CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ANYONE ELSE ?

It is a widely-held belief that by comparison with other ethnic communities the French neither are, nor were, ordinary people. Their apparent distinctiveness was underlined when, during the course of undertaking research for this book, we encountered great difficulties in ascertaining their first names. Unlike any other nationality French settlers in Australia were invariably described as "Monsieur X" or "Madame Y", going down in history, even in contemporary times, without a christian name.

But there are in fact two fundamental reasons behind the general view that the French are an "elite" group. The first is that the French of Australia are often thought to be transients: business people, specialists or academics despatched here for a limited period of time and who could, in fact, have been posted anywhere else in the world.

In the introduction to this book, however, we clearly stated that only "real" settlers would be included in this survey. The so-called "transients", moreover, are very small in number. Checks with French Consulates in Australia revealed that five per cent at most of the French citizens registered with them were employed by French companies doing business here. Given that consular registration is a necessity only for temporary expatriate nationals, and that the large majority of French subjects never bother to register at all, we can safely say that 97 per cent of the French in Australia are real settlers in the fullest sense of the term, or French Australians according to our earlier definition.

The second reason for the French being viewed as "extraordinary" in some way, is that they are often seen as the products of an "upper class" or social elite. This idea needs to be examined in an historical context and in reference to those migrants who clearly did NOT belong to the upper crust of society.

A number of Australia's nineteenth century French migrants belonged to the category of "mariners". Researcher Anny Stuer has found a number of records which show that French whalers, especially from the Basque country, at the time deserted ship, mostly in Tasmania and south western Australia. A small French community of these whalers had been reported near Esperance, Western Australia, in the 1840s.

An unusual case was that of Narcisse Pelletier, a French cabin boy who was the sole survivor of a shipwreck on Rossel Island, northern Queensland, in 1858. Pelletier was found and cared for by Cape York aborigines for 17 years until his "rescue" by white Australians in 1875. He was eventually sent home to France but felt unhappy there, and after a few years of "civilized" life managed to return not only to Australia, but to the very people who had taken care of him. He spent the remainder of his life with his Aboriginal friends.

When writing this book we were contacted by a Mr Leneuf whose forebear, Charles Leneuf, was a French mariner who came ashore in Hobart in 1878. It would therefore appear that migration by mariners did not stop after 1850.

The next large-scale migration from France was the drive to the goldfields of the 1850s. And of the few hundred or perhaps thousands of French who arrived (the only mass migration from France to Australia in history), only a very few were members of the French upper classes.

The circumstances of the 1880-1890 migration were different, however. As seen in Chapter Seven, a majority were business people and there were very few poor migrants, as shown by the fact that the Melbourne French Club was unable to allocate its relief funds for the needy.

On the other hand, Journet's L'Australie, published in 1885 and probably the best documented of all the nineteenth century guide books to the Australian colonies, says that: "our fellow countrymen are very few ... one or two here and there, in a vineyard, a mine, or as factory workers in Melbourne or Sydney".

For a long time in fact, business people received greater encouragement to settle here than did workers, except those who were highly skilled. Unskilled or clerical workers faced a hard battle to obtain jobs.

This was still the situation in the early 1950s, when we arrived. The handful of French migrants who had found work as watersiders or as mail sorters were the object of envy by their compatriots, while foreign bank clerks were an unknown race at the time.

Skilled tradesmen, however, faced no difficulty in finding employment. Sam Leber, for instance, a Paris-born fitter and turner, landed in Melbourne in 1952 on a Friday and started work on the following Tuesday. After working for at least two dozen employers - one year he had seven, he told us - he settled down with General Motors Holden for the last twelve years before his retirement. His wife, Madeleine, worked in the clothing industry for many years, doing piece work at home. So it appears that piece workers were not all southern Europeans ... French women were at it too!

In the 1960s and 1970s Australia became altogether more prosperous and more cosmopolitan. Whilst in 1950 no-one would have dreamt of employing a foreigner as a bank clerk, banks now pride themselves on their arrays of international name plates displayed on branch counters.

It would therefore be more than ever mistaken, nowadays, to link first and second generation French migrants with the members of an upper-class world. The overwhelming majority are wage and salary-earners scattered through all levels of society, with 40 per cent of Victoria's French community, for example, classed as "blue-collar" workers.

To speak French in the street, in shops, or on public transport, is an excellent way to discover that there are French-born shop assistants, tram conductors, nurses and railway staff. A French waiter brought us a meal in an Alice Springs cafe, French taxi-drivers have transported us in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth, a

French gardener was busy mowing the lawn at a Brisbane friend's home, a French joiner turned up to install kitchen fittings, and a French woman came to the door conducting a public opinion poll.

If there was ever any justification in labelling the French as elitist or upper-crust, it may have been applicable to some extent in the 1880s and 1890s, but certainly not since.

13-4 SMALL FARMS

Australia's early history saw the arrival of a few rich French migrants who bought large properties, as mentioned in Chapter Two, and later some were to try their hand at wine-growing, as seen in Chapter Ten. But throughout these years settlers of more limited means or ambitions were to engage in farming on a smaller or less grandiose scale . And it was Queensland, more than any other state, which was to attract such people.

In Souvenirs d'une parisienne aux Antipodes, Marie Rousselet Niau recounts how she and her husband were lured by a confidence trickster, the Marquis de Rays, into investing in and travelling to a new French settlement, "Port Breton", on the island of New Ireland, east of Papua, in 1881. Abandoned and near starvation, the new settlers were evacuated to Sydney and finally found work as farm hands in New South Wales "to the great satisfaction of their employers". The Niau family In 1882, obtained a selection of 1,280 acres on the Daintree River, near Port Douglas, North Queensland. With the help of Chinese farm hands, they tried to raise poultry, but gave up when the fowls were killed by snakes. They then cleared land and planted sugar cane on the promise of a forthcoming sugar mill to be built on the Daintree. When the mill failed to see the light of day, the cane was used as food for the goats and for the family. That was one experiment in farming which ended in misery.

Another early French attempt to tame the Australian bushland was recounted by Hélène McCalman, whose four uncles, then French settlers in Algeria, migrated here in 1905 with the idea of

acquiring land of their own. After working on various Victorian farms, they tried to settle at Cleveland Bay in Queensland, but were driven off by the mosquitoes. Eventually, they succeeded in growing cane on their own land in the Proserpine district in Queensland and, says Hélène, grew accustomed to the flying foxes and other assorted pests, such as snakes and leeches. A few other French settlers were farming in the area, and fairly wierd characters they appeared to be at that. Hélène's mother meanwhile had been widowed during the First World War, and Uncle Fred had married in 1920 and bought a farm two miles away from Prosperpine. So the remaining three brothers, still bachelors, decided to bring out their sister from France to keep house. It was a hard life as the farm had to be entirely self-sufficient, and the occasional Saturday night at the local pictures constituted the only possible outings. Hélène Quod, as she was then called, "inherited" the housekeeping job at the age of 17 when her mother died. Cleaning and cooking for six to seven people daily, including the farm hands, for no wage whatsoever - these were the times of the Depression - coupled with the patriarchal attitudes of the uncles, finally drove Hélène and her brother to leave in 1940. She first worked in Brisbane hotels, but said that later "the street fights between Yanks and Aussies forced the pubs to close and the streets became dangerous". So Hélène moved to Melbourne, found work in the aircraft industry, joined the New Theatre and "became interested in left wing politics". Hélène McCalman was only two when she arrived in Australia, but still speaks fluent French. Some of her relatives remain in the Proserpine district. Laurie McCalman, who is not French, is a retired trade union official, and their daughter, Janet, who obtained a Ph.D, wrote the story of the city of Richmond, Victoria.

Even Cooktown in North Queensland, once the favoured destination of escapees from New Caledonia, continues to count a French farmer, Michel Bradillet, amidst its now tiny population.

Victoria's French farmers include the Stervinous, near Colac, and the Cottons of Birregurra, both families from Brittany, and Georgette and Bernard Reitz in Apollo Bay, who are from Alsace.

A FEW PROFESSIONALS, ENTREPRENEURS, ETC...

Among the French immigrants who have failed to slot conveniently into the preceding chapters are the doctors in medicine, a number of whom appear to have been present throughout most of this country's history.

One interesting case is the story of the Duret-Crivelli "dynasty", recounted to us by the now late René Crivelli. In 1868, Dr Duret and his wife (René's grand-parents) boarded ship for Australia following medical advice that a long sea voyage was necessary for his wife's health. Duret at first disliked Melbourne so much that he attempted to convince her to stay on board and simply continue the voyage. But curiosity won the day and they disembarked and rented small lodgings in Spring Street.

Only a few days had gone by when a delegation from the Municipal Council of Emerald Hill (now South Melbourne) knocked at the French doctor's door. They had come to inform him that Emerald Hill was badly in need of a doctor and that a good practice was available should he want it. The doctor allowed himself to be convinced, starting his practice cum residence in what is now Albert Park. Twelve years later, believing the time had come to seek a successor, Duret wrote to the Paris Faculty of Medecine, which came up with the names of a few applicants. Among them a docteur Marcel Crivelli seemed particularly brilliant. So Crivelli it was who arrived in Melbourne and, after a few years as Duret's assistant, not only took over the practice but married one of his daughters.

The medical practice continued to flourish and, in addition, Mrs. Marcel Crivelli became one of the leading figures of early twentieth century Melbourne society. The couple had seven children, six of them boys. The three oldest sons, including René, went to France to do their military service and served in World War One. Two of the other boys joined the Australian forces, the third being too young. But the medical practice did not continue much longer. René became an engineer with the State Electricity Commission, his brother George worked as an agronomist and the youngest, Roger, joined the press, retiring a few years ago as finance editor of the Sydney Morning Herald.

Another French medical family of note are the Gabriels. Dr Charles Gabriel, born in Martinique, first visited Sydney in the 1840s as a surgeon on a French ship which passed through. He later returned to settle in Kempsey, New South Wales, where his son, also christened Charles, was born in 1857.

Dr Charles Gabriel "junior" moved to Gundagai, where he became in 1888 the government medical officer for the district, a post he held for the following 35 years. In Gundagai, he displayed a lively personality and interests embracing local activities beyond the sphere of medicine. His greatest legacy was a collection of photographs he took of the town and its residents, during a period of 40 years, which provide a stunning record of the life of a N.S.W. country town around the turn of the century.

One of Australia's first aircraft pilots was a Frenchman by the name of Maurice Guillaux. Flying his own plane, a single engine Blériot, Guillaux made the first postal and cargo flight between Melbourne and Sydney on 16 July, 1914. Although he was en route for more than two days, the actual flight time totalled nine and a half hours. The feat was believed to be the first commercial (goods carrying) flight carried out anywhere in the world. Guillaux hoped to win a contract to continue his flights but World War One put an end to his plans.

Roger Loubère In his lifetime, tried so many trades that it is impossible to pin him down to any one professional category. He recounted his early experiences in a 1953 book, Australie Cinquième Continent (Australia the fifth continent), which proved to be indispensable to migrants of the 1950s due to its helpful hints ranging from the explanation of the mysteries of cricket, to Australian arts and politics.

Loubère was first sent here in the 1920s by his father, a small industrialist from Bordeaux who wanted his son to learn to speak English. But the family industry went broke, so young Roger simply stayed on, working his way through the shop-floors of car plants and rubber factories in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. It was in one such job that, to his great surprise, his employer called him in and said: "Tomorrow, Frenchie, you must go out on strike with the others rather than be unpopular with your

In 1937, Loubère took up a post at the French Consulate in Sydney but the appointment was interrupted by the war. He left for London in 1941 to join the Free French Air Forces and an article he sent to the Courrier Australien was headed "Volunteer from Australia writing". In it he described life in England during the war, expressing great admiration for the courage and determination of the British. He also proudly reported that he had just been sentenced to death by the Military Tribunal of "Vichy" France.

Back in Australia, he was appointed French Consul to Melbourne, then to Perth, ending his consular career in Pakistan. Although Loubère, unlike the Comte de Castelnau last century, was not of the scientific consular elite, he was so well versed on any possible topic that he was constantly in demand to deliver talks or speeches on any subject that cropped up. Loubère retired in 1959 to live in Melbourne with his wife Foxie and died there in 1980.

There are a few French Australians who seem to cultivate a certain aura of mystery. In Atherton, Queensland, for example, lives one of the state's better-known French figures, Jean Huon de Nèvrancourt. He retired there with his New Guinea born wife and four daughters after spending 20 years in P.N.G., the last 16 as Health Officer. He is a leading member of the Alliance Française, the French Returned Soldiers' Association and had just been awarded, when we contacted him late 1985, a Queensland silver medal for "outstanding services for migrants and other community development". Yet we could learn little on his earlier adventurous life, bar the fact that he had personally known "Papillon", France's most ~~famous~~ notorious 20th century convict who escaped the prison of Devil's Island.

Likewise for Alice Springs, where Marc Caillot - and he is by no means the only French man or woman there - has lived in so many places that we would be sure to miss out on a vital chapter of his life were we to attempt to list them all. Amongst others, he was lecturer in French at the University of Newcastle

from 1958 to 1966, and his last residence before returning once more to Australia was Jamaica, where he married a young Jamaican. Caillot presently works in Alice as a "resource teacher and tourism language master" at the Sadadeen Secondary College, whose students in 1987 included a number of Aborigines.

There are French Australians in most professional fields, such as Sydney's Pierre Roussel, an expert in organising the mergers of large companies and in corporate structures in general.

Also in Sydney is Lucien Boz, who runs his own Public Relations firm. Boz in fact was born in Rumania, as were other eminent Frenchmen of today, such as the writer Eugène Ionesco, who is one of his friends. After first migrating to France in 1938 and being interned in the infamous camp of Drancy during the Nazi occupation, Boz returned to his native Rumânia from 1945 to 1946. But the lack of freedom drove him back to France until 1950 and then on to Australia, where he was the French Embassy Press Attache from 1951 to 1957. Since then "Boz Public Relations" has worked for French films, exhibitions and especially for Aérospatiale, an activity that has been instrumental in securing purchases of French aircraft in Australia.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES : FORBES AND NOOSA HEADS

The towns of Forbes, in New South Wales, and of Noosa Heads, on Queensland's central coast, have a special place in the lives past and present, of the French in Australia. Both therefore deserve special treatment.

Forbes : the nearest to a case of French chain migration

Both Auguste Nicolas and Joseph Bernard Reymond were born, in 1829 and 1834 respectively, in the Hautes Alpes (central southern Alps) of France, an area of grandiose mountain landscapes but limited economic means, which forced many of its inhabitants to emigrate, especially to Mexico. Reymond's birthplace of Orcières was situated in the Champsaur mountain range, a name he would later give to his property in New South Wales.

But the two men probably had never met before their paths crossed, sometime in 1856, in Paris. By this time, Nicolas was a veteran gold-digger, who had tried his luck on the gold-fields of California, New Zealand and, finally, Victoria, where he had found some payable gold at the McIvor diggings. He had returned to Paris, but was determined to sail off again to Melbourne, when he encountered his fellow countryman. He so impressed Reymond with his tales of adventure and potential fortunes to be made, that the teacher asked for a year's leave of absence to sail with Nicolas first to London, then to Melbourne, in late 1856, beginning what was to be a life-long partnership.

Through the course of their almost half-century-long association - a rare feat at any time - Nicolas would prove to be a mechanical genius, while Reymond, the former teacher, would reveal himself to be a businessman and entrepreneur par excellence.

The first five years in Victoria saw the pair move from goldfield to goldfield, the last being Chiltern, where Reymond met and married Margaret Kerr.

Then rumour came of great gold discoveries around the Lachlan River, in New South Wales. The partners sold out a stake at Chiltern to join the crowd of perhaps over 30,000 hopeful prospectors who had swarmed to Black Ridge, later to become Forbes. But the precious

metal (by then) had lost some of its attraction to the Frenchmen, and Nicolas decided to construct a sawmill rather than dig for gold, while Reymond opened a general store.

When the gold as usual petered out, the population dwindled to around 500, and though the pair traversed tough times, they decided to maintain the sawmill and stay put. They began to devise and produce cutting machines for the growing number of farmers in the area, and in about 1865 became farmers themselves, growing hay and vegetables. In 1866, Reymond took up a"selection" of 320 acres, which he named Champsaur after his home mountain, while Nicolas stayed on at the sawmill. That same year, Reymond successfully cultivated the first wheat and corn crop of the Forbes area. Nicolas meanwhile manufactured and erected the first steam irrigation plant of the Lachlan Valley, and perhaps also the first in Australia. Their next endeavour was to build a flour mill, which when completed in 1873 constituted yet another "first" in Forbes.

What enterprise! Reymond's great-grandson Michel recounts that when "trade was slack ... Reymond and Nicolas turned their hand to building bridges, goals, police barracks and anything by which they could earn money. They worked on as farmers, sawyers, engineers, contractors, millers, book-keepers, engine-drivers, fruit-growers and vignerons".

For Reymond was soon to turn to wine-growing, with his production of wine in due course totalling between 60,000 and 80,000 gallons each year. He also grew lucerne successfully, harvesting the crop with a harvester designed and built by Nicolas.

When Forbes later became a municipality, Joseph Bernard Reymond became one of its first Aldermen, and later served as Mayor. It was during his term as mayor of the city that the Department of Public Works came up with a plan to build a weir across the Lachlan for £ 1,000. Nicolas offered to do the job for £ 130 - and so he did!

In 1895, Reymond was elected to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly and held the seat until 1904. He is, we believe,

the only French Australian to this day ever to have been elected to a parliamentary seat in this country.

Forbes, moreover, appears to be Australia's only township to have attracted some French "chain migration", which albeit on a small scale, took place over an extended period of time.

The town's first French migrant after the pioneering partners, Reymond and Nicolas, was most proably Joseph Laneyrie, a fruit and vegetable grower who arrived shortly afterwards and whose daughter Claudine married Auguste Nicolas in 1867.

Célestin Blanc followed shortly on their heels, and after 25 years spent in this country convinced his nephew Pierre Girot, born in Alsace, to join him in Forbes. Girot arrived in Sydney in 1892, accompanied by his wife Marie, and found work at Reymond's flourmill. Célestin meanwhile purchased two 25-acre blocks from the same Reymond.

When Reymond and Nicolas, once settled, finally divided up their properties in 1901, Champsaur became the property of the Nicolas family. Auguste Nicolas brought out from France in 1897 his nephew Daniel, then only 18 years of age. Daniel studied at the Sydney Technical College, where he obtained a Diploma of Mining Manager, and then at the Hawkesbury College, where he learnt scientific farming. His greatest feat in the agricultural field would be to harvest 150 tons of wheaten hay from 30 acres of land in 1912, an all-time Australian record which was still unbeaten in 1935. He also later erected a new and powerful irrigation pumping system with an output of 21 tons of water per minute.

Around 1920, Daniel in turn brought out from France his brother Jean, who in keeping with the Nicolas family tradition modernised the farm machinery, adding in particular a lucerne elevator and boling press of his own invention. He also began to raise sheep.

Some descendants of Joseph Bernard Reymond still reside in Forbes. And like the Joubert family detailed in Chapter Six, Reymond's descendants are proud of their ancestry. Most males had, or have,

"Bernard" as a second name in memory of their forebear. One of his great grandsons Michel - not "Michael" - Bernard Reymond is a solicitor in Sydney and provided much of our information on Forbes' French pioneers.

Among other French settlers in Forbes, of whom less is known, were Casimir Gaymard, founder of "Sunnyside", Joseph Doris, who married Lucille Prel and was later joined by nephew Joseph Prel, and the families Chaumont, Tribolet, Cabot, Le Brocque and Le Blanc.

While most of the people listed above migrated to Australia during the course of the nineteenth century, a handful of French migrants have settled down in Forbes in more recent years. One such recent migrant is Jacques Noël Genet, a winegrower mentioned in greater detail in Chapter Ten, who also supplied information on the town. Born in Nice, Genet trained and worked in chemistry before migrating to Australia in 1951.

Noosa Heads: the latest and the youngest

Around 0.5 per cent of the inhabitants of the booming tourist town of Noosa Heads on the Queensland coast are French Australians. This may not seem a high proportion at first glance, but is in fact at least four times the national average. Noosa is thus Australia's "Frenchest" city, and if a project to build a Club Méditerranée in the city goes ahead as planned, there are likely to be even more French migrants who settle down there.

A group of already established French immigrants in the town put their heads together to write a collective account of their life there. While it lacks dates, the direct and lively style seemed to merit a straight reprint.

"In the past twelve years a fair size French community has been established in Noosa Heads and the surrounding Sunshine Coast. As far as we can remember, it seems Jean Pierre and Nea Pablasso have always been here, a father/daughter unit, thinking, talking and even eating the same. Jean Pierre's wife, a beautiful Tahitian, apparently lost her life giving birth to Nea. They have a workshop gallery where Nea designs and produces beautiful sarongs while Jean Pierre paints the colours of the South Pacific.

"Some years later, Jacques and Dominique Page arrived with daughter Maude from the south of France, via Spain. Fashion designers, both felt in sympathy with Noosa and started manufacturing individual garments to reflect the Noosa feeling. Their enterprise is very successful, and the brand name "Zazou" has won fame throughout the Sunshine Coast. Their imaginative and creative fashion parades have also allowed them to raise money for world peace.

"Luc Turschwell arrived in Noosa after many years of travelling through the world. He only intended to stay for a few days of holidays but ten years later is still here. Why? Simply because as a man from the Mediterranean he found in Noosa everything he had left behind in Europe. He loved the sun, sea and surf, he loved life. So making a snap decision, he transformed an old beach house in the heart of Noosa into the best French restaurant in Queensland, with a terrasse which was a nouveauté on the coast. He fought hard for it, but finally the Shire gave him the green light, and with his love of life, his love of people, the definite touch he had for Mediterranean cooking passed the test. His staff - no, we should say his friends because ten years later they are still with him - realise how much they owe him. He gave them the perfect touch, allowing them to become chefs or top waiters without even leaving their country.

"In the mid-seventies, a lone Frenchman from the Pyrénées appeared in town after having seen Noosa, the year before, while on holidays from his work as a chef in Melbourne, under contract from France. Jean Luc Lapene rapidly became the best known chef in Noosa for his expertise in the kitchen, his energy and his interest in his fellow workers. He is the only chef who in one day can work a ten-hour shift, play three sets of tennis, swim a mile, cook lunch for his friends, straddle the Noosa bar on his windsurfer, fix Jean Pierre's bike - and still have enough stamina to win the daily game of belot è (card game). Jean Luc Lapene has made a real impact on Noosa, and as long as he can return to the Pyrénées to see his family and ski on the snow every now and then, is very content to remain here.

"Jacques Von Alpen arrived after driving all the way from France via Asia and crossing the Indian Ocean to Perth. Thereupon he toured Australia in a battered Land Rover and stumbled on Noosa. He found a piece of land in the surrounding hinterland near

Kenilworth that was so much like home. With a few goats to herd, he makes his own goat cheese just as well as his father used to make it. Being a diver for pleasure, he joined Jacques Cousteau in his many adventures and was in charge of the recovery of the wreck of the "Pandora", with Chapkin his son as first assistant. He now runs his own diving school in Noosa.

"Jacques Paillard, a former pastry chef apprentice at Fauchon's in Paris, came to Sydney to meet up with another Frenchman from Noosa and start up the first French pâtisserie as such here. Today, Jacques' croissants and éclairs au chocolat are still the best in town, although other patisseries have since opened in Noosa. After being surrounded by sweets and meat all day long, he has become a total vegetarian and spends his holidays meditating in a Yoga Ashram centre."

ORIGINAL

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

DARK CLOUDS OVER THE SOUTH PACIFIC

The 14 July is France's National Day: the origin of that observance was explained in the first chapter.

While Australia's ~~migrant~~ ethnic communities tend to celebrate their National Days in a rather low-key fashion, that certainly was not the case on 14 July 1903 in Sydney.

The venue was Clifton Gardens, on Sydney Harbour's North Shore. The French community had invited all the local personalities they could think of, and come they did. The Governor-General was probably the only one to excuse himself, but the Prime Minister of the then fledgling Commonwealth of Australia was present, as were several members of his government. Also in attendance was the Governor of New South Wales, most of the state government, heads of the Statutory Authorities as well as the Sydney Lord Mayor. Attorney-General B.R. Wise delivered a highly welcoming speech IN FRENCH, followed by more speeches, music and much enjoyment for both the French community and the guests.

On 14 July 1973, exactly 70 years later, the occasion turned out quite differently and the National Day was a sad one. For the past two months, French Australians had been totally cut off from mail to and from the old country due to a general boycott of all postal and shipping services - extended for a while to cables and telephones - that was started up by Australian workers attempting to stop French nuclear tests in the Pacific. The boycott was to last a full five months and achieve nothing beyond the victimization of one ethnic group, whilst life continued normally for the rest of the population.

These two sharply different episodes in the life of the French community show how, more than any other, that community can be affected by the international political atmosphere, by the symbolic sunshine or storms over the South Pacific.

FEAR OF THE FRENCH

In 1788, the year of the First Fleet, Britain was at peace with France, but not for much longer. The French Revolution that beheaded its sovereign Louis XVI, in 1793, was not too popular with the British monarchy, and many French aristocrats, persecuted in their own country, took refuge in England. It was no surprise that Great Britain sided with the First Coalition against the French Republic in 1793, and again with the Second Coalition in 1799. But the British Fleet was unable to prevent grain shipments from the American states from reaching blockaded France (Ernestine Hill gives a graphic account of the Brest naval battle in Matthew Flinders' biography "My Love Must Wait"), and finally, neither Coalition succeeded in bringing down the new Republic. So Britain signed the Treaty of Amiens with France in 1802.

In General Bonaparte, who was about to become Emperor Napoleon the First, the British saw a mortal enemy and soon resumed hostilities against France, especially on the high seas. The war was to last 12 years and nothing but Napoleon's final downfall, at Waterloo in 1815, could have ended it.

On the other side of the world, meetings between explorers of the two countries were friendly enough, with neither side trying to harm the other. Behind the scenes, however, suspicion was ripe, and the British rulers of the new colony of New South Wales never truly believed that French visitors to their shores had scientific designs alone. Today, as explained in Chapter Two, the reasons for France's total disinclination towards colonisation have become clear, but were just not pereceived at the time.

A "fear of the French", or determination to "forestall the French", became a central plank of Sydney's policy and motivated the establishment of settlements all along the coastline, further and further afield. As H. G. Turner put it in his

"A History of the Colony of Victoria":

> "An ever present dread that the French government contemplated the appropriation of some portions of the southern coast of Australia, kept the Governor of New South Wales in a continual simmer of anxiety".

Turner says it was this fear that led to the sending of an expedition to settle Westernport Bay in 1825. Although the settlement declined after only two years and had been all but abandoned when a French expedition headed by Dumont d'Urville stayed in the area a few weeks, the French produced some interesting sketches for posterity but left without planting the flag and "appropriating no portion".

MARK THAW ONE

It was not until around 1830 that the fear of French colonisation subsided. In Europe, a new friendship began between Britain and France under the reign of Louis-Philippe from 1830, a friendship that bloomed after 1840 when Francois Guizot became Foreign Affairs minister. Guizot, who later became prime minister, was a Protestant, a scholar and an Anglophile who had translated Shakespeare into French and written several volumes of French and English history.

Also under Louis-Philippe, France decided to follow Britain's example and strive to build a colonial empire. Her pre-Revolution colonies had shrunk to just a few ports and islands.

Empire-building began close to home, where pirates based mainly in the port of Algiers were threatening navigation on the Mediterranean Sea. With Britain's blessing, French forces captured Algiers from the pirates in 1830 and extended their conquest to the rest of Algeria during the following decade.

COLONIAL SHARING

Much has been said and written on the deep rivalry that supposedly existed between Britain and France, bringing them time and time again to the brink of war. Yet the common picture of the two enemy powers, crouched and ready to spring from their respective sides of the channel, does not stand up to the test of historical fact.

Possibly no archives will ever disclose the existence of a secret Anglo-French treaty defining respective spheres of influence and/or colonisation, such as the earlier Treaty of Tordesillas under which Spain and Portugal in 1494 agreed to share out the world. But there is little doubt that some agreement on those lines, explicit or implicit, existed between Britain and France from 1830 onwards, or perhaps even earlier. Great Britain's sights were on Latin America, in particular on Argentina, where the demise of the Spanish empire had created a power and economic vacuum that London filled fairly successfully for almost a century.

France did not challenge Britain for South America, nor for East Africa, but was left unhampered to try its hand for Western and Central Africa. There was considerable turmoil in both capitals, however, when a French military detachment trekked across Africa, from the west to the east, and victoriously hoisted the French tricolour flag at Fashoda, in the Sudan. Paris braved immense unpopularity at home by recalling its troops from an area it probably had conceded to the British long before.

Such incidents suggest there was a "colonial accord" - for want of a better term - that was of paramount importance to both countries. Although the sparring continued, probably to satisfy public opinion, Britain and France not only never declared war against each other from 1815 onwards, but also fought side by side together as allies in Crimea (1854/5), China (1860 and 1900), World War I (1914/18), World War II (1939/45) and the Suez expedition (1956).

There are of course cases in which each power thrust inside the other's sphere of influence, for reasons which would be too complex to try to deal with here. Britain for example established a few colonies in West Africa, possibly to stave off the Germans, a common enemy, while France grabbed Djibouti, in East Africa, perhaps to ward off Italian penetration.

But our chief concern is with French settlement in the South Pacific, only a small part of the world-wide picture, where it appears that New Zealand and the Fiji islands had been staked out by Britain while the rest of the area was to go to France. An outline of the circumstances of French settlement in the area illustrates why it was destined to generate such anger among Australians both of the colonial and post-colonial era.

As soon as Australia had been settled, the stage was set for the colonisation of the Pacific. Once the explorers had left the scene, the leading role was played by Christian missionaries: Protestant or Anglican, especially the London Missionary Society, on the pro-British side, Roman Catholic, the Marists in particular, on the French side.

The action unfolded in Tahiti. The local king, who had been converted to Christianity by English missionaries, asked for British "protection" as early as 1825, but to no avail. French Catholic missionaries disembarked on the island only in 1836 - the year Britain appropriated the South Atlantic Malvinas Islands to rebaptise them "Falklands" - and a new queen was induced to apply for French protection in 1843. This was "granted" forthwith, and a French navy ship just happened to be on hand. The British had had their chance during 18 years, and some, such as Consul George Pritchard, had worked hard to take control. But London had its own reasons, as suggested above, for denying support.

In New Zealand the "Colonial Accord" worked the other way, as it was meant to. In the North Island only a few Britishers had settled when a French adventurer, the Baron de Thierry, began to buy land from the Maoris on a large scale and declared himself "King of New Zealand". French missionaries led by Bishop Pompallier had arrived in 1838 and appeared to have fared quite well as far as natives' conversions went. Yet none got any help from Paris when the British secured possession of the Island under the Treaty of Waitangi (1840). Neither did Paris support, in fact it promptly recalled, Captain Lavaux who in 1840 landed a party of French settlers on the South Island at Akaroa, near to-day's Christchurch.

Descendants of the French settlers live to this day at Akaroa but speak no French, despite street signs sporting names such as "Rue Jolie" or "Rue Lavaux", to the amazement of travellers reaching Akaroa by way of the village of Duvauchelle, and its "Hotel des Pecheurs".

The Australian media still carries expressions of surprise that islands discovered and NAMED by the British, such as New Caledonia, the New Hebrides or Wallis, named after Captain Samuel Wallis, were subsequently appropriated by the French, implying that some sort of treachery took place. But if treachery there was, then it was as much the doing of the British as of the French.

1/ CALEDONIA AND HEBRIDES : THE FORTY-THREE YEAR CONFLICT (1863-1906)

Largest of all the Pacific Ocean islands west of New Guinea, and named by James Cook, New Caledonia first saw installation of French Marist missionaries in 1843. The natives were not exactly welcoming, so the missionaries fled the north and made for the southernmost tip, where they were rescued from near massacre by troops rushed in by Paris, who occupied the territory in 1853. A capital was founded and named Port de France before later becoming Noumea.

France at last had found a colony apparently suitable for immigration from Europe, an island where French people of adventurous bent could settle. And among the early temporary French settlers

on the Ballarat gold fields or in New South Wales : Antoine Fauchery and Didier Joubert. Joubert began sugar cane growing and was joined in 1862 by Timothée Cheval, erstwhile restaurant proprietor (Café Français) of Sydney.

For good measure, Gérard Georges, a direct descendant of Noumea's first elected mayor, Eugène Porcheron, came to Australia in the 1960s and currently runs La Chaumière in North Melbourne, one of Australia's best French restaurants.

But mutual relations took a turn for the worse when Paris in 1863 decided to create a penitentiary in the new colony. The idea, inspired by the Australian example, was to both rehabilitate criminals and supply cheap labour to the cane growers and mine owners.

When French transportation started, Britain was still sending convicts to Western Australia despite almost daily petitions from all the Australian colonies urging the Crown to end the system. When British transportation ceased in 1867, anger turned against the French.

In spite of mounting protests, transportation to New Caledonia was to last for 33 years, until 1896. It is difficult to know how many transportees were sent: Huetz de Lemps in l'Océanie Française gives a figure of 40,000 but other reliable researchers give half that number. Attempts to keep them in the colony after completion of sentence by offering small grants of land convinced only a small minority, which differs from the Australian situation where the overwhelming majority of convicts stayed in the country.

Some convicts tried to escape and Australia was the obvious choice of destination inasmuch as trade winds and currents would carry rafts from New Caledonia to around Cooktown on the North Queensland coast. In the North Australian Monthly of February 1959, an article by Henry Lamond, "In Cooktown Sixty Years Ago" begins:

"When I was a kid in Cooktown, back in '96 and '97, the chief inhabitants of the town's goal were French escapees. (...) there are now in this State some quite wealthy and respectable families who are the descendants of an uncaught escapee!"

An article in Le Courrier Australien, published shortly before transportation was stopped, estimated that about 40 convicts managed to escape to Australia each year, but that only about 10 remained free. Those caught were returned to the French authorities

French residents in Australia wholeheartedly supported the mounting calls to halt transportation, with Le Courrier saying: "In Australia any French migrant looking for work feels handicapped... is he an escaped convict?"

It seems likely that a few French "expirees" - convicts whose terms had expired - settled in Australia, as both the parliaments of Queensland and New South Wales attempted to pass legislation to "protect" their respective communities from such migrants . Sir Henry Parkes in 1879 presented a "Bill to Make Provisions Against the Influx of Certain Foreign Criminals into New South Wales" , but after much debate the bill was thrown out. Queensland on the other hand successfully passed the "Criminals Expulsion Bill" in 1881, only to see it disavowed and annulled by the colonial authorities in London.

But well before Paris decided to end transportation to New Caledonia in 1896 - the penitentiary remained in place until all convicts had ended their terms - the Australian colonies had found new motives of anger against the French. Ire now was focussed on French designs on the south-west Pacific, with arguments flaring over who was a "good" or a "bad" coloniser, and over the right and wrong aspects of Christianity.

The early 1880s also saw the emergence of a new notion, the concept of "Australasia". These days the term generally applies to Australia plus New Zealand, but then, and according to an 1883 speech by Victorian Premier James Service, it meant in addition "the crescent New Guinea to New Hebrides". Once that purely artificial concept had caught on, it was easy to claim as Service did, that "the islands of Australasia ought to belong to the people of Australasia".

These "islands of Australasia" had long been a source of cheap labour (called slave trade in many parts of the world) to Queensland's sugar planters, ~~as in~~ Nancy Cato ~~'s~~ in "Brown Sugar".

When it was realized, in 1885/6, that Rrance would soon occupy the New Hebrides and that Britain would not oppose her, the anti-French campaign that had been building-up for two or three years rose to a climax in Victoria and Queensland, but was more muted in the other colonies.

Discovered by Quiros in 1605 but named only later by Cook, the New Hebrides kept their Scottish name under the French, rather than taking the name of Nouvelles Cyclades given by Bougainville. The coconut trade attracted many Europeans but French planters soon outnumbered the others. Quite a few were murdered, prompting military intervention by France, whose troops landed there in 1886, accepted by the British, but not by the Australians.

On the eve of French occupation protests appeared almost daily in the press, ranging from the pompous statement of Queensland Premier Griffith "The Australian Colonies have an insuperable objection to any alteration in the status quo with respect to the New Hebrides in the direction of sovereignty by France", to the impassioned motion passed by the Melbourne Presbytery (6 April 1886) condemning the "... contemplated abandonment of the British Christians of the New Hebrides ... as little less than national humiliation".

Missionaries had preceded the planters and had probably nurtured a dream of a British Christian Paradise in the New Hebrides. Former missionary John Paton wrote in 1883 (Melbourne Argus): "Our natives long for British protection ... last year the chiefs and leading natives, through our Mission Synod, petitioned our beloved Queen for protection or annexion (sic) to her Colonial Empire". It is difficult to find an explanation for such positive abhorrence from missionaries over the prospect of "our natives" coming under French control (complete independence was probably not even envisaged), unless it stemmed from a belief that the French were either not really Christians, or if so, then Christians from a heretic sect!

As for the arguments raging over who was the better coloniser, the French were at a disadvantage since it was easy for Australian politicians to argue, as did Premier Service : "The French do not colonize, they do empty their goals abroad". The British, on the other hand, now colonising Fiji, were hailed. Several July 1883 papers carry the same letter from a Fred Marshall, late Government Agent, Fiji, saying: " ... the rate of wages, 3 pounds per annum, seems very

small, but a hut is provided ... and whilst the hours of work are long, they are not nearly so long as a farm servant's working hours in Victoria ... the Fijian planter of to-day is as a rule an educated man, whose good feelings and interest, to say nothing of a most lively fear of the Government, prompts him to a sensible and kind, even generous treatment of his natives."

The French planters levelled the reproach the other way. In a 1902 petition reprinted in Le Courrier Australien, the French settlers asked their government to make the New Hebrides a fully-fledged French colony because :

(1) French settlers numbered over 300, mostly planters or business people, whilst the British were only 100, mostly missionaries.

(2) The French owned 500,000 hectares, one-third of all land fit for cultivation , the British possessed only 50,000.

(3) The French had been responsible for organising la vie civilisée (the amenities of civilised life).

However, the unrelenting campaign waged by Australian clerics and statesmen , the latter undoubtedly because of the pressure exercised by the former, finally brought success when, in 1906, the dispute over the fate of the New Hebrides was settled by the Accord of French British Co-Dominion. But the campaign left traces that remain today in the form of a strong belief by many "Pacific" French that both Australia and New Zealand are intent on seizing French or formerly French territories in the region.

THAW MARK TWO

It was early this century that French-Australian relations at last began to improve, following the 40 years spent "forestalling the French" (1788-1828), the 33 years of the New Caledonia Transportation dispute and the 20 years of conflict over the New Hebrides (1886-1906).

Whether it was a result of the Entente Cordiale signed by the mother countries, the end of support in France towards the Catholic orders, increasing French business in Australia, or just plain common sense, the advent of the twentieth century brought

acceptance and popularity to the French in Australia. The newfound friendship was, as a popular expression puts it, "sealed in blood" during World War I, when thousands of Australian soldiers, including a few French Australians, fought and fell on the battlefields of France. Seventy years later, the memory of the "Anzacs" remains alive in French villages such as Bullecourt and Villers-Cotterets, their former battlefields, where Anzac Day is celebrated with fervour each year and schoolrooms display signs saying "N'oublions jamais l'Australie" (Let us never forget Australia).

The friendship continued after 1918, with many "Diggers" keeping alive the flame by bringing back war brides from France (see Chapter Seven). When later years saw the advent of fascism and bolshevism in Europe, and of Japanese imperialism in Asia, France, Great Britain and Australia found themselves again on the same side of the dividing line.

The occupation of France by the Germans in 1940 split the country between supporters of the pro-German Vichy collaborationist regime and the Free French, a rift that affected French communities across the world. The New Hebrides rallied to General De Gaulle's Free French forces on 22 July 1940, only a month after his famous "Appel du 18 Juin" (Appeal of 18 June) for support. New Caledonia and Tahiti followed suit in September, and volunteers set up the "Bataillon du Pacifique", a battalion that fought for several years with the Allied Forces, mainly on the North African front, and which included some French Australians.

As soon as news of General De Gaulle's "Appel" reached Australia, a committee of support was set up by Andre Brenac, Joseph Flipo and a few others, most of them wool traders. We located Andre Brenac, now in his eighties, living in retirement on the French Riviera. He recounted how General de Gaulle in December 1940, and by then head of the French government-in-exile in London, appointed him as his official Delegate in Australia.

Not all of Australia's French residents backed the Gaullists: there was a Vichy French consul and some French people remained loyal to Marshal Petain's collaborationist government. Brenac said that while the Australian government recognized the Vichy regime, unlike the government of the United Kingdom, it also recognized his semi-official consular status. Brenac relinquished his post in 1944 upon the installation of a regular diplomatic mission.

After 1945 and into the early 1950s, Australia welcomed French migrants. Some of us came under a special scheme for former members of the Allied Forces that provided a refund of one-third of the passage money. Unlike other migrants, we were not forced to stay in camps, but were free to travel and take up residence where we chose. Most Australians treated us extremely well, especially the Diggers from World War I, who gave returned soldiers in particular an unbelievably warm welcome, making us feel that it was thanks to the joint sacrifices of the British, French, Australians, Americans and Russians that we were able to continue living in a free world.

THE WORLD'S LARGEST BACKYARD

Most Australians sit nightly in front of their television sets and watch the news. Several stations broadcast the news with a map of the world in the background, which is a good idea, some with a map of Australia in the centre, which is even better. These maps, however, are distorted, as the Pacific Ocean appears much narrower than it really is. The distance between Australia's east coast and South America's west coast appears to be only about one and a half, to two times, greater than the distance across Australia, while in reality the distance across the South Pacific is THREE AND THREE QUARTER TIMES Australia's width.

Everyone has learnt that the Pacific Ocean is huge, covering almost half the Earth's surface, yet now we unconsciously identify it with the image on the screen and are not shocked by government affirmations that the South Pacific is "our backyard".- a little like the Mediterranean Sea was "Mare Nostrum" (our sea) to the

Romans. Nor do we stop and reflect on what is our strategic or geographical "front" - why focus attention on the Pacific rather than on the Indian Ocean? If we continue to assume that our front lies east, where the largest cities and most of the population are located, perhaps this is a leftover from our colonial past, when the ships from England docked on the eastern seaboard.

STORM IN THE BACKYARD

The mutual friendship of the first half of the century was to be sorely strained from 1966, when the French began nuclear testing at Mururoa, a French Polynesian atoll located almost halfway between the port of Mackay in Queensland, and the port of Iquique in Chile, South America, some 8,000 kilometres from either coast.

Adverse reaction from Australia surprised Paris at first. Had not Australia supported the testing of atom bombs, as they used to be called, on its own soil a few years earlier? But on the other hand had not France made a similar misjudgement in the past, when it established a penitentiary in New Caledonia inspired by the British example in Australia?

Nuclear testing, which has now been going on for some 20 years, has undoubtedly been responsible for much of the hostility directed towards "the French" in the South Pacific area.

Until 1973 the tests were carried out above ground and the protests were made in the name of danger to health through radiation Twelve years after "undergrounding" the tests, an A.B.C. (Australian Broadcasting Commission) programme said that while radiation risks had waned, the nuclear test scheme remained just as offensive. The fact that a distant nation could continue committing an affront in "our backyard" and get away with it, along with the realisation that the South Pacific nations were powerless to stop the tests, was definitely hurtful, the A.B.C. said.

While the use of nuclear power to generate electricity is on the rise in many overseas countries, and nowhere as much as in France, "nuclear" remains a dirty word to a large section of the

Australian public. Ratepayers in hundreds of cities and towns across the country subsidise the production and erection of signs saying "This is a nuclear-free zone".

On the other hand, the A.B.C. crew mentioned above found that in France, the world's most often invaded country over the past couple of centuries, the majority of citizens will support any defence effort. If they are told that the nuclear deterrent is a necessity and that it means testing, they will back the scheme at whatever the cost.

As for those Australians who regularly advocate the boycotting of French goods in retaliation, they may be making the same errors of judgement as the French made towards Australia in the past. The French will in effect welcome such boycotts as a means of demonstrating their priorities - defence before trade.

More recently, the Franco-Australian rift seems to have shifted from the area of nuclear testing to the support offered by Australia to New Caledonia's indigenous Kanaks, or Melanesians, seeking independence from France.

In the 1902 petition drafted by French settlers which is mentioned above, there was also a claim that with respect to the New Hebrides and New Caledonia: "Australians will take over, following Monroe's doctrine that makes them owners of all that is "Oceanien"". These old fears of Australian "imperialism" have remained in the minds of French settlers in the Pacific, and the pressures exerted on the central government in Paris by the "Pacific" French may be behind some of Paris' more hostile gestures towards Canberra.

A more rational approach by the French government towards Australian moves would be to interpret Australian foreign policy in regional, rather than international terms. With two Melanesian states on its doorstep, Papua-New Guinea and Vanuatu, is it not natural for Canberra to back the Kanak cause, and even more so given its feeling that it is powerless to support the Melanesian peoples of East Timor and West Irian?

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While fears of Australian expansionism in Paris and Noumea appear unfounded, it would be just as erroneous to brand France as an old-fashioned colonial power. There are very few French possessions left in the world, and there also exist U.S., British, New Zealand and even Australian island territories. The remaining French possessions, moreover, have had their status as members of the "French community" approved by the majority of their inhabitants, who in their overwhelming majority are non-Europeans.

To French Australians, these disputes, needless to say, are highly regrettable. They demonstrate the need to understand each other better, and we feel this is an area in which the French community in this country has a vital role to play.

Firstly, Paris should be nudged into sending more politicians to Australia, and not just to Noumea. Visiting journalist Thierry Desjardins, of "Le Figaro", was amazed to learn that no French head of state nor of government, and only a handful of ministers, had ever paid visits to this country since Federation in 1901.

Secondly, the extremely low-profile French community needs a shake-up. There are for example far fewer Palestinians in Australia than French, and yet their spokesman regularly appears on television or radio to counter statements or action by Australian politicians that the community feels are unfair. Likewise the Vietnamese or Jews do not hesitate in staging street demonstrations or swamping the media as soon as they detect the arrival of an "enemy". And the Greeks, Italians, Poles, Hungarians and Dutch have compatriots in State or Federal parliaments who do not forget their origins.

The French in comparison keep a profile so low that sometimes only their best friends or fellow compatriots are aware of their ethnic origins. As a result, to most Australians, the concept of a French man or French woman does not conjure up the image of a person living or working close by. A good example of this state of things was provided by four letters published simultaneously in the Melbourne Age in September 1986 (see illustration), in which the authors said by and large that the terrorist bombs which had killed 10 people and injured over 150 in Paris were a just retribu-

tion. Would the four have written these letters if they had known that after publication they could be confronted by a neighbour, a workmate or a customer who happened to be French and had lost a relative in the attacks?

Many French Australians retain a low profile because they have given up all hope of support or understanding from Australians, aside from the committed Francophiles. The author's experience, however, was quite the opposite when, in 1973, he attracted the attention of the then Minister for Immigration A. L. Grassby to the plight of the French community due to the mail boycott. A few letters and telegrams received in reply, including one from then Prime Minister E. G. Whitlam, are proof that a response can be obtained, even by an ordinary citizen, and indeed, within a few days, the mail ban was lifted.

The French community, however, has been the focus of far greater attention than previously on the part of the French "Corps Diplomatique" since the arrival of Ambassador Bernard Follin. There is probably not one French-Australian enterprise that has not received one or several visits from the Ambassador, along with his encouragement. One can only hope this sign of support will help French people here to shrug off their siege mentality and take as strong an affirmative stand as do other communities.

The Australian authorities, both federal and state, are likely to demonstrate their support to these migrants as soon as they are forced to realize the French community is one to be reckoned with.

The South Pacific is home to violent, swift and devastating cyclones, but the blue skies reappear just as quickly. In the case of Franco-Australians relations, a little extra push appears necessary.

Select Bibliography

Some hundreds of documents, articles and books were used in the preparation of this study, especially its historical chapters. Since most of them are mentioned only episodically if at all, it was decided not to include them in a bibliographical note that records works on which the author drew consistently or that he recommends to readers as valuable and informative accounts in English of the subject of the French in Australia. The brevity of the following list should not give the false impression that the topic has been largely neglected by researchers.

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