heedless of the land, careless of history, it had let itself be fed upon the thin gruel of immanent justice or of the restoration of a vague "right" that was without body or soul, an indiscriminate conception which might be adopted by a tribe of Redskins. . . . For our part we have never accepted the vicious argument about "countries" in general; our argument has always concerned the country of the French, strengthened by the rights and acquisitions of the French.'

'This patriotism, firmly based upon the earth, is not to be confused with the pseudo-mystical adoration of soil and blood which has intoxicated some European peoples. It is in reality the traditional lore of the genius of France inspiring the French of today.'

'The definition of "the land of the father" is one with our word "fatherland". It has a long inheritance from the Latin fathers, coming down through Bossuet. . . .'

The fact that there are no complete treatises on country and on nation to be found in French tradition is because the fathers of France never knew the misfortunes of today:

'I admit that our forerunners had the bad fortune to live too happily. . . . The strength of their frontiers allowed them to meditate upon very different problems much higher placed in the realm of ideas, more deeply rooted in the human heart. This explains the reticence of our classical literature upon certain sensitive aspects of the national life. It was not obsessed by the conditions of defence nor by the laws of duration. . . . But reticence is not absence, and as soon as our masters are closely scrutinized the essence of the most certain principles is to be seen, as it were, just beneath the surface, ready to bear fruit in counsels and rules for civic life. . . .'

'Since then our lot has changed; we have suffered five invasions in the five quarter-centuries since the Declaration of the Rights of Man. That is enough to invite reflection upon the possibility of other invasions. The old principles implicit in the wisdom of this land acquire in consequence a greatly enhanced value. What abides in them gives us light by which to count and examine the titles, reasons and moral foundations of our nationality, which is menaced as much by armed force as by perfidious reasoning. . . . The principles of classical policy unravel the aims for which this robust and wise land has deserved to live, to grow and to prosper.'

A nation, like a family, is much more serenely and firmly united by a traditional sense of the inheritance that is held in common (that is by the idea of the native country) than by a fevered awareness of the community it at present constitutes (that is by the idea of the nation-state in its modern connotation).

Moreover, the spiritual heritage of France is one with that of civilization in general, so that when a French Nationalist shows respect

for the heritage of his forbears he is unconstrainedly fulfilling his duty as a member of the human race. 'When we defend France', wrote Charles Maurras, 'when, with outstretched hands, we protect the torch of the spirit, we have laboured to defend traditional, eternal and universal values.'

Here again we are confronted by one of the essential discoveries of the new nationalism. Far more than any of the Anti-Encyclopedist thinkers, Charles Maurras sought to distinguish in the spiritual legacy of the French that which was essential and that which had played only a secondary part. He continually reminded his readers of the guiding threads that run throughout the spiritual tradition of France: Greek wisdom, Roman order and the transcendent revelation of Christianity.

To a superficial observer it may sometimes seem that Charles Maurras completely neglected the contributions to French culture of the Celt, the German and the East, but to him it was far more important to discover an order than to label a multiplicity of factors. On one occasion, having recommended curiosity about all matters, careful attention to everything which appears at the gate of the 'intellectual keep', he added: 'But then one must act, one must classify. The whole of life lies in the problem of organization.'

His contribution to the inventory of the spiritual wealth of France, what remains valid in his system, is in fact this attempt to organize the hierarchy he discovered. If he frequently emphasized the contribution of Græco-Roman civilization to French culture it was not so much out of personal prejudice or intellectual preference but because he saw in the 'bright Mediterranean Empire' 'the motherland of order, which is to say of authority, of hierarchy, of inequalities and liberties naturally compounded'; it was because he had discovered that the essential feature of the country of the French was precisely that it had found for so many voices in the visible and invisible world a firm pattern in which each sound was integrated into a divine harmony.

Such was the intellectual task accomplished at the beginning of the twentieth century by one Frenchman impressed by his country's misfortunes. His work is in a different class from the partial investigations of the nineteenth-century critics. This is not because it discovered unknown truths: all the elements of the Maurras teaching can equally well be found in the work of the great political thinkers of Antiquity as well as in that of the traditionalist writers of Old France, and even his attack on the errors of his own day can be found in other Anti-Encyclopedist writers.

His supreme merit is that he was the first to construct a *synthesis* and to establish an order for fragmentary, scattered and inchoate elements.

He alone distinguishes between those elements in the Nationalist movement which are linked with passing needs and those which are bound up with the essential tasks of mankind.

In this respect the civilizing value of this work is incomparable. It not only appeals to all the concrete forces in the vague traditional patriotism but it satisfies the uneasy curiosity that was at the source of contemporary realization of the idea of the nation. It attacks the pernicious principle of the ideology spread throughout the world by the Revolution, because it establishes for every man a harmony between Country and Universe, between man as a citizen and man as a human being.

In the eighteenth century Frenchmen had preached to the world a pernicious ideology based on an inaccurate science of human society. It was in France that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the wisdom of the ancient teaching was distilled to form an elixir of life for the future.

At its greatest moments, the very form of the genius of 'France' was not a petrified respect for the past but fidelity to that which had shown through the centuries that it could *endure*.

CONCLUSION

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THE OBJECT of this book has been to discover whether the history of the Frenchman's view of his native country could provide us with any lesson that might help to clarify the present chaotic conception of the idea of patriotism and the mother country.

The lesson taught by the pre-revolutionary history of France has already been summarized in the first part of this book. We have seen that in these times, although there was a strong feeling among Frenchmen for their country, it was very rarely defined. When, in the eighteenth century, the whole people became conscious of this feeling, this was the logical culmination of a process of evolution. We know how that evolution became profoundly disrupted and deflected by the Revolution.

In 1789 the French were urged into a kind of individualistic revolt which on the one hand tended to exalt the national community in the present by denying it the support of traditions hammered out by long centuries of effort, and on the other hand tended to deprive the short-lived work of man of the permanent help of wise institutions.

It was natural that, after eight centuries of effort towards unity, the concept of nation (consciousness of the community formed by a people linked with the same heritage) should become more and more familiar to Frenchmen. They might have realized clearly what they felt vaguely; their dim traditions might have been explained; the enlightenment of history might have served to strengthen natural fidelity to tradition.

The ideology of the Revolution, however, postulated as the reason for cohesion not the common effort of the past but the present will of the individual. The association between man and man was shown as being purely voluntary, it was a 'contract' which joined together the members of a people. The concept of the 'nation' was exalted at the very moment when France was being told to forget the only abiding reasons for its unity: those which made it the heir of the past. For 'the country is the heritage; the nation is the heir'.

At the same time the backbone of the organism of an independent State was removed. Until then it had been possible for men of the same people not to feel conscious all the time that they were the guardians of the State. The suppression of the Monarchy made necessary an exaggerated sense of national group-feeling, so that the unity of the group could be maintained.

We know what excess resulted from these principles when they had been developed to their extreme conclusions, either in France or in

other European countries. Nations which could only endure by the voluntary effort of their members were led into vast mythical generalizations about their destiny, into heightened images of their own selves. Irritable national pride became attached to these views, the worst of delusions and errors crept into them, and from them arose unreasoning infatuations and hatreds for other peoples throughout the world.

In disgust at such excesses an increasingly large number of citizens hastened to deny the very existence of country and to seek refuge in Utopian dreams of the Universal City which the Revolution had also foretold. Such an idea, however, though valid in the realm of the spirit, could not, on the political plane, efface the real facts of human society. The harsh reply that the growing ferocity of wars forced upon all such dreamers is only too well known.

The world today is appalled at the sight of the emergence of two gigantic empires, beside which the outlines of former frontiers take on the air of boundaries to a child's garden. Doubt seizes upon the men of every people. Are individual countries doomed? Many a citizen believes so, some with rejoicing, others with regret.

The past history of the land of France brings to man today a lesson which shines brightly through the chaos around. It is not the 'fatherland' that is doomed but its counterfeit, violent exaggerations of the particularity of people, pride in individualism, brutal secession from the community of man. Such excesses can end only in dreams of domination or in endless war.

The idea of a mother country remains unchangeable, for it is substantial with the very nature of man. When he comes into the world *he receives a thousand times more than he contributes* and is thus, with the first breath he draws, bound up with the labours and the fate of his ancestors. Whatever may be the modes of human grouping in the future, and as far as the imagination can envisage, nothing can withstand the *reality* that we are all heirs to a culture. Frenchmen are the sons of the men who made France: it is a truth which explains many of their aspects and which at the same time conditions the essential part of their social duties in the future.

Moreover it is this idea of country which best helps man to stretch his hands to the future, since it puts the emphasis on the idea of *continuity*, whereas the idea of nation, in lonely exaltation, divorced from the realities which gave it birth, reduced to an exasperated awareness of individuality, limits man to the present, to his brief existence, and having made him forget his ancestors incites him to neglect posterity.

By contrast the idea of country is in no way an ossification of the mind in respect for time past; it has, within it, none of the characteristics of

immobility; it does not ask of man nostalgic and sentimental rumination on outworn themes. It does not whisper: 'Let us dig up the past, like careful archaeologists'; it says:

'I show you what has endured. I remind you of what has succeeded. But I teach you this so that you may add your contribution to the long sequence of toil and struggle, for you are continuers. Men who truly live seek in the words of the departed only a sacrament to sustain their courage amid the risks and adventures of the unknown. If man is the heir to a long succession of efforts he is also charged with forging his own destiny each day, with exerting daily his genius and his boldness in the struggle against the universe, that is both his friend and his enemy.'

For this reason the idea of country sets man in his place in a series of unending duration and, giving to his humble deeds the support of those effected by the myriads of imperious dead, links him at the same time with the exacting mysteries of the future. It provides him with miraculous solace in time by associating his often bitter destiny with others that shine everlastingly.

In the same way, in space, the idea of country, as it emerges from the lessons of French history, harmonizes admirably with the spiritual ideal of universality. 'The French will always be my best soldiers for the Crusade', said God in Charles Péguy's poem, 'and there will always be a crusade', that is, a war of ideas, common to many peoples.

Too often, of course, in the last hundred and fifty years, the legacy of the Crusader has been recalled to lead the French into struggles for Utopia, just as the attempt was made to confuse the spirit of knight-hood with that of Quixoticism in their minds. The history of the motherland of France tells us however that the French, in the words of Péguy, need to '*penser le vrai pour l'univers*' and the French habit of self-sacrifice for ideas common to all men is not incompatible with the safeguarding of the City walls. For, at the time the French were 'inventing' the Crusades they were also founding the first country to be born in Europe.

Because the idea of country proceeds as much from the material realities inherited as from the spiritual it is possible to defend a civilization by defending its soil, to preserve the genius of people by protecting the territory which was its sanctuary. Thus is harmony established among the voices which speak to man in all aspects of the visible world and in all the secrets of the invisible.

Further, the history of France teaches that this conception of country is most likely to conciliate men of the same people. Modern States have sought to base themselves solely on the theory of voluntary association. This association, as the events of each day prove, is not always a natural

or a permanent feeling. To stimulate it violent artificial restraint has been adopted: a common ideology, to which willy-nilly all men of the same nation must adhere. So the door has been opened for the furies of partisanship, and men's reasons for hatred and anger against their fellows of the same people have been multiplied.

Patriotism, however, does not compel the excesses wrought by the mistaken exaltation of nationalism. It concedes that we may feel little affection for our fellow-countrymen, that by our ideas and personal tastes we may sometimes even be opposed to many of them. It invites us, however, to remember that the men of our own people, whatever they may be, are with us co-heirs to the same material and spiritual legacy. Knowledge of our inheritance will help to unite us without effort or constraint; we do not need to renounce our most legitimate personal preferences or our sympathies for the foreigner.

Yet some readers will point out that our very heritage very often recalls past divisions. The reply is that this too is a lesson, which counsels us not to trust in the people's power of cohesion alone to ensure its endurance. Because our history has been marked by many quarrels, it enables us to see what has survived so many shocks, what has been preserved and developed, what has proved useful and beneficial, and has come to assume the value of counsel. Even in the errors of our forbears we who are their children can sometimes recognize the caricature of one of their essential qualities. The Utopian wars of the Revolution, for instance, show us a deformation, none the less burning with enthusiasm and generosity, of the true Crusades of old.

Those who today are adversaries can therefore find reconciliation not in enumerating their differences, but in seeking to discover, in a mixture of truth and error, the permanent features of France. And as, from confused tracks, the shining path of certainty slowly emerges, so, obscured by the thousand movements of life, there rises the shape of an order in itself the result of the cohesion of centuries.

It is the honour and the pride of Frenchmen that the order which shows the path of agreement to the men of France also leads them to the fulfilment of their duties as members of the human race. Their ordering of the terrestrial City has always sought to harmonize with the design of the City of God.

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