

CHAPTER ONE

FRANCE'S HISTORY AND ITS PEOPLE

Because of its shape on a map, France is often referred to as l'Hexagone. Often too, the symmetrical proportions of the hexagon are said to symbolize the unique balance that France takes pride in, of mind and body, town and country, plains and mountains, agriculture and industry, indulgence in the past and concern for the future.

1-1 FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS UNTIL THE FRENCH REVOLUTION OF 1789

Officially, the kingdom of France was established by the treaty of Verdun in the year 843. Its first king - very few French students these days would know his name - was Charles le Chauve (Charles the Bald), who reigned until 877.

With the possible exception of Denmark, no other European nation/country still in existence today, has a continuous history going back so far: England, once free of Danish hegemony, started in the 11th century, Portugal in the 12th; unified Spain in 1492, Russia in the 16th century, Germany and Italy not until the 19th; the Netherlands, Greece and Poland stayed under foreign rule for a long time, the Austro-Hungarian Empire is defunct, and so on.

The year 843 stands somewhere in the middle of what most of us call "The Dark Ages", a millenium (4th to 14th century) of barbarism and ignorance that occurred between periods of higher civilization and knowledge. But this opinion is not shared by experts such as Régine Pernoud, one of today's leading historians of the French Middle Ages, who divides this period into:

The "Imperial Age", the time when Emperor Charlemagne, largely through his own drive and charisma, almost unified Western Europe and presided over vast movements of population. The year 843 was towards the end of that period.

1-02

The "Feudal Age" came next, as people settled into a time of great harmony and faith that lasted from the 10th century until the end of the 13th. We have less records of those times as the accent was on decentralization and village life had taken over from imperial adventure or wars of conquest. Rural crafts flourished, land for pasture or agriculture could not be bought or sold, and an image of that period of deep faith has been left to us in France's hundreds of "Romanesque" churches, or églises romanes, in French. It was also a time when women had an equal place with men in society - queens for example were crowned in their own right until the 15th century -, a place they would lose in the following centuries.

But after the year 1300 the situation changed dramatically. The next two centuries, Pernoud says, could more aptly be described as the famous "Dark Ages".

First, a rather abrupt fall in temperature hit the country, badly hurting agriculture. Then in 1347/8, an epidemic of bubonic plague killed about one-third of the population, and as deaths were not evenly distributed, many villages lost their entire population and were virtually wiped off the map.

Meanwhile the armies of Edward the Third, king of England, had set foot in France: the so-called guerre de cent ans (Hundred Years War) began in 1339 as Edward became heir to the throne of France. A French-born prince, Philippe de Valois, was also a pretender. Eventually the Valois dynasty would reign, but in the meantime the war, though not continuous, added to the hardships of all inhabitants. Gangs of robbers took advantage of troubled times to pillage houses.

For some time the English were victorious and their success was enhanced by alliance with the French-based dukes of Burgundy. Gradually they took possession of French lands until the tide was turned by the most unlikely leader of all times. Joan of Arc was only 17 when she convinced the heads of the French army to give her command of the troops. Once in command, she forced the English to withdraw from their siege of Orléans (1429), defeated them later in battle at Patay and had a reluctant prince, the Valois heir, crowned as King Charles VII of France. Joan was captured and burnt

on the stake in 1431, but Charles continued on his trail of victory until peace was achieved in 1455. Very few protagonists of world history can have matched Joan's charisma and powers of conviction, ^{certainly} none at her age, so it is no wonder she has been celebrated in countless legends and dramas. According to serious French historians, George Bernard Shaw, in his play "Saint Joan", is the author closest to the truth, even though his aim was mainly to satirize the English.

When France was founded in 843, the monarchy ruled directly over only a small part of what is now modern France. Each of the hexagone was ruled by vassals of the king and regions such as Brittany and Aquitaine were almost independent. Steadily however, over the following centuries, the French kings succeeded in increasing direct rule, in many cases peacefully through marriage. By the end of the 16th century, the Crown was firmly established over the territory that is now France with the exception of the Eastern border regions. The left bank of the Rhine, the Franche-Comté (Jura) area, Savoy and Nice were to change hands between France and its neighbours for another three centuries. Paris had become the capital and would remain so except for intervals during wars, and the monarchy had set up residence in the Louvre, the royal palace from the 13th century which was destined to grow in size until the 17th.

But the Guerre de cent ans had only been over for another hundred years when the greatest strife that France would ever know began - the Wars of Religion.

The first wave of Protestantism, or "Reformation", that of Martin Luther, was successful in many parts of what are now Germany and Scandinavia. A second wave spread like fire through much of Western Europe: its founder was Frenchman Jean Calvin, born 1509 in Noyon, Northern France. By the time of Calvin's death in 1564, Reformation was already well established in France, particularly in the Central and South-West regions: it had made many converts from high-ranking noblemen to ^{craftsmen} in small towns.

It was not long before each faction had its own armies and encounters were bloody almost from the beginning.

When on 18 August 1572, Protestant prince Henri de Navarre married the heiress to the French throne, it seemed the scales had definitely tipped in favour of Reformation. This ^{situation} was to last but a few days. On the night of August 23/24, the massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy, presumably master-minded by the very mother of the bride, queen Catherine de Medicis, resulted in the assassination of at least fifty thousand, perhaps up to one hundred thousand Protestants, including their military chief, admiral Coligny. The bride-groom's life was spared in favour of house arrest, but he would soon escape.

From then on the wars of religion became international, with Spain helping the Catholic monarchy and England siding with the Protestant rebels. In 1589, Henri de Navarre became the actual successor to the throne. Would the tables turn again? In fact, Henri was unable to enter Paris and to become king for a further four years as the capital, helped by a Spanish garrison, resisted against the armies of a ruler it regarded as a "heretic". Only Henri's conversion to catholicism finally allowed him to become King Henri IV of all France.

Henri was adept at healing old wounds and did not forget his former brothers. In 1598, he proclaimed the Edit de Nantes, under which Protestants were guaranteed freedom of worship as well as a number of fortified cities, the main one being La Rochelle on the Atlantic coast.

Henri IV was seen as a good king by most of his subjects, and his assassination in 1610 brought deep sorrow across France. His successor to the throne, Louis XIII, was only a little boy, ^{so} the country ^{was thrown} into a period of confusion which lasted until 1624, when Cardinal de Richelieu took over for a few years as France's effective ruler.

Few modern-day stories of "rags-to-riches" success would match Richelieu's swift ascension to power. Born in 1585 to a family of impoverished, almost destitute nobility, the young Armand de Plessis turned to the only career open to a youngest son, the clergy. At the age of 22 he was appointed bishop, and in 1614

came to the notice of people of influence after being elected a clergy delegate to the Etats Généraux, the nearest institution France then had to a parliament. In 1616 he was made a Secretary of State, and a Cardinal in 1622, at 37 years of age. Only two years later, the young King named him his Chief Minister.

On the international scene, Richelieu sided with Protestant princes when it suited him, but within France's borders he fought the reformers relentlessly. Realising their main seat of power lay in the fortress city of La Rochelle, he decided on a siege he would command in person.

It was to prove one of the toughest in History, with La Rochelle Mayor Jean Guitton no less determined than Richelieu. The cardinal ordered trenches to be dug on the land side of the city, and an embankment built on the seaside around its harbour, long and wide enough to stop English ships entering the port and bringing food. The enterprise took six long months, but the city held on for over a year. When Guitton finally surrendered, in the year 1628, only 154 men were left and 15,000 had died, mostly from starvation. *

Although the Protestants had lost a battle, the war went on for at least another sixty years. Louis XIV, crowned in 1654, may have been a great patron of the Arts, but was also an autocrat who suffered no religious or political dissent. In 1685 he repealed the Edit de Nantes, triggering the emigration of almost 300,000 faithful to Britain, to Prussia and to Switzerland. Thus departed the cream of France's craftsmen, manufacturers and financiers, a loss that was to seriously hamper the country's economic progress for years to come.

A handful of Protestant families stayed on, however, and in 1985, according to the weekly magazine Le Nouvel Observateur, nine of France's 20 richest taxpayers, belonged to two or three of these old Protestant families.

* In English-speaking countries, the 16th and 17th century French Protestants are usually referred to as "Huguenots", a name possibly derived from the German Eidgenossen (conjurors). The term is not used by French historians of the period.

The reign of Louis XIV, which embraced the second half of the 17th century, was also the period of France's great "classical" school of arts. Molière, Corneille and Racine wrote their plays and had them performed, music flourished under Lulli, and the king had the Chateau de Versailles built on a design by the architect Mansart (and a few others), with the gardens and waterworks designed by Le Nôtre. Versailles today continues to attract more visitors than any other town or monument. On the "debit" side, however, the king lured an ever rising number of courtisans to Versailles, and the spectacle of the idle rich, who were increasingly rich and increasingly idle, lolling amidst a toiling, poor, and sometimes starving population, was in due course to spark widespread anger and revolt.

France entered the 18th century as Europe's most populous country and was still in second place after Russia around 1790. By this time it had about twenty million inhabitants while Great Britain had only nine. During the same century, France was also at the forefront of ENLIGHTENMENT, an intellectual and philosophical movement without parallel; a boiling-pot of new ideas, a time of questioning established principles and advancing new ones, and in particular a new conception of Man and Nature that was scientific, not prescribed by the theologians.

French had become the international language. It was spoken in foreign courts where, in addition, some of the best-known French writers were invited for extended stays, Voltaire in Prussia, Diderot in Russia. The writing of L'Encyclopédie had begun in France under Diderot's direction and the greatest minds of Europe took part in that mammoth task spanning twenty-one years (1746-1767)—an intellectual masterpiece that was to condone the primacy of scientific over theological truth. There was still a certain amount of book censorship in France and many of the French philosophes had their books printed in London, Amsterdam or Geneva.

This simmering cauldron of new theories, stoked by a circle of European, and soon American, revolutionaries, was bound to explode in the face of the ~~indifference of the monarchy~~ ^{an indifferent and autocratic} - and explode it did in 1789, just 18 months after the ~~founding of the British government~~ ^{N.S.W.}. Everyone has heard of "Bastille Day" and the French Revolution.

But what exactly occurred on July 14 1789 that has made that date one of the best-remembered ~~of all times?~~ ^{in world history!}

At the time it seemed to be just one more event in a long stream of successive elections, new assemblies, street demonstrations, major speeches, new ^{political} clubs and ^{an upsurge} ~~surge~~ of the free press. Louis XVI was king on ^{July} ~~the~~ 13th and remained on the throne on ^{July} ~~the~~ 15th.

July 14th
On ~~the fourteenth~~, ~~known as "Bastille Day"~~ ^{known as the Bastille} in the English-speaking world, several thousand Parisians, inflamed by speeches against tyranny, especially those of Camille Desmoulins, attacked arms depots in the capital, seizing weapons and ammunition. Once armed, they converged on the formidable medieval fortress, ^{known as the Bastille} where enemies of the Regime had been imprisoned under the authority of successive kings - no judgement was necessary - ^{then} and practically forgotten. Apart from its forbidding stone walls, ^{that} La Bastille had been left with no effective defence and its garrison put up little resistance. A few ^{prisoners} ~~captives~~ were found by the assailants and set free.

If July 14 was chosen as France's National Day - ^{it has been so} officially, only since 1880 - it was essentially because of its symbolic value. On that day ended tyranny in the form of the fortress, whose stone-by-stone removal began almost immediately, becoming in fact one of the greatest souvenir business ventures of all times. The symbolic value of the destruction of the Bastille was perceived abroad within days, feeding the imaginations of freedom-loving peoples across the globe. The events of that day took on even greater significance when, shortly afterwards, France's Assemblée Constituante issued the Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen (Declaration of Human and Citizen's Rights). The new American states had already drafted a similar bill for their own usage, but the French declaration was taken up by oppressed peoples worldwide, who continue to this day to quote it as a guiding force of inspiration.

REPUBLIC OR MONARCHY?

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King Louis XVI was beheaded in January 1793. But the First Republic that followed his reign lasted no longer than 10 years, to be terminated by a Corsican of small stature named Napoléon Buonaparte, who had himself crowned Napoléon the First, Emperor of the French.

At war with ^{many} European rulers for ^{almost} the entire duration of his reign, Napoléon's armies were generally victorious. Was it because of their supreme commander's military genius, because of France's larger human resources — Defeat would come at the hands of Europe's sole more populated country, Russia — or because Napoleon had inherited from the Revolution an aura of Liberator of the oppressed? All these factors contributed to ^{his} success and to a "legend" that survived long and far. In January 1986, French journalist Sylvie Crossman remarked in Le Monde that Sydney still has eight "Napoleon" and eighteen "Josephine" (Napoleon's first wife) streets, despite the fact that England was Napoleon's greatest enemy.

^{three}
After Napoleon's ^{final} defeat in 1815 at the battle of Waterloo, France was ruled successively by ^{two} more kings, each having nominal rather than real power. The last, Louis-Philippe, whose wife Adelaide gave her name to the Australian city, was deposed in 1848 when a three-day revolution led to the establishment of the Second Republic.

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Louis-Philippe's reign to 1848 ended what modern-day monarchists call the succession of "forty kings who in a thousand years. MADE France", from 843 to 1848.

But the Second Republic lived no longer than the first, and like it was ended by a Napoleon, a nephew of the first, who was crowned Emperor Napoléon ^{III} the Third in 1852.

Like other European powers of the time, France was in the throes of the Industrial Revolution, experiencing the progressive rise of great capitalist enterprises and the parallel increase, in numbers if not in power, of an industrial proletariat. Like

not called
the wife of
William IV?

1-09

the novel
England's Dickens, French writers Victor Hugo, and later Emile Zola, (through their novels) ^{directed} brought the bourgeoisie's attention to the plight of the exploited.

Also like other European powers, France now began looking outside the continent to build up a network of colonies that would supply food and raw materials to the mother country's hungry new enterprises.

In both her industrial and her colonizing endeavours, France was being outstripped by Britain. Demographically, she had never quite recovered ^{from} the human losses suffered during the Napoleonic wars, and by the turn of the century her population was surpassed by ^{some of} Britain, Germany and the United States.

Progressively through the nineteenth century, the former ruling class, the aristocracy, had been replaced at the top by an increasingly wealthy bourgeoisie of merchants and industrialists. Some of the latter paid an indirect homage to their predecessors by purchasing a title of nobility or sometimes simply ^{by} inserting the particle de between their first and last names, as that ~~could suggest that one came~~ ^{from the} of pre-Revolution aristocracy: the most famous would-be aristocrat was ^{writer} Honoré Balzac who became Honoré de Balzac.

There was so much wealth and money in the country that rates of interest during the second half of the century were rarely over one or two per cent. Money-hungry foreign rulers came to offer higher rates to French lenders, and acceptance by much of the petty-minded French bourgeoisie proved to be a great miscalculation. Instead of investing in industry, ~~or in~~ or in the development of their overseas territories, the wealthy French simply lent millions of francs to near-bankrupt foreign governments: the largest borrower was Russia, and French investors lost everything after 1917 when the USSR disclaimed the Czars' huge debts.

Meanwhile, ^{III} Napoléon ~~the Third~~, dubbed Napoléon le Petit by his detractors, apparently had inherited his uncle's bellicose nature. He involved France in a Mexican war, but his choice of emperor for Mexico, Maximilian of Austria, was defeated and shot. Although his military campaigns in China and Crimea, waged

alongside the British, were a little more successful, they proved costly. But his entanglement in a war against Prussia ^{finally} proved fatal. French armies were defeated, the emperor deposed, and Paris suffered a lengthy siege during which its residents were forced to feed on rats as a last resort. From March to May 1871, the capital ^{declared itself} ~~was ruled by~~ La Commune de Paris, considered by many historians as the first attempt to establish a "marxist" regime during Karl Marx's lifetime. French troops reconquered the capital, staging a bloody repression, and for almost one hundred years the revolutionary Commune de Paris was officially played down as a non-event that warranted no more than a couple of lines in school textbooks.

There was great hesitation on the part of the new ruling class, after 1871, as to whether to re-instate the monarchy or opt again for a republic. Then in 1875, by a paper-thin majority of one, the French parliament passed, probably for ever, the death sentence on the monarchy by voting in favour of l'Amendement Vallon, a short ^{bland} paragraph referring for the first time ever to la République Française.

For most of its lifespan the Third Republic (1875-1940) was the scene of bitter antagonism between the Right and the Left. While the former found support in the wealthier classes, the Army, the Clergy and the Law, the latter counted on the workers and on small farmers for votes, with the division into these two opposing blocks often being more a matter of family tradition, and of historical and even geographical ties, than of ^{political} issues. Election results since the turn of the century show each département generally returning "deputies" (members of parliament) of the same political persuasion, irrespective of changes in the region's social structure.

Early this century, the antagonism focused on the role of the Roman Catholic church. The anti-church movement was led by Emile Combes, once an ordained Catholic priest and doctor in theology. Combes became prime minister in 1902 and enforced "Separation between Church and State". This is why in France one must be married by a mayor; a church wedding is acceptable but has ~~no~~ legal force. Feelings ran very strong on both sides, and there are still left-

wing départements in central France where at weddings and funerals, the women will enter church for the service but most men will remain outside.

BAD TIMES

The First World War (1914-1918) brought a great wave of patriotism from most French men and women, along with the desire to obtain the return of Alsace-Lorraine, seized in 1871 by Prussia, ~~now the~~ German Empire. For the soldiers, the war was a hell of damp and dark trenches, with deaths counted by the thousands at ~~each~~ assault. Half a million died at the battle for Verdun. Victory came after four devastating years and the eventual support of American troops under the banner "La Fayette, nous voici" (La Fayette was the head of a French force which ^{had} helped ^{the} Americans win independence in the 1780s - the debt was being repaid). In 1919, the Treaty of Versailles returned Alsace-Lorraine to France and compelled the new German Republic to pay huge war reparations that did little for France and its ~~for its~~ ruined north-eastern towns, but ^a lot to stir hatred in the vanquished nation.

Hatred in fact is perhaps the word that best defines the ^{dominant} dominating feeling in the 20-year period between the two world wars. France at first was not affected by the feeling as much as ^{were} its neighbours, nor did it suffer as greatly from the Great Depression, after 1929, due to the balanced ^{state} of its economy.

The rise of Fascism in Italy under Mussolini, then of Hitler's Nazism in Germany, both movements, essentially a product of the ambient hatred and of the economic depression, were perceived by many, but not by all French citizens, as an ominous threat. More than a few were attracted instead by the drive, dynamism and apparent idealism of the fascist movements, in contrast to what they saw as stagnation and moral decadence in France. Yet in 1936 there were enough French voters to bring to power the Popular Front, the first coalition of Socialists and Communists ever to govern the country.

But the Spanish Civil War was soon to polarize French opinion. Only five years after ousting absolute monarchy and replacing it with an elected republican system, Spain in July 1936 was faced

with a grave military revolt. General Franco's armies had the support of the same conservative forces - the clergy, large landowners and industrialists - that backed the rightwing political parties of France, and had obtained arms and troop support from fellow-fascists Hitler and Mussolini. The besieged republic failed in its efforts to win material support from the Western democracies, despite the backing of large sectors of the public. Over 40,000 volunteers signed up to join the International Brigades fighting the forces of Franco, many of whom travelled clandestinely into Spain from France, crossing the Pyrenees mountains on the border. Among them was legendary French writer André Malraux, who in later years worked closely with General De Gaulle. But the superior might of the adversary and internal disputes finally led to the collapse of the Spanish Republic in 1939.

In a way, World War Two, which began in September 1939, was merely the logical continuation of the Spanish Civil War. In Spain, the Axis Powers, as they were called after the "Rome-Berlin Axis" treaty, had tested both their weapons and the weakness of their democratic opponents, chiefly France and Britain. They also knew they could count on the support of many Westerners, who felt their countries should fight bolshevism, as Soviet Communism was called, rather than fascism.

Because many of its military leaders were conservative by tradition, France's armies played a passive role during the first eight months of the conflict, which left them unprepared and unable to resist the thoroughly prepared thrust forward of thousands of German tanks in May 1940.

A million-and-a-half French soldiers were taken prisoner and sent to camps in Germany, with the major part of French territory occupied by the invading forces. In the remainder of the country, known as the "Free Zone", a pro-German government under the leadership of Marshal Pétain was set up and elected headquarters in the spa town of Vichy. It never organised elections but knew it could count on the support of the same conservatives who had disapproved of the war in the first place, and who came to be known as collaborateurs. Many other French men and women, indeed the

majority, did not lose faith in freedom and national independence, and opposition to the occupiers and their stooges became known as the resistance.

The Résistance was not factional but attracted men and women from all strata of society irrespective of prior political commitments. For the first time this century, it brought together Catholics and the anti-clerical, as celebrated by the poet Aragon in his famous line: Celui qui croyait au ciel, celui qui n'y croyait pas ... (The one who believed in Heaven, and the one who did not believe).

As early as June 1940, following an appeal from London by ~~the~~ expatriate General De Gaulle, volunteers began forming the Free French Forces. They were to be joined in the months and years following by some 35,000 escapees from occupied France and from its overseas territories. Inside the country, at least 100,000 people, perhaps up to twice that number, took an active part in the underground struggle against the occupation troops. This may not ^{seem} a large proportion of the population, but many people who hoped to join never had the chance because of the need to operate in complete secrecy. Also, "active" résistants had to be highly skilled and willing to risk their lives at any moment, given the extremely high rate of casualties. Of the men and women who joined the "secret army" in the earliest days of the struggle, hardly any survivors remained by 1945.

Critics of the active resistance movement consider little was achieved by the fighters, and certainly less than in Greece or Yugoslavia where the terrain was more favourable to ^{guerrilla} rebel action. Yet the Résistance not only succeeded in pinning down Nazi troops who otherwise would have been dispatched to the Eastern front, but also gave a telling demonstration of which side was morally right. Sabotage compelled the occupation forces to ~~resort~~ to increasingly harsh action, whittling away the little popularity they still enjoyed with a section of the French population. The wartime regime little by little became increasingly oppressive, and those who lived through it remember l'occupation with horror.

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"IN FRANCE WE DON'T HAVE PETROL BUT WE HAVE IDEAS" - POPULAR
SLOGAN OF THE 1960S

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POSTWAR REVIVAL

After 1945 and the defeat of the "Axis" powers, France resumed normal life. General De Gaulle, the first head of state after the war, did not re-establish the dishonoured Third Republic which had voted dictatorial powers to Marshal Pétain. Instead, the new regime was to be called the Fourth Republic ... but De Gaulle left it to its own devices the following year.

French

In 1945, women for the first time were given the vote. It comes as a great surprise to many people to discover that a country with a reputation for enlightenment and progress granted women equal political rights so late (only Switzerland was even further behind). The explanation is that conservative men consistently opposed a move that would restrict their authority and break with tradition. As for left-wing political parties, theoretically in favour of social progress, they had concluded from their own opinion polls that a majority of women would give their votes to the right, an assumption which later proved to be correct.

The Fourth Republic lasted only thirteen years, from 1945 to 1958. Its major weakness was the ^{facility with which parliament could defeat} ~~parliament's ability to defeat and~~ ^{and} throw out the government of the day, a situation that caused political instability due to ^{a succession of short-lived} ~~short-lived~~ governments, 25 of them ~~successively~~ in 13 years. In 1958, a crisis largely generated by the war in Algeria, ended with the recall of De Gaulle from 12 years in retirement. Seen once again as France's "Saviour" against chaos, De Gaulle imposed a new Constitution under which a government was assured of staying in office as long as it had a parliamentary majority. In addition, the president of the Republic was no longer to be a mere figure-head but to have greater executive powers, somewhat on the same lines as the U.S. president. De Gaulle became the first president of the Fifth Republic, followed by Pompidou, Giscard d'Estaing and Mitterrand.

Thirty
Twenty-nine years later, the Fifth Republic seems to be well-established and destined to last. Its first task was to seek an honourable conclusion to the war in Algeria.

France granted independence to those of its former colonies which voted to that effect - not all did so - but the case of the three Algerian départements under French rule was seen as being different. At school the French had been indoctrinated into believing that these départements were, like those on the mainland, an integral part of France. The Algerian population had never expressed a strong and general wish to the contrary inasmuch as Moslems, the majority of the population, were deprived of the right to vote. In French schools of the Third Republic, students were taught that the reason for this was that the Koran allowed men to have several wives, which was in contradiction with French law prescribing monogamy. In other words, by depriving Moslems of citizenship, France in fact was demonstrating its respect for their customs.

Guerilla action against the French ^{stepped} started up around 1954 and ^{grew} later built up into fullscale fighting. But neither the despatch of more and more French troops, nor increasingly harsh measures against the rebels, succeeded in re-establishing the dominance that the one and a half million European settlers expected their national army to impose on what they argued was the country of their birth, ^{Albeit} a country they were unwilling to share on equal terms with people of a different culture. Finally, in 1962, under the impetus of De Gaulle, a treaty was signed at Evian under which France gave the Algerian state full independence with equal rights for all residents.

Further turmoil broke out in France in 1968, when workers across the country joined the May revolt of the young, who in several other countries were also protesting against the establishment. Since then, political life has largely settled back into the old squabbles between right and left, with one newcomer to the scene these last years, the Front National, an extreme rightwing group which attracts people ^{afraid} the country could eventually become a racially non-white and non-European society. In the 1980s, the most startling political event was the victory in 1981 of the Socialists and Communists, the first by leftwing parties in 23 years. The Communists, junior partners in the coalition, walked out in 1984 and the Socialists were defeated by the right in 1986, but Socialist President François Mitterrand remained in office under a ~~strange~~ new power-sharing agreement the French call "cohabitation".

1.2 Economic and Cultural Life

Although the French media continue to play up the political confrontations, these have lost the momentum of the past. Instead, the country appears to have directed most of its energy during the last decades towards improving and strengthening its economic and cultural standing, with no small measure of success.

~~Economic and Cultural Life~~ With 56 million inhabitants, less than one-and-a-half per cent of the world population, France is the world's fifth largest economic power in terms of Gross National Product, well ahead of Great Britain, which is ⁱⁿ sixth ^{place} and slipping. On the basis of population ratios, France is the third largest exporting nation on the international scene after Japan and Switzerland.

Leading business magazine L'Expansion in 1985 published an alphabetical ^{"hit parade"} list of French ^{export successes} trade "hits" which began with AIRBUS, now 650 on order and even Australia plans to increase its Airbus fleet at the expense of U.S. aircraft. It followed with AIR FRANCE, the fourth largest international passenger airline, ASTERIX one hundred and ten million books sold throughout the world along with film rights, and ended with VUITTON, the world's ^{luxury} most popular brand of luggage, with annual sales of about 200 million dollars, 40 per cent in the Far East.

Among other such "hits" on the list are BIC, which controls 30 per cent of the world's "writing aids" market, CLUB MED, with 820,000 members, COGNAC, with exports of about one billion dollars a year, and PERRIER, world leader by far in mineral waters.

But France's most spectacular industrial successes are in high technology, especially in nuclear energy and communications. France, which depends on nuclear power for about 65 per cent of its energy, heating and lighting, has the world's second largest civil nuclear energy programme behind the United States. The nuclear plants of Creys-Malville and Cattenom are among the world's four or five highest-powered, and French company COGEMA supplies fuel to some 170 nuclear reactors across the globe.

In the area of transport, the French-built T.G.V. (trains à grande vitesse), which started running in 1983, has taken over from Japan ^{as the world's fastest train}, cutting back rail travel time, for example, between Paris and Lyon, to ONE-THIRD of what it was in 1940. The T.G.V.s are also proving to be a commercial

success. The huge investments required to build a separate railway track for the train was originally expected to be recouped only after the year 2,000, but ~~it appeared~~ the investment will be recovered by 1990.

The Satellite launcher ARIANE, which is 59 per cent French, despite occasional failures, had obtained half of the world's launching contracts before the catastrophic explosion of the NASA shuttle.

One telephone handset out of ~~the~~ eight in the world is French-made, as are the SAGEM teleprinters, used for Telex transmissions in many countries. Australia currently has 30,000 such machines in use and *SAGEM has been the sole supplier* ~~has purchased no other brand~~ since 1978. *All of them are for city from the traditional dependence of France as a producer of cheese, wines, perfumes and luxury goods.* The technological invention with the greatest impact on everyday life in France today is undoubtedly the MINITEL, *an interactive* video screen available free on request to all telephone subscribers. Its own separate story is worth telling.

In the mid 1970s, executives of the French Telecom authority, ~~the PTT~~ began to express concern about the dwindling market for telephone manufacturing plants as well as the increasing size and weight of telephone directories. Why not, it was suggested, turn to manufacturing small video units ^{and} supply them free of charge to subscribers, who could consult their own screens for regularly updated listed numbers? While this seemed a constructive solution, the authorities took the idea a step further. Given the expense of the venture - 20 million video units to be produced - they reckoned the screens could be used to carry ~~additional~~ *other sorts of* information, ^{in addition} to the directory, and thought private companies could exploit the system against a fee. So Minitel was conceived, although delivery of the product required further years of experimentation and trial in pilot areas before its national launch.

The sets have been available to subscribers since 1983, but ~~in~~ ^{were} by 1986, although postal directories ~~are~~ still available, the Minitel ~~had~~ become more than a necessity or useful tool of work, it ~~had~~ blossomed to become a way of life, a fashion, a mode of entertainment. At the beginning of 1987, some 3,500 "suppliers" were

the equivalent of
 paying \$500 each for the privilege of selling information or
 wares on the Minitel screens, and there seemed to be no limit to
 what the user could call up on the telephone-connected video set.
 Data included:

- flight and train schedules, along with booking facilities;
- theatre programmes and bookings;
- medical and veterinary advice (the French have the highest proportion of pets to humans of any country);
- personal bank accounts, including transfer facilities;
- media data banks, one of the most highly-used services, with users accessing as much information on the past, on science, sport and politics, etc., as on current affairs;
- erotica, in words and illustration, allowing users to communicate with each other, a service not lacking in patronage. One of the suppliers advertised their service saying: "you can get married ten times this evening and then settle down to a happy sleep in your own bed".
- dating. Who would have thought the French needed it, yet its popularity is mounting steadily.
- shopping for almost everything, including ready-made home-delivered meals, with ^{an} à la carte menu on the screen.

(almost)

Charges for using Minitel are included in the telephone bill, and financially ~~France's telecommunications service, the PTT~~ ^{Telecom France} is the great winner. It collects extra revenue from the additional calls, charging users according to the time spent accessing the screen (companies are beginning to come down on staff accessing erotic and dating services in office hours), and ^{it} charges suppliers for the connection as well as taking a percentage on sales. The 1986 Minitel income was estimated at \$600 million, with the original investment now almost entirely recouped. A similar system is currently being introduced by Telecom Australia.

Turning to more elaborate communications systems, the French state-owned company Thomson C.S.F. in 1985 clinched the sale of a military system called RITA (Réseau Intégré de Transmissions Automatiques) to the U.S. army for the equivalent of six billion Australian dollars, two-thirds of which are to be spent in the U.S.A

France in fact is the world's third largest military supplier after the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., selling Mirage aircraft, Exocet missiles, Super-Etendard missile launchers, Alouette helicopters and AMX tanks, to cite but a few of the better-known names in French military hardware.

In another area of communications, Agence France-Presse is one of the ^{would} top three international wire services, ~~with~~ ^{alongside} Reuters and Associated Press, ~~in the world~~. Their English-language news service is widely used by the Australian press.

At the risk of shocking Australian readers, it should be stressed that many of the goods and systems mentioned above are NOT the product of free enterprise but of "nationalised" industrial groups and utilities. In 1987 to 1988 some of these groups are due to be returned to the private sector, but many analysts believe "privatisation" will do little, if anything, to further boost their performances.

On the cultural front, the French authorities have displayed as much concern with maintaining a French cultural identity as with its economic and technological rank.

First and foremost in the cultural battle has been the language. In a recent book entitled "Francophonie", William Bostock reviews the 100-odd organisations based in France and other French-speaking countries, most of them government-sponsored or assisted, which work to keep the French language alive, boost its usage and, if possible, maintain its purity, ^{that is,} keep it free of franglais!

Since the 1950s, the French have feared the creeping "Americanization" of their language, arts, writing and even eating habits. English-speaking tourists, we are told, obtain less assistance from the French at large, even ^{from those who} speak a little English, than tourists who speak other languages. The explanation is that many French people associate the English language with an image of a would-be master-race, or at least of a master culture and general arrogance.

The old fears recently have died down somewhat, with television programmes such as Dallas highly successful in France, a sign perhaps that 30 years of cultural vigilance have paid off and that cultural co-existence (now) is possible.

French
The cultural industry in fact remains one of the healthiest in the world. While 93 per cent of French homes have television, cinema, concerts and live theatre are still flourishing. In 1984, nine million admission tickets were sold at theatres and 188 million at cinemas, at a time when the number of film-goers in other European countries was falling by the millions. The film industry continues to lead other European countries in the number of works produced each year, and in Paris two weekly magazines are entirely devoted to listing shows, exhibitions and other forms of entertainment. One recent week listed 138 plays performed in professional live theatres. Melbourne and Sydney combined would offer 25 to 30 at most in any given week.

The Ministère de la Culture in recent years has played an increasingly prominent role in national and political life. It says its yearly allotment of just under one per cent of the national budget is one of the highest levels of state cultural spending in the world. Ministry financing of cultural activities hovers around an annual two billion dollars. And public opinion, more than anywhere else in the Western world, we believe, is strongly in favour of supporting artists, writers, film-makers and creators in general.

In the area of books, for example, state-owned television networks feature several programmes a day in which books are mentioned and displayed, and authors interviewed, whether it be as regards history, mining or tennis. One of the television shows with the highest popularity ratings is Apostrophes, a weekly 60-minute programme featuring four to six authors who are interviewed on their latest book and who discuss the works of the others, some of them low-brow, some of them highly esoteric.

and
At home and in everyday life, a highlight of French culture continues to be food. While La Nouvelle Cuisine, highly fashionable a few years ago, has become a target of ridicule, it nevertheless has left its mark. No longer can the restaurateurs, home cooks, or even corner cafes, consider that a good bifteck frites plus

half a dozen standard dishes are all one needs to offer. The trend now is to constantly try out new recipes just a little different from anything tried before, using foods that will each contribute their own natural taste. The mere perusal of menus posted in restaurant windows is a fascinating experience in itself, and one wonders whether among the thousands of restaurants there are just two that offer exactly the same fare.... Probably not.

1.3

IMMIGRATION - *emigration*

Through much of the 19th and 20th centuries, France has served as a pole of attraction to foreigners, while the emigration of French citizens, except to the country's overseas territories, has been viewed with deep suspicion and mistrust by the majority of its population.

2nd in France as country of immigration →

The richer European nations, at times when it appeared vital to the improvement of the national economy, attempted to attract migrant workers or migrant capitalists. The "guest workers", as they have come to be known, were under the threat of being sent home packing if the economic outlook deteriorated...and sent packing they often were. When they stayed put, these migrants were rarely accepted or treated as fully-fledged citizens until at least the second or third generation.

Many of the European migratory movements during the last two centuries were due to poverty-related factors, this being the case of Portugal, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Spain. Other countries lost vast sectors of their populations as a result of insecurity and persecution. Millions of Jews emigrated from Russia last century fearing "pogroms", antifascists and antinazis fled Italy and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, followed by an exodus from the Eastern Bloc countries in the 1950s and 1960s. The majority of these people left Europe altogether, but of those who did not, more settled in France than in the rest of Europe. In 1980, over one million Portuguese-born people were resident in France, against 10 million in Portugal.

Why did France attract so many immigrants? Its fairly balanced economy seemed to offer a wide range of opportunities, while its constitutional pledge to offer asylum to the persecuted and its reputation for political and religious tolerance, whether entirely justified or not, appealed to all those seeking a safe haven. A perhaps more vital reason still was France's own problem of a declining birthrate, which began in the mid-nineteenth century and which resulted in France being the only European nation to actively encourage immigration. As in the case of Australia, defence against a possible invasion was the underlying motive.

Immigrants were expected to "assimilate", to learn the language and customs of the host country as speedily as possible. Many did so with unmitigated success. While recent years have seen a surge of xenophobia in France, linked to troubled economic times, the weekly magazine Le Nouvel Observateur pointed out in 1984 that many of France's leading figures today were in fact first-generation immigrants. Cardinal Lustiger, the highest-ranking dignitary of the Roman Catholic church, the country's largest religious denomination, was born a Polish Jew. Henri Krasucki, head of the largest trade union confederation, the CGT, is also Polish-born, while France's most popular sportsman is Central African tennis-player Yannick Noah. And the two ^{of the} most popular actors ^{in France} ~~currently~~ are Italian-born Yves Montand and Algerian-born Isabelle Adjani.

Foreigners have even penetrated the ranks of French literature. Even mastery of the French language has been achieved by foreigners. French theatre since the 1960s has been dominated by Eugene Ionesco, who was in fact born and educated in Rumania. ^{selected to} Earlier on, in the 1920s, Panait Istrati, another Rumanian author who did not even live in France, wrote all his works in French. One of the few French ^{winners of the} Nobel literature prize ~~(winners)~~ in recent years was Irish-born Samuel Beckett, who only began to learn French at high school. He began writing in English and then turned to French entirely, producing one of the most significant contributions to contemporary French drama and literature.

there were those who

But ¹ DID emigrate from France. The great religious migrations, those of the ~~P~~rotestants, were over just before Australia's history began. Members of the aristocracy emigrated during the French Revolution, but most returned home as soon as it was safe, although a few remained in Australia. Near the turn of the ^{twentieth} century, it was no longer the ~~P~~rotestants but the Catholic monks who feared religious persecution in France, and Mary Durack in "The Rock and the Sand" mentions the Cistercian monks who settled in Western Australia following persecution.

Another group of people left France around 1850 to flee the regime of Napoleon the Third, and a larger politically-motivated flight took place in the 1870s in connection with the Paris Commune.

in "France 1850-1945"

In the second half of the nineteenth century, over-population in country areas provoked a vast drift towards the cities as well as attracting more French immigrants to foreign countries than is generally believed. Theodore Zeldin points out that in 1860 there were no less than 31 registered agencies in France set up to assist the emigration of private persons, despite the government's efforts to discourage citizens wishing to settle abroad from choosing a destination other than Algeria. Zeldin quotes statistics showing that half a million French people lived abroad in 1901, swelling to a peak of 600,000 in 1911, then slowly declining. Of these, about 60 per cent settled outside Europe, the highest concentration being in the U.S.A. and Argentina. Zeldin believes that French migration during the 19th century, at a time when it was unpopular with the authorities, was in fact higher than officially recorded. Moreover, as the largest groups of emigrants were residents of areas near the French borders, in the Pyrenees, Alps and Alsace, they often departed from the foreign border country and were officially listed as migrants from Spain, Italy or Germany.

Zeldin's final point is, that unlike other European migrants, the French were not pushed to emigrate by poverty or unemployment. Those who departed were generally well-off and well-educated, craftsmen and professionals in search of a more favourable environment or hoping to improve their chances of success. This

is certainly true of the majority of emigrants settled in Australia in the 19th century.

More recently, the end of the Second World War made many Europeans, including the French, dream of places far away from the danger zone as well as from the bad memories of the Old World. And from around 1948, the Australian authorities launched a publicity campaign in France which stressed Australia was the only country in the world to actually offer cash, in the form of subsidized passages, to potential migrants who had fought in the Allied Forces. The consequence was a flood of requests to the Australian consulates in France.

France's loss of its former colonies and overseas territories, in particular Morocco in 1957 and Algeria in 1962, brought about the departure of a few hundred thousand people, French by culture if not by birth, to leave at first for France, where many were who left

to feel unwanted. Some of these pieds-noirs * tried nevertheless to "assimilate" on the mainland, but drove finally migrated to places which apparently offered opportunities or space for the entrepreneurially-minded. Of those who came to Australia, the favourite destination was Queensland, with its warmer climate and more familiar way of life.

Today, French attitudes to emigration and immigration remain basically unchanged. In France, migrants are still expected to assimilate, to become completely French and to perform military service. As for those who emigrate, they are expected to remain French forever and preferably to return to the mother country to spend their years of retirement on the substantial savings they should have accumulated while abroad. This at least is the popular and traditional image.

* pieds-noirs literally means "black feet". In France, the term applies only to the former colons of North Africa. There are arguments over the origin of the term. Certain pieds-noirs resident in Australia said the term dates back to the days when Europeans wore black boots while the "natives" went barefoot.

ONE
CHAPTER TWO

CIRCUMNAVIGATION TO SETTLEMENT

Official history, which one day may be proven wrong, says that no Europeans had settled in Australia before 26 January 1788 - a date now celebrated each year as Australia Day.

The First Fleet of eleven ships had sailed from Plymouth on 13 May 1787, and the safe arrival of the entire fleet at Sydney Cove eight months later is viewed as one of the greatest sea-faring achievements of all time.

From the vessels landed some 1,300 convicts and 600 free men, mostly crew, troops and guards, all under the general command of Captain Arthur Phillip, the first Governor of the new colony.

But the inmates hauled from British prisons for the journey halfway around the world were not necessarily all British. On lists of the passengers of the First Fleet appear the names of two French convicts, apparently the only non-British Europeans to have been transported to the penal colony. *

One was George Francisco, who after three years in a French jail left for England, where he was arrested once again and sentenced for theft in the Old Bailey in 1784. The other was Pierre Parris, whose story is recounted in "1788: The People of the First Fleet". Author Don Chapman, quoting earlier documents, writes:

"Peter Parris, a Frenchman, was sentenced to death in Exeter for burglary. Pardoned on condition of transportation for seven years, he arrived on the Scarborough. In February 1788, Parris went missing and it was rumoured that he has escaped to Botany Bay and persuaded his French comrades to take him on board the Astrolabe or the Boussole.... Both vessels later foundered in the New Hebrides and all hands were lost".

* A manservant of Captain Phillip, by the name of Bernard de Maliez was also listed. But despite research in maritime records, there is no conclusive proof that he was French as his name would seem to indicate.

While most French immigrants are told on arrival that Australia could have been French "if only Lapérouse had arrived a few days earlier", this is no more than a legend. Lapérouse's brief was to explore the world and not to take possession of any land. His expedition was to enter the Pacific from the east, via Cape Horn, call at Easter Island, ^{at Tahiti} and then map routes to the Northern Pacific and Japan. The anchoring of his two ships, the Astrolabe and the Boussole, in Botany Bay, also in January 1788, was unscheduled and only took place due to incidents on Samoa where twelve members of the expedition were killed.

It was in Botany Bay that the French crew buried Father Le Receveur, who died from wounds received at the hands of island natives, becoming the second white man to be buried in Australia.

But aside from the few French people on hand to witness Australia's beginnings, many more took part, both before and after Lapérouse, in attempts to circumnavigate, reconnoitre and explore the continent.

DISCOVERY UNCOVERED

Perhaps it was in fact the French, and not the Dutch, English or Spaniards who discovered Australia, but this is a question that will probably never be settled. Arguments such as these, moreover, are heightened by debate over the meaning of the word "discovery", and its relation not only to history but to philosophy, religion, ethics, etc. Eminent Australian historian Manning Clark points out that for many years "children in Catholic schools were taught that Quiros discovered Australia, while in the Protestant and state schools the honour was given to the Dutch - to Jansz or Hartog", (around 1605).

Some academics, Leslie Marchant for instance, believe Chinese navigators, according to certain assumptions, may have reached parts of Australia before the Europeans. But that theory has not yet appeared in textbooks, and probably never will. Must a discoverer be European to be acknowledged? We have all been taught that Christopher Columbus discovered America, yet it is now known that other Europeans, Vikings in particular, set foot on the American continent long before and possibly settled there.

As for Australia, awareness of the existence of a great "southern land" (Terra Australis in Latin) is recorded in texts belonging to the Western civilisation which date back to before the Middle Ages.

Marcel Chicoteau, a French-born scholar now retired in Brisbane after lecturing in French literature in the universities of Wales, Waikato and Queensland, has set out to untangle the reality from the myths in his short book Australie, Terre Légendaire, published in French in Brisbane in 1961.

In the book, Chicoteau recounts the work of Jean Ango, a wealthy shipbuilder and shipowner from Dieppe, in France's province of Normandy, who in the 1530s and 1540s played host to a circle of scientists, explorers and cosmographers. In Jean Ango's nearby château of Varengeville, which still stands today, the group produced the cartes de Dieppe (Dieppe maps), based on the travels of navigators of the time, mainly of French and Portuguese origin. The maps are recognised as the ^{most important} greatest cartographic ^{document} exploration produced before Mercator introduced a different system of ^{geographical} projection towards the end of the 16th century.

Several of the Dieppe maps feature La Grande Jave, a vast expanse of land south of La Petite Jave, itself clearly identifiable as Java, part of present-day Indonesia. The Dieppe maps showing Great Java include, in particular:

- the "Dauphin" map of 1536
- the Jean Roze map of 1542 where the western shores of Australia are the most clearly distinct
- the Pierre Desceliers map of 1550
- the Atlas Le Testu (1545-55)

Chicoteau points out that the outline of a section of the Dauphin map definitely portrays features of north-western Australia: Collier Bay, Walcott Inlet, King Sound and Fitzroy River.

One writer, C. de Varigny, says in an 1889 article entitled L'Afrique et l'Océanie that "Australia was discovered by Guillaume Le Testu, a navigator from Provence, in 1542". ^{Jesks} Another historian, disagrees but concedes that Le Testu at the time knew of the existence of such a continent.

In his thorough work published in 1896, The Story of Australasia, J.S. Laurie wrote:

"Flinders found Great Java, as per 1542 map...agrees (it was) nearer with the position and extent of Terra Australis...than with any other land...Admiral Burney in his History of Discoveries in the South Seas (writes); all these circumstances justify and support the opinion that the north and west coast of New Holland WERE KNOWN AND WERE THE GREAT JAVA OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY" (our capitals).

If they were known, especially in France, how did this come about?

Several Australian historians, such as Russel Ward and Ross Fitzgerald, believe the data on which the Dieppe maps were based had in fact been smuggled out of Portugal. While Portugal in the 16th century was undoubtedly a far more important maritime power than France, why not accept that some French navigators may have contributed directly to the Dieppe maps? Leslie Marchant in "France Australe" points out that Jean Ango after all owned up to 70 ships, and that the Parmentier brothers, his captains, had sailed as far as Sumatra, almost next door to both Small and Great Java.

It is possible, however, that the information also could have been passed ^{on} by French spies such as Jean Fonteneau, who sailed on Portuguese ships under the assumed name of Alfonse and passed himself off as Portuguese.

Another factor that tends to argue against the hypothesis that all the mapping data was provided by the Portuguese is that the Dieppe maps ^{appear to} refer to both east and west "Australia". Under the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas between Spain and Portugal, only Spanish sailors were authorised to navigate in these eastern waters, while Portuguese ships were restricted to the western side of the dividing line established by the pact. *It is not over possible that the final letter of the treaty was not observed, and was in fact difficult to measure exactly, in such far off latitudes.*

Apart from Ango's own ships, some of the information for the maps may have originated from Paulmier de Gonneville, a French navigator from Honfleur (near Dieppe) who during a few months in 1504 claims to have stayed in a place called Terre Australe. Some scholars firmly believe it was *he* Australia but others argue it was either Brazil or Madagascar.

Chicoteau, for his part, also makes an interesting comment on rock paintings by the Wandjina tribe of the Kimberley Ranges, in Western Australia. *Following earlier 19th century commentators such as G. G. Grey?* He points out that the paintings are completely different from those found in the rest of the continent and bear a definite resemblance to the Byzantine style of art. This supplies one more argument to support the thesis that earlier Europeans, or explorers from the Middle East in this case, may have disembarked in Australia long before the

But probably the most noteworthy Frenchman connected with Australia's pre-settlement history is one who never came near its shores. His name was Charles de Brosses, and like Jean Ango, two centuries earlier, he was a patron of sciences. One of France's leading legal figures, he was a friend of the writer and thinker Voltaire, who called him President des Terres Australes because of his passion for the southern lands. De Brosses is the author of a five-volume work published in 1756, entitled Histoire des navigations aux terres australes.

Manning Clark considers that his writings, in particular his call for "the use of New Holland (Australia) as a receptacle for criminals, on the grounds that in every society there is a proportion of men whose only occupation is to harm others," were instrumental in convincing the English to ship their convicts there some 30 years later, following further investigation, notably the Cook expedition. (Bart, Cook, & Sir James Cook: over familiar with de Brosses' work.)

As for de Brosses, he was firmly convinced that Paulmier de Gonneville had set foot in the "Austral lands" and that it was consequently up to France to pursue his work and set up a colony there. This conviction led to his sponsorship of a maritime expedition headed by Bougainville. The explorer established a French colony in 1764 on the Malouines islands (named after the French city of Saint-Malo), now the Falklands, but sold them to Spain during a second expedition in 1766. From there he flitted about the South Pacific, where his observations on the Tahitians' taste for pleasure and leisure were laid down for posterity by Diderot in Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville. Sailing further westwards, he was left all but stranded on the Barrier Reef, failing to ever set foot on the Australian continent and forced to limp home empty-handed to the disappointment of Charles de Brosses.

Apparently the sole Frenchman to actually declare a part of Australia as a possession of France was Saint-Allouarn in 1772, who reached its western coast. Although Saint-Allouarn Island still exists today, near Cape Leeuwin, his territorial claim was never taken seriously by the French authorities.

Names left by French seafarers to scores of geographical locations abound along the Australian coastline, especially in the west and in Tasmania. But the apparent lack of interest in establishing French possessions across the continent remains puzzling. The well-worn theory that the British settled the land to forestall their French rivals is not fully convincing given the time that was needed to complete the settlements, and the number of opportunities open to the French to plant their flag along the endless miles of shore.

The most likely explanation is that France at the time was not in the mood to establish new colonies. It had lost Canada in 1759, helped the Americans to wrest their independence, and was to undergo the turmoil of the 1789 Revolution.

The successive parliaments of the First Republic time and again threw out the demands made by the pro-colonial lobby, sponsored by the/cane-growers of Saint-Domingue (later to become Haiti). Napoleon dispatched his brother-in-law General Leclerc at the head of a 20,000-strong army to defeat the rebels on the West Indian island, France's richest colony, but the troops were routed and independence finally ceded. The sale of Louisiana to the emerging United States of America in 1803 also demonstrates Napoleon's growing disinclination towards the spirit of colonial enterprise.

Colonisation curried favour neither with the government of France nor with its influential citizens at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. The country, on the other hand, considered itself a major intellectual and scientific power, the hub of Enlightenment, and as such encouraged expeditions of research or discovery, which won large popular support across France.

ENLIGHTENMENT VERSUS THE BOOK OF GENESIS

In Europe, the travels of Bougainville and Cook had a great impact on the collective imagination. So much so that a play, which was recently translated and published in Melbourne as ~~the~~ "The First Australian Play" *, was performed in Paris in 1792 during the French Revolution. Most of the characters portrayed in Les Emigrés aux Terres Australes are aristocrats, priests and an assortment of enemies of the Revolution. They are expected to redeem their sins in the southern land under the watchful eye of republican officers and a laboureur, the symbol of the masses, endowed with a larger dose of commonsense than the noble men and women. The play also features a few sauvages (the Aborigènes), who are on the people's side and are morally superior to the aristocrats.

At the time, perhaps the single greatest difference between the French and the English lay in their respective attitudes towards native peoples. And if the English were indeed bent on settling new lands to forestall the French, their motives may have had more to do with growing fears of the revolutionary ideas and theories on enlightenment being nurtured in France than with mere national rivalry.

It is within this context that Frenchman Francois Péron, despite a stay of only/about a year in Australia, has had - or

* Translated from the French and re-published by Patricia Clancy

could have had, had his ideas been followed - a greater and more constructive influence on this country's development than any other of his fellow-citizens. Péron's fame is currently on the rise, and in the short space of the last five or six years have appeared a film based on his writings, "The Last Tasmanian", Colin Wallace's book "The Lost Australia of François Péron", a re-publication in France by Les Marmousets of Emile Guillaumin's François Péron Enfant du Peuple, as well as various other works by or on Peron.

Manning Clark, for example, compares the British settlers' view of the Aborigènes as a hopeless race of cruel, revolting, and at best inferior people, with Péron's idea that improvement in their social status would enhance their development and make them better and stronger people. Clark writes:

"Peron had derived his ideas on the nature of man from the Enlightenment rather than from the Book of Genesis.

With such ideas, the aborigène might have been saved from extinction and degradation, while the white man might have been saved from guilt and estrangement".

François Péron was born in 1775 in the small central French town of Cérilly. His father, an ailing tailor who worked from house to house, died at 30 when the boy was ~~seven~~ years old. Left with her son and two younger daughters, the widow, who had very little money, managed to send him to the local private college until he was 15 with ~~the~~ financial help of relatives.

Then came the days of the Great Revolution. In 1792 the young republic was invaded and calls for volunteers to join the forces reached Cérilly. François signed up at 17 and was sent to fight with the armies of the Rhine where he gained rapid promotion due to his courage but lost an eye. Taken prisoner, he was exchanged, sent home to Cérilly at the age of 20 and declared unfit for further duty because of his injury. Employed as a temporary town clerk, he fell in love with the daughter of a local dignitary, Pierre Petitjean, who was never to become Péron's father-in-law but from then on acted as his protector and patron. Petitjean obtained a studentship for his protege at the Paris medical school that was to mark the beginning of a unique scientific career.

Said to have been a man of compassion, with great powers of persuasion and leadership despite his frailty and unassuming ways, Peron ~~turned~~ from medicine to the study of natural sciences, where he came to the attention of botanist Jussieu and other well-known scientists, such as Cuvier and Lacépède. It was thanks to Jussieu that he was named to join an expedition sailing to the far-off Austral lands. All the scientific posts had already been taken, and Peron's application was accepted at the last minute thanks to his research in a then new field of study on human skulls, known as... anthropology. Peron later was to widen the scope of the science, and is considered by some writers as the true founder of Anthropology as we know it today.

The expedition left Le Havre on October 19 / 1800 aboard the vessels Géographe and Naturaliste, under the command of Captain Nicolas Baudin. It would be three and a half years before the two ships returned to France, without the captain, without most of the scientists, and with a crew badly depleted by deaths and desertions.

Throughout the expedition, Péron worked in close cooperation with three men, and much of the work left for posterity bears their signatures alongside Péron's - marine surveyor and cartographer Louis de Freycinet, and artists Charles Lesueur and Nicolas Petit.

According to Cuvier's testimonies, translated by Colin Wallace in his book mentioned above, Peron brought back:

"more than 100,000 sample species of all sizes... The number of new species... more than 2,500. In comparison, the second voyage of Cook, the most brilliant of its kind... less than 250 new species.

"18,414 specimens of Australian fauna".

And turning to his study of the Aborigines:

"Peron has omitted nothing... Their physical constitution, manners, customs, ornaments, games, dances and wild and war-like habits; their weapons, combats, methods of hunting and fishing; their dwellings, clothing, illnesses and water transport... (He) has compiled vocabularies from their languages, and the English, finding these of value, have supported his research in this field".

Peron is credited for introducing into Europe both the eucalypt tree and the black swan (he bought a live pair home). He also wrote essays on meteorology, on sea temperature, on dysentery and on jelly-fish. But his major published work doubtless remains the monumental Voyages de Découvertes aux Terres Australes. The first volume, published in 1807, contains many of the sketches carried by museums across the globe today and reproduced in scores of works.

A second volume, largely written by Peron, was completed by Freycinet and appeared in 1816. In poor health since his return, and overworked due to the urge to speedily publish his discoveries, Peron died on December 14 / 1810 in his native town of Cerilly at the age of 35. His death came shortly after Lesueur had drawn his portrait with the 1807 map of Australia that carries the 100-odd place-names given by the scientist. In 1842, a monument to his memory was erected in Cerilly's main square above his remains.

(Lesueur)

Louis de Freycinet later made a second voyage to Australia, skippering the "Urania" and taking along his young wife Rose, who embarked disguised as a man and who became the first woman ever to journey around the world.

Among other French explorers to reach the Australian shores were Marion Du Fresne and Vice-admiral Bruni d'Entrecastaux. Du Fresne sailed from Mauritius in October 1771 in command of two ships which landed early the following year in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), the first group of Europeans to set

foot there since Abel Tasman's passage in 1642. Their encounters with the natives proved much less fruitful than Peron's 30 years later, and after a short stay the ships left for New Zealand where they established far better relations with the Maoris. But although Du Fresne managed to communicate through the language he had learnt from the Tahitians, he was killed by the Maoris for reasons which remain unclear.

V the Vice-Admiral Bruni d'Entrec^astaux was the second visitor to Tasmania and also preceded the Baudin expedition. He sailed from Brest in September 1791 with two ships and orders to find Lapérouse. But although he combed the seas for well over a year, he failed to find any trace of his predecessor, whose remains were later discovered in 1826 by Peter Dillon, near the island of Vanikoro in the New Hebrides. During his travels, the vice-admiral sailed southwest of Tasmania through what was to become the d'Entrec^astaux Channel, near Bruni island.

SETTLEMENT

Péron's stay in Australia gives some idea of the life of the first French settlers. When he arrived in Sydney in 1802, where he remained for several months, fourteen years had elapsed since the arrival of the First Fleet. In Les^uteur's sketch, Plan de la Ville de Sydney, capitale des Colonies Anglaises aux Terres Australes, about 200 buildings are marked and the only road named is the Route de Paramatta, with the cemetery on one side and the gallows on the other.

Péron stayed with Larra, a French jew and emancipated convict who by then had obtained grant of some land which he was working. Larra's wife was also a French transported convict. Their life has been documented fairly extensively, and they have been credited with opening Australia's first French inn, in 1824. However Péron, the first to write on the French presence in Australia, excluding the fictional characters in the revolutionary play mentioned earlier, talks of two other Frenchmen in the early settlement. One is Colonel de la Clampe, a cotton-growing free settler and aristocrat émigré who chose to come to Australia, unlike many other émigrés, because he did not want to take arms against his own country. Péron reported that he was extremely happy about his decision to have chosen "New Holland". The other Frenchman Péron mentions went by the name of Morand. Together with an Irish partner, he had set out to fake vast amounts of English money, seeing the venture, he said, as a patriotic move to undermine England's credit. He was sentenced to death in England but later transported to the penal colony. He also told Péron he was extremely satisfied with life in the new settlement, where his skills as a watchmaker and goldsmith were bringing in a lot of money -- real money -- by 1802.

Subsequent to Péron's stay, it is no easy task to trace the settlement of the few French immigrants in Australia, officially known as New Holland until around 1820. The most extensive research in that direction was done by Anny Stuer for her book "The French in Australia", and it was no mean feat to discover the existence of some French immigrants given the absence of official nationality counts.

For the period prior to 1850, there is no record of immigrants by country of origin, but there are records of naturalization certificates, showing that 72 French males were naturalized between 1829 and 1850. The only other existing record is a South Australian census of 1866 which reports 65 arrivals of French nationals between 1836 and 1850, nine of whom were naturalized. By transferring the same proportion to the other colonies over the same period, Stuer calculates that between 500 and 600 French migrants reached Australia before the gold rush of the 1850s. During the same period, nearly 130,000 French migrants, many of them craftsmen displaced by the industrial revolution, disembarked in the United States.

From the very beginning, the French contingent of migrants was, as it always would be, a mixed bag of people from all social classes, including the titled aristocracy. Gabriel Huon de Kerzillau was an émigré officer and a Huguenot. He joined the New South Wales Corps and later became a tutor for the Macarthur family, Australia's first and leading graziers and landowners. His descendants still live in the country, and a branch are landowners in the Albury area.

Marie de Gouges, daughter of another émigré officer, married a British officer and emigrated to Tasmania in 1826.

Prosper de Mestre, who according to historical accounts was a successful businessman, settled in Sydney in 1818, obtained large land grants, became a director of the Bank of New South Wales and of several insurance companies. He was the second person ever naturalized in Australia, in 1825. ~~There is also a strong possibility that he was the illegitimate son of the then Duke of Kent, which would have made him the half-brother to Queen Victoria.~~ A descendant, apparently, with the same surname, now lives in Canberra and is researching the family's history.

Emile de Bouillon Serisier, a descendant of the Ducs de Bouillon, who were bitter adversaries of Richelieu during the Wars of Religion, was a founder of the town of Dubbo in New South Wales, where he opened a general store in 1848. One of his descendants, Errol Serisier, a century later was Mayor of

the first

Dubbo.

Francis Rossi was a Corsican of noble birth who had joined the British forces. He served as general superintendent of the New South Wales police from 1825 to 1834, and was credited with the capture of 18 bushrangers, earning a reputation as a tough law-and-order man - a reminder that the typical French "gendarme" is *expected* to be Corsican. On retirement he took up ownership of "Rossiville", a 14,000-acre property near Goulburn which years later was robbed by bushrangers Ben Hall and John Gilbert, when Rossi's son, also named Francis, was the owner.

Gabriel de Milhaud was perhaps the last French aristocrat to arrive before the gold-rush period. He too acquired large properties to raise cattle, and later was party to the French building boom in Hunters Hill, where a street still bears his name. (see later chapter "Australia's Only French Village")

West Australia contributed one VIP of French origin, Francis Lochee, (1811-1893), another descendant of the Huguenots. A French-English bilingual with a taste for journalism, he published first the "Inquirer" and then, from 1840-46, the "Western Australian Journal of Politics". He was also the author of a book on wine-growing but eventually settled down as a bank manager.

The first French consulate ^{was} ~~to be~~ opened in the country was Sydney's ~~French Consulate~~ in 1839. The consul was Louis de Sentis, also mentioned later in the chapter "Australia's Only French Village".

If the handful of French settlers named so far among the few hundred who came to Australia are all "upper-crust", this is because they have been the subject of separate studies or have won, at the very least, a mention in the Australian Dictionary of Biography. Others have not. *Of* the scores of anonymous settlers who sailed to ~~this~~ continent, farmers made up the majority. The French countryside in the 19th century had become hopelessly overcrowded, and farming in a sparsely populated overseas country where land was cheap was seen as a viable alternative to the attraction of city-life nearer to home. A few seamen and whalers also came to stay, and there was a slow beginning to the arrival of trades in which the French later would prove to be immensely popular - governesses for the rich, hairdressers, winemakers, jewellers.

But perhaps due to their tiny number, and to the fact they were by and large politically or economically displaced persons, the French settlers tended to merge and disappear within the general population, showing no apparent desire or need to indoctrinate their children with a sense of loyalty to the former nation or to its culture.